Promise of a New Covenant
Jeremiah 31:27-34
SS Lesson for 11/12/2017

Devotional Scripture: Heb 7:11-28

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines the provisions of the covenant and what distinguishes the Promise of a New Covenant from other covenants. The study’s aim is to realize that the new covenant involves an internalization of God’s truths. The study’s application is to obey biblical truths not merely externally but internally (from the heart).

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Jer 31:33

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

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

31:2-6. God assured the Northern Kingdom that He will restore her. Those who had survived the sword (probably Assyria’s destruction of Israel) will yet experience God’s favor as He leads them into the desert for their new Exodus (cf. 16:14-15; 23:7-8; Hosea 2:14-15). The turmoil of their long years of exile will cease when God intervenes to give rest to the nation Israel. The motivation for God’s future restoration of the nation is His everlasting love (‘ahāḇāh) which He will freely bestow on His people (cf. Hosea 11:4; 14:4; Zeph. 3:17) and His loving-kindness (ḥesed; cf. Jer. 9:24; 32:18; Lam. 3:32; Dan. 9:4). God had made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:7-21) and another covenant with the nation Israel (Ex. 19:3-8; Lev. 26; Deut. 28:1-30:10), and He vowed to stay faithful to His commitments. Israel could look forward to experiencing God’s blessing. Jeremiah drew three word-pictures that will characterize God’s restoration of Israel. First, it will be a time of renewed joy. Israel will once again take up her tambourines and dance with the joyful. The times of sadness will cease when the Captivity ends (cf. Ps. 137:1-4; Jer. 16:8-9; 25:10-11). Second, it will be a time of peace and prosperity as the people plant their vineyards on the hills of Samaria. Free from external threats, they will be able to enjoy their fruit (cf. Lev. 26:16; Deut. 28:33; Micah 4:4; Zech. 3:9-10). Third, it will be a time of renewed commitment to the Lord. The watchmen stationed on the hills of Ephraim will summon the people to go up to Zion to worship the Lord.

31:7-9. God’s restoration will be accompanied by songs of joy and the praises of the people for His deliverance. No one will be too far away for the Lord to restore him; God will gather His people from the ends of the earth. Also no one will be too insignificant for the Lord to deliver him; God will restore the blind and the lame along with expectant mothers. As God leads these people on their new Exodus into Israel He will provide for their every need. He will guide the people beside streams of water (cf. Ex. 15:22-25; Num. 20:2-13; Ps. 23:2) and they will travel on a level path so they will not stumble. God will do all this because of His special relationship to Israel. He is Israel’s father (Deut. 32:6), and Ephraim (emphasizing the Northern tribes of Israel) is his firstborn son (cf. Ex. 4:22). Jeremiah used the image of a father/son relationship to show God’s deep love for His people (cf. Hosea 11:1, 8).

31:10-14. Israel’s regathering (like a flock of sheep; cf. 23:3; Micah 2:12; 5:4; 7:14) will be accompanied by a renewal of God’s material blessings. Those who will be restored to the land will rejoice in the bounty of crops (cf. Jer. 31:5) and flocks. Jeremiah compared Israel’s material wealth to a well-watered garden that was producing in abundance (cf. Deut. 30:5, 9). This outpouring of blessing will produce gladness, comfort, and joy (cf. Jer. 31:4, 7).

31:15-20. The nation’s future hope will contrast sharply with her present misery. The cry from Ramah was one of mourning and great weeping as Jeremiah pictured Rachel weeping for her children. To what was Jeremiah referring? Ramah was a town five miles north of Jerusalem, and Rachel was Joseph and Benjamin’s mother. Joseph was the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, who became the two major tribes in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Thus Jeremiah was picturing the weeping of the women of the Northern Kingdom as they watched their children being carried into exile in 722 B.C. However, Jeremiah could also have had the 586 B.C. deportation of Judah in view because Ramah was the staging point for Nebuchadnezzar’s deportation (cf. 40:1). In all likelihood these women were crying because they would never see their children again. But as the women of Israel and Judah wept for their exiled children, God offered a word of comfort. There was hope for their future because their children would return to their own land. God would bring about a restoration. In what sense was Herod’s slaughter of the babies (Matt. 2:17-18) a “fulfillment” of Jeremiah 31:15? Jeremiah pointed to an Old Testament deportation of children from a town north of Jerusalem; Matthew used the passage to explain the New Testament slaughter of
children in a village south of Jerusalem. The answer to the problem hinges on Matthew’s use of the word “fulfilled” (πληροῦ). Though Matthew did use the word to record an actual fulfillment of an Old Testament prediction (cf., e.g., Matt. 21:4-5 with Zech. 9:9), he also used the word to indicate that the full potential of something in the Old Testament had been realized (cf. Matt. 3:15; 5:17). In these latter instances there is no prophetic significance to the word “fulfill,” which is how Matthew used the word to associate the slaughter in Bethlehem with the sadness in Ramah. Matthew used Jeremiah 31:15 in his book (Matt. 2:17-18) to explain the sadness of the mothers of Bethlehem. The pain of those mothers in Ramah who watched their sons being carried into exile found its full potential in the cries of the mothers of Bethlehem who cradled their sons’ lifeless bodies in their arms. Jeremiah ended this section by recording Israel’s cry of contrition that she will recite when she returns to the land. Though she had strayed (Jer. 31:19) she will repent. When she returns to her God she will be ashamed and humiliated because of her sin. God in turn will express His great compassion for the wayward but returning nation (cf. Hosea 2:16-23).

