

Heel Grabbing in the Household of God:

An Inquiry into the Applicability of the New Covenant with Israel-Judah (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

to the Church

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OT515: Old Testament Survey

July 19th, 2024

Abstract

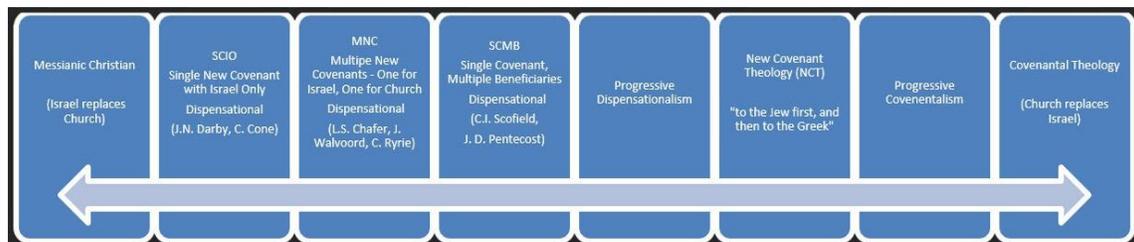
The most famous passage about the New Covenant, Jeremiah 31:31-34, covenantal blessings are only promised to Israel-Judah. Nothing in Jeremiah-Lamentations leaves any room for any blessings to flow directly to any Gentiles in any age. Parallel passages about the New Covenant in Ezekiel, Hosea, Isaiah, Joel, Micah, and Zephaniah emphasize that the blessings are only for ethnic Israel. Peter's use of Joel 2 in Acts 2, the connection between the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper, Romans 9-11 with an emphasis on Paul's analogy of the olive tree and branches, and the spiritual blessings of Ephesians 1-2 are reconsidered to see if the Church is enjoying some portion of the New Covenant today. The view of the relationship of the Church to the New Covenant found among the majority of modern dispensational theologians seems to have greater biblical correspondence and logical coherence than the competing view of New Covenant Theology (NCT). Two of the minority views among dispensationalists are also deemed viable theories with strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately certainty remains out of reach and several competing views cannot be ruled out.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Jeremiah’s revelation, the list of the beneficiaries of Yahweh’s newer and better covenant is limited strictly to “the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:31). Nothing in the proximal or distal context hints to any of its blessings trickling down to any Gentile believers after being poured over the remnant of the twelve ethnic tribes of Jacob. When Jesus indicated it was “not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs” (Matt. 15:25-27), he seemed to suggest that it would be somewhat unthinkable for any of the divine blessings showered upon God’s covenant people to benefit we who are “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise” (Eph. 2:12). Despite this, the view that became dominant among Gentile Christian thinkers is that the Church, a global and omni-racial group of believers in Jesus, has *already* become the *primary* beneficiary of the New Covenant (NC). Even after narrowing the field to the schools of Christian thought that give priority to biblical exegesis over the inertia of tradition, we are left with a remarkably wide-ranging spectrum of views of the relation of the Church to the NC. On one extreme, the Church replaces unfaithful Israel and takes all of her blessings. On the other, Israel retains her blessings while subsuming the Church. This exploration of Jeremiah 31 and other NC passages will explore which, if any, of the median views are the most biblically defensible.



¹ This chart was adapted in part from the four dispensational views of the New Covenant found in Christopher Cone, Ed., *An Introduction to the New Covenant* (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2013), 82-108. In chapter seven of the same book, George Gunn similarly recasts the spectrum as (1) Partial Fulfillment (of the NC by the Church), (2) Participation (by the church in the spiritual blessings of the NC), (3) Two New Covenants (one NC for Israel and one NC for the Church), and (4) No Relationship (between the Church and the NC). Cone and company argue for the SCIO and/or No Relationship position. Arnold Fructenbaum also discusses the four distinct dispensational views of the New

TEXT

Jeremiah's scroll resists the attempt to fit it into any one specific generic category. It contains accurate historical accounts of events that occurred around 627-580 B.C. in the kingdom of Judah before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. It also contains poetry, prose, sermons, and "autobiographical complaints to God in poetic form."² It has no peer in pagan literature of the Near East, is not worth comparing with any apocryphal texts written as if from Jeremiah or Baruch, and is best classified simply as one of the "major prophets" of the Tanakh.³ This category is a unique one where God himself, speaking mystically to and through a human prophet, warns Israel and/or Judah of impending judgment, the need for repentance, and the future hope of restoration and blessings for the remnant that survives the chastening. As such, it should be read with reverent sobriety, as if God himself were the ultimate author of the book. The fact that the book contains poetry does not give the reader any artistic license to reinterpret its prophecies in a non-literal sense or otherwise violate the three fundamental laws of logic. The prophecies it contains that have already been fulfilled were done so both literally and totally; its prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled should likewise be expected to be fulfilled in the future, both literally and fully.

Neither textual criticism nor translation from the Hebrew were performed for this paper. Multiple English translations—ESV, NASB, NET, NIV⁴— that are all based upon the Masoretic Text were consulted and judged adequate for the purposes of this inquiry.

Covenant and champions the SCMB (Single Covenant, Multiple Beneficiaries) view in *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 1989) 339-357.

² Bob Utley, "Introduction to Jeremiah," Bible.org. <https://bible.org/seriespage/introduction-jeremiah>. Accessed July 9th, 2024.

³ In the TOCMA method of biblical interpretation, which is being used here, generic analysis is paramount at the outset of any interpretive endeavor. "TOCMA" is an acronym for Text, Observation, Context, Meaning, and Application, and is a framework for a twelve-step interpretive process described by Jason DeRouchie in his book *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 14-16.

⁴ All quotations in this paper are from the ESV unless indicated otherwise.

OBSERVATION

To determine who the beneficiaries of the NC are, there is very little need for the analysis of clauses, text blocks, grammar, argument tracing, and word/concept studies. Some clarifications about Israel, Judah, covenant, and “new” are warranted.

