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## A COVENANT PEOPLE

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### Days of restoration

We are living in a time when God is bringing about the *“restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began”* Acts 3:21. This is so He can *“send Jesus Christ”* Acts 3:20. We have sought to imitate the early congregation [a more literal translation of the Greek word “ekklesia” normally translated as “church”], *“continuing daily...breaking bread from house to house”* (Acts 2:46). Through regular participation in the Lord’s Table, *breaking bread*, many truths of what Jesus has accomplished have become real to us and restored to us. One such truth beginning to be restored to us is the reality of being God’s New Covenant people.

### The Cup of the New Covenant

On the night Jesus was betrayed He celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples and established *“The Lord’s Table”* (1 Cor.10:21) as the New Covenant meal. At that Passover Jesus took the cup and said, *“This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is shed for you”* Luke 22:20. The Table of the Lord is the place where we partake of the New Covenant. When we drink of the cup, we drink of the New Covenant in Jesus’ blood. If we are partakers of the New Covenant then that means we are the covenant people, *“His own special people”* (Tit. 2:14, 1 Pet.2:9).

### “Covenant”

In modern society there has been little understanding of what “covenant” is and its absolute binding nature. “Covenant” is legally establishing a relationship based on commitments and promises and, Biblically, this also involved severe consequences when those commitments were not honoured.

In 1 Samuel 20:1-16 Jonathon made covenant with David to tell the truth about King Saul’s intentions towards David. Jonathon invoked a serious curse if he was not faithful to David – *“may Yahweh do so and much more to Jonathon”* (v.13). He also invoked a powerful blessing for being faithful – *“You shall not only show me the kindness of Yahweh while I still live, that I may not die; but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever...”* (v.15). *“So Jonathon made a covenant with the house of David”* (v.16). This covenant David kept by allowing Mephibosheth, Jonathon’s crippled son, to *“eat bread at my table continually”* (2 Sam.9:7). He was allowed at the “Table of the King” (Luke 22:30), because of the covenant!

### Covenant relationship is not based on feelings

David had no personal emotional affection towards Mephibosheth that motivated him to be so kind to him. It was because David had made a covenant with Jonathon that he had bound himself and committed himself fully to show kindness to Jonathon’s descendants. It was not based on whether Mephibosheth was a nice man or not – it was based on a covenant.

If we believe in Jesus, God has covenanted Himself to be our God, to show us mercy, to justify us and many other wonderful things that are written in His word! It is not based on subjective emotions and opinions of whether we are good, bad, nice or deserving of any

kindness. Simply believing in Jesus puts us into a covenantal relationship with God where we become God's people and He has promised to be our God!

## **Covenant with God**

The word for "covenant" in Hebrew is *berith*. This means: *a pledge, a treaty, an agreement, a compact* [from Word Wealth in New Spirit Filled Life Bible **Gen.17:7**]. The word in Greek is *diatheke*. This means: *a will, testament, pact, contract, an agreed upon plan to which both parties subscribe. While the word may signify an agreement between two parties with each accepting mutual obligations, most often it is a declaration of one person's will. In the Bible, God initiated the whole action, set the conditions, and defined as a decree a declaration of purposes* [from Word Wealth in New Spirit Filled Life Bible **Mark 14:24**].

When God makes covenant with us He sets conditions and He decrees a declaration of purposes. It is so very important that we come to understand the conditions and God's declared purposes for being in covenant with us. This provides the foundation of our relationship with Him. It is good to know that our relationship with God is not based on feelings or whimsical mood swings, as are many relationships in the world. It is based on a covenantal commitment by the Creator of the universe, that through the Messiah Jesus, He will be God to us forever and will achieve His purposes through us!

## **God's declaration of purposes**

In **Jeremiah 31:31-34** and **Hebrews 8:10-12** we discover God's "decreed declaration of purposes" in the **New Covenant**. There are four major promises that this covenant is founded on. All of them are so worthy of attention and we must fully explore them and know them to understand the nature of this covenant relationship. These are the basis of our relationship with God through Jesus the Messiah, the Mediator of this New Covenant (**1 Tim.2:5, Heb.12:24a**). The four promises are:

- ***"I will put My laws in their minds and write them on their hearts"***
- ***"I will be their God, and they shall be My people"***
- ***"all shall know Me from the least to the greatest"***
- ***"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more"***

We are to be firmly established in the knowledge of these declared purposes. These promises reveal God's intention for us as His people. For the remainder of this study we are going to focus on the promise that ***"I will be their God and they shall be My people"***.