31:21-22. God called on the captives to set up road signs and guideposts as they traveled to Babylon and to remember the road they would take. They would need this information during His promised restoration so they could return to their towns. This time of promised restoration will be so remarkable that it will be as if God will create a new thing on earth. That new event is described proverbially by the clause, a woman will surround a man. This is probably the most difficult verse to understand in the Book of Jeremiah. One possible idea is that a woman will seek, or court, a man (NIV marg.). In that culture a woman would not normally court a man, so this would indicate something unusual. The woman here is Israel (v. 21). She had been unfaithful, but in the future she will finally seek out her God and ask to be united with Him.

31:23-26. When God will restore the nation of Israel, He will also reverse the fortunes of Judah. Those living in the land of Judah will again invoke a blessing on Jerusalem (God’s righteous dwelling) and the temple area (the sacred mountain; cf. Pss. 2:6; 43:3; Isa. 66:20). The land itself will be repopulated, and God will meet every need. The rest of the chapter focuses on the new relationship God will establish with His people. Jeremiah used the same Hebrew phrase to introduce the three sections that form this unit. Each section begins with הָנִיחַ יָמוֹן בָּאָנָה (lit., “Behold, days are coming,” vv. 27, 31, 38; cf. 33:14). In the third occurrence the word for “coming” was omitted, but it is clear that Jeremiah intended for the reader to supply it. Jeremiah used this phrase to introduce three aspects of the Lord’s new relationship with His people.

31:27-30. God vowed to provide a new beginning for His covenant people. In this new age God will plant the nations of Israel and Judah with the offspring of men and animals. Jeremiah again used agricultural and architectural metaphors to illustrate God’s work (cf. 1:10). God had judged Judah for her sin, but He will reverse that judgment. God’s work for the nation will silence a proverb that was common in Jeremiah’s day (cf. Ezek. 18:2-4). Those facing judgment in Jeremiah’s day felt they were being unfairly punished by God for their ancestors’ sins. Though the fathers had eaten sour grapes, it was the children who experienced the effects of having their teeth... set on edge. This proverb was false because it implied that God was unrighteous. God’s justice will guarantee that each guilty person will die for his own sin.

31:31-37. In addition to a new beginning God promised to make a New Covenant with His people. This New Covenant was expressly for the house of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and the house of Judah (the Southern Kingdom). It would not be like the covenant God had made with Israel’s forefathers at the time of the Exodus because that covenant had been broken by the people (cf. 11:1-8). The earlier covenant God referred to was the Mosaic Covenant contained in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Twice God had announced a series of punishments or “curses” that would be invoked on those who violated His Law (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). The final judgment would be a physical deportation from the land of Israel. With the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. this final “curse” was completed. God had set a holy standard of conduct before the people, but because of their sinful hearts they could not keep those standards. A change was needed. God’s New Covenant will involve an internalization of His Law. He will put His Law in their minds and on their hearts, not just on stones (Ex. 34:1). There will be no need to exhort people to know the LORD because they will already all know God (cf. Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14). God’s New Covenant will give Israel the inner ability to obey His righteous standards and thus to enjoy His blessings. Ezekiel indicated that this change will result from God’s bestowal of the Holy Spirit on these believers (cf. Ezek. 36:24-32). In Old Testament times the Holy Spirit did not universally indwell all believers. Thus one different aspect of the New Covenant is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all believers (cf. Joel 2:28-32). A second aspect of the New Covenant will be God’s provision for sin. The sins of the people resulted in the curses of the Old Covenant. However, as part of the New Covenant God will forgive Israel’s wickedness and remember their sins no more. But how could a holy God overlook sin?
The answer is that God did not “overlook” sin—its penalty was paid for by a Substitute (cf. Isa. 53:4-6). In the Upper Room Christ announced that the New Covenant was to be inaugurated through the shedding of His blood (cf. Matt. 26:27-28; Luke 22:20). Forgiveness of sin would be part of the New Covenant only because God provided a Substitute to pay the penalty required of man. To underscore Israel’s permanence because of this New Covenant, God compared her existence to that of the heavens and the earth. As God had appointed the sun to shine by day and the moon and stars to shine by night (cf. Gen. 1:14-19), so He had appointed Israel as His chosen nation. It would take a feat as fabulous as making these natural decrees vanish from nature to make Israel... cease to be a nation. The power God displayed in creating the universe was the power that He exercises in preserving Israel as a nation. Throughout history people have tried in vain to destroy Israel, but none have succeeded—and none ever will. How is the church related to the New Covenant? Is the New Covenant being fulfilled in the church today? Ultimately the New Covenant will find its complete fulfillment during the Millennium when Israel is restored to her God. The New Covenant was made with Israel (Jer. 31:31, 33) just as the Mosaic Covenant had been (v. 32). One key element of the New Covenant is the preservation of Israel as a nation (vv. 35-37). However, though the ultimate fulfillment of this covenant awaits the millennial reign of Christ, the church today is participating in some of the benefits of that covenant. The covenant was inaugurated at Christ’s death (Matt. 26:27-28; Luke 22:20), and the church, by her union with Christ, is sharing in many of the spiritual blessings promised to Israel (cf. Rom. 11:11-27; Eph. 2:11-22) including the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15; 12:22-24). But though the church’s participation in the New Covenant is real, it is not the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise. The fact that believers today enjoy the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant (forgiveness of sins and the indwelling Holy Spirit) does not mean that spiritual and physical blessings will not be realized by Israel. That still awaits the day when Israel will acknowledge her sin and turn to the Messiah for forgiveness (Zech. 12:10-13:1). Some Bible scholars, however, take a slightly different view. They see one covenant (a covenant of grace), which God will apply to Israel in the Millennium and is now applying to the church in this present age. In both views the New Covenant is made possible by the blood of Christ.

