

Kingdom and Covenant in the New Testament

Study Guide

LESSON
THREE

THE NEW COVENANT



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STUDY GUIDE

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How to use this lesson and study guide

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Preparation** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule breaks** — Review the outline and the time codes to determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions in the outline.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Notes** — Use the Notes section to follow the lesson and to take additional notes. Many of the main ideas are already summarized in the notes, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Review Questions** — Questions on the basic content of the lesson. Answer review questions in the space provided. Review questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Application Questions** — Questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Outline

- I. Introduction (0:20)
- II. Kingdom Administration (1:32)
 - A. Covenant Representatives (6:16)
 - 1. Old Testament (7:16)
 - 2. New Covenant (9:00)
 - B. Appropriate Policies (10:56)
 - 1. Old Testament (11:52)
 - 2. New Covenant (13:39)
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 - 2. New Covenant (23:14)
- III. Dynamics of Interaction (29:55)
 - A. Divine Benevolence (32:09)
 - 1. Old Testament (33:30)
 - 2. New Covenant (37:15)
 - B. Tests of Loyalty (43:11)
 - 1. Old Testament (46:35)
 - 2. New Covenant (49:16)
 - C. Consequences (58:21)
 - 1. Old Testament (58:54)
 - 2. New Covenant (1:01:36)
- IV. Conclusion (1:08:51)

Notes

I. Introduction

II. Kingdom Administration

Both "*berith*" (Hebrew) and "*diatheke*" (Greek) mean "covenant" or "a solemn agreement or pact."

In the Bible, there are covenants between:

- Peers
- Kings and their citizens
- Kings and other kings
- God with nations and people

Many scholars have compared biblical covenants with a group of ancient Near Eastern documents called "suzerain-vassal treaties."

In these treaties, suzerains, or great kings, administered their kingdoms through treaties with vassals, or lesser kings under their authority.

A. Covenant Representatives

God administers his kingdom by making covenants through men whom he chose to represent his covenant people.

1. Old Testament

Covenant representative in Old Testament times:

- Adam (Genesis 1-3; Hosea 6:7)
- Noah (Genesis 6:18, 9:9-17)
- Abraham (Genesis 15 and 17)
- Moses (Exodus 19-24)
- David (Psalms 89 and 132)

Covenants with Adam and Noah are “universal covenants” because these men represented all human beings as God’s covenant people.

Covenants with Abraham, Moses and David are “national covenants” because they represented Israel and the Gentiles adopted into Israel.

2. New Covenant

Christ is the new covenant representative (Hebrews 9:15; Romans 8:34; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

New Testament theology is closely tied to the person and work of Christ ("Christocentric").

B. Appropriate Policies

The policies of God’s covenants were designed for specific issues that were important at different stages of biblical history.

1. Old Testament

Policies relevant for particular stages of God's kingdom:

- Covenant of foundations:
 - God's covenant with Adam
 - Emphasized the goals of God's kingdom
 - Emphasized the role of human beings before and after the Fall

- Covenant of stability:
 - God's covenant with Noah
 - Focused on nature's stability as the secure environment where sinful humanity could serve God's kingdom purposes

- Covenant of Israel's election:
 - God's covenant with Abraham
 - Focused on the privileges and responsibilities of Israel as God's chosen people

- Covenant of law:
 - God's covenant with Moses
 - Focused on God's law as he unified the tribes of Israel into a nation

- Covenant of kingship:
 - God's covenant with David
 - Established Israel as a genuine kingdom
 - Emphasized how David's royal dynasty was to lead Israel in kingdom service

2. New Covenant

Covenant of fulfillment:

- Comes in the last period of biblical history

- Established policies to reverse the failures of the past and fulfill God's kingdom purposes in Christ (Jeremiah 31:31).

God revealed the policies of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

God called Israel to move beyond outward association with his covenants and circumcise their hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4).

Jesus taught that the new covenant age would unfold over time in three stages:

- Inauguration — In Christ's first advent, he fulfilled many but not all expectations of the new covenant.
- Continuation — Period between Christ's first and second advents where Jesus fulfills more new covenant expectations through his church.
- Consummation — At Christ's second advent, every expectation of the new covenant will be fulfilled.

New Testament theology was devoted to explaining the policies of the new covenant as it unfolded in these three stages.

New Testament authors had to adjust expectations for life in the new covenant (Matthew 6:12; 1 John 1:9; 2 Corinthians 11:13; Galatians 2:4).

C. Organic Development

Each Old Testament covenant had different covenant representatives and policies but there was organic unity despite these changes.

1. Old Testament

The policies of the covenants continued in force throughout Old Testament history from Adam to David.

2. New Covenant

The organic development of covenants that began in the Old Testament continued with the new covenant in Christ.