Given the split of Israel into northern and southern kingdoms, in Jeremiah’s day, *Israel* was the political kingdom of the ten northern tribes that descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; *Judah* referred to the southern kingdom which was comprised of the ethnic tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The semantic range of Israel could also stretch comfortably to include all of the twelve tribes of Jacob. In the future, when God restores Israel and Judah, they will be mended back together into one cohesive kingdom comprised of the descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel. Reading “the Church” into either Israel or Judah is beset with multiple challenges.

A *covenant* is an agreement that establishes a special relationship between two parties and functions like a treaty, legal contract, or, as with the NC, a marriage contract. Contrary to some voices, *new* (31:31) actually means new. It is not something less than new, such as the mere renewal of something old.⁵ Jeremiah’s God emphasizes the discontinuity between them. He says explicitly that the NC “will not be like the old covenant” made with the twelve tribes at Sinai (31:32). It will not be a reinvigoration of any older covenant, like a still-married couple renewing their same old marriage vows at a new time. The old marriage contract was broken by Israel-Judah (31:32b), via chronic infidelity, and rendered void. The old was bilateral, conditional, and breakable; the new appears unilateral, unconditional, and eternal. The old did not include the spiritual power to keep the laws; the

⁵ Ron Mosely, for example, agrees with David Stern in arguing that the New Testament is “not a ‘new’ covenant” and suggests “we are to fulfil the Old [Covenant] by obeying the New. In the New Covenant, nothing has been replaced, except the blood of animals being replaced by the blood of Jesus.” Ron Mosely, *Yeshua* (Baltimore, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 1996), 57, 70.

new will empower the people by giving a deeper, internalized knowledge of God and his law (31:33-34). In the old, he was with them and amongst them; in the new, he will be inside them.

CONTEXT

As to historical context, Assyria had already been used by God to judge, discipline, massacre, enslave, and scatter the ten tribes of Israel for their unfaithfulness to him. Now it was soon coming time for a similar judgment to befall the two tribes of Judah for the same reasons. They had broken faith, broken covenant, turned away from their husband, and refused to turn back to him. His patience amply tested over multiple generations, the time had come to give them their certificate of divorce and cast them out. Ultimately the discipline would prove redemptive. Eventually a remnant of Israel and Judah will repent from their idols, false saviors, and the practice of injustice to widows, orphans, sojourners, and the weak. They will call in faith and desperation upon the God of Jacob. Jeremiah's revelation assures them that even though they will be captives in Babylon, and suffer in other ways, ultimately God will take them back. He will not take them back as a slave or concubine. He will take them back as a wife, giving them a new marriage contract (covenant), and making it so the marriage is guaranteed to succeed the second time. To suggest that the New Covenant will be made with Gentiles who join the church instead of Israel-Judah does not fit with the historical flow. The NC will be for the same people that the older covenant was made with at Sinai, with the same people who broke that covenant, and with the same people who were disciplined.

As to literary context, the role that Jer. 31 plays in the flow of the book of Jeremiah is the zenith of how they will be blessed. After 29 chapters of warning about discipline, captivity, wrath, famine, sword, pestilence, and other unpleasant consequences for their chronic rebellion, the Lord begins to explain, in chapter 30, how he will *restore their fortunes*, a key phrase that permeates the book (Jer. 15:19; 16:14; 27:22; 29:14; 30:3, 18, 23; 31:18; 32:44; 33:7, 11, 26; 33:26; 50:19; c.f., Lam. 2:14; 5:1,

21), is echoed in other prophetic books (Ps. 85:1; Ezek. 39:25; Hos. 6:11; Joel 3:1) and the New Testament (Acts 1:6; 15:16). Where they were scattered amongst the nations, they will be restored to their homeland. He will bless them in the land and turn their mourning into joy (Jer. 31:12-13). With the analogy of the ex-wife who had been cast out being graciously allowed to return to her old domain and showered with blessings there, it makes sense for the merciful, gracious, loving Lord to include a new marriage contract as part of the restoration. While we could imagine a simpler scenario where a wealthy landowner would simply give his ex-wife some verdant land to live on, proceeding to also give her a guaranteed-to-succeed, never-to-be-revoked marriage covenant offers her the reliability and longevity of the enjoyment of all the blessings.

As with the rest of the book, Jeremiah 32 also makes it perfectly clear who the covenant breakers were “. . . *the children of Israel and the children of Judah* have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth. *The children of Israel* have done nothing but provoke me to anger by the work of their hands, declares the Lord. . . . because of all the evil of *the children of Israel and the children of Judah* that they did to provoke me to anger—their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets, *the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem*” (Jer. 32:30-32, emphasis added). It is this same, specific people group that was given into domination and deportation by the Babylonians. And it is the future descendants of this same group that will be gathered from the nations, brought back to the land of Israel-Judah (32:37), have their fortunes restored, given a moral heart surgery (32:39-40), and be given “an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them” (32:40). Again, it is “the people of Israel and the people of Judah” (50:4) who will “seek the Lord their God” and voluntarily say “let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten” (50:4-5).

In his summary of Jeremiah, New Covenant Theology (NCT) theologian Gary Yates equates salvation with the New Covenant and concludes, (1) “the new covenant . . . [provides] spiritual

transformation for all who belonged to the covenant,” (2) this [NC] applies “to the Jew first and also to the Greek,” to “the restored remnant of Israel and the nations,”⁶ and (3) “this great salvation would include not only a reunited nation of Israel but also some from their once-evil neighbors ([Jer.] 3:17; 4:2; 12:16).”⁷ This seems like too great of a stretch.

While it is true that the Gentile nations will be obliged to visit the restored theocratic kingdom of Israel in obeisance (Jer. 3:17), and that Gentile nations will experience conditional blessings in this future era (Jer. 4:2; 12:14-17), the degree of deductive stretching required to conclude that the Gentiles have any direct portion in the NC that is made with Israel is unwarranted. When confined to Jeremiah’s scroll, judgment—not blessing—is the expectation for the Gentile kingdoms neighboring Israel. God will judge the Egyptians (Ch. 46), Philistines (47), Moabites (25, 48), Ammonites (49), Edomites, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, Elamites (25, 49), and Babylonians (25, 50-51). With light from other prophetic scriptures, the division of kingdoms between the Jewish kingdom and the Gentile kingdoms is maintained (c.f., Zech. 14:13-21; Ezek. 16:53-54, 29:14). That the Gentiles need to go to Jerusalem to properly inquire of the Lord or worship emphasizes the special role that Israel will play in the future as God’s restored, priestly people. But the more likely scenario is that Israel’s Messiah will dictate the terms of multiple covenants (here suzerain vassal treaties) with the Gentile nations in a relationship that, while mutually symbiotic, ultimately favors Israel as the greater party and Gentile nations as the lesser parties.

