Convocation 2015 Jer. 31

Behold the days are coming

**The New Covenant**

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| The ability to understand optical magnification is credited to the Dutch in 1608. The story is told of two young boys playing in the shop of an optical instrument maker, when he observed that they made a distant weather vane on a roof look closer by simply holding up two pieces of glass… thus Hans Lippershey’s curious mind would set in motion a quest for all continuing generations. The simple act of making far away things to look near and with greater clarity has pressed the minds of men and gave observers a new perspective on issues far reaching. And in time, when later generations of other curious minded men pointed that same spyglass toward the sky, our view of earth and our place in the universe changed forever. Because magnification has given us the ability to understand, with unparalleled clarity, the very origins of time and the universe around us… and thus points the mind and spirit upward in its quest for knowledge, stirring the affections giving us perspective. You see this knowledge gave us far more than a look at a star… light was understood and therefore time and space. This knowledge however was not limited to the confines of the observatory and laboratories of NASA, but fingers out into the various other disciplines shaping concepts and ideas that optics can’t reach…namely the soul. And so the philosophers, poets and musicians have taken this understanding of time and space and sought to shape the progression of historical dialogue by pointing out the meaning of sight and time and the depth of its ramifications. But sweet brothers, nowhere has the simple idea of magnification had more of an impact than in the queen of the sciences… Theology. Because as the secular world around us seeks to use the gained advancements of scientific optical depth and clarity for a foundation disproving the very existence of God and therefore the blunting of any religious interpretation of such advancements… there plan has not prevailed. Because I submit to you that we have the advantage… we know the Maker of the eye, and of time and space, and He has written a book, and we have it… complete with maps and leather binding. And so I introduce the passage given to me from Jer. 31 as a point of optics. Because Jeremiah has a context, thus one lens is clearly shown, but he lifts yet another lens over against that one, for a perspective far from his own time but near enough for him to describe with great depth and certain clarity, because the God who wanted the far brought near, and who owns the light and controls time and space, the God he worshipped had foretold him of that time and had him record it for us. There is a premium on such knowledge, as the voice of the prophet becomes all the more valuable as the days advance and time and light are brought to bear. And so you see that how we see and understand things far away and then interpret that data becomes very important.  **And so there is difficulty in dealing with this passage:**  I’m consciously starting this message without reading the sacred Scripture first in an effort to affect your thinking about how we understand Jeremiah 31. Because as I set out in the somewhat daunting and vast landscape of Christian theology, looking for some source material that might bring the far to the near and shed light upon the context and interpretation of Jer. 31. I found that the camps are fairly narrowly entrenched and the lines are pretty clearly drawn. And to my minds interest I was forced to look at histories of division and finely tuned and even sometimes elaborate discussions that brought into view ideas **that seemed**, at least to many, to be asked by the text. They were the most basic of questions, not at all what I expected. Like… How do I logically read the Bible? And because of the institution of the new covenant by Jesus among his Disciples at the last supper, and the writer of Hebrews use of Jer. 31 in chapter 10, who is spoken of in Jer. 31? Natural Israel or the future NT gentile Christians or both? These are but a few of the myriad of questions… And so to somewhat simplify it for us, I have tried to boil it down, because as I studied this passage it became apparent to me that there are many kinds of problems within this passage. But I’m going to address two.   1. **The Approach,** that is to say the way we logically read the Bible: NT then OT or OT then NT… why it matters. 2. And then the **necessary setting of natural Israel within this world** as a means of understanding divine revelation:   The argument goes something like this… Here is a quote from the book New Covenant Theology by Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel.  “Few Christians, I think, will question the fact that in the NT we have the latest (and, indeed, the final) essential revelation of God for the Church age, the age in which we live. This would seem to be common property among us, even for those Charismatics who contend for present revelation in some subsidiary sense. Like all convictions, this one has practical ramifications that must be faced. **The critical point here is this: NT revelation, due to its finality, must be allowed to speak first on every issue that it addresses. This point of course, is a logical point. No one sins by starting his or her Bible education by reading Genesis, Exodus, etc. first. Nevertheless, the NT holds logical priority over the rest in determining theological questions upon which it speaks.”