

## WHERE IS THE CHURCH IN GOD'S COVENANTS?

Today we would like to start by talking about God's covenants in general, then we will zero in on the New Covenant and begin to answer the question, "Who is under the New Covenant?"

### WHAT IS A COVENANT?

McClintock and Strongs, Vol 2, pg 543, Covenant: "a mutual contract or agreement between two parties, each of which is bound to fulfill certain engagements to the other."

So a covenant is a contract in which each party has a mutual obligation to complete a service on behalf of the other party. Take Israel's Law Covenant for an example. Duet 28 shows that if Israel would obey God, He would bless them with rain, flocks, produce, health and protection from their enemies; but if they would disobey, the opposite would occur.

As a matter of fact, if Israel could follow the law perfectly, they could have eternal life.

Rom 10:5 - *For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby.* RVIC (see also Luke 18:18, 20)

### WHAT ARE THE MAJOR COVENANTS OF THE BIBLE?

We often think of the three major covenants of the Bible. These are:

- 1) **The Abrahamic Covenant** - God's promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham's seed.
- 2) **The Law Covenant** – The law of Moses that God made with Israel on Mount Sinai, which includes the Ten Commandments.
- 3) **The New Covenant** – The future covenant God will make with Israel and the world during the earthly kingdom in which He will write His law in their hearts.

But there is also one more major covenant in the Bible. It is

- 4) **God's Covenant with Noah** to never again destroy all life on the earth.

### ARE ALL BIBLE COVENANTS CONDITIONAL?

In other words, do all Bible covenants require both parties of the covenant to fulfill certain obligations?

NO. Not all Bible covenants are conditional.

For example, God made an unconditional covenant with Noah to never again destroy all life on the earth.

In **Gen 9:11**, God said, "I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." NASV

No strings were attached. No conditions were required. God simply made a promise to Noah and set the rainbow in the sky as a sign of it.

## **WHEN DOES A COVENANT GO INTO EFFECT?**

A covenant can go into effect, only after it has been ratified. To ratify a covenant means to confirm it or to guarantee it. Today we ratify a contract with a signature. In Old Testament times a covenant was often ratified by animal sacrifices.

An example of ratifying a covenant is illustrated in Gen 21:22-34. Here Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech that the well at Beersheba would belong to Abraham and that Abimelech's servants would no longer use it. The two parties sacrificed sheep and oxen to ratify the covenant.

**Gen 21:27:** *And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and they two made a covenant.*

The Hebrew word for "made" in this verse is "karath". Strong's gives the following definition: **Strong's 3772:** *a primitive root; to cut (off, down or asunder); by implication to destroy or consume; specifically to covenant (i.e. make an alliance or bargain, originally by cutting flesh and passing between the pieces).*

Often the sacrificed animal would be cut in parts; each half was laid on the ground with some space between them. The covenant makers would then walk between the cut parts, thereby ratifying the covenant. This was also how God ratified the Covenant with Abraham as recorded in Gen 15:9, 10, 17, 18.

Jeremiah speaks in figurative terms of ratifying the Law Covenant:

**Jer 34:18:** *... the covenant which they made before me, when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof..."*

Again, the thought of animal sacrifices is associated with ratifying a covenant. The New Covenant too must be ratified by sacrifices.

**Heb 9:16, 17:** *For where a Covenant exists, the Death of that which has RATIFIED it is necessary to be produced; because a Covenant is firm over dead victims, since it is never valid when that which ratifies it is alive. - Wilson's Diaglott. (See also Rotherham and Young's Literal Translation)*

The "victims" plural here are Christ and the Church whose joint sacrifice ratifies the New Covenant.

So, in order for a covenant to go into effect, it must be ratified by sacrifices. In order for the New Covenant to go into effect, it must first be ratified by Christ and His body members.

The expression "to be produced" is from Strong's 5342 and is in the **present tense**, according to Baker's Analytical Greek New Testament. Present tense indicates that this sacrifice, which includes the Church, was in process (not complete) at the time the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. Consequently, the New Covenant cannot have gone into operation since the sacrifice that will ratify it is in process.

## **HOW ARE THE COVENANTS PICTURED BY ABRAHAM'S WIVES?**

For the answer, please turn to Galatians 4. We would like to begin our discussion by noting two observations:

- 1) Nowhere in Galatians does Paul mention the "New Covenant."
- 2) Paul explicitly mentions both the Law Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant and begins that discussion in chapter 3.

Now let's start reading with Gal 4:21. Paul says, "Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?"

