

A New and Better Covenant

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 May 2026

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 01] Jesus was gathered together with his disciples to celebrate the Passover! And so they were remembering together what God did long ago in the days of the Israelites! when they were slaves in Egypt and how he saved them.

Many of you are already familiar with the story of what happened that night as Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples. We read that he took bread and he gave thanks and then he broke it and he passed it out to them.

As he did, he said, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. The bread symbolized what was about to happen to Jesus the next day.

His body would be broken, meaning that he would die. And his death was for them, to give them life.

Which is what them eating the pieces symbolized. Then we read that Jesus took a cup. And again, he gave thanks to God.

[1 : 16] And then he gave it to them. And he asked them all to drink of it. He said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Which is poured out for you. We talk a lot about the blood of Jesus. And how it provides forgiveness for our sins.

How his death makes atonement for us. There's declaration of that in many of the songs that we sing. What can wash away my sins?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. We learn from the Old Testament that the punishment for sin is death. But that God will accept the death of another on our behalf.

And so animal sacrifices were offered by God's command in ancient times. To make atonement.

And we learn from the scriptures that those sacrifices really pointed ahead to the ultimate sacrifice.

[2 : 22] Which Jesus became for us. To make atonement for our sins. But there's another word here that Jesus said. Which maybe we don't talk as much about.

This cup is the new covenant. What does that mean? Covenant. And new covenant.

And so this morning we're going to take some time to just reflect on those words. That word.

Covenant. We're going to look back a little bit into the Old Testament.

And be reminded of some of the covenants that God has made. And then we're going to turn to the book of Hebrews. For a deeper understanding of this new covenant.

The one that Jesus is talking about. This night as he breaks bread with his disciples. As we look back to ancient times in the Bible.

[3 : 20] The language of covenant is used a lot. The first time is when God makes a covenant with Noah. And his sons. Promising never again to destroy all life on earth.

With a flood. We learn there that a covenant is a solemn promise. Made to another. Then after the days of Noah.

We read the story of Abraham. And how God made a covenant with him. And here too we see that a covenant is a solemn promise. Made to another.

And with Abraham. It's God making this promise to him. Actually not just one promise. But a whole set of promises. To Abraham and his descendants. Now the whole point of a covenant.

Is to add seriousness. Or weight. To the promises being made. We could even call the promises vows. By making a covenant with someone.

[4 : 20] You are binding yourself to them. You are obligating yourself. To fulfill your vows and promises. And so people back then. Enacted a covenant.

With each other through a ceremony. Or a ritual. And it was a very graphic. And serious ceremony. They would basically cut some animals in half.

And then they would separate those halves. And then they would walk. Between the halves. Both parties would walk between the halves. As they made their promises and vows to each other. And by doing this. You were declaring something. You were basically saying. May God do to me. What has been done to these animals. If I fail to keep my promise. Or my vow. To you. And so. Basically. They bound themselves to each other. By a curse. It was like calling God as a witness.

[5 : 19] To the things that they were promising. And then asking him to bring death. Should they fail to keep their promises. And so. Already we start to see.

How blood. Relates to covenant. So. A covenant was the most serious kind of promise. You could make to another. And it is truly amazing.

That in those days. God. Made this kind of a covenant. With Abraham. He himself. Walked between the pieces. Of the. Of the animals.

Or passed between them. I should say. Um. While promising. To bless Abraham. And to. Give him a son. And to make his. Descendants increase. And give him possession.

Of the land all around him. Well fast forward. From. Abraham. Over 400 years. And we find the descendants.

[6 : 14] Of Abraham. The children of Israel. At Mount Sinai. God has. Led them out of slavery. In Egypt. By great acts of power. And.

They come to Mount Sinai. In the desert. And there at Mount Sinai. God makes. Another covenant. With them. In the days of Moses. And we read all about.

This covenant. In the Bible. In Exodus. And Leviticus. And Numbers. And Deuteronomy. It's actually. There's a lot to it. Now this covenant. Was between God.

