Dr. Jeffrey Niehaus, Biblical Theology, Session 9, New Covenant Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Niehaus, Biblical Theology, Session 9, New Covenant, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Niehaus's lecture on Biblical Theology Session 9 focuses on the New Covenant as the ultimate and ongoing special grace covenant. He posits Jesus as the prophesied covenant mediator, drawing parallels between Jesus and Moses. **This new covenant, predicted in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is distinct from previous covenants, offering a new priesthood and law.** The lecture explores the nature of this covenant, its establishment through Jesus's ministry characterized by both prophecy and spiritual warfare, and the resulting indwelling of the Holy Spirit, making believers individual and corporate temples. **Ultimately, this new covenant anticipates the eschatological temple and the restoration of creation, offering believers the power of the Spirit to overcome sin, a privilege exceeding that of those under the Old Covenant.** The lecture concludes by connecting the New Covenant to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise of the Spirit.

2. 34 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Niehaus, Biblical Theology, Session 9 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Biblical Theology - Niehaus).

Niehaus_BibTheo_Session09.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Niehaus, Biblical Theology, Session 9, New Covenant

Briefing Document: The New Covenant in Biblical Theology

Overview: This document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Jeffrey Niehaus in Session 9 of his Biblical Theology lectures, focusing on the New Covenant as the final and culminating covenant in God's program of special grace. Niehaus emphasizes the uniqueness of the New Covenant, its mediator (Jesus Christ), its fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, its impact on believers, and its ultimate eschatological implications. He also critiques alternative understandings of covenant theology.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The New Covenant as the Culmination of God's Grace:

- Niehaus asserts that the New Covenant is the "final covenant, the culminating covenant in the special grace program."
- It is the "one remaining special grace covenant that functions."

2. Jesus Christ: The Covenant Mediator Prophet:

- Jesus is identified as the promised prophet like Moses from Deuteronomy 18, who would be a "covenant mediator prophet with a new covenant with Torah for all the people, new Torah, new deal for all the people."
- He mediates the covenant predicted in Jeremiah 31, which is explicitly stated as a "new covenant" and "not a renewal covenant" of the one made in Egypt.
- This newness involves a "new deal, new priesthood," necessitating a change of law as stated in Hebrews.
- Jesus is also the promised "one shepherd, David" from Ezekiel 34 and 37, the "beloved" who brings the "covenant of peace" that the world cannot give. "This covenant that is coming, which is going to be mediated by this new David, is also called a covenant of peace. And we understand now the meaning of that because that does come through the new David, Jesus, the beloved, who imparts that peace that the world cannot give."
- This covenant mediated by Jesus is an "everlasting covenant," the one that "really lasts forever."

3. The Career of Jesus as Parallel to Moses:

- Drawing on the work of Meredith Kline, Niehaus suggests the Gospel genre parallels the account of Moses' career in Exodus, highlighting Jesus as a covenant mediator.
- This parallel includes similarities such as birth under threat, persecution by a ruler (Herod/Pharaoh), transport from peril, return to God's people, clear establishment of identity, calling of followers, initial signs and wonders, giving of (new) law (Sermon on the Mount), further instruction and miracles, a transfiguration-like event, a covenant institution (Last Supper as a "covenant ratification meal"), a temple consecration (Pentecost), and the ongoing presence of the Lord.
- Niehaus emphasizes that the rulers' attempts to kill the covenant mediator (Moses and Jesus) failed due to God's intervention, highlighting the devil's influence behind these events.

4. The Believer as the Temple of the Holy Spirit:

- The New Covenant results in believers becoming the sanctuary of God: "In particular, we are his sanctuary. So, he is among us. He is in us forever."
- This indwelling Spirit empowers believers for "kingdom warfare," analogous to Jesus' own ministry after his anointing (baptism and the Spirit).
- Christian ministry, in various forms (preaching, teaching, healing, counseling), is characterized as spiritual warfare against the "kingdom of darkness."
- The Church collectively is also the corporate temple, indwelt by the Spirit, with Christ as its architect and builder, fostering unity through the Spirit's gifts.
- Niehaus distinguishes between spiritual gifts (tools for ministry) and the fruit of the Spirit (development in Christ's likeness), emphasizing the latter as the ultimate goal.

5. Eschatological Fulfillment: The New Heavens and Earth:

- The New Covenant anticipates the eschatological temple described in Ezekiel 47 and Revelation 22, featuring a river of life and the tree of life, reminiscent of Eden.
- This signifies a restoration of what was lost, with God's presence fully realized.

