

The Message of Jeremiah 31

01/23/2010

Jeremiah was a prophet of God. The singular importance of his ministry was that he prophesied during a period of transition. The 10 Northern tribes of Israel had been taken into captivity over one hundred years earlier. The tribe of Judah had progressively gone into more sin, idolatry and disobedience to God and His covenant.

Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem and Judah during the 41 year period from 629 to 588 BC. The word came to him,

Jeremiah 1:1-5. The words of Jeremiah ... to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.
... Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

Judgment must be announced by Jeremiah time and again throughout his life.

Jeremiah 25:3. "From the thirteenth year of Josiah ... I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened".

Beginning in Jeremiah 31:2, God through Jeremiah is going to begin to encourage the people.

Jeremiah 31:2-3. Thus says the LORD: ... "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you..."

Jeremiah 31:6-9. For there shall be a day ... A great throng shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. ... for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.

Three other prophecies begin with 31:27 "Behold, the days are coming..." 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming..." and 31:38 "Behold, the days are coming..."

Jeremiah 31:31-37. "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

In Jeremiah 31:31 we have the words: *new covenant* (Brit Hadashah – in the Hebrew language). This is the only such instance of these words in the Hebrew Bible. These words have different meanings to both Christians and Jews for different reasons.

What is a covenant anyway? A covenant is a contract.

The American Heritage Dictionary, p. 334, Second College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company (1991), defines covenant (the noun) as follows: *covenant* n.

1. A binding agreement made between two or more persons or parties; compact.
2. Law.
 - a. A formal sealed agreement or contract.
 - b. A suit to recover damages for violation of such a contract.

In other words, a covenant is a contractual agreement between two parties.

Exodus 19:5 - And now, if you will obey Me and keep My covenant, you shall be to Me a treasure out of all peoples, for Mine is the entire earth.

The terms of the contract consist of blessings (rewards) that would accrue by obedience and warnings and curses (consequences) that would result from disobedience. Detailed blessings in the wake of obedience are found in Leviticus 26:3-13, in Deuteronomy 11:13-25, and in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. The wages of disobedience are detailed in Leviticus 26:14-39, and again in Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

Exodus 24:3-4,7. And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances, and all the people answered in unison and said, "All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do." ... They said, "All that the Lord spoke we will do and we will hear."

The fact that this *new covenant* (*brit hadashah*), will not replace the Law, (*Torah*) is emphasized by Jeremiah himself:

Jeremiah 31:32. For this is the covenant ...“I will place My Laws, the Torah (*torati*) within them, ... and I will be their God and they shall be a people for Me.”

In Jeremiah 31:31-32, the Prophet declares the new covenant to be:

“Not like the covenant that I formed with their forefathers on the day I took them by the hand to take them out of the land of Egypt, for they broke My covenant,...”

How will this new covenant differ from the original Sinai covenant?

Exodus 13:9. And it shall be to you ... that the Law (*Torah*) of the Lord shall be in your mouth; for with a mighty hand has the Lord brought you out of Egypt.

And the contract was verbally agreed to, as was seen from Exodus 24:3,7. On the other hand, according to Jeremiah 31:32, God says, “... I will place My Torah within them and I will inscribe it upon their heart ...”; the *new covenant* will be placed within the people.

In other words, this *new covenant* will simply be an integral part of the people of God, and in the future of physical Jacob, Israel and Judah and it will become just part of the converted man’s way of life.

The new covenant does not abolish God’s Law — the *Torah* if you will. Both the new and the old covenant deal with God’s law. The law of God is the same in both cases. There are many verses in the Bible, that state that God’s Law is everlasting, eternal, that it will never be done away.

Psalm 119:142. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.

1 Chronicles 16:17. And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant.

Psalm 105:10. And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant:

Psalm 119:44. So shall I keep Your law (*Torah*) continually, forever and ever.

Psalm 119:144. The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting; give me understanding, and I shall live.

The keeping of God’s word is the path to eternal life, our Savior told us,

Matthew 4:4. But He answered and said, “It is written, `Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

We are the *New Covenant* Church of God. God the Father has given us His precious Holy Spirit to renew the understandings that we already have. We have a mission in demonstrating that we are under this *new covenant* and that we look forward to serving and obeying God in every way we can.

We owe it all to the appointed mediator of the *New* and *Improved* covenant, to our Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ. We look forward to His return with great anticipation and we pray for His Kingdom to come soon!