

# The Covenant

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Jeremiah 31: 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.”  
Jeremiah 31: 31



# I. Introduction

Through the prophet Jeremiah, while the people of Israel is facing the deportation and the destruction of Jerusalem, God provides hope. He reaffirms that His project of love will not end by the unfaithful attitude of the kingdom of Judah. When the time announced by the prophets will come, His mighty hand will call the rest of Israel into the promised land. This will be the illustration of what God wants to do with His children of all generations: To write His laws in their hearts and to transform their mind so that they may grow in the likeness of Christ.

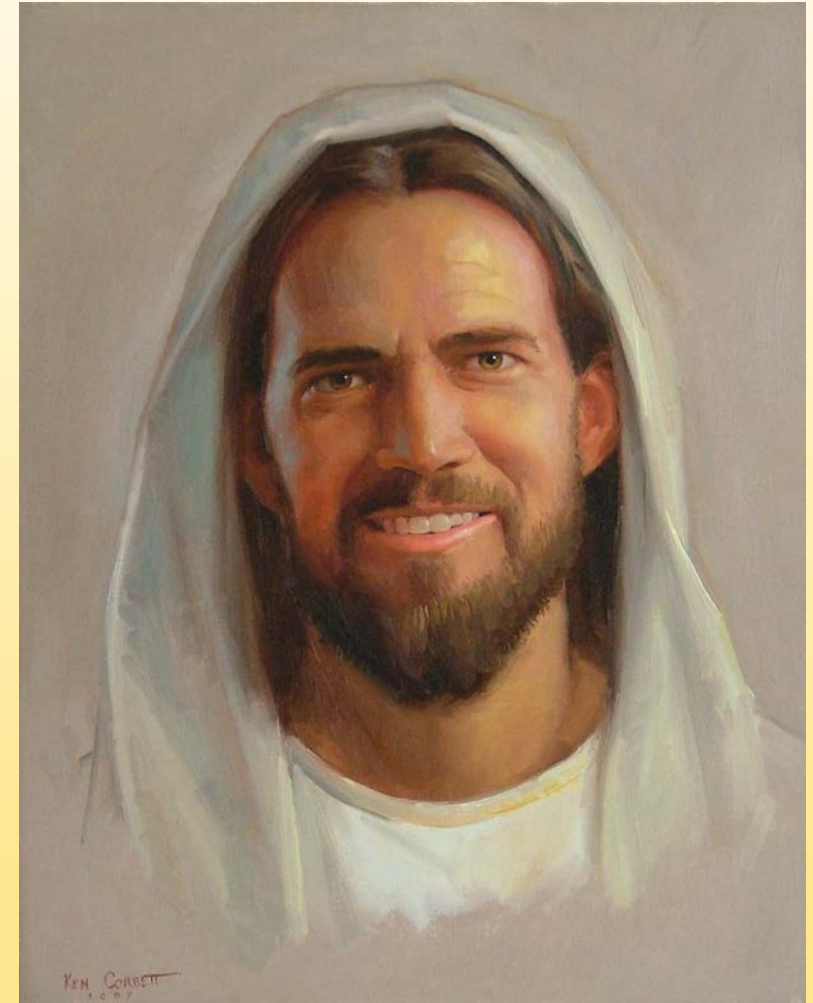




"The new covenant is not a mere possibility; it is a new creation. It is something not merely that God proposes, but something that He accomplishes. It is the creation of a people for God who will not forsake him. They will be his people and he will be their God for ever. The certainty of it lies not in them, but in God's covenant commitment: He says that he will forgive their sins and remember their iniquity no more. And he says that he will write his laws this time not just on tablets of stone, but on tablets of the heart." John Piper



"And now, from the prophecy in Jeremiah of a new covenant of forgiveness and of the Spirit and of free obedience on the part of man, we learn that the Old Testament looks beyond the past and present to a form of the relationship between God and Israel... In the light of this passage from Jeremiah 31 we are indeed enabled and summoned to give to the concept of the covenant the universal meaning which it acquired in the form which it manifestly assumed in Jesus Christ."  
Karl Barth, 'Church Dogmatics IV.1 p. 34.



