



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 8:1–13

“Hebrews and the New Covenant”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we approach Thee through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that Thou hast made it possible for us through him to access our great Triune God in heaven. We thank Thee for the word of God, put in our hands by Thy grace and through the preservation of the Holy Spirit. We thank Thee for its power. We thank Thee for the way that Thou hast used it in our lives and we rejoice in the blessings that are set forth for those who belong to Thee. We thank Thee for the covenants and the sacrifice of our Lord, and the priestly ministry, and all of the other things that give us such a solid foundation for the life that lies ahead of us. We thank Thee and praise Thee for goodness and mercy shown to each one of us and our family and our personal lives. We thank Thee for Believers Chapel and its ministries and we pray that Thou wilt continue to bless it, bless the ministry that is coming Sunday, both in the Sunday school and in the evening services and, especially, in the eleven o'clock service. We commit that to Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon it. And we ask, Lord, for those who are unable to be with us, due to serious physical problems; we commit them to Thee. We pray for them. And, Lord, we also pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon those who are in leadership, our President and others associated with him. Give wisdom and guidance. And we pray for the preservation of the United States of America as a free country and as a country in which it is possible for us to preach freely the good

news of the Gospel of Christ. And, Lord, we pray that Thou wilt now be with us as we study, again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, together.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We're coming, tonight, to the 8th chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the subject is, "The New Covenant." It would be, to my mind, much nicer if we were able to spend at least three times on "The New Covenant," because it is important and there are some interesting questions that arise from it. But, I think, it would probably be better to save that for some other time in which we would concentrate on it. And so tonight, we will look at the 8th chapter as a whole and hope to finish it.

Now, chapter 7, you may remember, laid great stress upon the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ and now, in chapter 8, we turn to the covenant and, of course, in turning to the covenant, the sacrifice is involved. But, primarily, the divine promises are set forth and so that will be the emphasis as we look at chapter 8. When we reach chapter 9, then, great stress will be upon the sacrifice and the divine redemption that flows from that, once-for-all, as our author puts it, once-for-all sacrifice.

We have said several times that the author of this epistle conceives of spirituality as access to God. We underline that in connection with the priesthood because he, himself, underlined it. You remember verse 19 of the preceding chapter, "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh to God." So access to God is one of the fundamental ideas of the author and, perhaps, is the idea that he conceives of as being central to spirituality; the privilege of access to God. Now, that's possible, he has told us, by priesthood or divine mediation, sacrifice or divine redemption, and covenant or the divine promises.

Now, in chapter 8 in verse 12, he will say, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Those that is the climax of the divine

promises. So what he is going to lay stress on will be the covenant and the sacrifice and the full redemption that is involved in that.

Many years ago, I read a little book by F. W. Boreham, a New Zealander or Australian man who lived in New Zealand for many years, in ministry and in one of his very interesting articles that he wrote, he told a story of Ebenezer Wooten, an earnest but eccentric evangelist, who was conducting a series of summer evening services in the village green in England, at Lindford Brook. “The last meeting had been held, the crowd was melting slowly away and the evangelist was engaged in taking down the marquee,” he said. I assume that’s something like a tent. It is what he had set up on Lindford Brook in order to conduct the meetings. “And, as he was engaged in taking it down, a young man approached him and asked rather more casually than earnestly, ‘Mr. Wooten, what must I do to be saved?’ And the preacher looked up, kind of took his measure of the young man,” so Mr. Boreham said. “And replied to the young man, ‘Too late.’ And he said it, in a matter of fact kind of way, glancing up from some obstinate tent peg with which he was struggling. ‘Too late, my friend. Too late.’”

Well, the young fellow was startled out of his indifference and he said, ‘Oh, don’t say that, Mr. Wooten.’ A new note of pleading coming into his voice. ‘Surely, it’s not too late just because the meetings are over?’ ‘Yes, my friend,’ the evangelist said, dropping the cord in his hand, straightening up, looking right into the face of the questioner. ‘It’s too late. You want to know what you must do to be saved, and I tell you, you’re hundreds of years too late. The work of salvation is done. Finished. It was finished on the cross. Jesus said so with the last breath that he drew. What more do you want?’”

