



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
LEWISVILLE

Session 7

Out With the Old, In With the New

Summary and Goal

The coming of the Messiah was not something that God planned after the old covenant failed, the Messiah's coming was planned from the very beginning. (See Gen. 3:15.) The prophets saw the coming of the Messiah, and they knew God would usher in a new covenant. They knew this was gospel, or good news, to the people of Israel. They knew the Messiah would be the fulfillment of God's plan for the world.

Main Passages

Jeremiah 31:27-40

Session Outline

1. Building and Planting (Jer. 31:27-30)
2. Written on Our Hearts (Jer. 31:31-37)
3. A Promised Future (Jer. 31:38-40)

Theological Theme

Through faith in Christ, we are grafted into Israel, God's chosen, covenant people.

Christ Connection

God's plans and prophecies concerning the nation of Israel culminate and find their fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Missional Application

Knowing we are now part of Israel by faith in Christ gives us a new identity and purpose.

Historical Context of Jeremiah

Purpose

Jeremiah is the prophet of the “word of the LORD” (1:2). Of the 349 times the OT uses the phrase “thus says the LORD,” Jeremiah accounts for 157 of them. But this prophetic word that Jeremiah spoke was more than an objective revelation from God to the nation; God’s words were to be joy and food for Jeremiah’s own soul. As 15:16 states, “Your words were found, and I ate them. Your words became a delight to me and the joy of my heart.” However, God’s word was sometimes a burden to the prophet. He sometimes grew tired of bringing God’s message of judgment to an unresponsive people.

The people felt immune to any threat of divine judgment, but Jeremiah repeatedly warned them about the vanity of their reliance on ritual and external formalism. The prophetic word of God was to make the people blush and turn away from meaningless outward piety.

Author

Jeremiah was a priest from the town of Anathoth (1:1). At the Lord’s command, he neither married nor had children because of the impending judgment that would come upon the next generation. His ministry as a prophet began in 626 BC and ended after 586 BC. He was a contemporary of Habakkuk and possibly Obadiah.

Setting

The Book of Jeremiah discusses the last days of Judah. King Hezekiah reigned for forty-two years (729–686 BC) and began to reverse Judah’s spiritual bankruptcy. But when Hezekiah’s son, Manasseh, came to the throne, idolatrous and superstitious cultic practices and rites came back like a flood. Manasseh’s son Amon ruled for only two years (642–640 BC). He also reinstated idol worship as the official religion of Judah (2Ch 33:22–23).

Amon’s eight-year-old son, Josiah, succeeded him on the throne. This lad “walked in the ways” of the former King David. When he was eighteen years old (622 BC), he called for long-delayed repairs to be made to the temple. During this work, a copy of the law of Moses was found. On the basis of hearing this word, the young king and all his people renewed the covenant with the Lord. However, this reformation failed to overcome the effects of the wickedness Manasseh and Amon had instituted.

Special Features

The book and prophet Jeremiah hold at least two great distinctions among all the Old Testament prophets. (1) This is the longest Prophetic Book in the Bible (1,364 verses). (2) Jeremiah’s life is more fully described than any of the other fifteen writing prophets. Into the tumultuous times of the last half of the seventh century and the first quarter of the sixth century BC, came this prophet bearing a word from God for the stubborn people of Judah. The book’s contents span roughly from 640 to 580 BC.

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Condensed Leader Guide

Out With the Old, In With the New

Introduction

- ? When was the hardest you have ever worked? What motivated you to work so hard? In what area of your life have you seen the most reward for your hard work? School? Sports? Extracurricular activities? Hobbies?
- ? Sometimes people mistakenly think they can do certain things to earn God's love. What are some ways people attempt to earn God's love?

To a degree, our success is dependent upon how hard we work. It is no wonder we have such a hard time accepting that our relationship with God isn't performance-based. When we understand that our salvation happens by grace through faith in Christ alone and we can't do anything to earn or lose it, we're set free from the works that enslave us. Salvation by grace is at the heart of the new covenant. Israel failed to keep God's law, so He graciously sent Jesus to die for our sins so that His law might be written on our hearts.

1. Building and Planting (Jer. 31:27-30)

Today's passage contains one of the most important prophecies found in the Old Testament. It informed Israel of God's plan to establish a new and better covenant that would result in true knowledge of the Lord and forgiveness of sins.

