

DISPENSATIONAL
UNDERSTANDING OF THE
NEW COVENANT

3 VIEWS

Mike **Stallard** | editor

DISPENSATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEW COVENANT

Contributions from:

John **Master**

Dave **Fredrickson**

Roy E. **Beacham**

Elliott E. **Johnson**

Rodney J. **Decker**

Bruce **Compton**



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Abbreviations

ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ANE	Ancient Near East/Ancient Near Eastern
BDAG	Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3rd ed.
BDF	Blass, Debrunner, Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
DPT	<i>Dictionary of Premillennial Theology</i>
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
EDT	<i>Evangelical Dictionary of Theology</i> , 2nd ed.
LEH	Lust, Eynikel, Hauspie, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint</i>
L&N	Louw and Nida, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i> , 3rd ed.
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, Jones, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i>
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
SRB ₁	<i>Scofield Reference Bible</i>
SRB ₂	<i>New Scofield Reference Bible</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
Thayer	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i>
TWOT	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
WBE	<i>Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

The abbreviations OC (old covenant), OT (Old Testament), NC (new covenant), and NT (New Testament) are used when the terms function as adjectives.

Contributors

ROY E. BEACHAM (ThD, Grace Theological Seminary) is professor of Old Testament, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Plymouth, Minnesota.

BRUCE COMPTON (ThD, Grace Theological Seminary) is professor of biblical languages and exposition, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen Park, Michigan.

RODNEY J. DECKER (ThD, Central Baptist Seminary) is professor of Greek and New Testament, Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania.

DAVID FREDRICKSON (PhD, Baptist Bible Seminary) is assistant professor of theology, Western Seminary, Sacramento, California.

ELLIOTT E. JOHNSON (ThD, Dallas Theological Seminary) is senior professor of Bible exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas.

JOHN MASTER (ThD, Dallas Theological Seminary) is professor emeritus, School of Bible and Ministry, Philadelphia Biblical University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

MIKE STALLARD (PhD, Dallas Theological Seminary) is dean and professor of systematic theology, Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania.

Preface

Mike Stallard, editor

IN THE SPRING of 2008, I asked the administration of Baptist Bible Seminary to fund an annual conference designed for traditional dispensationalists.¹ I had concluded that such dispensationalists had no real forum for talking among themselves about the hermeneutical and theological issues facing them on the evangelical landscape. Thus in September 2008, we launched the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics to facilitate such discussions, hoping to understand what we were *all* thinking and what we considered the primary issues before us. One of our hopes was that publications might emerge from our discussions that would serve both the scholars and the evangelical public. Some articles have been published, but the work before the reader is the first book generated by our deliberations from 2009. Some of the articles in this work were not part of the actual conference from that year. Members of the council were asked to write specific articles in light of our discussions or to modify and expand their council writings for purposes of the book. In some cases (e.g., Compton), previously published articles have been modified and included.

It was not surprising that the topic “The Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant” generated strong interest in 2009. The seminary chapel was full of council members and observers, and the discussion was lively. Perhaps the interest in the discussions stemmed from the fact that dispensationalists have often been criticized for a lack of clarity about the new covenant. The main issue is whether the church experiences the new covenant in this present age. Perhaps the lack of clarity comes from disagreements among dispensationalists themselves on the question. One of my desires was that this particular

1. Sometimes I will simply use the word *dispensationalist* throughout. It always has the meaning “traditional dispensationalist” unless indicated otherwise.

meeting would surface exactly *why* dispensationalists disagree on this topic. I was not disappointed.

Organization of the Book

The book has four articles that are not included in its debate section. We chose to include more than simply an introduction and debate section in order to introduce other necessary features that help frame the issues involved in understanding the new covenant. John Master and Bruce Compton have perhaps written on the new covenant as much as, or more than, any other current dispensationalists. Consequently, Master has written a lengthy foreword from the vantage point that the church has no present relationship to the new covenant. Compton's article serves as an epilogue and is a digest of a 2003 article that gave substantial input into dispensational thinking about the new covenant. Unlike Master, Compton sees a connection between the church and the new covenant.

Dave Fredrickson makes a unique contribution when he addresses the question of how we know whether a passage is a NC passage. Some interpreters assume the scheme put forward by Walter Kaiser several years ago. However, the lists among interpreters of what passages constitute NC passages are quite varied. Fredrickson helps to formulate a method whereby decisions in this matter can be made consistently and appropriately. It is hard to come to agreement on the interpretation of the new covenant if it is not possible to agree on which passages are actually NC passages. Fredrickson gives us a way out of this dilemma.

I have provided an article on the history of interpretation in dispensationalism relative to the new covenant. It must necessarily be selective in sources for a work like this. However, the study helped me to understand the historical development, starting with Darby. One special note of interest is that many of the varying views are closer to each other than originally thought. It is also possible that dispensationalists have misread their own history. I hope that this article will provide a corrective for that state of affairs. I would suggest to our readers that they read the history article before they read the debate section of the book.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics from 2009 was that the two–new covenants view was not voiced during the deliberations of the council. If anyone present held the view, he did not speak up. This may show that few traditional dispensationalists today hold the Lewis Sperry Chafer approach to handling the new covenant; that

is, there is a new covenant for the nation of Israel while there is a distinct and separate new covenant for the church. Consequently, this view is not represented among the various views discussed in this book.

The Contributors

The three views that are put forward are represented by Roy Beacham, Elliott Johnson, and Rod Decker. Beacham argues that the church has no relationship to or participation in the new covenant. It is for Israel only. At best, the current blessings experienced by the church are analogous to those that Israel will one day experience when Jesus comes. Johnson argues that the church has an indirect relationship to the new covenant. The church enjoys the spiritual benefits of Israel's new covenant by its union with Christ, the mediator of the new covenant. In this way, the church experiences the spiritual blessings of the new covenant without being directly related to the covenant. This is a nuanced view which, in my judgment, reflects the view of John Nelson Darby as well. Decker argues that the church has a direct relationship to Israel's new covenant, but this does not constitute fulfillment of the OT promises to Israel; that remains for Israel during the Lord's millennial reign. The land promises in particular have no bearing on the church.

Readers will, of course, judge the back and forth of the debate articles for themselves. At this point, I am constrained to make two overall comments about them. First, I must say that I learned more personally from Beacham's presentation at the conference and in his essay here than from the other positions. This has nothing to do with quality and all to do with my past history. For the most part I have ministered and taught in a context where I have considered only the other two options. I had ruled out Beacham's position without much consideration. However, his approach to categorization following the ANE understandings of covenants was an addition that my thinking needed. Coupled with this was his invocation of passages in Ezekiel besides chapter 36 that I had never considered before relative to the new covenant. As I listened at the council and read Beacham's work, I realized I had more to deal with than I had thought. Although I have not adopted this view, I must never again relegate this position to some remote place where it is never seen.

Secondly, I must say a word about the structure of Decker's article advocating a direct relationship between the church and the new covenant. It is somewhat different than the other two articles. Due to his assignment at the council, Decker has not attempted a full synthesis of all aspects of the new covenant. Instead, his article is limited to an exegetical treatment of Hebrews 7—10.

Consequently, it has a different feel to it than the other articles. Decker's responses to Beacham and Johnson still bring out overall theological synthesis. Moreover, this is not to say that Beacham and Johnson do not do excellent exegetical work to support their theological conclusions. The reader will notice, however, that Decker's work is primarily an exegetical commentary, while Beacham and Johnson are developing synthetic theological treatises. While this divergence of approaches may be surprising for a debate section, we considered it to be acceptable for the purposes we wanted to accomplish. In all cases, we have tried to point the reader to other writings of these men that flesh out more of the details (this is especially true for Beacham).

Significant Implications

Overall, the entire process of discussion starting with the council and culminating with this book suggests several significant implications for dispensational understanding of the new covenant. At the outset it must be noted that all the dispensationalists involved believe strongly in literal, contextual, grammatical-historical interpretation. It is from this vantage point that these implications must be evaluated.

First, my earlier question was answered, but in a direction I had not anticipated. I had asked *why* dispensationalists disagreed on the new covenant. The expected response was in the arena of theology. That is, I expected that theological commitments and concerns would drive the discussion. Certainly, for the two–new covenants view, I wondered if the desire to keep the distinction between Israel and the church determined how many of the passages were understood. However, I found that, at least for the three positions represented in this book, what drove the conversation was exegesis more than theology. The meaning of specific passages in Ezekiel and Hebrews were addressed with an attempt to deal with teachings in context. The biblical covenants (especially the Abrahamic and new covenants) were dealt with in an attempt to develop a biblical theology grounded in appropriate exegetical work. In addition, the background of ANE handling of covenants in general was an attempt to see the proper historical context as biblical language about the new covenant was analyzed. All in all, I applaud the writers in this book for having strong exegetical concerns instead of being driven merely by theology. The differences lie largely at the textual level.