And the whole nation. Of Israel. And it's a very different covenant. Than the one made with Abraham. The covenant made with Abraham. Was an unconditional.

Covenant. God made promises. To Abraham. That he would keep. No matter what. Abraham. Didn't make any promises. That day.

[7 : 09] He didn't pass through. The halves of the animals. He was just a recipient. Of the promises. That God made to him. But here. In the days of Moses. At Mount Sinai.

God made this second covenant. With Israel. And this one. Was conditional. God set out his. Laws. And his commands. Concerning life.

For the nation. The ten commandments. Were part of. That covenant. But there were also. Commands given about. All kinds of things.

How the Israelites. Were to worship God. Ceremonial. And sacrificial. Laws. Civil laws. How they were to. Treat one another.

And how justice. Was to be. Done in the land. It was a whole package deal. Whereby the nation of Israel. Entered into this covenant. Relationship.

[8 : 04] With God. Binding themselves. To God. In a solemn. In a solemn. Agreement. And that covenant. Came with promises.

From God. To bless them. And to prosper them. Beyond their wildest dreams. If. They. Kept. The requirements. Of the covenant.

Covenant. But it also came. With promises. From God. To bring judgment. And to punish them. If they. Broke the covenant. And the people agreed.

They committed themselves. To this. Binding covenant. Relationship. With God. Through. Ceremony. This is a big part.

Of what the. Overall story. Of the Bible. Is about. In the Old Testament. Leading up to. The coming of Jesus. But let's now look.

[9 : 00] To the letter of Hebrews. We just heard. From Jesus. Own lips. That the cup. Represents a new covenant. In his blood. So there's a new covenant.

There's a new. Agreement. That Jesus is going to. Bring about. By his blood. By his. By his death. And what is. The new covenant. Let's look at.

What the author of Hebrews. Has to say. We pick up his teaching. In chapter 7. Verse 22. We read there. These words.

Because of this oath. Jesus. Has become the guarantor. Of a better covenant. He says. Jesus has become the guarantor.

Of a better covenant. Of a better covenant. Now we're jumping right into the middle of Hebrews. Up till now. He's been talking about how Jesus is supreme. And superior. To everything.

[9 : 58] And everyone. He is the son of God. He is the exact representation. Of his being. He is far greater than the angels. He is greater than Moses.

And though he was the son of God. And the exact representation. Of God's being. He was truly human. He was one of us. He had flesh.

And blood. As we do. He was tempted. And suffered. As we are. And the author of Hebrews. Wants us to know.

That part of why Jesus came down into our world. And actually became one of us. A human being. Was so that he could represent us. Before God. So that he could become.

Our. Great. High priest. And offer to God. The ultimate sacrifice for us. Here in chapter 7.

[10 : 53] He's been talking about. How Jesus is our high priest. Forever. How he was made our high priest. Forever. By God's oath. And the implications of this are massive.

Because we now. Have. In Jesus. A permanent. High priest. One who will. Never die again. One who is continually.

Representing us. Before God. Forever. This new covenant. That he establishes. By his blood. Is guaranteed. It cannot fail.

And therefore. It is not only a new covenant. But it is a better covenant. Than the one that God made long ago. With Israel. At Sinai. The covenant at Sinai.

Required. That the people. Fulfill their obligations. To God. It required. That a high priest. Go into the most holy place. In the temple. And make atonement. For the sins of the people.

[11 : 54] Once a year. It required. All kinds of other sacrifices. To be offered. As well. But eventually. The high priest. Would get old. And he would die. And he would. Be replaced.

By another. And as the story. In the Old Testament. Goes. There were many. High priests. Some were good. But some were bad.

They didn't do. What was required. By God. Some of them. Eventually. The priests. And the kings. Came to neglect. The worship of God. Altogether. At his temple.

They no longer. Did what God commanded. And then. They went even further. And replaced. The worship of God. At his temple. With the worship. Of other. False gods.

