

# The Hope of the New Covenant// Jeremiah 31:31- 34

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Introduction: Turn to Jeremiah 31

As you do that: Quick survey. When it comes to the glass being half full or half empty. What this shows me is who is optimist and who is a pessimist.

When I graduated from high school I'll never forget the conversations I had.

- You're going to do great! Then you'll be able to graduate and get a job, and get a family, etc. The best is yet to come!
- You're going to have bills, the job market isn't as great as it use to be. There's plenty of fish in the sea but fishing is boring, if you really think about it. Some of the hardest days are ahead of you.

I don't know about you guys I try to put myself in the middle. Like I want to encourage people and I hope they enjoy being around me but I do like to be realistic as well.

Yes the job market is hard, but don't give up. You may not get to do what you want to do immediately, but to have a job instead the job is better than no job.

Over the last few days, as we have already covered, it appears that black lives still have no value after all of these years of fighting for civil rights. People are angry at police officers for the bad decisions of some and they decide to take what they think to be justice in their own hands. You look at social media and you see that people are divided and it appears they are choosing sides. I must admit, its hard to be optimistic in times like this.

Today I want to spend time in God's word who I would say was by far one of the best optimists you will come across.

If you haven't put it together yet I'm talking about Jeremiah. The point of this sermon isn't to talk about Jeremiah in depth but instead I want to highlight what Jeremiah had to share with the people of Judah.

Jeremiah was an Old Testament prophet of God who prophesied during the siege and captivity of Jerusalem by the Babylonian empire around 586 B.C.

What we get to see in the entirety of the book of Jeremiah is that

- He was constantly at odds with his fellow countrymen mostly because he was constantly pointing out the sin and corruption of Judah's people

and its leaders. For that reason they could not stand him.

- Jeremiah was convinced that Judah would not survive because of its wickedness and refusal to repent and return to God (chaps. 2–6).
- He saw Babylon as God’s instrument of judgment on his people and warned that Judah would be destroyed (1:11–19; 4:5–31; 25:1–14).
- Jeremiah was convinced on theological grounds that the nation was under God’s judgment and would be punished
  - I will paint a picture about this in detail a little later but to give you an understanding of why they were being judged, they had started to worship false gods. Sounds familiar right? The chosen people of God had a horrible habit of worshipping idols.
  - What we are used to seeing from the people of Israel was that they would repent and turn back to God. What we don’t see taking place in Jeremiah is repentance, and for that reason, we see judgment.
- Finally, we see that in Jeremiah 52 and 2 Kings 24–25 that his convictions were correct and Judah finally faced its demise to the Babylonians.

Yet in the midst of these chapters with the emphasis on sin and judgment that is coming on the nation of Judah, the same way it did to the nation of Israel, there is hope.

In the midst of gloom and doom we see the optimism of Jeremiah and he pens chapters 30–33, which many scholars call the Book of Consolation or the Book of Comfort.

These chapters are important because they anticipate a restoration of Israel to God’s favor and a return of the people to their homeland.

You see up to this point everything they anticipated from God and everything that they knew and loved was taken away from them; their land, their national identity, and the temple in which God dwelt.

This was punishment for their disobedience and the breaking of the covenant that God had made with them. In the midst of this, Jeremiah could still talk about hope.

I believe he could do that because he knew that **Salvation was on the other side of their situation.**

To paint a picture for you, when I say situation, I’m not talking about sickness, or health, or finances, or family relationships. Now God may very well bring healing to those situations, but the situation I’m talking about here today is bigger than those things. The situation at hand is sin.

If you look at verse 10 of chapter 1 we see the twofold ministry of Jeremiah.

*“See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”* (Jeremiah 1:10, ESV)

He would announce messages of judgment (“to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow”) because of their situation of sin. But on the flip side of that he would bring messages of encouragement and hope (“to build and to plant”) to point them towards the expectation of salvation.

Judgment was coming to the people of Judah because of their sin and idolatry and Jeremiah knew that salvation was on the other side of that and he wrote arguably one of the most important passages in the Old Testament.

This passage alone has had tremendous influence on the New Testament. Because of it, we too can be the most optimistic people in the world. It is here that Jeremiah introduces what is known as the New Covenant.

