

# **Dr. David L. Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 10, The Covenant, Old Testament and New Testament, Part 2**

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 10, The Covenant, Old Testament and New Testament, Part 2.

We ended the last section by looking at Jesus fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant and Paul particularly, although Matthew, for example, demonstrates that Jesus is coming to fulfill the promises made to Abraham as the true son of Abraham who brings the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant to all the nations.

Paul likewise and more explicitly refers to Jesus as the true seed of Abraham in fulfillment of the promises in Genesis related to Abraham's seed or Abraham's offspring. And so, in Galatians 3:16, we end by noting that Paul equates Jesus with the seed of Abraham. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, so the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant now go out and flow to all nations through the person of Christ.

However, the other element of the Abrahamic Covenant is that not only are the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant fulfilled in Jesus but also in his followers. So, once again, as I said, we see this with most of these themes. The promises, first of all, go through Jesus and then extend to his people who are united to him in faith.

And that's exactly what happens here in Galatians 3:16 in a text that we've already talked about briefly. So, after reading chapter 3:16, although we've already seen in chapter 3:7 of Galatians that Paul's readers in Galatia are called the children of Abraham, at the very end of chapter 3, we find Paul saying in chapter 3:29 of Galatians, if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. That is, they inherit the promises made to Abraham, which, as kind of a side note, I take it also to include the land promises, which we already talked about land and creation as probably how God's people possess the promises of the land.

But how can the author say that you are Abraham's seed? It's because, as verse 29 begins, you belong to Christ, who, back in chapter 3:16, Paul has already called the seed of Abraham. So Jesus is the true seed of Abraham, but we are also Abraham's seed by virtue of belonging to Christ, who is the seed of Abraham. So again, Paul can say, if you belong to Christ, and he's assuming the true seed of Abraham, chapter 3:16, if you belong to him, then you too are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

One other interesting text that we don't usually associate with the Abrahamic covenant that probably now jumps us ahead to the not yet, but I want to talk about it anyway, is found in Revelation chapter 7 and verse 9, which is probably part of John's vision of the consummation. So now we've jumped to the not yet, but I want to refer to it because it's the other text that, to me, clearly seems to refer to God's people in terms of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant or the fulfillment of Abraham's offspring. In verse 9, Revelation 7, after this, that is, in the first eight verses, John sees a number of 144,000 persons from every tribe of the nation of Israel.

We'll deal with that text later on when we talk about people of God. But now John says after this, after seeing this, the 144,000 sealed, I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count or number from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne and before the lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

What I want to focus on is the description of this great multitude as belonging to a group that no one could count, or no one could number. In my judgment, and a couple of other commentaries, I think, have borne this out, but in my judgment, this language of a multitude that no one could number probably reflects again the Abrahamic promise. Whereas if you remember, if you go back to Genesis 15-17, God consistently reiterates the promise made to Israel, and I believe even some of the patriarchs after that, in reiterating the promises made to Abraham, God promises Abraham that his offspring will be so numerous that it will be more numerous than the stars of the sky and the sand of the sea.

It will be so numerous that it cannot be counted. And so, this reference to a multitude that no one could number or no one could count, I think, alludes back to the promises made to Abraham in the book of Genesis. So that once more, the people of God fulfill the promises made to Abraham.

What is intriguing is when you go back to the original promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, God promises that he will make Abraham's name great, he will make him a mighty nation, and he will ultimately be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. But it's interesting that when by the time you get to the New Testament, Galatians 3, and here in Revelation 9, it's not the blessing to all nations that get appealed to, but it's Abraham's offspring that gets appealed to. The innumerable offspring.

So that we participate in the blessings of Abraham, not only by being the nations that are blessed, but we are the nations that are blessed precisely by becoming the children of Abraham, by becoming the seed of Abraham, by becoming that innumerable multitude, that multitude that could not be numbered in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. So I find that rather intriguing that we're not only kind of on the shirrtails of Abraham getting the promises, though that's not necessarily what

Genesis 12 intends, but instead, we receive, as the nations, we receive the blessing precisely by becoming the seed of Abraham. Galatians 3 and Revelation chapter 7. So, we've looked at the promises, the relationship of God with his people at creation, with Adam and Eve, and how that gets restored in Christ and in his people.