⁶ Gary E. Yates, “Jeremiah,” in Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2013), eBook position 118/219.

⁷ *Ibid.*, eBook position 119/219.

MEANING

Lamentations. The book of Lamentations, which is written by the same author(s) as Jeremiah, and written soon after Jeremiah was written, re-emphasizes what Jeremiah had already revealed. The subject is Judah (1:3), the daughter of Zion (1:6), Jerusalem (1:7), and Jacob (2:2). The need of the day is repentance (3:40-55) of the people of Judah, compassion from the Lord (3:21-32), and a future restoration by the Lord (5:1-21). The apocryphal books titled *The Letter of Jeremiah* and *Baruch* are not written by the authors of the book of Jeremiah and will be ignored here.

Ezekiel. Written in the same era as Jeremiah, and perhaps around the same time as Jeremiah, the scroll of Ezekiel is the next best choice for shedding light on Jer. 31. Ezekiel has a very similar prophetic revelation from the Lord that applies to “your brothers, even your brothers, your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (11:15) and promises regathering from the nations, returning them to “the land of Israel” (11:17), cleansing (11:18), impartation of a hitherto unknown internal spiritual power to keep God’s laws (11:19-20a), and a marriage relationship (11:20b). The new marriage implies a new covenant. Though the original covenant was broken (16:59), the memory of the old covenant leads to God establishing “an everlasting covenant” (16:60) with Israel-Judah. As hinted to in Jeremiah, Ezekiel also seems to hint that atonement for past sins (16:63) seems to be a key characteristic of this new marriage in ways that were not visible in the older covenant. The Lord will cleanse Israel-Judah with water (36:25, 29) and give them a new heart, a new spirit, a new internal spiritual power to know and do what he wants them to do (36:26-27; 37:14). This prophecy may have been what Jesus was alluding to when he told Nicodemus, a “ruler of the Jews” and a “teacher of Israel,” that individuals must be born again, or born from above (John 3:3), that is “born of water and spirit” (John 3:5) to see the kingdom of God. If so, the famous passage on being born again may be properly relegated to Israel and have little or nothing to do with the Church. This would support the idea that the NC is strictly for Israel, and not

the Church. After Jesus gave his exposition of what we may presume to be Ezekiel 36, he then shifted his message away from rebirth and the kingdom for Israel to his need to be put to death for the sake of the world and our need to believe in him to be given eternal life (John 3:14-18).

Emphasizing historical and ethnic-genetic continuity, God gives them “the land that I gave to your fathers” (Ezek. 36:28; 37:14) and blesses it with abundant food production (36:29-30). Israel and Yahweh will belong to one another like a married couple belongs to each other (36:28). This applies to the ethnic peoples of “Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him,” “Joseph . . . Ephraim, and all the house of Israel associated with him” and Judah (37:15-19). He will gather them to the land of Israel, unify them, rule them, save them, cleanse them, and, in marriage terms, take ownership of them and belong to them (37:19-20). He will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them (37:26), bless them, dwell with them, and be married to them in a way that he is not married to “the nations” (Jer. 3:26-28). Everything in Ezekiel shows that the NC will be with the surviving remnant of ethnic Israel. No hints are dropped that any Gentiles have any portion in this.

Hosea. Although Hosea was written perhaps a century before Jeremiah, it was also written during a very similar set of circumstances (focusing more on God disciplining Israel with Assyria rather than Judah with Babylon) and occupies the same generic classification. It tells the same story of Israel being unfaithful to the Lord, in a way that is analogous to a wife having several affairs and forgetting her husband, being punished by her husband, followed by being cleansed, restored, remarried, and blessed by her husband. As with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, there are strong hints that the second marriage will be more intimate and more successful than the first.

Isaiah. Like Hosea, the scroll of Isaiah was written over a century before that of Jeremiah and belongs in the same generic category. Isaiah tells of “those in Jacob [Israel] who turn from transgression [repentance]” benefitting from a redeemer and enjoying what seems like a new covenant

(Isa. 59:20-21). This covenant also involves an increased and seemingly unprecedented portion of God's Spirit and God's words being imparted to them and their grandchildren "from this time forth and forevermore" (59:21). It will be an "everlasting covenant" (61:8) that is tied to "everlasting joy" (61:7).

If we extend the range of support passages from those that talk clearly about the NC to related passages that speak of the future restoration and regeneration of the nation Israel, we may see additional light on NC of Jer. 31 in other passages found in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Micah, and Zephaniah.⁸ Isaiah foretells a time when the Lord will sanctify "the house of Jacob" and give them a new understanding with a moral dimension (Isa. 29:22-24). Isa. 30:15-22 speaks of "the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 30:15) being gracious to "the house of Jacob" (29:22), saving them, blessing them, being gracious to them, showing mercy to them, and, after a time of affliction, giving them new, internal sources of teaching that result in them discarding their idols (30:20-22). Isaiah also speaks of a future day when the Lord will "pour water upon him that is thirsty, streams upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring. . ." This regeneration will cause "Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen" to call upon the name of the Lord, call on the name of Jacob, and identify as belonging to the Lord (Isa. 44:1-5). He also will blot out the transgressions of "Jacob and Israel," redeeming them, accepting their return, and blessing the land they live in (Isa. 44:21-23). "Israel will be saved by Yahweh with an everlasting salvation," per Isa. 45:17. Echoing Jeremiah, God will give his people "a heart to know me" such that they return to him with their whole heart (Jer. 24:7). In Isa. 55-56, Fructenbaum sees NC salvation reaching the Gentiles indirectly:

⁸ These and a few other passages are recommended by and explicated in Arnold Fructenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2004), 405-411.

