

# **Dr. David L. Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 11, New Covenant**

© 2024 Dave Mathewson and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 11 on the covenant, particularly the New Covenant.

So, we've been looking at the new covenant as sort of the overarching covenant that brings fulfillment to all of the others, the Abrahamic, the Noahic, the Mosaic covenant, and the Davidic covenant.

They all find their fulfillment in some way in the new covenant as sort of the overarching one. We began looking at the new covenant in terms of how the Gospels portray it being fulfilled in Jesus' ministry, in his words at the Lord's Supper, where Jesus is celebrated in the Passover and demonstrates that his upcoming death, his blood, ratifies and inaugurates the new covenant. We looked at a number of other texts in the Gospels that demonstrate, without using the word covenant, that Jesus came to inaugurate the covenant to dispense the blessings of the new covenant to his people.

So, with the new covenant and people, those two themes, we'll look at people of God next, but those two themes overlap substantially. What I want to do now is look at the theme of the new covenant in the rest of the New Testament. And just as a reminder, we'll say this several times, but just as a reminder, the fulfillment of the new covenant and its blessings takes place according to the scheme of inaugurated eschatology.

That is, we already participate in and enjoy the fulfillment of and the blessings of the covenant under the new covenant. So, these are not just blessings that kind of bleed over, but the covenant really is not enacted or something like that. But we participate in these blessings already because the new covenant has already been enacted and inaugurated through the death of Jesus Christ, yet those anticipate the final consummation of the new covenant.

And so, we'll look at both of those. We'll look at a number of texts that in the rest of the New Testament, particularly in the Pauline literature, but in a couple of other places that look at the new covenant being already inaugurated, consistent with what we find in the gospels. Then, look at just a couple of texts, one in particular, that demonstrate the final consummation of the new covenant promises.

So, it takes place according to that already, but not yet, the scheme that we've seen with others, other themes in the New Testament, and other biblical-theological themes. And then the other thing to remind you is that many of the texts that we'll

refer to are ones that we've looked at already. So, as we've said, most of these themes are integrally related to each other and intertwined.

So, it's often difficult to pull them apart in referring to one theme, you're referring to another. So, some of these texts that referred to restoration and new creation, or that we'll see, we'll refer to people of God now, or even old covenant or Davidic covenant now we'll find in the context of the new covenant as well. And then we'll repeat some of these texts again; we'll see them as important texts referring to the theme of people of God, but new covenant in the rest of the New Testament.

I want to start with a text that contains explicit references to new covenants and new covenant texts from the Old Testament and how they are developed. And then, we'll look at a number of implicit texts. And by that, I mean texts that don't necessarily use the word covenant or explicitly refer to covenant or refer to passages from the Old Testament that refer to new covenant.

But nevertheless, they seem to embody elements of the new covenant. They seem to communicate blessings or deal with blessings of the new covenant, such as forgiveness of sins and things like that, which suggests that the author is assuming the new covenant or that these blessings that the author is describing are those that are connected with the establishment and the inauguration of the new covenant. So, I want to begin with an explicit text, and that is Second Corinthians chapter three and second Corinthians chapter three.

And I'll start reading with verse one and just a few of the verses. I will not read by any means the whole chapter, but the first few verses of it, which clearly Paul is utilizing, as you'll see language that comes right out of new covenant texts, particularly Jeremiah chapter 31 and also Ezekiel chapter 36 and 37. So, starting with chapter three and verse one of 2 Corinthians, Paul says, are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need some people's letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter written in our, on our hearts, known and read by everyone.

You know that you are a letter from Christ. The result of them a ministry written, not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts, such confidence we have through Christ before God, not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made as competent as ministries of the new covenant.

So, there's a clear reference to the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. Now, if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters and stone, came with glory so that the Israelites could not look steadily on the face of Moses because of its glory, a transitory thought, it was will not the ministry of the spirit or the new covenant be even more glorious. If

the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness? The ministry bringing righteousness, being the new covenant for what was glorious, has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.