- Ultimately, in the new heavens and earth, God and the Lamb will be the temple.
- Niehaus argues for the physicality of the new earth, drawing support from Isaiah and Revelation, suggesting a real continuity with the current creation.

6. Critique of Alternative Covenant Theologies:

- Niehaus critiques the classic view of covenant theology that distinguishes between a "covenant of works" (Adamic) and a "covenant of grace" (all subsequent covenants), arguing that all covenants involve works and are gracious gifts.
- He also criticizes the tendency to lump disparate special grace covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic) together as one covenant, pointing out that the Abrahamic, Davidic, and Mosaic covenants no longer function as covenants in the New Covenant era. "These special grace covenants, the Abrahamic covenant no longer functions, the Davidic covenant no longer functions, and the Mosaic covenant no longer functions as a covenant."
- He disagrees with Dumbrell's proposal that all covenants primarily reconfirm existing relationships, using the Gibeonite covenant as a counter-example.
- Niehaus proposes that God's redemptive program utilizes successive covenantal arrangements: common grace covenants (Adamic and Noahic) providing a global platform, followed by special grace covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic) historically focused on Israel and ultimately fulfilled in the New Covenant.

7. The Law and the New Covenant:

- Drawing from Romans 7, Niehaus explains that believers have "died to the law through the body of Christ" to belong to Christ and bear fruit for God.
- The law, while pedagogical in revealing sin and leading to Christ, also "aroused by the law were at work in our bodies so that we bore fruit for death." It can provoke sin due to our sinful nature.
- Life under the law is likened to slavery (Galatians 3-4), subject to "basic principles of the world."
- The New Covenant, through faith in Christ and the indwelling Spirit, frees believers from this slavery to sin. "Sin shall not be your master because you're not under law but under grace."

- Believers in the New Covenant are made "sons of God" through a new creation by the Holy Spirit, a status not held by those under the Old Covenant in the same way.
- While acknowledging the struggle with sin (as seemingly described in Romans 7), Niehaus argues this describes life under the law or the experience of an early believer, not the intended empowered life of a Christian under grace. "You are not powerless before sin."
- The New Covenant fulfills the Abrahamic promise of the Spirit coming to the Gentiles through Christ by faith. "The blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

Quotes:

- "We come now to the New Covenant, which, as we understand it, is the final covenant, the culminating covenant in the special grace program."
- "This will not be like the covenant that I made with your forefathers when I brought them out of Egypt. And a renewal covenant is certainly like the covenant that it renews. So, this is a new covenant, new deal, new priesthood, for example."
- "This covenant that is coming, which is going to be mediated by this new David, is also called a covenant of peace...who imparts that peace that the world cannot give."
- "The Gospel genre is partly biography, but it's the biography of a covenant mediator through whom God does signs and wonders to deliver his people and establish a temple presence among them."
- "In particular, we are his sanctuary. So, he is among us. He is in us forever."
- "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."
- "Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against the heavenly powers, you know, the authorities and rulers in the heavenly places."
- "Destroy this temple, and I'll rebuild it in three days. And he was referring to the temple of his body."

- "Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this, he meant the Spirit..."
- "There's no need of a temple anymore, because God on the Lamb, the Lord, is a temple..."
- "I will create a new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind..."
- "If any man be in Christ, he's a new ktisis, a new creation, a new creature. Old things are passed away. All things are become new."
- "These special grace covenants, the Abrahamic covenant no longer functions, the Davidic covenant no longer functions, and the Mosaic covenant no longer functions as a covenant."
- "So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead in order that we might bear fruit to God."
- "Sin shall not be your master because you're not under law but under grace."
- "Because those who are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God."
- "You are not powerless before sin."
- "The blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

Conclusion:

Dr. Niehaus provides a comprehensive overview of the New Covenant as the central and ultimate expression of God's special grace. He emphasizes Jesus Christ as the unique mediator who fulfills Old Testament prophecies and establishes a new relationship between God and humanity, characterized by the indwelling Holy Spirit and the promise of an everlasting, restored creation. His critique of alternative covenant theology aims to clarify the distinct nature and function of the New Covenant in light of previous covenants. The session concludes with an encouraging application for believers, highlighting their power through the Spirit to overcome sin under the grace of the New Covenant.

