**APPENDIX D**

**The New Covenant - by Dr. Renald Showers**

**(FIRST READ THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES: JEREMIAH 31:31-40, 32:30-44; ISAIAH 59:20-21, 61:8-9; EZEKIEL 34:25-30, 36:21-38, 37:21-28, AND ROMANS 11)**

**The Parties of the New Covenant**

According to the Old Testament, the parties of this covenant are God and the nation of Israel. Three things in the Old Testament indicated that God would establish the New Covenant with the people of Israel:

1. The Old Testament made clear statements to that effect. For example, *Jeremiah 31:31* states, *"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah."* Similar clear statements were made in Isaiah 59:20-21; Jeremiah 50:4-5; Ezekiel 34:25-30, and 37:21-28.
2. God declared that He would establish the New Covenant with the descendants of those people with whom He established the Mosaic (Old) Covenant (the Law). Having promised that He would establish a new covenant with the houses of Israel and Judah, God stated, *"Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (Jeremiah 31:32)*. Since God gave the Mosaic (Old) Law only to the people of Israel (Leviticus 26:46: Deuteronomy 4:8) and not to the Gentiles (Romans 2:14), and since He promised to establish the New Covenant with the descendants of those to whom He gave the Mosaic Law Covenant, then the New Covenant must also be established with the people of Israel, the physical descendants of Jacob.
3. The Old Testament associated the establishment of the New Covenant with the endless existence of the nation of Israel (the physical descendants of Jacob) and with the rebuilding and permanent standing of the city of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 31:31-40).

In light of these three items in the Old Testament, it is evident that God intended to establish the New Covenant with the literal people of Israel.

**The Promises of the New Covenant**

God promised many things to the people of Israel in the New Covenant:

* He promised regeneration. This would involve the giving of a new heart (a new inner control center where the issues and direction of life are determined) and the new nature (a new favorable disposition toward God consisting of the law of God in the heart) (Jeremiah 31:33; 32:39-40; Ezekiel 36:26).
* God promised forgiveness of sin (Jeremiah 31:34; Ezekiel 36:25).
* He pledged the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:27).
* He guaranteed a universal knowledge of Jehovah among the people of Israel (Jeremiah 31:34). The context of this promise indicated that God was referring to a personal experiential knowledge of Himself (the kind of knowledge which comes through a genuine salvation experience), not just a head knowledge of His existence.
* God promised that Israel would obey Him and have a right attitude toward Him forever (Jeremiah 32:39-40; Ezekiel 36:27; 37:23-24).
* God promised many national blessings to the people of Israel. He pledged that His Spirit and words would never depart from them (Isaiah 59:21), that the nation would have a great reputation because of God's special blessing (Isaiah 61:8-9), that Israel would have a unique relationship with Him as His special people (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:28), that God would do them good (Jeremiah 32:40-42), that wild beasts would be eliminated from their land (Ezekiel 34:25, 28), that Israel would enjoy complete security in its land (Ezekiel 34:25-28), that the nation would receive no more threats and insults from other nations (Ezekiel 34:28-29), that great abundance of food would eliminate famine (Ezekiel 34:27, 29; 36:29-30), that Israel's land would be so luxurious that it would have the reputation of being like the Garden of Eden (Ezekiel 34:29; 36:34-35), that rainfall would be controlled perfectly (Ezekiel 34:26), that Israel's cities would be rebuilt and inhabited (Ezekiel 36:33), that the nation would enjoy a population explosion (Ezekiel 36:37-38; 37:26), that the nation would be completely unified (Ezekiel 37:21-22), that the people of Israel would live in their own land forever (Ezekiel 37:25), that once again God would have His sanctuary in Israel and would dwell in the midst of the nation forever (Ezekiel 37:26-28), and that God would never turn away from the people of Israel (Jeremiah 32:40).

It should be noted that some of the promises of the New Covenant were purely spiritual in nature, but others were material and national in nature.