Second, as I mentioned earlier, some passages have been left out of most discussions (e.g., Ezek. 20; 22). This work surfaces a more holistic understanding of how a larger number of passages may function in the debate over the

meaning of the new covenant. The issue is not settled based upon a minute collection of passages. Thus, this work should help Bible students expand their study when looking at this controversial matter.

Third, also as I mentioned earlier, the two–new covenants view does not seem to be held by many dispensationalists today. The Chafer synthesis, while perhaps noble in its attempt to craft the new covenant in terms of the Israel–church distinction, does not seem to account for all the biblical data. At least those views represented in this book think this is so. I know of dispensationalists who still follow the Chafer approach. They are to be respected. However, most dispensationalists hold a different view on the new covenant.

Fourth, these discussions have made obvious the fact that for all views stated here, the present spiritual experiences of the church are exactly the same. At the experiential level we cannot say that one of the dispensational views sees what is happening for individual Church-age believers to be different from another of the dispensational views. Then what is the difference? At the theological level, we are debating how to label what is going on. In what way does the church experience its blessings? For the view that the church has no relationship to the new covenant, the blessings the church experiences are analogous to those that Israel will see in her future kingdom. Similarly, one can say for the two–new covenants view that the church’s blessings under its unique new covenant are analogous to those under Israel’s new covenant. The view that the church receives the blessings of the new covenant (either directly or indirectly) holds also that the blessings are the same as the spiritual blessings for Israel that the nation will obtain in the future. The characterization of these blessings relative to the work of the Spirit and forgiveness are the same or similar throughout all the views. What decides how a particular author labels the view is how he takes a particular passage or set of passages.

Fifth, one of the main concerns of dispensationalists has been to maintain the hermeneutical autonomy of the OT text relative to the NC promises to Israel. This is a matter of faithfulness to exegesis of OT passages. God intends to keep His word to Israel. Consequently, even for dispensationalists who see a connection between the church and Israel’s new covenant, there is no claim that the spiritual blessings that the church experiences *fulfill* the OT promises to Israel. There is a unanimous belief among all dispensationalists that Israel will receive her new covenant when Christ returns. The spiritual blessings of Israel’s new covenant will be granted in the context of the nation’s ultimate kingdom restoration in the land promised to her (Jer. 31:33–40; Ezek. 36, cf. Joel 2:28–3:21). Such straightforward truths should never be surrendered

to some form of replacement or cancellation due to additional NT revelation. A NT priority should not disallow OT teaching. To follow such an approach appears to dispensationalists to abandon the Bible's teaching in the Old Testament.

Finally, one concern that is raised by the study is the realization that traditional dispensationalists have not spent enough time studying their own history. While this has not been the first time such a complaint has been raised, the specific issue that sparks it here is the varying understandings of John Nelson Darby's view on the new covenant that exist among dispensationalists. While some of this may be attributed to ambiguity at times in Darby's own works, I am of the conviction that some of this is due to a lack of study of Darby's actual writings. Furthermore, we must be as exhaustive as possible in studying his work. What may be ambiguous in one section of his writings might be clarified in another. In addition, a lot has been said about what others have said about Darby. We must read Darby and other dispensationalists on their own terms.

I must wrap up by thanking all of the contributors to the book for their patience with the editor as I worked through this process as a busy seminary dean. I also would like to mention with kindness my personal assistant, Joy McGinniss, who pre-edited and formatted the manuscript for the publisher. We have allowed some flexibility in the style chosen by individual authors in the book. However, I must necessarily claim any editing errors as mine alone. Special thanks go to Kevin Mungons (and others) of Regular Baptist Press for entertaining the possibility of this project and providing direction for its completion. There are still a host of us who love dispensational truth. We are grateful for publishers who share our concerns.

Mike Stallard
Baptist Bible Seminary
Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania
May 2012

Which Are the New Covenant Passages in the Bible?

Dave Fredrickson

IN 1985 the NIV Study Bible notes offered a position regarding the new covenant that was new to its general evangelical readership. The notes present this new view by linking the idea of the Servant “becoming” a “covenant” (Isa. 42:6; 49:6) to the new covenant, which Isaiah allegedly twice mentioned a hundred years prior to Jeremiah’s coining of that label.¹ Belying its matter-of-fact tone, this Study Bible assertion was extraordinary for two reasons. First, it went against the current scholarly consensus: prior to the 1980s commentators had rarely considered the possibility of a link between Isaiah’s dual mention of a Servant-covenant and the new covenant of Jeremiah 31, let alone an identity.² The majority view of that era among students of Isaiah regarding

1. Kenneth L. Barker and Donald W. Burdick, *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 1076. Their margin note for Isaiah 42:6 states: “42:6 . . . *covenant*. See 49:8. The Messiah will fulfill the Davidic Covenant as king (9:7) and will institute the new covenant by his death (Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:6–13; 9:15).” The notes do not link the new covenant to any earlier passages such as Deuteronomy 30 or Joel 2.

2. This writer’s survey of commentaries on Isaiah prior to 1980, for example, yields only three comments regarding the possibility of such a link. Those of H. C. Leupold, F. Delitzsch, and Claus Westermann briefly consider but do not affirm this link (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 65; F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, vol. 7 of *Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, trans. James Martin [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 179; Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary*, ed. G. Ernest Wright, John Bright, James Barr, and Peter Ackroyd [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], 92–101). A survey of commentaries on Jeremiah and Ezekiel of the same vintage yields no examples.

Ironically, J. A. Alexander states that “the great majority of writers” (not specified) support a link between Isaiah’s Servant-covenant and the new covenant, but he argues against it himself (*Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974], 136). Christopher R. North also brings up the new covenant, but specifically to deny its presence anywhere in “Second Isaiah” (*The Second Isaiah* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1964], 18).

Occasional references (outside of commentaries among evangelicals prior to 1980) to any passage in Isaiah as linked to the new covenant of Jeremiah are exemplified by dispensationalist Charles C. Ryrie, who mentions Isaiah 59:21 and 61:8, 9 (*The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* [Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1953], 112–14), and dispensationalist J. Dwight Pentecost who

a link between these Isaiah passages and the new covenant is represented by Christopher North, writing in 1964: “There is in DI [Deutero-Isaiah] no mention of a ‘new covenant,’ as in Jer. xxxi.31–34.”³

A second reason the Study Bible note was extraordinary is that, while it represented a minority view within published evangelical scholarship, it did anticipate by a decade a wholesale reversal of consensus on the issue. Between 1980 and 2000 (barely a point in time in historical terms) evangelical writers moved, at least as recorded in print, from generally overlooking to generally accepting the identity of the Servant-covenant passages and many other OT passages with the new covenant of Jeremiah.

Walter Kaiser appears to have been the first evangelical to suggest in print the presence of over a dozen Old Testament NC passages, stating in a 1972 *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* article (and later in a 1978 book) that “sixteen or seventeen” NC passages are found in the Old Testament.⁴ In so doing, Kaiser created the seminal point of departure for published evangelical discussion of the new covenant in the Old Testament for decades. Perhaps it is a measure of Kaiser’s stature that his words nearly ended that discussion before it began—subsequent evangelical writings regarding the NC elements and passages in the Old Testament have most often simply accepted Kaiser’s enumeration.⁵ As well, they have generally followed without discussion Kaiser’s

repeats Ryrie’s comments approvingly and adds Isaiah 24:5 and 55:3 (*Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958], 118, 120).

3. North, *The Second Isaiah*, 18.

4. Walter C. Kaiser, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 15 (Winter 1972): 14; cf. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,” in *The Bible in Its Literary Milieu*, ed. John Maier and Vincent Tollers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 109, 117. See the quotation with detailed evaluation in “The Formative Model of Walter Kaiser” on page 5.

5. Writers who have relied on Kaiser’s enumeration of Old Testament NC passages with little or no additional development include Femi Adeyemi, “What Is the New Covenant ‘Law’ in Jeremiah 31:33?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (July–September): 314; Russell L. Penney, “The Relationship of the Church to the New Testament,” *Conservative Theological Journal* 2, no. 7 (December 1998): 461; Bruce Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 69. In some cases there is no footnote, but instead an allusive nod to Kaiser via reuse of his designation *locus classicus* for the Jeremiah 31 passage, as appears to be the case with R. Bruce Compton, “Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 8 (Fall 2003): 11.