We've looked at the Abrahamic covenant and how that also gets fulfilled in the person of Christ and in his people as well. And now, I want to spend just a few minutes looking at the Davidic covenant. The covenant that God made with David was that he would establish a seed of David, a descendant of David, establish his throne, establish his kingdom, and rule forever.

We likewise find that the New Testament is unanimous, that Jesus Christ is the son of David, that seed of David, that descendant of David promised in the Old Testament. We saw the beginning with 2 Samuel 7, repeated in some of the Psalms, Psalm 2, Psalm 110, and Psalm 89, but also reflected in prophetic expectations of restoration. Ezekiel, chapters 36 and 37, even in the book of Isaiah, references a Davidic figure, the branch, a shot from Jesse that will rise up.

All of these expectations of a coming Davidic ruler and Davidic king, when God restores his people, now find their fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. The long story of God dealing with David and the promises made to David is now climaxing in reference to Jesus Christ. We've already referred to Matthew chapter 1 and verse 1, where Jesus Christ is the son of David and the son of Abraham.

But we also find in texts like Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 5, which I've already read, for to which of the angels did God ever say, you are my son, today I have become your father, quotation right out of Psalm chapter 2 and verse 7. But then, if that's not enough, the author says, or again, and now he goes all the way back to 2 Samuel 7, 14. Again, I will be his father, and he will be my son, using this specific Davidic covenant formula. Now, the author of Hebrews finds that fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

You actually find those same texts apply to Jesus Christ elsewhere. Other texts that we've looked at that take the Davidic covenant formula and refer it to Christ would be, for example, in Ephesians chapter 1, where Jesus Christ is exalted and seated at the right hand of God above his enemies, far above his enemies. That language comes out of Psalm 110, another Davidic Psalm.

So, I could point to texts in Acts, and I could point to a number of other texts. Some New Testament scholars even think that wherever you find the word Christ in the New Testament, it should be read in terms of the Messiah. That's not just a proper name or designation.

They would still hold to that as a title. That may not be true in all of them, but I would suspect that, at least in some of them, when you find references to Jesus Christ, Jesus is the Christ, which probably still carries Messianic connotations. So, all over we find the that Jesus, assumption and explicit indications that Jesus is the son of David and he fulfills the promises made to David.

But interestingly, what is often overlooked, much like the promise, the Adamic promises and God's intention for Adam and the mandate to Adam, much like the Abrahamic promises, the promises to David of God being his father and David being his son also get applied to his people. For example, in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 18, a text that we've already looked at a couple of times is connected with land and temples. In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, I want to read verse 18 in the context of a number of Old Testament quotes.

Here's verse 18. Let me back up and read verse 16 just to demonstrate what's going on. What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

Now, notice what he does, what Paul does in verse 18. He says, and I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters. Combining a quote from Isaiah, the Lord almighty says the same.

This is a quotation right out of 2 Samuel 7 verse 14, where the author apparently takes the promise to David and now applies it not to Christ but to his people. We too are the true sons of David. But again, the assumption behind 2 Corinthians is Jesus Christ is the true son of David.

And the Davidic promises then get fulfilled in us by virtue of belonging to Christ. That, however, is not the only place where that takes place. If I can once more jump for a moment to the not yet, we're primarily focusing on how Christ and his people fulfill the covenants now.

We'll look at the not-yet aspect again, landing us in Revelation. But if I can jump to Revelation right now, no pun intended, verse 7. I'll read verse 6. This is in the context of the vision of the new creation, new heavens, new earth. And now we're going to find a list drawing on the Old Testament, a sort of litany of Old Testament promises that now get fulfilled in God's people.

Verse 6, he said to me, it is finished. I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty, I will give water without cost from the springs of the water of life, that Isaiah 55.1. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God, and they will be my sons, or the NIV translates it as children.