The gods. Of the nations. Around them. And so. They broke. The covenant. What was needed. Was a better. High priest. One who wouldn't.

[12 : 50] Die. And be replaced. By sinful men. And so. God. By an oath. The author of Hebrews says. Appointed his. Son. To be.

High priest. Forever. So that this new covenant. Could not fail. It would be guaranteed. By Jesus. Continual service.

As priest. On our behalf. Forever. And so. This is the first reason. We see why this covenant. Is a better covenant. Now let's jump in.

And read a little bit. We'll turn the page over. To Hebrews 8. We're going to start. In verse 3. And learn a little bit more. About this. New covenant. Every high priest.

Is appointed. To offer. Both gifts. And sacrifices. And so. It was necessary. For this one. Jesus. Also. To have something. To offer. If he were on earth.

[13 : 54] He would not be a priest. For there are already. Priests. Who offer the gifts. Prescribed by the law. They serve. At a. Sanctuary. That is a copy.

And shadow. Of what is in heaven. This is why. Moses was warned. When he was about. To build the tabernacle. See to it. That you make. Everything. According to the pattern.

Shown you. On the mountain. But 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. Jesus. So here we come.

To the explanation. Of it. There's lots. In there. Reading from Hebrews. Is kind of like. Drinking from a. Fire hose. There's just so much. In there. We won't linger long.

[14 : 51] On verses three. And three to five. There. But basically. He's contrasting. Jesus. As our great. High priest. With the Levitical priests. He's saying. Jesus. Our great. High priest.

Represents us. In heaven. Before God. While the Levitical priests. Did their work. On earth. At the earthly temple. He's saying.

That Jesus priesthood. And the work. That he does. On our behalf. Is superior. To the Levitical priesthood. Because Jesus. Has gone right. Into heaven itself. Right into the presence. Of God. To represent us. And he says. That it's superior. Because. The covenant. Of which Jesus. Is a mediator.

Is superior. To the old one. See that in verse six. We already heard that. A moment ago. In chapter seven. That this new covenant. Of which Jesus.

[15:44] Is guarantor. Is better. We hear it again here. This covenant. Is superior. To the old one. We kind of translate that.

Into everyday. English speak. The new arrangement. For relationship. With God. That Jesus brings about. Is far better. Than the arrangement. God had in the old.

Testament times. With the people of Israel. And what's better. About this new arrangement. The author of Hebrews.

Tells us. That this new covenant. Is established. On better promises. Than the old covenant. So let's keep reading. And see what. Those promises are.

Verse seven. For if there had been. Nothing wrong. With that first covenant. No place. Would have been sought. For another. But God.

[16:40] Found fault. With the people. With the people. So there was a problem. With the arrangement. That God had. With the children of Israel. Long ago.

At Sinai. And what was the problem? The problem was not. With the covenant itself. But with the people. Who entered into this covenant. With God.

God. Found fault. With the people. A covenant. Is solemn promises. Made to another. But promises.

Can be broken. God laid out. The terms. Of this covenant. But those terms. Were violated. By the people. They did not.

Keep the covenant. They broke it. Let's listen. As the author of Hebrews. Tells us a little bit more. But God. Found fault.

[17:36] With the people. And said. 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. It will not be.

Like the covenant. I made. With their ancestors. When I took them. By the hand. To lead them out of Egypt. Because they did not. Remain faithful. To my covenant. And I turned away from them.

Declares the Lord. The author of Hebrews. Right here. In this. These verses. Verses 8 and 9. Is actually quoting. Words that God spoke. Over 600 years earlier. Through the prophet.

Jeremiah. In fact. If we look back. Into Jeremiah. We can even see. Right around. Where this prophecy is given. Good indications. That. These words.

May have been spoken. At the very moment. That Jerusalem. Was under siege. By the Babylonians. Just before. Jerusalem. Was conquered. And the people.

