

Title: The New Covenant
Text: Luke 22.14-23 pt.2
Theme: The glory of the new covenant in the setting of betrayal
Series: Luke
Aim: I aim to help my people see that the wrath of man was overruled by God to carry out his plan to have an eternal people for himself.

Read Text:

The two-word phrase, “6-7” is like an inside joke for kids. When they hear someone say, “6-7.” their eyes light up, they look at each other like it is some kind of a code phrase for a hidden meaning. And adults, not wanting to appear to be completely out of it, are often afraid to ask what exactly does “6-7” mean. If you haven’t asked a kid about it, try it some time. If you do, you will not feel ignorant and out of touch because the kids don’t know what it means either. There is no actual meaning.

That is not the case with Scripture and of course with the words of Christ. Everything he says matters. Jesus is with his disciples in the Upper Room, observing the Passover on the night before he died. After the main meal is over, *“after they had eaten”* Jesus took what would have been the 3rd cup of wine in the Passover meal observance and gave this cup a new meaning. *“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”* When Jesus said this, a theological sonic boom sounded. Covenant is a very important term that describes the nature of God’s relationship with his people. The new covenant means that there was an old covenant. In fact, the Old Testament (Covenant) is full of this language. But there is more. Immediately after dropping this bomb by saying that the cup now represents the new covenant in his blood, Jesus then announces that there is a betrayer in their midst. *“But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.”*

Imagine that you are having dinner with the head of the CIA and he tells your dinner party 2 things: 1) China is launching an invasion of India and 2) he bought a new car yesterday. Then for the rest of the conversation, everyone wants to talk about his new car. That analogy is not quite the same, but the massive statement that Christ made about the New Covenant was overshadowed by immediate issue that there was a betrayer in their midst. That is what the disciples focus on (v.23). But look at v.22. Jesus summarizes these two realities by assuring us that (reality 1) *“the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but (reality 2) woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”*

1. **God planned history around the cross.**

The death of Christ was the event God used to establish the new covenant with his people. The new covenant was the fulfillment of the other covenants that God had made. Those covenants are fulfilled and built upon by the New Covenant. This is visually depicted in the moment that Christ died. Luke tells us that at that moment the curtain in the Temple tore in two. That enormous curtain protected and hid the Holy of Holies. The Temple was the focal point of the

Old Covenant. As Hebrews 8.13 says, *"In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."* Jesus is telling his disciples that a massive change in the plan of God is about to happen. The Old Covenant is about to be rendered obsolete and replaced by the New Covenant which is symbolized by the cup which represented the violent death of Christ on the cross. This event (the cross) has been a long time in coming. A new era has arrived. Let's review.

The storyline of the Bible is based on a series of covenants that build upon each other and relate to each other in which God defines the relationship. A covenant is NOT a contract. A contract is an agreement enacted between two equals. A covenant, however, is a binding oath established by a king with his subjects. A covenant is a one-sided agreement in which the king, the superior party, makes promises, places the subjects under obligation, is ratified by sacrifice and broken only by and punishable by death and is marked by a sign.

These covenants are like the structure of the Bible. In this room we see the walls, and the ceiling. But the walls and the ceiling and the roof above the ceiling are all attached to the steel girders that are the architectural frame. These covenants are like the architectural frame of the Bible that holds it together. They all relate to one another, build on each other and all point forward to this New Covenant.

What we see in each covenant is: 1) A statement by God (announcing the relationship) 2) A revelation of the terms of the relationship. God says what he is going to do and what he expects of the people. 3) A sacrifice that ratifies and seals the covenant and 4) a sign that reminds both parties of the covenant. Let's see how this is reflected in the covenants.

This was made clear in the covenant God made with Noah after the flood (Genesis 9). God reveals how he is going to relate to people. Here is what I am going to do. I will not destroy you with a flood. I promise. Here is what you do: be fruitful and multiply on the earth. If someone murders someone else, then they have to pay for that with their own life. I.e. be fruitful and enact justice. The sign of the covenant? The rainbow.

Later (Genesis 15) God made a Covenant with Abraham in which God determined to call Abraham's offspring through Isaac his people. I will be your God and you are to recognize me as your God. I am going to give you this land and you are to be marked (sign) by circumcision that you belong to me.

This led to the Mosaic (Sinai) Covenant or the covenant God made with Israel through Moses at Sinai (the Law of God). The terms were the law, and the sign was the Sabbath. The covenant that God made with David was like the Mosaic covenant in that it was all part of the covenant that God made with Abraham. In the covenant with David, God promised David that he would have an heir who would reign forever. A few observations:

1) God initiated and defined the relationship. The heart of each covenant is this idea: I am your God; you are my people and as my people I am going to pour out affection on you. This rather

short statement (sprinkled throughout the Scriptures, repeated in various ways) is loaded, making a clear distinction between the Creator and the creation, but also showing a strong bond of ownership, deep affection and personal attention between God and his own.

