

# The Everlasting Gospel: The Proclamation of Covenant Promise

By adminlen On January 6, 2012 · Add Comment

## Introduction

The ministry of the Apostle Paul was marked by a constant striving against those who would cloud the gospel in Gnostic terms, human traditions, legalism, or sophistic rhetoric. His vision and purpose, by contrast, was to preach "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" ([1 Cor 2:2](#)). He did so with the strong affirmation that anyone who preached any other gospel was *anathema* ([Gal 1:8](#)). Paul's understanding of the gospel was deeply rooted in the understanding that God was working for all time, and that the gospel that he preached was not something new, but truly was the Way from which others had strayed ([Acts 24:14](#)).

Our proclamation must be the same, and for the same reasons. God's covenant of redemption has not changed in its goals, and God continues to use the foolishness of preaching to build his kingdom. Our preaching, then, should be filled with the optimism of the fulfillment of all of God's promises to his people in Christ. We offer to the world not our history, not our traditions, not our agendas (Paul called all that *dung*, [Phil 3:8](#)), but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Jesus said, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to Myself" ([John 12:32](#)). John Angell James responds to Jesus' statement, "With this divine lode-stone magnetize your sermons: here lies the attraction."

## The Basics of the Biblical Terms

The term most commonly used in the Hebrew Scriptures for *covenant* is *berith*. The word means a *pledge* or *agreement* accompanied by signs, sacrifices, and a solemn oath that sealed the relationship with promises of blessing for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking it. When used with its idiomatic companion verb, *karat*, *berith* takes on the idea of an agreement sealed in blood ("to cut a covenant" as in [Genesis 15:18](#); [Exodus 24:8](#)), particularly as the bloody sacrifice symbolized the death of the one making the vow should he fail to keep the terms of the agreement. David's final words reflect that he clearly understood the unfailing nature of God's Word. God made Himself the surety (David knew God's faithfulness was not dependent upon David's merit): "Although my house *is* not so with God, yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; will He not make it increase ([2 Samuel 23:5](#))?"<sup>[1]</sup> David's faith in God's covenant was justified. That covenant provides the paradigm for our own confidence in our covenant-making God. God Himself says through Isaiah, "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David ([55:3](#))."

You will find other examples of the *karat/berith* construction in [Isaiah 61:8, 9](#); [Jeremiah 32:40](#); [Psalm 89:3](#); and [2 Chronicles 21:7](#). The prophets wrote almost entirely in covenantal language, since their principal duty was to call the covenant people back from their sin into a faithful relationship with God.

A second Hebrew term that is intimately related to the covenant idea is *hesed*, commonly translated *mercy*, or *lovingkindness* by older versions of the Bible. It is best translated *loyalty* or *covenant faithfulness*. The New International Version of the Bible (NIV) usually translates it *unfailing love*. A related term is *hasidim*, "holy ones" or "saints," which suggests that sainthood is connected to one's covenant bond with God (and, incidentally, with other saints). Used hundreds of times in the Old Testament, the Psalms in particular employ the word extensively. For the fullest example, see Psalm 136 (seemingly a responsive song used in temple worship). Note the following as typical examples of the psalmist's thought (the words translating *hesed* are in bold):

- [Psalm 40:10](#) and [11](#) (especially in the context of the entire psalm, see vs. 1-3) – "I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed

Your **lovingkindness** and Your truth from the great assembly. Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O LORD; let Your **lovingkindness** and Your truth continually preserve me.”

- [Psalm 85:7](#) – “Show us Your **mercy**, LORD, and grant us Your salvation.”
- [Psalm 89:1-4, 33](#) – “A Contemplation of Ethan the Ezrahite. I will sing of the **mercies** of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, ‘**Mercy** shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens. “I have made a covenant [karat/berith] with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: ‘Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.’” ... My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.”

The New Testament Greek term for covenant is *diatheke*, which originally meant *last will* or *testament*, but was also used in the sense of *berith*, as above. In fact, *diatheke* is used to translate *berith* in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). The principal idea is the declaration of one person’s will, not an agreement between two parties. Comparing verses from the Old and New Testaments demonstrates the idea of the Lord’s initiative clearly:

- [Romans 11:27](#) – “For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins;” and
- [Isaiah 59:21](#) – “ ‘As for Me,’ says the LORD, ‘this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,’ says the LORD, ‘from this time and forevermore.’ ”
- [Hebrews 9:20](#) – “He said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep’”; and
- [Exodus 24:8](#) – “And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.’ ”

An excellent demonstration of covenantally declaring one’s will is found in [Ezekiel 16:8](#), “ ‘When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,’ says the Lord GOD.” The New Testament parallel of this idea is amply summed up by Jesus’ declaration in [John 15:16](#), “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

## An Everlasting Gospel in an Everlasting Covenant

God progressively reveals his determination to redeem a people through history in the various manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. That covenant, as we call it, is the “visible” (through the Word) revelation of the eternal purpose of the Godhead established before the foundation of the world, which I am here calling the Everlasting Covenant (as prompted by [Isaiah 55:3](#)).