31:38-40. The third aspect of God’s new relationship will be the establishment of a new city for His people. Jerusalem, the city that symbolizes God’s relationship with His people, was destroyed by Babylon. But even before that event took place God promised that the city will be rebuilt. The Tower of Hananel was at the northeast corner of the city (cf. Neh. 3:1; 12:39; Zech. 14:10) and the Corner Gate was probably located on the northwest corner of the city (cf. 2 Kings 14:13; 2 Chron. 26:9; Zech. 14:10). Thus the northern wall will be restored. The locations of the hill of Gareb and Goah are unknown; but since Jeremiah 31:38 described the northern boundary and verse 40 describes the southern and eastern boundaries it may be assumed that Gareb and Goah detail the western boundary of the city. Perhaps Gareb referred to the hill west of the Tyropeon Valley that is today called Mount Zion. The southwestern and southern boundary will be the valley in which dead bodies and ashes are thrown. This is the Hinnom Valley (cf. 7:30-34; 19:1-6). The eastern boundary is the terraces out to the Kidron Valley. This boundary would extend to the corner of the Horse Gate on the southeast tip of the city, where the Kidron Valley and Hinnom Valley unite. God described two characteristics of this new city. First, it will be holy to the Lord (cf. Zech. 14:20-21). The city and its inhabitants will be set apart to God who will dwell in her midst (Ezek. 48:35). Second, the city will no more be uprooted or demolished. The ravages of war will not be experienced in this new city. These verses were not fulfilled after the Babylonian Captivity ended. Since the postexilic period provides clear evidence that holiness was not a primary characteristic of the people in Jerusalem and Judah (cf. Mal. 1:6-14), so the city was destroyed again in A.D. 70 by the Romans. These promises (Jer. 31:31-40) await their future fulfillment during the Millennium.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

The beautiful promise of a new covenant was given during a terribly dark time in the history of Judah. The Babylonian invasion, with the destruction of Jerusalem, was just around the corner. Jeremiah, God’s faithful prophet at that time, was under fire, frequently harassed, and even imprisoned. The situation was bleak. Part of Jeremiah 31 is a prophecy of the suffering to come. The Lord made reference to the nation being plucked up and thrown down. Yet it would also be built up and planted again (vs. 28). Ultimately, the new covenant’s fulfillment depended on Christ, who came to replace an old covenant that could not supply what sinful and suffering souls needed. The promises of the new covenant are better (Heb. 8:6). Let us look at what they are. First, there is the promise of regeneration, new life in Christ. The text states that in the workings of the new covenant, God will put His “law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” This speaks of the transforming power of God. It is one thing to try to follow a law or command that exists
outside of us. But when that law is part of our inward man, the entire dynamic of life is changed. We are given an inward power to fulfill God's law. So the new covenant includes within its vision the gift of the Holy Spirit who indwells the believer at the moment of regeneration. This new life within grants an agreement with God in the inner man. No longer are we oriented chiefly to serving our self-centered desires. With new life within, we suddenly have the capacity to grow in our love for God and our desire to fulfill His commands. This makes the Christian life possible. A spiritual transformation has taken place. A second promise of the new covenant is an abiding relationship with God. After the enactment of the new covenant, God says that He "will be their God, and they shall be my people." At the moment of saving faith, we enter this covenant and are no longer estranged from God. We have been brought near and have full knowledge that we belong to Him forever. He is our God, and we are His people. We know from that moment on that He will never leave us or forsake us. No foe shall overtake us. No enemy can have victory over us. We belong to God. The promises of the new covenant, fulfilled ultimately in Christ, are, to sum it up, regeneration (new life) and relationship. This gives hope and confidence that lives can be rebuilt in Christ. Just as the ancient nation of Judah was given a promise that they would be rebuilt and reestablished after the exile, so also we realize that God builds lives through the power of His new covenant. The presence of God in the Person of the Holy Spirit grants new life and the capacity for continued transformation. We should never give up in the journey of the Christian life. Circumstances can be discouraging, and our failures are always with us, but the promise of the new covenant is that all lives can be rebuilt by God's saving and transforming grace. Through Him, victory is certain!