an offer of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. ... the offer of salvation [to Israel] is made on the basis of a principle found in the Davidic Covenant. ... if they respond positively to the invitation, God will respond by making an everlasting covenant with them. This covenant is the New Covenant. . . Just as the Davidic Covenant is guaranteed, so is the New Covenant and the spiritual salvation it brings. ... [Per Isa. 55:5] A foreign people will suddenly run to Israel because they will know YHWH is the Holy One of Israel who has glorified His people. Zechariah 8:20-23 makes a similar point. In the Messianic kingdom, the Jewish people will become the center of Gentile attention.⁹

Like a shepherd with his lamb, Yahweh will bring Israel to his pasture, remove the iniquities of Israel and Judah, and pardon the remnant he leaves (Jer. 50:19-20). The book of Hosea begins with and ends with promises of Israel's regeneration. The Lord will also "pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" in a way that causes them to prophecy, dream dreams, and see visions (Joel 2:28-29). He will "pardon iniquity and pass over transgression of the remnant of his heritage," have compassion on the descendants of Jacob and Abraham (Mic. 7:18-20). He causes the remnant "who seek refuge in the name of the LORD, those who are left in Israel" to act justly and speak truthfully (Zeph. 3:12-13). In all these instances of spiritual regeneration, the beneficiaries are identified consistently and unambiguously as Israel/Jacob or one of the tribes of Israel. While there is an expectation of Gentiles to also experience a spiritual renaissance (e.g., Zeph. 9-10), the dichotomy between Jews and Gentiles is maintained with no hint of Gentiles being subsumed into, much less replacing, Israel-Jacob.

Joel. The book of Joel was written around the same time as Jeremiah, applies to the situation (Judah versus God and Babylon), and belongs in the minor prophet division because of its shorter length. The first half of Joel's second chapter talks about the Day of the Lord, a terrible time of severe discipline for the people of Israel in the land of Israel. The second half of Joel 2 speaks of the need for repentance, the Lord's compassion, rain and blessed food harvests, safety in the land from enemies, joy and rejoicing, Israel knowing God, God being with Israel like a husband with his wife, God pouring

⁹ Arnold Fructenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: Isaiah* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2021), 590-594.

out his spirit upon them all (in an unprecedented way), and other blessings that dovetail very well with descriptions of the NC in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. The audience is the inhabitants of Zion.

Peter's Controversial Use of Joel 2 in Acts 2

We now switch from doing biblical theology to doing systematic theology when trying to make sense of Apostle Peter's quotation of Joel 2 found in Acts 2. On the day of the festival of Pentecost, some fifty days after the crucifixion of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the twelve apostles in a way that enabled them to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with a wide variety of Jews and Gentile proselytes in several of their own languages. Peter explained to the astonished audience that this outpouring of the Spirit was the same type of phenomenon they had read about in Joel 2:28-29. Peter said this Pentecostal outpouring with the speaking of divine revelation in diverse languages was what he had predicted. In saying "this is that" (Acts 2:16), some Christian interpreters have connected the dots and assumed that the New Covenant, which Joel was almost certainly referring to, began to be fulfilled by the Apostles, the foundational stones of the Church, on the day of Pentecost. Subsequent outpourings, baptisms, indwellings, and giftings of the Spirit in the early church were then also presumably in continuity with Joel's allusion to the NC. All of these manifestations of the Spirit were initial fulfillments of the NC promise of the outpouring of the Spirit. Perhaps the NC began to be applied and fulfilled on the famous Day of Pentecost so long ago. Or perhaps not. Dispensational theologian J. Dwight Pentecost suggests alternatives:

Peter, in stating, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16 KJV), is referring to the essential fact that Joel predicted—namely, the advent of the Spirit to indwell believers. Peter is not asserting that on the day of Pentecost the signs of Joel 2:28b-31 were present and that the signs the multitude had witnessed were the signs of Joel. Rather, Peter is emphasizing that the Spirit's indwelling would have manifestations that the audible, visible signs given, accompanied by speaking in known, discernible languages, are evidence that the Spirit had come to indwell believers as had been promised. Three major views explain how these events relate to the prophecy of Joel. They depend on interpretations of the phrase "this is that." The first view interprets Peter's statement as saying, "This is similar to, or like, what Joel predicted but is not in fact the actual fulfillment of that prophecy." . . . A second view

sees a double-reference, or a near and a far view. An event in the near future may bear such a resemblance to an event in the far future that the two may be viewed as one. ... A third view holds that the fact predicted by Joel—namely that the Holy Spirit would be sent into the world to baptize believers, that is, to indwell believers as His tabernacle—actually took place. The accompanying signs did not follow because of Israel’s unbelief; Israel did not enter into the benefits of the advent of the Spirit. Consequently, the nation must experience severe discipline (Joel 2:30-31) to bring them to repentance. ... Thus we conclude that Peter was not mistaken when he affirmed “this is that.” The nation will be brought to repentance by the disciples that God will pour out on it during the seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy.¹⁰

Arnold Fructenbaum, another dispensational theologian, recommends seeing Peter’s “this is that” as *drash*, one of four specific types of usages of the messianic prophecies from the Old Testament used in the New Testament. If so, it is not meant to be taken as *pshat*, which entails “literal prophecy plus literal fulfilment” or *remez*, as literal prophecy from the OT used in a typological sense in the NT. *Drash* would entail the explanation, exposition, or application of a literal prophecy to a current situation. Fructenbaum explains, “Based on one small point of similarity, an Old Testament verse was quoted and applied to what was a current situation for the New Testament writer. The writer was not denying the original context of the Scripture—be it historic or prophetic—but because of one point of similarity, the verse was applied to a similar, but not exact, New Testament situation.”¹¹ He lists Acts 2:16-21 as a good example of a *drash* usage and explains:

In this passage, Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32, a prophecy which describes the supernatural manifestations that will occur when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the whole nation of Israel. This is a literal, future event. However, nothing predicted by Joel 2 happened in Acts 2. For example, Joel spoke about the pouring out of the Spirit upon *all* Jewish flesh, which did not happen in the book of Acts. In Acts 2, the Spirit was poured out upon 12, or at the most, 120. Joel spoke about the sons and daughters of Israel prophesying, the young men seeing visions, and the old men dreaming. No one did any prophesying, the young men did not see visions, and the old men did not dream dreams. None of these phenomena are mentioned in the context of Acts 2. Furthermore, the servants of the Jewish people were to experience these

¹⁰ J. Dwight Pentecost, *New Wine: A Study of Transition in the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010) 50-55. For a more uncertain approach, compare with Daniel J. Treier, “The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple-Lens Approach,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40/1 March 1997 13-26. https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/files_JETS-PDFs_40_40-1_40-1-pp013-026_JETS.pdf. Accessed July 14th, 2024. Thomas Constable opts for the “double or partial fulfillment” view in “Joel,” *Thomas Constable’s Notes on the Bible* <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/joel.pdf>. Accessed July 18, 2024.