"There was a service, and there is a service. To whom pertains the service Romans 9:4 and again: 'Serving God in the Spirit.' Philippians 3:3. There was a covenant, and there is a covenant. 'I will make with you a new covenant, not according to the covenant which I made with your fathers.' Jeremiah 31:31. There was a sanctification, and there is a sanctification: there was a baptism, and there is a Baptism: there was a sacrifice, and there is a Sacrifice: there was a temple, and there is a temple: there was a circumcision, and there is a circumcision; and so too there was a grace, and there is a grace. But the words in the first case are used as types, in the second as realities, preserving a sameness of sound, though not of sense... For the types like patterns anticipated and sketched beforehand the dispensations which should be accomplished under the new covenant, and Christ came and fulfilled them."

John Chrysostom, Homily 14 on the Gospel of John, (149 – 407 A.D.)

"The children of the promise [Rom 9:8], reborn of God, who have obeyed the commands by faith working through love [Gal 5:6], have belonged to the New Covenant since the world began. This they did, not in hope of carnal, earthly, and temporal things, but in hope of spiritual, heavenly, and eternal benefits." Augustine, "Against Two Letters of the Pelagians III. iv. 6-12, esp. 11 (MPL 44. 591-597; tr. NPNF V. 346-351)



“What is the new covenant? The new covenant is simply a promise. “Covenant” means promise. The new covenant is the promise of salvation, which means the complete forgiveness of all your sin, made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That’s God’s promise. God promised to take away your sin, remember your sins no more, remove them as far as the East is from the West, completely and totally forgive them because of what Jesus Christ has done on the cross.”  
John MacArthur