Writers who have developed Kaiser’s enumeration further include Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001), 31; and Paul R. Thorsell, “The Spirit in the Present Age: Preliminary Fulfillment of the Predicted New Covenant according to Paul,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (Fall 1998): 398. Rodney Decker (“The Church’s Relationship to the New Covenant, Part One,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 607 [Summer 1995]: 294) acknowledges Kaiser’s list of passages but

lead in limiting Old Testament NC passages to the writing prophets.⁶

The Urgency for an Agreed-upon Model for Identifying the New Covenant Passages

Beyond the historical interest of such a quick consensus reversal across evangelicalism should lie a scholarly concern over the absence of the foundation appropriately undergirding such a large-scale shift in opinion—a careful debate regarding the necessary recalibration of a generally accepted, objective process for identifying NC texts in the first place.⁷

questions two Isaiah passages. Darrell Bock (“Covenants in Progressive Dispensationalism,” in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999], 189) and Robert L. Saucy (*The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993], 112–13) do not reference Kaiser but list nearly the same NC verses and the expression-based criteria for their selection. Elliott Johnson (“Covenants in Traditional Dispensationalism,” in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism*, 131) references the Bruce Ware article above, which itself begins with the Kaiser model.

6. John R. Master (“The New Covenant,” in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. John R. Master and Wesley R. Willis [Chicago: Moody, 1994], 93–110); John H. Sailhamer (*Introduction to Old Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 99); and John Whitcomb (“Christ’s Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6 [Fall 1985]: 205) are among the minority who have argued for the presence of NC elements earlier in the Old Testament.

7. Outside evangelicalism there was a parallel but moderated shift in consensus regarding the number and identity of the NC passages in the New Testament. The view identifying multiple passages as NC texts surfaced in print among higher-critical writers about twenty years earlier (in the 1950s rather than the 1970s), took twenty years rather than a single decade to rise to prominence, and took its place alongside the rival views regarding the identity of NC passages in the Old Testament, rather than essentially replacing them, as it did among published evangelicals. The Catholic higher-critical adherent Stefan Porubcan offered perhaps the first extended defense of the identity of the Servant-covenant in Second Isaiah with the NC passage of Jeremiah 31 in *The New Covenant in Isaiah 40–66* in 1958 (“*Il Patto Nuovo* in Is. 40–66,” *Analecta Biblica*, no. 8 [Roma: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1958], 88–134) and again in “The Covenant in Isaiah 40–66” (*Sin in the Old Testament: A Soteriological Study* [Rome: Slovak Institute, 1963], 481–512). He presented in chronological order Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Second Isaiah as the three primary OT treatments of the new covenant, each developing further the theology of the new covenant. (Regarding Catholic theologians and higher-critical views, North posits that Catholic scholars have found a way to obey the 1908 injunction [Biblical Commission] against denying Isaiah’s authorship of chapters 40–66 by treating Second Isaiah as a discrete literary unit yet avoiding discussion of its authorship (North, *The Second Isaiah*, 3).

Porubcan’s defense of Second Isaiah as the third and fullest OT exposition of the new covenant among the writing prophets coincided with the ending of the virtual consensus outside evangelicalism against the presence of the new covenant outside Jeremiah and Ezekiel. By the 1980s, Porubcan’s view had matured into a rival description for the makeup of the new covenant in the Old Testament among higher-critical adherents. The view that Isaiah builds on the new covenant of Jeremiah was essentially assumed in the well-received work of W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 199. Dumbrell comments, “The New Covenant theology of Jeremiah received therefore its elaboration and confirmation at the hand of both Ezekiel and Isaiah. . . . The New

This void is dramatized by the uncomfortable reality that in the debate's absence, the exegetical foundation for the current evangelical consensus is by default Kaiser's "footnoted" higher-critical Catholic source Stefan Porubcan. While Porubcan is a respected OT exegete among evangelicals,⁸ his comments regarding the new covenant are built upon premises that evangelicals reject.

One premise behind Porubcan's identification of NC passages in Isaiah is his higher-critical view that "Second Isaiah" is postexilic so that it offers appropriately brief allusions to the *earlier*, extended descriptions of the new covenant in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.⁹ In contrast evangelicals view the backdrop for "new covenant passages" in Isaiah 40–55 to be Isaiah 1–39 of the same writer and the other preexilic prophets, hardly "treasure-troves" of explicit NC description.¹⁰ Yet the tendency among evangelical writers has been to simply reverse Porubcan's higher-critical chronology for the three prophets, without comment as to how well Isaiah's "new covenant passages" function as *previews* of Jeremiah's new covenant rather than as later allusive nods.

Recent Brief Models for Identifying the Old Testament, New Covenant Passages

The paucity of working models for systematically identifying the NC passages in either Testament by evangelicals has had predictable results—consensus regarding the precise elements of the new covenant has eluded evangelical students of the new covenant at least in part because that discussion has been

Covenant is seen by Jeremiah as the fulfillment of the Sinai covenant, though Ezekiel and even more Isaiah take us much further." Dumbrell thus affirms the higher-critical consensus that the alleged Second Isaiah was dependant on the earlier Jeremiah, and affirms Porubcan's view that Second Isaiah offers the fullest presentation of the new covenant.

8. For example, Stefan Porubcan is referenced eight times in *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament* (R. Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, electronic ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1999, c1980], SS. 024, 279, 520, 651, 654, 742, 856, 864).

9. Porubcan, *Sin in the Old Testament*, 500, 559.

10. Kaiser's seventeen NC passages in his classic quotation include from Isaiah 1–39 only 24:5 ("The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke [*hiphil*, perfect tense] the everlasting covenant"), but in fact it is difficult to see how this passage could be a reference to the new covenant. Here the "covenant" is both past and already violated by all humankind. The passage most likely refers to the Noahic covenant, given the emphasis on worldwide disobedience and worldwide judgment. A variety of commentators suggest this latter identification, including F. Delitzsch (*Isaiah*, 427), H. C. Leupold (*Exposition of Isaiah*, 378), J. A. Alexander (*Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 406), and Douglas Moo ("Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 3 [Fall 2006]: 462). In contrast, the more explicit NC passages describe the new covenant both as future and as impervious to failure, given the Spirit's ministry. Porubcan's broader list includes Isaiah 11:1–10 as well (*Sin in the Old Testament*, 510).

plagued with differing enumerations of the relevant passages. In addition, the few models offered for methodically surfacing NC passages have been generally ignored by others, at least in print.

The Formative Model of Walter C. Kaiser

Kaiser's classic enumeration of NC passages in the Old Testament is as follows:

The only place in the Old Testament where the expression “new covenant” occurs is Jeremiah 31:31. However it would appear that the idea is much more widespread. Based on similar content and contexts, the following expressions can be equated with the new covenant: the “everlasting covenant” in seven passages [Jer. 32:40; 50:5; Ezek. 16:60; 37:26; Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8], a “new heart” or a “new spirit” in three or four passages [Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26; Jer. 32:39 (LXX)], the “covenant of peace” in three passages [Isa. 54:10; Ezek. 34:25; 37:26], and “a covenant” or “my covenant” which is placed “in that day” in three passages [Isa. 42:6; 49:8; Hos. 2:18–20; Isa. 59:21. For additional passages on the new covenant see Stefan Porubcan, *Sin in the Old Testament: A Soteriological Study*, Rome: Slovak Institute, 1963, pp. 481–512]—making a grand total of sixteen or seventeen major passages on the new covenant.¹¹

Kaiser briefly described his criteria for capturing NC passages outside Jeremiah 31 as being the presence of “similar content and contexts.” After referencing his first category, that of passages with the name *new covenant* (which involves only Jeremiah 31), Kaiser captured additional NC passages based upon whether they incorporate any one (or more, presumably) of the following four expressions: (1) *eternal covenant*, (2) *new heart* or *new spirit*, (3) *covenant of peace*, or (4) *a covenant* or *my covenant* linked with *in that day*.¹² Because most of these phrases do appear in Jeremiah 31 and Kaiser did specify Jeremiah 31 as his locus classicus, one could certainly envision the genesis of Kaiser's model as involving first the acceptance of Jeremiah 31 as a NC passage, followed by the observation of key descriptive terms or phrases in the passage, and finally the seeking out of the same key elements in other OT passages.