Notice, that some in the Early Church felt they were under the Law Covenant. So **why doesn't Paul simply tell them that they can't be under the Law Covenant, because now they are under the New Covenant?** If in Paul's day the Church were already under the New Covenant, this would have been the obvious argument to bring out. The answer is that Paul did not make that argument, because they were not under the New Covenant.

Now let's read more.

### **Gal 4 (NASV)**

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.

23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.

24 This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

- 1) Vs 24 clearly states that Hagar and Sarah represent two covenants.

### **What Covenant does Hagar represent?**

In verse 25, the covenant from Mount Sinai is clearly the Law Covenant. So, Hagar represents the Law Covenant. Ishmael, her son, represents natural Israel.

Gal 3:19 tells us that the Law was "added" to the Abrahamic Covenant. Hagar was "added" to Abraham's family, illustrating that the Law was "added" to the Abrahamic Covenant.

Hagar's son was born first and represents how the Jewish people were the first that came into the inheritance under God's favor.

Notice how verse 25 says "she is in slavery with her children." So even though in Paul's day the Law Covenant was dying, the Jews were still in slavery, under that Law covenant. Hagar (the Law) was still with Ishmael (natural Israel).

Paul shows that the Jews were still under the Law Covenant in his day by explaining in Romans that that in order to come into Christ, they had to come out from under the Law Covenant.

**Rom 7:4** ... you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ,  
6 *But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound*

**Rom 10:4** *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.* NASV

So Paul explains that in order for the Jews to come out from under the Law, they had to come into Christ.

Reading on - **Gal 4** (NASV)

29 *But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.*

30 *But what does the Scripture say? "CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN."*

When Hagar was cast out, she took her son Ishmael with her, showing that during their period of disfavor, Israel has remained in bondage, under that dying Law Covenant, and will continue under the Law until the New Covenant replaces it.

### **What Covenant does Sarah represent?**

**Gal 4** (NASV)

26 *But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.*

27 *For it is written, "REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR; BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR; FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND."*

28 *And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.*

Sarah is associated with Abrahamic Covenant and her son Isaac is The Christ, Head and Body, heirs of the promise--through whom all families of the earth are to be blessed. The Church is developed under the same Covenant-Mother as was Christ, a Covenant of sacrifice. (Psa 50:5)

As Sarah was older than Hagar, but barren for many years, so the primary, or chief, Covenant of God was barren for nearly two thousand years and only began to bring forth the seed of promise

in Jesus' resurrection from the dead and also in the begetting of the entire Church by the holy Spirit. The antitypical son of Sarah has already been more than nineteen centuries in process of development.

After the Sarah Covenant has finished its travailing, and has fully brought forth the Isaac class (the Church), then the New Covenant will be established with Israel.

In the type Sarah died prior to the time that Isaac married Rebecca. This signifies that once the Church is complete and joined with her bridegroom, that the Abrahamic Covenant's purpose of developing the spiritual seed will have already been completed. This Seed of Abraham will then be ready to bless all people. The Church will be aided by another covenant that was added, the New Covenant.

### **Why Do We Associate the Sarah Covenant with Spiritual Israel?**

We often call the Sarah Covenant, the "Grace Covenant" or the "Covenant of Sacrifice." It is that portion of the Abrahamic Covenant that relates to the spiritual seed, the bride of Christ. How do we know this?

Let's again read Gal 4:28-29 again. (NASV)

**Gal 4:28** *And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.*

**29** *But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.*

In verse 28, Paul says that we are "children of promise." In verse 29, the expression, "him who was born according to the Spirit," identifies the "heirs (or children) of promise" (of verse 23) as the spiritual seed of the Abrahamic Covenant. Therefore, Sarah pictures that part of the Abrahamic Covenant relating to the spiritual seed, not the earthly seed. Do you understand? (pause)

The earthly seed (sand of the sea) is not part of this Sarah type. Keturah pictures that. The New Covenant is added to the Abrahamic Covenant to aid in accomplishing the blessing to the earthly seed. Since there is overlap between the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant in regards to the blessing of the earthly seed, Keturah represents the New Covenant, which would be a means of accomplishing the blessing of Abraham's earthly seed. Sarah does not have a second son to picture the sand of the sea. To do so would confuse the fact that there would be a New Covenant pictured by a new wife, Keturah. This was the simplest way God could present this in type.

### **Why can't Sarah represent the New Covenant?**

As we know, Sarah represents the Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant cannot be considered a New Covenant, since it is the oldest of the three covenants. The New Covenant will follow the Old Law Covenant which it replaces. It is the final covenant that follows both the Abrahamic and Law Covenants. The Old Sarah Covenant cannot represent the New Covenant.