Another allusion to, or even quotation, of 2 Samuel chapter 7, the Davidic covenant formula. So once more, we find an example of the Davidic covenant being fulfilled, not just in Christ, but in his followers in 2 Samuel, I'm sorry, in 2 Corinthians 6.18, and now in Revelation in the not yet realization in Revelation 21:7. So, God's intention to reign over all creation, and here we see a connection between again the Davidic covenant and the relationship God had with Adam and Eve and his intention for them.

God's intention that Adam would rule over all of creation, and who would do that by obeying and keeping the covenant, is now carried out through David, through David's greater son, who is Jesus Christ, but also through his followers. So as the reigning Davidic king, Jesus Christ now dispenses the blessings of salvation, the blessings of the new covenant, and brings the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, but also his people fulfill the Davidic covenant, and they are also God's sons, and he is their father, by virtue of them belonging to Christ Jesus. By the way, as another footnote or aside, this is probably one of the most compelling arguments for the notion of imputation.

There's an ongoing debate about whether, in the New Testament, we ever find Christ's obedience, not just his death, his obedience, and death, but Christ's act of obedience, his obedient life, and whether that gets imputed to believers. There's been a long-standing tradition theologically that says part of justification is Christ's own righteous life gets imputed to God's people. That may find some justification in the Davidic covenant, in that Jesus Christ is the one who fulfills what Adam did not do, who, as the son of David, keeps the covenant, obeys the covenant, and represents Israel as obeying the covenant and keeping the covenant.

Now Jesus Christ, as our representative, his obedience then becomes ours. As those who are united and joined to Christ, the Davidic covenant is fulfilled in us also. It is possible to see Christ's own obedience imputed to or attributed to his followers in light of the Davidic covenant, where the Davidic king was the representative who would rule over God's people, who would keep the covenant, who would obey it.

Now, Jesus Christ does that. He perfectly obeys and responds in obedience, and then, by virtue of belonging to Christ, it's possible to see that obedience then imputed to, attributed to God's people who belong to him. So, the Davidic covenant is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ and, by extension, his followers.

The Mosaic covenant should also be seen as being fulfilled in Jesus Christ; that is, Jesus Christ brings it to fulfillment. The clearest statement of that is found at the very beginning of Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount. At the very beginning, before Matthew gets into sort of the heart of the sermon as sort of an introduction to, and by introduction, I don't mean introductory things, you kind of get out of the

way so you get to the main point, but as a preparation for correctly reading and understanding the rest of the sermon.

Notice what Jesus says in chapters 5, verses 17, through 20: Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. And he goes on and says truly I tell you until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter nor least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law.

Here, the law is capitalized in my NIV, probably correctly, because Jesus is speaking about Mosaic law. Not one stroke will appear from the law until everything is accomplished. Now, when Jesus says I have come to fulfill the law, that is the Mosaic law, as part of the Mosaic covenant that God made with his people, part of the stipulations that they are to follow.

When Jesus says I have come to not abolish but to fulfill that, in this context, at least, I don't think Jesus is primarily saying I have come to keep it and obey it. Yes, he did that, and there are clear references in the gospels to Jesus doing that. But here, the point does not primarily seem to be that Jesus Christ comes to obey the law and keep it perfectly, though yes, he did that.

Instead, I think we should understand fulfillment here in chapter 5 in the way that Matthews used fulfillment in the first two chapters, especially chapter 2. Remember, if you go back to chapter 2, everything Jesus did in his infancy or what his parents did, Matthew connects to a fulfillment of an Old Testament text. This happened to fulfill what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, or this took place to fulfill what was spoken by Jeremiah, or this took place to fulfill what was written, etc. etc.

So, everything that Jesus does, everywhere he goes in Matthew 2, is seen as fulfilling, that is, bringing to completion, being the goal of what was being anticipated and pointed to. Now Jesus is saying I have come not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them. How does Jesus fulfill the Mosaic law as part of the Mosaic covenant? Well, simply that Jesus' life and teaching is what the law was actually pointed to.