[18:32] Deported. And that's. That's pretty significant. Actually. It's as though. God was explaining. Through Jeremiah. Why he was allowing. The Babylonians.

To defeat. His people. All those years ago. He was allowing them. To be defeated. Because. Those were the terms.

Of the covenant. Made at Sinai. They had rebelled. Against God. They were living. Wickedly. They had broken. The covenant. And according to the terms.

Set out in the covenant. God said. That if they did not keep it. He would punish them. He would. Even bring this exact form. Of punishment. That they would be conquered. Uprooted.

Taken out of. The land. That he had given them. We can read about that. In Deuteronomy 28. So God found fault. With the people. They did not.

[19:27] Remain. Faithful. To the covenant. The old covenant. Could very easily. Be broken. And that relationship. Between God. And his people. Ruined.

Because of the sinful bent. Of the people. But. Here's the amazing thing. Even as God. Was bringing. That punishment.

Promised on them. In Jeremiah's day. For breaking the covenant. He was also. In that same moment. Through Jeremiah. Announcing his plan. To make a new. And different covenant.

With his people. Over 600 years. Before Jesus came. God said. This is the covenant. I will establish.

With the people of Israel. After that time. I will put my laws. In their minds. And write them. On their hearts. I will be their God.

[20 : 23] And they will be. My people. No longer. Will they teach their neighbor. Or say to one another. Know the Lord. Because they will all know me.

From the least of them. To the greatest. For I will forgive. Their wickedness. And will remember. Their sins. No more. Here are those.

Better promises. That he mentioned. Up in verse 6. This new covenant. Is superior. It's better than the old one. Because it's established. On better promises.

And here he lays out. The promises for us. Right out of the words. Of Jeremiah. The first promise. I'm getting ahead of myself here. There's 8.

10. 10. 10. 10. 10. 10. the first promise that he makes we read in verse 10 he says I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts the problem with the old covenant is that it required the people to live obediently and righteously it required them to be holy this was necessary because to have a close relationship with a holy God they themselves had to live holy and of course God understood they couldn't do that perfectly that's why there was sacrifices which could be offered to make atonement but even more God was showing them all along that there was a greater problem in us than we realized he was showing that sin was not just bad things that we do but a corruption a restless evil in our hearts and in our minds the problem was that God's righteous and good laws were not in the hearts and the minds of the people they were only an outside standard to us the problem was that we did not love the good and the righteous we did not desire it and so the promise God made was that with this new covenant he would put his law in their minds and write it on their hearts this is no less than a promise to change their hearts their loves their desires so that no longer do we love evil and hate what is good but that we love what is good and hate what is evil and so that's the first promise to write his laws on our hearts to put them in our minds the second promise is in verse 10

[23 : 24] I will be their God and they will be my people this promise is really not new we can look all the way back to the beginning almost and we can see that this has been the desire of God right from the start to have a personal relationship with us with people God said to the children of Israel when they were slaves in Egypt that he was going to take them out of there so that they would be his people and he would be their God and so that's been his desire for a long time but the stubbornness and the sinfulness of our hearts is what's getting in the way of that and so as God restates that desire here as a promise it's as though God is saying I will make this happen once and for all I will deal with the sinfulness I will deal with the waywardness that's keeping us apart I will be your God and you will be my people the third promise is in verse 11 no longer will they teach their neighbor or say to one another know the Lord because they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest it appears that this is how it was in the days of Jeremiah there were a chosen few in Israel men like Jeremiah who by God's grace had a sincere faith in the Lord and knew the Lord there was few there was this remnant and we almost get this picture from these words that they would say to their neighbors or to one another know the Lord get to know your God because the majority of the people around them did not know the Lord they had forsaken the God of their forefathers they'd replaced his worship with the worship of false gods they had been ignoring the prophets that he sent and so this is promise number three with this new covenant coming you will no longer say know the Lord get to know him because all of my people all those called by my name will know me from the least of them to the greatest there's coming a day when according to the promise of God there will not be a mixture of believers and unbelievers or of true worshipers and pretenders all that will be left of the people who bear the Lord's name are those who truly know him those who truly have a relationship with him men like who have faith like Abraham did long ago some of the other