**The Nature of the New Covenant**

Two things can be said concerning the nature of the New Covenant:

1. God intended it to be an unconditional covenant. God stated no conditions in the passages which deal with the covenant. This meant that the fulfillment of the promises of the New Covenant would not depend upon the obedience of Israel. In fact, God indicated that He would fulfill the New Covenant's promises, not because Israel would deserve it, but because of Israel's disobedience. In *Ezekiel 36:22* God declared, *"Therefore, say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD: I do not do this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the nations, to which ye went."* In addition, in the New Covenant God promised that He would cause the people of Israel to have a right attitude toward Him and to obey Him (Jeremiah 32:39-40; Ezekiel 36:27; 37:23-24). Thus, instead of the New Covenant being dependent upon Israel's obedience for its fulfillment, it would cause Israel's obedience. When God presented the promises of the New Covenant, instead of stating conditions for Israel, He continually said, *"I will" (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:37-42; Ezekiel 36:24-37).* This meant that the fulfillment of the promises of the New Covenant would be dependent totally upon God's faithfulness to His word. God emphasized this fact when He said, *"I, the LORD, have spoken it, and I will do it" (Ezekiel 36:36).*
2. God intended it to be an everlasting covenant. He specifically declared it to be everlasting in nature (Isaiah 61:8-9; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 16:60; 37:26). The fact that God intended the New Covenant to be everlasting, together with the fact it would be unconditional in nature, meant that the New Covenant would never be abolished or annulled with or by Israel. Once it would be established, its promises would have to be fulfilled. Once Israel would enter into that covenant relationship with God, it would continue in that relationship forever.

**The Relationship of the Church to the New Covenant**

The Old Testament clearly indicated that God would establish the New Covenant with the literal people of Israel, the physical descendants of Jacob. The Old Testament said nothing concerning a relationship of the Church to the New Covenant. This silence should not be a surprise for at least two reasons.

**First**, the Apostle Paul indicated that no revelation concerning the Church was given before the time of the apostles and New Testament prophets (Ephesians 3:2-9). Thus, the Old Testament contained no information concerning the Church.

**Second**, the Old Testament prophets who presented God's revelation concerning the New Covenant were Israelite prophets. It was their responsibility to declare God's message specifically to the people of Israel. Thus, they described how the nation of Israel would be related to the New Covenant, not how others possibly would be related to it. Since the Old Testament contains their declaration of God's message to Israel, one would expect the Old Testament to present only that nation's relationship to the New Covenant.

In spite of the Old Testament's silence concerning the relationship of the Church to the New Covenant, the New Testament seems to indicate that the Church does have some relationship to it. There are at least **three lines of evidence** for this conclusion:

1. The first line of evidence is the Church partakes of the communion service which Christ instituted on the night before He went to the cross (1 Corinthians 10:21; 11:23-30). When Jesus instituted the communion service, He stated the following concerning the cup of that service: *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Corinthians 11:25; Luke 22:20*—literal translation). Two things should be noted concerning Jesus' statement:
	1. First, Jesus made His statement to Jewish men. They would have been aware of only one New Covenant—the one God had promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31. Since Jesus did not tell them to think otherwise, they would have understood Him to be referring to that specific New Covenant.
	2. Second, since Jesus used the word “the” in the expression “the new covenant,” and since God had promised only one New Covenant (the one promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31) prior to Jesus' statement, it seems evident that Jesus was referring to that New Covenant. Thus, Jesus was saying that the cup of the communion service represented the New Covenant which God had promised to literal Israel in Jeremiah 31 and other Old Testament prophetic passages. It seems obvious that Jesus was stating that the communion cup represents the New Covenant which God promised to Israel in the Old Testament. The fact that the Church partakes of the communion cup which represents the New Covenant promised by God to Israel seems to indicate that the Church has a relationship to that covenant.
2. The second line of evidence for concluding that the Church is related to the New Covenant is the fact that believers who make up the Church partake of the spiritual blessings which God promised as part of the New Covenant in the Old Testament. Church believers have been regenerated (Titus 3:5), received forgiveness of sin (Ephesians 1:7; 4:32; Colossians 1:14; 1 John 2:12), been indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), and received the new nature (a new favorable disposition toward God consisting of the law of God written in the heart—Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Peter 1:4).
3. The third line of evidence that the Church is related to the New Covenant is the Apostle Paul's indication that the apostles of the Church functioned as ministers of a New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6).