Also, if Sarah represented the New Covenant, then that would place under it the Isaac Class, the spiritual seed. Christ, as head of that Isaac seed, cannot be under the New Covenant. He did not need anything the New Covenant provides in Jer 31. He did not need the forgiveness of sins, God's law was already written on his heart and he already knew Jehovah. So it would make no sense for Sarah to represent the New Covenant, since we know that here seed, Jesus Christ, is not under that covenant, nor can be his body members.

### **Who represents the New Covenant?**

We have already stated that we believe that Keturah represents the New Covenant. Abraham married Keturah (Gen 25) after Sarah died (Gen 23), showing that the New Covenant begins after the Abrahamic Covenant has completed the work of developing the spiritual seed, the Isaac Class. The New Covenant is added to the Abrahamic Covenant and becomes a means for the blessings of all the families of the earth.

Keturah did not become a wife until after Isaac's marriage (Gen 24), which typified that the New Covenant would go into effect after the marriage of Christ and the Church. Keturah's six sons pictured the imperfect world of mankind brought back under the New Covenant arrangement. When joined with the Ishmael class, natural Israel, we have a complete seven of all mankind under the New Covenant. Even though Keturah is called a wife in Gen 25:1, in 1 Chron 1:32 she is called a concubine. We think this is to demonstrate, even though Sarah was dead, she was Abraham's special wife through whom his seed (Isaac) would come and no one else could be considered an equal wife to Sarah. In Heb 11:17 Isaac is called Abraham's "only begotten son," which highlights Sarah's prominent status as Abraham's wife.

So Keturah, the lesser wife, pictures the New Covenant, which was added to the Abrahamic Covenant.

### **WHAT IS THE NEW COVENANT?**

The Jer 31 "New Covenant" is a special contract that God makes with natural Israel. The reason it is called a New Covenant is because it's a replacement for the Old Law Covenant. In this New Covenant God promises that he'll both write His laws in their hearts and forgive their sins. The Old Law Covenant could not accomplish either of these two objectives.

## IS THE NEW COVENANT OF JEREMIAH 31 MADE WITH THE CHURCH?

**Jer 31:31, 32:** *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD.*

This passage provides three facts that show it cannot apply to the Church.

- 1) It refers back to the Old Law Covenant that God had made with Israel when he led them out of Egypt. Yet God never made an old covenant with the Church when he led them out of the world.
- 2) It also states that they broke the Covenant. The Church didn't break any previous covenant with God.
- 3) It speaks of God as having been a husband to Israel while they were under the Old Covenant. God was never previously a husband to the Church under some old covenant.

In spite of these clear conflicts, most Christians argue that the Church is under the New Covenant. A popular reason is that Jer 31:33 says God will write his law in their heart, they will all know him and he will forgive their sins. It's argued that this is all true of the Church and therefore we must all be under the New Covenant.

However, if a Nuclear Physicist has an ice cream cone today and I have an ice cream cone today too, that does not make me a Nuclear Physicist.

To apply Jer 31 to the Church is the same as applying Isa 35:5-10 to the Church. It says that the deaf will hear and the blind will see. Although this is spiritually true of the Church in the Gospel Age, Isa 35 is not talking about the Church, but instead about the world of mankind walking up the Highway of Holiness (vs 8) in the future earthly kingdom.

It has always been true that people need to have God's laws written on their hearts. Notice how **Proverbs 7:2-3** says, "*Keep my commandments and live, And my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart.*"

Were the Jews who followed this admonition to write God's commandments on their heart under the New Covenant? Of course not.

Consequently, just because Jer 31 says that God will "write his law in their heart," this does not prove that the Church is under the New Covenant any more than was Natural Israel was during the Jewish Age. In the case of the Church, there is no taking away of the stoniness of heart, but there is a new nature, a new heart, in flesh only in the sense that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Cor 4:7.

So we do not believe that there is a compelling reason in Jer 31 to apply the New Covenant to the Church.

## WHEN IS THE NEW COVENANT MADE?

This question can be answered by looking at the context in which Jer 31:31-34 is placed. It's important to go back to chapter 30 where Jeremiah's prophecy begins. Jer 30:1 starts out with -

**Jer 30:1:** *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD...*

So the prophecy covers Jeremiah 30 and 31, then a new prophecy begins in Jer 32:1 which starts out with this same phrase. A careful examination places chapters 30 and 31 in a kingdom context referring to natural Israel. Notice Jer 30:3

**Jer 30:3** *For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and **THEY SHALL POSSESS IT.***

Ver 3 is referring to natural Israel returning to their land just prior to the kingdom and possessing it; not like their return from the Babylonian captivity where they were unable to really possess it, being under the domination of the Greeks and Romans. Notice now verse 11.