Read with me in Jeremiah 31:31-34

*“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my*

*people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* (Jeremiah 31:31–34, ESV)

In these four verses, Jeremiah shows the situation that the people of Judah are in, but then he clearly articulates the salvation that will come their way.

What we see out of the gate throughout the book of Jeremiah and in this New Covenant is that Sin is the Situation.

### **Sin is the Situation**

Look again at the second part of verse 32 where it says *my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD*

Before going any further we need to discuss what a covenant is:

Three types of Covenants:

- One type of covenant looks more like a treaty. So say America and a smaller country like Estonia were at war because Estonia, the much smaller nation would not want to be overcome by America which is the bigger nation, they would make a treaty with America saying, we would pay you ex amount of

whatever to keep the peace, we won't betray you and we won't join forces with another country to overpower you.

- The second type of covenant is what we would consider now to be somewhat like a contract. In this you have two parties who come to an agreement saying I will do this for you if you do this for me. We saw this earlier in our Bible reading plan with Jacob and Laban where Jacob said he would work 7 years to have Rachel as a wife.
- The third one in which we are talking about is when the stronger party is looking at the weaker party and says, I am going to do this for you and it doesn't matter if you don't hold up your end, I'm still going to be faithful to what I said I would do.
  - Picture the relationship that you would typically have with your children. There's a saying in my house that typically transpires between my daughter and me when I ask her to do something and instead of responding in obedience, her response is either no, can mommy do it, or why. The response she typically gets is "Tru, you don't pay any bills here. Do what you're told." The answer about not paying any bills depicts the idea that because I provide you with food, and light, and water, and toys, and all of the things you get the chance to enjoy inside of the house, there is a mutual obligation that you do as I say. Not because you're a slave and I'm the

master, but you do it out of love and appreciation for the things that we do for you. That even though they are disobedient, and they draw on the walls in permanent marker, and they throw toys at each other, or they forget to put the dog in her crate and she sleeps in mommy and daddy's bed all day and makes it stink like dog on daddy's side of the bed. Mommy and Daddy will still love you, and care for you, and make sure you get the things that you need because we want what's absolutely best for you, no matter what you do.

This is the type of covenant that God had made with his people and its what we call the Old Covenant.

The focal point of the covenant tradition in the Old Testament is found in Exodus 19 between God and Israel at Mt. Sinai.

The Sinai covenant was the formal institution of a relationship between God and His chosen people. His chosen people, Israel, received the law, also called the Ten Commandments. Now these Ten Commandments sometimes are perceived as being a "to-do or else" list.

However that is not the case at all. The Ten Commandments were given to provide direction in living, in loving God, and in serving all people as God's covenant

people. God gave these commandments because He knew that for us trusting in Him and what He enlisted, would bring the fullest joy that we could imagine.

My children have a little book about a pig who wants to become a sheep. So the pig speaks with the German Shepherd and he tells the pig that he could become a sheep, he simply has to follow the direction of the shepherd. So as he does he eventually becomes more and more like a sheep. The pig's skin begins to grow tufts of fluff and his oink begins to morph into a bleat. And things are good until the pig turned sheep begins to desire the slops and the filth of the old pigsty. And so he wanders off and dirties his new wool and trades in his fresh green grass and protection of the shepherd to the slop, filth, and lonely life of a pig, yet again.

This is the trend that we see in Scripture with God's chosen people. You see although they knew about the covenant and received the law that required them to live a certain way and experience the joy of God, they failed it miserably.

I believe that the people of God failed to obey the law because of their unbelief in who God was and their hardheartedness in trying to be their own rulers.

**Jeremiah 11:10 (ESV) — 10** They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The

house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant that I made with their fathers.

Because of their unbelief and their hard hearts, they broke the entirety of the law.

- By idolatrous worship (breaking the first 5)
- By their immoral conduct (breaking the last 5)
  - If you have been reading in the Bible reading plan you saw that the people of Judah participated in lying, murder, adultery, stealing, so on and so forth

What's crazy is that this was a repetitive cycle for God's people. We see it throughout the OT when Israel would forget about God, they would sin, they would remember who God was, and then renew the covenant.

