

Exegetical Notes – Jeremiah 31:31-34

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

(Jeremiah began proclaiming God’s word as a young man, perhaps as young as 20. He spoke as God’s prophet until his death. He saw many changes in his life. But through all that he endured, he remained faithful to his calling. He is called “the weeping prophet,” “the prophet of loneliness,” and “the reluctant prophet.” His ministry was not easy, but he was faithful to his calling. In that, Jeremiah is an example to us all.

It is hard to jump into the middle of any Biblical book. Normally, that is not our approach to Scripture at Cornerstone. But today, on this first Sunday in the New Year 2024, we jump into the middle of the Book of Jeremiah, to consider the New Covenant God offers the world through Jesus.)

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Verse 31

***“The days are coming,” declares the LORD,
“when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel
and with the people of Judah.***

- In this passage, the prophet speaks to the people of Israel and the people of Judah. After the reign of King Solomon, the kingdom of Israel divided into two parts. The northern part retained the name of Israel but quickly wandered away from YHWH worshipping idols of its own creation. The southern part was called Judah. It retained the descendants of David as its kings and worshipped YHWH, more or less, throughout its history. Most prophets in the Old Testament speak to one part of the kingdom or the other. But, in this passage, Jeremiah addresses the whole nation together.
- In this prophecy, YHWH, the God of the united Israel, speaks of a future time, a time when the kingdom of Israel is united again. That day came in 1948-9 when the nation of Israel was born.

- God says that he will make a New Covenant with the people of Israel. A covenant is a contract or a treaty. God always lays down the boundaries of His relationship with His people in the form of a covenant (see Genesis 9:8-17, Genesis 15:9-21, Genesis 17, Exodus 19-34, Numbers 25:10-13, 2 Samuel 7:5-16). These documents are always offered by God to His people and define their relationship to each other.
- In this passage, YHWH says that the day will come when He will offer His people a NEW covenant.

Verse 32

³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

- God says that the new covenant He offers His people will not be like the older ones which He offered. The new covenant will be unconditional. The older covenants required the people to do something to live in proper relationship with God. The old covenants failed because the people never kept the conditions God laid down for them in the covenants. Though God was always faithful, the people never were.

Verse 33

³³ "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "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.

- God says that under the New Covenant, the provisions will be entirely up to Him. HE WILL (1) put His laws in His peoples' minds, (2) write His law on their hearts. Obedience will no longer be something required of God's people. It will be as natural as breathing because God will accomplish it.

- God Himself will live among them. He will be their God and they will be His people. Immanuel will be accomplished. He will be among His people. He will be “God with us”!

Verse 34

***³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor,
or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,”
declares the LORD.***

***“For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.”***

- It will no longer be necessary to teach people the word of the Lord so that they may obey God. They will all know Him.
- He will forgive their previous sins and remember them no more.
- While part of this has been accomplished in the reuniting of Israel’s tribes (see verse 38), and the New Covenant has been established through Jesus (see Matthew 26:26-28), the fulfillment of these promises will not fully occur until Jesus returns to earth.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on Jeremiah 31:31-34. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)