**Jer 30:11:** *For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save: though I make a **full end** of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will **correct thee in measure**, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."*

The text refers to God making a **full end** of all nations where Israel has been scattered. The time when God makes this full end of these nations is the end of the Gospel age, not the end of the Jewish age. (See Zech 12:9; 14:3.)

Notice also how Jeremiah says that God will **correct Israel in measure** and won't leave them unpunished. This is speaking of the punishment Israel has received during the double, down through the Gospel age of being persecuted and cast off from their land (Ez 39:25-29).

### **Jer 31:27-28**

27 *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast.*

28 *And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD. (KJV)*

The Christian church was never plucked up and thrown down and destroyed by the Lord. However this fits perfectly for natural Israel.

Other verses which place the context at the end of the gospel age and the beginning of the kingdom are Jer 30:9; 31:6-11, 28, 29. So, from the context, we believe that the New Covenant does not become operative until the time of the earthly kingdom.

Many other Old Testament passages speak of the New Covenant as being established with Israel at the time of the kingdom. We don't have time to read these passages, but after reading

them on your own time we believe you'll agree that the Old Testament does not indicate that the Church is under the New Covenant.

\*\*Jer 32:37-40; Ez 16:59-63; Ez 20:33-38; Ez 37:23-28; Isa 55:3-5\*\*

We find the New Testament to be consistent.

## **IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE FOR A DOUBLE APPLICATION OF JER 31?**

It has been suggested that Jer 31 has a double application, not just to Israel in the future kingdom, but also to the Church during the Gospel Age. The strongest evidence suggested for this view is Jeremiah 31:15-16 in which Rachel is weeping for her children because they were not. It is suggested that this applies to the Babylonian captivity. Then the passage goes on to say that Rachel would be comforted because "Thy children shall come again to their own border" (verse 17). This has been applied to the return of Israel "to their own border" when freed by Cyrus.

We disagree with this application. Rachel weeping is connected to verse 16 which says that "they shall return from the land of the enemy." The enemy is death. This is confirmed by Matt 2:18 which applies this passage to the children two years old and under, who were killed by Herod's soldiers. 1 Cor 15:26 tells us that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

The return from the "land of the enemy" in is the resurrection from the dead at which time all Israel will have returned "to their own border" (verse 17). At this time it really is their own border, not a border ruled by the Greeks and Romans.

Let's now turn to the New Testament and see what it has to say about the New Covenant.

## **THE NEW COVENANT IN ROMANS 11**

To whom does Paul apply the New Covenant in Romans 11? Do we find any hint that God makes the New Covenant with the Church?

### **Rom 11:25-29**

*25 ... blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*

*26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;*

*27 For this is **My covenant** with them, **When I take away their sins.**"*

*28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

NKJV

Paul shows in vs 25 that the New Covenant will not be made "until the fullness of the Gentiles come in," that is, when the Church is complete. Verses 26 and 27 show that God will take away Israel's ungodliness and establish the New Covenant with them. Paul nails down his argument about Israel being favored under the New Covenant by stating in verse 29, "the gifts and calling

of God are without repentance". In other words, God promised this New Covenant to Israel, he won't go back on his word.

Paul exclusively applies the New Covenant in this chapter to natural Israel, and makes no reference to the Church as being under it. If the Church truly were under the New Covenant, we would have expected Paul to make some reference to that fact.

## **HOW IS JESUS A SURETY OF THE NEW COVENANT?**

Does the fact that Jesus is a surety of the New Covenant have any bearing on whether or not the New Covenant is now operative with the Church?

**Heb. 7:22:** *but by so much has Jesus become the PLEDGE of a Better Covenant.* - Wilson's Diaglott

The word PLEDGE here is translated SURETY in the King James and many other translations.

**Strong's #1450:** *pledged (as if articulated [joined] by a member) i.e. a bondsman*

**R. Milligan, New Testament Commentary, Vol. IX:** *the word egguos does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament; but in classic Greek it means a surety, a sponsor, or a bondsman: one who pledges his name, property, or influence that a promise **SHALL BE FULFILLED**, or that something else **SHALL BE DONE**.*

So a surety is a pledge, deposit or guarantee that some promise will be fulfilled in the future. If the New Covenant were in operation in Paul's day, Jesus would not have been needed as a surety. Therefore the Early Church was not under the New Covenant and nor can we be.