And if that was transitory, if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that, which last, therefore, since we have such hope, we're very bold. We are not like Moses, who had put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day, the same veil remains when the old covenant is read.

It has not been removed because it is only taken away in Christ. Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. Let me skip down to verses 17 and 18.

Now the Lord is the spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all who, with unveiled faces, contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the spirit. Now, in this section, I just read, there's a lot we could say.

And once more, we don't have time in texts like this and other texts that we've looked at to go into a detailed exegesis and answer all of the questions that you might have about this passage. But I want to simply make a number of comments related to the new covenant in this text. First of all, the burden of this text is to demonstrate that Paul is a minister of the new covenant in analogy with Moses, who is a minister of the old covenant.

So, Paul compares himself to Moses, compares and contrasts; Moses gave the law, but now Paul mediates the new covenant spirit to the people through his ministry. So notice, notice the comparison and contrast back and forth, the law between what the law did and what the law accomplished under Moses' ministry. And now the surpassing greatness and glory of the new covenant.

So, Paul says, yes, there was glory associated with the old covenant, but how much greater than is the glory associated with the new covenant that now Paul sees himself as a mediator. So, Paul is setting up a comparison contrast between himself and Moses, as Moses was the minister of the old covenant. Now Paul sees himself as a minister of and as the mediator of the new covenant, as particularly signaled by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

So already, the reference to the holy spirit recalls new covenant texts, such as Joel chapter two and Ezekiel chapter 36 with the outpouring of the holy spirit. And we'll come back to this again, but, but, but once more, this is a demonstration that when we talk about the holy spirit, and we see references of the holy spirit, not only here

in 2 Corinthians three, but elsewhere in Paul's letters in the New Testament, it it's rooted ultimately in the Old Testament. This is not a Christian thing.

This is not a Paul's invention. This is not something that all of a sudden New Testament authors decide to emphasize. But, the presence of the holy spirit is nothing less than the fulfillment of God's new covenant promises in the Old Testament.

So, Paul then sees himself as a minister of the new covenant in analogy to Moses as a minister of the old notice. Interestingly, Paul's ministry can even be seen in terms of Jeremiah's ministry. As we said, much of what Paul says in chapter three draws on language from the book of Jeremiah, particularly chapter 31, the new covenant passage, but elsewhere as well, notice that later on in 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse eight, Paul describes his ministry this way.

So, even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority, the Lord gave us the apostles to build up rather than tearing us down. I will not be ashamed of it. And that language of building up and tearing down actually comes right out of the book of Jeremiah at the very beginning of Jeremiah chapter one.

The prophet describes his own call and his own ministry in verses nine and 10: then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, I have put my words in your mouth. See today, and I point you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant. But now, Paul and much of that was because Jeremiah's message was to be one of judgment upon Israel and the nations, but also one of a prompt promise of restoration in the new covenant.

Now, in a way, by contrast, Paul tells us in chapter 10 of 2 Corinthians he does not see his ministry as one of tearing down but primarily building up. I take it through mediating the new covenant, the Holy Spirit, to the people through his ministry. So now Paul builds up, rather than tearing down, because the new covenant has been inaugurated and because his ministry is one of mediating the new covenant, the Holy Spirit, to the people.

Notice throughout this text, again, the contrast between the old covenant, which focused on the written law. So this language of written on stone and engraved in letters on stone verse seven, even the written in ink, this, this language of, of, of, of written on tablets, this refers to the old covenant. The new covenant is demonstrated by the fact that God is now at work in human hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul could even say the law kills, but ultimately, the spirit gives life to the new covenant, the Holy Spirit. Again, we'll see in a moment that that language goes right

back to the new covenant text, such as Jeremiah chapter 31 and Ezekiel chapter 36 or 37. So then, when Paul describes in chapter two, chapter three of verse, verse three of second Corinthians, he says, you show that you are a letter from Christ and the result of our ministry written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, like the mosaic law, but on tablets of human hearts clearly seems to allude to Ezekiel chapter 36.

