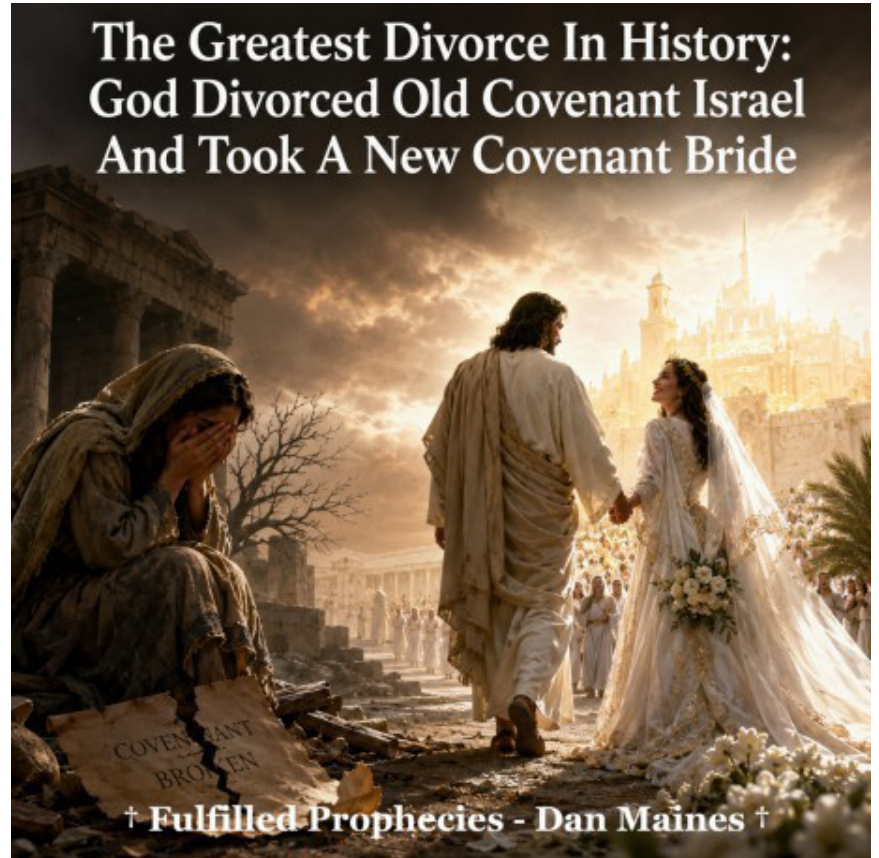


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Covenant - The Greatest Divorce In History: God Divorced Old Covenant Israel And Took A New Covenant Bride



By Dan Maines

The Greatest Divorce In History: God Divorced Old Covenant Israel And Took A New Covenant Bride

Introduction

† Most Christians know about the marriage of Christ and His Bride, but few realize the Bible first tells the story of God's covenant divorce from Old Covenant Israel.

† This wasn't the end of God's redemptive plan, it was the necessary end of one covenant so a better covenant could begin.

† From Jeremiah to Revelation, Scripture tells one continuous covenant story. The Old Covenant wife proved unfaithful, God promised a New Covenant, Christ purchased His Bride with His blood, and by AD 70 the old marriage had fully passed away.

† Understanding this covenant transition removes confusion about prophecy and reveals the beauty of the New Covenant we enjoy today.

Jeremiah 3:8-10

And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a certificate of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and prostituted herself also. And because of the thoughtlessness of her prostitution, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception," declares the Lord.

† God explicitly declared that He divorced covenant Israel because of her spiritual adultery. This wasn't symbolic language without meaning, it described the breaking of the Mosaic covenant. (Jeremiah 3:8-10)

† Judah witnessed Israel's judgment but repeated the same covenant unfaithfulness instead of repenting. (Jeremiah 3:9-10)

† This divorce explains why a New Covenant became necessary. God wasn't repairing the old covenant, He was preparing to replace it. (Hebrews 8:7-13)

Isaiah 50:1

This is what the Lord says: Where is the certificate of divorce By which I have sent your mother away? Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you? Behold, you were sold for your wrongdoings, And for your wrongful acts your mother was sent away.