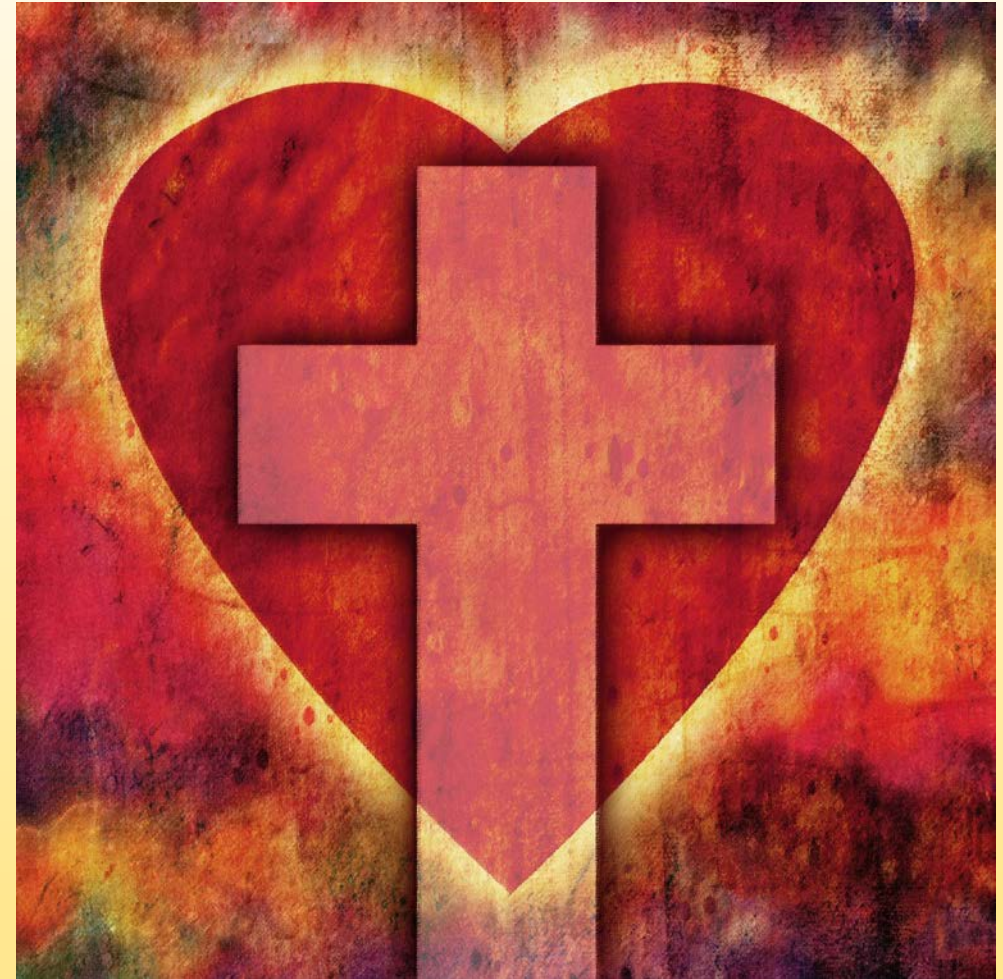


"No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' Jeremiah 31: 34. ...These scriptures are to be understood comparatively, in the same sense as God said he would have mercy and not sacrifice, Hos. 6.6. The Spirit of illumination and knowledge shall be so abundantly poured forth under the gospel, and God shall so write his laws in the hearts of his people, that there shall be almost as much difference between those under the old covenant and those under the new covenant, as there is between those that need a teacher and those that need not a teacher." George Gillespie



"The whole dispensation of the Spirit, the whole economy of grace in Christ Jesus, the whole of our spiritual lives, and the whole of the health, growth, and strength of the church has been laid down, provided for, and secured in the New Covenant."

Andrew Murray



# II. Context



The central part of the book of prophet Jeremiah contains the message regarding the New Covenant. This action of God will represent the basis for a new relationship with His people. The core message of Jeremiah is that God will forgive the sins of Israel and write His law in their hearts.





# The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

## Chapters 30 – 33: Structure

A	30: 1 - 3	Return of Captives
B	30: 4 – 31: 14	Consolation (Jacob)
C	31: 15 – 26	End of Lamentations (Rachel)
D	31: 27 – 40	Covenant
C'	32: 1 – 44	Prosperity for God's People
B'	33: 1 – 18	Consolation (David and Levy)
A'	33: 19 - 26	Return of Captives as a Consequence of the Covenant

The elements of this 'book of the new covenant' (chapters 30 – 33) are very important for the understanding of the end time events. Thus, the part B (30: 4) develops a concept of the trouble of Jacob. The part C (31: 15) is an echo to the picture of Jacob's suffering. This is the weeping of Rachel. But the global message is the end of lamentations and the new hope of God's deliverance.



## The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

### Chapters 31: Central Part of the Book of Jeremiah (31: 27 – 40)

1	27 – 28	To Build and to Plant
2	29 – 30	Individual Responsibility
3	31 – 34	New Covenant, House of Judah and House of Israel
4	35 – 37	Eternal Covenant
5	38 – 40	Jerusalem shall be built for the Lord

There are five essential elements of the new covenant:

1. God's role is to build and to plant.

What God asked Jeremiah to do in his prophetic ministry (chapter 1), He is doing Himself for the well-being of His people.





## 2. God is promoting individual responsibility

In the concept of Israel, the collective responsibility was an usual way of dealing with those who committed sin (ex. Joshua and Achan, Jos. Ch. 7). In the new covenant, the individual accountability is the universal rule (cf. Ezekiel 18)



3. The unity is the main characteristics of new covenant  
Samaria was destroyed in 722 B.C. However, those who left the city and came to live in the kingdom of Judah had hard time to be integrated. They were always 'discriminated', as those from the kingdom of North. The new covenant will eliminate this division



#### 4. God's Covenant is unbreakable.

By nature, it is eternal

When God is initiator of the covenant, when His law is written in the heart of His children, this relationship can resist all temptations and all trials.



## 5. The New Jerusalem shall be built for the Lord

At the time of the total destruction of the land and of the city of Jerusalem, when everything is without form and void ('Tohu wa bohu', Jeremiah 4: 23) God gives promise of rebuilding the place He designed as His dwelling place among the people of Israel. He invited His children to see the new reality beyond the ruins.