- ? Why does God often "tear down" before He builds and plants? When has this been true in your own life? Explain.
- ? How might God use times of transition in a church to tear some things down so that He might build and plant again?
- ? How does the phrase, "I watch over them to build and to plant" encourage us going forward?

2. Written on Our Hearts (Jer. 31:31-34)

The promise of the new covenant is not only for Israel, thank the Lord! In this passage, Jeremiah was directly speaking to Israel. However, in the

? For Further Discussion

In terms of church life, what would it look like for us to take responsibility for our actions? What would it look like for us to live as though we are simply victims of past decisions?

Book of Hebrews, this exact passage is applied to all the church. (See 8:10; 10:16). Anyone from any language or tribe is able to be saved through the New Covenant that Christ Jesus inaugurated.

- ❓ Why do you think the Lord reminded Jeremiah that He had previously delivered Israel out of slavery in Egypt before informing the prophet of the new covenant?
- ❓ Did Israel keep the old covenant (v. 32)? In what ways did they break God's law?
- ❓ Why would the Lord say, "I will be their God, and they will be my people" (v. 33)? Was Israel not already His people? Have we yet seen the day when "they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them" (v. 34)?

❓ For Further Discussion

Compare and contrast the old covenant with the new covenant. How did the Lord say He would overcome our failure to keep the law? How has Christ fulfilled the new covenant?

3. A Promised Future (Jer. 31:35-40)

By reminding Jeremiah of His immeasurable power in creation, God was letting Jeremiah know that He would keep the new covenant. If this covenant were dependent on our love of God or our good works, we could have no confidence in its promises. However, because God made the new covenant on the basis of His power and faithfulness, we can be sure that this covenant will bring us into a right relationship with God and result in the forgiveness of our sins.

- ❓ Why do you think God concluded the covenant by reminding Jeremiah of the vast nature of His creation?
- ❓ How does this serve as confirmation that we can trust the promises of the new covenant?
- ❓ In your own words, what do verses 38-40 indicate about the future guaranteed for God's people by the new covenant?

Conclusion

- ❓ Do you tend to think about newness in Christ as relating only to the moment of salvation or to each day we walk with Him on the earth? Why?
- ❓ How might knowing God assures us righteousness by faith in Jesus change the way we think about our failures and successes? Our future as a church?
- ❓ What is something you want to pray for God to build and plant here at First Baptist Lewisville in the days ahead? What is our responsibility in that?



Expanded Leader Guide

Out With the Old, In With the New

Introduction

- ❓ When was the hardest you have ever worked? What motivated you to work so hard?
- ❓ In what area of your life have you seen the most reward for your hard work? School? Sports? Extracurricular activities? Hobbies?
- ❓ Sometimes people mistakenly think they can do certain things to earn God's love. What are some ways people attempt to earn God's love?

To a degree, our success is dependent upon how hard we work. It is no wonder we have such a hard time accepting that our relationship with God isn't performance-based. When we understand that our salvation happens by grace through faith in Christ alone and we can't do anything to earn or lose it, we're set free from the works that enslave us. Salvation by grace is at the heart of the new covenant. Israel failed to keep God's law, so He graciously sent Jesus to die for our sins so that His law might be written on our hearts.

1. Building and Planting (Jer. 31:27-30)

Today's passage contains one of the most important prophecies found in the Old Testament. It informed Israel of God's plan to establish a new and better covenant that would result in true knowledge of the Lord and forgiveness of sins.

Verses 27-30 recall Jeremiah's commissioning in Jeremiah 1:10,12. God had appointed Jeremiah, in part, "uproot and tear down, to destroy and demolish." God had accomplished those purposes. Now He was ready to do what was next: "to build and to plant."



- ❓ Why does God often "tear down" before He builds and plants? When has this been true in your own life? Explain.
- ❓ How might God use times of transition in a church to tear some things down so that He might build and plant again?

The people had long misinterpreted such passages as Exodus 20:5b: "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me" to excuse their sinful lifestyles. Their idea was that they were the victims of generational sin, and as such, not responsible for their behavior. Jeremiah 31:29 is crucial for understanding the coming change. Under the new covenant, only the individual who sinned would be punished. The entire nation would not be held responsible for the sins of a person within it.


- ❓ In terms of church life, what would it look like for us to take responsibility for our actions? What would it look like for us to live as though we are simply victims of past decisions?
- ❓ How does the phrase, "I watch over them to build and to plant" encourage us going forward?

