

In Preparation for Easter Sunday

The New Covenant

“This is the covenant I will make with the house 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. No longer will anyone teach his neighbor, or anyone his brother, saying, ‘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.’” Jeremiah 31:33-34

Read: Jeremiah 31:15-33:26

Every dimension of salvation that Jeremiah foresaw under the new covenant depends on the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

It is crucial that we understand that the trajectory of Jeremiah’s prophecy leads right to the New Testament Church, the coming Kingdom of God, and the promise of everlasting life under the rule of God. The meaning of the New Covenant has everything to do with who is included in “the house of Israel.” The Lord’s promise, “I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore” (33:22), finds its fulfillment among both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 1:16; 2:28-29; 10:12; Galatians 3:28-29; Colossians 3:11).

It is fitting that the climax of Jeremiah’s prophecy should cause us to think of Jesus Christ from the time of his coming (31:15; Matthew 2:18) to the time of his rule (33:15-17; Hebrews 12:2). Every dimension of salvation that Jeremiah foresaw under the new covenant depends on the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Ramah may have been the place where the exiles were gathered for their deportment to Babylon (see 40:1). In any case, it had symbolic significance as a place of suffering. Rachel’s tomb was located near Ramah, five miles north of Jerusalem (Genesis 35:19; 1 Sam 10:2). Herod’s massacre of innocent boys in Bethlehem after Jesus was born, was in keeping with Israel’s suffering through the centuries. How did Matthew interpret Jeremiah’s reference to Ramah (Matthew 2:18)? How does the poignancy of wailing mothers relate to the good news?

2. In light of the earlier description of God as the jilted lover, what significance should be attributed to the reference of Israel as “Virgin Israel” (31:4, 21)? How can Jeremiah appeal to “O Virgin Israel” and in the same breath ask, “How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter?” (31:21-22)? In the light of the New Testament, what significance might this reference have (Ephesians 5:25-27; John 3:29; Revelation 19:7; 21:2)?

“Come back, dear virgin Israel, come back to your hometowns.

How long will you flit here and there, indecisive? How long before you make up your fickle mind? God will create a new thing in this land:

A transformed woman will embrace the transforming God!”

(The Message, 31:21b-22, Peterson)

3. How does Jeremiah’s description of the new covenant highlight personal responsibility and a personal relationship with the Lord (31:27-34)? What action inaugurated the new covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:1-9:28; 12:24)?

4. At first glance it seems anticlimactic to go from the theological significance of the new covenant to the biographical description of Jeremiah's run-in with king Zedekiah (32:1-2). The explanation of how Jeremiah came to be imprisoned in Zedekiah's palace courtyard comes later (37:1-21). However, the focus of attention in chapter 32 is on Jeremiah's purchase of his cousin's field located in his hometown of Anathoth, some three miles north-east of Jerusalem. How significant was the purchase of this property for Jeremiah? Is there a stewardship lesson in this for us? Reflect on Jeremiah's prayer (32:17-25). How was this newly purchased field like a guarantee of things to come?

5. Do you feel that you have the "singleness of heart and action" that the Lord promises are part of his everlasting covenant (32:39-41)?

6. The destruction and exile of the northern kingdom (Israel) in 721 BC and the southern kingdom (Judah) in 597 BC must have convinced some that The Lord [had] rejected the two kingdoms he chose" (33:23). But in spite of the desolation wrought by Babylon, Jeremiah insisted that the Lord promised his people "hope and a future." How did Jeremiah describe God's promised restoration (33:1-26)?

7. The promise of restoration rested on a particular person (33:15-18) and was guaranteed by the order of creation (33:2, 20, 25). Redemption and Creation are combined to affirm the promises of God. Jeremiah said less than Isaiah about the coming Anointed One, but what he did say was significant (23:5-6). How are these promises of "great and unsearchable things" (33:3), "health and healing" (33:6), "abundant peace and security" (33:6) fulfilled for those who are in Christ?

You may want to reflect on Romans 11:33; Ephesians 3:8; Matthew 10:8; 13:15; John 14:27