So Jesus' own teaching and his life and ministry are actually the goals of the Mosaic law and the Mosaic covenant. Now that Christ has come, his teaching and his life and ministry can now be seen as the fulfillment of it. So what Matthew is saying is that Jesus brings the Mosaic covenant and the Mosaic law to its completion and its fulfillment.

Later on in the New Testament, the apostle Paul refers to the temporary nature of the Mosaic covenant. Back once more in Galatians chapter 3, we saw that part of what Paul is doing in Galatians chapter 3 is to demonstrate that the primary

fulfillment of the new covenant for God's people comes through Jesus Christ, not through the old covenant. That is the new covenant promised in Ezekiel, and Jeremiah finds it, or I'm sorry, the Abrahamic covenant promised in Genesis 12 and following finds its fulfillment not ultimately in the Mosaic covenant but in the person of Jesus Christ.

And so, in Galatians, chapter 3, what Paul does is argue that actually, the Mosaic covenant played a temporary role in preparing for the coming of Christ, the Messiah. Now, once more, I don't want to go into a detailed exegesis of this section, and we don't have time to look at all the details, but simply to recognize that Paul, again, the whole purpose is he's arguing for the temporary nature of the Mosaic covenant. It played a temporary role of keeping and maintaining the people, of guarding them until the promise arrived, the true promise of the Abrahamic covenant arrived, which is Jesus Christ.

Now that that has arrived, now that Jesus Christ has arrived, the Mosaic covenant is no longer binding on God's people. It has reached its climax. It has reached its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

So, Paul's point is the Mosaic covenant did not set aside the Abrahamic covenant. It did not eclipse it. It is not the ultimate and final eternal fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

Instead, Paul says, no, if you read the Old Testament, historically, it played a temporary role of keeping and guarding and sustaining the people, preparing them for the fulfillment that comes in the person of Jesus Christ. So, for example, I'll just start reading in verse 15, so you kind of get a flavor of what Paul is doing. He says, brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life.

Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been established, so it is in this case. In other words, Paul says, in the same way that the Abrahamic covenant has been established, another covenant cannot come along and supersede it, set it aside, or add to it. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.

Scripture does not say to seeds, meaning many, but to one seed, meaning Christ. We read that. Then, in verse 17, he says, what I mean is this: the law introduced 430 years later after the Abrahamic covenant does not set it aside, the covenant, the Abrahamic covenant previously established by God, and thus does not do away with the promise.

For if the inheritance, that is, the Abrahamic promises and Abrahamic covenant, depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise. But God, in his grace, gave it to Abraham through a promise. Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions.

Until the seed that is Christ, back in chapter 3, verse 16, Paul just told us that the seed of Abraham is Christ. Until the seed to whom the promise has referred has come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator.

A mediator, however, implies more than one party, but God is one. Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not. For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin so that what was promised being given through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Then, just a couple more verses. Before the coming of this faith, that is faith in Jesus Christ, the seed who fulfills the Abrahamic covenant.

Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law. Locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So, the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So, in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. So, I'll stop right there.

But you get the picture that the law functioned as a temporary measure to keep people, to guard people, to maintain them, to guard them until Christ came. And now that Christ has come, the law has served its purpose, and it no longer functions in a binding, authoritative manner over the people of God. In fact, Paul also argues in this section in chapter 3 and verse 10.

He says that all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse as it is written. Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law. But then he goes on in verse 13 and says, but Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

In other words, Jesus' death also brings to an end the curse that came because of failure to live in obedience to the Mosaic law. And so, Paul's argument is the Abrahamic covenant is not fulfilled primarily and finely and exhaustively in the old covenant, the Mosaic covenant, but it is fulfilled in Christ. Instead, the Mosaic covenant plays a role of yes, bringing about fulfillment, but by guarding and keeping, and as Paul says, locking up, maintaining God's people until the promised seed arrived, which is Christ.

The implication is that now that fulfillment in Christ has arrived, the readers do not need to submit to the Mosaic law. We find something similar going on in Hebrews chapter eight, another section that we've dealt with in connection with the temple.