## **DOES DRINKING THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT MEAN WE ARE UNDER IT?**

**Matt 26:27,28** And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. NASV

This text has thoroughly convinced many that the Church is under the New Covenant. Notice though, this text nowhere states that God will make the New Covenant with the Church. The conclusion some draw is that since the Church drinks of the blood of the New Covenant, this means they are under it. Yet, we ask, **where does the Bible show that drinking blood represents being under a covenant?**

Quite to the contrary, drinking blood represents participation in Christ's sacrifice. This text therefore does not prove that we are under the New Covenant, but rather, it shows our participation in the sacrifice that ratifies the New Covenant.

Let's look at scriptures which support the view that drinking blood represents participation in sacrifice.

**Mk 10:38:** *But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask. Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*

**Jn 18:11:** *Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

**Matt 26:39:** *And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

All three of the texts reveal that drinking of the cup represents Christ's sacrifice or our participation with Christ in His sacrifice. The common rebuttal to this conclusion is that none of these verses have anything at all to do with the cup drunk at our Lord's memorial supper. However the last two texts quoted occurred within hours of the memorial supper and if they do not all relate to each other, we might as well throw out the window the concept of scripture interpreting scripture.

We find further support in..

**1 Cor 10:16:** *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?*

The word "communion" has the thought in the Greek of sharing or common participation. It's the same Greek word used in Phil 3:10 where Paul speaks of having a "fellowship" or common participation in Christ's sufferings.

**Phil 3:10** *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;* NASV

So in all four of the texts quoted, drinking of the cup represents participation in sacrifice. 1 Cor 10:16 directly ties in this thought of common participation with the memorial cup.

Our drinking of the cup proves that our relationship to the New Covenant is that of sacrificers. Since sacrifices ratify covenants, the Church's sacrifice (as a part of Christ's body), with their head, is what ratifies the New Covenant.

## DID JESUS DRINK THE CUP OF THE NEW COVENANT?

This question may seem trivial, but it is quite important to our discussion. Those who believe that the Church is under the New Covenant strongly argue that Jesus definitely did not drink of the cup. Why do they take such a strong position?

Think about it. If our drinking of the cup is used as proof that we are under the New Covenant, then that must mean Jesus is under the New Covenant too if he drank of the cup. Jesus of course cannot be under the New Covenant, therefore they conclude that the Church drinks the cup, but Jesus did not.

What do the scriptures say?

**Mk 14:25**: Verily I say unto you, I will drink **no more** of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it **new** in the kingdom of God. KJV

Notice two points from this scripture. First, Christ says he will drink **no more** of the cup. The fact that he won't drink any more until the kingdom indicates that had already drank of the cup, else how could he drink of it **no more**.

Second, Christ says he won't drink with them again until he drinks the cup **new** with them. If he promises to drink it **new**, there must have been a time when he drank it **old**. Therefore, Jesus did indeed drink of the cup on the Passover night. This is in harmony with his clear statement.

**Mk 10:38**: But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what he ask. Can ye drink of the cup that I DRINK OF? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? (See also John 18:11)

Since drinking the cup does not place Jesus under the New Covenant, but rather makes him the sacrifice that ratifies it. So likewise with us, the Church is not under the New Covenant, but as a part of the body of Christ, we participate in ratifying that covenant.

[It was Jesus' cup of which he drank, which he gave to his disciples to finish. R4475:1 204475]

In Matt 26:39,42 when Jesus prayed that this cup pass from him, he was praying that His sacrifice be successful that that the cup could pass from him over to his disciples, so that they too could drink from His cup and become body members with Him. Jesus drank the cup and through his successful sacrifice, the cup passed from Him to His body members.

## IS THE CHURCHES ROLE IN RELATION TO THE NEW COVENANT THE SAME AS JESUS' ROLE?

To find the answer, let's take a careful look at Luke 22.

**Luke 22:20** - *Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."* NKJV

**Luke 22:29** - *And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;* KJV

The word "appoint" is not accurate. It is the same word mistranslated Testator in Hebrews 9:16 (Strong's 1303) and the real meaning of the word is "covenant sacrifice." That is what we are; covenant sacrificers with Christ, who ratify the New Covenant.