**  Do you see the point I’m trying to get at by using their point as the catalyst? They want to interpret **everything** from the NT looking backwards. Thus they are giving it a superior authority, I understand their intention, I really do… Jesus is the God lens come down to us that has made the far things near. And God has spoken to us in these last day through Christ. I get it. I’ve read Hebrews. But what follows Hebrews 1:1-4 is a litany of OT passages that make the Christ work understandable, not visa-versa, therefore you can’t say that the OT must be informed by logical priority in every instance by the NT, because that would be false. But my real bone of contention is this. Inspiration of the text is not selective… every joy and tittle is the Word of God and is God breathed. And so I find that the problem of their approach is this… When you approach the serious study of the Bible, “How” you do it matters, as the progression of the narrative in the OT leading to Christ sets the foundational stage, and so you’re meant to draw certain conclusions all along the way. You can’t turn the telescope around and get the details right as the message then is re-interpreted in a backward looking way. And we have raised a generation of basically illiterate Christians when it comes to the OT. Why? Because we have lost the since of identity given to us by its engrafting message, because we have taken on Israel’s identity in the new covenant and left them to their discipline in their rejection of the Christ. **Hear me**… **I worship God alone**, not Israel, and I’m not interested in becoming a messianic Jew, Acts 15, settles that for me. **But I’m a debtor**, and I’m eternally thankful for Israel because they, by divine design are supposed to teach me of God, in their history and writings, in their covenants and land, and in their sins and their leaders. And though they are at present under the rod they speak as the very stars in the heavens constantly declaring the glory of God. And so it should humble the NT believer that God would let us in on the covenants He has made with natural Israel… because if I’m reading things correctly, the greatest interpreter of the OT and of Christ, the great Apostle Paul, said in Eph. 2:11-12  “*Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ,* ***being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*”**  Did you hear it…? “Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise…” Prey tell… what are the covenants of promise from the commonwealth of Israel? Hello OT! Do you hear me? The history has interpretation and meaning! And you can’t let the data be manipulated in such a way that it leaves out the very soul of the argument. You don’t sit down and start watching the movie ¾ of the way into it and get the storyline and plot correct. So brothers we have to start with the OT first, because then you will land on certain facts that will logically influence your thinking and therefore your interpretation methodology. Such ideas as, God elected, that is, chose natural Israel in Abraham thru covenant to be the people of God, **not just** the NT Christian. And the Mosaic covenant shows you the need for a perfect righteousness when approaching God, and you don’t have it and can’t get it. Thus it looks forward, and is a schoolmaster that leads you to properly understand your inability to approach God apart from an atonement eternal in its nature. And that the kingdom on earth doesn’t come in the weakness of a fallen race of sinner kings starting with David, but it looks forward to his Seed, which is Christ for the perfection of the kingdom in a humble servant with two comings,. And that all covenants in the OT are a progressive display of redemptive history, each one showing pieces of differing aspects of Gods One eternal covenant set within two administrations, OT and NT. But, there is one major problem that their method of interpretation affects, and that is why I’m raising this issue in particular… if you were to primarily focus on the NT first, and in so doing, you do away with the history of the covenants of promise, and therefore the natural Jew, **you’ll never understand the prophets rightly.** And their distant message will be blurred by your replacement of Israel, and Israel will be viewed with a skewed eschatological lens, thus your far to near hermeneutic will be all but lost. And that can have 2 grave consequences. Namely, you will heap antisemitism on the Jew in the future coming time of sifting. And just as natural Israel missed the time of their visitation of Christ at his first coming, because they couldn’t discern the times correctly…because they didn’t understand their own prophets, so also you will be in danger of misunderstanding or miss-representing the second coming. And many will say**, who cares! It will all pan out**, as the Denney’s one pan fits all breakfast approach to interpretation will serve us well when the great Satan shows up in human flesh. When AC is come up from his thicket, is not the time to hit the books. **The stakes are more serious than that brothers.