**Lesson Introduction and Background**

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Ancient Israel was given a do-over by God. Israel had to suffer exile for her sins, but God reversed the exile, restored the Israelites to their land, and granted the promise of a new covenant. There would be a new people of God in a day to come. They would know him in the fullest sense, would have his law written on their hearts, and would experience complete and total forgiveness for sin.

Jeremiah’s ministry may have begun about 627 BC; many scholars believe he influenced the law reforms enacted by King Josiah (640-609 BC). Jeremiah lived to see the death of Josiah and the collapse of his reforms. Ultimately Jeremiah encouraged the people of Judah to capitulate to the new superpower, the Babylonians, because Babylonia was the instrument of God’s judgment against their sins. Jeremiah’s ministry ended sometime after the Babylonian-appointed governor of Judah (Gedaliah) was assassinated in about 585 BC. The prophet was forced to flee to Egypt, where tradition says he died. The book of Jeremiah is complicated, and its episodes are often difficult to date. Most of Jeremiah’s oracles are judgments against the Judeans, the people of the southern kingdom of divided Israel (the tribes of the northern kingdom having been taken into exile by the Assyrians decades before). Those oracles lament the apostasy of the people. The only hope Jeremiah gives is found in a section known as the Book of Consolation, which is Jeremiah 30:1-33:26. But what a hope it is! God promised to make the exiles his people once again (Jeremiah 30:22), to “make a new covenant” with them (31:31-34), to return them to their land (32:41), and to establish once and for all time the Davidic dynasty as originally promised (33:15-26; 30:9). The theme of the Book of Consolation is restated often:

**Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

**Hope for Justification (Jer 31:27-30)**

27 "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast.
28 And it shall come to pass, that as I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord.
29 In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge.'
30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.
Justification through love (27-28)

Justified by God's everlasting love (Jer 31:3)

3 The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.

Justified by God's love because He made us His child (1 John 3:1-3)

1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Justified by God's love because He demonstrated His own love for us (Rom 5:8-9)

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Justified by God's love because belief in Jesus brings eternal life (John 3:16)

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Justification through mercy (29-30)

God's mercy is expressed through justification through Jesus (Eph 2:7)

7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Justification through God's merciful unlimited patience (1 Tim 1:16)

16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Justification through God's mercy by the new birth given to us (1 Peter 1:3)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We are now one of God's people through God's mercy (1 Peter 2:10)

10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Hope for New Covenant (Jer 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."
Covenant of a new relationship (31-32)

New, not just restored (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Most of us have seen an old tractor, its days of usefulness long past, sitting broken and rusting beside a barn. The farmer has replaced it with a new, larger, and more powerful machine. However, some people like old tractors. Don Dahlinghaus, an Ohio farmer, is one such person. His collection of fifty antique tractors contains examples dating back into the 1920s. Photos and descriptions of many of them can be seen at his Web site www.dondatractors.homestead.com. Each winter Dahlinghaus restores another tractor or two. When he is finished with the task, he uses them in parades and occasionally does some token farm work with them. The Old Covenant was somewhat like these old tractors. It served its purpose for its time, but a “new and better model” was eventually needed—a covenant with “more power,” power to meet the needs of the human race in a way the old one never could. The New Covenant that God promised through the prophet would do the job so much better than the old one. The Old Covenant (like the old tractors) had become broken and useless. But rather than attempt to restore what had been broken (as some people still do), God offered a New Covenant that comes with a divine guarantee that it will perform the task it was designed for: to bring us salvation and forgiveness through the blood of Christ, the Son of God.

A new relationship that deals with the mind and heart (Heb 8:7-10)

7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 8 But God found fault with the people and said: “The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. 10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

A new relationship that is written with the Holy Spirit on our heart (2 Cor 3:3)

3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

A new relationship through faith (Gal 3:26-29)

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

A new relationship in which we are called a Child of God (Rom 8:16-17)

16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

A new relationship that makes us an heir of God (Titus 3:3-7)

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Covenant of a new spirit (33)

A new covenant that is a ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:7-8)

7 Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?
A new Spirit that is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17)
16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

A new Spirit that makes our spirit alive (Rom 8:10-11)
10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.
11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

A new Spirit that allows us to call God our Father (Gal 4:6-7)
6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

A new Spirit that seals us until the redemption (Eph 1:13-14)
13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession - the praise of his glory.

Covenant of a new knowledge of God (34)

Knowledge that only comes through Jesus (Matt 11:27)
27 “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

A knowledge of God that comes from Christians being a shining light (2 Cor 4:6)
6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Knowledge that comes from the anointing of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20)
20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

A knowledge that gives us an understanding that God is the “true” God (1 John 5:20)
20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true - even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Knowledge that is eternal life (John 17:3)
3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable

At that future time, namely, the eschatological future (cf. Jeremiah 30:24), the Lord would establish an intimate relationship between Himself and all the families of His people (cf. Jeremiah 31:33; Genesis 17:7; Zechariah 12:10-14). He would finally achieve what His people had always frustrated by their sins.

