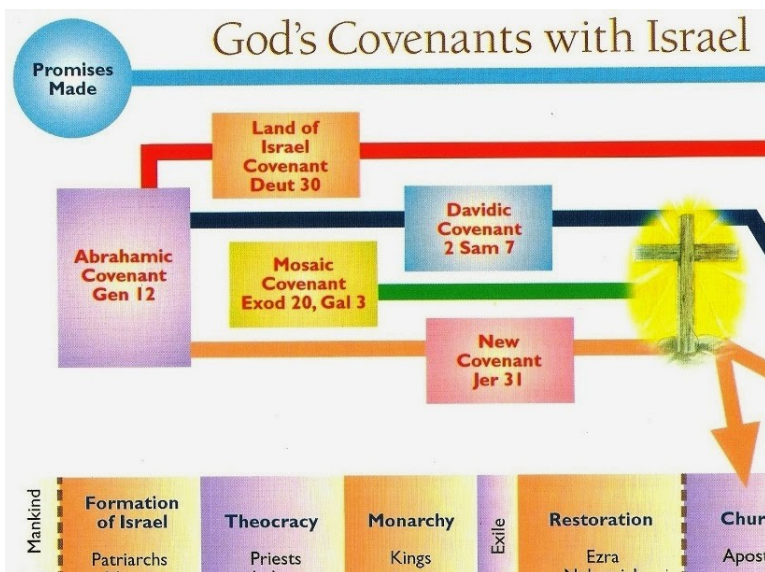


# THE NEW COVENANT – PART 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW COVENANT

- The Davidic Covenant promised that One in the line of David would come and rule over God’s people (Israel), sitting on David’s throne to rule and reign in an everlasting kingdom
- But in order for this to happen, Israel would need a heart change since it wouldn’t make sense for the greater David to come and rule over the land of Israel but govern a people who were still unregenerate and rebellious
- Therefore, regeneration and forgiveness of sins would need to be part of God’s relationship with Israel
- Thus, the NC constitutes God’s promise to redeem Israel by transforming them from the inside
- This covenant, then, develops the “blessing” aspect of the original AC



- Thus, God made the NC with the nation of Israel, promising them salvation and material blessings that would accompany their salvation

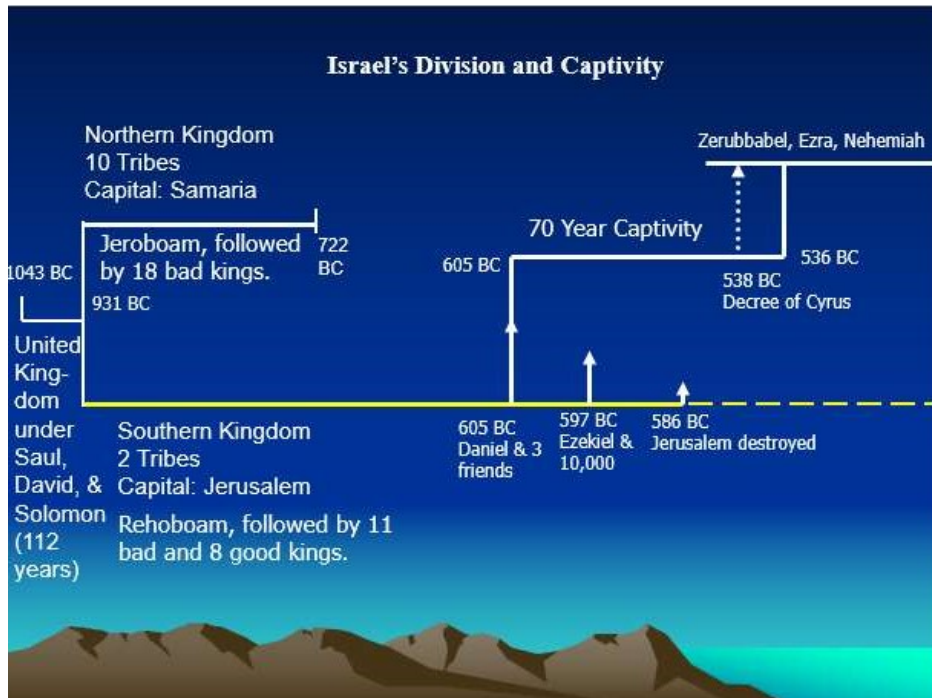
## THE BACKGROUND OF THE NEW COVENANT

Covenants Timeline:



- The NC must be interpreted both in light of its own historical context and in light of the biblical covenants which have preceded it
- Specifically, understanding the NC requires a careful survey of the events that transpired after God’s covenant with David
- After the reign of Solomon, the kingdom was divided: The 10 northern tribes constituting the Northern Kingdom and the 2 southern tribes (Benjamin and Judah) constituting the Southern Kingdom (1 Kings 11-12)

- Both Israel and Judah and her kings have failed to keep covenant with the Lord...they became steeped in idolatry...they have broken the covenant by walking in the stubbornness of their hearts
- God sent prophets to call the nation back to covenant loyalty, but the nation did not heed their message
- As a result, God did exactly what He said he would do in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28...He took the people out of the land as subjects to a foreign power, first the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC by Assyria (2 Kings 17:7-23), then the Southern Kingdom in 586 BC by Babylon (2 Kings 25:1-21)



- Yet at the time of Israel's judgment in which they experienced the consequences of covenant disloyalty, God demonstrated His faithfulness by promising a time when the people's hearts would be transformed
- This covenant would be "new" in the sense that it would differ from and supersede the covenant established in the days of Moses
- The difference would not lie in the basic demand of the covenant itself but in the people's capacity to obey it
- Under the Old Covenant, God required His people's loyalty and obedience but they rebelled against His authority and disobeyed His commands
- However, with the NC, the Lord would forgive their former sins....He would again demand their devotion, but this time He would place within them the desire and ability to remain loyal to Him
- They would be given the capacity to follow Him because their hearts would be transformed
- The Lord's demands would be, as it were, written on their hearts, rather than on stone tablets
- This promise of repentance, forgiveness, and future restoration of Israel marks the highpoint of God's covenant faithfulness to His people

"Evangelical biblical scholars and theologians uniformly affirm that the new covenant constitutes a high point in God's redemptive and restorative program. At the heart of the new covenant is the relentless determination of a loving and gracious God to make of His people what He has called them to be. Upon examination, there can be little doubt that in speaking of the new covenant, biblical writers intended to engender hope, faith, and a longing for holiness in the hearts of God's people."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The search for definition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 68.

## THE NEW COVENANT TERMINOLOGY

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- The phrase “new covenant” is only found in one passage in the OT:

**Jeremiah 31:31** ~ “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

- It is often referred to as the “everlasting covenant:”

**Jeremiah 32:40** ~ I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.

**Ezekiel 37:26** ~ I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever.

- It is also described as God promising to give Israel a “new heart” and “new spirit:”

**Ezekiel 36:26** ~ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

- It is also referred to as “a covenant of peace:”

**Ezekiel 34:25** ~ I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety.

**Ezekiel 37:26** ~ I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever.

## THE NEW COVENANT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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### Deuteronomy 30

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- Moses alluded to the NC as the Israelites prepared to enter the Promised Land:

**Deuteronomy 30:1-6, 8-9** ~ So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live...8 And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. 9 Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers;

- Moses promised that Israel’s disobedience to the Law and idolatry would result in them being judged and taken captive by their enemies: see Deuteronomy 28:32-33, 36-37, 41, 48-57, 63-64; 29:27-28
- God would raise up a nation to act as His own instrument of judgment against His ungrateful people
- This dispersion began with the captivity of the northern kingdom, Israel (722 BC), then the southern kingdom, Judah (586 BC), and is still a reality today

- But, having anticipated a time when Israel’s disobedience would lead them into captivity in a foreign land, Moses looked beyond the destruction of that time of judgment to an even more distant time of restoration and redemption for Israel
- Moses describes this redemption: restoration of their fortunes (vs. 3), God having compassion on them (vs. 3), gathering them from the nations (vs. 3), possession of the land (vs. 5), numerous and prosperous (vs. 5), circumcised hearts (vs. 6), they will love the Lord (vs. 6), they will obey the Lord (vs. 8), they will enjoy greater prosperity than they have ever known (vs. 9)
- It is interesting to note that the NC includes material blessings for Israel, but those material blessings are dependent on the salvation of the nation first
- This future restoration and blessing for Israel would take place under the NC which would involve a total change of heart so that God’s people would naturally worship and obey Him

## Jeremiah

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### *Jeremiah 30-31*

- Probably the greatest description of the NC in the OT is found in Jeremiah 31
- In the earlier part of Jeremiah, he laid out Judah’s guilt and prophesied the resultant punishment of exile
- Jerusalem was in the final stage of a siege by the Babylonians (Jer 32:1-2)...the final blow was about to fall
- Yet, in chapters 30-33 (known as the “Book of Consolation”), the message turns to one of consolation and future hope: God will not forsake His people...after they are purged, He will restore them to the land and fulfill His covenant promises of blessing to them
- Jeremiah 30 begins with the promise of restoration for Israel:

**Jeremiah 30:3** ~ ‘For behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.’ The LORD says, ‘I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.’