** Ask the five foolish virgins who had no oil at the end how that’s working out for them? You see Christ didn’t view it that way… Matthew 24, He sent you back to Daniel to make His message clear. And Paul didn’t view it that way… Rom 11, he sent you back to Isa. 29, and Deut. 29, and Ps. 69, and Jer. 11 to make his message clear. And it must be noted that Paul was speaking to a mainly gentile audience and so his explanations were to be a lesson in the importance of OT study. And so sweet brothers, **you shouldn’t view it that way either**. Because to the grievous, and somewhat glaring oversight of those who would replace the natural branches all together, the NT uses the OT for a context constantly as the first lens that makes the Christ life, ministry, death and resurrection, and His inspired interpreters message about Him brought near and with clarity that shines. So it matters brothers. Moving right along. I said that there were two problems…  **The second point**, is the necessary setting of natural Israel within this world as a means of understanding progressive revelation:  I’ll be brief, because this is a series of messages in and of itself. But I wanted to say that, in the election of the nation of Israel we have a statement from God. He for reasons within Himself, chose this certain special people to be His covenant people. They were to be the seed of the woman, the bloodline of the Messiah, the custodians of the Word of God, and the covenant relationship that would bring it all to the rest of the world. They serve as a vehicle to show us the God hidden by the blindness of sin. And when you take a Jeremiah 31 new covenant passage and exclusively reinvent yourself as them, i.e., “*Israel and Judah*” in that passage and transfer your NT status over against them as though you were the root that supports and not the engrafted branch… my Bible says you should fear. Because you are losing your context, that had you read the Scriptures properly you would have seen the already existing plan of God… included gentiles in the promise and covenant God made with Christ in eternity and with Israel all throughout the OT. And that by totally usurping a position not given to you, you have lost the clarity of the interpretation. **Be careful here…** God told Abraham that his Seed would be the great blessing to the whole world, and the Christ is just that, but not to the **exclusion** of the people group to whom the promise was made, i.e., Abraham. The natural Jew has born the weight of that calling in the fires of history, and they have the scars to prove it. And today they sit under an imposed blindness in the form of covenant discipline that awaits the return of Christ for its removal, so let’s be more discerning about their future, because ours is inescapably intertwined. And so my point is this… to miss-interpret the significance of their history past, present and yet future as the necessary setting, i.e., covenant history and contextual vehicle, and then discard them after the last supper is a grave misunderstanding of the data. So don’t be so quick to do away with the eyes that gave you the sight.  So much for my intro… open your Bibles please to Jeremiah. and look at the board so I can orient you to historical setting of Jeremiah’s prophecy.  **Context and division of Jer. 31:**  31:1 – The whole nation is addressed in vs. 1. All Israel  31:2-22 – Then the 10 Tribes. Ephraim… 1 Kings 12:28…  31:23-26 – Then Judah.  31:27-40 – Then both Judah and Israel in 27-40.  **The 3 pillars of our argument:**  Decree of Cyrus Restoration of Jerusalem Messiah is cut off Start of 7 years Rapture/ Return  1000 Year Mill  Satan bound  Matt. 26:26-29 “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many…”  Matt. 23:37-39 “Your house is left to you desolate… **till** you say…” Covenant discipline imposed  Neh. 5:16  Trouble – Jacobs - Rest  Application of Messiah’s atonement found in the promise of the “New Covenant” made with natural Israel at the second coming. That is they receive salvation nationally and acknowledge Jesus as Messiah.  Nehemiah  Ezra  Zerubbabel  Isa. 44:28 Ez. 5:14b  1 --- Historically Undeniable --- 2  Historically Verifiable    7 weeks 62 weeks 1 31/2 7  49 years 434 years    483 Years = 69 of the seventy weeks 70th week = 7 years  Dan. 9:24-27  Why our future is secure in our understanding of this passage. Daniel is the logical connection to Jeremiah in many ways, listen to Daniels source materials. “*In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—2 in the first year of his reign* ***I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem*.”**  First, we see in Dan 9:1-2, a critical link in the mind of Daniel that gives him the understanding of Jer. 25:11-12 and 29:10. That plainly show that the Babylonian exile will last 70 years. And it is clear from Daniels chapter 9 supplication and prayer for national repentance that he saw in this destruction of Jerusalem and deportation a clear breaking of the Mosaic covenant, c.f., 9:11;13 which covenant was in his mind still binding on the nation. Thus the Deuteronomy 28-30 blessing and curse covenant relationship of God to natural Israel even though having undergone a Davidic covenant phase, and subsequent period of decline was nonetheless still binding, and **enforced by God**. Thus the promise of a restoration has meaning that needs consideration, as the partial breach by one covenant member does not annual the covenant for the other party. Thus the division of the kingdom was a covenant discipline, not a total end of the binding regulations… more of an incurred penalty from the offended party, i.e., from God for the rejection of His sovereign rule in favor of idolatry, c.f. 1 Kings 11:9-13, (Solomon’s heart turned to idolatry, God will tear the kingdom away from him.). God in covenant legal action took away the single monarchical kingdom’s unity and brought division into north and south as a sign of the broken relationship between