But in Hebrews chapter eight, as part of the author's argument over and over that Jesus Christ is superior to various events and persons and institutions under the old covenant, as part of that argument, the author now demonstrates that Jesus Christ brings about a superior, inaugurates a superior covenant.

Again, the way that Jesus is superior is important to understand that the author does not argue Jesus is superior because the old covenant was plan A, and it failed. It was inherently defective and something bad and evil that just didn't work. And so now God scraps that and does something else.

But instead, at the heart of the author's argument is Hebrews chapter one and verse two, which kind of set you up for reading the rest of the book. In the past, God spoke to our ancestors and to the prophets many times in various ways, but in these last days, in the days of fulfillment, he has spoken to us through his son or by his son. So, in other words, Jesus is seen as bringing to a climax, bringing to a fulfillment, God speaking; God spoke in various ways to the prophets through Moses, through the Old Testament law.

But now God, the climax of God speaking to his people is through his son, Jesus Christ. So, we're to understand Jesus' relationship to the Old Testament once more as one of promise and fulfillment throughout the book of Hebrews. So now, in chapters eight through 10, the author begins a lengthy section where he will argue for Jesus' superiority over the Old Covenant because the salvation that he brings now is the ultimate fulfillment of what was promised in the Old Testament.

In fact, the author will argue from the Old Testament itself that if the old covenant under Moses was still binding, then why in the New Testament, this isn't just a New Testament thing, but why in the Old Testament do you find Jeremiah anticipating a new covenant? If that's the case, that seems to suggest that the old covenant is now obsolete. If the old covenant was God's final word, his final means of establishing a relationship with humanity and dealing with sin, if the old covenant was the final expression of God's will for his people, why do you have years later Jeremiah anticipating the establishment of a new covenant? So, in Hebrews chapter eight, and I'll read verses seven and following seven through 13, we find the author explicitly quoting at length Jeremiah 31, the new covenant passage. Now, we've seen the new covenant text.

The new covenant is also clearly present in Ezekiel 36 and 37, and perhaps Joel 2 and elsewhere, but the author quotes explicitly from Jeremiah 31, which clearly refers to this new relationship as a new covenant. So, verse seven, for if there had been nothing wrong with the first covenant, no place would be sought for another. Again, if the old covenant was sufficient for God's final word for dealing with sin and establishing a relationship with human beings, why do you have to mention a new covenant later on? But God found fault with the people of Israel, verse eight, and

said, now quoting Jeremiah, 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. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. And here it is, I will put my law in their minds and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people. There again is the covenant formula. 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 remember their sins no more.

Then, the author of Hebrews ends in verse 13 by saying that by calling this covenant new, he has made the first one obsolete, and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear. So notice in this text not only the lengthy Jeremiah 31 quotation but once more the fact that the old covenant, what the old covenant was meant to do, will find its ultimate fulfillment and expression in the new covenant, where there is a complete renewal, and the writing of the law in our hearts, a renewal, and according to Ezekiel 37, God will put his spirit in us, enabling us to keep the covenant, and there is also forgiveness of sins. You see, the problem of the old covenant, according to the author of Hebrews, is not that the old covenant was sinful or bad or wrong or kind of a plan A that just didn't work and backfired, but the only problem was Israel's stubbornness and rebellion and disobedience, and that the old covenant could not ultimately overcome this, which is what the new covenant now will deal with by giving a new heart to the people.

So once more, the old covenant, which seems to be the consistent theme of the New Testament, is the old covenant has run its course; it's reached its fulfillment in the new covenant that has now been inaugurated in the person of Jesus Christ. And so what I want to do in the rest of this time, and then also in the next section, is spend the remainder of our time looking at the new covenant and its fulfillment in the New Testament. When it comes to the new covenant, we've already suggested that it is meant to be an overarching covenant that brings others fulfillment.

It's the covenant that maintains all the other covenants, or I'm sorry, the culmination, the fulfillment of all the other covenants, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, and the Davidic covenant. The new covenant now brings those all to a climax, to a culmination. We've also looked at the fact, again, just to remind you so that when we look at specific New Testament texts, we can recall the connection.