- Notice that the NC is linked with here with the Abrahamic Covenant and its promise of a land forever (“bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers”)
- The restoration to the land will be preceded by a great “day,” the “time of Jacob’s distress” in which Israel faces terrible calamity:

**Jeremiah 30:7** ~ Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s distress, But he will be saved from it.

- Despite this calamity, Israel “will be saved out of it”...it will result in salvation for the nation
- So, Jeremiah promises a time of restoration and salvation for Israel, but it will be preceded by tribulation and distress (something that hasn’t happened yet)
- Notice the many kingdom blessings promised in Jeremiah 30-31:

**Jeremiah 30:10**~ ‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant,’ declares the LORD, ‘And do not be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, **I will save you from afar And your offspring from the land of their captivity.** And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease, And no one will make him afraid.

**Jeremiah 30:11**~ ‘For I am with you,’ declares the LORD, ‘to save you; For **I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you.** Only I will not destroy you completely. But I will chasten you justly And will by no means leave you unpunished.’

**Jeremiah 30:17**~ ‘For **I will restore you to health And I will heal you of your wounds.**’ declares the LORD, ‘Because they have called you an outcast, saying: “It is Zion; no one cares for her.”’

**Jeremiah 30:18**~ Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob And have compassion on his dwelling places; And the city will be rebuilt on its ruin, And the palace will stand on its rightful place.’

**Jeremiah 30:22**~ You shall be My people, And I will be your God.

**Jeremiah 31:1** ~ “At that time,” declares the LORD, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.”

**Jeremiah 31:4-6** ~ Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! Again you will take up your tambourines, And go forth to the dances of the merrymakers. Again you will plant vineyards On the hills of Samaria; The planters will plant And will enjoy them. For there will be a day when watchmen On the hills of Ephraim call out, ‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion, To the LORD our God.’

**Jeremiah 31:8** ~ Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, And I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together; A great company, they will return here.

**Jeremiah 31:12** ~ They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion, And they will be radiant over the bounty of the LORD— Over the grain and the new wine and the oil, And over the young of the flock and the herd; And their life will be like a watered garden, And they will never languish again.

**Jeremiah 31:13** ~ Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance, And the young men and the old, together, For I will turn their mourning into joy And will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow.

**Jeremiah 31:16** ~ Thus says the LORD, “Restrain your voice from weeping And your eyes from tears; For your work will be rewarded,” declares the LORD, “And they will return from the land of the enemy.”

- All of these physical and national blessings promised to Israel are contingent upon their spiritual transformation
- The promise of a new heart will be at the center of Israel’s restoration and relationship with God
- The NC is what guarantees this!

**Jeremiah 31:31-34** ~ “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. 33 “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

- Notice a number of key elements about the NC in these verses:
  - It is a “new” covenant, not the Mosaic Covenant which Israel broke (vs. 31-32)
  - It is made with “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (vs. 31)
  - It involves the promise from God, “I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts” (vs. 33)
  - It will result in their forgiveness (vs. 34)
- God then links His covenant faithfulness to Israel with the fixed order of the sun, moon, and stars:

**Jeremiah 31:35-37** ~ Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: 36 “If this fixed order departs From before Me,” declares the LORD, “Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever.” 37 Thus says the LORD, “If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done,” declares the LORD.

- These verses emphasize the certainty with which Israel can expect God to fulfill the New Covenant: As long as the fixed order of the universe remains, God will not remove the nation of Israel from His plans

## Jeremiah 32

- The physical and spiritual blessings of the kingdom promised to Israel through the NC are further described in Jeremiah 32:36-44

**Jeremiah 32:36-44** ~ Now therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning this city of which you say, 'It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine and by pestilence.' 37 "Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. 38 They shall be My people, and I will be their God; 39 and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. 40 I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. 41 I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul. 42 For thus says the LORD, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them. 43 Fields will be bought in this land of which you say, "It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans." 44 Men will buy fields for money, sign and seal deeds, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland and in the cities of the Negev; for I will restore their fortunes,' declares the LORD.