Him and them, therefore there security was compromised. This in turn weakened them, making them opposed to themselves and vulnerable to outside interests. Which is exactly what opposition in the soul reveals, a division in allegiance, heart and practice… Now that is interesting, because when you think of God’s division and then removal of northern Israel and southern Judah **from a land representing His presence** because of the covenant ties that bind them to the physical land, you begin to see the underpinnings of our argument for the security of these four pillars in their future prophetic fulfillment… starting or looking forward from the time of Jeremiah. You see the question is why? Why bring Israel and Judah in and out of the land? I submit to you that there is a few answers to this question that must be explored.  **1.** **To purposely obscure the message**, from principalities and powers and worldly men who usurp spiritual matters, c.f. 1 Cor. 2:6-8 “*However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.* ***But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom*** *which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*.”  **2.** **The message of the prophets is purposely written in a near too far** **style** so that the Messiah would remain hidden in both comings. Example: Isa. 7. Stop explain. We are dealing with a mystery.  **3.** **To allow a body of messages to be compiled by the prophets** that would instruct selected ones for the purpose of preparation and witness to those coming for instruction. Think 1 Pet. 1:10-12, “*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into*.” Because when you think about it, the necessary rise of the nation to Babylon, makes the first peg in our Daniel 9:24-27, 70 weeks possible. You can’t have historically verifiable and therefore undeniable proofs that will lead you to the credible witness of the future if you can’t establish a track record of interpretation based upon the past. And the prophets are that past context that we interpret.  **4.** **The promise of the physical land of Israel must be understood as a point of anchor**, because it is the one constant in the long covenant relationship. The people must be in a covenant relationship that promises them a land, gives them a land to come back to and then finally delivers to them a land in which to remain forever. Because an earthly establishment of a kingdom requires a land in which to establish its influence from. So please understand that the land has far greater meaning, more on this in just a bit dust and rock and water.  Think with me…  Garden Gen. 3:24 – driven out! Abram was coming back to fulfill the prophecy of Noah against Ham’s son Canaan Gen. 11:3.  Assyria – 720 BC northern tribe exiled and killed.  Babylon – 586 BC Southern Judah exiled.  Rome – 70 AD – Titus wilderness of the nations.  Modern state – May 14 1948… back in the land to be dispossessed again in time of Jacobs Trouble.  Why does this matter? Ezek. 38:8; Deut. 30:5; Jer. 30:5. Recently regathered… dwelling safely.  And so we are on solid ground, because the 70 weeks first three events are already made certain in our backward look at history… and that literally so. And so the clear prophecy of the future one, the time of the coming application of the new covenant to the natural Jews, is as certain as the ones already past.  Dan. 9:24-27  **Restoration of Jerusalem:** point to man on board… Jeremiah was looking forward to the immediate time of Jerusalem’s destruction, then a period of 70 years of captivity and 49 years of rebuilding.  Death of Messiah:  Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet because he as a priest of God bore the people of Israel on his heart. Therefore Jeremiah weeps as the mediator, the go-between. But he weeps as one under the weight of an immovable deep brokenness of a pleading eternal covenant seeking expression and quiet in Israel’s full redemption... It's a, "…deep calling unto deep…" work of intercession that pours forth out of him.  Thus you see in Jeremiah's own calling in 1:5, before he was born, a "knowing" that is, the continuation of the covenanted appointing for the task was set within him. And this calling meant that God Himself stokes the fires of inner turmoil, and keeps his eyes wet and the spirit of pleading alive in his prophets and priests for the tempering of His anger. That’s right, you heard me correctly. God has His Spirit within them pleading to Him for mercy on their behalf… that’s one half of it, there is another part to it, but that waits for just a minute. He raises it up in them as the spirit of Christ in covenanted promise looks to the future fullness, on the other side of the cross to an end-time of national restoration. This pleading weeping priestly heart is witnessed in many places throughout the Scripture. Most notably, in Christ as He pleads from the cross to not lay this sin against those who crucified Him.  And we see it in Abraham as he pleads for a remnant within Sodom, because of Lot.  And again we see it arise within Moses as he pleads for temperance and restraint at Sinai because of His heritage.  And the great prophet Samuel relents and turns to helps Saul and then pleads for Saul, knowing he bore the divine rejection.  This priestly prophetic cry for mercy is the human aspect or product of the covenant within men, pouring itself out in prayers, with the garment of rebuke, sackcloth and ash, full of intercessions and tears… and so the Trinitarian God pleads through the Holy Spirit as he gives a context, that is births his promises and rebukes but always asking for His restraint. And that pleading is always asking the sinful nation one thing… Return to Me. You see…  My people, they have forsaken Me...  