- Covenant, remember, renewal.
- Moses Exodus 34
- Joshua 23-24
- Sam 1 Sam 12
- Hezekiah 2 Chronicles 29-31
- Josiah 2 Kings 22-23

So we see this repetitive characteristic between God and His people under the Old Covenant.

This is the same scenario in the book of Jeremiah.

The imagery that is used here is strong. God depicts His relationship with the people of Judah to that of a husband and a wife. And in this situation, the wife has been

unfaithful. She's been sleeping around, she's visiting other men. The language that we see in this book is strong because he essentially says that God's people have been prostituting themselves to false gods and idols.

Throughout the entire book, verse after verse we see the unfaithfulness of God's people. They saw the temporary pleasures of this world and compared it to the eternity of the beauty of God and who He is and chose the temporary.

**The temporary seems better, but it could never match the eternal.**

They saw other gods that looked more attractive in the moment and instead of staying faithful to the God who had brought their ancestors out of Egypt, they went and cheated and left their first love.

Under the Old Covenant, the people of God are faithless:

- They were idolatrous
- They were immoral
- They were incapable of obedience

The sin of the people put them in a position that they did not want to be in. And so is the case today.

Our world is in a situation of sin as well. We are at odds with each other. We hear about mass shootings and things like this break our hearts.

Listen, I've had to come to grips that we as humans aren't as good as we think that we are. We are sinful and broken people. Again, all you have to do is scroll through social media and see the remarks in the last 72 hrs and you will see we are broken. We look at the people of Judah and wonder why they couldn't get their act together after they have been warned but we are no different. We are sinful people. We may not ever murder somebody or we may not cheat on our spouses but the Bible is clear that if you have ever been angry at someone or had a lustful thought in your mind you are considered a murderer and an adulterer.

In this room alone there are liars, and cheaters, and thieves, and murderers, and adulterers, and men who love darkness rather than light, and people who think more of themselves than they do others, and people who don't empathize, and people who judge, and whatever sin you committed last night or right before you came to church this morning and the list goes on and on and on and according to the law of God you deserve judgment.

The people of Judah brought this judgment on themselves because they could not keep the law of God and so is the case with us.

We are idolatrous people. We are immoral people. We are incapable of complete and total obedience. Left to ourselves if we were to present ourselves to God as being perfect we would miss the mark 100% of the time. Why do we do the things that we don't want to do or shouldn't do?

When it comes to being optimistic or being pessimistic I must admit, things don't look good for us similar to the days of Jeremiah.

Here's the thing: God got to the point where He said I'm sick of it! This sin, this idolatry, this unfaithfulness; I'm tired of this vicious cycle. It can't be the case anymore. For that reason, I'm doing something new.

You see, when we like the people of Judah are faithless, God is faithful.

It is here that the new covenant is introduced. It is here that we see that the new covenant introduces a salvation that can only be produced by God. Which leads us to see that salvation is the solution.

### **Salvation is the Solution**

#### **Read 31, 33-34**

31 *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,*

*33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying,*

*‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

We see that God will introduce a new covenant and in this New Covenant we see:

#### **1. A New Heart**

I love that the New Covenant starts with this: a new heart.

God here is saying, you know what, I'm done with the stones and the chisele. There will no longer be the law, my ways, etched on a stone, its now going to be engraved on their hearts.

Why is that the case? Well Jeremiah tells us why in Jeremiah 17:9. It says *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”*

This verse lets us know that: **The heart of every problem is the problem of the heart.**

Remember how the people of God had hard hearts? Our hearts are no different. Our hearts will somehow try to convince us that we really don't have any issues and any issues that we do have we can simply try harder.

- I'll TRY not to look at pornography anymore.
- I will TRY and love my spouse better than what I do.
- I will TRY not to get as angry with my kids.

- I will TRY not to be a racist.
- I will TRY not to be so cold hearted to the plight of other people.
- We will TRY to do better.
- We can TRY to figure it out ourselves because we are smart individuals.

All this does is feed our self-righteousness and allows us to continue to be the kings and queens of our little kingdoms. Our heart is deceptive and it will lead to our destruction. So God says that he will give us a new heart. Basically God told the people of Judah you need a complete transformation from the inside out because its only when you have been transformed and your heart has changed that you can truly fall in love with me and love me the way you were created to do and do what I want for you to do. To truly love me and love those who are around you.