And then, he said, it dawned on the young man, on the village green, about the same time it dawned upon young Hudson Taylor, in the hayloft, many of you remember Hudson Taylor’s conversion. That quite, from what Mr. Taylor said concerning his conversion, as he thought about the finished work of Christ since the whole work was finished, and the whole debt paid upon the cross, there was nothing for him to do but fall down upon his knees and accept the Savior. And

there, under the elms at Lindford Brook, so Mr. Boreham said, “The young man bowed his head and in thanksgiving, rested his soul for time and eternity on the finished work of Christ.” In the story of Hudson Taylor, usually, at that point, a stanza is cited, which expresses that idea. “Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, another’s life another’s death, I stake my whole eternity.”

Well, that summarizes the finished work of Christ and that is what we have here in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and we will talk about the forgiveness and no more fear as a result of what Christ has done, in a moment.

Well, Hebrews, then, hangs upon three great scriptural utterances; Psalm 110, verse 4, which speaks of the new priesthood and provides the divine mediation. Then Psalm 40, verse 7 through verse 9, we have not come to that yet, we’ll come to that in chapter 10 which speaks of a new sacrifice, providing divine redemption. And then Jeremiah 31:31 through 37, which has to do with the New Covenant providing promises of a full and final forgiveness.

Well, the new priesthood has been discussed in chapter 7, and so now he turns to the New Covenant. He did mention it previously in chapter 7 in verse 22, he wrote, “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament,” or a better covenant. But now, he’s going to pick that up for further treatment and from here on he will mention the term “covenant” about sixteen times. So you can see that this has become, this will become a big part of the central part of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

One thing we might note of a kind of a technical nature and you don’t have to remember this, but there were two terms for covenant. One, as you can see, I’ll pronounce them and you can see they are somewhat, they sound somewhat alike because the fundamental root of the word is different. One is the noun, *suntheke*, and the other is, *diatheke*. And the *theke*, which comes from another word, is the same thing in both of these words. *suntheke* was a term that referred, in the Old Testament, to agreements and also had reference to covenants. But the covenants that *suntheke* referred to, generally, were covenants in which the two parties had obligations, not necessarily equal obligations but obligations. Each one of them had obligations. And it was the more common word.

diatheke was a different word and, in ancient times, it generally referred to a will. And, of course, a man's will is not something that depends upon obligations on the part of two people. You cannot think of receiving the benefits of someone's will as an obligation. That's a benefit that you have and it's something you receive by the will of the person who has died and, in his will, has conveyed property to you.

Now, it's very interesting that the former word, the word that has to do with an agreement in which two people have obligations that is passed over when we come to discussing the New Covenant in New Testament times. And what the author is stressing by the use of it is that the New Covenant is a covenant in which only one person has obligation and that is the Lord God. It is an unconditional kind of covenant. So when we think of the covenant we should note the New Covenant, we should not think of God as having obligation and then of ourselves as having obligation. It is a one-way disposition of the benefits, which the Lord Jesus Christ has won for us. And so it is a covenant of grace now, I think, you can see that if it is unconditional and comes from one person, one mighty person, who has all of the power to carry out all of his determinations then that is a gracious covenant.

Well now, the author writes in verse 1 and verse 2 about the superior sanctuary in which, the Savior carries on his ministry. He says, “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the.” Now, if you, how many of you, I'm interested, how many of you have the Authorized Version. I see a number of you have the Authorized Version. It's amazing how many people live in past time. No, I was just kidding. But the Authorized Version was a great version, but there are some mistakes in it and some places where it's not really what it should be and this is one of the places where a correction should be made. We read here, “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum.” But that word does not really mean “sum.” It means something like “chief point.” And so let's take it in that sense, because he's not summarizing everything that is being said. As a matter of fact, there's another slight error there, also because we have the past tense. “Now of the things we have spoken.” But in the original text, it's in the present tense. He's talking about the things of

which he is speaking. So the chief point of the things we are speak is this. The chief point? What’s the chief point? Well, he’s telling us what is the most significant fact that has been brought out to this point. And it is this.

“We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched [not Moses, see]. The Lord pitched and not man.”