It seems evident that, although the Old Testament promised the New Covenant specifically to the literal nation of Israel, the Church also has a relationship to that covenant. This prompts an issue.

**The Statement of the Issue**

The issue can be stated in the form of a question. Since the Church has a relationship to the New Covenant, partaking of its spiritual blessings, what is the relationship of the nation of Israel to the fulfillment of the New Covenant?

Theologians disagree with each other in their answers to this question. Many **Covenant Theologians** claim that the New Covenant is being fulfilled totally in the Church today. According to this view, the literal nation of Israel forfeited any relationship to the New Covenant because of its unbelief and rebellion against God. The New Testament Church has replaced literal Israel in that relationship. Thus, the promises of the New Covenant which were presented in the Old Testament are to be fulfilled in a spiritualized Israel (the Church) now. They are not to be fulfilled in the literal nation of Israel in the future. According to this view, there never will be a fulfillment of the New Covenant for national Israel.

By contrast, **Dispensational Theologians** claim that, since God promised to establish the New Covenant with the literal people of Israel (Jeremiah 31:31), since He intended the New Covenant to be unconditional in nature (totally dependent for the fulfillment of its promises upon God's faithfulness to His word—Ezekiel 36:36), and since God declared that He would fulfill the promises of the New Covenant with Israel, not because the nation would deserve it, but because of its disobedience (Ezekiel 36:21-36), then the literal nation of Israel has not forfeited its relationship to the New Covenant because of its unbelief and rebellion against God.

According to this view, the Church has not replaced literal Israel in its relationship to the New Covenant, and the New Covenant is not being fulfilled totally in the Church today. The fact that the Church has a relationship to the New Covenant does not rule out the fulfillment of all the promises of the New Covenant with national Israel in the future. Thus, according to the Dispensational view, there will be a fulfillment of the New Covenant for literal Israel in the future.

In light of this disagreement between Covenant and Dispensational Theologians, a conclusion can be drawn. The major issue related to the New Covenant is if there will be a complete fulfillment of the New Covenant with literal, national Israel in the future.

**Evidences for the Future Fulfillment of the New Covenant with National Israel**

**First**, in one of the major Old Testament passages in which God presented promises of the New Covenant (Ezekiel 36:21-38), He clearly indicated that He would fulfill those promises with the same national people who profaned His holy name among the Gentiles. The context (Ezekiel 36:16-20) and language ("house of Israel," vv. 22, 32, 37) of this passage signify that those people were the literal people of Israel. Because of its unbelief, national Israel has not yet received the fulfillment of the New Covenant promises of Ezekiel 36 since the time Jesus established that covenant when He shed His blood on the cross. Since God indicated that He would fulfill the New Covenant promises with literal Israel, and since that nation has not yet received the fulfillment of those promises, one must conclude that they will be fulfilled with national Israel in the future.

**Second**, God's declaration that He would fulfill the promises of the New Covenant because of Israel's profaning of His holy name among the Gentiles (Ezekiel 36:20-23) indicates that literal, national Israel does not forfeit its relationship to the New Covenant. Instead of the nation's disobedience preventing its receiving the fulfillment of the New Covenant promises, it actually causes it.

**Third**, earlier it was noted that some of the New Covenant promises were spiritual in nature, but others were material and national in nature. In addition, it was noted that the Church today partakes of the spiritual blessings which God promised as part of the New Covenant, such as regeneration, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and possession of the new nature. The Apostle Paul declared that Church believers have been blessed "with all spiritual blessings" (Ephesians 1:3).

It should be noted, however, that although the Church partakes of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant, the material and national promises of that covenant are not being fulfilled with the Church. For example, one of the national promises was that once Israel would enter into the New Covenant relationship with God, that nation would receive no more threats and insults from other nations (Ezekiel 34:28-29). By contrast, in spite of the fact that the Church has had a relationship to the New Covenant throughout its history, it has been threatened, insulted, and persecuted many times by different nations.

Since the material and national promises of the New Covenant are not being fulfilled with the Church, that means that those promises have not yet been fulfilled. Since God has declared His determination to perform all His promises (including the material and national ones) of the New Covenant (Ezekiel 36:26), one must conclude that those promises will be fulfilled with the nation of Israel in the future.