Verse 15

The Lord described the Israelite mothers - using the figure of Rachel - weeping for their children who had died because of the Assyrian invasion. Rachel - being the mother of Joseph (the father of Ephraim and Manasseh), and Benjamin - represented all the Israelites, from the north and the south. Ramah was a town about five miles north of Jerusalem that stood in Benjamin’s tribal territory near the border between Israel and Judah. The exiles stopped at Ramah, and undoubtedly wept there, on their way to exile in Babylon (Jeremiah 40:1). Rachel’s
tomb was near Bethlehem (Genesis 35:16; Genesis 35:19), south of Jerusalem. "Rachel’s life story sets her apart from the other Israelite ancestors. She alone had only a grave and never a home in the promised land (Jeremiah 30:3). She died "on the way" (Genesis 35:19), and her last words express her sorrow (Genesis 35:18). Not every mother will give up her own life for her child’s (e.g, Jeremiah 19:9; Lamentations 2:20; Lamentations 4:10; 2 Kings 6:28-29). Rachel’s death in childbirth makes her deeply credible as an example of the profound extent of a mother’s love. Rachel is a mother who does not forget her children (cf. Isaiah 49:15)." "The destruction of the people of Israel by the Assyrians and Chaldeans is a type of the massacre of the infants at Bethlehem, in so far as the sin which brought the children of Israel into exile laid a foundation for the fact that Herod the Idumean became king over the Jews, and wished to destroy the true King and Saviour of Israel that he might strengthen his own dominion."

Verses 15-22
The end of Rachel’s mourning (31:15-22)
"In this strophe the promise is further confirmed by carrying out the thought, that Israel’s release from his captivity shall certainly take place, however little prospect there is of it at present."

Verse 16-17
The Lord comforted "Rachel" by assuring her that her children would return from exile. All the work she had expended on them was not in vain. There was hope for their future.

Verse 18
Yahweh heard Ephraim, the people of the Northern Kingdom, acknowledging that He had chastened them like an untrained calf. They cried out to Him to restore them because He was their God.

Verse 19
Ephraim repented, and felt humiliated and ashamed of his previous youthful rebellion against the Lord. Slapping one’s thigh, an onomatopoeic expression in Hebrew, was a common expression of remorse, horror, and terror in ancient Near Eastern culture (cf. Ezekiel 21:12).

Verse 20
Yahweh still regarded the people of Ephraim as His dear son and delightful child. Even though He had rebuked him, He still remembered and yearned for him. He would surely have mercy on these people (cf. Hosea 11:1-4; Hosea 11:8-9).

Verse 21
The special object of Yahweh’s love, Israel (cf. Jeremiah 31:4), should give attention to returning to the Promised Land (cf. Isaiah 35; Isaiah 40:3-5; Isaiah 40:11; Isaiah 41:18-20; Isaiah 42:16; Isaiah 43:1-7; Isaiah 44:3-4; Isaiah 49:9-13).

Verse 22
Israel had wandered from the Lord long enough, as a wayward daughter. He would bring a new thing to pass, namely, Israel’s repentance and return to the land. The last line of this verse may have been a popular proverb describing something very unusual and unexpected. Some interpreters, following the early church father Jerome, have taken it as a prophecy about Mary’s conception of Jesus, but this seems unlikely. Others view it as simply a figure expressing security, here of Israel’s security back in the land. Perhaps the expression points to something amazing and hard to believe that would happen without being explicit about what it would be. Still other interpreters believe the woman represents Israel and the man Yahweh, the point being that the woman who had formerly departed from her Husband would cling to Him in the future (cf. Jeremiah 2:20-21; Hosea 1-3). I prefer this view. Another view is that the woman, Israel, will become aggressive and will cling to and overpower warriors among the nations who will oppose her. "Two things are "new," which have not been seen before in the land: (1) Faithless Israel, who is called a whore in chap3, will be taken back by God, even though such a thing is never done (Jeremiah 3:1-2). (2) Mourning will be turned to joy."

Verse 23
Instead of Judah being a target for cursing in the future, as she became because of the Babylonian exile, she would be a subject of blessing. She would become a place where righteousness dwelt, a holy hill.
Verses 23-26
The regathering of Judah (31:23-26)

Verse 24-25
Judah would experience great unity at that time because the Lord would satisfy the previously weary residents and refresh those who formerly languished.

Verse 26
Jeremiah awoke from the sleep in which he had received this encouraging revelation from the Lord-feeling revitalized. The revelation was positive, and it encouraged him. Perhaps since sleep is often symbolic of death (cf. Job 14:12; et al.), Jeremiah here may also represent Judah awakening to new life. "... this prophecy is the only one in the whole book which contains unmixed comfort, and that it is thus easy to explain why he [Jeremiah] could never forget that moment when, awaking after he had received it, he found he had experienced a sweet sleep."