## **I WILL BE THEIR GOD AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE**

In this covenant God has committed to ***"be our God and we shall be His people"***. Have you ever stopped to consider what this means? By partaking in this New Covenant, you are now the people of God! We are the covenant people of God in the earth. He has declared us to be His people! He has always wanted a people in the earth that He could call ***"His people"***. It is through this people that the world will know that He is God! We are not His people because of our race, birth, genealogy or religious upbringing. We are His people by partaking in this New Covenant through faith in Jesus the Messiah!

## **Covenant through confession**

In **Romans 10:9-10** the Scripture declares that our salvation comes as we believe in our heart and ***"confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus"***. Apostle Paul said that ***"with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"***. Recently we have discovered that the word

*confession means to speak the same thing and has the connotation of 'a binding public declaration by which a legal relation is established' [Kingdom Dynamics in New Spirit Filled Life Bible **Romans 10:9-10**]. The word confession has to do with accessing the covenant. We enter into covenant when we confess the Lord Jesus. When we speak according to the Word of who Jesus is, we enter into covenant with Him. We become His people through confessing the Lord Jesus to be the God of us!*

### **God has always wanted a special people**

When Israel was entering into covenant with God at Mount Sinai, God proclaimed *“if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all the people; for all the earth is Mine” Exodus 19:5*. In **Deuteronomy 26:17** Moses describes how the people entered into covenant by making a confession, a proclamation, *“Today you have proclaimed Yahweh to be your God”*. When we confess Jesus to be our Lord, our God, we also enter into the New Covenant.

Then Moses revealed God’s covenant confession, *“Also today Yahweh has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments, and that He will set you high above all nations...in praise, in name, and in honour and that you may be a holy people to Yahweh your God” Deuteronomy 26:18-19*. These words were God’s covenant to His people. What wonderful promises declared through the covenant! To be His *“special people”* means to be His *possession, His personal property, His prized possession and royal treasure*. This is still the essence of the New Covenant in Christ Jesus. He has said that we will be His people and He will be our God. In fact the New Covenant fulfils this promise as we are placed high above all nations with and in Him (**Eph.1:20-23, 2:6**) through Christ Jesus.

### **Prophecy of the Covenant**

God declared through **Jeremiah** another time that, *“They shall be My people, and I will be their God” (Jer.32:38)*. God then went on to say, *“then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children...And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. Yes I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land with all My heart and all My soul” (Jer.32:39-41)*.

### **The New Covenant people are this people**

The above prophecy is seen to be fulfilled when the New Covenant people of God emerged. God’s covenant people would be identified as a people of:

- ✓ **“one heart”** – We see this in **Acts 4:32** *“the multitude who believed were of one heart...they had all things in common”*. This covenant people live as a family.
- ✓ **“one way”** – This is seen in **Acts 24:14** *“according to the Way...I worship the God of my fathers”* – The disciples of Jesus were known as a sect called “the Way” because they followed Jesus, *“the Way, the Truth and the Life” John 14:6*.
- ✓ **“that they may fear Me forever...I will put My fear in their hearts”** – We see this in **Acts 9:31** *“And walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit they were multiplied”*. This covenant people walk in the fear of the Lord by the Spirit, having received the *“Spirit of the fear of the LORD [Yahweh]” Isaiah 11:2*.
- ✓ **“an everlasting covenant”** – the *“God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead...through the blood of the everlasting covenant, makes us perfect*

*and complete for every good work to do His will” Hebrews 13:20-21.* By the blood of Jesus, we have entered into this eternal covenant where God can make us complete and perfect, doing His will!