### General Characteristics

The various descriptions of the Everlasting Covenant in the Scriptures provide us with a rich understanding of the glorious and trustworthy nature of the gospel of redemption:

- *Everlasting*, [Hebrews 1:8; 13:20, 21](#) – “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.” The eternality of the covenant of redemption provides the

eternal *foundation* of redemption (Christ's divine authority, [Heb. 1:8](#)), the eternal *means* of redemption (Christ's blood), and the eternal *results* of redemption (our ultimate perfection in Jesus).

- *Peaceful*, [Ephesians 2:16](#); [Isaiah 9:6](#) – “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Notice the progression and connection of the adjectives *wonderful*, *mighty*, and *everlasting* that culminate in *peace*.
- *Established Before Time*, [Ephesians 1:3, 4](#) – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him ....” God's plan for redemption was no afterthought, but a deliberate act of His sovereign will before the earth existed. A careful study of the word *chose* is enlightening. God's choosing is for the purpose of making His chosen people holy.
- *Initiated by the Father, Obeyed by the Son*, [Hebrews 1:2, 5, 8-12; 3:1, 2; 10:5-9](#) – “Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, “Behold, I have come  $\frac{3}{4}$  in the volume of the book it is written of Me  $\frac{3}{4}$  to do Your will, O God.” ’ ” These verses make it clear that Jesus did not come to earth hoping to locate someone to believe in Him. He came to bring about the will of God that had been established before Jesus' earthly ministry, which was to secure what had been divinely “prepared” for him. The Church (including believers from history) is Jesus' thanksgiving offering back to God. Jesus was faithful to complete what the Father had initiated. [Hebrews 3:1, 2](#) reads, “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also *was faithful* in all His house.”

As you meditate on the determination of God to redeem a people to himself, rejoice in the matchless grace of a God whose plans are certain, unchanging, and unfailing because of Christ's perfect obedience. Arthur Pink writes:

What is popularly taught...is that the atonement of Christ has merely provided an opportunity for men to be saved, that it has opened the way for God to justly pardon any and all who avail themselves of His gracious provision. ... The grand fact is that Christ's death was the completion of His agreement with the Father, which guarantees the salvation of all who were named in it  $\frac{3}{4}$  not one for whom He died can possibly miss heaven: [John 6:39.\[2\]](#)

### *The Terms of the Covenant*

Though there is not a specific text that develops this covenant (as there are with the other historic covenants), the teaching of Scripture throughout is clear: God didn't dream up the plan of redemption after the fall happened. It was a matter of agreement and covenanting together among the Godhead to bring about the redemption of fallen mankind while maintaining God's righteous requirements for fellowship. From the actions of the Godhead revealed in Scripture, the following characteristics of the everlasting covenant may be deduced.

The first major stipulation of the “terms” was Christ had to humble Himself. You are undoubtedly familiar with [Philippians 2:5-8](#). See also [Hebrews 10:5](#), which sums up Christ's humiliation well: “...a body You have prepared for Me.” So, He had to become man, [1 John 1:1, 2](#). He had to die, shedding his blood, [Genesis 3:15](#) and [Hebrews 9:16-23](#). And, as man, Jesus had to perfectly image God, [Hebrews 1:3](#) and [Colossians 2:9](#). This was all a matter of obedience to the Father, and required the laying aside of much of His visible glories. He did not cling to His divine powers and outward glories, but gave Himself for His people.

The second part of the “terms” was that the Father made certain promises to the Son as part of this covenant. Some of those promises concerned Christ Himself: His deity would be confirmed, [Isaiah 9:6](#); [11:1-5](#) (compare with the gospels); [John 8:29](#) (with its context); he was guaranteed Divine protection, [Isaiah 42:6](#); [Zechariah 3:8, 9](#); [John 10:18](#), and Divine assistance in His task, [Isaiah 42:4](#); [49:8-10](#); [John 17:4](#). The Father also guaranteed Christ success and reward, [Isaiah 53:10, 11](#); [Psalm 89:27-29](#); [110:1-3](#). These promises were given to provide encouragement to our Savior as he claimed them, [Psalm 89:26](#); [Isaiah 50:8-10](#); [Hebrews 2:13](#).