Verse 27
Days would come when the Lord would fill the Promised Land with people and animals once again. The land had become desolate because of the exiles.

Verses 27-30
Future fruitfulness (31:27-30)

Verse 28
As Yahweh directed the breaking down of His nation, so He would oversee its building up.

Verse 29-30
In that time of future blessing, people would no longer repeat a popular proverb that said that the children were suffering because of their fathers' sins. This proverb expressed a popular misconception (cf. Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:2-4). It blamed present trouble on past ancestors inordinately. In that day, everyone would bear the consequences of his own actions. Justice would be obvious then, even though at present it did not seem to be operating. Whereas people do suffer consequences for the sins of their ancestors to a limited extent (corporate responsibility), they much more consistently suffer for their own sins (individual responsibility).

Verse 31
In the future, the Lord will make a new covenant with all the Israelites, specifically the Israelites who had inhabited the Northern Kingdom and those who had inhabited the Southern Kingdom (cf. Jeremiah 32:40; Isaiah 24:5; Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:8; Isaiah 55:3; Isaiah 59:21; Isaiah 61:8; Ezekiel 16:60; Ezekiel 37:26; Hosea 2:18-20; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8 to Hebrews 9:28; Hebrews 12:24). This is the only place in the Old Testament where the term "new covenant" appears, though there are many references to this covenant elsewhere. "The short passage which develops from the simple announcement in this verse is one of the most important in the book of Jeremiah. Indeed it represents one of the deepest insights in the whole OT." "The heart of OT theology and of the message of Jeremiah was his teaching on the New covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34."

Verses 31-34
The New Covenant (31:31-34)

Many commentators believe that Jeremiah’s revelation of the New Covenant was his greatest theological contribution. They view it as the high point of the book, the climax of the prophet’s teaching. "The prophecy of Jeremiah marks a watershed in Hebrew religious and cultic life. From this point onwards there is a significant divergence between what has obtained in the past and what will characterize the future religious observances of Israel."

Verse 32
This New Covenant would be different from the Mosaic Covenant, which the Israelites consistently and inevitably broke in spite of Yahweh’s faithful commitment to them. They had worshipped Baal (Heb. ba’al) even though Yahweh had been a faithful husband (Heb. ba’al) to them.
Verse 33

Instead of God’s law being external to them, the Lord would write it on their heart (i.e., mind and will; cf. Jeremiah 17:1). He will do something for them that they cannot do for themselves (cf. Deuteronomy 30:5-6). “Writing on the heart” suggests the removal of written documents and merely human mediators. Having the Lord’s Word in the heart prevents sin and fosters obedience (cf. Deuteronomy 11:18; Psalm 119:11). David equated having the law written on his heart with desiring to do God’s will (Psalm 40:8) “It will become part of the nature of God’s people: it will be instinctive. The core of the new covenant is God’s gift of a new heart (cf. Ezekiel 36:25-27). Herein lies the sufficient motivation for obeying God’s law.” “... there is no further need of any external means like mutual teaching about God ...” God would also enter into an intimate relationship with His people as His covenant partners (cf. Jeremiah 7:23; Jeremiah 11:4; Jeremiah 24:7; Jeremiah 30:22; Jeremiah 31:1; Jeremiah 32:38; Deuteronomy 31; Ezekiel 11:20; Ezekiel 36:28). The old Mosaic Covenant being broken, a new relationship would begin. “If the sheer grace of God’s election as covenant partner was apparent in the first covenant making, how much more so in this promise following their history of unfaithfulness and rebellion (Jeremiah 31:32).” Notice that Jeremiah revealed nothing about human responsibility under the New Covenant. That would come later with the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles.