The utility of Kaiser's second-to-last expression *covenant of peace* is not clear. The phrase does not appear in Jeremiah 31, though that passage does

11. Kaiser, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,” 14; the brackets in the quotation indicate the location, plus text, of Kaiser's footnotes within the quote.

12. *Ibid.*, 14.

promise personal spiritual peace and corporate military peace with other terms. The difficulty is that one or both of these senses of peace are present in all of the named biblical covenants, including the conditional Mosaic covenant.¹³ The first time the label בְּרִית שְׁלוֹם (“covenant of peace”) appears in the prophets, Yahweh was assuring Israel by way of Isaiah that His loyal love is unending: “For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,” says the LORD who has compassion on you. ‘O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires” (Isa. 54:9–11).¹⁴ That unending love is apparent in all the unconditional covenants, such as the Noahic, which Yahweh explicitly mentions here, as well as the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants. As it is not unique to NC passages, it seems best to understand a *covenant of peace* as a “subset provision” included within several broader covenants from Yahweh.

The efficacy of Kaiser’s first and last expressions—*eternal covenant* and a *covenant* or *my covenant* linked with *in that day*—is equally unclear. Logically it seems that these expressions could capture any covenant that is linked to the eschaton by OT prophets. If one were to view all the biblical covenants relevant to the eschaton as expressions of a single generic eschatological covenant for which *new covenant* is the preferred name, as indeed some do,¹⁵ then these

13. The biblical covenant that is best positioned of all covenants to lay claim to the label *covenant of peace* is one linked to the Mosaic covenant. This lesser-known covenant of Yahweh with the Levitical priest Phinehas properly claims the earliest use of the label in Scripture, as its actual name: “Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give him My covenant of peace; and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel’” (Num. 25:12, 13). It is ironic for the Kaiser model that the label *covenant of peace* surfaces some passages linked to the Mosaic covenant—the covenant to which Jeremiah 31 explicitly contrasts the new covenant.

14. The New American Standard Bible (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995) is the source for Scripture quotations unless otherwise noted.

15. Odendaal (*The Eschatological Expectation of Isaiah 40–66 with Special Reference to Israel and the Nations*, 131) and Porubcan (*Sin in the Old Testament*, 487, 503, 504) were mentioned above as adherents to this view. Unquestionably the named, unconditional covenants of the Old Testament are activated in a coordinated, perhaps even seamless, manner in the eschaton as described by the prophets. In that sense these covenants represent a single, divine program. On the other hand, there are signature elements in each of the named, unconditional covenants which appear to resist amalgamation at the hands of both the OT and NT writers. As an example, individual, internal transformation by way of Spirit indwelling seems to be a signature element of the new covenant. So while the Spirit is mentioned in Isaiah 11, there He has the secondary background role of energizing the Davidic ruler. The Davidic rule is the

would be efficacious categories. For those who recognize distinctions between multiple, named, and distinguishable covenants that are linked to the eschaton by writing prophets, however,¹⁶ these two categories seem improperly broad.

In regards to Kaiser's first expression בְּרִית עוֹלָם ("eternal covenant"), it is likely that Jeremiah 32:40, which Kaiser captured by this phrase, does refer to the new covenant. In fact, it offers an excellent summary of what had been detailed in Jeremiah 31: "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." On the other hand, Isaiah 24:5, which is captured by the same expression, seems just as clearly to refer to the Noahic covenant. There Yahweh declares that all humankind has broken a covenant made prior: "The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant" (Isa. 24:5). Regarding Isaiah 55:3 and 61:8, it seems that both those passages refer to the Davidic covenant. Thus it seems the label בְּרִית עוֹלָם ("eternal covenant") can be attached to multiple named covenants. Surprisingly, narrowing the final category (passages involving the temporal expression בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא ["in that day"]) from passages that are generally eschatological to those passages that use this precise temporal label shortens the list to only Hosea 2:18–20. It is difficult to link this passage to any one of the named OT covenants in particular. The passage highlights a future "covenant of peace" to be made for Israel with wildlife, which is more clearly an event related to the rule of Davidic Messiah in Isaiah 11 than to the activation of the new covenant described in Jeremiah 31, although admittedly the Hosea passage mentions spiritual rejuvenation as a secondary element. It seems best to take this covenant of peace as a recognized sub-element of more than one named OT covenant, per the discussion above of the "covenants of peace" in the Old Testament.¹⁷

Thus the first, third, and fourth expressions that Kaiser offered for identifying NC passages in the Old Testament seem improperly broad. Working from

focus of this passage, not the Spirit, and his activities are, it seems, not a signature element of the Davidic covenant. So it seems Isaiah 11 should be understood as a "Davidic covenant passage," not a NC passage.

One can argue that the positive outcomes nationally of Davidic rule in Isaiah 11 are contingent upon the activation of the Spirit's transforming work as described in the new covenant. But this shows that the Davidic covenant and the new covenant are interdependent, not that the latter has subsumed the former.

16. Such as the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 and the Davidic covenant in Jeremiah 33.

17. Isaiah seems to use the label *covenant of peace* for the Noahic covenant in Isaiah 54, and he links the concept of both individual, internal peace and corporate, external peace with the Davidic and other covenants in 9:7; 32:17, 18; 54:13; 55:12; and 66:12.

Kaiser's own overarching criteria of "similar content and context," these expressions capture some passages that seem clearly to refer to the new covenant, but as well capture other passages that seem to refer to other named OT covenants that are active in the eschaton in addition to the new covenant. Perhaps these three expressions of Kaiser can serve as a first filter for surfacing potential NC passages, but additional criteria are needed to further cull the list of passages down to a list of passages describing the new covenant in distinction from other named OT covenants. One could suggest other first filters that require an additional filter, such as the phraseology involving Yahweh being "their God" and Israel being "my people," which captures both Mosaic covenant passages (Exod. 29:45; Lev. 26:45) and prospective NC passages (Jer. 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek. 37:23, 27) in the Old Testament.

The second expression *new heart* or *new spirit* does appear to capture successfully other passages that refer to the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 in terms of Kaiser's criteria of similar content and context.¹⁸ These passages are Jeremiah 32:39 (LXX) and Ezekiel 11:19; 18:31; 36:26.¹⁹ The efficacy of this category is further validated by the fact that if and when the criterion of *verbal* adherence to the key expression is broadened to *conceptual* adherence on the part of candidate OT passages, then the category captures other seemingly valid NC passages that appear elsewhere in Kaiser's list.²⁰ This group involves Isaiah 59:21; Jeremiah 32:40; 50:5; and Ezekiel 16:60–62; 37:26, 27. Each reflects the concept of individual, internal, and spiritual transformation of Israelites.

The remaining passages in Kaiser's list are those that are improperly captured by his categories, because they seem to refer to other covenants or are not clearly similar to Jeremiah 31. They are Isaiah 24:5; 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; 54:10; and Ezekiel 34:25.

The failure of Kaiser's model to capture the Joel 2:28 and 29 passage provides another interesting point of analysis for the model. The passage speaks of the distinct action of the Spirit on humankind "in those days" and at least implies inner spiritual transformation of His beneficiaries, as the Spirit has been poured out on them and has caused them to experience visions and dreams. Had Kaiser listed *the Spirit* as one of his key expressions for capturing NC passages, as many students of the new covenant in the Old Testament

18. Kaiser, "The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34," 14.

19. The exception is Kaiser's reference to Ezekiel 18:31, in which Yahweh calls on the current people of Israel to reform their own hearts, more in keeping, it seems, with the Mosaic covenant.

20. Larry Pettegrew makes this modification—see section below titled "The Modified Kaiser Model of Larry D. Pettegrew."

would, Joel 2, it seems, would have been captured as a NC passage. Kaiser did not list *the Spirit* as a qualifying expression, however, even though many of his sixteen or seventeen passages include it, presumably because the Jeremiah 31 passage from which he culled most of his key expressions does not. On the other hand, Kaiser included in his criteria other expressions beyond *the Spirit* that are absent from Jeremiah 31, but only when they involve the word *covenant*. Given that all of those parameters have proven to be overly broad, there is certainly a basis for questioning whether the list of key expressions could be improved by way of both selective deletions and additions.

Nevertheless, the Kaiser model does a good job of capturing NC passages in the Old Testament, given the model's brevity and simplicity. The utility of the model is perhaps most clearly seen when the model is compared to other contemporary models, which are generally more complex and rarely as accurate in capturing and omitting appropriate OT passages.

