



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## The New Covenant: God's Great Guarantee to His People

PASTOR ALEX CRAIN TEACHING FEBRUARY 4, 2016 PART 1

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**Jer. 31:31-34** *“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.”*

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“NOWHERE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT DO WE FIND ANY CLEARER MENTION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AS WE DO HERE.”

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (354-430 A.D.)

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### FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- FEBRUARY 11: JER. 31:31-34 *THE NEW COVENANT (PART 2)* BY PASTOR ALEX CRAIN
- FEBRUARY 18: ACTS 11:19-30 *A LEADERSHIP OF OTHERS-CENTERED LOVE*

### I. IMPORTANCE OF THE NEW COVENANT

Having a clear understanding of one's identity is essential. Just think of the first ideas that parents try to impress upon a child: (1) his name, (2) his parents' names, and (3) where they live. As horrifying as it is to think of losing a child, it's even worse to think of losing a child who has

no idea of his own name, or what family he belongs to, or where their home is. Sadly, some who think of themselves as Christians are in a similar condition. Without an understanding of the New Covenant and God's promises, they wander through life not having a clear sense of the identity that should guide them.

Why is the New Covenant so important? Consider first that the word "covenant" is interchangeable with the word "testament" ...as in "The New Testament."

The New Testament is, of course, the latter part of the Bible (consisting of 27 books) that reveals Jesus Christ as the promised Redeemer. It tells of His saving work of willingly laying down His life as the sacrificial "*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Christ was the sinless substitute who fully obeyed His Father's will. Salvation and forgiveness could not have been granted apart from a death penalty bearer (Isaiah 53, Acts 10:43, Romans 6, Second Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 9:22).

The cross not only satisfied God's judgment against sin, but it demonstrated His love. After His death and burial, Christ was *partially* vindicated by rising from the dead, ascending to Heaven, and continuing His work through Spirit-empowered followers. The church grew explosively in a way that can only be described as miraculous. Christ's followers had no military or political power. They experienced waves of intense persecution. Yet, Christians stand strong and continue to increase throughout the world to this day, testifying to the supernatural impact of Christ's resurrection and eventual return. Christ's *ultimate* vindication, according to the New Testament, will occur when He returns in power as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:6). His kingdom will never end and will be the ultimate governmental dream fulfilled: justice will be done, war will end, every citizen will flourish, and death will be no more. God is always faithful to His promises,

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### BIBLE STUDIES

THURSDAY @ 6:30 AM –PRAYER MEETING – GAB 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR EAST CONFERENCE ROOM

THURSDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – GAB 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR EAST CONFERENCE ROOM

# Virginia

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and the future of Christianity will prove to be just as true as its beginning.

### II. IDENTIFIED WITH THE NEW COVENANT

One other clue that indicates the huge significance of the New Covenant has to do with the way in which two key figures, Jesus and Paul, are identified so closely with the New Covenant. In Hebrews 12:24, Jesus is said to be "*the mediator of the New Covenant.*" Additionally, Jesus Himself, when speaking of the cup symbolizing His death on the cross, said in Luke 22:20, "*This is the New Covenant in My blood.*" The fact that Christ associated the term "*New Covenant*" with the crowning act of His earthly life, speaks volumes about the significance of the New Covenant and we should do all we can to understand it.

#### Question: What is a covenant?

As for the Apostle Paul, in Second Corinthians 3:6 he described himself as a "*minister of the New Covenant.*" Remember that Paul had formerly been a political rising star in his party, the Pharisees (Acts 7-9). He was an A-plus super-achiever who, if he had stayed on track, would have probably become "*the Teacher of Israel*", a position with great authority. When Paul was struck by the blinding truth that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, his Pharisee party membership was revoked and they sought to kill him. But those earthly honors that others counted as important became meaningless to Paul when compared with the value of knowing Christ (Philippians 3:4-9). Paul's clear understanding of God's true plan of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9) was precious to him. His awe at having union with Christ (Romans 8, Ephesians 1) fueled his mission as a minister of the New Covenant. He went on to shape an institution of far greater significance than the Pharisees.

Since Paul was well-trained in the Torah, Writings, and Prophets (i.e., the 39 Jewish books of the Bible that we

call "The Old Testament"), He was uniquely suited to be used by the Holy Spirit to explain how Jesus of Nazareth was, indeed, the Messiah and how the New Covenant included both Jewish and Gentile believers in accordance to Old Testament prophecy.

#### Question: What does God promise in the New Covenant?

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"I WILL PUT MY LAW WITHIN THEM, AND I WILL WRITE IT ON THEIR HEARTS." JEREMIAH 31:33

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### III. INTERNALLY CHANGED BY THE NEW COVENANT

This first promise leaps off the page when we think of what we bring to the table in salvation. Ephesians 2, Romans 3, and many other passages say that we are not merely sick spiritually. We are *dead*. We need to be called to life like Lazarus (John 11:43).

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"JESUS RAISES THE DEAD. THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR SALVATION IS TO BE SPIRITUALLY DEAD. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SMART, RICH, ATTRACTIVE, OR FUNNY. YOU JUST HAVE TO BE DEAD." ROBERT CAPON

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Titus 2:11-14 describes this transformative work as ongoing and progressive. Ezekiel 36:26 says, "*A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart ...and I will give you a heart of flesh.*" Note that Isaiah 56:3-8 predicted that this inner transformation included the Gentiles, as we saw last week in our study. Hadn't the Jewish believers in Acts 11 heard of Isaiah? Why was it such a big hurdle for them to accept the fact that God intended to include Gentiles?

Might this indicate we possibly have our own blind spots that future generations will wonder why we couldn't see?

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#### Questions to Ponder:

- 1) What blind spots might we have that future generations could possibly judge or find puzzling?
- 2) Have you been internally transformed with a new heart that is obvious to those opposing or above you?
- 3) What impact does it have on you to focus first on God's actions for you instead of trying to be good "for God?"