For that which does not prophet...  And for crust and husk they have changed their glory in the valley they call Tophet.  My covenant to them is but a law, My history with them a story.  They can only see its requirements...  Not My person, My character, My glory.  In vain they try and keep it's statuettes from a flesh that in Adam is fatally flawed.  Offering endless black wide eyed flinching sacrifice...  They count its cost in earth, and not in God.  And I hear a gentle pleading, arising on the wind, asking Me for mercy and a chance to begin again.  And the wind blows where it wishes, and they cannot see it, for it surrounds them only outside. Return to Me.  O Israel, My sweet Son have your inheritance... and then run, Run, RUN...  What injustice have you found, that has your heart turned to the Baals?  Why the High places?  Why the apathy?  Broken cisterns to no avail.  Yet you seek me in the harlot, under trees and bowed to stone.  As though the elated pleasure of a moment, could for you, become a home.  And you burn your sons and daughters like sticks upon the fire.  As Molech steals my heritage because your heart for Me has tired.  So avert your proud gaze, dare you raise your fist!  I gave you all you have, It’s ME… you… should… have… missed…  And I hear a gentle pleading, arising on the wind, asking Me for mercy and a chance to begin again.  And the wind blows where it wishes, and they cannot see it, for it surrounds them only outside. Return to Me.  But now Judah you are surrounded... And it is Me who is your fire...  And the gold it has grown dim.  And your prophets, they are all liars.  From the north your trouble hastens...  And the city once called by my name,  Will sit in silent judgment while I give it to the flame.  Your young men faint...  And your virgins hide in fear...  Knowing what is coming from the troops that are drawing near.  And I hear a gentle pleading, arising on the wind, asking Me for mercy and a chance to begin again.  And the wind blows where it wishes, and they cannot see it, for it surrounds them only outside. **Return to Me.**  Return to Me, and I will heal you,  Return to Me, the fountain of life.  Return to Me, and I’ll cover you…  Return to Me, you are my wife!  Break up your fallow ground, use repentance as your spade  Return to Me, and head my prophet  For he pleads my cause to mend your ways  Return to Me, I’ll give you a future  Return to Me, please take a pregnant moment and pause…  Because I am the voice within Jeremiah  In covenant pleading your cause…  And I hear a gentle pleading, arising on the wind, asking Me for mercy and a chance to begin again.  And the wind blows where it wishes, and they cannot see it, for it surrounds them only outside. Return to Me.  The gentle pleading message that is always coming from the prophet is Repent, and return to your husband…your God. Here is the value sweet brothers of the great prophet Jeremiah, because this is one of his many great contributions to prophecy displayed for all to see. He was a man of weakness, tendered but not timid, fearless when need be, and obedient to his own hurt. You see it’s like a displayed broken marriage in the prophet Hosea, Jeremiah’s life and witness **embodies the spirit of the covenant between Israel and God...** At times he is alone in prayer weeping for God to have mercy, at other times, he is standing as a bronze wall in the Temple against the breaking of God’s law warning the non-believing listener of the northern impending invading judgment. Many times rising to blunt the cheapened serpent tongue of a false prophet. But get the real parallel… near the end of Jerusalem’s final siege he lays imprisoned and wallowing in the mire of a polluted dank dark well. He was between the holy God and the polluted Judah with no way of escape, just as the covenant of God stands in oath and witnesses between them and their restoration…He like the covenant sees all the sins of the people as he is one of the people… so he suffers with them. Jeremiah must by reason of his calling, fearlessly call for a time of cleansing because of the holiness of God that refuses to relent and live with the sin of the people any further. Thus Jeremiah is entombed… alive by Gods mercy, but rejected by God’s people… a perfect picture of the larger situation.  **But for all that…** I think that there is something even more deep going on in the back story… Think with me, brothers. God was in covenant with Christ in eternity…the eternal covenant. And then in covenant with His people in time… but He has only one place that He has chosen to set His name… **the Land.** And that is the backstory message of Jeremiah. Hear God’s Word brothers…  *I brought you into a bountiful country, to eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered,* ***you defiled My land and made My heritage an abomination***. Je 2:7  *For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes.  And first I will repay double for their iniquity and their sin,* ***because they have defiled My land; they have filled My inheritance*** *with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols*.” Je 16:17–18.  *Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.****And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.