Verse 34

All the Israelites, from the least to the greatest, would also know the Lord intimately, without having to be exhorted to do so. “The verb know here probably carries its most profound connotation, the intimate personal knowledge which arises between two persons who are committed wholly to one another in a relationship that touches mind, emotion, and will. In such a relationship the past is forgiven and forgotten.” They would know Him in this intimate way because He would forgive their sins and not bring them to memory or judgment any more. True forgiveness, in contrast to the covering of sin that the Old Covenant sacrifices provided, would make intimacy with God possible (cf. Isaiah 54:10; Ezekiel 34:25; Ezekiel 37:26). “The old covenant spoke of a great physical deliverance from Egypt through the blood of lambs and the power of God; the new covenant proclaims a great spiritual deliverance from sin and death through the efficacious blood of the Lamb of God and the power of God. The Passover Feast memorialized the first; the Lord’s Supper memorializes the second.” “In the old covenant, the law with its requirements is the impelling force; in the new covenant, the grace shown in the forgiveness of sins is the aiding power by which man attains that common life with God which the law sets before him as the great problem of life. It is in this that the qualitative difference between the old and the new covenants consists. The object which both set before men for attainment is the same, but the means of attaining it are different in each. In the old covenant are found commandment and requirement; in the new, grace and giving.” “Based on similar content and contexts, the following expressions may be equated with the New covenant: the "everlasting covenant" in seven passages (Isaiah 24:5; Isaiah 55:3; Isaiah 61:8; Jeremiah 32:40; Jeremiah 50:5) and later in Ezekiel 16:60; Ezekiel 37:26); a "new heart" and a "new spirit" in three or four texts (Jeremiah 32:39 [LXX]; and later in Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 18:31; Ezekiel 36:26); and "a covenant" or "my covenant," which is placed in the context of "in that day" in three passages (Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:8; Isaiah 59:21; Hosea 2:18-20). That makes a total of sixteen or seventeen major passages on the "New covenant." "Still, Jeremiah 31:31-34 was the locus classicus on the subject, as may be seen from several lines of evidence. It was this passage that stimulated Origen to name the last twenty-seven books of the Bible "the New Testament." But it was also the largest piece of text to be quoted in extenso in the NT, vis, Hebrews 8:8-12 and partially repeated a few chapters later in Hebrews 10:16-17. Furthermore, it was the subject of nine other NT texts: four dealing with the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25); two Pauline references to "ministers of the new covenant" and the future forgiveness of Israel’s sins (2 Corinthians 3:6; Romans 11:27); and three additional references in Hebrews (Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 10:16; Hebrews 12:24; cf. the two large teaching passages mentioned above).” There are three basic views concerning the identity of the people with whom God would make this New Covenant and when He would make it. One view is that God will make it with Israel alone when He resumes dealing with that nation as formerly, namely, in the Millennium (cf. Romans 11). A second view is that God made it with the church alone, which advocates of this view (i.e., covenant theologians) say replaces Israel in God’s plans, and He made it at the Cross. A third view is that God made it with Israel at the Cross, and the church, which does not replace Israel, somehow enters into its blessings. I hold the third of these views. It seems that God made the New Covenant with Israel when Jesus Christ died on the cross (Luke 22:20). The church now operates under this covenant (1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:1-14; Hebrews 8:8-12; Hebrews 10:16-17). However, Israel will enter into the blessings of this covenant, which God promised her, at the time of Israel’s restoration, namely, at the second coming of Christ. This arrangement resembles one that is possible to set up in a Charitable Lead Unit Trust under the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. Suppose there was a vastly wealthy and generous philanthropist of the magnitude of a Bill Gates. As he prepared his will he bequeathed millions of dollars to various charitable causes
that would benefit millions of people all over the world when he died. He also wrote into his will that when his only son reached the age of 21, he would inherit billions of dollars. When this man died, his son was only five years old, so for 16 years he did not enter into his father’s inheritance. However, as soon as the philanthropist died, the millions of dollars he had bequeathed to charity went to work immediately-to help many people. This illustration shows how the church enters into the blessings of the New Covenant. When Christ established the Lord’s Supper, it was as though He notarized His will; it became official then. The will is the New Covenant. When He died, His “estate” became available to those He chose to profit from it, namely: both Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus Christ. Soon many people around the world, Jews and Gentiles in the church, began to benefit from the blessings of His death. However, God’s chosen people, His son Israel, will not enter into his unique inheritance until the appointed time, namely: the Millennium. Blessings for the church began almost immediately after Christ’s death. Blessings for Israel will not begin until God’s appointed time arrives: Christ’s second coming. “Perhaps an [other] illustration will help us better understand this duel fulfillment of the new-covenant prophecy. Standing with Jeremiah and Ezekiel at their vantage point in history, we are in a dark tunnel. As we look with them toward the light at the end of the tunnel, we see God making a new covenant with ethnic Israel. We then move through the tunnel and emerge into the light. There ahead of us we see the same scene we saw from afar-God implementing his covenant with ethnic Israel. But now that we have stepped out of the tunnel into the light, our peripheral vision is expanded. To the side of us, incapable of being seen from back in the tunnel, is another scene-God implementing this same covenant with the church of the present era, comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. The prophets were not wrong-they simply had "tunnel vision" because their focus was on ethnic Israel." Which blessings of the New Covenant does the church enjoy now and which are for Israel in the future? There are four promises in Jeremiah 31:33-34. The promise of having God’s law written on the heart has been fulfilled to a limited extent. Christians do have an innate desire to please God because of the indwelling Holy Spirit’s ministry, but we do not have the innate understanding of God’s will that God promised here since that was a promise for the Israelites. All people do not know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, now. Second, we have a unique covenant relationship with God as Christians, but we are not the same group that will have a unique covenant relationship with God in the future, namely, the Israelites. Third, all Christians know the Lord to some degree of intimacy now, but we do not all have the depth of relationship with God that He promised the Israelites here. We still need teaching and teachers, but apparently this will not be the case for Israel in the future. Fourth, Christians enjoy complete forgiveness of sins individually, as the Israelites will in the future, but the Israelites will also enjoy complete forgiveness of their corporate sins as the nation of Israel as well. So I would say Christians enjoy all these blessings to some extent, but not to the extent Israel will enjoy them in the future. As the return from exile was a partial fulfillment of the promises of restoration, so the church’s enjoyment of these blessings is only a partial fulfillment of what God promised Israel. The New Covenant is a branch or outgrowth of the Abrahamic Covenant. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised Abraham a piece of real estate for his descendants, an incalculable number of descendants, and blessing for his descendants and for all people through his descendants (Genesis 12:1-7; et al.). Deuteronomy 29-30, sometimes called the Palestinian Covenant, gave more information about the land God had promised Abraham. The Davidic Covenant gave more information about God’s promises regarding descendants (2 Samuel 7). The New Covenant revealed the particulars of the promised blessing (Jeremiah 31). Each of these later covenants relates to the Abrahamic Covenant organically; each is an outgrowth of it in the progress of revelation. In contrast, the Mosaic (Old) Covenant does not relate organically but "was added" (Galatians 3:19) to explain how the Israelites could maximize the benefits God had promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. Consequently, when God terminated the Old Covenant, it did not eliminate anything He had promised in the Abrahamic, "Palestinian," Davidic, or New Covenants.