Rotherham translates closer to the real meaning:

**Luke 22:29** - *And, I, covenant (Strong's 1303) unto you—as my Father hath covenanted (Strong's 1303) unto me—a kingdom,*  
(Supported by Vine's Expository Dictionary)

So the Church's role in relation to the new Covenant is the same as Christ's role. Luke 22:29 says that Christ has covenanted unto us, just in the same way as the Father has covenanted unto Him. Christ's relationship to the New Covenant is the same as our relationship to the New Covenant.

In other words as covenant sacrificers, ratifying the New Covenant, Christ and His body members make possible the Kingdom, through the New Covenant arrangement.

## HOW IS THE CHURCH GIVEN FOR A COVENANT OF THE PEOPLES?

Again, the Church's role in relation to the New Covenant is shown to be the same as Christ's role.

**Isa 49:8**: - "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and GIVE THEE FOR A COVENANT OF THE PEOPLE, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages."

Who here is given for a covenant of the peoples? We are given the answer in II Cor 6:2 and Acts 13:47, where this text is applied to the Church. The fact that the Church is "given for a covenant of the peoples", when compared with Isa. 42:6, demonstrates that the Church cannot be under the New Covenant.

**Isa 42:6**: - "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for A COVENANT OF THE PEOPLE, for a light of the Gentiles..."

Verses 1-3 of this chapter are quoted in Matt 12:17-21, where they are applied to Jesus. Verse 6 also applies to Jesus.

If the Church's being "given for a covenant of the peoples" means that they are under the New Covenant, then Christ's being "given for a covenant of the people" would mean that he is under the New Covenant. But Christ can't be under it. He's both the new covenants mediator and the sacrifice that ratifies it. Therefore, the Church can't be under it either.

The fact that both Christ and the Church are "given for a covenant of the people" shows that they both hold the same position in relation to the New Covenant. We believe then that the Church shares Christ's position as the New Covenants mediator and the sacrifice which ratifies this covenant.

## HOW ARE WE MINISTERS OF THE NEW COVENANT?

A common passage quoted to prove the view that the Church is now under the New Covenant is found in:

**2 Cor 3:3** ... you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. NASV

We are told that this verse is a fulfillment of the Jer 31:33 statement that God's Laws will be written on their hearts. We believe the solution is that the future Administrators of the New Covenant must have God's spirit written in their hearts in order to impart the same to mankind.

It is a mistake to insist that the only way to impart God's laws or spirit into man's heart is through the New Covenant. For example, under the Old Law Covenant we read.

**Duet 11:18**: *You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart...* NASV

**Prov 7:2-3**: *Keep my commandments and live... Write them on the tablet of your heart."*

To go one step further, God's law is even said to reside in the hearts of unbelievers through their conscience.

**Rm 2:14,15** NASV

*14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,*

*15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,*

Remnants of God's original law placed in Adam's heart remain with all mankind, even if this glimmer of conscience is often distorted by superstition and error.

For Jesus, God's laws are even more perfectly in His heart. Yet we do not say that Jesus is under the New Covenant just because God's Laws are in his heart. Nor should we feel compelled to say that the Church is under the New Covenant since God's laws are in our heart.

**2 Cor. 3:6:** ...”who also has made us adequate as servants [ministers] of a New Covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

Being servants or ministers of the New Covenant makes us teachers and representatives of it to others. We are serving the New Covenant in the same sense that Jesus served it. Let's turn to **Mal 3:1** (NAS95) - “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the **messenger of the covenant**, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.”

Jesus is described as the messenger or servant of the Covenant (that is of the New Covenant) and each one of the Church now being called and chosen becomes a servant and messenger of the New Covenant. Jesus and His body members, the Church, are ministers of the New Covenant to the world, just as Moses was the minister of the Law Covenant to Israel.

We read in **R5294:3**, "Unless there were Better Sacrifices, there would be no basis for that New Covenant. The sufferings which the Church undergo at this present time are a blessed privilege to us; for we are ministers of that New Covenant, in the sense that we are serving it by training for future service--after it shall have been inaugurated."

**2 Cor. 3:7,8:** *But if the ministry of death in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?*

Ex.34:29-35 tells us that after the LORD had spoken to him, Moses would come down from Mount Sinai with his face shining and would relay God's message to the people of Israel. 2 Cor 3:13 shows us that after speaking with them Moses would cover his face with a veil so that they would not see his fading glory.

