

truths and would point to Christ's sacrifice. Such features would be no longer needed after the one real sacrifice was made because now we can look back to their fulfillment in the work of the Saviour. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Heb. 10:1-4, 10.

4. The new feature of the promised New Covenant is to be its universality, portrayed and emphasized in the first part of v.34. The phrase, "know the Lord" does not simply mean knowing facts about God. It must refer to such complete knowledge of God as results either in saving faith or in so conscious and definite a repudiation of God as to cause one to be entirely without excuse.

V. To whom does the phrase "New Covenant" apply?

1. The great stress on the nation of Israel in the entire context might suggest that the "New Covenant" is a promise that relates only to the condition of earthly Israel at some future time. Support for this view may be derived from the fact that so large a portion of Jer. 30 and 31 relates specifically to Israel and Judah. Return from exile is promised in 30:3, 10 and in 31:8, 10, 16, 17, 21, and 24. The verses immediately following 31:31-34 use very strong language in declaring that the descendants of Israel will never cease to be a nation before God and will never be rejected by Him.

2. A number of commentators declare that the Christian Church today is the complete fulfillment of the New Covenant. In Heb. 12:24 Jesus is called "the mediator of the New Covenant."

While many of the provisions of the New Covenant, particularly those that also occur in connection with the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, find expression in the nature and activities of true believers today, the full implementation of this covenant can hardly be said to apply to the present situation. As noted above, the distinctive feature of this covenant is its universality. No one will be able to say of any neighbor, that he does not know the Lord. This word "neighbor" is used many times in the Bible to refer to those in one's neighborhood, and could not reasonably be restricted to saved people living in an ungodly world.

There has never yet been an entire city, to say nothing of a whole country, of which it would be said that every inhabitant truly knows the Lord.

To say that v. 34 is a description of the church as it now exists would require us to reduce the words of v.34 to the following meaningless promise "that no one who knows the Lord would teach someone who knows the Lord to know the Lord, because everyone who knows the Lord already knows the Lord."

3. It would seem evident that this Covenant will at least include all of Israel and Judah, that it will differ from the Sinaitic Covenant in looking back on what Christ has done instead of looking forward to what He was going to do, that it will be like the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants in being spiritual and inward rather than legalistic or external, and that when it reaches its full application it will include all who are then living on earth.

VI. Use of the passage in the Book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 8:8-12 quotes Jer. 31:31-34 in full and Heb. 10:16-17 quotes parts of Jer. 31:33-34. Examination of the context shows that these quotations are for the purpose of stressing the fact that some of the positive teaching of the New Covenant already applied to believers after the sacrifice of Christ and that the portions of the Sinaitic Covenant that looked forward to this sacrifice could now be abandoned since they prefigured events that had already occurred. The verse describing the distinctive feature of Jeremiah's New Covenant--its promised universality--is quoted in Heb. 8:11 but obviously awaits fulfillment at a later time.