So this is the superior sanctuary. So he hesitates for a moment in the development of his thought, to help us keep an eye on the main point the chief point of what he’s talking about.

And, to summarize it, it’s something like this. The chief point is we have a priest, who has sat down, and not only that, but who also is a minister of the heavenly sanctuary. So we have a seated priest; not a constantly occupied priest, carrying out his work as if it’s never finished. He will lay great stress on that in the next chapter, in chapter 10. But we have a seated priest; that is, his sacrifice is over. The propitiation has been accomplished. The satisfaction to the holiness and righteousness of God has been rendered and, on the basis of the value of that sacrifice, he is ministering in the true sanctuary. So the chief point concerns not simply that he has sat down, but he has sat down and he is ministering in the sanctuary. Now, he’s just been talking about him as a high priest, so it is not surprising to say that he’s there and he’s ministering. So the chief point, then, is a seated priest, within the veil remember, there were two veils two that kept the people out, one that kept Aaron out, except on the one day of the year. But now, this priest is within the holiest of all and he’s ministering for us. And he is the one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of Majesty in the heavens.

I must confess, every time I come to this, I think of an incident that happened in Believers Chapel when we were in the schoolhouse, before we had completed this building. And I was standing up front in the Betty Hoffman Auditorium, which was, I believe, something like their gym,

but it was particularly characterized by the fact that on the blank wall behind there were dancing girls that they had put up on the wall. So we preached out of that context for some years there. But one of the mornings when I was talking about our Lord being at the right hand of the Majesty on High, afterwards, there was a little boy his name was Tykeon Hesse, and he was sitting on the second row, and as I was speaking he was right there. I'm sorry, he was right there, on that side. And, immediately, after I had given the benediction, he came right up to me and he said, “Dr. Johnson? Who's sitting on the left hand of the throne of God?” [Laughter] Very typical of kids, isn't it? He'd probably thought of that for a long time. Our Lord's on the right hand, who's on the left hand? And, through the years, when I've taught Hebrews at the seminary, I've made reference to that. Seminary students always got a big kick out of that, because they know what it is to be asked strange questions. Well, that was one I've never heard anyone else ask. He was about eight years old at the time. So a seated priest, ministering in the sanctuary in the presence of God where he serves. And, remember now, this is not only where our Lord serves, but this is where he seeks to bring us, because he said back in chapter 7, verse 19, “By which we draw near to God,” and so the purpose of his ministry there is that we be brought to God, within the sanctuary.

It should not be the experience of believing Christians to enter heaven, for the first time, at their death. It should be an experience that we have, in the true spiritual significance of this, constantly. We are to live in the sanctuary, by faith, of course. But our lives are to be lived in the light of what God seeks to do through the Lord Jesus Christ for us. Heaven should not be a totally strange place to us, when we have come in the physical sense. So that's the superior sanctuary. This is the sanctuary, the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man. But now, talking about the service, he says, in verse 3 through verse 6, these words.

“For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.”

You remember, in the preceding chapter, he said the Lord Jesus could not be a priest because he came from the wrong tribe; he came from Judah and not from Levi. Well, he alludes to this, “For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.” The Levitical priests who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, that is, their ministry is a typical ministry. Now, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle, “‘For see,’ saith he, ‘that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.’” Now, that’s a quotation from the Old Testament about Exodus chapter 40 in verse 5, as I remember, in which Moses is given instructions for the building of the Tabernacle. So he had, evidently, seen a model of it or picture of it, and he is to construct it in accordance with the pattern that was shown him in the mount. But now, turning to our Lord, hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. So as a priest, he must offer, every priest carries out his work by virtue of a sacrifice. That’s what priests do. They offer sacrifices. We offer sacrifices as priests. The sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving and the gifts of our financial means directed by the Lord God. This writer will, again, mention that in chapter 13. So we are priests and we are occupied with sacrifices, too, but not the sacrifices to take away sin. That has been, now, of course, done for us.

So he goes on to say, every priest must have gifts and sacrifices. He must have somewhat to offer also. So what sacrifice does he offer? In what does he minister? Well, he has offered the once-and-for-all sacrifice and he ministers in the light of the eternal value of the sacrifice that has been made.

