

THE PROPHETIC WORD TODAY

Signed, Sealed, and Delivered

TEXT: Jer. 31:31-34

INTRODUCTION: You have probably noted through our study of the book of Jeremiah that its message can be pretty glum. It is not by accident that Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet. The culmination of the despair of God's message through Jeremiah came last week as the Lord declared the certainty that the cup of His wrath would be poured out upon those who rebel against Him.

The mood of these chapters of Jeremiah reminds me of the atmosphere of that week that led to the crucifixion of Jesus. Except for the brief hour of exhilaration as the people shouted "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord," the days were pretty dark. The religious leaders were plotting to capture and kill him. One of his disciples decided to betray him. Rome was ever ready to execute anyone who might upset the fragile balance of power.

But just as the gloom of death on Friday yielded to the brilliance of the resurrection on Sunday, so also the shadows of wrath and judgment in the message of Jeremiah gave way to words of hope, comfort, and promise. And interestingly, those two events are irrevocably linked.

You see, during those seven days that now we call Holy Week, God was cutting a new deal with mankind. The Bible word is covenant, and it means agreement, alliance, or contract. As God orchestrated the events of that week:

The last supper

The betrayal by Judas

The capture in the Garden of Gethsemane

The trials before the Sanhedrin, Herod, and Pilate

The crucifixion

The resurrection

God was instigating a new covenant, a new agreement between Himself and the people of the world.

And what is so fascinating for us as we have been moving through the history and prophetic messages of Jeremiah is that following God's uncompromising denunciation of Judah's apostasy and the resulting judgment on sin is followed by the announcement that this new covenant is coming.

Let us stand and read this announcement, paying attention to its details, realizing that what Jeremiah wrote here contains God's promise to us, His agreement with us, and His covenant for us.

Jeremiah 31:31–34 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— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. ³³ But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

I. THE CONTENT OF THE NEW COVENANT

A. It is a new covenant.

1. It replaces the Mosaic Covenant, also called the Covenant of the Law.

a. This covenant was conditional.

Exodus 19:5-6 ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

b. This was never a covenant of personal salvation. People were never saved by the keeping of the law. It was a covenant establishing Israel and a holy nation to serve the Lord as a priestly kingdom for the purpose of reaching the other nations of the world.

c. Israel broke this covenant. By the time of Jeremiah, around 600 B.C., God declared the covenant broken.

Jeremiah 31:31-32 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— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

B. The New Covenant is internal rather than external.

Jeremiah 31:33b I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts;

C. The New Covenant is relational.

Jeremiah 31:33c I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

D. The New Covenant is comprehensive.

Jeremiah 31:34a No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD.

E. The New Covenant brings forgiveness.

Jeremiah 31:34b For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

II. THE INITIATION OF THE COVENANT**A. Jesus announced the New Covenant at the Last Supper.**

Matthew 26:26–28 ²⁶ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."²⁷ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

B. Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant by His death on the cross.

Colossians 1:19–20 ¹⁹ For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

C. The New Covenant was sealed as Jesus' body was sealed in the tomb.

Matthew 27:66 So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

D. The New Covenant was delivered to us with the resurrection of our Lord.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

That is why I have entitled this sermon on the new covenant "Signed, Sealed, and Delivered." That is what we celebrate this week.

Jesus signed it with His blood.

Sealed it with His death and burial in the tomb.

He proved by His resurrection that He can deliver on the promises made in the covenant.

III. THE ENTRANCE INTO THE COVENANT

A. The New Covenant is for Israel and Judah.

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—

B. We are made a descendant of Abraham, and therefore a part of the New Covenant when we put our faith in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:7 Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

C. All the promises of salvation are for those who have trusted Jesus as Lord and master.

Rom. 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

John 3:16-18 ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

CONCLUSION: A critical question for every man and woman: “Have you entered the new covenant through faith in Christ?”