Though the people were responsible for their own actions, God would not leave them on their own. He promised to watch over them to build and to plant. God promises to watch over us, too, as we move forward in new opportunities of growth.

2. Written on Our Hearts (Jer. 31:31-34)


-  Why do you think the Lord reminded Jeremiah that He had previously delivered Israel out of slavery in Egypt before informing the prophet of the new covenant?
-  Did Israel keep the old covenant (v. 32)? In what ways did they break God's law?

As a nation, Israel had failed to keep the law by giving into pressure from the surrounding nations to worship other gods. On a more personal level, all of God's people failed to live up to His law. David, a man after God's own heart, committed adultery and murder, and Solomon, the wisest man in the Bible, married foreign wives and turned a blind eye to their idolatry. We are no better off than the Israelites, as we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

-  Compare and contrast the old covenant with the new covenant. How did the Lord say He would overcome our failure to keep the law?



The old covenant had to be replaced. The primary difference between the old and new covenant is their relationship to God's law. Paul taught us that "you are Christ's letter, delivered by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God—not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor. 3:3). The old covenant was written on tablets and scrolls and delivered to the people who were to obey it. God promised to write the new covenant on our hearts. Ezekiel spoke of the new covenant like this, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26). The new covenant is a promise that God will change His people's hearts so that obedience is our natural response instead of rebellion. The process by which God promises to do this is by forgiving our sins and ensuring that everyone in this covenant knows the Lord.

-  How has Christ fulfilled the new covenant?


-  Why would the Lord say, “I will be their God, and they will be my people” (v. 33)? Was Israel not already His people? Have we yet seen the day when “they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them” (v. 34)?

The promise of the new covenant is not only for Israel, thank the Lord! In this passage, Jeremiah was directly speaking to Israel. However, in the Book of Hebrews, this exact passage is applied to all the church. (See 8:10; 10:16). We also know that Gentiles will not be excluded from the promise of the new covenant. Galatians 3:7 says, “You know, then, that those who have faith, these are Abraham’s sons.” Gentiles can also count on the promise of the new covenant. Anyone from any language or tribe is able to be saved through the New Covenant that Christ Jesus inaugurated.

3. A Promised Future (Jer. 31:35-40)

-  Why do you think God concluded the covenant by reminding Jeremiah of the vast nature of His creation?
-  How does this serve as confirmation that we can trust the promises of the new covenant?

By reminding Jeremiah of His immeasurable power in creation, God was letting Jeremiah know that He would keep the new covenant. If this covenant were dependent on our love of God or our good works, we could have no confidence in its promises. However, because God made the new covenant on the basis of His power and faithfulness, we can be sure that this covenant will bring us into a right relationship with God and result in the forgiveness of our sins.

-  In your own words, what do verses 38-40 indicate about the future guaranteed for God’s people by the new covenant?

God affirmed His promise in verses 38-40. Not only does His sovereignty over creation give us confidence of our future as recipients of the new covenant, but so does His Word. In describing the rebuilt city and vast geography of the land, God guaranteed Israel’s indestructibility. Its future and ours is stable, no matter the circumstance or difficulty.

Conclusion

- ❓ Do you tend to think about newness in Christ as relating only to the moment of salvation or to each day we walk with Him on the earth? Why?

- ❓ How might knowing God assures us righteousness by faith in Jesus change the way we think about our failures and successes? Our future as a church?

- ❓ What is something you want to pray for God to build and plant here at First Baptist Lewisville in the days ahead? What is our responsibility in that?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for His fulfilled promises in Jesus Christ. Thank Him for sending His Son to usher in the new covenant. Thank Him for preserving the witness of the prophets for us in His Word. Ask the Lord to help us live each day with confidence, boldly declaring the beauty of the new covenant as the prophets did before us.

Family Discussion

Family Discussion Questions for Children

- *Does someone being a good person make them a Christian? How does a person become a Christian?*
- *What is your responsibility as a Christian? What has God promised to help you fulfill that responsibility?*

Family Discussion Questions for Teens

- *When you mess up (sin), do you still feel loved? Why or why not?*
- *Share with your teen about a time you struggled to understand what it means to live under the new covenant (i.e. you were trying to earn your salvation).*
- *What is something God needs to tear down in your life so that He can build and plant something else? How can we help you in that process?*

For Next Week

Session Title

- A New Way of Living

Main Scripture

- John 20; Acts 1

Session Outline

1. Peace, Now Go (John 20:19-23)
2. Witnesses to the World (Acts 1:4-11)

Memorize

“I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

— Jeremiah 31:33b

Extended Commentary

Jeremiah 31:27-40

31:27-30. The remainder of this chapter (vv. 27-40) deals specifically with the new covenant. The material should be divided into three parts (vv. 27-30, 31-34, 38-40), with an interlude (vv. 35-37) between the second and third part. In the interlude Jeremiah delivers Yahweh's oath of affirmation and assurance that what he says will be performed.