¹¹ Arnold Fructenbaum *Yeshua, Volume 1* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2016), 24.

same things, and there were no servants involved in the context of Acts 2. Joel spoke of climactic events in the heavens and on earth: blood, fire, pillars of smoke, with the sun turning into darkness, and the moon into blood [and Peter quoted that part too]; yet, none of these things happened in Acts 2. So why does Peter apply Joel's prophecy to what was happening around him? What we have here is the third category of quotation—*literal plus application*. The literal meaning of the prophecy in Joel is that there will be a time when the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all Israel. This will be accompanied by supernatural manifestations, and the result will be Israel's national salvation in preparation for the messianic kingdom. This was not what was happening in the book of Acts, but what happened did have one point of similarity with the passage in Joel 2: There was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit accompanied by unique supernatural manifestations, which, in Acts 2, was speaking in tongues, an item that Joel did not even mention. Because of this one point of similarity—an outpouring of the Holy Spirit—the Old Testament was quoted by the New Testament as an application.¹²

Alexander Gonzales, another dispensational theologian, agrees while using different terminology:

When a New Testament writer uses or quotes an Old Testament Scripture, he basically has three purposes for using the passage, (1) direct fulfillment, (2) prophetic typology, or (3) analogy. ... Prophetic typology has two components. The first is where a pattern is repeated in the original type until it is finally fulfilled in the antitype. There is usually an escalation or heightening. The Day of the Lord is a good example of this pattern. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32, but only the first half of the passage was experienced on Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21); the catastrophic Day of Yahweh in judgment did not occur. Thus, a token of the Day of the Lord was experienced, but it will climax and be fulfilled in the final coming of the Lord. . .¹³

Regardless of how we describe it, whether as *drash*, *qal wachomer* argumentation (reasoning from the greater to the lesser in this case), prophetic typology, or something else, it seems clear, on second glance, that Peter was not so foolish as to say this phenomenon is *exactly* like that phenomenon in every way. He doubtless understood the meaning of Joel's prophecy better than we do. He knew that

¹² Ibid, 26-27. He minimizes the continuity in similar words in Arnold Fructenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Acts* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2022), 72. However, we need not insert so great a wedge between prophecy and tongue-speaking as Fructenbaum does. Both were mystical receptions of intelligible revelation from the Spirit of God to the spirit of the human that relays the message to others in verbal form. The only real difference is that speaking in tongues includes the ability to relay that revelation in a language that the prophet has not learned. Tongues then may just be a more specific and rarer kind of prophecy. If so there are two parallels between Joel's prophecy and the tongue-speaking phenomena of Pentecost. The connection between the Spirit and speaking messages from the Spirit goes back at least to Moses and the seventy elders in Number 11:24-26. Peter arguably could have also said "this is that" about that event too.

¹³ Alexander R. Gonzales, "The Significance of the New Covenant in the New Testament," in H. Wayne House and Forrest S. Weiland, Eds., *The Theory and Practice of Biblical Hermeneutics: Essays in Honor of Elliot E. Johnson* (Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2015), 321.

the appearance of the moon had not turned blood-red that day and nor was he pretending that it had in some pliable, poetic way. He understood the significance of what happened to him and his colleagues better than we do. To the astonished crowd, he may have simply been saying, in effect, “People, do not be shocked by what you saw. Our prophets said that in the last days the Lord would pour his spirit out on his people and they would relay revelations from him. We just witnessed the tip of that iceberg today. It may differ in degree, but it does not differ in type.” It is we who are prone to err, not Peter. We are not wiser interpreters of the Scriptures and the seasons than Peter was.¹⁴

From the Last Supper to the NC to the Lord’s Supper

There are additional reasons why we tend to connect the NC to the Church. There is, for example, a natural reflex for Gentiles to think that the Old Testament (i.e., Old Covenant) books were for Israel and the New Testament (i.e., New Covenant) books are for the Church.¹⁵

¹⁴ The notion that Peter erred in his application of Joel 2 to the Acts 2 situation can lead to more problems than just errors about applying the NC to the Church. In 2011, when Michael Licona was challenged by Norm Geisler on his dehistoricizing the pericope of the raised saints in Matt. 27:51-54, Mike defended his view before the Evangelical Philosophical Society by saying that Peter, in Acts 2, “appears to believe the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled at Pentecost. Accordingly, it’s reasonable to hold that Joel and Luke intended for these celestial phenomena to be understood as apocalyptic symbols for the divine acts witnessed at Pentecost—specifically the speaking in tongues—without intending for readers to interpret them in a literal sense.” If Luke/Peter could play so fast and loose with artistic license where celestial (i.e., apocalyptic) hyperbole are mentioned, then likewise Matthew could have been speaking with artistic license about the raising of the dead in concert with celestial (i.e., apocalyptic) hyperbole. The scholars of the EPS and ETS found this logic persuasive and defended his view rather than challenging him further. See Michael Licona, “When the Saints Go Marching In.” <https://www.risenjesus.com/when-the-saints-go-marching-in-2> & <https://www.risenjesus.com/wp-content/uploads/2011-eps-saints-paper.pdf>. Accessed July 14th, 2024.