Other promises concerned Christ’s people. What a thought that we were included in the counsels of the Godhead in eternity past! Notice that these promises, while benefitting us, are still focused primarily on Christ. First, He would receive gifts among us, [Psalm 68:18](#). These gifts include praise, adoration, and fellowship. These things are a joy to engage in, both for us and for Christ.

The second area of promise concerning Christ’s people is that God would make His people acknowledge Christ as Lord, [Psalm 110:3](#); [John 6:44](#) – “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him....” (Note the result of His drawing in verse 69, “...we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”) This word “draw” is related to the word James uses in his epistle at 1:14, “...each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.” It carries with it the idea not of a gentle pull, but of an inexorable, irresistible hauling in through an inward power. Sin has that luring capability, but God’s drawing unto righteousness is greater, praise His name! In the Pacific Northwest, logging is still a relatively common occupation. After a tree is cut down, it must be moved to a loading site. A choker cable is wrapped around it, and powerful engines draw it through the brush to where it is needed  $\frac{3}{4}$  nothing can stop it. This is similar to the idea of irresistible grace: God’s people cannot help but follow after him as he draws them with everlasting love. Unlike a fallen tree, however, God’s people are given new life to willingly and joyfully run to their Savior.

Third, eternal life would belong to the people Jesus Christ redeemed, [Psalm 133:3](#); [Titus 1:2](#). That life is not to fulfill the desires of the creature, but it is given so that a chosen seed would serve Him, [Psalm 22:30, 31](#). As Christ makes new creatures out of His people, recreating in them the image of God, His relationship with His people mirrors the imaging relationship between the Father and Son established by the everlasting covenant. Pink’s thoughts are poignant (compare [Ephesians 1:22, 23](#)):

... A help-meet was provided for Adam, who was one in nature with himself, as pure and holy as he was, in every way suitable to him: Eve became his wife and companion ([Gen. 2:21-24](#)). Beautifully did that set forth the eternal marriage between Christ and His church ([Eph. 5:29-32](#)). Let it be carefully noted that Eve was married to Adam, and was pure and holy, before she fell; so it was with the church ([Eph. 1:3-6](#)).[3]

The final area of promise to Christ concerning His people is that kings and princes would worship him, [Isaiah 49:7](#) – “Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel *and* its Holy One, to the despised One, to the One abhorred by the nation, to the Servant of rulers, ‘Kings will see and arise, princes will also bow down, because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.’ ” This promise is in keeping with His position as King of kings and Lord of lords, confirmed by His faithful obedience to the will of the Godhead. As a small token of the ultimate fulfillment of this promise, take a look at [Matthew 2:1-11](#) (the adoration of the Magi).

The last aspect of the covenant terms to consider is the assurance that Christ would receive the promises. The Father’s Word can be depended upon. [Philippians 2:9-11](#) summarizes it best: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Take a look also at [Hebrews 1:13](#) and [Revelation 19:11-16](#); [21:22, 23](#); and [22:1-5](#).

## The Promise of the New Covenant

[Jeremiah 31:31](#) – “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” (quoted also in [Hebrews 8:8, 13](#))

This passage is the principle one that reveals God’s intent concerning His relationship with His people for eternity. However, it is not the first or only time that these promises have been stated. In every other covenant made with His people, God has promised that He would be their God, that He would dwell with them and they with Him. The New Covenant simply makes those promises explicit and immediately personal. The heart of the covenant is found in verses 33 and 34: no more shall the law be merely external to God’s people, but it shall be instilled in their hearts by His direct action (compare [Romans 2:17-29](#)). [Ezekiel 36:25-27](#) echoes this promise by saying: “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”<sup>[4]</sup>

The “new” character of the covenant must be understood to mean a fresh demonstration of the mercies of God, not something altogether new. “The substance remains the same,” Calvin comments on this passage. The nation may be restored to the land, but little glory meets their eyes. Where is the mercy they were promised? Calvin further observes:

...had [the Prophet] not spoken of a new covenant, those miserable men, whom he sought to inspire with the hope of salvation, would have ever vacillated; nay, as the greater part were already overwhelmed with despair, he would have effected nothing. Here then he sets before them a new covenant, as though he had said, that they ought not to look farther or higher, not to measure the benefit of God, of which he had spoken, by the appearance of the state of things at that time, for God would make a new covenant.<sup>[5]</sup>