And also, for especially Jeremiah chapter 31 and verses 31 through 34, where this is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel. I will put my law in their hearts and write it on their hearts. So, Paul clearly alludes to Jeremiah 31 and the new covenant text.

The new covenant clearly in this section depends on the power and presence of the life-giving Holy Spirit. So, at the center of Paul's ministry of the new covenant, as at the center of the new covenant, as Paul describes it is the life-giving spirit of God. So again, he says in verses six, verse six that the new covenant that Paul ministers is not of a letter but of the spirit, for the letter kills, the spirit gives life.

And we find the same thing in verse seven. Now, if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory so that they could not look at it. verse eight, will not the ministry of the spirit be even more glorious?

And then verse 18. And we all who are with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed in his, into his image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the spirit. So, the Holy Spirit plays a key role.

The life-giving spirit plays a key role in Paul's understanding of the new covenant. Furthermore, in this section, Paul is also convinced that the proof of the inauguration of the new covenant age is the transformed lives that result from it. The transformed life in transformed lives of God's people is proof that the new covenant age has been inaugurated and fulfilled by Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

So, for example, in Ezekiel chapter 36 and verses 25 through 27, once more, I know we've read these texts already, but in connection with other things. But now we find Paul explicitly alluding, I think, to a number of these in chapter 36 of Ezekiel and 25 and 26, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from your impurities and from all your idols.

I will give you a new heart, and I will put my spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And again, notice that heart language, the heart of flesh in contrast of the heart of stone in light of the stone and spirit contrast in 2 Corinthians three in light of that note, again, what Paul says in verse 18 of 2 Corinthians three, we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory

are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, which is the spirit.

And at least conceptually, again, we find here Paul linking transformation with the receiving of the spirit, which is the same linkage that one finds in Ezekiel chapter 36 of the cleansing that will take place because God will place his spirit in his people. And likewise, in chapter three and verse six of Second Corinthians, he has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. Again, a clear allusion to Jeremiah 31 and 31 and 34, and God pouring out his spirit on the people or giving them a new heart and writing the law in their heart.

So, they're able to obey and keep God's commandments and cleanse them from their idolatry and their sinfulness. The key feature, though, of this section as well, or I should say another key feature, not the key one, but another key feature, is it's intriguing once more that we find a text that originally in its context in Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31, a text that was fulfilled or was to be fulfilled in national Israel. Again, both Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31 are in the context of the restoration of God's people, Israel.

But now we find these new covenant promises and texts fulfilled, not in national Israel, but extended to embrace all people, Jew and Gentile, in light fulfillment in Christ. So, Paul clearly addresses in 2 Corinthians a Gentile Christian in the city of Corinth. And now they are participants in the new covenant promises of God that, again, in the Old Testament, are originally applied to Israel, but now expand and embrace Gentiles.

We'll talk more about that when we get to the theme, people of God, why and how Paul and other New Testament authors do that. But one of the keys, as we've already seen, is to sort of anticipate what will develop more fully under the people of God. One of the keys is that New Testament authors see these promises fulfilled first of all in Jesus Christ. Going back to our discussion of the gospels, we'll also see this in the book of Hebrews: the new covenant promises get fulfilled first of all in Jesus Christ; his death and resurrection ratify and inaugurate and enact the new covenant.

