

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt — a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, 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 within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

The Bible is all about God and the people in a covenant relationship. The almighty and all-powerful creator of the heavens and the earth desires to be in a loving relationship with humanity. The people get a terrific blessing. They get land that is very productive and they get divine protection so that they get to keep the land. The condition of this blessing is if they remain faithful. The Bible emphasizes this condition repeatedly. The only thing that they need to do is to remain faithful to the one true God. The relationship is based on love and is frequently compared to a marriage with each side committed to their end of the agreement. The relationship is also compared to that of a parent and child relationship. The parent provides and protects the child and the child responds to love with love, appreciation, and obedience. The loving relationship requires a commitment on both parties. The only requirement for the people is to worship God and only God. Faith balances and maintains the relationship. God is loving and caring and takes the initiative in establishing the relationship. The covenant is required because both parties have to be in agreement on the conditions of the relationship. God does a lot of good for people because this relationship is based on love.

If the recipients of gifts don't appreciate the gifts, then then they don't appreciate the giver. The Bible states that God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5). However, it is not jealousy as we commonly associate it. There is much more to it. God is put into the position of one that would be jealous because God is abandoned and rejected by the people that God love. They don't love God back. Therefore, the deal terminated. Their action is an insult to God. The point is not that God is jealous; the point is that God is put in a position of being hurt by the people. There is no value in a relationship when love is rejected. Therefore, Jealousy in this case is not an emotion of envy; jealousy is a state of being rejected.

The time of Jeremiah was during the Exile. It was the worst time ever for the people. Assyria had invaded and destroyed Israel. The people were well aware of the danger. God used Prophets to deliver the word to the people, warn them, and inform them of how they have transgressed from the will of God. The prophets tell the people how their actions displease God. Through the prophets God offers the people a chance to repent and a warning of the consequences if they fail to repent. God also promises redemption.

The prophecy of Jeremiah is congruent with the other prophets because it is the word of God. The testimony that Jeremiah delivered to the people is that God is going to

restructure the covenant. This is a really big deal! The whole nation was in a relationship with God that was based on the covenant. The people knew the covenant, the conditions of the covenant, and the consequences of breaking covenant. The covenant is based on the law of God and obedience to the law. Israel was destroyed due to their failure to keep covenant. Now Judea is under the same threat. The people know what the prophets have been telling them. Now, here is Jeremiah stating that God is going to establish a New Covenant. This is a very big deal! It changes everything.

Let's take a quick look at the questions of the New Covenant: who, what, when, where, how, and why. Who - God is the answer. The prophet delivers the word of God and it is God that says "I will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah." What - New Covenant is the answer. This is very important because it is significantly different from the Old Covenant. When - sometime in the future is the answer. The words "after those days" means after the Exile has ended. No exact date is set in the scriptures. Where - the Promised Land is the answer. The exiles will return to the Promised Land and the nation will be united once again. How - the answer not revealed here. However, we know it is achieved through the love sacrifice of Jesus. Why - is due to the conditions of covenant.

The New Covenant is significantly different from the old one. The Old Covenant was based on law. The consequence of disobedient was punishment. The motivation to be obedient was to avoid punishment and was carried out as a sense of duty. The New Covenant is one of love; it comes from the heart of God. The motivation to be obedient is the loving relationship. With the New Covenant there is the promise of forgiveness. God will forgive the iniquity of the people and will not hold sin against us. This is absolutely terrific! God replaces punishment with forgiveness. This is a very big deal! The Old Covenant has punishment, consequences, fear of wrath. The New Covenant has grace, redemption, and forgiveness. As such, the New Covenant is written on the hearts of the people. God gets deeper into the relationship. God reaches to the heart of the people. The New Covenant is heart to heart; from the heart of God to the heart of humanity. The New Covenant is God's gift of love from the heart of God to our hearts.