Now, he talks about them as “serving the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle.” There are some interesting things that have been said among by the Rabbis concerning the fact that Moses was shown a picture of the tabernacle. And the Rabbis have, of course, constructed a lot of fantastic things. I just know

that most of it is not true because Charlton Heston, when he went up on the mount, he didn't see anything like this, at all, and so that pretty much settles the question as far as we are concerned.

[Laughter]

No, you don't like that, I know, but nevertheless, some of the Rabbis had said that a model was shown to Moses, and there were biblical critics that said it was still standing on Mount Sinai. But no one ever has reported that. And so we are not going to pay too much attention to that.

Notice the 6th verse, “But now he hath obtained a more excellent ministry.” What does his ministry consist of? Well, of course, it consists in the better covenant, and then in the better promises that the covenant has offered to us, sovereignly, by the Lord God, the chief of which, as he will point out, is the forgiveness of our sins. This covenant is mediated by the Son of God, who dies. Notice chapter 9, verse 15, on this point, “And for this cause, he is the mediator of a new covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance.” So the better covenant has better promises, the chief of them being forgiveness. And they are mediated to us through the Son of God who dies to secure them for us.

Job in chapter 9 in verse 33, of his book, makes an interesting statement which you are familiar with, I know. Job is talking about the Lord God and he says, “For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us,” no mediator between us, that is between the Lord God and us, “that might lay his hand upon us both.” That is, it might represent God and that might represent man at the same time.

And, now, of course, as Paul tells us, there is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus. Isn't it interesting? “The man, Christ Jesus,” is the mediator, because he is the divine Son, who also possesses a true and full human nature. So the more excellent ministry, which he mentions, which he ministers then, has as its chief blessing the forgiveness of our sins.

Now, there are four questions that need answering at this point. And I'm going to summarize what I would like to spend a long time on, but we'll just have to summarize it. Four

questions, the four questions are these. First of all, what is this “better covenant?” Well now, we’ve had covenants in the Bible, if we’ve been reading along in the Bible and you know, of course, there are a number of individual covenants that are made. For example, Jonathan and David have a covenant between themselves. And when we think of the covenants of the Scriptures, fundamentally, there stands out, first of all, the Abrahamic Covenant, which is a covenant under which you and I receive salvation, ultimately. Then we also know that up to this point, in the Old Testament, there comes the Davidic Covenant made by the Lord God with David. And certain promises are made to David, which are also inviolable promises; that covenant too being an unconditional covenant. And then in Jeremiah chapter 31, also in Ezekiel and mentioned in Jeremiah in more than one place, is this covenant that is called the New Covenant. It’s the last of Israel’s covenants, which provides the redemptive basis for the Abrahamic, the Palestinian, I didn’t mention that a minute ago because it’s not very important the Davidic Covenants.

In other words, in those other two covenants the Abrahamic and Davidic God says, he tells us what he is going to do, and what he is going to do in an unconditional way. But the question might arise, on what grounds is God going to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant and on what grounds is he going to fulfill the Davidic Covenant? It would raise the question of redemption because those that had any spiritual understanding would know that it would not be possible for God to give an unconditional covenant to sinners, if some provision were not made for their sin, being a holy and righteous God he must make provision for their sin, if he is to convey blessings to them. And so it raises the question of, on what grounds are those promises to Abraham and David to be fulfilled? Well, the New Covenant does begin the explanation of the grounds upon which those promises are to be made ours in the Abrahamic and the Davidic Covenant because this covenant has to do with redemption. And he states at the end of it, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” And it’s this covenant, of course, that our Lord ratifies in his death on Calvary’s cross; explaining what was transpiring beforehand, at the Lord’s Supper, when he takes the cup and says, “This cup is the New Covenant, in my blood, which is shed for many, for the redemption of their sins.” So the

significance of the Lord’s Supper, which is constantly before us as we observe it, is the significance of a completed redemption, which in effect makes it possible for the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants also to have the certainty and assurance of their ultimate fulfillment, as well.

So the first question, “What is this better covenant?” Well, it’s the last of the three great unconditional covenants, and like the term kingdom, the words New Covenant are defined by the Old Testament, itself. If we want to know what the New Covenant is, we have to turn back to Jeremiah chapter 31, and read what it says. It’s new in the sense that it’s fresh and it contains the freshness of the redemptive promises that go with the historical development of the plan of redemption.