His people then participated in the new covenant as well. And the new covenant is fulfilled in them and for them by virtue of their belonging to Jesus Christ. So we find then in chapter three of 1 Corinthians or 2 Corinthians that these new covenant texts from Ezekiel and Jeremiah now find fulfillment, not in national Israel, not ethnically in the Israelite people, but now extending to embrace all people due to fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

The last feature of the new covenant in 2 Corinthians three is the fact that if you move up to a section that we've already looked at in connection with a couple of

things, and we'll look at again if you move to 2 Corinthians chapter six, we'll see that Paul's discussion of the new covenant climaxes in the covenant formula with God dwelling in midst. So, in 2 Corinthians chapter six and verse 16, where Paul says, what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols for we are the temple of the living God? As God has said, I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Now, we have looked at this text in connection with the temple theme, which is closely connected with the theme of covenant. But here, Paul's discussion of the new covenant now climaxes in the reference to God, the covenant formula with God dwelling with his people. Once more, this text is probably a combination of both Leviticus 26 and Ezekiel 37 and verses 26 and 27, which is the covenant formula in the midst of Ezekiel's discussion of the inauguration of the new covenant, which we see Paul already alluding to and referring to back in chapter three.

Now, he picks up Ezekiel 37 again and alludes to it or actually quotes it as part of his understanding of the new covenant. Part of the new covenant is that God now also takes up residence and dwells with his people. But we saw with the temple theme, not in terms of a physical temple structure, but the people themselves are now God's temple and God's dwelling place.

Also, by the way, later on, I just read verse 16 of 2 Corinthians 6. If you move down two verses in verse 18, Paul quotes from 2 Samuel 7 verse 14, I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord God Almighty. He actually combines 2 Samuel 7 with a text from Isaiah, but it's intriguing. We already said what was unique about this is Paul applies the Davidic covenant formula, not to Jesus at this point, but to his people, to his followers.

In other words, intriguingly, what Paul is suggesting is the restoration of the people of God under the new covenant. The fulfillment of the new covenant and the establishment of the new covenant with his people of God now takes place under the reign of David's son, Jesus Christ. In other words, the new covenant, the way that the covenant will ultimately be fulfilled, is in the context of the establishment of the new covenant as well.

I would remind you that all of this is in the context of purity, too. The whole reason Paul quotes these texts in chapter 6 is to call his readers to separate from those who are unclean spiritually. So, as we said, the key feature, the key proof, and the key marker that the new covenant has been realized are the transformed lives of the people and their purity.

As we read in Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31, God would cleanse them from their sins. God would cleanse them from their wickedness and idolatry, write his law on their hearts, and put his spirit within them. So inevitably, if one participates in new

covenant salvation, if one has received the new covenant Holy Spirit, inevitably one cannot help but live a transformed life and exemplify that in a transformed life and in pursuing a life of purity and holiness.

So, 2 Corinthians 3 then is an important text that develops Paul's understanding of the new covenant. Once more, we could say a lot of other things about that, but I think we've said enough in 2 Corinthians to demonstrate that the new covenant is a fundamental structure for Paul as well, as far as understanding God's relationship to his people, the people's possession of salvation and the transformed lives and the holiness and purity that he wants to see his people live out, the work and role of the Holy Spirit in their lives. All of those things come under the structure of the new covenant that has been inaugurated in the person of Jesus Christ, and now his people participate in it as well.

So, 2 Corinthians 3 is an explicit text, chapter 3 into chapter 6 of 2 Corinthians is an explicit text referring to the new covenant. What I want to do now is look at perhaps a number of implicit texts that once more refer to blessings of or elements of the new covenant. Even if they don't use the new covenant or new covenant language explicitly, they certainly seem to assume the presence and the fulfillment of the new covenant.

One of them is the fact that we find Paul referring to the formation of a new people of God in a number of places. One text that we've already looked at that is significant so that I won't read the whole section again is Ephesians chapter 2, verses 11 through 22, a passage where we saw Paul alluding to, again, although he doesn't quote it, he alludes to concepts and texts, specific texts, particularly from the book of Isaiah, and those texts in Isaiah are in the context of the restoration of God's people Israel. Now, Paul alludes to those in Ephesians 2:11 through 22, where because of Christ's death on the cross, he has brought the promised peace that Isaiah anticipated.