*** Je 25:10–11  Take away the people, that is cast Ephraim from **his inheritance**! You have broken the covenant! Away with the harlots on the highways and the Baal’s on the high places…**they pollute God’s land**. And take away her treacherous harlot sister Judah! You’re heart has turned to stone and your heedless ways have brought you wages duly earned. Flee from my presence… my Temple… **my land**, says God. And so I would like to suggest that Jeremiah’s interwoven covenant relationship is tied to the endearing issue that stands the test of time… **the land**. It is here that **the land** takes on a special place in Jeremiah’s prophecy. The people who are sinning against God, and refuse His repentance are either killed or sent away from the unmovable aspects of the covenanted relationship, i.e., **the land**. I don’t have time to develop this more but it should not escape our notice. Because it is the hushed 70 year Sabbath rest for the land that brings us to the promise of Gods restoration. The eternal enduring symbol must have a voice… the kingdom must needs have a restatement of its intentions in the midst of the destitution. Thus Jeremiah 30-33 is called the Book of the consolation. Because right in the middle of the hell that was the last days of Judah… this ray of hope is given by the promise of a new covenant and a restored land. I think that Jeremiah maybe was even resisted by the people and ruling class because he went against the established word of Moses in Deut.?  But God wasn’t through… And so God instructs Jeremiah to go and buy a field, and this on the eve of the fall of Jerusalem and deportation… hardly real estate 101. Because God wanted a deed in hand, that secured rightful ownership of this sacred piece of covenant signage. So that when others would try and take this place, they could assert with title in hand the fact of ownership, which belongs to the Jewish nation…alone! C.f. Gen. 23 Abraham does the same thing with the sons of Heth. But in God’s economy, the land is allowed a time of hushed Sabbath and needed healing rest. So that the dust could settle from the traffic of sin, and the reason for the silence of Gods time of solace could be heard, in another land. But brothers listen, our God is merciful beyond our understanding… and there is always following judgment a promise.  The spirit of that promise is the heart of God in the restatement of a coming new covenant... Which promise always looks forward to a time of restoration and regathering **back to the land**, never to leave again? And so Jer. 30-33 is the book within the book, and is the diamond within the setting. It sets the context for the far future to be brought near, so let’s explore.  **The dark day ahead is overshadowed by the light of a new dawn:**  The coming time of “Jacob’s Trouble” is the necessary setting for the first step of the dawning of Christ’s unending day.  List the statements of what will happen…  I will get to Jer. 31 in just a minute, but I have to start with the prior commitment presented in the text of chapter 30. You see God through Jeremiah is interested to show one continuous hammering, namely one glaring issue… **The people have forsaken God**. Lifeless ceremony and dead orthodoxy coupled with rote and mechanical practice have brought about the living of a double life. It’s the Temple on Saturday and Baals on Sunday… The worldliness of lost ungodly kings has finally loosed the reins of the lust of lost people, And God’s restraint has run out. List… 1:16; 2:1-5, 2:11-13, 17, 19. The result is 2:22- “*For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, Yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord*.” You see they can’t get clean.  Yet God through Jeremiah won’t leave them alone and so he raises up adversaries against them in an effort to drive them to Himself. And in so doing, and from a place of covenant fidelity He pleads with them… in the passionate blushed red face and the weak voice of a jilted heart torn lover to… “**Return… to… Me**.” And Jeremiah says, *“Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. And I said, after she had done all these things, ‘Return to Me.’ But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.*” Jeremiah 3:6–8. And therefore there was a separation… and a mandatory exile for both northern Israel and southern Judah was God’s answer.  Now my question is simple brothers… divorce is final. Abandonment of the spouse is grounds enough, but adultery is even far worse, forgivable, but difficult. So what brings us to the promise of a “new covenant” with Israel and Judah? What great act of love gathers the divided parties, God, Israel, and Judah and heals the great breach? I submit to you that it’s the prior commitment I spoke of earlier. Hear it in Jer. 30:18-22. “*“Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will bring back the captivity of Jacob’s tents, And have mercy on his dwelling places; The city shall be built upon its own mound, And the palace shall remain according to its own plan. Then out of them shall proceed thanksgiving And the voice of those who make merry; I will multiply them, and they shall not diminish; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as before, And their congregation shall be established before Me; And I will punish all who oppress them. Their nobles shall be from among them,* ***And their governor shall come from their midst; Then I will cause him to draw near, And he shall approach Me; For who is this who pledged his heart to approach Me?’ says the Lord. ‘You shall be My people, And I will be your God.