¹⁵ Despite the term testament having different connotations in common, modern English parlance, in theological context, testament and covenant are coterminous. Answering the question of why the authors of the Greek scriptures translated Hebrew *bērit* as *diatheke* (a legal will or testament) rather than *syntheke* (covenant, contract, or compact), Leon Morris explains: “. . . *diatheke* stood for something laid down with final authority. One cannot bargain with a testator to get better terms. He is dead. It is a case of “take it or leave it.” . . . Here God lays down the terms. Man cannot negotiate with God in order to get him to change his mind and produce another agreement that better suits the human recipient of his favors. . . . indicates an authoritative laying down of the terms.” Leon Morris, *The Atonement* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983), p.32. While in classical or Attic Greek *diatheke* tended to mean testament/will with an “irrevocable decision, which cannot be cancelled by anyone,” in the LXX *diatheke* is used 270 times for Hebrew *berit* and is the common word for a wide variety of agreements. Joachim Guhrt, “Covenant,” in Collin Brown, Ed., *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, Volume 1. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 365.

When Jesus had his eleven disciples drink the cup of red wine, he explained that this symbolized “my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28, Mk. 14:24) or “is the *new* covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25, emphasis added.). For the last two millennia, the churches have been drinking the blood of grapes to remember his death and proclaim his future return. There is then a natural pathway, albeit a vague one, from the Last Supper’s indisputable connection to the New Covenant and to Christ’s crucifixion/blood to the Last Supper’s continuity with the Lord’s Supper, and the Church *should* celebrate and participate in the Lord’s Supper. The Church has a seat at the Lord’s Table and therefore there must be some measure of participation in the NC. Similarly, since the twelve disciples/apostles are the foundation of the church, and they participated in the Last Supper, and promulgated the practice of the Lord’s Supper in the early churches; there must be some connection between the Church and the NC. Also, the parallels between the spiritual blessings of the NC that Israel-Judah is to enjoy (i.e., forgiveness, rebirth, new heart, law on heart, new spirit) and the spiritual blessings that Christians are to enjoy (i.e., forgiveness, rebirth, indwelling of Spirit) have an uncanny resemblance and both were achieved by Jesus Christ’s self-sacrifice on the cross. The parallels between the two have sufficient overlap to persuade many that Christians have become beneficiaries of the New Covenant.

Romans 9-11 and the Analogy of the Olive Tree and Branches

In Romans 9-11, Paul maintains a firm distinction between Israel and the Church and makes it clear that “the covenants”¹⁶ belong to “the Israelites,” “[his] brothers, [his] kinsmen according to the flesh,” the “race” of the “patriarchs,” the descendants of Israel (Rom. 9:3-6). Ignoring the universal

¹⁶ Greek scholar and expositor S. Lewis Johnson notes that some manuscripts of Romans “have the singular here, ‘the covenant,’ but I think it is probably more likely he wrote the plural as we have it in the Authorized Version text, ‘and the covenants.’” S. Lewis Johnson “Christ Over All: Romans 9:1-5” <https://sljinstitute.net/pauls-epistles/romans/christ-over-all/> Accessed July 9th, 2024. If it is covenant (singular), we may imagine the Abrahamic covenant at the base and most of the other covenants, including the New Covenant, as sprouting out of that covenant. Covenants (plural) seems more logical as their diversity (most notably unilateral-unconditional and bilateral-conditional) challenges unification.

Noahic covenant, nowhere does he indicate that Gentiles have any claim on any of the covenants. But then he complicates the definition of Israel by saying, “not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring” (Rom. 9:6-7). While there is consensus that the primary Israel is ethnic Israel, there is debate over who the secondary Israel is. Some take it to be the larger group of the Church (which contains believing Gentiles and Jews) while others see it as a smaller group of believing Jews within the primary, ethnic Israel.¹⁷

He goes on to explain, using imagery from olive tree horticulture, that cultivated olive branches (Israelites) were broken off the cultivated olive tree and “wild olive branches” (Gentiles) grafted into the root or trunk of the cultivated olive tree (11:17-19). There is debate over what the root/trunk of the tree symbolizes. Some hold that Gentiles are being grafted into Israel itself, as if the covenant community is the root/trunk. Those who replace Israel with the Church naturally interpret the root/trunk as the Church. Others see the root/trunk as “the place of blessing” where Jews and Gentiles can enjoy privileges that flow from the Abrahamic covenant.¹⁸

Additional NT-NC Support Passages

With over 175,000 words in the New Testament, it is surprising that there are no explicit statements connecting the NC to the Church. Aside from Acts 2 & Joel 2, Luke 22:20 & 1 Cor. 11:25, and the variable of Paul’s olive tree analogy, there are just a few other mentions of the NC in the NT. The fact that the Apostle Paul states that he and his coworkers, or possibly even the believers in the church at Corinth, are “ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:6) tilts the scales in favor of the Church having some relation to the NC. And the book of Hebrews has

¹⁷ Arnold Fructenbaum, *Israelology*, 70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 91, 708-709. C.f., Arnold Fructenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Romans* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2022), 223-226, 311-386.

a few mentions of the New Covenant that also incline many to think the NC must be for Christians (Heb. 7:22, 8:7-13; 9:15; 10:8-9; 12:22-34). As persuasive as these loose connections may be in a vacuum of scrutiny, upon closer examination the assumption that they prove the Church must be enjoying the sum of the benefits of the NC today remains non-explicit, speculative, and quite challengeable.¹⁹

APPLICATION

It is clear in the OT that the NC is first and foremost, if not exclusively, aimed at a future, unified, purified Israel-Judah. Israel has a lot to look forward to in the future. After the great and terrible Day of the Lord, the repentant remnant will be restored to the land, have their fortunes restored, and enjoy the many benefits of the NC in perpetuity. Even if Gentiles do not benefit directly from the NC in that future, there will surely be a bounty of indirect and tangential benefits. From the beginning of Abraham's calling, before the Abrahamic covenant was cut, it was clear that Yahweh intended to bless Abraham and Israel so that they "will be a blessing" such that "in you all of the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:2-3; 22:18; 26:4). The same will likely be true with the NC.

While it is clear in the NT that the Church is presently enjoying many "spiritual benefits," it remains unclear whether those benefits are part of NC. Positive and negative cases have been made, and, while all are persuasive to some, none enjoy an overwhelming power of logical persuasiveness. Arguably, the NT does not make it clear in explicit quality or implicit quantity of data.

