

(v. 34b). Man will not enter the new covenant because of his “perfection” or self-acquired holiness but through “forgiveness” made possible by the perfect sacrifice, that Lamb of God. The basic inadequacy of the old covenant was its failure to provide a perfect sacrifice for sin.

A NEW COVENANT

Verses 35-37. God makes an astonishing commitment with regard to this new covenant. God’s faithfulness in keeping His promises in the natural realm are offered as a pledge that he will keep the new covenant just as faithfully.

The sun, moon, and stars daily perform their assigned tasks of governing the day and the night. The waves of the sea continually crash against the beach, as these laws of nature are certain, just that surely will God’s Israel of the new covenant continue forever before Him.

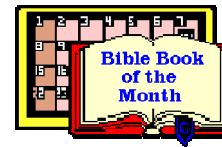
On the day that man is able to measure the heavens and search out the foundations of the earth— on **that** day and not before— God will cast off the new covenant Israel as He had the Israel of old. These two verses are equivalent to saying that God will never forsake His people today!

Investigative Question 4: Whom does Paul identify as “Israel” today (Romans 2:28-29; 4:12-14; 9:4-8)?

SUPPLEMENT QUESTIONS:

1. Why is the passage of our study today so important?
2. Just as God had been faithful to fulfill his prophecies of destruction he will also be faithful to _____.
3. What popular proverb expressed the mood of the people?
4. What was wrong with this proverb?
5. What time did Jeremiah envision in this prophecy?
6. How can we be sure Jeremiah’s reference was to the covenant made at Calvary and not to something else still yet future?
7. What part did Jesus’ death play in regard to the new covenant?
8. What was a new spiritual dimension of the new covenant?
9. What was the basic inadequacy of the old covenant?
10. How does Jeremiah illustrate the certainty of God’s commitment to the people of the new covenant?

JEREMIAH – A New Covenant



Lesson # 3

Text: Jeremiah 31:27-37

Collateral Reading: Jeremiah 31

Also read Hebrews chapters 8 and 9

Introduction:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 is an example (par excellence) of the fact that the prophets foresaw the abrogation of the law and the ushering in of a new order. It has been said that these four verses are the most important in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 31:27-37 (*The New King James Version*)

27 "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. 28 And it shall come to pass, that as I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord. 29 In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge.' 30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. 31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

35 Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name):

36 "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the Lord, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever."

37 Thus says the Lord: "If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel For all that they have done, says the Lord.

NEW CONDITIONS

Verses 27-30. In these verses there is first a promise of *fruitfulness*. God will make the people and their cattle multiply so fast that it will seem as though they spring up like seed sown in the fertile soil.

Secondly, there is here a promise of *faithfulness*. Just as God has been “watchful” over the fulfillment of the prophecies of judgment and destruction, so will He now be equally zealous in fulfilling his promises of restoration.

Investigative Question 1: What positive side of Jeremiah’s call do we see developed here (Jeremiah 1:10)?

Thirdly, there is a promise of *fairness*. Apparently the people of Jerusalem and the exiles already in Babylon had complained that it was unfair for them to have to suffer for the sins of their fathers. A popular proverb expressed the mood of the people, “*The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the teeth of the children are set on edge.*”

Such a proverb could only be uttered by a generation blind to their own sin and disobedience and utterly deluded in thinking that they were innocent of all wrong-doing. Ezekiel (ch. 18) attacks this proverb as a blasphemy of God’s justice. On the other hand, Jeremiah is not so much concerned about refuting this notion as to merely assert that in the Messianic age people will have no occasion to make such a complaint.

There are certain implications in Jeremiah’s prediction that the sour grapes proverb will no longer be used in the Messianic age.

1) The prophet may be suggesting that individuals in the Messiah’s kingdom will be more sensitive to the sin in their own lives, and thus there will be a change of attitude.

2) Similarly, the thought may be that in the Messianic age the justice of God will be recognized by His people.

3) Another implication might be that in the Messianic age the emphasis will be more upon individual responsibility and retribution than upon the community.

A NEW COVENANT

Verses 31-34. Jeremiah envisions a time when the covenant between God and Israel instituted at Mt. Sinai will be replaced by a new and better covenant. After giving the promise (vs. 31-32) Jeremiah then outlines some of the provisions of that covenant (vs. 33-34).

In Old Testament prophecy the unification of Judah and Israel points to that day when there would be neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female but all the redeemed would be one in Christ Jesus. Both Peter and Paul so interpreted such earlier prophecies of Hosea (1 Peter 2:10; and Romans 2:25f)

Hebrews 8:8-12 quotes at length from Jeremiah’s prophecy and applies

it to the Christian dispensation. This refutes those who would interpret this promise to be something yet future between God and today’s political nation of Israel.

In the prophetic view of the future the restoration of Israel reaches its climax with the institution of the new covenant.

Paul repeatedly takes up the matter of the new covenant and emphasizes the distinction between it and the old Sinai covenant (cf. 2 Cor. 3:6, 14-16; and Hebrews 8:6-7).

Jesus alluded to this new covenant when he instituted the Lord’s supper by saying “This is my blood of the new testament [covenant] which is shed for many” (Matthew 26:28).

Question 2: How were the two covenants ratified (Heb. 8:19-28)?

Verse 32 compares the old covenant to a marriage in which God was the “husband” and Israel was the bride. God being the perfect Husband never gave His bride any cause for being unfaithful, but Israel had repeated violated her marriage covenant.

Question 3: In such comparisons what is meant when it is said Israel committed fornication or adultery?

Verses 33-34. Jeremiah did not give the details of the new covenant but only a broad outline of its basic character. Four statements are made with regard to the future covenant.

1) “*I will place My law within them, and write it on their heart*” (vs. 33a). The new covenant would have new spiritual dimensions. The old had been written on tables of stone, now under the new men will respond to God’s will from inward motivation rather than outward compulsion.

2) “*I will be their God and they shall be my people.*” There is to be a new relationship. Those who enter the new covenant through faith and obedience will come into a special relationship with God. Peter describes them as “*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God’s own possession*” (1 Peter 2:9).

3) “*All will know Me from the least to the greatest*” (v. 34a). There will be direct access to God for both Jew and Gentile under the new covenant which didn’t exist under the old. To “know” God here includes faith, repentance and obedience and thus indicates the exclusion of infants and those incapable of “knowing” God in this sense (John 17:3).

4) “*I will forgive their sin and their iniquity will I remember no more*”