

## **“BEHOLD...I WILL MAKE A NEW COVENANT”**

Presented by

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On September 13, 2009, Tyler and I began a brand new Sunday-morning class titled “A Journey through the Old Testament.” Today, June 5, 2011, as I present this sermon, we have now been involved in that “journey” for **twenty months**—and we **still** have not completed it! But within the next few weeks, we will. As I prepared for this sermon, and looked back in my mind to consider the many marvelous things we have learned, I could not help but stand in awe of all that God has done for His people throughout the whole of human history on planet Earth. Thanks to the hundreds and hundreds of full-color visual aids that have been plastered on the walls of our classroom week after week after week, Tyler and I have been able to experience everything from the creation of the world to the almost complete collapse of the nation of Israel as “God’s chosen people.” As I look back at **the more than eighty** Sunday mornings that we have spent studying the Old Testament, I can safely say that it has indeed been a truly fascinating, spine-tingling, soul-stirring journey—one that I would not trade for anything on Earth! Our teacher has repeatedly emphasized to us that the information we have been learning is essential to understanding the importance of everything we will be studying in the future in the New Testament. And, little by little, Tyler and I have come to understand just how true that assessment really is.

In fact, that is basically the story line of my sermon today—moving **out** of the Old Testament and **into** the New. Interestingly enough, such a change in covenants actually was prophesied in the Old Testament—and brought to fruition and discussed as a reality in the New Testament. Allow me to explain, and I think that you will begin to see, as Tyler and I have, just how important our “Journey through the Old Testament” has been.

As far back in the Old Testament as the book of Genesis, we began to see clues—almost as if someone was dropping breadcrumbs on the ground to lead us where we were supposed to go—suggesting that “something new” was coming. For example, when Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin, God told the devil in Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” As Tyler and I would later learn when we studied the various prophetic books of the Old Testament, the “He” in Genesis 3:15 was destined to be **Jesus Christ**, the Savior of the world. In fact, we found more of those “breadcrumbs” leading us to Christ in passages such as Isaiah 42, Isaiah 53, and numerous others scattered throughout the Old Testament.

But, truth be told, nothing could have prepared us for the plain, straightforward statement that we stumbled across during our study of the book of Jeremiah. In chapter 31, verses 31-33, of the book that bears his name, Jeremiah wrote,

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, ‘**when I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke. **But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days**, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’”

As we were reading that, our teacher reminded us about what the writer of the book of Hebrews had said in the New Testament in Hebrews 8:13—“In that God says, ‘A new covenant,’ **He has made the first obsolete**. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old **is ready to vanish away**.” Those two statements—one from the Old Testament book of Jeremiah, and the other from the New Testament book of Hebrews—could not help but remind us of something that God had said to Abraham when He first called him and promised that through him, all nations would be blessed. In Genesis 17:7 God told the patriarch, “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, **for an everlasting covenant**.”

Ephesians 2:14-15 and Colossians 2:14-15 in the New Testament both plainly teach that when Christ was crucified at Calvary, He, through His death, nailed the Old Covenant to the cross, having “abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” When that happened, Jesus’ New Covenant—what James called “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25)—came into effect. God’s promise to Abraham has always been kept—from the beginning of the Old Covenant that God gave the Israelites at Mount Sinai after they had come out of Egypt, to the installation of the New Covenant upon the death of Jesus at Golgotha. And that New Covenant will be kept even to the time when Christ, as Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 15:24, “delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.”

When Tyler and I started our “Journey through the Old Testament” more than eighty Sundays ago, we, of course, had no idea what lay in store for us. Little could we have known that we would witness the Creator of the Universe making a covenant with people that not only would last across all the millennia of human history, but that also would move into eternity through His promises to safeguard spiritual Israel—the church of Christ. **How thrilling is all of this?!** God’s promise, “You shall be My people, and I will be your God” (Jeremiah 30:22), has resounded across the centuries, and remains as true today as it was the day when He first made it.

As Tyler and I watched the pitiful deterioration of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and its ultimate demise at the hands of the powerful Assyrian Empire, and as we saw the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah experience seventy long, devastating, disastrous years of Babylonian captivity, we began to realize that we were witnessing “the beginning of the end” of the Old Covenant. It had served its purpose as—to use the words of the apostle Paul in Galatians 3:24—“a tutor to bring us to Christ.” The time therefore had come for it to, as the writer of the book of Hebrews put it, “vanish away.”

And so, in approximately A.D. 30, on a hill outside the city walls of Jerusalem, it did exactly that. On that fateful day when Jesus cried out, “It is finished!,” and the veil of the temple split in two from top to bottom, Christ not only ushered in through His death the New Covenant, but also “broke down the middle wall of separation” that separated Jews from Gentiles, thereby allowing “all nations to flow into the house of the Lord” (the church) that the Son of God had given His life to establish (Isaiah 2:2). Finally, the last part of God’s promise to Abraham had been fulfilled. **How thrilling is *that*?!**

When Tyler and I started our “Journey through the Old Testament,” neither one of us was a Christian. Now, however, **both of us are!** And I do not think I am overstating the case when I tell you today that one of the reasons we both made the decision to become Christians was because of what we learned during our amazing journey through the Old Covenant. We came to understand—to use the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 15:4—that “whatever things were written before were written for our learning.” Part of that learning led us to realize that we today are no longer under that Old Covenant. Rather, as we also learned, we must comply with the terms of Christ’s **New** Covenant, because if we do not, one day we will hear God say to us, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). And neither of us wants **that** to happen! Instead, we want to hear God say to us, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). Thanks to our “Journey through the Old Testament,” that is exactly what we expect to hear. **And how thrilling will *that* be?!**