

## Jeremiah 31:23-34

The highlight of chapter 31 is the promise, to Israel, that in the future they will have a New Covenant with God. And, the certainty of this coming to fruition is reinforced when God says if one wants to destroy my promises to Israel and the Jewish people, he needs to destroy the universe.

- 23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.**
- 24 And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks.**

Judah is specifically promised to be part of the greater return (world-wide return) and will be blessed. The return from captivity is a certainty - notice **"when I shall bring again their captivity"** not if. People will dwell securely and peacefully with abundant flocks.

God will bless two things in the land of Judah (this does not preclude blessing throughout the land).

1. Justice will flow from Judah.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Isaiah 9:6-7

2. The mountain of holiness refers to the Temple mount and, thus, a rebuilt Temple.

"And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD." Isaiah 66:20

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Psalm 2:6

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." Isaiah 2:2

"Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain." Zechariah 8:3

- 25 For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.**
- 26 Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.**

The coming peace and tranquility for the people of Israel is seen in the promise that the weary soul will be satisfied and their sleep was sweet.

- 27 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast.**

God promises to multiply the people and the animals.

- 28 And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD.**

History records the discipline God has meted out upon Israel through the ages, just as He promised. He has also promised to restore the nation and will watch over them as they build the nation.

**29 In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.**

**30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.**

**In those days** refer to the coming Messianic kingdom.

Charles Ryrie states the common understanding of these verses:

"The people excused themselves by saying they were being punished for the sins of their fathers; in reality each person is punished for his own sins (cf. Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:2-4)."

Although there is some truth to this consider the following.

Israel was under the Mosaic Covenant. Consider Exodus 20:5-6

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;  
And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

Forsaking God would bring judgment to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation. Mercy, though, was always available.

As the next verses tell us, the Mosaic Covenant will be done away with the establishment of the New Covenant with the coming of Messiah.

Yes, as Deuteronomy 24:16 says - "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin." - individuals are always responsible to God for their own sin. But, the use of the "sin of the fathers," which has a biblical basis. as an excuse will no longer be viable as the Mosaic Covenant is done away with.

**31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that 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 bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:**

**33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

**34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.**

These are amazing promises that are clearly made to Israel (**the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**).

Vs. 31 The promise of a future New Covenant is absolute and for Israel.

Vs. 32 It is different from the Mosaic Covenant

Vs. 33 The New Covenant is NOT a book, but a relationship between God and the people of Israel.

Commenting on verses 30-33, the [Milstein Commentary on Jeremiah](#), page 275, says:

"Messianic times will usher in an era in which God will circumcise the hearts of people from their evil inclinations (Deuteronomy 30:6). Consequently, the natural human tendency will be to choose correct and virtuous actions. In contrast to pre-Messianic times in which the natural inclination is for evil. Jeremiah reiterates this point here by stating that God will seal a new covenant with the nation, free from evil and sin (Ramban *ibid.*).

"Non-Jewish theologians have attempted to 'prove' the veracity of the New Testament from the term *new covenant*. Verse 32, however, clearly indicates that the newness will be in the sense that God will engrave the existing Torah upon the hearts of the Jewish nation, thereby creating an everlasting and loyal bond between Him and Israel."

Vs. 34 Jewish people individually will need to embrace the New Covenant, which results in their sins being forgiven.

## The New Covenant for Israel and the church

1. Seventeen references in the N.T.: Nine actual mentions - Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8, 13; 9:15; and 12:24 and eight references - Romans 11:27; Hebrews 7:22; 8:6, 7, 10; 10:16, 29; 13:20.
2. The setting of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) is eschatological.
  - A. "I will be their God and they shall be my people" is eschatological - Zechariah 13:7-9
  - B. The Gospel accounts of the Last Supper and the New Covenant are related to an eschatological setting: Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25 (cf. Exodus 6:6-7 and the fourth cup of Passover)  
  
In the synoptic gospels the blood (although related to the New Covenant) and not specifically the new covenant is said to be "for" the disciples.
  - C. In 1 Corinthians 11 the bread phrase "for you" is used in connection with the bread but not in connection with the cup. Perhaps this is because the bread ("you proclaim the Lord's death") relates specifically to them but the cup ("until He comes") does not relate as directly to them but rather to God's faithfulness to Israel.
3. Because a covenant has been "cut" doesn't mean it is fully operational. God "cut" a covenant with Abraham regarding the land (Genesis 15) which has not been fully realized.
4. The mention of New Covenant in 2 Corinthians 3 and Hebrews 7:6 (and the contrast between law and spirit) may be understood as a contrast between a ministry based on works and self-effort and a ministry dependent on the Spirit of God (Paul says he/we have been made "sufficient as ministers of the New Covenant" - vs. 6).
5. Hebrews mentions the New Covenant in chapter 8; 9:15; 10:16-17; 12:24.  
  
Hebrews 8 emphasizes the mediator of a better covenant (vs. 6) and is saying that Jeremiah understood at his time that the O.T. actually spoke of the temporary nature of the Aaronic priesthood and the Mosaic Law and that even now (in Jeremiah's time) the Mosaic Covenant was "growing old" and "ready to vanish."  
  
Hebrews 9:15 & 12:24 points to Jesus as the mediator of this covenant and not that it is being fulfilled now.  
  
Hebrews 10:16-17 needs to be understood in the context (verses 14-17) where the "perfecting forever" would seem to point to the glorification of believers and ties in well with the eschatological thinking of the covenant promises found in the gospels and 1 Corinthians 11.
6. Believers today don't demonstrate obedience any better than saints under the Old.
  - 1) Believers in this age don't demonstrate a greater obedience of faith than did the Old Testament saints living under the Mosaic Law.
  - 2) Paul's suggestion that the unnatural branches will be cut off if they fail to believe as Israel did in the O.T. (Romans 11:19-21) seems to imply a potential parallel between the unfaithfulness of Israel in the O.T. and that of believers in the present age. How could this be in light of the promise of Jeremiah 31:33-34?
7. The great commission's command "to teach" is hard to reconcile with the new covenant's promise that they would not need to "teach" under its blessings (Jeremiah 31:34).

CONCLUSION: It would seem that the New Covenant should be understood in an eschatological framework. The church is united to the mediator of the New Covenant and at best partakes in some of the blessings of this covenant and does not fulfill it. It would seem that the best one could do is argue that the New Covenant is being partially fulfilled today in the church receiving the spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3) of the Covenant.