

GOD'S COVENANT RENEWED

CORE PASSAGE: JEREMIAH 17:5-8; 31:31-37

CONTEXT

Jeremiah was called to speak for the Lord in the waning days of the kingdom of Judah. Most of his messages warned of the coming judgment, which he witnessed with his own eyes, but a few promised hope for a ruined people. For a time, Judah was looking to put their trust in Egypt to fight the Babylonians, but Jeremiah's warning was to put their trust in God alone. In Jeremiah 17:5-8, which sounds like a psalm or proverb, the prophet addressed Judah's misplaced trust. And in Jeremiah 31:31-37, the prophet foretold the new covenant that God would make with His people to deal with their sin and ours once and for all.

KEY CONCEPT

A new covenant will establish followers of Jesus.

As you examine Jeremiah 17:5-8; 31:31-37:

- Understand that trusting in humankind leads to desert places without life.
- Dwell upon the promise that God will write His law on His people's hearts, call us His people, and forgive our sins.



TIMELINE

Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Jeremiah Is Called as a Prophet
(Jeremiah 1)

**SESSION STUDY: Jeremiah Prophesies Judgment on
Judah and a New Covenant (Jeremiah 1–38)**

Hezekiah and Josiah Restore the Worship
of the Lord (2 Kings 18–20; 22–23)

Judah's Remaining Kings Return to What Is
Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 23–24)

Babylon Besieges and Conquers Judah, Deporting the People (2 Kings 25)

Daily Readings

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| ☐ Day 1: Jeremiah 1–10 | ☐ Day 4: Jeremiah 30–38 |
| ☐ Day 2: Jeremiah 11–20 | ☐ Day 5: Habakkuk 1–3 |
| ☐ Day 3: Jeremiah 21–29 | ☐ Day 6: Psalm 92 |



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to access this session's
Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

JEREMIAH 17:5-8

THOSE WHO TRUST IN HUMANKIND ARE CURSED; THOSE WHO TRUST IN GOD ARE BLESSED.

Underline all the truths about those who trust in humanity. Circle all the truths about those who trust in God.

5 This is what the LORD says: Cursed is the person who trusts in mankind. He makes human flesh his strength, and his heart turns from the LORD. **6** He will be like a juniper in the Arabah; he cannot see when good comes but dwells in the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land where no one lives. **7** The person who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence indeed is the LORD, is blessed. **8** He will be like a tree planted by water: it sends its roots out toward a stream, it doesn't fear when heat comes, and its foliage remains green. It will not worry in a year of drought or cease producing fruit.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

UNION WITH CHRIST: At the heart of our salvation is our union with Christ. The Bible describes salvation as entering into a covenant relationship with God and also describes the church (which is made up of believers) as the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32). Christians believe that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Christ in us) and that we are simultaneously dwelling in Him (Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27; 3:1-4). This union is indissoluble; it will last for all eternity.

These verses are structured more like a psalm or proverb than a typical prophecy we might read in the Bible, but they still hold prophetic truth. The curse that Jeremiah pronounced calls to mind the blessings and curses Moses put before the people before his death, his final warnings before the people entered the promised land (see Deuteronomy 27–30). In Jeremiah’s day, the people of Judah were experiencing the punishment associated with those curses, and Jeremiah called them to repent and to trust in the Lord.

Jeremiah compared two types of trees to emphasize the differences between trusting humanity and trusting God. First was the “juniper in the Arabah” to describe those who put their trust in humankind (Jeremiah 17:6). The juniper is a prickly, bushy shrub that grows in the desert, often found in rocky fissures.¹ It barely scrapes by in the arid landscape. Similarly, the people of Judah, leaning on their own power and foreign alliances, were parched and barely surviving.

What does godly trust in others look like compared to a cursed trust in others?

For the second tree, the image used to describe those who put their hope in the Lord is that of a lush, thriving tree planted near a water source. Verses 7-8 are very similar to Psalm 1. According to David, the psalmist, those who trust in the Lord are like a tree that prospers and flourishes by streams of water, but those who do not are like chaff and blown away (Psalm 1:3-4).

Jeremiah 17:8 states that even when the heat comes, the tree planted by water does not fear but still flourishes. This does not mean that those who trust in the Lord won’t experience suffering, but when they do, they can be unafraid and unmoved despite their circumstances. No matter what, they can be constant and faithful because their trust is in the One who is always faithful (Hebrews 10:23).

How can you pursue the Lord now so that when trouble comes, you will be unwavering and strong amid trials?



PERSONAL PREPARATION

JEREMIAH 31:31-37

THE NEW COVENANT BRINGS HOPE AND FORGIVENESS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

Highlight every instance of “the LORD’s declaration” in the passage below.

Circle the promises God makes to Israel.

31 “Look, the days are coming”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. **32** This one will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—my covenant that they broke even though I am their master”—the LORD’s declaration. **33** “Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—the LORD’s declaration. “I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. **34** No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them”—this is the LORD’s declaration. “For I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin. **35** This is what the LORD says: The one who gives the sun for light by day, the fixed order of moon and stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea and makes its waves roar—the LORD of Armies is his name: **36** If this fixed order departs from before me—this is the LORD’s declaration—only then will Israel’s descendants cease to be a nation before me forever. **37** This is what the LORD says: Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below explored, will I reject all of Israel’s descendants because of all they have done—this is the LORD’s declaration.”

Key Concept: A new covenant will establish followers of Jesus.

Jeremiah prophesied the glorious promise of a new covenant, which would be established not because God broke His end of the deal but because God's people could not keep up their end of the agreement. From the moment He brought them out of Egypt, God's people consistently broke faith and pursued idols instead of God. They had failed to obey, earned God's curses, and would soon be exiled from the land, but now God in His mercy was laying out new terms for their relationship.

Previously, God's laws were written on stone tablets and on stone markers in the land, but in this new covenant, God's law would be written on the hearts of those who belong to Him. This demonstrates a shift from the law being an external commitment that the people broke regularly to an internal commitment that showed a transformation of the heart.

How does the state of our heart impact our obedience to the Lord?

This new covenant will also be for all the people, "from the least to the greatest of them" (Jeremiah 31:34), including anyone despite their age, social class, or ethnicity. The New Testament confirms the new covenant is for all who repent of their sin and trust in the Lord (Hebrews 8–10).

The new covenant ultimately displays God's forgiveness through Jesus. The old covenant offered forgiveness through sacrifices, but the new covenant provides forgiveness through one ultimate sacrifice—Jesus's blood (Luke 22:20). Jesus's sinless life and sacrificial death for sinners is the perfect display of God's willing forgiveness for our sins. And finally, God declares that this new covenant will be permanent. It will never cease to exist, nor will God's people.

How has God proven to you that He will uphold His covenant with you?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

The new covenant was established through Jesus, the Son of God, who was a substitute for the penalty of our sin. He fulfilled the law completely and writes the law on our hearts, and we are adopted as children of God. Through the new covenant, all who believe and trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior are saved as a free gift because of God's grace and mercy.

GOD'S NEW COVENANT

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. In the spaces provided, identify the ways the old covenant is superseded by the better new covenant.

OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
(Jeremiah 31:32)	Jesus inaugurated and fulfilled this covenant for those who believe (Romans 3:21-26; Hebrews 9:11-28)
Laws written on tablets and monuments of stone (Exodus 31:18; Joshua 8:32)	(Jeremiah 31:33)
The Lord's presence was experienced by a few and secluded in the tabernacle (Hebrews 9:1-10)	(Jeremiah 31:34)
Impossible for the blood of animals to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4)	(Jeremiah 31:34)
Mediated by Moses (Exodus 24:3-8)	(Luke 22:20)

How should we view these Old Testament passages as we live in New Testament times?
How can we as believers in Jesus find strength and hope in these verses?

Key Concept: A new covenant will establish followers of Jesus.



HEAD

Why is it important not just to memorize Scripture but meditate on the words?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

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Read Psalm 92, then pray specifically through verses 12-15. Acknowledge that blessing is only found in relationship with the Lord and that He alone deserves our praise and obedience.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

How should we respond to our sin in light of God's unbreakable new covenant?



HANDS

How will you approach your good works and obedience in light of the new covenant Jesus fulfilled for you?



THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

By Matt Rogers

The theme of God's judgment is threaded throughout the Old Testament, but the notion of God's judgment makes many uneasy. Some neglect the Old Testament or falsely believe that the God it reveals is fundamentally different than the God of the New Testament. A consistent reading of the Bible reveals just the opposite—the themes of God's holiness and the just judgment for sin are established in the Old Testament to make clear the unique hope offered by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Case in point is the exile.

THE WARNING AND JUDGMENT OF THE EXILE

God warned Israel of the consequences of their idolatry all the way back when Moses positioned the people on the brink of the promised land in the first place. God warned that they would be judged should they rebel from the Lord once they inhabited the land: "You will become an object of horror, scorn, and ridicule among all the peoples where the LORD will drive you" (Deuteronomy 28:37). Though the exile would not take place for generations, the warning was loud and clear and repeated. When God's judgment came, no one would be able to say that God was capricious in His actions.

The looming threat of the exile was a constant reality during Israel's time in the land. Prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah spent years echoing these warnings to no avail. The people persisted in their waywardness, and God did just what He said He would do. He allowed pagan nations to crush Israel, destroy their land, and carry their people off into captivity. Perhaps the high-water mark of this judgment occurred when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and ransacked the Lord's temple (2 Kings 25). As an act of just judgment, God removed His blessings of the land and the temple because He would not allow His people to mock Him with rampant idolatry (Ezekiel 36:16-20).

THE GRACIOUS GOD OF THE EXILE

A number of themes emerge from the exile.

- First, God is just to judge humans for their sin. He is holy, and He has provided clear standards that must be obeyed. When people fail to honor Him as God, they are rightly judged.
- Second, God gives time to repent. While the final exile was swift, the time of warning was extensive. The people had ample time to repent from their idolatry and turn to the Lord.

- Third, God does what He says. We tend to apply this truth positively and reflect on how God keeps His promises to care, protect, love, and preserve His people—and we should. But we should also consider that God is faithful to keep His promises of judgment. He is not like the parent who threatens a punishment they never intend to enact. God does what He says.
- Finally, God gives grace. The Bible doesn't end with the exile. It's not the final word. The story continues with God bringing the people back to the land and ultimately undoing the exile through the salvation offered in Jesus.

THE GRACIOUS GOD OF THE GOSPEL

The exile also has implications for unbelievers today. In the same way as with Old Testament Israel, God has given clear warnings about the just judgment due for human sin (Romans 3:23; 6:23). This judgment is more than a physical exile from the land. It is death—physical, spiritual, and eternal death. God also provides time for unbelievers to repent. Sadly, as Paul wrote, many presume upon this time and believe that God has turned a blind eye to their sin and that He will not hold them accountable. Instead, they should see this time as an opportunity to repent (2:1-11).

Unbelievers should feel the burden to flee from the coming judgment because God will keep His word. As Paul warned the church in Galatia: “Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the

flesh” (Galatians 6:7-8). A person who fails to repent of their sin will experience the reality of God’s faithfulness in judgment.

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Finally, God does give grace. However, this grace will not come from another offer of salvation on the other side of death like the grace seen after the exile. Instead, this grace is available now. God has provided a means of escape from the wrath to come through the work of Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:7). Through faith in Christ and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, sinners can be forgiven of their sins, made right with God, and promised an eternal inheritance with all of the saints that can never be taken away (Romans 8).

Matt Rogers is the pastor of Christ Fellowship Cherrydale in Greenville, South Carolina. He and his wife, Sarah, have five children: Corrie, Avery, Hudson, Willa, and Fuller. Matt is also an assistant professor of church planting at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, the church development coordinator with the Pillar Network, and a freelance author.