****”*    Jer. 30:21. Sweet brothers the restoration and application of the new covenant has its prior commitment in the One who approached God for mercy on their behalf and gave his heart as a pledge... in the eternal covenant. Look upon the beauty of Messiah, receive the great unending vast beyond measure supreme love of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He comes from among them, that is, He came from His own… He to his own peril pledged to approach the righteous Judge on their behalf and take their punishment. Adorned with their filthy garments stained with the rancid weakness of the flesh in penal substitution… and He said, with His arms extended before them, staked on a beam of wood … “You shall be My people, And I will be your God.” And Isa. 53 foresaw this moment and he wrote, God was pleased to bruise Him for He has put Him to grief… He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied.” Hear it brothers in Jeremiah 31:31–40  ***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—32not 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. 33But 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.*** *34No 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.”*  Jesus is the new covenant in his humanity, incarnation… sinless life… death, burial and resurrection.  … tabernacling among us  So what is being recovered in the new covenant? Image in perfection, no possibility of sin because it is God who maintains your standing by being in you.  **The promise of a New Covenant:**  God    Earth  Dominion over creation  **The recovery of image is covenant:**  In Gerard Van Groningen’s book, Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament, He begins with a study of the idea of Adam and Eve as “Royalty.” An idea that most commentators don’t bring to the discussion until the formation of the Davidic dynasty, and rightly so in many aspects. However in the creation of mankind certain aspects of royalty or the, “rule of mankind” are very clearly laid out. So how are we to understand his reasoning, and what bearing does it have on our discussion of the new covenant? We must widen our gaze when thinking of the concept of an OT messianic figure he says. The fact that the image of God, the very image of God, was placed within man in the creation account sets the stage for a unique relationship, springing forth from the Divine resolve and therefore setting apart mankind in every way from the rest of creation, and the created order... including angles. Thus when we read, Gen. 1:26-28 please hear it with this in view. “*Then God said, “Let Us make man* ***in Our image, according to Our likeness****;* ***let them have dominion*** *over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle,* ***over all the earth*** *and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man* ***in His own image****;* ***in the image of God*** *He created him; male and female He created them.* ***Then God blessed them****, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply;* ***fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion*** *over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth*.” Notice the institution of the creative authority in the spoken words, “*Then God said*” and “*Then God blessed*,” thus transferring upon mankind the right of ruling ex nihlo, out of nothing, that is, nothing within mankind that would project him to that position naturally. This was divine prerogative sovereignly displayed through endowment, and so mankind was placed in a positional relationship between God and the rest of His creation by reason of the likeness shared and the image within. In this new position as monarch we see the formation of a new identity separate from a mere creature and distinguished from an angelic servant. Thus we see in Adam **a type** of anointed one, **a type** of messiah figure. God was entrusting His identity within this new man, giving him His authority to rule, thus the conception of royalty is expressed in the words, “*let them have* ***dominion***” and thus binding them in a covenant relationship by reason of the shared image within them. They were responsible to God for the care of His creation and the rule of it as he alone was blessed with the capacities for moral governance. Mankind’s governance was to reflect to the creation the image of God by filling the earth with godly progeny and therefore a multiplicity of tiered relationships. He was to be busy taming the wilds of the lower creation cultivating and ordering the arrangement into a society that displayed the Creator-kings character. We see this displayed most clearly as Adam set about naming, that is ordering the species. And he was clothed with a glory that represented him to the animal kingdom as the vice-regent of God.  So what I’m laboring is this, Adam was in effect the…  **Prophet** – He declared the word of God to the creation, and informed it of God’s will.  **Priest** – He was to care for the garden and the inhabitants by ruling over them in fairness and truth  **King** – He was given dominion over every aspect of this creation. That’s it!  **A recovered image:**  SO why labor this point of image and rule? Because I hope that you can see in the recovery of the image of God in the new covenant salvation application on a national scale at the end of the great tribulation, Israel goes into the millennium in a recovered garden type experience. We could certainly keep going, but this is where we have to stop for now, lets pray. | |
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