2) God usually established a covenant in relationship to God performing a great rescue operation. Noah was rescued from the flood, Abraham from a life of pagan idolatry in Ur, Moses and the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt and David from being the least in his house to being the King. Every covenant that God made was established on the basis of his grace.

3) God did more than what people could imagine. God gave Abraham a land and made him the father of a nation. God told David that he would have a son who would reign forever and ever.

4) Each covenant increased in revelation, responsibility, relationship and joy. Therefore, each covenant pointed forward to a greater covenant and ultimately to Christ. These covenants all built upon the other. With each covenant, there was both continuity and discontinuity. For example, in God's covenant with Noah, he promised that he would never flood the earth again and that the rainbow would be an everlasting sign of his promise. I believe that aspect of his covenant is still in place. In God's covenant with Abraham, he promised the land of Canaan to the Israelites. I believe that aspect of that covenant is still in place. In God's covenant with David, he promised that David would have a descendent who would reign on his throne forever and ever. I believe that aspect of the covenant is still in place. With each successive covenant, some things were replaced by something that was better. The movement was always forward.

5) The problem with the Old Covenant was not the covenant, but the people of the old covenant. The people did not want to be God's people. They wanted to be their own God. The people that came after Noah decided to build the Tower of Babel in order to make a name for themselves (that would replace God's name). We see this repeatedly with the Mosaic Covenant. The problem with the covenants was never God, it was always the people. Do you remember when God was revealing the terms of his covenant with Israel to Moses on Mt. Sinai? What were the people doing down at the base of the mountain? They were worshipping a golden calf. Moses came down and did what with the law? He broke it! That scene captures the Mosaic Covenant. It was busted before it was even ratified. It would never work because the people would not follow it.

Over and over God would send prophets to his people to remind them of the terms of the covenant and call them to repent and to live under his reign. One of those prophets, Jeremiah, was a prophet to the southern kingdom/nation of Judah. The northern kingdom called Israel was wiped out. During his life, the dreaded Assyrian empire that had destroyed the Northern Kingdom because of their unbelief was itself overthrown by the Babylonians. The Babylonians were the punishment of God that he employed on Judah because they too failed to believe and follow God. So, the massive army of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, tore down the wall, razed the temple and deported thousands of Jews to Babylon. God had already revealed this to Jeremiah, who warned his people of the coming judgment if they refused to follow the

covenant. As the destruction-laden armies of Babylon closed in, Jeremiah watched with deep heaviness his prophecies of warning being fulfilled, spelling the end of the nation of Judah as it had been known. But then, the word of the Lord came again to Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34).

*Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **(however)** not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt **(note the relationship of the former covenant to Passover and notice why this new covenant will not be like the old one because...)** my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But **(the reason why this one is going to be different and better)** this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. **(and the result of this covenant will be)** And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **(This new covenant relationship means...)** And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For **(Because, or the basis for this new covenant is)** I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*

God told him of the day when God would establish a new covenant with his people. This one would be better. Instead of giving his people a law that was written on stone tablets, this time God was going to write his law on their hearts. If the word of God was on the inside of them, then they would obey from the inside. If God had them by the heart, they would forever and always be his people. With the Word of God on the inside, now those who are his is evidenced by an internal faith that is expressed in an external obedience. The old covenant was broken by disobedience. The new covenant would not be broken because it was written on hearts that God had changed. But, since every covenant that God established was ratified by a sacrifice, what kind of a sacrifice would be necessary to ratify this new, this ultimate covenant? By the end of Malachi, this question is not answered. The reader of God's Word and genuine follower of God is left hoping, looking, and longing for a perfect prophet, perfect priest, perfect sacrifice, perfect King and a new covenant.

So, when Christ, in the upper room took the cup of wine and said, "*This cup that is poured out for you is **the new covenant in my blood***", the disciples should have known. Christ was the ultimate sacrifice who was going to ratify the ultimate covenant that God established to create a permanent, unbreakable, and eternal people for himself. This new nation, called the church, is not from one ethnicity, but from all over the world. It is not centered in a temple in Jerusalem but now the people themselves are the temple. In the days to follow, they would figure it out.

The Passover was a ceremony celebrated by families of the Old Covenant. The Passover is fulfilled by Christ in his death which establishes the New Covenant. The New Covenant is celebrated, not by families in homes, but by THE FAMILY of GOD, the church. Even here in Luke 22, Jesus establishes the Lord's Supper as an ordinance for his people and he does it with his people (his disciples).