The Generic Eschatological Model of Bruce Compton

Bruce Compton offered his model in his *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* article "Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant."²¹ Compton's work, particularly his earlier doctoral dissertation, has received attention from several other students of the new covenant,²² though his methodology is highlighted more in his article.

While Compton considered Jeremiah 31 as the proper first passage, as did Kaiser, Compton offered more prolegomena than did Kaiser by discussing selection criteria before discussing selected passages. Compton's first criterion for NC passages in the Old Testament is that the passage needs to treat the new covenant as an "identifiable entity," which for him distinguishes his approved passages from all those earlier than the writing prophets that may admittedly involve "antecedent trajectories" towards the new covenant.²³ Compton's second criterion is that the NC passage will mention by label a *covenant*, and thirdly that this covenant will be by context future, specifically eschatological.

21. Compton, "Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant," 3–48.

22. Compton's unpublished dissertation ("An Examination of the New Covenant in the Old and New Testaments" [ThD dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986]) has been cited by, among others, Adeyemi ("What Is the New Covenant 'Law' in Jeremiah 31:33?", 320); Rodney J. Decker ("The Church's Relationship to the New Covenant, Part Two," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 608 [Fall 1995]: 441, 447–49, 451–53); Robert McCabe ("The Meaning of 'Born of Water and the Spirit' in John 3:5," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 4 [Fall 1999]: 90); Penney ("The Relationship of the Church to the New Covenant," 464); and Pettegrew (*The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 31).

23. Compton, "Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant," 10.

The bases for these criteria were not given. The criteria were effective pragmatically, in that they allowed Compton to quickly delineate a core of NC passages. Theologically, their utility is not as clear. The above review of Kaiser's model has shown that such criteria are prone to surface passages that may or may not be referring to the new covenant, and further examination of Compton's model bears this out.

On the basis of these three criteria, Compton began with Jeremiah 31:31 because it specifies the new covenant by name. He stated that there are an additional twelve NC passages: "Hos. 2:18; Isa. 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 59:21; 61:8; Jer. 32:40; 50:5 (cf. 24:4-7); and Ezek. 16:60; 34:25; 37:26 (cf. 11:14-21; 36:22-33)."²⁴ He stated that each of the thirteen passages have in common the following five elements, beginning with two of the three criteria that had led to the actual selection of the thirteen passages: (1) a covenant is mentioned; (2) the covenant is future and eschatological; (3) Israel faces national judgment and dispersion; (4) Israel is afterward restored to its homeland; and (5) Israel experiences great material and spiritual blessings.

At this juncture in the model's development some issues regarding passage selection arise. First, criteria two and three, also listed as the first and second elements in the list of "five commonalities" to the thirteen passages, seem unduly broad. Any reference in the OT prophets to the activity of other unconditional covenants (the Abrahamic and Davidic for example) in the eschaton would be captured by those two criteria.²⁵ Collecting OT passages referring to the covenant of Jeremiah 31 by the three criteria of this model

24. Ibid.

25. One could reply that there are the original three criteria plus an additional three listed as the third through fifth elements in the list of five commonalities, which together will resolve the problem of criteria breadth, but Compton specifies that he surfaced the third through fifth elements of that list *after* he had identified the thirteen initial passages by way of the three earlier criteria.

Compton exercises the same two criteria in his dissertation. There he does acknowledge the potential problem for his criteria of improperly capturing references to covenants other than the new covenant, due to the criteria's breadth: "Excluded from exegetical consideration are Zech. 9:11 and Mal. 3:1. Although both mention the word 'covenant,' neither offers sufficient information to identify clearly which covenant is in view nor are they able to advance the concerns of this study" (Compton, "An Examination of the New Covenant in the Old and New Testaments," 5n3).

However Compton's later article clarifies that, unfortunately, he is not concerned with improperly capturing eschatological expressions of covenants other than the new covenant, but only concerned with capturing OT references to *non*-eschatological covenants: "Two additional passages which mention the term 'covenant,' Zech. 9:11 and Mal. 3:1, have not been included. In both, the information provided for the identification of the covenant is insufficient to determine *whether the reference is to a future covenant or to an antecedent covenant*" (emphasis mine) (Compton, "Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant," 10).

could in actuality collect all passages, making any reference to any biblical covenant relevant to the eschaton of Israel, regardless of the passages' relation to descriptions of the new covenant. Even using all five of Compton's criteria would seem to result in one's capturing a broad range of such references. To put it another way, it is hard to see how Yahweh could have spoken in the OT prophets regarding activity originating from any covenant and could have located the activity temporally by referring to key events in Israel's eschaton without it later being captured as a NC passage by these criteria.

For Compton the new list of NC elements derived from the three Jeremiah passages doubled both as an amendment to his description of NC elements, and as an amendment to his list of selection criteria. Nor was the expanded list of criteria, now nine in number, stabilized at this point—as Compton assimilated additional OT passages to his “stable” of NC passages, his list of criteria for identifying NC passages expanded further as well. Thus, for example, when Compton turned to his six candidate passages in Isaiah, he considered the degree of overlap between the elements of those Isaian passages and his current list of nine criteria.²⁶ All the Isaian passages were validated as NC passages because they overlap to some degree with those nine criteria.

With the six Isaian passages now “in the NC stable,” Compton considered whether any of those additional passages suggest additional NC elements not seen in the Jeremiah passages, which should then be used to “cast the net” of NC criteria still wider as the search for other NC passages continues. He concluded that the list of elements within the new covenant of the writing prophets should, as a result, be expanded from nine to fourteen to include the Isaian Servant of Yahweh, the role of the Servant as *covenant mediator*, Gentile enlightenment, the identity of the Servant as a Davidic ruler, and the Davidic promises reflected in Isaiah 11.

Compton used the same “expanding criteria” approach to his evaluation of the Ezekiel passages that mention a discrete eschatological covenant, measuring their overlap with the fourteen criteria in play since the evaluation of the

26. *Ibid.*, 17–20. Intervening between Compton's discussion of the candidate NC passages in Jeremiah and Isaiah (pp. 14–17) is a discussion of Hosea 2:18–20. From this passage Compton discerns two new elements of the new covenant: the cessation of warfare arising from divine discipline, and peace between the nation of Israel and the animal kingdom. Although Compton is not as explicit in regards to assimilating new NC elements from Hosea into his NC selection criteria as he is in regards to assimilating new NC elements from Jeremiah and Isaiah into his NC selection criteria, the Hosea elements may be partially behind his inclusion of Isaiah 54 involving the *covenant of peace* and his mention of Isaiah 11 involving Israel's peace with and among animals.

Isaiah passages.²⁷ Again, the individual Ezekiel passages were added to the list of NC passages, and then these new passages were reviewed for NC elements that were not evident in the NC passages surfaced in the earlier prophets. At this point, due to Ezekiel 36, the activity of the Spirit was brought into the list of NC elements.

Interestingly, Compton did *not* at this juncture conduct a second sweep of Jeremiah, armed with the additional NC elements found in Hosea, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. It seems that had he done so, his final list of NC passages from Jeremiah could have been larger. In fact, it seems that the reason several passages referring to David or Davidic descendents were captured from Isaiah and Ezekiel by the method—after none were even considered from Jeremiah—is simply because the list of criteria in place when candidate NC passages from Jeremiah were evaluated was shorter relative to the list used to evaluate Isaiah and Ezekiel passages. Nor does Compton continue the search into other prophetic OT books, at least to the point of considering Joel 2:28 and 29. It would seem that the Joel 2 passage would have been captured due to the involvement of the Spirit described there, since that parameter had been assimilated after a survey of Ezekiel.

Because of Compton's expansive approach toward assimilating NC criteria across the OT prophets, it seems certain that Compton's model will label a larger number of OT passages as NC passages relative to the Kaiser model, if the Compton model is applied consistently such that earlier prophetic passages are reconsidered for assimilation as NC passages each time the criteria for inclusion is expanded, and such that all the writing prophets receive full attention.

It would seem that the expansive character of the model is not in and of itself a model flaw, since the degree of contextual similarity and content overlap required among approved NC passages by any model that is employed is arguably a subjective decision on the part of the model designer. However, there do seem to be two objective flaws to the model. The first flaw is theological: not enough attention is given to the possibility that the activity of a named divine covenant could be in view in a prophetic passage that is not the new covenant. For theologies that hold that the new covenant has consummated or replaced all other divine covenants that is not a problem, but it is for the theology of Compton.