He has brought the promised restoration that Isaiah anticipated. He brought the promised new creation and the new humanity anticipated back in Isaiah by uniting Jew and Gentile into one new humanity, one new body, and the church. So, Ephesians 2, 11 through 22 seems to draw on restoration texts, the restoring of God's people, in finding its fulfillment in the uniting of Jew and Gentile into one new humanity, into one new body, the church, through Jesus Christ.

Also, much like the new covenant formula, and much like what we found in 2 Corinthians 3 and 6, Ephesians 2:11 through 22 climaxes with God's temple dwelling with his people. So even though the word covenant is not used in Ephesians 2:11 through 22, it certainly seems to assume it with the restoration of a new people of God that climaxes with God's temple covenant dwelling with his people in Ephesians 2:11 through 22, where the people now are being built up to be a holy temple where



God dwells with his spirit. We could point to other texts, too, where Paul envisions the formation of a new people of God consisting of both Jew and Gentile, which probably assumes the inauguration and establishment of the new covenant.

Because once more, when you go back to new covenant texts, especially Ezekiel and Jeremiah, they're all in the context of and assume the restoration of God's people. So, if God's people are now being formed and renewed and created and restored, then the new covenant must be inaugurated and must be enacted. Another implicit reference to the new covenant would be Paul's references to forgiveness of sins.

Now, there are a number of texts that we could cite, but just to give you an example of the significance of this theme throughout the literature, in chapter 3 and verses 24 and 25, I'll back up. Verse 23, we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory and are all justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ and presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness because, in his forbearance, he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

So, the fact that Christ's death now deals with the problem of sin and brings about forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of atonement. We'll deal with this text in a little more detail later, but clearly underlying Christ's death on the cross, dealing with the sins of humanity, and fulfillment of the promises of the new covenant. More clearly, Galatians chapter 1 and verse 4. I'll back up and start with verse 3. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.

To him be glory forever and ever. Amen. So, the notion of God giving Christ for our sins, Christ's death on the cross on behalf of the sins of the people, again, I think, assumes new covenant language.

Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 7. In Him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace. So, once again, the forgiveness of sins is connected with Jesus' death and with his blood as a fulfillment of the promises associated with the new covenant. So, I'm convinced when Paul refers to the forgiveness of sins in his letter or other New Testament writers throughout their letters, that underlying this is the assumption of the inauguration and establishment of the new covenant, which promises the forgiveness and cleansing of sins.

Another implicit text that I've already mentioned a couple of times but is very significant, especially in light of Paul's discussion in 2 Corinthians 3, is the presence of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit to the people, as I've already said, is not a church doctrine or a Christian doctrine that New Testament authors invent or decide

all of a sudden to emphasize or receive some new revelation that is now important. But the promise and the gift of the Holy Spirit to God's people and to the church is nothing less than the fulfillment of the new covenant.

Clearly, in 2 Corinthians, we see Paul link the promised Holy Spirit with the new covenant. But other texts throughout the New Testament could be used to demonstrate that as well. For example, in Romans 8, I won't read the whole passage, but if you skim down through it, notice how many times there are references to the Holy Spirit.

Just let me read verses 5 and 6 of Romans 8. Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires, but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. It's interesting too in that text, the linkage between the Spirit giving life, which is the same linkage you find Paul making in 2 Corinthians 3, where he clearly alludes to new covenant realities.

1 Corinthians 12, I won't read that, but the well-known gifts of the Spirit. Galatians 5, 16-18, and 22-25, the well-known fruit of the Spirit. Also, Ephesians 1:13-14, and you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation when you believed you were marked in him with a seal, which is the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

So even in this language of the sealing of the Holy Spirit, notice some of the different metaphors used in 1 Corinthians 12, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, and now the sealing of the Spirit. But all of these texts, I think, assume and go back to the promise of the new covenant. Acts chapter 2, where Peter actually quotes Joel chapter 2, is also in a new covenant context, the pouring out of the Spirit on the people of God, consistent with what one finds in Ezekiel 36.