4. Study Guide: Niehaus, Biblical Theology, Session 9, New Covenant

Session 9 Study Guide: The New Covenant

Key Concepts and Themes:

- **The New Covenant as the Culmination:** Understand the New Covenant as the final and remaining special grace covenant in God's plan.
- **Jesus as Covenant Mediator Prophet:** Explore Jesus' role as the promised prophet like Moses, mediating a new covenant with a new Torah for all people.
- **Distinction from Renewal Covenants:** Recognize that the New Covenant is fundamentally new and different from previous covenants, not a mere renewal.
- **Promises of the New Covenant:** Identify the key promises associated with the New Covenant, including a new priesthood, the indwelling of the Spirit (sanctuary among them), a new Davidic shepherd/king (covenant of peace), and an everlasting covenant.
- **Gospel Genre and Covenant Mediation:** Understand Meredith Kline's perspective on the Gospels as a unique genre paralleling Moses' career, focused on the biography of a covenant mediator performing signs and wonders to deliver God's people and establish His presence.
- **Parallels between Moses and Jesus:** Analyze the presented parallels in their early lives (birth, persecution, transport from peril, etc.) and ministries (followers, signs, giving of law, covenant institution, temple consecration, ongoing presence).
- **Spiritual Warfare:** Grasp the concept of Christian ministry as spiritual warfare against the kingdom of darkness, exemplified in Jesus' temptation and ministry, and the church's mission.
- **Temple Consecration and the Holy Spirit:** Understand the progression of God's temple presence from the tabernacle and temple to believers as individual and corporate temples indwelt by the Holy Spirit, mirroring Jesus as the ultimate temple.
- **Gifts vs. Fruit of the Spirit:** Differentiate between spiritual gifts as tools for ministry and the fruit of the Spirit as the development of Christlike character, emphasizing the latter as the ultimate goal.

- **Eschatological Temple and New Heavens and Earth:** Explore the future fulfillment of the temple vision in Ezekiel and Revelation, connecting it to the restoration of Eden, and understand the physicality of the new heavens and earth.
- **Covenant Theology Perspectives:** Evaluate different views on covenant theology, including the traditional "covenant of works" vs. "covenant of grace" distinction, and alternative perspectives on the nature and function of the various covenants.
- **The Law and the New Covenant (Romans 7):** Understand Paul's argument in Romans 7 regarding believers' death to the law through Christ, the provocative nature of the law leading to sin, and the freedom from the law to serve in the Spirit.
- **Slavery to Sin vs. Freedom in Christ:** Contrast the experience of being "under the law" as a form of slavery to sin with the new covenant reality of being "under grace," empowered by the Spirit to overcome sin.
- **Fulfillment of Abrahamic Promise:** Recognize that the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers, including Gentiles, is the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham.

Quiz:

1. According to the lecture, what is the significance of the New Covenant in God's overall plan of grace?
2. How does Jeremiah 31 describe the nature of the New Covenant in relation to the covenant made at the Exodus?
3. What is Meredith Kline's perspective on the genre of the Gospels, and what Old Testament figure does he draw a parallel to?
4. Describe one parallel between the early life of Moses and the early life of Jesus as presented in the lecture.
5. Explain the concept of spiritual warfare as it relates to Jesus' ministry and the ongoing ministry of the church.
6. How does the lecture explain the idea of believers being temples of the Holy Spirit in the context of the New Covenant?
7. What is the key distinction made between spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit, and which is emphasized as more important?

8. Briefly describe the vision of the eschatological temple in Ezekiel and Revelation and its connection to the Garden of Eden.
9. According to Romans 7 as discussed in the lecture, what is the relationship between the law and sin in the life of a believer under the New Covenant?
10. How does the New Covenant fulfill the promise made to Abraham, according to the lecture?

Quiz Answer Key:

1. The New Covenant is the final covenant and the culminating covenant in God's special grace program. It is the one remaining special grace covenant that is currently functioning.
2. Jeremiah 31 states that the New Covenant will not be like the covenant God made with their forefathers when He brought them out of Egypt, indicating it is fundamentally new and not a renewal.
3. Meredith Kline suggests that the Gospel genre is similar to the account of Moses' career in Exodus. Both focus on the biography of a covenant mediator through whom God performs signs and wonders to deliver His people and establish His temple presence.
4. One parallel is that both Moses and Jesus were subjected to persecution as infants due to a king's attempt to kill the one who was born to be a significant leader or deliverer (Pharaoh and Herod, respectively).
5. Spiritual warfare refers to the ongoing conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. Jesus' temptation and ministry were forms of warfare, and the church's mission to advance the kingdom by preaching, teaching, healing, and counseling also engages in this spiritual battle.
6. Believers are considered individual and corporate temples because, under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit indwells them. This fulfills the promise of God's sanctuary being among His people forever, just as the Spirit filled the tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament.
7. Spiritual gifts are likened to tools that help believers accomplish the work of the kingdom, while the fruit of the Spirit represents the development of Christlike character. The lecture emphasizes that the fruit of the Spirit is the real goal and the most important aspect of spiritual growth.