Verse 35
The Lord reminded His people that He was the one who controlled the course of nature, not Baal. It operated regularly and within His set limits, as He promised Noah it would (cf. Genesis 8:22; Genesis 9:8-17). The sun and moon do not vary from their positions, but the sea appears to operate chaotically, yet the Lord controls them all.

Verses 35-37
Permanent restoration (31:35-37)

Verse 36
Future Israel would no more cease from being a special nation in God’s sight than the fixed order of nature would cease. This is strong testimony that the church has not replaced Israel in God’s plans.

Verse 37
If people could thoroughly explore the heavens above or the earth beneath, then the Lord would cast off future Israel because of her sins. "Looking beyond national Israel for the fulfillment of this prophecy in the church, as a spiritual Israel, fails to grapple with the certainty of the statements in Jeremiah 31:36-37."

Verse 38-39

In the future, Jerusalem would undergo rebuilding for the Lord. It would be built larger than it had been before its destruction by the Babylonians. The tower of Hananel was at the northeast corner of the city (Nehemiah 3:1; Nehemiah 12:39; Zechariah 14:10), and the Corner Gate seems to have been on the northwest side of Jerusalem (2 Kings 14:13; 2 Chronicles 26:9; Zechariah 14:10). The locations of the hill of Gareb, and Goah, are uncertain, but they may have been on the west side since this would fill out the picture of the city.

Verses 38-40

The New Jerusalem (31:38-40)

Verse 40

The whole new, enlarged city would be devoted to Yahweh, and it would never experience invasion or overthrow again. The valley of the dead bodies probably refers to the Hinnom Valley to Jerusalem’s south and west (cf. Jeremiah 7:31). The Kidron Brook lay on Jerusalem’s east side, and the Horse Gate stood at the southeast corner of the city wall and led out to the Kidron Valley. What had formerly been unclean land, full of dead bodies, would be holy to the Lord. The city’s change in character would be even more remarkable than its change in size. "Since a literal nation must have an actual geographical location in which to reside, it is now revealed that the capital, Jerusalem, will be rebuilt and expanded—yes, the very city that Jeremiah was before long to see destroyed by the Chaldean army." The description of rebuilt Jerusalem in Nehemiah’s day does not coincide with this picture. Furthermore, the temple that the restoration community rebuilt did not continue to exist (cf. Jeremiah 31:40); the Romans destroyed it in A.D70. That this is a description of a heavenly city is unlikely in view of the large amount of detail. Contextual considerations also demand an eschatological rebuilding of the city on the ancient site (cf. chs32-33). Ezekiel 40-48 and Zechariah 2, 14 also describe this future (millennial) city.

(Adapted from URL:https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/jeremiah-31.html)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The restoration promised in today’s text began with the return of exiles and the rebuilding of the temple. But the promised restoration was not fully inaugurated until the coming of Jesus in the first century AD. Hebrews 8 establishes that the promises of Jeremiah 31:31-34 are fulfilled in Jesus, our high priest. When we put today’s text alongside Romans 4:16; 9:6-8, we see the old covenant being replaced by a new one—a covenant based not on law and physical ancestry but on faith in the one whose death paid the price for our sins: Jesus Christ. This expands the covenant people to include potentially every person regardless of ancestry, nationality, etc. It was possible for “a foreigner” to be included under the old covenant (Exodus 12:48, 49; Numbers 15:13-16; etc.), but the division between Israelite and non-Israelite was still there. A power of the new covenant is to tear down that barrier (Ephesians 2:14). All are welcome!

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. God’s discipline always includes restoration for those whom He loves (Jer. 31:27-28)
2. Remembering how our sins affect others will strengthen our resolve to obey God (vs. 29)
3. Every man and woman is accountable for his or her own sin (vs. 30)
4. Man’s disobedience and failure can never thwart God's plans (vss. 31-32)
5. Our covenant with God is based on a personal relationship with Him—far beyond written rules (vs. 33)
6. God has made Himself available and accessible to all who will believe (vs. 34)