Now, the second question that arises is, “What are the better promises?” Well, they are recorded here in verse 8 through verse 12, so let’s just read these verses through. “For finding fault with them,” well, I guess I really ought to read verse 7, because we didn’t read that.

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”

By the way, notice immediately that when we read here, “Behold, the days come,” this is cited from Jeremiah 31:31 through 34, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant.” You notice the person who takes the initiative in these great promises is the Lord God, himself. It’s he who brings up the covenant. So far as we know, Israel never cried out, “Lord, how can you possibly fulfill the Abrahamic promises or the Davidic promises to us, who are sinners?” And so here, in the quotation from Jeremiah, we have again, the initiative and it is said to be the Lord God, himself.

Now, notice he says, “When I will make a new covenant,” this is verse 8, “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” Now, any kind of understanding of the New Covenant must

bear in mind that it is, fundamentally, a covenant made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Do you get that? Do you see this? It's underlined. “The house of Israel and the house of Judah.” How do you get in? I don't see too many physical characteristics that might mark you out as belonging to that elect company? Some of you might qualify. But this covenant is for the house of Israel and the house of Judah. So how do you participate in that?

You can see how important it is for us to seek to understand that. Of course, we can say, the Lord Jesus said, “This is the New Covenant,” and the apostles come along and underline that and Gentiles seem to possess the blessing of it. But I would like to know how I qualify. So let me go on and finish.

“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; [What covenant was that? Well, that was the Mosaic Covenant.] Because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not,’ saith the Lord. ‘For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days.’ [Notice again, the covenant is made with the house of Israel.] Saith the Lord, ‘I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.’”

In other words, there will be what a friend of mine has called, “A new inner control center in the individuals who are the inheritors of this covenant.” A new inner control center. Well, that's a scientific term I've got lots of scientific terms, you know, kind of like my friend [rattles pages] that I think of, too, to make the points. It's a scientific term but all it means is regeneration, because that is the new inner control center: regeneration. So the person who's been regenerated is the person who's had the laws of God put in his mind and written in their hearts. Now, we go on.

“And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know me,

from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

So what are the better promises? This is our second question. Well, they are recorded here in verses 8 through 12, and they center, particularly, in the forgiveness of sins and in the divine enablement.

Now, if you study these promises in the light of the promises made to Abraham now, not just in Genesis 12:1 through 3, but the promises that are repeated over and over again, and occasionally expanded. And then, the promises that were given to David, and not just the ones in 2 Samuel 7, but the way in which some expansions in the terminology is made, through the Old Testament, you will come to the conclusion, if you compare what is said in the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31, with those promises that essentially the New Covenant is a repetition of the Abrahamic and the Davidic promises. It's essentially a repetition of them. There is some expansion and we do have the expansion of “their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.” But what this is is really a fresh or a renewal we would call it, of Abrahamic and Davidic covenants with the addition of the redemptive ground of those particular covenants. So the second question then is, “What are the better promises?” They are the better promises of the Abrahamic, the Davidic, and the expansions of the New Covenant, together, centering in the forgiveness of our sins.

The third question is this now, I've already underlined this by what I've been saying but we'll have to give it, because I said I was going to give the four questions. The third question is, “With whom was the New Covenant made?” Well, it's very plain. The Old Testament says that covenant was made with Israel and with Judah. We have here, “the house of Israel and the house of Judah.” And then, over here, again, we have reference made to that that it was to the house of Israel verse 10, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel.” So with whom is the New Covenant made? Well, it's made with the house of Israel, the house of Judah and repeated here, “the house of Israel.”

Now, there is a reason why the author would have thought of this because after all, he’s talking, remember, to Hebrew professing believers, and he’s seeking to deliver them from the danger, which he was afraid they were faced with, of departing from the faith that they had professed. And so what better way to bring them back than to remind them, these Hebrew believers, these Hebrew professing believers of the great covenant that Jeremiah was given, by the Lord God, for the house of Israel and the house of Judah. So that’s why, I think, that he lays stress upon this New Covenant.