With this covenant, the immediate parties in view are God and the nation of Israel (even the 10 tribes who had rebelled against the house of David, v. 31); but since Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem (Noahic Covenant), and believing Gentiles were to be brought in (Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants), and the Anointed King of Israel is the King of kings (Davidic Covenant), the New Testament’s subsequent teaching is nothing “new.” True Israelites are those found in Christ (Galatians 3). It must be clear, though, that to say that Jeremiah’s prophecy is simply a spiritual passage referring to the Church only (i.e., that a literal conversion of the nation of Israel is not in view) is to impose one’s own presuppositions upon the text. There is no hint here that God is crossing His fingers behind His back  $\frac{3}{4}$  in fact, just the opposite. The majority of the text about the covenant proclaims God’s absolute promises that He will never fail the nation ([Jeremiah 31:35-40](#)). Remember, the context of this passage in Jeremiah is that God will restore them to their land at the conclusion of the exile (chs. 29-30). Spiritual restoration is also evident (31:1, developed by the rest of the chapter). To take the spiritual restoration as literal but not the restoration of the land is hardly defensible. Both restorations should be taken at face value. I do not pretend to know to what extent the land restoration will be in the case of national Israel, but I do believe that this promise will be (if it has not already been) fulfilled to the degree God promises. The interpreter should also resist going to the opposite extreme by insisting the passage only refers to Israel  $\frac{3}{4}$  to do so would deny the clear teaching of the New Testament ([John 3:5-21](#); [Romans 9-11](#); [Galatians 3:1-4:7](#); [Ephesians 5:26](#); and [Titus 3:5-7](#)). The larger kingdom of our Lord Christ (true Israel) is in view in the microcosm of national Israel. I personally see the land restoration being ultimately fulfilled in the New Heavens and Earth. God uses the familiar pattern of “now and not yet” fulfillments of his promises.

### *The Institution of the New Covenant*

When and how was the new covenant instituted? The answer depends upon what you mean by *instituted*. It was actually declared in Jeremiah’s day, and entered into before Creation ([Ephesians 1:3](#)). Its visible institution began at Jesus’ birth (the seal of *Emmanuel*). Jesus’ baptism made the covenant “public” (anointing of high priest, mediation). Jesus declared its fulfillment at Passover before the crucifixion ([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.’”). Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection accomplished the reality of the sign (compare also the visible sign of the covenant in baptism, [Colossians 2:11-15](#)). The ascension brought about the effects of the covenant (John 16; [Acts 2:32-](#)

36; [Romans 8:34](#)), and covenant promises were affirmed at Pentecost. The seal of “God with us” continues through the ministry of the Holy Spirit ([Ephesians 1:13, 14](#)). The Westminster Confession of Faith (8.6) states it this way:

Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof, were communicated unto the elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices, wherein He was revealed and signified to be the Seed of the woman, which should bruise the serpent’s head, and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world being yesterday and today the same, and for ever. ([Galatians 4:4,5](#); [Genesis 3:15](#); [Revelation 13:8](#); [Hebrews 13:8](#))

### *The Effects of the New Covenant*

Another pertinent question to ask is, what are the effects of the new covenant upon its beneficiaries? In most places, the word for “new” is the word *kainos*, meaning *new, replacing what is obsolete*. But, in [Hebrews 12:24](#) (“Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant”), the word *neas* (*fresh*) is used. In Hebrews, the focus of the passage is the effects of the new and better covenant, which has a fresh impact upon the redeemed. The Westminster catechisms are helpful in spelling out some of the benefits we receive as a result of Christ’s finished work:

- WLC 57 What benefits hath Christ procured by his mediation? A. Christ, by his mediation, hath procured redemption,<sup>1</sup> with all other benefits of the covenant of grace.<sup>2</sup> (<sup>1</sup>[Hebrews 9:12](#) <sup>2</sup>[2 Corinthians 1:20](#))
- WLC 58 How do we come to be made partakers of the benefits which Christ hath procured? A. We are made partakers of the benefits which Christ hath procured, by the application of them unto us,<sup>1</sup> which is the work especially of God the Holy Ghost.<sup>2</sup> (<sup>1</sup>[John 1:11-13](#) <sup>2</sup>[Titus 3:5-6](#))
- WLC 65 What special benefits do the members of the invisible church enjoy by Christ? A. The members of the invisible church by Christ enjoy union and communion with him in grace and glory. ([John 17:21](#); [Ephesians 2:5-6](#); [John 17:24](#))
- WSC 32 What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life? A. They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification,<sup>1</sup> adoption,<sup>2</sup> and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.<sup>3</sup> (<sup>1</sup>[Romans 8:30](#) <sup>2</sup>[Ephesians 1:5](#) <sup>3</sup>[1 Corinthians 1:26, 30](#))
- WSC 36 What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification? A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God’s love, peace of conscience,<sup>1</sup> joy in the Holy Ghost,<sup>2</sup> increase of grace,<sup>3</sup> and perseverance therein to the end.<sup>4</sup> (<sup>1</sup>[Romans 5:1, 2, 5](#) <sup>2</sup>[Romans 14:17](#) <sup>3</sup>[Proverbs 4:18](#) <sup>4</sup>[1 Peter 1:5](#))
- WSC 37 What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness,<sup>1</sup> and do immediately pass into glory;<sup>2</sup> and their bodies, being still united in Christ,<sup>3</sup> do rest in their graves,<sup>4</sup> till the resurrection.<sup>5</sup> (<sup>1</sup>[Hebrews 12:23](#) <sup>2</sup>[2 Corinthians 5:1, 6, 8](#); [Philippians 1:23](#); [Luke 23:43](#) <sup>3</sup>[1 Thessalonians 4:14](#) <sup>4</sup>[Isaiah 57:2](#) <sup>5</sup>[Job 19:26-27](#))
- WSC 38 What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection? A. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory,<sup>1</sup> shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment,<sup>2</sup> and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God<sup>3</sup> to all eternity.<sup>4</sup> (<sup>1</sup>[1 Corinthians 15:43](#) <sup>2</sup>[Matthew 25:23](#); [Matthew 10:32](#) <sup>3</sup>[1 John 3:2](#); [1 Corinthians 13:12](#) <sup>4</sup>[1 Thessalonians 4:17-18](#))

[Hebrews 9:15](#) summarizes, “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new [*kainos*] covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” That inheritance carries with it responsibilities as well  $\frac{3}{4}$  [2 Corinthians 3:6](#) – “...who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant....”

Obvious as it may sound, the New Covenant has great relevance for the Church. No one will dispute that, but that relevance will not be realized fully without comprehending the continuity between the covenants prior to the earthly ministry of Christ and the New Covenant. That continuity is the premise of Paul's thinking in [2 Corinthians 3:1-11](#):

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.

So, how do we live as “ministers of the new covenant” (v. 6)? It is first necessary to ask, “How was Israel a minister of the old covenant?” The Scriptures reveal clear answers:

- First, walking in obedience to God themselves. [Deuteronomy 27:1-10](#). The law was to be inscribed on the stones of a permanent altar, indicating even at that time the connection between covenantal law and redemption.
- Second, calling all nations to obedience. [Isaiah 49:6](#) – “Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’ ” (See also [42:6](#) and [1 Chronicles 16:24-25](#))
- Third, it was a spiritual service. [Deuteronomy 6:1-9](#); [Jeremiah 4:4](#) – “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem....”

Next then, we ask, “How are we ministers of the New Covenant?” Following the pattern God demanded of Israel, it is not hard to find the applications for us:

- First, walk in obedience to him. [John 14:15](#) – “If you love me, keep my commandments.”
- Second, call the nations to obedience. [Matthew 28:19](#)
- Third, serve in the power of the Spirit. [John 4:24](#) – “God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” [John 6:63](#) – “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life.” (See also [2 Cor 3](#); [Isa 11:2](#); [61:1](#); [Luke 4:17-21](#).)

# Conclusion

Before time God the Father initiated an everlasting covenant with God the Son to redeem creation, including an elect people. This covenant good news would be progressively revealed through historical covenants that God would make with men until the fullness of time when the Son came to perfectly manifest the will of the Father. The Son has been faithful to the terms of the covenant from eternity, securing for us the benefits of the Father's promises both to Him and to us. This he proclaims to us, and this we must proclaim to others.

The New Covenant is the most glorious revelation of God's grace so far (all that remains is the visible consummation). In reality, there is only one covenant <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> that one covenant the Father made with Christ before the foundations of the world that He would redeem by his own blood a remnant to Himself, trophies of the victory Christ would win over sin and death. May God grant us the ability to walk humbly before Him, that we may win the victor's crown and life everlasting.

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[1]All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), unless otherwise noted.

[2]Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Covenants*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1973), p. 24.

[3]Ibid., p. 23.

[4]Passages like this one are prime reasons why water should be applied to the person (not the other way around, as in immersion) in baptism, the sign of the new covenant, as well as explaining the significance of the sign.

[5]John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations*, vol X, trans./ed. John Owen, (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, n.d.; reprint ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 125.