The two primary texts that we want to look at are Jeremiah 31, verses 31 through 34 of Jeremiah chapter 31, and then the appropriate sections of Ezekiel 36 and 37,

which also contain covenant language and clearly anticipate a new covenant established with God's people when he returns them to their land. So, covenants are also related to land and restoration. When it comes to the new covenant, it seems to me the essentials of the new covenant are this, and again, I owe these observations to Scott Hafeman's article in *Central Themes in New Biblical Theology* and a number of other works.

First of all, the new covenant is needed; according to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the new covenant is needed primarily due to Israel's sin and Israel's rebellion. So, it's for that reason that they broke the old covenant, and so the new covenant is needed due to Israel's rebellion. The second essential element of the new covenant is it will not be broken like the previous one, precisely because the law will be written on the hearts of God's people, Jeremiah 31, and they will be given a new heart, they will be a renewed heart, they will be given the Holy Spirit, Ezekiel chapter 36.

Third, the new covenant is based on God's prior act of redemption. Fourth, in connection with that, it offers complete forgiveness of sins, that is especially at the end of Jeremiah, but also in Ezekiel, God will cleanse them of their wickedness and their idolatry, God will remember their sins no more, he will provide forgiveness for their wickedness. So, the new covenant offers complete forgiveness of sins.

Finally, the new covenant then points to the coming of a Messiah whose death and resurrection will enact the covenant. And we'll see this in the rest of the New Testament, the development of the new covenant. Now, one question that arises is, in the Old Testament, the new covenant in both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the new covenant is promised to a restored Israel.

Particularly in Jeremiah 31, we find that the divided kingdom, the northern and southern kingdoms, Israel and Judah, the covenant is made them in Ezekiel, the two kingdoms are restored and it's with the nation of Israel, with God's people Israel, that God, I'm using Israel as an umbrella term for God's old covenant people, the people of God in the Old Testament, it is with Israel, the restored nation of Israel, that God makes his promise in Jeremiah and Ezekiel of a new covenant. So, it's obviously related to the people of God. Now, when you get to the New Testament, it appears that the new covenant is fulfilled not in Israel but in God's new people, Jews and Gentiles, making up the church.

The question is how we understand that. One theological system or movement that has wrestled with that is one we've referred to, and that is dispensationalism. There have been a couple of different dispensational themes just to demonstrate how this tension has been wrestled with; where you have in the Old Testament the promises in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the promise of the New Testament is made exclusive to Israel.

Yet in the New Testament, you seem to find the new covenant and its promises and blessings now applying to the various churches that you find New Testament authors addressing, that is, the people of God made up of Jews and Gentiles. Within dispensationalism, what is often known as classical dispensationalism, one of the features of that movement was to draw a very, very sharp distinction between Israel and the church. So, the promises that God makes to the national, ethnic Israel in the Old Testament must be fulfilled by them.

The church made of believing Jews and Gentiles are not to be equated with, or not be confused with, or, according to many under more classic older dispensationalism, had no connection with Old Testament Israel. So often, the way it was explained is some of the spiritual blessings of the new covenant, such as forgiveness of sins and a new heart, are realized in the church. They are given to the church, but that doesn't mean the new covenant is associated with the church.

The new covenant can only be fulfilled with Israel, but the church does get some of the blessings, much like what Israel gets under the new covenant. What is often known as more progressive dispensationalism actually says that the new covenant does get fulfilled in the church. It's actually fulfilled.

It's not just that some of the blessings kind of bleed over into the church, but they actually get fulfilled in the church, even though they still would reserve a future fulfillment for Israel in an eschatological fulfillment sometime in the future. So, some of the more progressive movements of dispensationalism would see an already but not yet fulfillment. Already, the new covenant is being fulfilled.

It's being fulfilled through Christ in God's people, the church made of Jews and Gentiles, but that does not rule out a future eschatological fulfillment for God's people, Israel. The key, I think though, is to understand wherever you want to fall. The key is to understand that the New Testament consistently demonstrates that the new covenant is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ and then once more, by extension, all who belong to him.

