

**Jeremiah 31:1-6, 27-34**  
**From Jugement to Hope – New Covenant**  
**September 18, 2022**  
**Rev'd Chris Johnson**

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It used to be that you only bought batteries for torches and children's toys. At the moment we are going through a technological revolution where batteries are becoming the energy source for just about everything.

The way this has affected me recently is a move to battery powered tools rather than the ones you plug in or the ones that use petrol. So now I have a mower which has an electric motor powered by a battery pack. I can attach the same batteries to a blower, an outdoor vacuum and a trimmer. In time I'm sure there will be other tools I will purchase that can use the same rechargeable batteries. I have to say these battery tools are so much easier to use than the petrol version. They start in an instant. There is less vibration. And they are much lighter. A lot of new things are coming with the development of battery technology.

Today we come to the final week in our series on Jeremiah and the pivotal Chapter 31 and the promise of a New Covenant.

Read vv 31 – 33

What a wonderful message for the people to hear. The nation has been devastated by war. The leaders have been carted off to the Babylon and are in exile. As I said last week the people are wondering if this is the end of the nation.

-They're wondering what happened about the covenant with Abraham and the promise to be a great nation.

-They're wondering what's happened to the covenant with Moses - the salvation of the exodus and the giving of the law.

-They're wondering what ever happened to the covenant with King David and the promise of an everlasting dynasty.

They are asking, 'Where is God in the midst of this disaster?'

Jeremiah chapter 31 assures them there is hope. A new covenant is coming. God has not forgotten them. This New Covenant will fulfil and transcend all previous covenants. God will keep his promises but in a way the people of Jeremiah's time could not possibly imagine.

It may be like trying to explain to someone in the 1960s that one day cars will be powered by batteries and homes as well. That would have been something very hard to grasp back in the 60s. The new Covenant must have been something that was very hard for the people of the 6th century BC to grasp. But all they needed to know was that God had not forgotten them. There was a New Covenant coming. There was hope.

In a similar way for us today it may be difficult at times for us to grasp the future promises of the New Covenant - of a life forever with our creator/redeeming God in a new creation.

It's very hard for our minds to completely take it in. But when we look at Jesus we can believe the promises are true and we have hope.

For the people of Jeremiah's day the promise was that after 70 years they would return to the promised land and God would restore the nation. Jerusalem would again be the capital of the nation.

The Temple would be restored. The people would again have a visible sign of God's presence with them and a future and a hope.

Look at this in vv 4-6

So God is going to build up the nation again and they'll be able to plant their vineyards and rejoice in the Lord at the Temple.

I want to point you again to the Call of Jeremiah in Chapter 1, v10. Remember we were told he was being appointed to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant. Over these weeks we've seen the prophecies of Judah being overthrown. Here now is the prophecy of the renewed nation that will emerge, the building up and the planting.

And look at verses 27 and 28 where the Call narrative is recalled and reinforced. *"The days are coming, declares the Lord when I will plant the kingdoms of Israel and Judah with the offspring of people and of animals. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the Lord."*

We have seen in Jeremiah a number of passages of judgement where the nation is overthrown and destroyed. But now in Chapters 30 & 31 we find passages which speak of God planting and building. God is planting a new seed. The people will be restored in the promised land.

But the New Covenant is much bigger than the promised land, it is actually the New Testament. And the question in my mind is, In what way is the New Covenant actually new?

V33b *"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people."*

How new is this New Covenant?

-After all Deut 6:4 says, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts."*

-Deut 10:16 says *"Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds."*

So what does Jeremiah mean when he says, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts in v33?" Isn't that already in the Old Covenant? How will it be different in the New Covenant?

Well the big difference is simply Jesus. He is the one who makes all things new. The Lord Jesus will be far superior to everything that has come before. He will make it new.

I want to point out three ways in which Jesus reshapes the Covenant and makes it new.

1. **Jesus makes it personal.** Jesus is God come in the flesh. God reveals himself in many ways in the Old Testament, but there is no clearer revelation than this. John 1:17 & 18 says, *"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known."*

So we don't have to live in a fog about God anymore Jesus has made God known.

This is not just head knowledge but heart knowledge. There's so much I could refer to but think for a moment about the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. Jesus takes the 10 commandments and redefines them in terms of the heart.

-*"You have heard it said you shall not murder. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a*

*brother or sister will be subject to judgement.*

*-You've heard it said you shall not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

Can you see here how Jesus takes the letter of the law and applies it to people's hearts. I think this is what Jeremiah is pointing to in his prophecy. In the New Covenant the law will be written on their hearts.

[In Anglican liturgy, when we say the 10 commandments the response at the end is, "Lord have mercy on us: and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit." We are asking for the promise given through Jeremiah to be fulfilled in us; that the law might be written on our hearts.]

SO Jesus makes it personal. He is God in the flesh, but more than that he takes the Old Covenant and applies it to our hearts.

2. The New Covenant is new because **Jesus offers a better sacrifice**. At the Last Supper Jesus takes the cup and says, *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you."* (Luke) In the Old Covenant it was the blood of animals which was offered to take away sin. In the New Covenant it is the blood which Jesus sheds on the cross. Hebrews 9: 12ff says, *"Jesus did not enter the Tabernacle by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"*

So the New Covenant is new because the blood of Jesus is so much superior to the blood of bulls and goats. His shed blood should break open our hearts with an inner obedience of which the old covenant was but a shadow. Remember Jesus said it is the new covenant in his blood.

3. Jesus promises **the gift of the Spirit**. John 14:16 *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - the Spirit of truth."* And we know that Spirit of truth came at Pentecost and is also present in every Christian when they accept Jesus Lordship over their lives.

Followers of Jesus have a new life in the Spirit. It's a new life where God softens our hearts to want to live for him. Paul puts it very well in 2Corinthians 3:3, *"You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."*

The New Covenant is new because we have the gift of the Spirit in full measure, available to every believer and the Holy Spirit energises us to live for Christ.

So here are three important ways in which the new covenant is totally new.

1. Jesus makes it personal
2. Jesus offers a better sacrifice
3. Jesus promises the gift of the Spirit

My friends we are living in a world that is always offering something new, a new model and new technology. Human beings have a habit of getting bored very quickly, so we are always looking for something new.

Well God provided the new thing 2,000 years ago. Jesus is God come in person to show us how much he loves us. We don't have to keep hankering after the latest trend to try and relieve our boredom. Jesus promises to provide us with everything we need.

There are so many people in our world today looking in all the wrong places. How do we reach them with all these wonderful truths of the New Covenant?

One way we can introduce people to God is through Alpha. Alpha runs over 8 weeks or 10 weeks (our first course will be 8 weeks) and it gives people time to digest all the major ideas of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is as big as the New Testament but Alpha breaks it down into digestible topics. And it does it in a very open, friendly, welcoming environment.

There are so many people in our world living lives of quiet desperation. So many people who are lonely. Alpha is a course which can introduce you to a very caring God who wants to do a new thing in your life. People can find the excitement of following Jesus. Please talk to me or Lynda if you would like to know more about Alpha.

So today is our last Sunday in Jeremiah. How have you gone? There is some tough stuff in Jeremiah about a Holy God and his absolute standards. Tough stuff about our idolatry and the judgement that is upon it.

But there is also much hope in Jeremiah. There is the image of the Potter's house and God shaping us into a beautiful pot. There is God's promise of a future and a hope even when the people were in exile in Babylon and now the promise of a New Covenant which of course we know is the promise of Christ and the gift of the Spirit.

We have moved from Judgement to Hope.

*"The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the people of Israel. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people."*