**Fourth**, after the Church came into existence and began to partake of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant, the Apostle Paul declared that the nation of Israel would experience the fulfillment of the New Covenant when the Messiah would come in His Second Coming (Romans 11:25-29). Paul was not original in this declaration, for the Old Testament taught that God would fulfill the New Covenant with Israel when the Messiah would come in conjunction with Israel's final regathering from its dispersion and permanent restoration to the land of Israel (Isaiah 59:20-21; Jeremiah 32:37-44; 50:4-5; Ezekiel 36:22-28; 37:21-28).

Paul stated that God would not repent (change His mind) concerning this future calling for Israel which He announced in the Old Testament (Romans 11:29). In other words, God's calling for Israel to enter into New Covenant relationship with Him in the future is irrevocable. It must happen. Paul signified that, when Israel enters into that relationship with God, the Isaiah 59:20-21 New Covenant prophecy will be fulfilled.

The fact that Paul had literal, national Israel in mind when he made these statements in Roman 11 is evident from at least three things: First, in verse one he clearly indicated that he was talking about the people of God who were as much literal Israelites, physical descendants of Abraham, and members of Israelite tribes as he was. Second, in verse 14 Paul declared that the Israel to which he referred was his flesh (his own countrymen). Third, Paul contrasted the Israel of this chapter with the Gentiles (vv. 11-14, 25). It is evident that in Romans 11 Paul was teaching that literal, national Israel will enter into New Covenant relationship with God in conjunction with the Second Coming of the Messiah.

The fact that Paul taught this after the Church had come into existence and had begun to partake of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant indicates two things. *First*, the literal nation of Israel has not forfeited its promised relationship to the New Covenant because of its unbelief and rebellion against God. *Second*, although the Church is partaking of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant, it has not replaced literal Israel in its promised relationship to that covenant. Thus, Paul clearly stated that God has not cast away His people of Israel (Romans 11:1-2).

**Concluding Considerations**

It is apparent that Jesus established the New Covenant when He shed His blood on the cross (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Hebrews 8:6-13; 9:15; 12:24). The Church, which began shortly after Christ's death (Acts 2:1-4; 11:15), has partaken of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant. According to the Apostle Paul's teaching in Romans 11, during the time of the Church, a remnant of literal, national Israel is being saved by the grace of God through faith in Christ. Those Israelites become members of the Church through salvation. They thereby partake of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant, as do the other members of the Church. But they do not partake of the material and national blessings of the New Covenant, as the rest of the Church does not.

By contrast with this remnant of Israel, the majority of literal, national Israel during the time of the Church does not become saved because of its hardened unbelief. As a result, that majority does not obtain any of the promised blessings of the New Covenant, even though it seeks many of those blessings during that time. Because of their unbelief, the majority of the nations have been removed by God from the place of covenant blessing which the nation of Israel enjoyed with Him in the past. This means, then, that national Israel failed to enter the New Covenant relationship with God in conjunction with the Messiah's First Coming.

While the majority of national Israel remains in unbelief outside the place of covenant blessing, many Gentiles, who originally were not in that place of blessing, are being grafted into it by God's grace through faith in Christ. These saved Gentiles are members of the Church. They are grafted into the place of covenant blessing in the sense that they partake of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant, as do the remnant Israelite members of the Church.

Although believing Gentiles are grafted into the place of covenant blessing in place of the unbelieving majority of national Israel it does not mean that the fulfillment of the New Covenant with literal, national Israel has been nullified. Paul made it very clear that the majority of national Israel will not be removed from the place of covenant blessing forever. That removal is only temporary. When the great harvest of Gentile souls has been gathered and the Messiah returns, national Israel will be saved and placed back into the place of covenant blessing (Romans 11:23-27). At that time literal, national Israel will enter fully into the New Covenant relationship with God, and all the promises (spiritual, material, and national) of that covenant will be fulfilled completely with that nation. Thus, although national Israel failed to enter the New Covenant relationship with God in conjunction with the Messiah's First Coming, it will enter it in conjunction with His Second Coming.

In Romans 11, therefore, Paul explained how the Church now partakes of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant. The complete fulfillment of that covenant with national Israel, however, has not been and never will be nullified.