8. Ezekiel and Revelation describe a vision of water flowing from the eschatological temple, bringing life and healing. This is seen as a restoration of the conditions in the Garden of Eden, where a river flowed and the tree of life was present, signifying eternal life and fruitfulness in God's presence.
9. According to Romans 7 as discussed, the law, while holy, can actually arouse sinful passions in our fallen nature, revealing sin for what it is and even provoking the very sins it forbids. Under the New Covenant, believers have died to this power of the law and are now meant to serve in the new way of the Spirit.
10. The New Covenant fulfills the promise to Abraham by extending the blessing of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles through faith in Jesus Christ. Just as Abraham was promised blessings, believers under the New Covenant receive the promised Holy Spirit as a seal and the fulfillment of that ancient promise.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Compare and contrast the role of Moses as a covenant mediator in the Old Testament with the role of Jesus as the mediator of the New Covenant. Consider the nature of the covenants they mediated and the significance of their respective ministries.
2. Discuss the concept of the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit in the context of the New Covenant. How does this understanding shape our understanding of worship, community, and the presence of God in the world?
3. Analyze the relationship between the law and the believer under the New Covenant, drawing primarily from the discussion of Romans 7. How has Christ freed believers from the law, and what is the new basis for their relationship with God and obedience?
4. Explore the theme of spiritual warfare in the New Testament, as presented in the lecture. How does this concept inform our understanding of the Christian life and the mission of the church in the world?
5. Discuss the significance of the eschatological temple and the vision of the new heavens and earth in understanding the ultimate fulfillment of the New Covenant and God's redemptive plan.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **New Covenant:** The final and culminating special grace covenant in God's plan, mediated by Jesus Christ, promising a new relationship with God characterized by the indwelling Spirit and forgiveness of sins.
- **Covenant Mediator:** An individual appointed by God to establish and oversee the terms of a covenant between God and humanity. Jesus is presented as the ultimate covenant mediator of the New Covenant.
- **Prophet Like Moses:** A reference to Deuteronomy 18:15-19, interpreted as a prophecy of a future prophet, understood in the lecture to be Jesus, who would mediate a new covenant and new Torah.
- **Renewal Covenant:** A covenant that essentially restates or reaffirms the terms of a previous covenant. The lecture argues the New Covenant is not a renewal but fundamentally new.
- **Covenant of Peace:** A description of the New Covenant found in Ezekiel, understood to be mediated by the "new David" (Jesus) who brings a peace that the world cannot give.
- **Gospel Genre:** According to Meredith Kline, the unique literary form of the Gospels, seen as paralleling the account of Moses' career in Exodus, focusing on the biography of a covenant mediator.
- **Temple Consecration:** The act of setting apart or dedicating a structure for God's dwelling and worship. In the New Covenant, this is seen in the Holy Spirit indwelling believers, making them individual and corporate temples.
- **Spiritual Warfare:** The ongoing conflict between the kingdom of God and the forces of evil, in which believers and the church are engaged through prayer, preaching, and resisting the works of darkness.
- **Eschatological Temple:** The future, ultimate dwelling place of God with His people, envisioned in Ezekiel and Revelation as a source of life and healing in the new creation.
- **Common Grace Covenant:** A covenant that extends God's general blessings and provisions to all humanity, regardless of their relationship with Him in terms of salvation (e.g., the Noahic Covenant).

- **Special Grace Covenant:** A covenant through which God works out His specific plan of redemption for His chosen people (e.g., Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New Covenants).
- **Pedagogical Function of the Law:** The idea that the Mosaic Law served as a guide or tutor to lead Israel to recognize their sinfulness and their need for Christ.
- **Stoicheia (Basic Principles of the World):** A term used in Galatians, which the lecture suggests could refer to spiritual forces that exert influence under the law, contributing to the experience of being in bondage.
- **Fruit of the Spirit:** The virtues and character qualities produced in believers by the Holy Spirit (e.g., love, joy, peace, patience), contrasted with spiritual gifts.
- **Ktisis (New Creation):** A Greek term used by Paul to describe the transformation that occurs when someone is in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), signifying a radical new beginning.