- Notice how the physical blessings of Israel described here are tied directly to the spiritual transformation guaranteed in the NC (vs. 39)
- The people will have a new heart and a right relationship with God, and this will translate into physical prosperity experienced by dwelling in the Promised Land and enjoying perpetual peace

## Jeremiah 33

- "As the Book of Consolation ends, we see another affirmation of the restoration of Israel after judgment. Uniquely, Jeremiah 33 explicitly refers to all five unconditional covenants – Noahic, Abrahamic, Priestly, Davidic, and New Covenants. All five together convey the absolute seriousness of God's intent to restore the nation of Israel. To use a modern saying – God brings in all the big guns to show how serious He is about restoring Israel."<sup>2</sup>

- The New Covenant:

**Jeremiah 33:8** ~ I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me.

- The Davidic Covenant (thus, NC kingdom conditions will take place under a coming David, the ultimate Son of David – Jesus the Messiah):

**Jeremiah 33:14-17** ~ 'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.' 17 For thus says the LORD, 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel'

- The Priestly Covenant (thus, NC kingdom conditions will result in a perpetual priesthood for Phinehas and his descendants):

**Jeremiah 33:18** ~ and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to prepare sacrifices continually.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 188.

- The Noahic Covenant (thus, if the normal patterns of nature are still in effect then it is certain that God’s plans to restore Israel through the NC are still in effect):

Jeremiah 33:19-22, 25-26 ~ The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, 20 “Thus says the LORD, ‘If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, 21 then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. 22 As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me...” 25 “Thus says the LORD, ‘If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, 26 then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.”

- The Abrahamic Covenant:

**Jeremiah 33:22** ~ As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me

## **Ezekiel**

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### *Ezekiel 11*

- Ezekiel chapters 8-11 describe the departure of God’s glory from the temple
- This was a catastrophic event as it represented the removal of the kingdom from Israel
- Yet in the midst of this awful event comes a declaration of hope

**Ezekiel 11:16-20** ~ Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.”’ 17 Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”’ 18 When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. 19 **And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.**

### *Ezekiel 16*

- God promises to make an “everlasting covenant,” the NC, with Israel resulting in national forgiveness:

**Ezekiel 16:60-63** ~ Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. 61 Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant. 62 Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, 63 so that **you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done,**” the Lord GOD declares.

### *Ezekiel 34*

**Ezekiel 34:25-30** ~ “I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. 26 I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. 27 Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. 28 They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid. 29 I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore. 30 Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people,” declares the Lord GOD.

## Ezekiel 36

- This critical text demonstrates that the spiritual, NC blessings of regeneration, a new heart, and indwelling Spirit will exist alongside the physical blessings of the land

**Ezekiel 36:24-38** ~ “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. 29 Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. 30 I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. 31 Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations. 32 I am not doing this for your sake,” declares the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!” Thus says the Lord GOD, “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. 34 The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. 35 They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.’ 36 Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it. 37 Thus says the Lord GOD, “This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock. 38 Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so will the waste cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”

- Notice what the restoration of Israel will be like as a result of the NC:
  - Israel will be gathered from the nations and placed in their own land (vs. 24)
  - Israel will be cleansed from filthiness and idolatry (vs. 25)
  - Israel will receive a new heart that replaces its old hardened hearts (vs. 26a)
  - Israel will receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that enables Israel to obey God (vs. 27)
  - Israel will live in the land God gave to Israel’s forefathers (vs. 28a)
  - Israel will be God’s people and God will be Israel’s God (vs. 28b)
  - Israel will experience agricultural prosperity along with no more famine (vs. 29-30)
  - Israel will experience salvation from sin (vs. 33a)
  - Israel will see its cities inhabited (vs. 33b)
  - Israel’s land will be cultivated (vs. 34)
  - Israel will see an increase in population (vs. 37-38)
- “These points can be summarized: *After a period of banishment to the nations Israel will experience spiritual salvation and restoration to the land of promise within the context of the New Covenant that brings both spiritual and physical blessings. As God accomplishes these things the nations will know that He is God. God’s plans for Israel are spiritual, physical, and national. All three elements are connected with the coming New Covenant.*”<sup>3</sup>

## Ezekiel 37

**Ezekiel 37:21-28** ~ Say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; 22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. 23 They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God. 24 My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. 25 They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. 26 I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. 27 My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. 28 And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.”

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 200.