

New Covenant (summary) –

The New Covenant is the promise that God will forgive sin and restore fellowship with those whose hearts are turned toward Him. Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant, and His death on the cross is the basis of the promise ([Luke 22:20](#)). The New Covenant was predicted while the [Old Covenant](#) was still in effect—the prophets Moses, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all allude to the New Covenant.

The Old Covenant that God had established with His people required strict obedience to the Mosaic Law. Because the wages of sin is death ([Romans 6:23](#)), the Law required that Israel perform daily sacrifices in order to atone for sin. But Moses, through whom God established the Old Covenant, also anticipated the New Covenant. In one of his final addresses to the nation of Israel, Moses looks forward to a time when Israel would be given “a heart to understand” ([Deuteronomy 29:4, ESV](#)). Moses predicts that Israel would fail in keeping the Old Covenant (verses 22–28), but he then sees a time of restoration ([Deuteronomy 30:1–5](#)). At that time, Moses says, “The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live” (verse 6). The New Covenant involves a total change of heart so that God’s people are naturally pleasing to Him.

The prophet Jeremiah also predicted the New Covenant. “‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. . . . This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,’ declares the Lord. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people’” ([Jeremiah 31:31–33](#)). Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law of Moses ([Matthew 5:17](#)) and to establish the New Covenant between God and His people. The Old Covenant was written in stone, but the New Covenant is written on hearts. Entering the New Covenant is made possible only by faith in Christ, who shed His blood to take away the sins of the world ([John 1:29](#)). [Luke 22:20](#) relates how Jesus, at the Last Supper, takes the cup and says, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (ESV).

The New Covenant is also mentioned in [Ezekiel 36:26–27](#), “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” Ezekiel lists several

aspects of the New Covenant here: a new heart, a new spirit, the [indwelling Holy Spirit](#), and true holiness. The Mosaic Law could provide none of these things (see [Romans 3:20](#)).

The New Covenant was originally given to Israel and includes a promise of fruitfulness, blessing, and a peaceful existence in the [Promised Land](#). In [Ezekiel 36:28–30](#) God says, “Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. . . . I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine.” [Deuteronomy 30:1–5](#) contains similar promises related to Israel under the New Covenant. After the resurrection of Christ, God in His grace brought the Gentiles into the blessing of the New Covenant, too ([Acts 10](#); [Ephesians 2:13–14](#)). The fulfillment of the New Covenant will be seen in two places: on earth during the [Millennial Kingdom](#), and in heaven for all eternity.

We are no longer under the Law but under grace ([Romans 6:14–15](#)). The Old Covenant has served its [purpose](#), and it has been replaced by “a better covenant” ([Hebrews 7:22](#)). “In fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises” ([Hebrews 8:6](#)).

Under the New Covenant, we are given the opportunity to receive salvation as a free gift ([Ephesians 2:8–9](#)). Our responsibility is to exercise faith in Christ, the One who fulfilled the Law on our behalf and brought an end to the Law’s sacrifices through His own sacrificial death. Through the life-giving Holy Spirit who lives in all believers ([Romans 8:9–11](#)), we share in the inheritance of Christ and enjoy a permanent, unbroken relationship with God ([Hebrews 9:15](#)).

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At the [Last Supper](#), Jesus took a cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” ([Luke 22:20](#)). Moments before, the Lord had broken the bread and given it to His disciples with the words, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (verse 19). With these symbolic actions Jesus instituted the [ordinance of communion](#), or the Lord’s Table.

The “[new covenant](#)” that Jesus spoke of is in contrast to the [Old Covenant](#), the conditional agreement that God had made with the Israelites through Moses. The Old Covenant established laws and ceremonies that separated the Jews from the other nations, defined sin, and showcased God’s provision of forgiveness through sacrifice. The New Covenant was predicted in [Jeremiah 31:31–33](#).

The Old Covenant required [blood sacrifices](#), but it could not provide a final sacrifice for sin. The Old Covenant required repeated, daily sacrifices of animals as a reminder of the people’s sin. But, as Scripture says, “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” ([Hebrews 10:4](#)). Under the Old Covenant, the same inadequate sacrifices were constantly repeated. For every sin, the process was replicated, day after day, month after month, year after year. The Old Covenant never provided a full, complete sacrifice for sin. “For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second” ([Hebrews 8:7, ESV](#)).

Jesus came to establish a “better covenant” ([Hebrews 7:22](#)), a “new covenant” that Jesus said was in His blood. Jesus shed His blood on the cross to take away the sins of the world ([John 1:29](#)) and ratify the new covenant between God and man. On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took the cup and said to His disciples, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” ([Matthew 26:27–28](#)). By “this cup,” Jesus referred, by metonymy, to the contents of the cup, which was the “fruit of the vine” ([Mark 14:25](#)). This was representative of Christ’s blood. Jesus gave His disciples the cup, infusing it with new meaning, and told them drinking it was to be a memorial of His death: it was to be drunk “in remembrance of me” ([1 Corinthians 11:25](#)). Now, “whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (verse 26).

The New Covenant is based on faith in the shed blood of Christ to take away sin, not on repeated sacrifices or any other kind of work (see [Ephesians 2:8–9](#)). Because Jesus is the holy [Lamb of God](#), His one-time sacrifice is sufficient to atone for the sins of all who believe in Him. We “partake” of Jesus by coming to Him in faith ([John 1:12](#)), trusting that His shed blood (and broken body) is sufficient to pay for our sins. The elements of bread and wine commemorate His death and the shedding of His blood. When we eat those elements in communion with other believers, we affirm our faith and fellowship in Christ.