The second thing we see is a Right Relationship

## 2. A Right Relationship

Another important aspect of the New Covenant was to establish a right relationship between God's people and God himself.

*And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.*

I have had the pleasure of getting the chance to speak with some of you this morning and its been a pleasure. Most of you know that I'm a pastor at the Summit Church. Most know I'm married. Most of you know that I have kids. Some of you know that my wife's name is Rachel and my children's names are Tru and Michael. Few of you have had the chance to have me over for dinner. Now with the wide spectrum of each of you and your interactions with me, if someone came up to you on the street and said, hey do you know Derrick DeLain. How could you answer that? I know him! I know OF him. The ones who only know OF me can only share but so much detail about my life. But the ones who KNOW me can go into detail, my likes, my dislikes, etc.

This is the relationship that God is establishing with His people. He wants to be a Personal God and His desire is to be with His people.

I looked up the word know in Aramaic and you know what it means? "To know" There's nothing special about the word "know" but one of the definitions that I saw was "the ability to be known." That blew me away because I see and I understand that because of the formation of the New Covenant I now have the ability to be known on a personal level by the creator of the universe.

I like how JI Packer in his book *Knowing God* says it he says "the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it-the fact that He knows me. I am graven on the palms of his hands. I am never out of his mind. All my



knowledge of him depends on his sustained initiative in knowing me. I know him because he first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters.”

What sets this apart from the OLD Covenant is this: To “know the Lord,” is the result of faith rather than instruction. To follow instructions means we only know God on an intellectual level.

This is what a proper relationship looks like within the realm of the New Covenant. Believing in and trusting in God that what He has set for me is for my good and for His glory. But it doesn’t end there. In fact this part blows me away more than anything else.

### 3. Forgiveness of Sins

*For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

Now I say this blows me away because of the depths of the importance of this section.

Part of the old covenant was the fact that the priests had to make sacrifices for God’s people year after year and we already see that their lives were never changed because the sacrifices that they were making could never take away

their sins. But under the New Covenant, forgiveness of sins was made possible. How? Through Jesus Christ! And you’re looking at the text and you say, I don’t see Jesus’ name mentioned here at all He doesn’t come on the scene until the New Testament. Correct, but this Covenant was made with anticipation of what was to come! That why Jeremiah says in the first part of 31 *Behold the days are coming*

Look with me to Hebrews 10:11-18

**Hebrews 10:11-18 (ESV) — 11** *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12* *But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, verse 14* *For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. 15* *And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 16* *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” 17* *then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” 18* *Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.*

When Jesus, at the last supper refers to the new covenant in my blood, that we see in Luke 22, he is picking up the same theme of Exodus with the covenant being sealed in a blood sacrifice.

Jesus’ offering up of himself completely covers and atones all of our sins past, present, and future. And for that reason,

God truly forgives and forgets because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

To fathom, that God would forget our sins. The God who has placed every star in the sky, the God who formed us in our mother's womb, the God who could count every hair on our head, chooses to forget our sins, because of the death of Christ. He sees our situation and promises that salvation will come to those who trust in what he provided for them.

What was needed, as God revealed through Jeremiah in this passage, was not another covenant renewal but an internal transformation of the people based upon the divine provision of complete forgiveness found only in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for you and for me.

The core of Jeremiah is that we are all idolaters. We worship our politics; our policies, our government and what they can and cant do for us. We worship things that will let us down each and everyday. But the core of the Gospel is that even in your idol worship, I will not allow you to stay that way; Our infidelity pales in comparison to God's faithfulness.

That's why we see in Titus 3:4-5 "That when the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy."

He didn't say give them what they deserve, He didn't say you have to prove yourself before I do it, but he looked at our state and realized that we could not do anything to earn it so he stepped in and did it for us! Because of his grace and mercy!

This is what makes the gospel so scandalous!

- We deserved the same punishment as the people of Judah but Jesus took the punishment for us.
- We deserved the same cup of wrath we see in Jeremiah 25; instead, Jesus took the cup of wrath for us. In fact he prayed to have the cup removed from Him but in the end said not my will by your will be done.
- We were unfaithful, but Jesus was faithful and obedient to the point of death.

