“What is the New Covenant?”

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The primary Old Testament passage pertaining to the New Covenant is Jeremiah 31:31-34. In this wonderful passage God promises to make a New Covenant with His people (v. 31), a covenant unlike the Mosaic covenant (v. 32). Under this New Covenant, God promises to write His laws on the hearts of His people (v. 33), to have intimate communion with them (vv. 33-34), and to forgive their sins (v. 34).

This New Covenant was inaugurated in the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. On the night of His betrayal and arrest, Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples. During the course of this meal He told them, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood” (Luke 22:20).

In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews has a great deal to say about this New Covenant. In an article on “Covenant,” Trent Butler describes some of the special features of the New Covenant as related in the book of Hebrews :

“The emphasis is on Jesus, the perfect High Priest, providing a new, better, superior covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). Jesus represented the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s new covenant promise (Heb. 8:8, 10; 10:16). Jesus was the perfect covenant Mediator (Heb. 9:15), providing an eternal inheritance in a way the old covenant could not (compare 12:24). Jesus’ death on the cross satisfied the requirement that all covenants be established by blood (Heb. 9:18, 20) just as was the first covenant (Ex. 24:8). Christ’s blood established an everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20)” (*Holman Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Trent C. Butler (Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 312).

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“Help Me Understand Eating Clean and Unclean Meats”

I am a freshman college student. A New Testament class professor said that Paul, James and Peter disagreed with the eating of clean and unclean meats. Now I know of the vision with Peter, which he says some scholars say is only for the fact that they should preach to Gentiles as well as Greeks. Now, is there anywhere else that says they may have not been disagreeing or that one case won out over the other or if one had more information from God? Should we be wary of this subject as Christians? Because that would mean we were eating “wrong” all this time (for those of us who do eat pork and other things like that). Does this have any relevance to our spirituality as Christians? Am I just thinking too hard?

Thanks for writing. The dietary laws set forth in passages such as Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deuteronomy 14:1-21 were temporary laws given by God only to Israel. These laws are not applicable to Christians today under the terms of the New Covenant. This is not only made clear in Peter’s vision, recorded in Acts 10:9-16, but it is stated explicitly by Christ Himself in Mark 7:14-23. Notice in particular what Jesus says in vv. 18-19. In part, this text reads, “Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?” Then notice the parenthetical statement which concludes this verse: “Thus He declared all foods clean.” In other words, the dietary restrictions given by God to Israel have been nullified. Christians today are not bound by such laws. Today, the Old Covenant under which Israel operated is obsolete (Hebrews 8:13).

Hope this helps!

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
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