Acts chapter 2 also then would be a new covenant text, the fulfillment of the new covenant by God pouring out his Spirit on his people. Now, later on, we'll spend a session looking at the Holy Spirit in more detail in both the Old and New Testament, but at this point, it's simply enough to say that the references throughout the New Testament to the Holy Spirit and his different roles and manifestations, etc., probably all go back to and assume, at least assume, the fulfillment of the new covenant. So, what is important about this is that all of the blessings of salvation that we experience are the result of the new covenant inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I know I've said that before, but I can't emphasize that enough. Again, we often tend to think of some of these things as New Testament realities or church or Christian

realities, salvation, redemption, some of this language we already read in Paul's letters, the receiving of the Holy Spirit, justification, etc., all these things that we often place in the category of the experience of the Christian, we need to recognize that all of these blessings we do not experience apart from the inauguration and the fulfillment of the new covenant through the death and resurrection of the person of Jesus Christ. Now, to move outside of Paul's letters to demonstrate the new covenant, the significance of the new covenant, and the role that the new covenant plays in the rest of the letters that assume or refer explicitly to the inauguration of the new covenant from Jeremiah, particularly Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel chapter 36.

One text that I don't want to spend a lot of time on because we've read it already in connection with the old covenant is Hebrews chapter 8, verses 7 through 13. In Hebrews chapter 8, 7 through 13, the author explicitly quotes at length Jeremiah chapter 31, verses 31 through 34. So unlike Paul, who alludes to it in chapter 3 of 2nd Corinthians, the author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31, 31 through 34 at length.

The author does this to demonstrate the inadequacy of the old covenant and establish the need for a new covenant. We've already said the problem with the old covenant was not that it was bad or evil or sinful or that it was a plan that God inaugurated, but it backfired, so he went to plan B. However, the problem with the old covenant was Israel's rebellion and sinfulness. The old covenant did not have within it the internal mechanism to ultimately deal with and overcome the rebellion and sin of God's people.

Therefore, we find in Jeremiah 31 that the author anticipates and prophesies a day when God will establish a new covenant where again he will put his law, write his law in their hearts, and enable them to keep it. The author of Hebrews is convinced that Jesus Christ has now inaugurated the new covenant. You note that throughout the book of Hebrews, especially when you go on and read chapters 9 through 10 of Hebrews, some think 8 through 10 is sort of the central section of Hebrews.

But when you read those chapters, you note that a new covenant is linked with tabernacle and temple and sacrifice and priesthood. So, the author's argument is if there's a change in one of those, there has to be a change in all of those. So, if there's been a new covenant inaugurated, there must be a new tabernacle temple, there must be a new sacrifice, there must be a new priesthood.

The author argues that Jesus Christ has fulfilled all of those as part of the establishment and inauguration of the new covenant salvation that Christ now brings. So, there's more we could say about that, but we've looked at Hebrews in connection with a number of other themes. And I want to move on and talk about two of the other, what are often called general epistles.

Then, we'll end with the book of Revelation and look at a number of references to covenant and new covenant language, particularly the reference to the new covenant being consummated. But one possible reference is intriguing to me, and I would emphasize possible reference to the new covenant, is found in the second Peter in chapter one. I owe this observation to Scott Hafeman again in his article on the covenants in a collection of essays entitled Central Themes in Biblical Theology.

In the 2 Peter 1, starting in verse three, we read this: his divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in this world caused by evil desires. For this reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness mutual affection, and to mutual affection love.

If you possess these qualities to an increasing degree, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election.

For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, there's a lot in there, and I don't want to go once more into detail as to what some of these words and things imply, but what Hafez has drawn attention to is that apparently, this section reflects the structure of the covenant. Verses three and four are the prologue in establishing what God has done for his people.

This is the provision part of the covenant, the provision of God for his people. So God has given us everything we need for a godly life. He has given us his great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption of the world.