This is our salvation! This is our solution!

We are saved from our idolatry, we are saved from our immoral actions, we are saved from our inability to be obedient to God, we are saved from our self rule, we are saved from our self righteousness, we are saved from our sin of racism, we are saved from our apathy, we are saved from the oppression of sin but we aren't simply just saved from something we are saved to something greater. We are saved to redeeming life found in God, we are saved to a life of worship, we are saved to celebrate that we are no longer dead in our sins, we are saved to the ministry of reconciliation, we are saved to tell of the goodness of God

and the mercy and grace that is found in Him, we are saved to the hope that even though things look bleak, even though there is sickness and death, and crime, and what appears to be an never ending cycle of sin and hell here on earth that my God has not forgotten us because we are known by Him. And we have those things because of what Jesus did on our behalf.

We were never meant to find hope in a political system, or a police force, or any man here on earth. The New Covenant gives us hope because the NC is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and He is all the hope that we need.

So now, because of Jesus, we have forgiveness of sins, which allows us to be in a right relationship with God, which allows us to see our need to be obedient to the law of God with our new heart.

How could Jeremiah be so optimistic knowing his flaws and seeing the demise of his people? He knew that a day was coming but we know that the day has come!

Look at all the promises found in here that God initiates:

- I will make a new covenant
- I will make it
- I will put my law in them
- I will write it on their hearts
- I will be their God
- I will forgive their sins
- I will remember their sins no more

God is a God who initiates, He is the one who sets the plan in motion, and He is the one who finished it.

I mentioned the children's story of the German shepherd and the pig, turned sheep, turned dirty sheep earlier. The German shepherd went out in search of his new lamb. And instead of hitting him over his little piggy head, he takes him, he cleans him off, and he brings him back into the fold to continue his life of grass eating, sheep living, no care in the world life. The pig didn't have to take a bath first, the shepherd did it for him. The pig didn't have to come up with a reason why he ran off, the shepherd took him back anyway. All the pig had to do, was rest.

Rest is a beautiful thing. We all enjoy rest. But for some in this room the concept of rest is escaping you. How can we rest knowing that what we've seen on the news last week will more than likely unfortunately happen again? How can we rest when we can't seem to shake our sins and we unfortunately make mistakes every day.

There's a theological idea that what we know and believe in Jesus is an already, but not yet. We already know that the promises of God are true; we know what we have in Jesus, but the reality of sin is still real and there will be a day when sin will be no more but it isn't here just yet, but there is hope

Revelation 21 says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more... And I heard a loud voice

from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.** And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And he said **IT IS DONE!**"

CS Lewis says it well when he states that heaven is going to be so incredible that even our greatest hurts will feel like just a spec in the grand narrative of God's glory.

This is how we can be optimistic in times like this. This is how we can have hope when sin and death are all around us. There are two ways for us to respond.

The first thing is to believe in who Jesus says that He is and putting our complete trust in Him. By doing this we become reconciled to God; that we are no longer enemies but we are children of God. But if that's the case, if we have been reconciled to God then 2 Corinthians 5 says that because we have been reconciled to God we are now ambassadors of reconciliation. So by believing but then also stepping out. To put it simply, because we understand what it means to be a law breaker that has been reconciled to the law giver, we advocate and step in with those in the world who need to understand the truth of reconciliation. We don't sit on

our hands and hope the world figures it out, we step in, because that's what Jesus did for us.

The second thing that we do is rest. Rest. Matthew 11:28 is my favorite passage in the entire Bible. In this passage Jesus is talking to his disciples about religious observance as a means of attaining self-worth. The conversation came about as many of the people at that time found the very law that we are talking about today as being a burden and too hard to accomplish. And you know what Jesus says. **Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV) — 28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

He says that knowing full well that He can and will accomplish what we could never do.

**The invitation to believe and rest means stop trying. Stop trying to fight sin on your own. Stop trying to earn your way into right standing with God. Stop depending on this world to do things for you that can only be done by God. Completely depend and trust in Jesus and know that He is enough for you.**

**This situation that we are in, this brokenness, this world of sin is not the end. I believe that to be true. Our solution is the salvation that is found in the work of Jesus Christ.**

I want us to pray again. **Healing. Forgiveness. Action**