The second flaw to Compton's model is structural: the model's criteria expand each time the model is applied to additional Bible books and surfaces

27. *Ibid.*, 21–23.

additional NC passages. This was seen above, as Compton applied a list of qualifying criteria to potential Ezekiel passages that was four times longer than the list of criteria used to evaluate Jeremiah. In a sense, this design flaw is fatal—the task of evaluating the writing OT prophets for the presence of NC passages can never be completed using this model. The criteria are continuously expanding so that for the results to be considered complete, the Bible books evaluated first need to be reexamined for new candidate passages each time the list of criteria expands.

The Minimalist Model of John R. Master

John Master's approach to identifying the elements and passages of the new covenant in the Old Testament in the 1994 book *Issues in Dispensationalism* is unique in two ways.²⁸ First, Master indicated no dependency on prior approaches to discerning the new covenant in the Old Testament—he stands apart from the majority of current evangelical NC students, who begin with the comments of Kaiser or others.²⁹ Second, with few exceptions, Master referred not to the new covenant, but to the “new covenant of Jeremiah 31.” By the end of his presentation, Master had made it clear that for him, Jeremiah 31:31–34 was the single primary passage regarding the new covenant in the Old Testament. Master did not make clear in his article his justification for giving pre-eminence to the Jeremiah 31 passage, beyond observing that it is the only OT passage to offer the specific label *new covenant*. Additional justification seems called for, since during the same discussion Master listed passages which for him reflect clearly the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, even though none of those passages offer a formal covenantal label for those covenants.³⁰

While other OT passages bear mentioning, they offer “allusions” to this passage for Master.³¹ Perhaps the first member of the list is Deuteronomy 30:6, which “mentions . . . the need for this inner transformation and the work for God . . . well before the revelation of the new covenant to Jeremiah.”³² Master

28. Master, “The New Covenant,” 93–110.

29. Examples of other recent writers who indicate no dependence on prior models are Homer Kent (“The New Covenant and the Church,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 [Fall 1985]: 289–98) and John McClean (“The Prophets as Covenant Enforcers: Illustrated in Zephaniah,” *Michigan Theological Journal* 5 [Spring/Fall 1994]: 5–25).

30. There could be pragmatic reasons for focusing on a single OT passage in this context—it simplifies the description of the new covenant in the Old Testament, and it brings to the fore the NC passage most quoted by the New Testament regarding the new covenant. But none of these are offered by Master.

31. Master, “The New Covenant,” 96.

32. *Ibid.*, 97.

mentions a total of five additional passages from Isaiah 11; 32; Ezekiel 36; Joel 2; 3; Zechariah 12—all in connection with the possibility of the full NC obedience he sees clearly presented in Jeremiah 31:31–34 (see their itemization below).

Master’s unique “hierarchy” for OT passages referencing the new covenant, involving the lone Jeremiah 31 passage complemented by other allusive texts, led to a similarly distinctive process for identifying the new covenant in the Old Testament. Delineating the key elements of the new covenant was a brief and straightforward task, since Master sidestepped the problem of differing emphases regarding the new covenant being reflected by differing primary NC passages. From the Jeremiah 31 passage Master itemized just two primary elements for the new covenant: it is to replace the Mosaic covenant (Jer. 31:32), and its recipients will be obeying God’s commands because of a “unilateral divine change” in them (Jer. 31:33).³³

Master twice reemphasized the latter NC element: “God intends to work in the lives of the Israelites so that they will finally and fully obey the commands of God that will lead to their entering into the fullness of God’s blessings and the blessings of the Promised Land” and, secondly, “in the Old Testament, the emphasis of the new covenant seems to relate to the work of God in the lives of the Israelites that will make them obedient to the commands of God as found in the Old Testament.”³⁴ Master’s emphasis on the perceived outcome of the inner personal transformation that emanates from the new covenant—a complete obedience to God’s commands, rather than upon the inner transformation itself—is also distinctive relative to the typical NC descriptions offered by others. Master supported this emphasis via OT passages that perhaps are from the secondary, allusive NC passages. These reflect, like Jeremiah 31, “a new possibility, created by God Himself, of realizing the will of God in human life.”³⁵ Isaiah 11:9; 32:15–17; Ezekiel 36:26, 27; Joel 2:28, 32; and Zechariah 12:10 emphasize to varying degrees the indwelling of the Spirit, internal spiritual transformation, and corporate obedience and righteousness.

It does not seem that the Joel 2—3 passage deserves inclusion on the basis of a perfect obedience among the beneficiaries. Rather, the Joel 2—3 passage should be included in Master’s list via a different, third criterion of his described below, the emphasis on the transforming ministry of the Spirit. Master’s identification of the stated replacement of the Mosaic covenant as an element of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 is a valuable contribution, because while that

33. *Ibid.*, 96–97.

34. *Ibid.*, 97–98.

35. *Ibid.*, 97.

element is overlooked by others, it is helpful for distinguishing Old Testament NC passages from OT passages referring to the eschatological activity of other named unconditional covenants. On the other hand, the second key element of the new covenant that Master identifies seems to be of mixed value. It does not seem that any of the passages itemized by Master clearly specify a punctiliar-versus-progressive shift to full obedience on the part of those transformed.³⁶ In most cases the passages seem to emphasize more the internal transformation itself rather than a behavioral outcome of perfect obedience, punctiliar or otherwise.

Master did discuss the internal transformation itself in terms of the part played by God's Spirit, which seems to be for Master a third element of the new covenant. It is at this point that a complication for his minimalist approach to constructing his model, recognizing only Jeremiah 31 as a primary NC passage, arises. For Master to highlight the NC role of the Spirit, he must leave the confines of "the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34." This he did by raising Ezekiel 36 to a kind of intermediate status relative to his other secondary passages by appealing to extra-biblical grounds.³⁷ While Master observes, in faithfulness to his own criterion, that "the term *new covenant*" is not used in the Ezekiel 36 passage, thus making its "connection" to the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 "circumstantial," he appeals to the fact that this connection is "generally, if not universally, acknowledged."³⁸ Master's identification of the role of the Spirit as an element of the new covenant, in spite of its absence in Jeremiah 31, is a valuable contribution, because the central involvement of the Spirit is helpful for distinguishing NC passages from those referring to the eschatological activity of other divine covenants.

36. *Ibid.*, 109n7. Master footnotes progressive dispensationalist Robert Saucy, who disagrees and sees a progressive shift toward obedience for beneficiaries of the new covenant (Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 32). Unfortunately, this note could lead Master's readers to infer falsely that all or even most traditional dispensationalists support Master's interpretation of punctiliar NC obedience as an outcome of the Holy Spirit's ministry under the new covenant.

This emphasis on immediate, full obedience at the point of internal transformation on the part of NC recipients could be seen as a minor distinctive in Master's presentation, except for the fact that it later undergirds a key point of his chapter: since members of the NT church are not exercising NC (i.e., complete) obedience, it is therefore evident that the NT church is not experiencing a fulfillment to any degree of the new covenant.

37. In oral discussions since the publishing of this book chapter, John Master has acknowledged an inconsistency to his basis for awarding the Ezekiel passage its intermediate status, and has deleted that assertion. In that case, Ezekiel 36 properly remains in his stable of allusive, secondary passages ("The New Covenant," 97).

38. Master, "The New Covenant," 97. Master does not further delineate those providing this consensus.

Master's conservative approach to identifying passages and elements of the new covenant in the Old Testament serves to highlight weaknesses of "generic eschatological" models such as Compton's above, which amass a great number of loosely related texts as expressions of the new covenant and have as their outcome an amorphous aggregate of covenantal impulses. Master succeeded in surfacing a small number of covenantal characteristics that both reflect primary elements of the new covenant, and help to delineate the new covenant from other divine covenantal activity in the eschaton. At the same time, Master's model for ascertaining the NC elements from "the" NC passage is ultimately unworkable, in that he was forced to suspend the strictures within his model in order to qualify the explicit involvement of the Holy Spirit as a primary element of the "new covenant of Jeremiah 31."