So, the first verses, three and four, would be the prologue of the covenant, or establishing what God has done, his provisions for his people. Then, the covenant stipulations are found in verses five through seven. For this reason, make every effort to add these things to your faith and eventually add godliness.

If you possess them, you will keep yourself from being ineffective. Then, finally, verses eight through eleven would be the promises and curses of the covenant. So, verse eight, if you do these things, basically if you don't do these things, you'll be ineffective, and you will be nearsighted and blind and forget that you have been cleansed from your sins.

But if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome. So, it's possible, and I don't want to argue for this or not, but it's possible that Hafeman has isolated or identified the covenant structure, in this case referring to the new covenant, behind 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 3 through 11. One other text that I think demonstrates new covenant realities is the entire book of 1 John.

Once more, though, 1 John does not explicitly refer to the new covenant or quote from or allude to Jeremiah 31 or Ezekiel 36 or 37, as far as I know. A number of the concepts that John refers to seem once more to assume and to come right out of the new covenant promises from Jeremiah 31 and verses 36 and 37. For example, John's repeated emphasis on the forgiveness of sins throughout his book, the most well-known one being 1 John 1 verse 9, where he says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

So that language of forgiving sins, cleansing or purifying us seems to reflect, at least reflect or assume, new covenant language from Jeremiah chapter 31, Ezekiel 36. In the first John 2 and verse 2, he is our atoning sacrifice for our sins, not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world. So, there are other texts we could probably refer to for forgiveness of sins in John, but I'm just giving representative ones.

The Holy Spirit, the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the people throughout 1 John. Chapter 3, 1 John chapter 3 and verse 24, the one who keeps God's commands lives in him and he in them, and this is how we know that he lives in us. We know it by the Holy Spirit that he gave us, or literally by the Spirit, but by the Spirit that he has given us.

In chapter 4 and verse 13 of the same text, 4:13, this is how we know that we live in him and he in us; he has given us His Spirit. So, note once more the giving of the gift of the Spirit, the pouring out of the Spirit on God's people in 1 John, which is connected with their transformation and the way they live as a demonstration that the reality of the Spirit in their lives seems to me to reflect new covenant realities from the Old Testament. Then, there is also the language of new birth throughout 1 John.

For example, in chapter 3 and verse 9, no one who is born of God will continue to sin because God's seed remains in them. They cannot go on sinning because they have been born of God. Verse 10: this is how we know the children of God and who are the children of the devil.

Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. Chapter 4 and verse 7, Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God.

In chapter 5 and verse 1, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. And everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. Verse 4 of chapter 5, for everyone born of God, overcomes the world.

In chapter 5 and verse 18, we know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin. The one who was born of God keeps them safe and the evil one cannot harm them, a reference to Christ. But notice the references to being given birth, rebirth, or being born of, perhaps reflecting something similar to what we find in John chapter 3 and Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus.

This idea of given new birth or regeneration links back to Ezekiel chapter 36 in particular and the new covenant promises. So, 1 John, without specifically mentioning the new covenant, contains a number of the blessings associated with the new covenant that are inaugurated or that are present because of the inauguration of the new covenant. Forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, being given new birth and regeneration.

That brings us to the last book of the New Testament, and that is the book of Revelation. Revelation also has a number of texts that demonstrate the realities of the new covenant, both in its already and its not yet manifestation. So, for example, in chapter 1 and verses 5 and 6, right at the beginning of the book, and this text is important for another reason as well that we'll see later on when we discuss a couple of other themes, but starting of verse 5, I'll back up and read verse 4. This is part of John's introduction to the book in that he frames it as a letter.

John to the seven churches in the province of Asia, grace and peace to you from him who is, who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before the throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth, to him who loves us and who has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom of priests. So even the book of Revelation begins with this picture of Jesus Christ's own blood, freeing his people from their sins, to become a new people, a kingdom of priests. So, notice this notion of restoring and creating a new people based on the fact that through the blood of Christ, he has freed them from their sins.