But now, if it is true, that the New Covenant is essentially a repetition with some slight expansion of the Abrahamic and Davidic promises and almost all of the evangelical New Testament scholars, I think, have come or are coming to that general position then we understand how Gentiles might also be the recipients of those promises, Gentile believers. Because, first of all, you remember, the promises were made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah but not to them as unbelievers. Paul makes it very plain in Romans chapter 9, “Not all who are of Israel are Israel.”

Now, he doesn’t mean that Gentiles may be Israelites. That isn’t what he means. “Not all who are of Israel are Israel,” there were Gentiles in Israel, too. No that would make nonsense of the Bible; to read the term “Israel” and then say that this is a reference to Gentiles that’s what our millennial friends like to say, but they have fundamentally misunderstood that statement. What Paul is talking about is “Not all who are of Israel, are Israel,” in the sense of Gentiles who believe. He’s saying there are two kinds of Israelites. That is, there are believing Israelites and there are unbelieving Israelites. He’s not talking about Gentiles at all. That’s evident from Romans, chapter 9. “Not all who are of Israel are Israel,” in the sense of an Israelite who is a true believer. These are the ones who obtain the promises. Unbelieving Israelites don’t obtain the promises. The promises were never given to unbelieving people in the sense of God’s guarantee that they would be brought to faith in the Lord. Do we get that? Do we understand that? Not all who are of Israel, that is, all who may be called Israelites, are not the believing Israelite that receives the promises of the Lord God.

So with whom then was the New Covenant made? It’s made with Israel, the house of Israel, the house of Judah. But, of course, it’s made with believing members of the house of Israel and the

house of Judah. People like Isaiah and Jeremiah and Hosea and Paul and Peter and John and the early church, composed almost entirely of believing Jewish people, in the early days on for example, the Day of Pentecost. So then, with whom then was the New Covenant made? With Israel but with believing Israel.

Fourth, well how then is the Church of Jesus Christ or believing Gentiles, how are they related? It looks like we've been excluded. Doesn't it? Well, if you were to look simply at these verses here, you might have reason for saying that. It looks like we've been excluded. This covenant is made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. But if you will look at the fundamental Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant together, as a covenantal program, you will know, you will surely know that in the Abrahamic Covenant provision was made for Gentile believers. Do you remember? Genesis chapter 12, verse 1 through verse 3. Well, this is what we read, for those of you that have forgotten.

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

“In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” In the Abrahamic Covenant, provision is made for Gentile salvation. Do you understand that? You see, what we are dealing with is a God who has made fundamental promises directed to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac, confirmed to Jacob. Then the Davidic promise is made to King David of the house Judah, and now, the New Covenant, a renewing of that covenant with redemptive ground given. And the reason that you and I are able to enter into the blessings of that covenant are purely the divine grace manifested, “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

It'd be nice, if we had time to turn to Romans chapter 11, and note how Paul in Romans chapter 11, makes it so plain that what God is dealing with is, he's still dealing with Israel, the house of Israel and the house of Judah, but provision is made for Gentiles who are, what's the term that he uses? What's the figure of speech that he uses in Romans chapter 11? Grafted! Grafted into the olive tree. That's the term that he uses in the chapter in which he, ultimately, will say, "All Israel shall be saved." "Grafted in." So that's how you poor Gentiles get in. You better be thankful, better be thankful for that last line of those Abrahamic promises and thankful for the way the history of divine redemption underlines the fact that God has been, down through the years, grafting into that line of the promises, people like you and like me. So to answer the third question, then, with whom was the New Covenant made? It's made with Israel.

Now, then, that raises the question I've partially answered. How, then, is the Church related to the New Covenant? Now, different answers have been given to this. And, as a matter of fact, in discussions we can read individuals who are seeking to support one or another of these viewpoints. For example, our amillennialists, our friends among them have taken the view that the Church and Israel are really one. That the Church is Israel and Israel is the Church. Hence, all the redeemed participate in it in the same way. And there are some plausible reasons that a person might give if he hasn't heard that excellent, excellent exposition that I've already given to you you might be fooled by that.