So now, in the present, Jews and Gentiles, as God's people, participate in the fulfillment of the new covenant and the blessings of the new covenant enacted by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But it will also have a consummated fulfillment in the new creation, which we have already seen, but we'll see again in Revelation chapter 21 and verse 3. So once more, the new covenant participates in the already but not yet fulfilled. It is already in Christ and his people, but it has yet to be fulfilled in consummated form in the new creation of Revelation 21.

Now, to summarize or to make a summary statement that is important to keep in mind as we start looking at a New Testament text and the fulfillment of the new covenant is it's important, I think to realize that all of the blessings of salvation that

we enjoy as Christians today are tied in the present and in the future are tied inextricably to the new covenant. So that is when we start reading the New Testament, and we start talking about things like being our salvation, being saved, being redeemed, receiving the Holy Spirit, that my sins have been forgiven, that I now have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, all this language that we like to use as Christians. What is important is that we anchor that in the new covenant.

Another way of saying it is that there is no salvation, and there are no blessings of salvation apart from the new covenant that God has promised and established with his people. So, all the blessings of salvation that you and I enjoy now and will enjoy in the future are tied inextricably to the new covenant that God has established and fulfilled through the person of Jesus Christ. So, for example, we will look more at this later, but when we talk about the Holy Spirit, and we talk about the gifts of the Spirit and receiving the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is not a church doctrine.

It is not something that Paul invented or decided to emphasize. It is not something that the New Testament authors started emphasizing. The Holy Spirit, wherever it occurs in the New Testament, ultimately owes its presence in the New Testament to the promises of the new covenant.

Again, go back to Joel chapter 2 or Ezekiel chapter 36, where the promise of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in those texts is tied to the new covenant relationship that God intends to establish with his people. So, all the blessings of salvation that we enjoy, the Holy Spirit, redemption, forgiveness of sins, all of those are tied into the new covenant. We do not enjoy those apart from participating in the new covenant, apart from God fulfilling his new covenant and establishing a new covenant relationship with his people.

So, the starting point with the new covenant, when we think about the New Testament fulfillment, is the Gospels, to note what the Gospels and what Jesus Christ says are in relationship to the new covenant. The place to begin would probably be in Matthew chapter 26 or Luke chapter 22 verse 20. But we will look at Matthew chapter 26 and verse 28.

This is in the context of the Lord's Supper, where Jesus is celebrating the Passover with his disciples, and that then emerges into Jesus and his disciples now celebrating the Lord's Supper, which then seems to be the fulfillment of what was intended in the Passover. So, it's not just some nice meal that Jesus wants them to have so that they can be like Israel, but it seems to have some connection to it in terms of promise and fulfillment. So, in the same way that the Passover meal celebrated God's redemption of his people from Egypt, now the Lord's Supper will commemorate and celebrate God's new covenant salvation, his redemption of his people through his son, Jesus Christ.

So, in Matthew chapter 26 and verses 17 through 30, we find the account of Jesus celebrating the Passover and then inaugurating the Lord's Supper, communion, the Eucharist, whatever you want to call it, with his disciples. And in the midst of that, we find the same thing in Luke 22. But in the midst of that, in Matthew 26 and verse 28, Matthew says, this is my blood of the covenant, or Matthew has Jesus saying, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Now notice the language of covenant and the language of forgiveness of sins, which seems to come right out of Jeremiah chapter 31, perhaps also Ezekiel as well. But if that isn't enough to convince you, notice how Luke records it in chapter 22, Luke chapter 22 and verse 20, Luke chapter 22 and 20 in Luke's record of the Last Supper. He says, in the same way, after supper, Jesus took the cup from the Passover meal and said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for many. So, by putting these two together, Jesus anticipates that his death on the cross would be the ratification of the new covenant.

It's through Jesus' death on the cross that the covenant would be enacted and that the forgiveness of sins promised under the new covenant would take hold and be fulfilled. A couple of other passages from the gospels that don't explicitly mention the new covenant but, in my opinion, are allusions back to the new covenant text. One of them, I think, would be Jesus dispensing the Holy Spirit.