**2 Cor. 3:18:** *But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the LORD, are BEING TRANSFORMED into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the LORD, the Spirit. - NASV*

Just as when on Mount Sinai Moses beheld the glory of the Lord and his face shone, so we through the scriptures behold the glory of the LORD and reflect his character in our Christian walk. Moses went up and down from the mountain to relay God's message to the people in his role as the Mediator of the Law Covenant. So in the kingdom, as a part of the Mediator of the New Covenant, the Church will descend from Mount Zion and relay God's message to the people of the world. But wait you say! The passage says that we are NOW ministers of the New Covenant. Why are we attempting to put this work in the future?

Actually the work is both now and in the future. Notice how verse 18 says that we are "being transformed." Through our work now of ministering and teaching the kingdom to others we are being transformed or prepared for our future work as mediators of the New Covenant. Before the Law Covenant was ever ratified (Ex. 24), Moses had already gone up and down the mount to relay God's words to the people. So even now, before the New Covenant has been fully ratified, we, as ministers of the New Covenant are relaying God's message to the people, but we will do so in a much grander and more effective way in the kingdom.

## WHY IS JESUS THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT?

Please turn with me to Hebrews 9:15. We are going to read this passage from the NASV and I will insert some explanatory comments as we read it.

**Heb 9:15** (NASV95) – *“For this reason [a reason Paul is now about provide] He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death [Jesus death on the cross] has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant [Jesus redeemed the Jews from the curse of the Law Gal 3:13], those who have been called [the Church Heb 3:1] may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance [Heavenly seed of Abraham to bless all nations - Heb 6:17 - by administering the New Covenant to Israel and mankind as Jesus' body members].”*

In other words, Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant for the purpose fulfilling the Abrahamic promise (our eternal inheritance) by blessing Israel and all mankind under the New Covenant (with the participation of His body members, the spiritual seed). Before there was any hope that the New Covenant would bless Israel, Christ had to first redeem Israel from the curse of the Law. Gal 3:13]

**How do we know that the “the eternal inheritance” of Heb 9:15 is referring to the work of the heavenly seed, the bride of Christ?**

### Hebrews 6:17-20

*17 In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,*

*18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.*

*19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,*

*20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. NASV*

The "eternal inheritance" is the promise to be part of the spiritual seed of Abraham. (Heb 6:12,17-20) Our membership in Christ's body makes us heirs of the Abrahamic promise (vs 17) and of the hope (vs 18) of following our High Priest Jesus through the Veil (vs 19) to share in the work of the priesthood. The word "forerunner" (vs 20) means that we are following after him, into the Most Holy into the "Presence behind the veil," that is the presence of God himself as represented by the shekinah light emanating from the ark.

Heb 9:14 speaks of God cleansing our conscience “to SERVE the living God.” That word “serve” is from Strong’s 3000 and refers to the service of the priests in the tabernacle (Heb 8:5; 9:9; 12:28; 13:10). This relates to their future role of the spiritual seed of the Abrahamic Covenant, who receive the “eternal inheritance” (vs 15) of the heavenly priesthood.

## HOW IS THE CHURCH SANCTIFIED?

Let's review Heb 10:1-14. First Heb 10:1-4: The law could not perfect the character & conscience of sinners; otherwise the Jewish sin-offering would have not have needed to be offered every year.

### **Heb 10:8, 9:**

*8 After saying above, "SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them" (which are offered according to the Law),  
9 then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL." He takes away the first in order to establish the second.*

**Heb 10:5-9:** Jesus can remove sins. As the antitypical Bullock He says, "I come to do your WILL" vs 7, 9). In vs 9, The SECOND (Christ & Church) replaces the FIRST (Bullock & Goat).

**Heb 10:10** *By **this will** we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

"**By this WILL**" means that the church joins with Christ in sacrifice as part of one SANCTIFIED body of the Christ. As the antitypical goat, the church says together with Christ "I come to do they WILL."

This principle of the joint sacrifice is established early on in Hebrews.

**Heb 2:11** *For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one ~~Father~~; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, NASV*

"Father" is in italics and is added by the translators. The text should read "are all of one." Yes, the church is offered up together as part of the Christ, head and body. We are "all of one," that is all of one body. We all say together "I come to do they will oh God."

The "offering of the body" must include the Church, since it is our "offering," that is, our bodies in sacrifice (Rm 12:1), that has a SANCTIFYING effect in our life. The "body" here can not be just Jesus, since His "offering" of Himself alone SANCTIFIED only himself, (even though His offering of Himself alone JUSTIFIED the Church, that is not the point here). Notice that the passage is NOT talking about JUSTIFICATION. If it were, then it would be true that Jesus offering "JUSTIFIES" us. But the text is referring to "SANCTIFICATION." Jesus sacrifice of Himself alone does not SANCTIFY the Church, but the corporate offering (including the offering of the Church) SANCTIFIES the Church.