¹⁹ For challenges to the idea that the NC is applicable to the Church today, see Christopher Cone, Ed. *An Introduction to the New Covenant*. Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2013. Also compare Alexander R. Gonzales, "The Significance of the New Covenant in the New Testament," in H. Wayne House and Forrest S. Weiland, Eds., *The Theory and Practice of Biblical Hermeneutics: Essays in Honor of Elliot E. Johnson* (Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2015). For interactions of three dispensational views consider Mike Stallard, Ed., *Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Books, 2012).

When Jesus Christ rebuked and tested the Canaanite woman, saying, “I am sent only to lost sheep of the house of Israel” and it is “not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs” (Matt. 15:24-27), he was affirming the truth that it would be highly irregular for the Lord to give any of the blessings for his covenant people and shower them on outsiders to the covenant. He then proceeded to do just that. Astonished by the exhibition of her great faith, upon hearing her retort, “But even the dogs sometimes get crumbs that fall from the table to the floor,” he proceeded to bless her with the healing she sought. Earlier he had done the same for the Gentile centurion who sought healing and also exhibited great faith. To him Jesus explained that due to the lack of faith among the Israelites, and the presence of faith among some Gentiles, “many will come from the east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. . .” (Matt. 8:5-13). Jesus was clearly interested in accomplishing that highly irregular thing. Even so, the division between Jew and Gentile identities are maintained, even if the wall of hostility between the two was removed. The precedent was set for faithful Jews and faithful Gentiles to feast together at the same banquet table. As such, we, the Gentiles who have repented towards the God of Jacob and believed in the LORD Jesus, are not just mildly fortunate dogs that get occasional crumbs that fall from the table; we will be esteemed guests at the table where the new wine is being served.

This fits well with the dispensational interpretations of Paul’s analogy of the olive tree with its natural, broken branches, and the ingrafted, wild branches. Ethnic Israel remains Israel and the Gentile believers, while spiritual children of Abraham, are not joined to Israel in either a genetic or spiritual sense. But Gentiles are permitted to enjoy some of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. While that covenant includes material blessings for the remnant of disciplined, believing, ethnic Israel, the Gentiles who are grafted in share only in the spiritual blessings. Paul says clearly, “For if the Gentiles have come to share in their [Israel’s] *spiritual blessings*, they ought to be of service to them in material

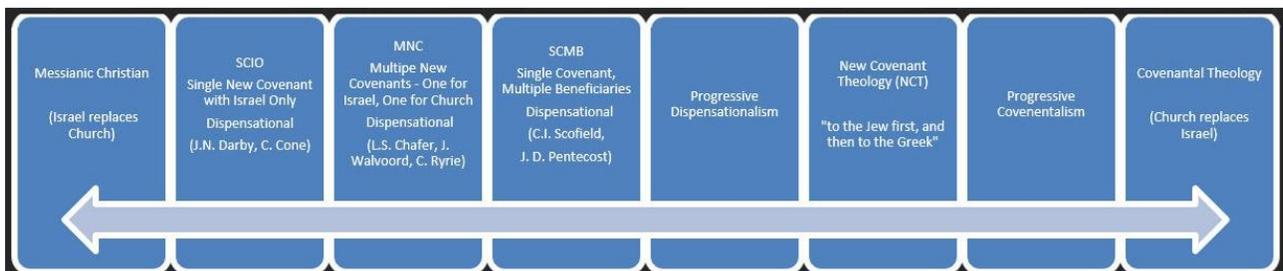
blessings” (Rom. 15:27, emphasis added). The lines are not blurred between Jew and Gentile identities and the bifurcation of spiritual and material blessings is emphasized.

Paul starts his letter to the Ephesians with, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*” (Eph. 1:3, emphasis added). This serves as a thesis statement that makes it clear that the main point of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is that we should bless God for the way he has blessed us with many spiritual blessings. The locus of these blessings is heavenly, not earthly. Those blessings include at least eleven related facets: **(1)** him choosing us before he created our world (1:4), **(2)** him predestining us for adoption as sons (1:5), **(3)** redemption and forgiveness (1:7), **(4)** uniting all things (1:10), **(5)** inheritance (1:11,14), **(6)** sealing with the Holy Spirit (1:13), **(7)** provision of wisdom, revelation, knowledge of God, and enlightenment (1:17-19), **(8)** love instead of wrath (2:3-4), **(9)** life instead of death (2:1,5,6), **(10)** nearness to, reconciliation with, access to, and peace with God in place of separation, alienation, hopelessness, hostility, and lack of covenantal relationship (2:11-19), **(11)** citizenship in the household of God (2:19) and inclusion in a living temple of the Lord (2:21-22). Interestingly, Paul does not explicitly connect “every spiritual blessing” with the NC. We tend to assume as much based on the inertia of tradition and the parallels between these spiritual blessings. The blessings for believing Gentiles were somehow accomplished by Jesus Christ on his cross (Eph. 1:7; 2:13). The NC seems to have been cut and ratified by Jesus and his work on the cross. If the fount of blessing for both sets of blessings is the same, perhaps it is just one set and not two.

Factoring out the material blessings out of the NC to focus strictly on its spiritual blessings, there is an unmistakable resemblance to the spiritual blessings that Paul enumerated as the Church presently possessing. Both include the (1) forgiveness of sins, (2) spiritual cleansing, and (3) some kind of spiritual rebirth where some old, faulty spiritual component is removed and replaced with a reliable

spiritual component that empowers us to live lives that please God. Generalizing in this way inclines us to assume the two sets must be one in the same. We encounter another “this is that” dilemma. But the parallels weaken under the microscope. The details differ. For example, unlike what is promised in the NC, the Lord has not put his law into the hearts of Christians such that we need not teach one another to know the Lord (Jer. 31:33-34). If we are beneficiaries of the spiritual benefits of the NC, why is teaching one another (e.g., Eph. 4:11; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 12:28; Acts 2:42; 20:27, etc.) still so paramount in the life of the Church? Our current measure of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit does not seem to provide the same level of mystical intimacy, revelation, guidance, and power as is promised in the NC. It seems to differ highly in degree, if not in type.