The Lord's Table symbolizes the New Covenant. When Moses confirmed the Sinai covenant, he took the blood of the animal sacrifices and "threw it on the people." Then he said (Exodus 24.8) *"Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."* Now, Jesus echoes those words as he fulfills them. But notice that the blood is not sprinkled on them, but its representation by the cup is taken internally by them. This new covenant is not an outward ritual, but represents an inward reality. Those who have come to faith in Christ, who trust in him alone as their Savior and Lord, are now, members of the new covenant family of God. Just as no one can eat this bread for you, or drink this cup for you, no one can believe for you. Taking the bread and the cup is saying that you trust in the One the bread and cup represents. Without coming to faith in Christ, this ordinance is not yours to participate in. But it is an invitation to come. There is room at the table for you.

When you come to faith in Christ, then you get baptized. Baptism by immersion is the sign of the New Covenant. This is why there is no such thing as infant baptism in the Bible. The New Covenant is not something you are born into as an infant in a family. It is a covenant that you are re-born into as one who believes and makes you part of the FAMILY. Your parents do not initiate you into the covenant (like the old one). The Spirit initiates you into the New Covenant through regeneration. Infant baptism confuses the signs. It tries to pound a square peg into a round hole.

In baptism, we are identified with the sign of the New Covenant as we each profess our faith in Christ individually. This is why NT baptism is always after one has professed faith in Christ. Baptism is the sign of initiation in the New Covenant. In the Lord's Table we, the members of the New Covenant, reaffirm our enjoyment of the New Covenant as we do this together as a community. This is a time for you to reflect on your walk with the Lord AND on your relationship with brothers and sisters in the church.

So yes, God planned history around the cross because the cross was the ultimate sacrifice that enacted the ultimate covenant. This is what God had planned. *"For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined."* And yet at the same time, Judas is actively planning on carrying out his scheme to betray Christ. Judas is there, but not there. His heart is not interested in anything that Jesus says, even when Jesus exposes him.

2. The folly of man's rebellion accomplishes the wisdom of God's plan. (23)

Jesus gave the cup to the disciples, like he did the bread and told them to drink it, and they did, including Judas. Taking the cup did not make Judas a believer. Judas took this as a lie. He took this in order to pretend that he was something that he was not. His betrayal of Christ in private was being played out even as he was betraying the disciples with his deceit. Then in this moment when Christ is announcing the ratification of the New Covenant, when a major page of history is being turned, Jesus drops the bomb of the betrayer in their midst.

If you are Judas and Jesus just told the 12 that one of you is betraying him, what are you thinking? Wouldn't it be obvious that you are busted? Jesus knows! There is no way that this

little scheme is going to work. But Judas does not confess nor give up his plan. I would think that he would be sweating bullets. If the guy had a smartwatch on, his BP would be off the charts and his pulse would be racing. But he joins in the questioning with the others acting as if he has no idea of what is going on. Judas, are you an idiot? Yes, the worst possible kind. He sees the truth, hears the truth, “knows” the truth, but refuses to embrace the truth. And somehow, even after being called out, he carries on his plan to rebel and betray Christ. Satan has entered him (v.3). Those who attempt to deceive God are themselves deceived. Judas, how on earth do you think this will ever work? Will he win? No. Will this work? No. Will the plan of God ever be threatened by the schemes of man? Never. Judas is a fool of the worst kind. His betrayal does not upend the plan of God, but only helps to carry it out.

The plan of God is plain, yet hidden. God plainly reveals what he is doing and leaves breadcrumbs all along the trail for us to follow. But the plan of God, this wisdom of God is hidden from those who rebel. As Paul said in 1 Cor. 2.8 *“None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”*

Judas illustrates the utter folly and personal destruction of rejecting Christ. Jesus gives a final warning, “Woe to that man by whom he is betrayed.” Woe is a guttural response that anticipates a terrible event. This was true for Judas. He believed his own lies, just like Satan.

There is so much going on in this moment in the upper room. The imagery of the Passover, the initiation of the New Covenant and its ordinance, the Lord’s Supper, the betrayal of Judas that will bring about the arrest of Christ is all here. Judas is making the worst possible decision. He is helping the leaders of his nation execute their rightful king. And yet, at the same time, the folly of man’s rebellion is accomplishing the sovereign plan of God to provide for you and me the perfect and complete sacrifice for our sin. Judas betrayed. Christ died. The sacrifice was made. The payment was accepted. Our salvation was accomplished. It is done. It is yours to trust. Christ is the King to follow. His church is the New Covenant people to be part of. His kingdom will come. And we do this in remembrance of him and until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.