**Heb 10:14** *For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified NASV*

This one corporate offering (of Christ and the Church) PERFECTS our CHARACTER and SANCTIFIES the Church, just as Jesus character was perfected through his own sufferings (Heb 2:10; 5:8, 9)]

## **DOES HEBREWS 10 SHOW US WHEN THE NEW COVENANT IS MADE?**

Heb 10:15-18: Most translators totally ruin these verses because the translators have no concept of the Church's share in the joint sacrifice ratifying the New Covenant. The word "AFTER" of verse 15, is referring to the word "AFTER" in the Jer 31 prophecy (see it quoted in Heb 8:10), pointing out that the New Covenant comes AFTER Israel's period of disfavor, when God "did not care for them" (Heb 10:9). This period of disfavor would begin 33 A.D. when Jesus said "your house is left to your desolate." Some brethren have also thought that Paul in Heb 10:15 is referring to AFTER the offering in sacrifice of the Church during the Gospel Age mentioned in Heb 10:14. Either approach shows that the New Covenant will not go into effect until the time when God is ready to fully "regard" Israel and/or after the Church's sacrifice is complete (both future).

Most translators attempt to connect the word "AFTER" in Heb 10:15 with the spurious words "*He then says*" in verse 16 to confuse the meaning by implying that the New Covenant is for the Church. These translators arbitrarily create these spurious words "*He then says*" in verse 16. Once we remove these spurious words, the only way to make any sense of the passage is with one of the two suggestions we made for the word "AFTER."

## **DOES HEBREWS 8 SHOW US WHEN THE NEW COVENANT IS MADE?**

In Heb 8:1, Paul says that the main point is that Jesus is our high priest. In contrast God found "fault with them," the Levitical priesthood (Heb 8:8; 7:11). God is replacing the Levitical priesthood with a new (Melchizedek) priesthood (Christ and the Church).

Because God found fault with the first priesthood, He says He will make a New Covenant with Israel "after those days" vs 10; that is, after the days of vs 9, when He says, "I did not care for them." The New Covenant could not have begun at the time of the Apostles since it was to begin after the days that that He "did not care for them" (during Israel's period of disfavour spanning most of the Gospel Age).]

Heb 8:13 says, "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." Since in Paul's day the Old Law Covenant had not yet vanished away, the New Covenant could not yet have been established. The shadow (type) ends where the reality (antitype) begins. (Matt 5:17, 18; Heb 10:1) The Law Covenant is a shadow of things to come. When it has fully passed away, only then can the New Covenant go into operation.

## HAVE WE ARRIVED AT MOUNT ZION?

In the NASB, Hebrews 12:22 says, "you have come to Mount Zion." Some take this to mean that we have arrived at Mount Zion, but this is not the force of the Greek. Notice these other sources:

The Diaglott and Rotherham: "You have approached..."

Green's Literal translation: "You have drawn near..."

Philips: "you have been allowed to approach"

Strong's #4334 to *approach*, that is, (literally) *come near, visit*, or (figuratively) *worship, assent to*: - (as soon as he) come (unto), come thereunto, consent, draw near, go (near, to, unto).

Thayer Definition: 1) to come to, approach, 2) draw near to, 3) to assent to

Henry Alford's "Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary" also renders it "but ye have drawn near..." Then he notes this is the same sense that Israel drew near or approached in Deut 4:11, and that other renderings miss the mark of the Greek.

So we have not ARRIVED, but are drawing near in the sense of giving assent, agree and are in accord with; but we are not now on that New Covenant mountain. That will only be when the church is complete and administers it from the heavenly Jerusalem, as noted in verse 23.

Paul said "ye are drawing near (during the Gospel Age) to mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (when the New Covenant will be ratified and operational)" He is not saying we are now or ever will be under the New Covenant. But we are indeed drawing near to that city that will have the ratified covenant and we will be part of its mediator.

During the Gospel Age, the Church has been approaching Mount Zion. Once the Church is complete (we have arrived and ascended up Mount Zion), the world will come under the New Covenant arrangement administered by Christ, His body members (Ex 19-24). Under the Law Covenant, the people and the books were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices. They all agreed to obey the terms of the covenant (Ex 24:7,8). So in the kingdom, the world will agree to the terms of the New Covenant and understand that it was ratified by the sacrifice of Christ and His body members.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the evidence considered, we believe that the Church is not under the New Covenant and that the operation of this covenant is reserved for the time of the earthly kingdom.