Regarding the spectrum of “median views” between extreme poles in the evangelical spectrum, two of the four ostensibly dispensational views seem to be the most consonant with the biblical data and a hermeneutic that is strict with not confusing Israel with the Church. Dispensational views answer negatively the question of whether the New Testament changes the fact that the Old Testament provisions of the NC have not and are not presently being fulfilled in this present age *to Israel*. Covenantal theology answers, to one degree or another, positively. The closer the median view is on the spectrum to Covenantal theology, the more the interpreter tends to try to replace Israel with the Church or otherwise give the Church purchase on Jacob’s heel where birthright is concerned.



New Covenant Theology (NCT) and Progressive Covenantalism seem to be moving in the right direction, in so far as they are seeing the NC as being for an ethnic Israel, who are both the genetic and spiritual heirs of Jacob, and focusing more on the biblically induced covenants rather than the more speculative, theologically deduced covenants. Progressive dispensationalism seems to be moving in the wrong direction (away from Dispensationalism and towards Covenantalism).²⁰

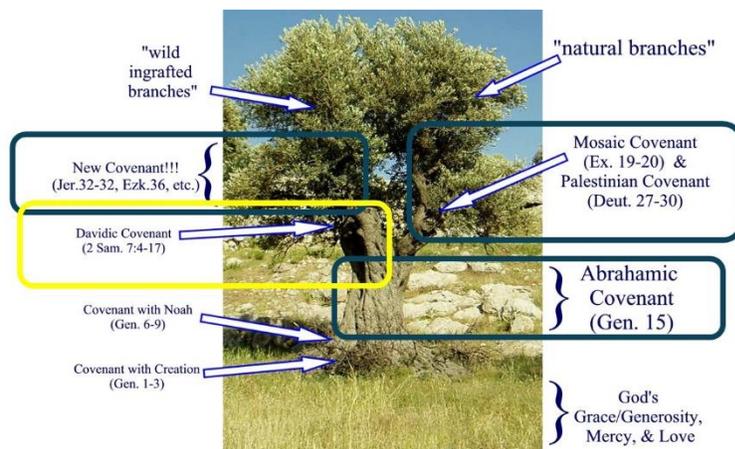
As for dispensationalism and its spectrum of views about the NC, there is still a position of strength, coherence, and plausibility here. The minority dispensational view that Christ cut two new covenants on the cross, the obvious one for Israel-Judah, and the surprise covenant for the Church, have some logical appeal for those wrestling deeply with the continuities and discontinuities in scripture. But it lacks *explicit* biblical support. Similarly, the minority view among dispensationalists that argues that the NC has nothing to do with the church at all, such that the church neither fulfills it in any way nor even participates in its spiritual blessings, should not be rejected outright with prejudice because of its radicalness. It too is trying to make sense of the continuities and discontinuities in the scriptures. It too has its logical merits but suffers ultimately from the difficulty in making an argument from silence. Just because the OT and NT do not make it explicitly and abundantly clear that the Church enjoys the NC now does not necessarily mean that the Church is not enjoying it now. The single-covenant, multiple-beneficiary view of the NC has become the majority view among dispensationalists.

Although possible, it seems unnatural to think of any group of humans enjoying a special relationship with God without a covenant. If so, which covenant(s)? Perhaps we wild olive branches are enjoying the spiritual sap of the Abrahamic Covenant presently and will enjoy the spiritual sap of

²⁰ See especially “The Hermeneutics of Progressive Dispensationalism” in Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002), 351-372. Also Christopher Cone, Ed., *Dispensationalism Tomorrow and Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie* (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008). For a balanced exchange, see Herbert W. Bateman, Ed., *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999).

NC in the future. Perhaps the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives the Church a head start into enjoying the spiritual blessings of the NC in the present dispensation. Or perhaps they just give us spiritual blessings that have a close parallel to the spiritual blessings of the NC. Whatever the case may be, we can rejoice in the certainty that we are enjoying immense spiritual blessings. The blessings and responsibilities of the olive tree could spring from any or all of the unilateral covenants.

The view that the Church participates only in the “spiritual blessings” of the NC while not partaking in any of its material blessings (land, safety from raiders and invaders, rain, verdant fields, rich harvests of milk, honey, figs, and new wine, etc.) remains tenable. The continuity between the Last Supper, the atoning and covenant-cutting bloodshed at the cross, and the Lord’s Supper suggests that our spiritual benefits could flow from the cross, and, therefore, somehow from Jesus’s ratification of the NC. Regardless, we Gentiles who are, by faith, spiritual heirs of Abraham (Gal. 3:7; Rom. 4:6), and fellow members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19), are enjoying the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant right now, or if we are just enjoying the spiritual blessings that parallel those of Israel’s New Covenant with uncanny precision (forgiveness of sins, change of relation from God’s enemies to his family, some outpouring and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and a new heart), we have ample reason to bow before the God of Jacob and thank, worship, and praise him. We also have ample reason to wait in expectant hope for a fuller installment of his blessings for both us and for the Israel of God in the future.



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APPENDIX I: THE MAIN NEW COVENANT PASSAGES (ESV)

Jer. 31:31 “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, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. 33 For 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. 34 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.”

Jer. 32:30 For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth. The children of Israel have done nothing but provoke me to anger by the work of their hands, declares the Lord. . . . 36 “Now therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence’: 37 Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. 38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. 40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. 41 I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul. . . for I will restore their fortunes, declares the Lord.”

Jer. 50:4 “. . . the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall . . . seek the Lord their God. 5 They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, saying, ‘Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.’

Ez. 11:15 “Son of man, your brothers, even your brothers, your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, . . . I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’ 18 And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. 19 And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ez. 16:59 “For thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, 60 yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant. . . . 62 I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord, . . . when I atone for you for all that you have done, declares the Lord God.”

Ez. 36-37 | 36:25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29 And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. ... 37:14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; . . . ‘For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him’. . . ‘For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel . . . the stick of Judah, . . . say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. 22 And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. 23 They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. ... 26 *I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them.* And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. 27 My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 Then the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore” (emphasis added).

Isaiah 59-61: “And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the Lord. 21 “And as for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord: “My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,” says the Lord, “from this time forth and forevermore.” ... I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed.