

Promises We Can Count On

Session 6

July 14, 2024

### *God's Promise of a New Covenant*

**The Point:** God promised a new, eternal life in Christ.

**Session Passages:** Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:14-20

#### **Jeremiah 31:31-32**

**Connection to the Point.** God will establish a new covenant unlike previous covenants.

**The context.** The Israelites had a cyclical relationship with sin and covenant renewals. On numerous occasions the people had celebrated spiritual revivals only to fall back into sin. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God revealed that what they needed and what He would provide was complete forgiveness through what He termed a “new covenant.” The new covenant would be different from all previous ones. It would involve a heart transformation of the individual and would be permanent.

**LookBehold** (v. 31). The Hebrew term (*hinneh*) is used to emphasize an idea or call attention to a detail. It is often used, as in this case, to introduce solemn declarations or prophecies about the future.

**The days are comingThe days come** (v. 31). The new covenant would not come immediately. These words contain an eschatological thrust that indicate the prophecy about to be disclosed is set in the times of the “Day of the LORD” or the climax of human history. The Lord intended for the Mosaic law to remain in effect until such time as the new covenant was instituted. The Old Testament prophets were not told specifically when this time would come. The New Testament indicates that this new covenant went into effect with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 9:11-26; 10:1-18).

**This is the LORD's declarationSaith the LORD** (v. 31). This statement indicates that what the prophet Jeremiah was about to state came not from him but from God. Because the following words come from God, they can be trusted that they are true and will come to pass. The statement appears in every verse of Jeremiah 31:31-34. **For the meaning of LORD, see session 1, page XX.**

**I will make** (v. 31). This covenant is unilateral; it is the Lord's covenant with His people. This is emphasized by “I will” appearing five times in Jeremiah 31:31-34. It is God who would take the initiative in establishing this new covenant with humanity.

**New covenant** (v. 31). God had always dealt with mankind through covenants—the covenants with Adam, Abraham, Moses, and David. In each case, there were certain stipulations of God that had to be met in order to receive the full benefits of the promises of the covenants. Jeremiah 31 introduces the promise of a new covenant. It specifically lists the promises contained in the new covenant. This covenant in many ways is a fulfillment of the covenants given to Adam, Abraham, Moses, and David. The phrase *new covenant* is not found anywhere else in the Old Testament. There are numerous allusions to it but not in those exact words.<sup>1</sup>

**House of Israel . . . house of Judah** (v. 31). The recipients of the new covenant are expressly presented: the house of Israel (Northern Kingdom) and the house of Judah (Southern Kingdom). The two nations would be unified and the promise was to the whole nation, not just selected parts. This new covenant would also be offered to the Gentiles because the Jews, God's chosen people, rejected the new covenant (Rom. 9:30-33; 11:11-32).

**Will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestorsNot according to the covenant that I made with their fathers** (v. 32). The covenant has always been the primary method by which God chose to communicate with and relate to His people, beginning with Abraham and continuing through the generations of his descendants (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-5; 17:1-

21). Through the Mosaic covenant, God further detailed the nature of the relationship He wanted to have with His people and how they were to live faithfully in that covenant relationship. The new covenant was necessary because Israel failed to keep the old covenant.

**On the day I took them by the hand****In the day that I took them by the hand** (v. 32). The imagery is that of a loving, gentle, and patient father. As a Father, God led His children the Israelites by the hand and guided them to the promised land.

**To lead them out of the land of Egypt****To bring them out of the land of Egypt** (v. 32). God reminded His people that it was He who freed them from Egyptian slavery and led them out of Egypt.

**My covenant** (v. 32). The old Mosaic covenant was also initiated by God.

**They broke****They brake** (v. 32). God had initiated the Mosaic covenant through His grace. He had freed the Israelites from Egypt and chosen them to be His people out of all the nations of the world (Deut. 7:6-8). However, in order to live in covenant relationship with Him, God gave the Israelites the statutes, decrees, and commandments of the Mosaic law which He expected them to keep (7:9-11; 28:1-68). The Israelites time and time again failed to keep the covenant. Therefore, God initiated a new covenant that would address the inability of the people to be faithful to the old covenant.

**I am their master****I was an husband unto them** (v. 32). The Hebrew is literally translated “I am their husband.” God often described His relationship with the Israelites as a marriage. He was the faithful husband, whereas they were His faithless and adulterous wife who had broken their vows (Jer. 2:1–4:3).

#### **Jeremiah 31:33-34**

**Connection to the Point.** One aspect of this new covenant is how we will live in relationship to God.

**Instead** (v. 33). The use of this word (*ki*) indicates a shift, in this context from the old to the new covenant. It links back to verse 32 where God says the new covenant will not be like the old covenant.**But this** (v. 33). *But this* indicates a shift from the old to the new covenant. It links back to verse 32 where God says the new covenant will not be like the old covenant.

**Covenant** (v. 33). This word introduces the new covenant that God would establish. What follows is an explanation of the differences between the old and new covenants.

**I will make . . . I will put . . . write . . . I will be . . .** (v. 33). These verbs strongly emphasize that God is the initiator of the new covenant. He will do for His people what they were incapable of doing under the old covenant.

**House of Israel** (v. 33). Earlier Jeremiah had referenced the house of Israel and the house of Judah; now he only referred to the house of Israel. He had not forgotten Judah; this is a reference to the united people of God. They were one people.

**After those days** (v. 33). This is an indication that the new covenant would be established after the people returned from their exile in Babylon (2 Kings 25:1-21).

**My teaching****My law** (v. 33). The term for *teaching* (*torah*) is used as both a general term for God’s law teachings and in reference to the Pentateuch (Genesis–Deuteronomy). The law is God’s instructions for His people. The mention of it

here serves as a bridge of continuity between the old and new covenants. In this instance, *torah* may be a reference to aspects of the Mosaic law or have a broader meaning of all God's "instructions" (see Gen. 26:5) instructions.

**Within them****Their inward parts** (v. 33). The Hebrew term (*qereb*) refers to a person's innermost being. This is where the new covenant is radically different from all previous ones. Instead of simply changing the covenant relationship with His people or instituting new terms or elements because they had broken the old covenants, God made a way by which the people could keep His teachings. He would place them within His people. The prophets elsewhere refer to this process in terms of receiving a "new heart" and "new spirit" (Ezek. 36:25-26; see Jer. 24:7). This transformation is done through God's Spirit (Ezek. 36:27). The New Testament refers to this as being "born again" (John 3), the "new birth" new birth ("hath begotten us again," 1 Pet. 1:3) and "regeneration and renewal the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5; see Eph. 2:4-5).

**Write it on their hearts****Write it in their hearts** (v. 33). God would write His teachings (of the new covenant) on people's *hearts* (*leb*), another term which by extension refers to a person's innermost being. It encompasses the mind, emotions, will, and intellect. The new covenant has an inner motivation that was lacking in the old ones, hence the reason they failed. This promise of a new heart also carries with it a sense of permanence and will be enabled through the Holy Spirit. (Heb. 10:15-16; see Gal. 5).

**I will be their God, and they will be my people****Will be their God, and they shall be my people** (v. 33). One of the most striking features of the new covenant would be a reciprocal claim of possession. God's people would now belong to God, and God would belong to His people. Where the Israelites failed in living up to being God's people because of their disobedience, now under the new covenant God's people will demonstrate they belong to Him through their obedience to His commands (John 8:31-32; 14:15; Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:3-8).

**No longer will one teach . . . "Know the LORD"****And they shall teach no more . . . Know the LORD** (v. 34). With the inauguration of the new covenant in the life of a person comes an inward change whereby God reveals Himself to the individual personally through Jesus Christ. However, while every believer knows Jesus, all disciples still need instruction and encouragement in the faith. So, this promise has a future aspect which will only be fulfilled in eternity when every believer will know the Lord more completely (1 Cor. 13:8-13).

**They will all know me****For they shall all know me** (v. 34). While the word *know* (*yada*) can refer to the acquisition and understanding of facts, here it has the meaning of an intimate, personal knowledge that comes about when two people are in a committed relationship with one another. With God's teachings written on their hearts, all His people will have a personal relationship with God through faith which will entail a desire and ability to obey His will. This relationship, the goal of the previous covenants, is accomplished in the new covenant through Jesus Christ.

**From the least to the greatest of them****From the least of them unto the greatest of them** (v. 34). These designations are broad in scope, encompassing all people. This statement refers to a future time when the wicked will no longer be present (Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-22:5).

**Forgive their iniquity** (v. 34). The term for *forgive* (*salach*) refers to forgiveness, release, or pardon. It is used only of God, for God alone can forgive sins. *Iniquity* (*avon*) refers to perversity, meaning moral evil—sin. The basis for the relationship between God and people under the new covenant is total forgiveness, which was accomplished once and for all through the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

**Never again remember their sin****Will remember their sin no more** (v. 34). The term for *remember* (*zakar*) carries the meanings to mention or bring to mind. Because Jesus has paid the penalty for all the sins of the believer, there is no longer any need to bring to mind or mention those sins (Ps. 103:11-12).

**Connection to the Point.** The new covenant was established through the death of Jesus.

**When the hour came** **And when the hour was come** (v. 14). The *hour* could refer to the time to officially celebrate the Passover meal. On the other hand, it could also mean the time had arrived when Jesus was to go to the cross to make atonement for sins.

**The twelve apostles** (v. 14). The Greek term (*apostolos*) refers generally to delegates or messengers, those who are sent. In this context, it refers to the twelve disciples Jesus had chosen to be His ambassadors of the gospel message (6:13-16).

**Reclined at the table** **Sat down** (v. 14). During Jewish festivals, meals were eaten in a reclining position. Jesus and His disciples would have been lying on their sides with cushions under their arms facing a low table.

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**I have fervently desired to eat . . . with you** **With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you** (v. 15). Jesus looked forward and anticipated sharing this meal with the apostles. The Lord had many things to share with them and His time on earth was coming to a close. Primarily, He desired to teach them about the new covenant that was about to be established through His death. It also demonstrated His humanity in that He desired to share table fellowship with His friends.

**This Passover** (v. 15). The Passover was established at the time of the exodus from Egypt, when God slew all the firstborn males (of both people and animals) in Egypt but passed over the Hebrews who had placed the blood of sacrificial lambs on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. A ceremonial meal was eaten on that night (Ex. 12). God established the Passover as a memorial feast in which the Israelites remembered how God delivered them from Egyptian slavery (12:14). In this context, Jesus may have been referring specifically to the Passover lamb or to the meal as a whole.

**Before I suffer** (v. 15). This refers to the arrest, torture, and crucifixion that Jesus would shortly endure (22:39–23:56).

**I will not eat it again** **I will not any more eat thereof** (v. 16). Jesus was probably not talking about eating the present meal. He was suggesting that His upcoming death would prevent Him from sharing future Passover meals with His disciples.

**Until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God** **Until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God** (v. 16). Jesus was looking ahead to the great banquet at the consummation of history known as the “Marriage Feast of the Lamb” when all believers throughout history will join in this feast with their risen Savior in the kingdom of God (Rev. 19:6-9).

**The Cup** (v. 17). During a Jewish Passover meal, four cups were used at specific points in the meal which correlate to God’s four “I will” promises of deliverance in Exodus 6:6-7. The cup mentioned by Jesus is probably one of the earlier cups of the meal.

**After giving thanks** **Gave thanks** (v. 17). The Greek word for *give thanks* *gave thanks* (*eucharisteo*) refers to the expressing of gratitude toward God for the blessings He gives to people, particularly as it relates to giving thanks before a meal. The term can also have the meaning of praying.

**Take this and share it among yourselves** **Take this, and divide it among yourselves** (v. 17). Instead of giving the disciples their own individual cups, Jesus distributed a single cup to be shared by all indicating the communal aspect of the meal.

**I will not drink . . . until the kingdom of God comesI will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come** (v. 18). Jesus was again speaking in light of His impending death. With His words, Jesus looked forward to the consummation of history when the kingdom of God will come in its fullness and all God's people will celebrate by sharing the messianic table at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-9; see Matt. 8:11-12). At that time, the new covenant will also be completely fulfilled.

**Bread** (v. 19). The term (*artos*) refers to a loaf of bread. Unleavened bread (bread made without rising agents such as yeast which causes fermentation and makes the dough rise) was used in the Passover meal to remind the Israelites of their deliverance from Egypt. The bread became synonymous with affliction. Jesus used it at this meal to introduce a powerful spiritual truth.

**This is my body** (v. 19). Jesus used a word picture, where the literal bread was symbolically associated with His body. Just as He broke the bread and gave it to His disciples to eat, so too His body would be broken on the cross for the sake of the Twelve and all of His disciples throughout history.

**Given for you** (v. 19). The term *given* (*didomi*) can be used both literally and figuratively. Figuratively it can be associated with suffering and here refers to Jesus's sacrificial, atoning death on the cross for all who will put their faith in Him as Savior and Lord.

**Do this in remembrance of meThis do in remembrance of me** (v. 19). *Do* (*poieo*) can have the meanings of observe or obey as well as to keep or celebrate. *Remembrance* (*anamnesis*) refers to a commemoration or a memorial. The breaking of the bread (and the drinking of the cup, v. 20) symbolize Jesus's sacrificial death which provides salvation for all who repent and believe. Christians remember their Lord's great sacrifice for them while they await His return.

**In the same way he also took the cup after supper and saidLikewise also the cup after supper** (v. 20). After the main course of the meal, Jesus proceed taking up what was probably the third of the four cups in the meal. Like His words about the bread, what Jesus said about this cup is meant to be understood symbolically.

**New covenantNew testament** (v. 20). The *new covenantnew testament* relates back to the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34). The cup represents the sacrificial blood of Jesus which inaugurated the new covenant.

**In my blood** (v. 20). Only by the shedding of blood can sin be atoned for (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). Jesus's blood is the once for all sacrifice for sin (10:1-18).

**Shed for youPoured out for you** (v. 20). Jesus's sacrifice made salvation available to all. Those who repent of their sins and put their faith in Him receive this salvation. He is the only way of reconciliation with God the Father (John 14:6; Rom. 5:10-11).