Each of these main parts begins with the same statement, though for some reason the NIV translators chose to vary the second one slightly. In the Hebrew text, all three are identical. The HCSB renders it the same way each time: "The days are coming."

Jeremiah began the first of Yahweh's three-part covenant with a statement of his intention to repopulate the land with both people and animals. Reflect back to the call experience (1:10). The prophet declared the twofold commission given to him. First, Yahweh had appointed him to uproot and tear down, overthrow and destroy. Here Jeremiah added bring disaster, words which are not recorded in the call experience. This had been accomplished. Yahweh was now ready to fulfill the second half—to build and to plant.

Verse 29 contains the heart of this covenant's first part. It deals with personal responsibility. A saying had arisen in Israel about the relationship of parent to child with reference to sin. Before Yahweh could restore the nation, the people must deal with this important issue. Jeremiah faced it squarely as did his contemporary, Ezekiel (Ezek. 18:2). The dilemma arose from the fact that Israel and Judah clung to a proverb the people had developed in their misinterpretation of such passages as Exodus 20:5b: "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me."

The people were using their interpretation of this verse as an excuse for their sinful lifestyle. Their reasoning was, "Since we are victims of the system, we are not responsible for our sins." Jeremiah rejected this attitude. To us, such an attitude seems ludicrous. But in Jeremiah's day it was common. It stemmed from the idea of corporate responsibility in family life. But Jeremiah insisted that in the coming days only the individual who sinned would be punished. No longer would an entire nation be held responsible for the sins of a person within it.

31:31-34. These verses deal with the second of this covenant's three parts. Jeremiah's theme is related to the inwardness of religious faith during the new era of God's revelation of himself. It will differ from the one made at Sinai shortly after the exodus from Egypt. Rather than giving the people laws and ceremonies they must obey, God will work a transformation of the heart of each believer. The parallels to our Christian faith are obvious. Implicit in the prophet's words is the new birth of which Jesus spoke in his interview with Nicodemus (John 3).

The phrase no longer will a man teach his neighbor... because they will all know me does not suggest that the instructional part of religion is no longer relevant. The word know means intimate experience. In the new era every person will be his or her own priest because everyone

will have a genuine experience of salvation and assurance of forgiven sin. Peace with God in this area is essential for fellowship with him. To put it in theological language, justification must precede regeneration—or neither is genuine.

31:35-37. In order to emphasize the certainty of Yahweh's love for his people and the certainty of his protective power, Jeremiah interjected words of assurance. The survival of Israel is as certain as the laws of nature that God has ordained. Jeremiah added a second proof of Yahweh's determination to preserve Israel. For him to cast her off was as impossible as a person being able to measure the heavens or discover the depth of the earth.

The expression because of all they have done refers to Israel's evil deeds. In spite of them, God's love is assured. Israel is still his people and always will be. His new creation, "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), brought into existence through his seed, Jesus Christ, remains a testimony of God's unquenchable love.

31:38-40. To the casual or superficial reader, these verses appear to be the most meaningless in the entire chapter. But further investigation and deeper meditation reveal that these are probably the most important in this segment of Jeremiah's prophecies. The text seems clear. God guaranteed Israel's indestructibility! But some students believe there is a different interpretation of this passage.

One school of thought insists on a literal fulfillment of the passage. The return from Babylonian captivity did not satisfy the requirements of verses 38-40. The fulfillment, therefore, rests in the future. Most people who hold this view believe also in an earthly reign of Christ for one thousand years with his throne at Jerusalem. In support of this position is the contention that God made a promise to Israel that has never been completely fulfilled. A further contention of this school is that the promise of God to Abraham was unconditional and has never been canceled. Therefore, a period exists in the future when Israel will once more occupy her land exclusively. This will be accompanied by unprecedented material prosperity and unparalleled fertility. But all interpreters do not agree with those who demand a literal fulfillment of these verses.