Some of our premillennial brethren have divorced the Church from the New Covenant of Jeremiah and have posited a new New Covenant. That was they found themselves in some difficulty at a particular time because if they said we inherit those promises, a person would say, "Ah, but those promises were made, the New Covenant was made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. That just leaves you out, doesn't it?" And Dr. Chafer, at the Seminary, later, followed by Charles Ryrie, thought that one way out of that would be to say that there were two New Covenants. One New Covenant made for the house of Israel and the house of Judah; and then, our Lord, ratifying a second New Covenant and this new covenant made for both Jews and Gentiles. But that cannot be.

It was the Council of Despair, as exegetes like to say about something that's obviously a strained interpretation to get over a difficulty they don't quite understand. All of us who have exegeted Scripture have fallen into that trap and I don't want to say that I am infallible like our friend [rustles papers] but so, I have made my share of mistakes too and will, no doubt, continue to make a few. I hope there are just a few in the future. I try to steer clear of things that I'm not fairly or reasonably, sure about.

But at any rate, just think about it for a moment, when the Lord Jesus takes the cup and says, “This is the New Covenant,” how in the world would they understand this to be anything but the New Covenant of Jeremiah, chapter 31? We learn that the way we interpret the terms of the New Testament is by finding them in the Old Testament. They are the clues that we obtain to understand them.

The term “kingdom” is a term that is defined by the Old Testament. The term “covenant” is defined by the Old Testament. And “New Covenant” is defined by Jeremiah 31. It would be most confusing if that were true; that there are two New Covenants. There would be no way to determine that, other than just the statement that there are two New Covenants. So that's largely abandoned now and that interpretation is no longer valid. So what I have sought to do is to give you what, I think, is the true interpretation of the New Covenant. It is the New Covenant of Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 31 through verse 34, but that New Covenant, connected with the covenantal program, Abrahamic, Davidic and New, since the promises are essentially the same, as we will see. If you study those three covenants, then in the beginning in Genesis chapter 12, verse 3, provision was made for Gentile believers. And in the Old Testament, any Gentile person was free to come and become a part of the nation Israel providing, of course, in his case, he underwent if he was a male he underwent circumcision. He could become an Israelite in that way.

So then the answer then to the fourth question, “How then is the Church related to the New Covenant,” well, the Church, that is, the believing Gentiles as well as Jews, are in view when those three covenants are made, and we as Gentiles, specifically, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are

grafted into the the figure grafted into the olive tree, representative of the nation Israel. Grafted into them, and as Gentiles, we partake of the promises that were made to Abraham, to David, and through Jeremiah to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Now, there are many other things that could be said about that but we don't have time to do that. Let me go on to read through well, to speak just for a moment about the last part of this particular chapter. Verse 13 is a kind of conclusion and so we 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.” Now, the purpose of this is to illustrate and underline the fact that the covenant, which Israel thought so highly of, the Mosaic Covenant, is a covenant that has been done away with. Notice he said in verse 8, “For finding fault with them.” Well, I should read verse 7, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them.” Notice, it's not the covenant that had fault. The Mosaic Covenant was a wonderful covenant, unfortunately, it was addressed to people that were sinners, and so they couldn't keep its provisions. So “finding fault with them,” because they are sinners, God's promises would not be ours, if they depended upon sinless individuals receiving them. We could not qualify. So finding fault with them, he said, “Behold, the days come,’ saith the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant, verse 9, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.”

So now, speaking to these Hebrew professing believers, who are in danger of going back into Judaism, what he has in effect told them is, if you go back into Judaism, you go back to live under a covenant that has already been proven to be insufficient for the salvation of your soul. It is a failure. A failure because of you and what you need is the New Covenant, of divine redemption, promised by the Lord God. And to underline it, he said you remember, he said, with reference to the priesthood, “Thou art a priest after the order of Melchizedek.” And he argued, if there is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who is an eternal priest, and who enters his office by virtue of the oath of God, then the Mosaic priesthood is done away with. The Mosaic priesthood was a fallible

priesthood fallible men. But here is a priest, “The Lord has sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” That effectively says that the Mosaic Covenant would be done away with, concerning the priesthood.