# The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Structure

A	Ch. 1	Prologue: Vocation of Jeremiah and prediction about Babylon
B	Ch. 2 - 10	Prophecies regarding Judah
C	Ch. 11 - 20	Confessions of Jeremiah
D	Ch. 21 - 29	Nebuchadnezzar punishing the king Zedekiah and Jerusalem
E	Ch. 30 - 33	The New Covenant and the new Consolation
D'	Ch. 34 - 35	Sin of the king Zedekiah
C'	Ch. 36 - 45	Suffering of Jeremiah
B'	Ch. 46 - 51	Prophecies regarding the Nations
A	Ch. 52	Epilogue: Fall of Jerusalem and fulfillment of the prophecy about Babylon

III. The New Covenant  
is the fundamental  
message for the  
foundation of God's  
kingdom. It produces  
the new realities,  
transforming sinners  
into God's children.



1. A bright future is  
promised to God's children  
"Behold, the days are coming, says  
the LORD"



“We must accept finite  
disappointment, but never lose  
infinite hope.”  
Martin Luther King Jr.





"I wouldn't ever say if you're having tough times then there must be something wrong with you or your attitude. Life's a fight. It's a good fight of faith. I encourage people to stay up, stay hopeful, stay faith-filled."  
Joel Osteen



“Never be afraid to trust  
an unknown future to a  
known God.”

Corrie Ten Boom



2. The new covenant  
is the masterpiece of  
what God can do for  
His children  
“When I will make...”



“We could not take one step in the pursuit of holiness if God in His grace had not first delivered us from the dominion of sin and brought us into union with His risen Son. Salvation is by grace and sanctification is by grace.”  
Jerry Bridges





“Abundant grace has been provided that the believing soul may be kept free from sin; for all heaven, with its limitless resources, has been placed at our command. We are to draw from the well of salvation. Christ is the end of law for righteousness to everyone who believeth. In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just. He looks upon us as His dear children. Christ works against the power of sin, and where sin abounded, grace much more abounds. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1, 2).”

Ellen G. White, A New Life, p. 24.

"I remember two things:  
that I am a great sinner  
and that Christ is a  
great Savior."  
John Newton,  
(1725 – 1807)



3. The imperfections of the Old covenant were replaced with the new thrilling realities, becoming possible only through God's action  
"A new covenant"



“If anyone, however, does maintain that this new covenant consisted in the rearing of that temple which was built under Zerubbabel after the emigration to Babylon, and in the departure of the people from thence after the lapse of seventy years, let him know that the [second] temple constructed of stones was indeed then rebuilt (for as yet that law was observed which had been made upon tables of stone), yet no new covenant was given, but they used the Mosaic law until the coming of the Lord; but from the Lord's advent, the new covenant which brings back peace, and the law which gives life, has gone forth over the whole earth, as the prophets said: ‘For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.’ Isaiah 2:3-4; Micah 4:2-3. If therefore another law and word, going forth from Jerusalem, brought in such a [reign of] peace among the Gentiles which received it (the word), then [only] it appears that the prophets spoke of some other person... his person is our Lord, and in Him is that declaration borne out.”

Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book IV, chapter 34. [130 – 202 A.D.]



“The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same.”

John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 429 (2.10.2).



"... The covenant of grace, of which Christ is the Mediator and surety; called "new", not because newly made, for it was made with Christ from everlasting; nor newly revealed, for it was made known to Adam after his fall, and to all the Old Testament patriarchs, and was exhibited under the legal dispensation, though but darkly, in types, shadows, sacrifices, &c. which therefore waxing old is vanished away; and the covenant of grace is now more clearly revealed under the Gospel dispensation, free from all the obscurity it before laboured under; and therefore is called "new", as well as because it will always continue so, and never give way to another covenant: now the Gospel, and the ministry of it, is nothing else but an exhibition of the covenant of grace, its blessings and promises; for such who are fit and proper ministers, are ministers not of the letter, but of the spirit."

John Gills

4. The new covenant  
is able to unite what  
is impossible to unite  
through human  
efforts

“With the house of Israel  
and with the house of  
Judah.”