The Modified Kaiser Model of Larry D. Pettegrew

Another category that captures a number of brief models from evangelicals for establishing the proper list of NC passages in the Old Testament is the Kaiser model with modifications. Larry D. Pettegrew provided such a model in his 1999 *Master's Seminary Journal* article, "The New Covenant," and his 2001 book, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*.³⁹

The earlier Pettegrew model. In his article "The New Covenant" Pettegrew began, as did both Kaiser and Compton, with Jeremiah 31 because of its expression *new covenant*; then he spoke of "parallel passages."⁴⁰ Though Pettegrew did not explicitly define that label, a footnote laid out his strategy for surfacing the parallel NC passages. Echoing Kaiser, Pettegrew suggested:

Other names for the New Covenant include an everlasting covenant (Jer. 32:40: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them"), "covenant of peace" (Ezek. 37:26: "And I will make a covenant of peace with them"), and "my covenant" or "a covenant" (Hos. 2:18–20). Cf. Bruce Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God," *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 69, and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 15 (Winter 1972): 14.⁴¹

39. Larry D. Pettegrew, "The New Covenant," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 10 (Fall 1999): 251–70. The two sources warrant separate examination, because a comparison indicates that Pettegrew's model for selecting NC passages has undergone some development in the intervening years.

40. *Ibid.*, 252.

41. *Ibid.*, 253n5.

Relative to Kaiser, Pettegrew mentioned the same labels in the same order except that he limited Kaiser's list of telltale expressions to those that are apparent synonyms for the Jeremiah 31 label *new covenant* in particular, deleting Kaiser's expressions *new heart*, *new spirit*, and *in that day* as additional criteria for surfacing parallel NC passages. As well, Pettegrew omitted all the Isaiah passages in Kaiser's list, labeling them later in his article as passages that describe an event (the coming of "a perfect mediatorial king, the Lord Jesus Christ") that will be both concurrent with, and a corequisite for, the activation of the NC blessings.⁴²

The contribution from Bruce Ware, the second source Pettegrew mentioned alongside Kaiser regarding parallel passages, is not easy to ascertain—perhaps Pettegrew noted Ware because Ware repeated the classic Kaiser quote (in whole) and stated his approval: "Kaiser is surely within legitimate bounds to cite these texts as pertaining to the new covenant spoken of in Jer. 31:31–34."⁴³ The net effect of Pettegrew's consideration and revision of Kaiser's list is that he made the first criterion for selecting NC passages the presence of a covenant label that he took to be synonymous with the expression *new covenant* in Jeremiah 31.

As noted in the review above of the Kaiser model, these criteria—the labels *everlasting covenant*, *covenant of peace*, and *my covenant* or *a covenant*—are of mixed value as selective criteria. They will all succeed in surfacing candidate passages for consideration as NC passages, but will also capture clear references to other named covenants. In that sense these covenantal labels can function as an initial filter for candidate passages, but such passages will need a second examination involving additional criteria that can surface passage elements unique to the new covenant. Pettegrew is aware of this at least in regard to the criterion *everlasting covenant*, which he links also to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants.⁴⁴

As indicated in his key footnote above, Pettegrew surfaced by these criteria the additional passages Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 37:26; and Hosea 2:18–20, all members of the Kaiser list. This footnote does not purport to provide a complete list of NC passages, but more likely presents a sampling of references for the criteria it enumerates. As detailed above regarding the Kaiser model, the three passages Pettegrew offered here do indeed seem to be NC passages, although supplementary criteria that are actually unique to the new covenant seem necessary to make that judgment.

42. *Ibid.*, 258–59.

43. Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God," 69.

44. Pettegrew, "The New Covenant," 254.

In his article, Pettegrew then offered a second set of criteria for surfacing other NC texts in the Old Testament. He developed these criteria by way of noting the key elements of the new covenant as described in the Jeremiah 31 passage. This appears to parallel the approach of Kaiser, in that Kaiser's list of key labels includes both synonyms for the label *new covenant* and key words that label some of the new covenant's elements as described in Jeremiah 31. The six criteria Pettegrew noted, along with the NC passages outside Jeremiah 31 that he linked with each, are (1) the new covenant is "new"; (2) unlike the Mosaic covenant, it is "everlasting and irrevocable"; (3) it offers an abundance of physical blessings (national gathering, rebuilding of cities, economic prosperity); and (4) it offers the spiritual provisions of (a) internal individual transformation (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 24:4–7; 32:37–41; Ezek. 11:17–21; 36:22–32), (b) a fuller measure of divine forgiveness, and (c) a consummated relationship between God and the people of Israel (Isa. 44:5; Jer. 24:7; 32:38; Ezek. 11:17–20; 34:30; 36:22–23, 28; 37:23, 37).⁴⁵

It was suggested in the evaluation of the Kaiser model above that the following passages surfaced both by Kaiser and Pettegrew do qualify as NC passages based upon both men's stated criteria: Isaiah 59:21; Jeremiah 31:31–34; 32:40; 50:5; Ezekiel 11:19; 16:60–62; 36:26; 37:26–27. Conversely, the following passages that are surfaced by both models were already examined during the evaluation of the Kaiser model and were found wanting as NC passages, based on the models' own criteria: Isaiah 24:5; 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; 54:10; Ezekiel 34:25.

Apart from these passages, of particular note are the three passages listed by Pettegrew that Kaiser's model does not surface: Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 24:4–7; and Isaiah 44:5.⁴⁶ The Deuteronomy passage could certainly have surfaced in Kaiser's list under the category capturing the expression *new heart*, if Kaiser had made the standard for passages meeting his criteria that of conceptual adherence, and not actual verbal adherence—Deuteronomy 30:6 speaks of a future "circumcised heart" among individual Israelites. Kaiser did not offer a criterion that would otherwise exclude the Deuteronomy passage as did Compton, who limited NC passages to those which speak of the new covenant as an identifiable entity as differentiated from passages that reflect antecedent trajectories toward the new covenant.⁴⁷ In the same way, the

45. *Ibid.*, 255–59. Pettegrew does not offer a total count of these elements; the count offered above reflects the fact that while Pettegrew deals with the elements of physical blessing as a group, he devotes a subtitle and multiple paragraphs to each of the spiritual provisions he discusses.

46. *Ibid.*, 255, 256, 259.

47. Compton, "Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant," 10.

Pettegrew passage Jeremiah 24:4–7 would, it seems, have surfaced in Kaiser’s list under the category capturing the expression *new heart*, if Kaiser’s criteria for candidate passages had been conceptual adherence: Jeremiah 24:7 speaks of future Israelites who have gained a “heart to know Me, . . . for they will return to Me with their whole heart.”

The final passage selected by Pettegrew as a NC passage but missing from Kaiser’s list is an interesting one in terms of its combination of elements:

²Thus says the LORD who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you, “Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; and you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. ³For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants; ⁴and they will spring up among the grass like poplars by streams of water.” ⁵This one will say, “I am the LORD’s”; and that one will call on the name of Jacob; and another will write *on his hand*, “Belonging to the LORD,” and will name Israel’s name with honor. (Isa. 44:2–5)

Kaiser’s criteria do not capture the passage because it does not make specific, verbal reference to either a covenant or a new heart. Certainly, however, one can argue for the presence conceptually in this passage of the same covenant that is labeled as the new covenant in Jeremiah 31: here Yahweh unconditionally promises some of the same elements that He “unconditionally covenants” to the same recipients in Jeremiah 31. A similar argument can be made for the presence in concept form of the promised benefit of a new heart—the new intimate level of relationship with Yahweh on the part of individuals that is promised here is presented in Jeremiah 31 as a clear residual of the gaining of a new heart, though the Isaiah passage is without the precise wording that would have surfaced it in the Kaiser model.

Third, the passage directly mentions the Spirit of Yahweh, who is seen as a key agent of the spiritual blessings in many of the NC passages. The addition to the selection criteria of the Spirit as active agent of individual spiritual transformation is unlike Compton’s practice of multiplying criteria each time the accepted list of NC passages expands. Though it is true that the element of Spirit activity comes from passages outside the locus classicus of Jeremiah 31, this element appears in multiple NC passages, and most importantly, seems unique to the new covenant. That is, the Spirit of Yahweh as covenantal agent is not emphasized in the passages describing the eschatological activity or fulfillment of other unconditional OT covenants. Adding the element of Spirit

as agent of individual transformation to the NC criteria is not a step toward creating an apparent, generic, all-inclusive, eschatological covenant. Thus, the selection of these three additional passages fits the “spirit” of Kaiser’s categories, even though Kaiser’s precise verbal criteria are not met.

