

New Beginning (7/13)

The kingdom of God is tightly connected to the plans, purposes, and consistent pursuits of God that we have studied in the Old Testament. These pursuits have involved a series of promises and covenants that are all fulfilled in the kingdom of Christ. When Christ establishes the new Kingdom there is a clear sense that he is both continuing something old and establishing something new. This week we want to explore the concept of covenant and examine some aspects of how Christ's kingdom is both old and new.

Covenant

The idea of covenant is foreign in our culture. We pursue agreements using contracts, policies, binding arbitration, purchase agreements, but not covenants. A covenant is equally binding on the individuals involved, but a covenant in Ancient Near Eastern practice was a relationship of trust, built upon the "word," "oath," and character of the individuals.

A covenant creates a relationship, bringing into existence something that did not exist before. A typical covenant formed a relationship between unequal partners such as a king with an inferior, or a more powerful nation with a lesser nation. Covenant documents from the period typically include the following items:

1. Identification & Historical background (Ex 20:2; Deut 6)
2. Stipulations – the agreements to which the vassal was bound to obey (Ex 20:3-17, note these are listed not as commands but expectations)
3. Deposit and Periodic Reading – copies of the agreement were often placed in the temple and often required to be publically read several times a year (Deut 31:9f; 17:14f; Ark)
4. Witnesses – other parties, often deities or the heavens and earth that will substantiate the performance of the covenant (not appropriate in a monotheistic setting)
5. Blessings and Curses – description of the consequences of obedience and the results of disobedience (Deut 28)
6. Ratification ceremony – often involved the sacrifice of an animal (Ex 19:8 – verbal; 24:1-11; Josh 24)

Old Covenant broken by Israel

Old covenant had been broken by Israel when they followed other gods, broke their oath to serve God, and failed to respond. The curses of Deut. 28 (See also 2 Kings 8:46f) are enacted and the covenant relationship severed. But God continues to promise that he will form a new relationship with his people.

- Both Hosea 1-3 and Jeremiah 2-4 depicts the covenant between God and Israel as a marriage in which Israel has been unfaithful and God divorces (Jer 3:1-8; Hosea 2:2) his covenant marriage partner.

New Kingdom Promised based on New Covenant

Despite the fact that Israel broke the covenant with God, God continues to pursue his people and establishes "something new" which in many ways is a continuation of something old.

- Ezek 36:24-28
- Jeremiah 31
- Isa 42:4-10
- Isa 43:16-21
- Isa 65:17f

New Kingdom is a new beginning

- The Bible opens with the message “in the beginning” and when the gospel writers set about the task of sharing the story of Jesus they adopt the same language
- Mark “beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ”
- John “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God...”
- Ministers of a new covenant 2 Cor 3:1-15
- Contrasting images of new covenant Gal 4:21-31
- 2 Cor 5:17 – in Christ = new creation

The New Covenant fulfills old purposes

- Gal 3:15 – the law did not do away with the promise
- Fulfilled, not done away with (Rom 11:25f; Matt 5; Rom 8, 13)

New Covenant enacted on the sacrifice of Christ

- Covenants are enacted by blood – Exod 24:3-8 // Mark 14:24 // Lk 22:20 // 1 Cor 11:25
- Lk 22:20 // 1 Cor 11:25