5. FAQs on Niehaus, Biblical Theology, Session 9, New Covenant, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: The New Covenant

1. What is the New Covenant and why is it considered the culminating covenant? The New Covenant, as taught by Dr. Niehaus, is the final and culminating covenant in God's special grace program. It is the one remaining special grace covenant that is currently in effect. It was promised in the Old Testament, particularly in Jeremiah 31, and is mediated by Jesus Christ. It's not a renewal of a previous covenant but a completely new arrangement with a new law (Torah) for all people, a new priesthood, and a new deal altogether.

2. How is Jesus Christ uniquely positioned as the mediator of the New Covenant? Jesus is the promised prophet like Moses, as foretold in Deuteronomy 18. To fulfill this role, he had to be a covenant mediator with a new covenant and a new Torah for all people. He is also seen as the promised "new David" in prophecies like Ezekiel 34 and 37, who brings a covenant of peace. His life and ministry, as recorded in the Gospels, mirror the pattern of Moses' career in Exodus, both being biographies of covenant mediators who perform signs and wonders to deliver God's people and establish God's presence among them.

3. In what ways is the New Covenant different from the previous covenants, particularly the Mosaic Covenant? The New Covenant is explicitly stated in Jeremiah 31 as being unlike the covenant God made with the Israelites when he brought them out of Egypt (the Mosaic Covenant). It's not a renewal but something entirely new. This includes a change in priesthood, necessitating a change in law (as stated in Hebrews). While the Mosaic Covenant served a pedagogical function, revealing sin and leading to the need for Christ, the New Covenant brings freedom from the law's condemnation through faith in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

4. How does the concept of the temple relate to the New Covenant and believers in Christ? Under the New Covenant, believers individually and corporately (the church) are considered the temple of the Holy Spirit, where God now dwells. This is in contrast to the physical tabernacle and temple of the Old Covenant. Jesus himself was the first to be called a temple, referring to his body (John 2:19-22). This indwelling of the Spirit empowers believers to live and minister in a way that mirrors Jesus' own ministry through the power of the Spirit.

5. What is the nature of the spiritual warfare that Christians engage in under the New Covenant? Just as Moses and David engaged in physical warfare after their anointing, Jesus engaged in spiritual warfare, notably during his temptation in the wilderness and throughout his ministry. Similarly, Christian ministry, in its various forms (preaching, teaching, prayer, counseling), is a form of spiritual warfare against the kingdom of darkness. This warfare is not primarily against human beings but against spiritual forces, as Paul describes in Ephesians 6. Missions are also presented as a form of spiritual conquest, paralleling the military conquests in the Old Testament.

6. How does the New Covenant address the issue of sin and the believer's struggle with it? The New Covenant offers a fundamental shift in the believer's relationship with sin and the law. Through Christ's death, believers have died to the law and are no longer bound by its condemnation. The Holy Spirit, given under the New Covenant, empowers believers to "put to death the misdeeds of the body" (Romans 8:13) and live in freedom from sin's mastery (Romans 6:14). While early believers may experience struggles reminiscent of life under the law (as described in Romans 7), this is not the intended or necessary state of a Christian living under the grace of the New Covenant.

7. What is the ultimate destiny of the New Covenant and its relationship to the new heavens and new earth? The New Covenant ultimately leads to the eschatological fulfillment envisioned in prophecies like Ezekiel 47 and Revelation 22, where the presence of God is fully restored, symbolized by the river of life and the tree of life. The new heavens and new earth will be a physical reality, a restoration of what was intended from creation, free from sin and its consequences. In this final state, God and the Lamb will be the temple, and believers will dwell in His presence in glory.

8. How does the New Covenant fulfill the promises made to Abraham? The blessings promised to Abraham, including the promise of the Spirit, are extended to the Gentiles through faith in Jesus Christ under the New Covenant. As Paul explains in Galatians 3:14 and Ephesians 1:13, believers are included in Christ and sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. This indwelling of the Spirit is a key characteristic and privilege of the New Covenant, fulfilling the ancient Abrahamic promise on a universal scale.