Old Testament prophets like Micah and Isaiah spoke of a day when the nations would stream to the mountain of the Lord's temple all of them eager to know the Lord and his ways and I think this promise points to the end and what will be at the very end finally there's the fourth promise here this is perhaps the most precious of all these promises of the new covenant they're all great but what about the wicked things that we've done what about the sins we've all committed what about the thing that caused the old covenant to fail God found fault with the people there's going to be a relationship with God where we know him and he is our God and we are his people then the problem of our guilt has to be dealt with there has to be a solution to our wickedness and our sins

and over 600 years before Jesus came

God said what he would do he made a promise I'm going to make a new covenant a new arrangement and here's how it's going to go I will forgive the wickedness of my people and I will forget their sins I will not remember them anymore this is the big difference between the old covenant and the new covenant with the old covenant came promises to punish for wickedness and sin with the new covenant comes the better promise to forgive and forget their sin and their wickedness and there's so much to say here I mean we could meditate on this all day we might wonder why couldn't God simply forgive the sins under the old covenant the short answer is that God is just and he just can't overlook the wrong things that we have done he can't pretend that it didn't happen what about the sacrifices in the old testament days that they had to make did they accomplish anything well the author of Hebrews gets into that in chapters 9 and 10 and he explains more how does it work how is it that God can forgive us of the wicked things that we have done and decide to remember them no more and still be just well that's what he's about to go on and tell us in chapters 9 and 10 and we're going to summarize some of this

Jesus our great high priest offered a sacrifice to atone for our sins he offered the only thing to God that God could accept as payment in full for our sins he offered his blood instead of ours he offered his life for ours God can keep his promise to forgive and forget everything that we've done wrong because Jesus gave his blood his life for ours like the lambs and the bulls and the goats offered under the old covenant Jesus was slaughtered for us to make atonement to establish this new covenant and I'm just going to read these precious words from chapter 10 starting in verse 11 day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties again and again he offers the same sacrifices which can never take away sins but when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins he sat down at the right hand of God and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool for by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy the Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this first he says this is the covenant

I will make with them after that time says the Lord I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds then he adds their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more and where these have been forgiven sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary we don't have time to unpack all of this it's all worthy of meditation but he tells us that with this new covenant with this new arrangement between us and God we have been made perfect by the one sacrifice of Jesus by what he did for us at the cross we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all that's how God can just forgive and forget our sins and remember them no more this is the new covenant this is the new arrangement and it's for all people

[31 : 48] Jew and Gentile God changes our very hearts and minds to love what is good and what is right he does what is needed to qualify us for relationship with him he draws us close he reveals himself to each of us personally so that we all know him and he forgives us of our sins and chooses to remember them no more unlike the old covenant this new covenant cannot be broken it cannot fail because it doesn't depend on our faithfulness but on Jesus and what he has done on our behalf the old covenant was conditional but the new covenant is unconditional not that the standards have changed but that God sent his son to our side of the arrangement to represent us to do what was needed from our side to secure it he is interceding for us he has made atonement for us he has offered a sacrifice that covers all of our sins and all that's required of us we hear in the scriptures is to turn to the

Lord to repent and to believe the good news and so this is what we remember this is what we celebrate when we partake of the Lord's table we remember that Jesus at the cross offered himself his body his blood as a sacrifice for us to make this arrangement this relationship with God a reality for us he did it to give us new and changed hearts and minds he did it so that we would know him truly know him and have relationship with him and so we're going to take some moments here to give thanks and to remember that I'm going to invite the elders to come up and pass out the elements and if you're here and you've put your trust in

Jesus and are following him then join with us eat and drink with us and if not just please let the elements pass by you we'll wait till everyone's been served and then we'll eat and drink together