The “early Pettegrew” model for ascertaining NC passages in the Old Testament builds upon, and to some extent improves upon, the Kaiser model. On one hand the Pettegrew model shares the weakness with the Kaiser model of tending to capture OT passages that speak of eschatological covenantal activity in general, because some of the criteria involve covenantal elements that are specifically linked to other covenants, to the exclusion of the new covenant, in the clearest passages. On the other hand, the Pettegrew model improves upon the Kaiser model by capturing valid NC passages that are parallel to the Jeremiah 31 passage conceptually, but not strictly verbally.

The later Pettegrew model. Pettegrew’s 2001 book, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit* uses the same model for surfacing NC passages in the Old Testament, with a few significant revisions.⁴⁸ Early in the book Pettegrew asks, “What then is the new covenant?” After quoting the Jeremiah 31 passage, Pettegrew mentions “other names” for the new covenant. Relative to his article Pettegrew here follows the Kaiser categories more closely. Rather than first offering a narrower list than Kaiser of terms that Pettegrew deems synonymous to the label *new covenant*, as he did in his article, and then scanning Jeremiah 31 for other elements in concept form, Pettegrew here collates both kinds of terms, as did Kaiser, into a single list and labels them all names for the new covenant.⁴⁹ He lists these from among Kaiser’s expressions for the new covenant as NC names (along with sample passages): *the everlasting covenant, a new heart, a new spirit, the covenant of peace, and my covenant*. In the process he surfaces one passage not mentioned in his article but present in Kaiser’s list, Ezekiel 16:60–63, a passage accepted as a NC passage in this study’s evaluation (above) of the Kaiser model. As mentioned above regarding both the Kaiser model and Pettegrew’s approach, these names or labels are of mixed value for surfacing NC candidates in that some of them are used by writing prophets to refer to other unconditional covenants that are to be active in the eschaton.

Pettegrew then states that “the Old Testament books are saturated with information about the new covenant,” adding an endnote statement with a

48. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 29–33.

49. *Ibid.*, 29.

revision of the key definitional footnote in his article: “See further Bruce Ware, ‘The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,’ in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 69. See also Herbert W. Bateman IV, ed., *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999).”⁵⁰ Ironically, while the paragraph supported by this endnote evidences a closer adherence to Kaiser’s categorization of NC passages than Pettegrew’s prior article did, the book endnote has been revised to omit Kaiser as a mentioned source. Pettegrew retains the mention of Bruce Ware (who, as mentioned above, does quote Kaiser approvingly) as an explicit source, and mentions in Kaiser’s place the 1999 book *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism* edited by Herbert Bateman. The contributions that Pettegrew has in mind from the authors of Bateman’s book (Darrell Bock, Lanier Burns, Elliott Johnson, and Stanley Toussaint) are not specified.

As in his article, Pettegrew then offers six elements of the new covenant that serve as additional criteria for surfacing NC passages. However, he has revised the six criteria since his article. The elements of the earlier list were presented as the key elements in Jeremiah 31, consisting of these: the new covenant is “new” and unlike the Mosaic covenant; it is “everlasting and irrevocable”; it offers an abundance of physical blessings (national gathering, rebuilding of cities, economic prosperity), and it offers the spiritual provisions of internal, individual transformation, of a fuller measure of divine forgiveness, and of a consummated relationship between God and the people of Israel.⁵¹ The revised list presented in the book consists of these: individual transformation through a new heart (item four in the earlier list), final forgiveness (item five in the earlier list), a consummated relationship between God and Israel (item six in the earlier list), physical and material blessings for Israel (item three in the earlier list), permanent indwelling of the Spirit (a new item), and the law inside the believer (a new item).

Key elements of Pettegrew’s model revision. Pettegrew has omitted from the earlier criteria for surfacing NC passages its first two items, the covenant being “new” in contradistinction to the Mosaic covenant, and the covenant being eternal. The new list of criteria is no longer characterized as being derived from Jeremiah 31, and properly so, since the fifth criterion, permanent

50. *Ibid.*, 29, 215.

51. Pettegrew, “The New Covenant,” 255–59. Pettegrew does not offer a total count of these elements; the count of elements offered above reflects the fact that while Pettegrew deals with the elements of physical blessing as a group, he devotes a subtitle and multiple paragraphs to each of the spiritual provisions he discusses.

Spirit indwelling, is not mentioned in that Jeremiah passage. This is a crucial adjustment: it means for Pettegrew that those passages which do speak of the Spirit's eschatological ministry to individual Israelites leading to internal transformation but which do not reference a covenant by label are now candidates as NC passages. Although Pettegrew does not mention it at this juncture, Joel 2:28 and 29 could be another such passage.

Of the two items omitted in his revision, Pettegrew's removal of the first item, that the new covenant is new and unlike the Mosaic covenant, seems ill advised. That element is both highlighted in Jeremiah 31 and, as a criterion, serves to properly distinguish NC passages in the Prophets from passages referencing the eschatological activity of other unconditional covenants. In contrast, Pettegrew's omission from the earlier list of the second item, that the new covenant is "everlasting and irrevocable," does seem to be an improvement. As discussed in the evaluation of the Kaiser model above, while that item as a criterion does surface possible NC passages, it must be supplemented because it does not succeed in differentiating NC passages from those passages referencing other unconditional covenants.

The most significant revision in the list appears to be the addition of the element *Spirit indwelling*. For Pettegrew's model this is significant strategically, because it involves designating for the first time a primary element of the new covenant that is not mentioned by Jeremiah 31 (he references Ezekiel 36:27 as its biblical source). This means that Pettegrew has expanded Kaiser's list of "first passages" or a priori NC passages from which initial criteria for selecting other passages are derived from the locus classicus of Jeremiah 31 to include at least Ezekiel 36. This would seem to be a reasonable expansion of a priori NC passages in that there is a great degree of overlap between the elements described in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 so that the original basis for preferring the Jeremiah passage as the only "first passage," that it alone refers by label to the new covenant, seems unduly rigid. This expansion serves to bring new significant candidates for NC passages into view from the point of the Kaiser and Pettegrew models. An example is the Joel 2 passage, which speaks of a massive eschatological pouring out of the Spirit on humankind, but does so without mentioning the precise phrases *new heart* or *covenant* that the Kaiser and earlier Pettegrew models depend upon for surfacing potential NC passages.

Pettegrew reaps the benefit of revising his model to include *Spirit indwelling* as a primary element of the new covenant that is described outside Jeremiah 31 (as per Ezekiel 36), as he begins his discussion in the second chapter of his book regarding the ministries of the Holy Spirit described in NC

passages of the Old Testament. He suggests that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit “initiates” the eschatological NC period, and he offers Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28, 29 as NC passages that describe the event.⁵² And it seems that it does become difficult to disqualify these as NC passages once the eschatological pouring out of the Spirit of Yahweh is recognized as a signature provision of the new covenant.

Another revision Pettegrew offers, however, is of such a magnitude that it takes his model in a new, expansive, yet uncertain direction, far afield from Kaiser’s approach. Per the Compton model to which he gives attribution, Pettegrew at this point begins adding not only additional NC passages, but additional selecting criteria derived from those new passages. Pettegrew states that Isaiah refers to the new covenant “at least five times” and lists Isaiah 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 59:21.⁵³ He attributes to Compton the four additional criteria for qualifying NC passages that Compton derives from Isaiah’s NC passages: (1) a covenant is promised to Israel after national calamity and prior to national blessing; (2) the servant of Yahweh is commissioned to function as the covenant’s mediator; (3) the servant is presented as a future David and national ruler; and (4) the servant in conjunction with the covenant brings spiritual enlightenment and salvation to the Gentiles.⁵⁴ Pettegrew adds an endnote with Compton’s contribution regarding the new covenant in Isaiah and strongly affirms Compton’s conclusions: “For an excellent biblical study of the new covenant, see Bruce Compton, ‘An Examination of the New Covenant in the Old and New Testaments,’ (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, *Grace Theological Seminary*, May 1986).”⁵⁵

With this new direction, the Pettegrew model has in a single move increased from six to ten the number of distinct primary elements of the new covenant in the Old Testament, via additions derived from the Isaiah collection of passages that differ from the six criteria derived from the “first passages” of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36. The first NC element derived from the Isaiah collection involving Israel’s eschatological restoration overlaps as much with passages describing the eschatological activity of other unconditional covenants. The remaining three criteria gained from the Isaiah collection add a trio of explicit Messianic, Davidic, and universal elements to the new covenant.⁵⁶ An

52. *Ibid.*, 40.

53. *Ibid.*, 31.

54. As given by Compton, in “Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant,” 18–19.

55. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 216.

56. *Ibid.*, 31.