

• **LESSON 9 (February 26)** •

The God Who Promised a New and Better Covenant

Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin (Jer 1:1) led a difficult life. “The word of the LORD came” to him (Jer 1:2) during one of the darkest stretches of history for the descendants of Abraham. Despite volatile political unrest, vicious foreign kingdoms, corruption in Jerusalem, unbelief on the part of the vast majority of his hearers, and intense personal hardship, Jeremiah served as a spokesman of God for more than 40 years. He is often referred to as “the weeping prophet,” and there is no wonder as to the reason. He is also the author of the work which follows the much larger book that bears his name—Lamentations.

And yet, in the midst of one of the most heart-wrenchingly tragic books of the Bible, Jeremiah 31 contains “covenant” language that greatly impacts our study of the God of promises and covenants.

- ❖ Take the time to read Jeremiah 31:1-6. What is the LORD promising, in your own words?

- ❖ In even clearer and more straightforward language, what is the LORD promising in Jeremiah 31:10-11?

- ❖ Very interestingly, immediately after promising to “turn their mourning into joy” and “give them gladness for sorrow,” we run across very dark and foreboding words in Jeremiah 31:15. What is the LORD foretelling? How do we know?

“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.” (Jer 31:31-34)

- ❖ When an original hearer of Jeremiah's message thought about the covenant that the LORD had made with the house of Israel and Judah, what would have immediately come to mind?

- ❖ With that in mind, what would this hearer have thought upon hearing God's prophet say, "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" (Jer 31:31)?

- ❖ What comes to your mind as you meditate on the LORD's words in Jeremiah 31:32?
 - "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" –

- ❖ "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts" (Jer 31:33). How would this have resonated in the mind of a Jew in ancient times?

- ❖ "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" (Jer 31:34). What does this mean, and how was it profoundly different than what Israel had been used to in the past?

- ❖ "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer 31:34). How does what we are reading in Jeremiah 31 prepare us for the profoundly important words spoken by Jesus in Luke 22:20?