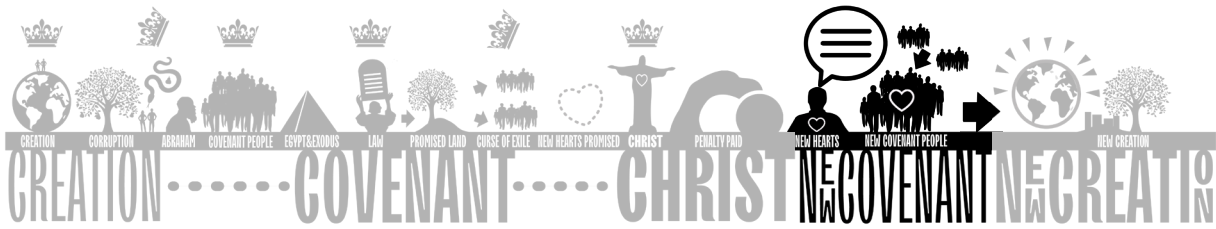




# **EPISODE 4**

## **NEW COVENANT**

### **(CURRENT)**



 **E4** [MPC.ORG.AU/GODS-STORY](http://MPC.ORG.AU/GODS-STORY)

After the coming of Jesus - the Christ - a new era dawns. In episode 4 the old agreement between God and Israel has been completed and a new one has been instituted in its place. Unlike the old covenant, however, this new agreement is open to all of us.

The night before he died, Jesus “took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to [his disciples], saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:19-20)

This covenant is a whole new agreement, but there’s evidence that it was in God’s plan right from the beginning. In fact, in the old covenant - in episode 2 - the prophet Jeremiah already foreshadowed that the old covenant would end and a new one would come. The writer to the Hebrews thinks that this is so important to understand that he quotes Jeremiah’s promise in full, reminding his readers that the old covenant had always been temporary and was designed to lead to a new one that would be far better.

*Read Hebrews 8:7-13 (sidebar).*

**1. What was wrong with the previous covenant? Anything? (Hint: see verse 7-8)**

**2. What do Jeremiah and the writer to the Hebrews say is different about God’s new terms of relating to him? (Hint: see verse 10)**

Hebrews wants to make sure that Christians know that the old covenant was completely insufficient to save people whose hearts are hardened towards God. We needed a better one.

**HEBREWS ORIGINAL**

8:7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.<sup>8</sup> But God found fault with the people and said::

**QUOTE FROM JEREMIAH**

8 “The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.<sup>9</sup> It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.<sup>10</sup> This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.<sup>11</sup> No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.<sup>12</sup> For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

**HEBREWS ORIGINAL**

13 By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

**ROMANS 8**

1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,<sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.<sup>3</sup> For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh,<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

5 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.<sup>6</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.<sup>7</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.<sup>8</sup> Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it.<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.<sup>15</sup> The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.<sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

**BUT HOW?**

But what exactly would God DO to bring about this change in the human heart?

Ezekiel (11:17-20; 18:30-32; 36:24-28) predicted that one day God would pour out his Holy Spirit on his people to bring dead hearts to life. We see this happen in Acts chapter two at Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus died and rose. Here's what happened when Peter shared the news about Jesus being king:

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."<sup>37</sup> When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" "Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." - Acts 2:36-38

**3. How did the crowd at Pentecost respond when they realised what they had done? (How does this connect with the requirement of Deuteronomy 30 we saw back in episode 2?)**

**4. What did they need to do to receive the Holy Spirit?**

When they received the Spirit, their change of heart was immediately evident. By the end of chapter two, the fledgling church was devoted to Jesus, generous to the poor, and they had 'glad and sincere hearts'.

**LIVING IN THE NEW COVENANT**

So what is life like in this era of the New Covenant? What's going on in the mind and heart of someone who trusts in Jesus in Episode 4? Paul gives us an insight in Romans 8.

*Read Romans 8:1-17 (sidebar).*

**5. What is the first big difference for those living in the New Covenant?**

**6. What difference could freedom from fear of punishment make to a person's life? What does Paul say about it in verse 4?**

**7. In verses 14-17 Paul talks about a special new type of relationship with God. What is it and how does it make you want to respond?**

**8. From what Paul says in this passage, should Christians expect life to be all beer and skittles under the New Covenant? (Note verse 17!) How do you feel about that?**

In Titus 2, Paul again describes the new way of life that God's grace opens up for people who trust in Jesus.

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.<sup>12</sup> It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,<sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,<sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

**9. What does it feel like in practice, day-to-day, to do good because you're already forgiven vs. doing good to work your way out of God's bad books?**

Because Jesus died for our sins, the Spirit can move in and start changing our hearts, putting to death sinful actions and bringing to life good ones. Now we obey God, not like fearful slaves as Israel were under the law and its threat of curse, but as loved and loving children, like Jesus himself. With humanity now putting God's goodness on display by the Spirit, there's hope for God's creation project yet again.