The new covenant is a renewed national covenant with the descendants of Abraham and the Gentiles adopted into his family.

The new covenant renewed, rebuilt, renovated or refreshed the policies that God had established in previous covenants.

Every dimension of New Testament theology incorporates and builds on the theology of the Old Testament.

III. Dynamics of Interaction

God determined how the dynamics of his covenants would come to fruition.

God's interactions with his people are often beyond human comprehension, but his ways are always good and wise (Deuteronomy 29:29, Isaiah 55:8-9, Job, Ecclesiastes).

A. Divine Benevolence

1. Old Testament

God's benevolence both initiated and sustained the relationships established by his covenants.

God showed kindness to each covenant representative and to the people they represented:

- Adam in the covenant of foundations

- Noah in the covenant of stability

- Abraham in the covenant of Israel's election

- Moses in the covenant of law

- David in the covenant of kingship

2. New Covenant

The New Testament displays God's benevolence toward Christ (Matthew 3:16-17, 12:18, 28:18; Luke 3:22; Acts 2:31-33; Romans 8:11).

The New Testament focuses on union with Christ.

The believer's union with Christ is two-fold:

- "In Christ": The people of the new covenant are identified with Christ in God's heavenly court (Ephesians 1:13).
- "Christ in us": Christ is present and at work within believers through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:10-11).

The New Testament teaches that, prior to Christ's return, God shows common grace to all people in the visible church.

B. Tests of Loyalty

God tested the loyalty of his people in *every* biblical covenant, including the new covenant.

1. Old Testament

God tested the loyalty of his covenant people in his testing of his covenant representatives (Genesis 22:12; Deuteronomy 8:2).

- Adam

- Noah

- Abraham

- Moses

- David

2. New Covenant

As the new covenant representative, Jesus passed every test of loyalty that God required of him (Hebrews 4:15; Philippians 2:8).

Jesus provided permanent atonement and eternal forgiveness to all who believe in him (Matthew 8:17; Acts 8:32-33; Romans 6:10; 1 Peter 2:22-25).

Tests of loyalty are still in effect for the church, the people of the new covenant.

- “In Christ”: True believers are judged to have passed the test because Christ passed the test on our behalf (1 Timothy 3:16; Romans 4:23-25).

- “Christ in us”: Christ’s Spirit works within believers to make them holy.

God tests us to move us forward in sanctification (James 1:2-3).

The church consists of false and true believers and God’s tests of loyalty reveal whether or not we have saving faith. (1 John 2:19).

C. Consequences

1. Old Testament

God issued both blessings and curses in the Old Testament covenants:

- Foundations:
 - God cursed Adam with suffering and death due to his disobedience.
 - God promised victory over the serpent.

- Stability:
 - Noah received blessings for his faithful service.
 - Noah faced curses after the flood.

- Israel's election:

Abraham received the consequences of blessings and curses as God's covenant representative.

- Law:

Moses' law spelled out many specific blessings and curses that would come to God's covenant people.

- Kingship:

David received the consequences of blessings and curses as he was faithful and unfaithful.

2. New Covenant

Christ, the representative of the new covenant experienced both God's curses and God's blessings (Galatians 3:13).

Jesus didn't come under God's curses because of his personal sins (Isaiah 53:1-12; Philippians 2:8-9).

Jesus' resurrection and ascension were the just reward for his perfect obedience to God.

The consequences of the new covenant also impact the church, the people of the new covenant:

- "In Christ": Every eternal blessing of God has already been assigned to true believers through Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

- "Christ in us": Jesus works in true believers so they experience the consequences of obedience and disobedience in their daily lives.

Hardships and curses false believers endure in life are foretastes of eternal curses they will receive when Christ returns (Luke 12:45-46; Romans 2:4-5).

The blessings true believers experience in life are foretastes of eternal blessings at the consummation (Hebrews 12:1-11; Revelation 21:6-8).

When Christ returns, true believers will receive their eternal inheritance in the glorious new creation.

IV. Conclusion

Application Questions

1. Christ is the new covenant representative of the church. How does this covenant arrangement help you better understand New Testament theology?
2. How do you deal with your failures in light of God's kingdom purposes in Christ?
3. How have your personal failures deepened your appreciation of Christ's work?
4. How are you loving God deeply in your present circumstances?
5. God promised to intervene and write his law on our hearts. What are some specific ways you have experienced this promise in your life?
6. How can you spread a passion for God so that others will want to be in covenant with him?
7. God tests the loyalty of his people. How have the temporary hardships and discipline of God been sanctifying influences on you?
8. What are some specific ways you can fulfill your covenant obligations to God eagerly and joyfully in your present circumstances?
9. As true believers, we will receive our eternal inheritance in the glorious new creation. How can you use this promise to motivate yourself and others to persevere?
10. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?