Now, the same thing is said here. He says, “In that a new covenant,” is promised by Jeremiah, “what does that say about the Mosaic Covenant?” It says, there is a time coming when the Mosaic Covenant will be done away with. And we know that that time has come. And when our Lord died on Calvary’s cross, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, from top to bottom, signifying just that very fact that men do not live under the Mosaic Covenant, are not intended to live under the Mosaic Covenant, but are intended through the New Priest, who has offered the final sacrifice, to live in harmony with the promises of the New Covenant. So the one word that he’s interested in, “In that he saith new.” Incidentally, just the adjective is used. The covenant is added in the Authorized Version you can tell by the Italics. “In that he’s saith, a new,” he’s made the first oath.

So to illustrate, so you went out, six months ago and bought yourself a nice new computer, and you thought it was so wonderful. You brought it home, you put it on your desk or whatever, and you set it up and you said, “I am really set now.” For how long? Well, until the time you open up the paper, not many weeks thereafter, and you read the company has put out a new model. And now, instead of having one with what, forty megabytes of memory, it’s now offering a computer with one hundred and twenty, two hundred and forty, or whatever; and you’ve already used up all of your memory and you’re in horrible straights and you’ve wasted your money, you feel. The term “new” has made yours old. And that’s precisely what he says. He says when he said, “new covenant” that means the old was going to be done away with. Jeremiah is responsible for that. He brought out the new edition and the new edition made the Mosaic Covenant old. “Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”

So let me close in just a couple of minutes. What then is the practical significance of this; if the New Covenant is for us? What does it mean? Well, first of all, it means that we have received grace that provides forgiveness and communion.

Notice the 10th verse, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. Communion between the Father and the members of the covenantal family. That, incidentally, that little statement is repeated in all of the covenants, because it’s the covenantal blessing. “I will be to them a God, they shall be to me a people.” And so by virtue of the New Covenant, we have received grace that provides forgiveness and communion.

Oliver Lodge used to say, “The modern man is not worrying about his sins, still less about their forgiveness.” I think that is true. It’s sadly true, “Modern man is not worrying about his sins and even less about their forgiveness.”

I was, yesterday, in San Angelo, for the graveside service of Helen Helping and a number of people gathered around. It was quite a nice crowd of people who had come to pay their respects to Helen. And, incidentally, she left a fragrant, spiritual odor in her family; and to see her children, two young men, particularly, who have been growing in their knowledge of the Lord, was very encouraging to see other members of the family who had responded to the Gospel. I’m sure, largely by Helen and Art’s prayers, but as I looked out over the audience, I now know most of them attended churches in which the Gospel of the Lord Jesus is not often preached. And it’s not pressed upon them very much. But around the casket, I gave the Gospel message and I could tell that this was something that they hadn’t anticipated hearing at the funeral service. Art came up to me afterwards and said, “Well, I think you said exactly what needed to be said,” and that’s why he wanted me to go all the way out to San Angelo to conduct the services. When I finished, I told Martha today, “I understand now why he was pressing me so to go out there and conduct those graveside services.”

Modern man ought to be worried about his sins, for he’s not worried about them. And he’s not thinking about forgiveness because he has the idea so many preachers today have that Universalism is, ultimately, the doctrine of God, and everybody is, ultimately, going to be saved.

I say only one thing. I'd like for you to notice, if you read through here, you will notice the divine word standing behind the promises. I'll just note them quickly, for our time is up. Verse 10, “I will put my laws into their mind.” Verse 10, “I will be to them a God.” Verse 10, “They shall be to me a people.” Verse 12, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness.” Verse 12, “I will,” or, “will I remember no more.”

God's sovereign activity in the fulfilling of all of his promises; that is, the promise of the word of God. All of us who have the forgiveness of our sins have them, not because we have done something, fundamentally, it's because God has persevered, in bringing us, by his grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to the knowledge of ourselves as sinners, and then has brought us face to face with the promises of God, caused us to acknowledge our need of them, and to flee to Christ as our redeeming Savior. I hope that's the experience of all of you in this auditorium.

Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word and for the promises of it. We thank Thee for the marvelous way in which Thou hast sovereignly carried out the divine program of salvation throughout history. And we have confidence, Lord, that Thou will complete it to the glory of the Triune God. We praise Thee for Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

And we pray in his name. Amen.