† Israel's separation from God wasn't because He failed His covenant, it was because they continually broke it. (Isaiah 50:1)

† The problem was never God's faithfulness, it was Israel's persistent rebellion against the covenant. (Deuteronomy 31:16-18)

† The prophets consistently described Israel's relationship with God as a marriage covenant, making the language of divorce completely covenantal. (Hosea 2:2-7)

Jeremiah 31:31-32

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.

† God promised a completely New Covenant because the former covenant had been broken. (Jeremiah 31:31-32)

† Notice that God identifies Himself as Israel's husband under the Mosaic covenant. Marriage language is covenant language. (Jeremiah 31:32)

† The New Covenant wasn't an improved version of the old one, it was an entirely different covenant established by Christ. (Luke 22:20)

Hebrews 8:6-9

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, to the extent that He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been free of fault, no circumstances would have been sought for a second. For in finding fault with the people, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will bring about a new covenant With the house of Israel and the house of Judah, Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers On the day I took them by the hand To bring them out of the land of Egypt; For they did not continue in My covenant, And I did not care about them, says the Lord.

† Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31 to prove that Christ is the Mediator of the very New Covenant God promised through the prophet. (Hebrews 8:6-9)

† The first covenant became obsolete because Israel broke it, exactly as Jeremiah foretold. (Hebrews 8:7-9)

† The New Covenant wasn't an afterthought, it was God's promised solution to Israel's covenant failure. (Jeremiah 31:31-32; Hebrews 8:6-9)

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.

† The writer of Hebrews declared that the Old Covenant was already growing old and was about to disappear. (Hebrews 8:13)

† The transition period was underway while Hebrews was being written, but the Old Covenant had not yet completely vanished. (Hebrews 8:13)

† That complete removal occurred in the judgment upon Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70, ending the covenant that God had divorced. (Matthew 24:1-2)

Matthew 23:37-38

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

† Jesus declared that Israel's house was being left desolate because they rejected their Messiah. (Matthew 23:37-38)

† The covenant relationship was ending, and the temple would no longer be God's dwelling place. (Matthew 23:38)

† This prepares for the complete removal of the temple in the next chapter. (Matthew 24:1-2)

Matthew 24:1-2

Jesus left the temple area and was going on His way when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. But He responded and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I

say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

† Jesus announced the destruction of the temple, the visible center of the Old Covenant system. (Matthew 24:1-2)

† When the temple fell in AD 70, the Old Covenant order reached its covenantal end. (Hebrews 8:13)

† God wasn't merely judging a city, He was bringing the Old Covenant administration to its close. (Matthew 24:1-2)

Ephesians 5:25-27

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

† Christ didn't return to His former covenant wife, He purchased a glorious New Covenant Bride with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

† The church isn't replacing an existing wife, she is the Bride of the New Covenant established through Christ's sacrifice. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

† The Bride is made holy through Christ, not through the Law of Moses. (Galatians 3:24-29)

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

† Paul described the church as a virgin promised to one husband, Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2)

† The apostles consistently viewed believers as the New Covenant Bride. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

† The marriage imagery is covenant language throughout the New Testament. (2 Corinthians 11:2)

John 3:28-29

You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' He who has the bride is the groom; but the friend of the groom, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly because of the groom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.

† John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Bridegroom long before Revelation described the marriage of the Lamb. (John 3:28-29)

† The friend of the Bridegroom rejoices because the promised covenant marriage had begun through Christ. (John 3:29)

† This connects the Gospels with the fulfillment seen in Revelation. (Revelation 19:7-9)

Revelation 19:7-9

Let's rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has prepared herself. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

† The marriage of the Lamb follows the judgment of the great harlot, showing the end of one covenant relationship before the full establishment of another. (Revelation 17-19)

† God doesn't have two covenant wives. The former covenant had to end before the New Covenant marriage reached its fulfillment. (Jeremiah 3:8, Hebrews 8:13)

† This is one of the great covenant transitions of Scripture, the divorce of the Old Covenant and the marriage of the New Covenant Bride. (Revelation 19:7-9)

Revelation 21:2-3

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

† The New Jerusalem is presented as the Bride because God's covenant people are now His everlasting dwelling place. (Revelation 21:2-3)

† The temple is no longer a building of stone, God's presence now dwells with His redeemed people. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

† The covenant story ends with God permanently dwelling with His Bride under the New Covenant. (Revelation 21:2-3)

Historical References

† Josephus described the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 in Wars of the Jews, Books 5-6, recording the covenant judgment that brought the Old Covenant age to its complete end.

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, recorded the fulfillment of Christ's warnings concerning Jerusalem's destruction and the preservation of the early church.

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 4, emphasized that Christ established the New Covenant promised by the prophets.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We aren't members of the divorced Old Covenant, we belong to Christ's everlasting New Covenant Bride.

† Our relationship with God isn't based upon the Law of Moses but upon the finished work of Jesus Christ.

† We live with the confidence that God now permanently dwells with His people and will never divorce His New Covenant Bride.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Did God actually divorce Israel?

A: Yes. Jeremiah plainly says God gave backsliding Israel a bill of divorce because of her covenant unfaithfulness. (Jeremiah 3:8)

Q: Why was a New Covenant necessary?

A: Because Israel broke the first covenant, God promised an entirely New Covenant through Christ. (Jeremiah 31:31-32, Hebrews 8:7-13)

Q: Who is the Bride of Christ?

A: The church, God's redeemed New Covenant people, is the Bride prepared for the Lamb. (Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 19:7-9)

Q: When did the Old Covenant finally end?

A: Hebrews says it was about to vanish, and its covenantal end was completed in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. (Hebrews 8:13, Matthew 24:1-2)

Q: If God divorced Israel, did He abandon His promises to Israel?

A: No. God fulfilled every promise He made through Christ. The faithful remnant of Israel entered the New Covenant, and believing Gentiles were grafted into the same covenant people. God's promises were fulfilled, not abandoned. (Romans 9:6-8; Romans 11:5, 17-24; Galatians 3:26-29)

Q: Why didn't God simply restore the Old Covenant instead of making a New Covenant?

A: Because the Old Covenant had accomplished its purpose. It was temporary, pointed to Christ, and was replaced by a better covenant established on better promises. Once Christ fulfilled it, there was no reason to return to what had become obsolete. (Galatians 3:24-25; Hebrews 7:22; Hebrews 8:6-13)

Q: Does that make Sabbath keepers members of the divorced Old Covenant?

A: If they believe Christians are still under the Law of Moses and are required to keep the Sabbath as a covenant obligation, then they are identifying with the covenant God declared obsolete and replaced through Christ. The Sabbath was the covenant sign of the Old Covenant made with Israel, not the sign of the New Covenant. (Exodus 31:13-17; Hebrews 8:13; Colossians 2:16-17)

Q: If someone says Christians must keep the Ten Commandments because they are still under the Old Covenant, what are they really saying?

A: They are saying the covenant God divorced and replaced is still binding on believers today. But Scripture teaches that Christ established a better covenant, made the first obsolete, and fulfilled the Law. Believers are under the New Covenant, not the covenant that vanished away. (Jeremiah 3:8; Hebrews 8:6-13; Romans 7:4-6; Galatians 3:24-25)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Jeremiah 3:8-10, Isaiah 50:1, Jeremiah 31:31-32, Hebrews 8:6-9, Hebrews 8:13, Matthew 23:37-38, Matthew 24:1-2, Ephesians 5:25-27, 2 Corinthians 11:2, John 3:28-29, Revelation 19:7-9, Revelation 21:2-3

† Historical Writers: Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Books 5-6; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3; Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 4

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