- ✓ ***“I will not turn away from doing them good...I will rejoice over them to do them good”*** – What a decree! This is the promise of God to those in this everlasting covenant! It is the ***“Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom” Luke 12:32, Luke 22:29-30.*** God makes us sons to Himself ***“by Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will” Ephesians 1:5.*** As New Covenant people it pleases God to do us good, making us sons who inherit His kingdom!
- ✓ ***“I will assuredly plant them in this land with all My heart and all My soul”*** – Jesus is the Sower planting ***“sons of the kingdom”*** in the world that they may grow to maturity displaying His righteousness (***Matt.13:36-43***). We are the planting of Yahweh and will not be uprooted from the earth (***Isa.61:3, Matt.15:13***) because the world and the earth are our inheritance through this New Covenant (***Rom.4:13, Matt.5:5***). God has covenanted to do this with all His heart and all His soul!

### **Covenant with God identifies us with God**

When we enter into the New Covenant with God through faith in Jesus the Messiah, our identity changes. We are now fully identified with God and He is fully identified with us. When Saul was met by the Light from heaven on the road to Damascus the voice said, ***“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Acts 9:4.*** Saul was ***“breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” Acts 9:1.*** Saul was persecuting the disciples, not Jesus personally, yet, Jesus identified fully with His disciples. When we are in covenant with God we are now one with Him. Touch God’s people and you are actually touching God. This is the reality of being His covenant people. Remember Jesus said, ***“inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” Matthew 25:40.*** Covenant makes us the *brethren* of Jesus!

### **Sons of God as covenant people**

Hosea prophesied that ***“In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people.’ There it shall be said to them, ‘You are sons of the living God.’” Hosea 1:10b.*** Apostle Paul quoted this verse in ***Romans 9:26*** proving that the Gentiles who are called by God are included in the people of God, even being called *sons of God*. Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus are the people of God, even *sons of God!* We are sons of God as a result of the covenant. The ***“adoption”***, being placed as mature sons into the inheritance, belongs to those in the covenant (***Rom.9:4***). God makes an awesome final statement in the book of ***Revelation 21:7***, which is a fulfilment of being in the New Covenant, ***“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son”***.

The goal of the New Covenant is to produce sonship in God’s people. The goal of the New Covenant is to bring us as His people into the inheritance. He does this by making us ***“His people”*** and by us receiving Him as ***“our God”***. Ruth, as a Gentile, was brought into this covenant through her own confession. Her confession to Naomi was a ***“binding public declaration whereby a legal relation was now contractually established”***. She confessed ***“Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God” Ruth 1:16.*** She entered covenant with the God of Israel. And God chose to bring forth the Messiah from her lineage!

## God has covenanted to do this Himself

Probably the most amazing thing about the New Covenant is that God has covenanted to do all of this Himself. When God made covenant with Abraham (**Gen.15:8-21**) and David (**2 Samuel 7, Ps.89:3-4**), God initiated these covenants and simply told them what He was going to do. He did not reason about it with them but due to their faith in Him, Yahweh promised by covenant to bring forth a Seed from them that would bring God's purposes to pass for the earth. The New Covenant is really a fulfilment of the covenants to the patriarchs. God has committed and covenanted Himself to fulfil His word in us.

## The New Covenant

God spoke through **Ezekiel** of the New Covenant in this way,

- *"I will take you from among the nations..."* - He called us (**Rom.8:30**)
- *I will sprinkle clean water on you...* - the water of His word (**Eph.5:26**)
- *I will cleanse you from all your idols...* - by revealing Jesus the true God and eternal life (**1 Jn.5:20-21**)
- *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you,* - I will cause you to be born again (**Jn.1:12-13, Jn.3:1-6**)
- *I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh...* - He will make us new creations (**2 Cor.5:16-17**)
- *I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My commandments and do them* – He will fill us with His Spirit writing the law on our hearts and putting in our minds (**Heb.8:10, 2 Cor.3:4-6, 1 Cor.2:16**)
- *You shall be My People and I will be your God*" – We will be fully identified as belonging to Jesus, His own special people (**Tit.2:14, 1 Pet.2:9-10**)

This is what God has covenanted to do. The covenant relationship is one of security and confidence. It is based on God's word to us and us simply accepting what God has said. By faith in Jesus the Messiah, the Mediator of the New Covenant (**Heb.9:15**), we are now the people of God in the earth! God has a covenant people! This is a people that are His special treasure. We are no longer *"Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus"* **Gal.3:28**. We are God's people and He is our God.

**This is what God has always desired!**

*"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God'"* Revelation 21:3

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