

Conversations on
Jer. 31:31–34

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Search YouTube for “Jeremiah 31:33–34” to watch a video that brings this Scripture to life.

WHAT is important to know?

Jeremiah 30 and 31 are sometimes called The Book of Comfort. The chief claim of this passage about God’s new days is that there will be a new covenant between God and the people. Throughout the Old Testament, covenants are used frequently to aid understanding of the relationship between God and people. Such covenants are not like contracts in the modern sense, which are agreements negotiated between two parties and entered into willfully. The ancient covenants are much more unilateral: one party (God) is much more powerful than the other (God’s people), and so sets the terms. Such a covenant does not require the weaker party’s consent or willingness. (*Jon L. Berquist*)

- ✧ In what ways is Jeremiah 31:31–34 a comforting passage of Scripture?
- ✧ What is a covenant? What are examples of other biblical covenants? What is the old covenant mentioned in verse 32?
- ✧ What does God promise to do in the new covenant?
- ✧ What role or responsibility do the people have in the new covenant?

WHERE is God in these words?

Jeremiah’s prophecy of a new covenant—perhaps his most important single teaching—is also a powerful harbinger of the “good news” that will be preached and embodied in Jesus Christ. Jeremiah realizes that humanity simply does not have the capacity to heal itself. The great moral problem of humankind—that is, sin—is not cognitive, but rather concerns the sinful will. In Jeremiah’s prophecy the new will for humanity will be a result of something that God does. Hope for such transformed wills lies within God’s grace, not in any hope for human perfection. (*Samuel K. Roberts*)

- ✧ What does this passage tell you about the nature of God?
- ✧ Why might Jeremiah 31:31–34 be the prophet’s “most important single teaching”?
- ✧ Why doesn’t humanity “have the capacity to heal itself”?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Despite all the ways the people have broken faith with God, God will not break faith with them. God will bring newness out of destruction. God will bring hope where there is no hope. God will bring life out of death. God will make a way where there is no way. The days are surely coming when the people, from the least to the greatest, will *know* God—with all the intimacy that word entails. God will wash away the people’s sins once and for all and remember them no more. (*Richard Floyd*)

- ✧ How does God respond when we break God’s law?
- ✧ How does this text affect your understanding and experience of Lent? How might your understanding of the text be different if you heard it read at a wedding? A funeral? During Pentecost?
- ✧ In your own life, how do you experience the difference between knowing *about* God and *knowing* God?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

What would it be like if God wrote the law on our hearts so that we would live within the creation with restraint and humility, living for the whole creation, not just for our singular, insular selves and our own narrow corner of creation? Here at the end of the season of Lent, this passage begs us to explore the ways that we need the law of love to be written on our hearts. It sets up the exploration in just two weeks of how the power of the resurrection can find a home in our hearts so that we, and those around us, can truly live a new life. (*Woody Bartlett*)

- ✧ In what ways do you or your congregation live “within the creation with restraint and humility”? In what ways could you do a better job of living “within the creation with restraint and humility”?
- ✧ In what ways do you “need the law of love to be written on our hearts”?

Thank God for God’s new covenant.