“Because God’s people are called to be one people, they must manifest their unity, and because they are called to be a holy people, they must manifest their purity. Unity and purity are two fundamental features of a life worthy of the church’s divine calling.”  
John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, p. 147)



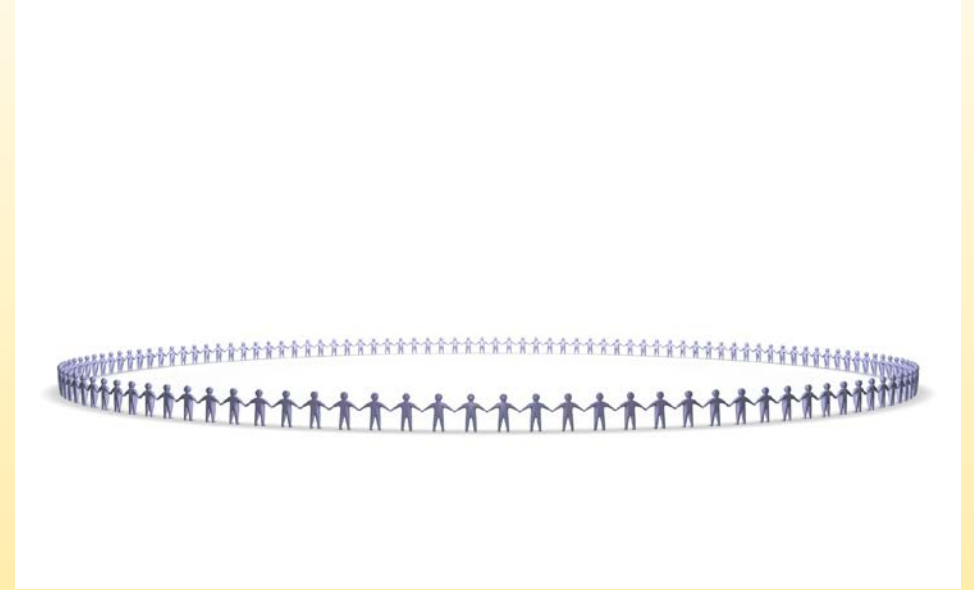


“When we bring our hearts into unity with Christ, and our lives into harmony with His work, the Spirit that fell on the disciples on the Day of Pentecost will fall on us.”  
Ellen G. White, 8T p. 246.



"To a true child of God, the invisible bond that unites all believers to Christ is far more tender, and lasting, and precious; and, as we come to recognize and realize that we are all dwelling in one sphere of life in Him, we learn to look on every believer as our brother, in a sense that is infinitely higher than all human relationships. This is the one and only way to bring disciples permanently together. All other plans for promoting the unity of the Church have failed."

A.T. Pierson



# V. Conclusion



“There are many who testify daily, I am not changed in character, only in theory.... All may through faith gain a conqueror’s crown, but many are not willing to engage in hand to hand warfare with their own imperfect dispositions. They retain attributes which make them offensive to God. Daily they are transgressing the principles of His holy law.

If all would only learn the simple lesson that they must take and wear the yoke of Christ and learn of the Great Teacher His meekness and lowliness of heart, they would better fulfill their covenant to love God supremely and their neighbor as themselves.... They must begin at the very beginning. Christ says, Take My yoke of restraint and obedience upon you, and learn of Me.... The heart will then be made right with God, through the creative power of Christ. Partakers of the divine nature, they are transformed.... {HP 162.3} The renovating, transforming work must begin in the heart, out of which flow the issues of life. Oh, how then can lip service be regarded as sufficient?”  
Ellen G. White, In Heavenly Places, p. 162.



"Change is not always a good thing. What I need is not change from one thing to another but transformation from who I am into who I was meant to become. Only when God's transforming power touches me can I begin to live the simpler, freer, fresher, more creative, more patient, more passionate, more sacrificial, riskier, rawer, more real, more love-driven life God intended for me all along. That transformation is what awaits all who dare to enter the story of God. As Paul wrote, 'Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think' (Romans 12:2)"

Steven James, *Story*



"Alone, we are human beings with spiritual potential, but lost in temptations. With God, we are spiritual beings lost in the immeasurable beauty of the divine. His presence in our hearts make all temptations unattractive. This is the new covenant: Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1: 27)"  
(DS)



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