He has forgiven them their sins through his sacrificial death. All of that seems to assume and recall the inauguration of an establishment of the new covenant. Furthermore, in chapter 5 and verse 9, we see the exact same or very similar language in chapter 5 and verse 9, and they sang a new song saying, you are worthy, referring to the lamb, Jesus Christ, you are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals because you were slain and with your blood you purchased for God people from every tribe and language and people and nation.

So once more, this idea of purchasing people by the blood of Christ, the blood of Christ, again, that which inaugurates a new covenant and now creating a new people, but an international people, people made of every tribe and language and tongue, etc. And then one other, before we look just very, very quickly at a text we've already looked at in connection with a couple of other themes, a couple of other texts that clearly seem to be in the context of covenant and perhaps place the entire book of revelation in the context of covenant is chapter 1 and verse 3, and then 22 verses 18 and 19. Chapter 1 and verse 3 say, blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it.

Or literally, those who keep what is written in it. So, there's a blessing for the one who reads and hears the word, but especially those who know it's not just by reading and hearing it, but by keeping and obeying it. So, there's a blessing for those who obey what one finds in the book of Revelation.

Now, what is intriguing is when you go to the very end of the book of Revelation in chapter 22, there are two interesting verses that I often think get misunderstood a little bit. And that is, I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of the scroll. Notice the similarity to verse 3 of chapter 1, blessed is the one who hears the words of this prophecy.

Now I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of the scroll. If anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes away from the scroll of this prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the Tree of Life and the holy city, which are described in the scroll.

Now, what is significant about the language of adding and taking away? We usually quote these verses in the context that there shouldn't be any books added to the New Testament or to the Bible because, or we shouldn't tamper with the book of Revelation because it says not to add or subtract. However, I want to make two observations about these verses. Number one, these verses seem to be a direct allusion back to Deuteronomy.

I think Deuteronomy and chapter 4 are the verses I want. Deuteronomy chapter 4, and I'll read verse 1. Now, Israel, hear the decrees and the laws that I'm about to teach you. So, this is in the context of the covenant that God made with Israel.

Hear the decrees and the laws I'm about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land, the Lord, the God of your ancestors is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord, your God that I gave you.

There's a similar text in Deuteronomy chapter 12 as well. But the point of this is, I am convinced that Paul's language of adding and subtracting goes back to the covenant. So, we are to read Revelations 22, 18, and 19 in connection with chapter 1, verse 3. Chapter 1, verse 3 says, there is blessing for hearing and obeying.

But now, chapters 22:18 and 19 remind us there is cursing for refusing to obey. I think adding and subtracting doesn't have as much to do with writing extra sentences or leaving books or paragraphs out. It has to do with failing to obey the word of God.

Even as we saw in Deuteronomy 4, the Israelites were told not to add or subtract but to keep everything written in it. So, to add or subtract to Revelation would be to fail to keep it, to disobey it. And so, you find the entire book of Revelation bracketed by this covenant idea, the blessings and curses.

Blessed is the one who reads, hears, and obeys it. Now, there's cursing for those who add or subtract or those who do not obey. The entire book, then, is in the context of covenantal blessings and cursings for obedience or failure to obey the warnings found in the book of Revelation, especially through idolatry and compromising one's faith in Jesus Christ.

By refusing to give Jesus Christ and God the exclusive obedience and worship that they deserve. Furthermore, you notice that chapter 22:18 and 19, it's addressed to the one who hears. Who's the one who hears? It would be the churches.

So, this is not addressed to unbelievers. It's not addressed to cults and false religions. It's addressed to God's people.

These are the covenant people of God. And now I take it in the wake of the establishment of the new covenant. There are blessings for obeying God's word, but there are also now cursings for refusing to obey it and failing to keep it. Now in the next section, we will then look at briefly at the consummated new covenant and then move on to another theme that is very, very closely related to new covenants.

And that is the theme of the people of God.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 11 on the covenant, particularly the New Covenant.