For example, in John chapter 7, and verses 37 through 39. John 7 37 through 39 says this: on the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, let anyone who is thirsty, come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.

By this, he meant the Spirit whom those who believed in him were later to receive up until the time the spirit had not yet been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified. So, upon his death and resurrection, Jesus would dispense the spirit in fulfillment of the new covenant promise, especially in Ezekiel 36 or Joel chapter 2, that God would pour out his spirit upon his people. Or within the same book, John chapter 3, the well-known exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus.

The language, starting in verse 3, Jesus says, truly, truly, I say to you, or very truly, my King James background was kicking in, very truly, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again or given new birth. Nicodemus then asks how someone can be born when they are old. Nicodemus asked. Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born. Jesus answered, very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and of spirit.

In my judgment, others have argued this, and so it is not original to me, but in my judgment, this goes back to Ezekiel 36 and the new covenant promises that we saw there. So, for example, if I can find the verse Ezekiel chapter 36, and here it is, starting in verse 24, for I will take you out of the nations, I will gather you from all the countries, I will bring you back to your own land, I will sprinkle clean water on you, that would be the water when Jesus says, you must be born of water, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean, I will cleanse you from all your impurities. Then verse 26, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you.

Verse 27, and I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees. So, when Jesus promises Nicodemus, or tells Nicodemus, I should say, when he tells Nicodemus, you cannot see the kingdom of God unless you are born of water and spirit, that is a direct allusion back to the new covenant language of Ezekiel 36. In other words, again, Jesus Christ is inaugurating the new covenant.

In my opinion, whenever Jesus promises forgiveness of sins, back in Matthew, he is to be called Jesus because he will forgive his people for their sins, or he will forgive his people's sins. Whenever Jesus offers forgiveness of sins, implicitly, that is an allusion back to the new covenant, especially Jeremiah 31, but also Ezekiel, that God would cleanse them from impurity, God would bring forgiveness, God would remember their sins no more. In fact, I will argue later on that when Paul refers to forgiveness of sins, we should probably see that as well as a direct link back to the new covenant.

Jesus' death on the cross, the specific references to Jesus' death on the cross, his blood, as ratifying the new covenant, as bringing forgiveness, as inaugurating the new covenant in the words of the Lord's Supper, Jesus dispensing the Holy Spirit in John 7 and elsewhere, the new birth by water and spirit, which links back to Ezekiel 36, the forgiveness of sins that Jesus offers, all linked back to the new covenant. Another example would be the fact that Jesus came to create a new people. The fact that in the Gospels, Jesus comes to gather a new people, starting with his 12 disciples and apostles, but beginning to gather a new people who will respond to him in faith, once more, I think, assumes the new covenant.

Jesus is creating a new covenant in fulfillment of the new covenant promises of God making a covenant with his people that he is going to restore to their land in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. So, to conclude then, Jesus' death on the cross is the means of enacting and ratifying the new covenant. It's the means of bringing the promised forgiveness of sins found under the old covenant.

The new covenant probably also reaches back to the old covenant in the Old Testament by the new covenant probably reaching back and embracing the sins under the Old Testament that were typologically dealt with under the Old Testament sacrificial system. Now, those sins are finally and ultimately dealt with under the new

covenant salvation that Jesus Christ provides through his death and resurrection. So, the Gospels clearly, without always using the word new covenant, although it does in Luke 22.20, the Gospels clearly present Jesus as inaugurating the new covenant of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and elsewhere in the Old Testament as the fulfillment of God's intention to enter into a covenant relationship with his people.

Now, what we'll do in our next section then is look at a number of other New Testament texts in the Pauline literature and elsewhere that likewise demonstrate the fulfillment in Christ and his people, the fulfillment of the new covenant promised in Jeremiah and Ezekiel in the Old Testament. Then, we'll end by looking at the not yet aspect, the consummation of the new covenant in the new creation of Revelation chapter 21.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 10, The Covenant, Old Testament and New Testament, Part 2.