

Introduction: What is it in us humans that does not like being told what to do? Or, why do we not want to let anyone be the boss of us? *** It has to do with our heart. All of us are born wanting to do some good. We all want people to like us and approve of us. This motivates us to try to do good things. But, at the same time, we do not want to give up anything we possess that we believe we need to keep in order for us to be happy. This is so even when we are not happy in our current situation, and nothing we have tried has made anything better. We think if we can maintain some measure of control of our lives in this mixed-up, chaotic world, things will improve. *** A Word that The Covenant God, Yahweh, gave His prophet Jeremiah tells us a lot about human nature from the perspective of our Creator. It is: ‘Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the LORD. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. ... The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?”’ (Jeremiah 17:5-6, 9) *** With this early Word to Jeremiah about human nature as our background, let’s go forward some fifteen years to God’s Word as to how He would amend His Covenant so all people could be given a new heart by Him so they could live by the instruction He gave Moses.)

I. Yahweh gave THE new covenant because everyone broke the covenant of instruction He gave on Mt. Sinai.

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; 36:1-8, 21-23, 27-28)

A. In THE new covenant He writes His instruction on their heart and they all intimately know Him. *(Jeremiah 31:31-34)*

1. Behold! Days are coming declares Yahweh when I will cut a new covenant. *(Verse 31)*

‘Cut’: In the time before Jesus came, people ‘cut’ covenants by walking between the halves of animals that had been cut in two. Each party was saying, ‘If I break this covenant may it be done to me as was done to these animals’.

(Genesis 15:8-18; Jeremiah 34:17-22)

New: Since God’s people, Israel and Judah, were not able to keep the covenant given through Moses, He says He will amend that covenant by doing something new and gracious for His people.

2. It will not be like the covenant He made with their fathers in the day He took them by the hand from Egypt which they broke – His covenant, though He was their husband. *(Verse 32)*

They broke: God’s people did not have faith to obey His covenant, doing their own thing instead.

Husband: Though they were unfaithful to His covenant, He was their faithful husband. God’s desire is to have a relationship with His people as intimate as the relationship between husband and wife.

3. Because this is the covenant I will cut with the house of Israel, after those days I will put my ‘law’ in them and write it on their hearts. *(Verse 33a)*

Internalized instruction: Torah is always translated ‘law’, but it properly means instruction so we may live our lives as God intended when He created us. God gave the Torah to bless His people to have life to the fullest. We cannot keep His covenant because our hearts are hard and stubborn. Here, God is declaring He will write His instructions on our heart. He will override our hardness and stubbornness by stamping His way on our heart.

In THE new covenant, God puts His Word in His people

Question: Let us all ask ourselves, how much of God’s Word have we memorized so we act on it?

Vietnam POWs: Jeremiah Denton grew up in church before becoming a POW in Vietnam. He found other Christians in his prison camp. They each shared Bible verses they memorized growing up in church. Together, they had memorized most of the Gospels and big portions of the New Testament.

How much would we contribute in re-constructing the Bible from the verses we have memorized?

4. And I will be their God and they will be My people. *(Verse 33b)*

Heart of Covenant: The relationship covenant starts Pharaoh and Moses (*Exodus 6:1-8*) and continues to Jeremiah and Ezekiel (*Ezekiel 37:21-28*). God spoke of a new covenant relationship through Ezekiel, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, to His captive people in Babylonia (*Ezekiel 36:24-38*). God will put His Spirit-inspired Word in people who have His Spirit in them.

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5. And they shall no longer teach each his neighbor: ‘know Yahweh’, because they will all know Me from the least to the greatest declares Yahweh. *(Verse 34a)*

ALL know Him: This is the story of God’s people since Pentecost in 33 AD. Both in their heart and in their experience, all members of the Body of Christ know they are God’s bride and He is their husband.

6. Because I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will not remember again. *(Verse 34b)*

Forgive and forget: He will forgive their depravity and the guilt resulting from it. He will never remember again when they fall short of complete obedience by faith. May we all understand and experience BOTH God writing His Word in our heart AND have an intimate union with Him.

B. Seven years before this Jehoiakim (‘Yahweh raises up’) showed Judah’s disdain for Yahweh’s Word as he burned it in a firepot. *(Jeremiah 36:1-8, 21-23, 27-28)*

1. And it was, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah this word came to Jeremiah from Yahweh. *(Verse 1)*

Background: This was in 603 BC. The prophecy five chapters earlier was given later, in 596 BC, when Babylonia first attacked Jerusalem. Prophecy books are not always in chronological order.

2. Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you against Israel, Judah and all the nations; perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the evil I am planning to do to them so they will turn, each from his evil way, and I will forgive their iniquity and sin. *(Verses 2-3)*

Scroll: The Hebrew word is ‘megillah’.

Goal: The Covenant God’s desired result is that His people will repent at hearing His words.

3. Then Jeremiah called Baruch who wrote all the words of Yahweh; then Jeremiah commanded Baruch: I am shut up and cannot go to Yahweh's house; you go and read from the scroll the words of Yahweh in the ears of the people in Yahweh's house on a day of fasting. (*Verses 4-6*)

Prisoner: For much of the time after Josiah died, the last four kings of Judah kept Jeremiah in prison.

Baruch: Baruch's name means 'blessed'.

Read to ALL: ALL people must have the opportunity to hear God's words, even if they reject these words in the end.

4. Perhaps their supplication will come before Yahweh and they will turn, each one from his evil way, because great is the anger and wrath Yahweh has spoken against this people. (*Verse 7*)

Supplication: After people repent before God, each one petitions Him to be forgiven of what he did.

5. And Baruch did all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him. (*Verse 8*)

Obedience: Obedience always leads to blessing. Baruch is an example of God working in the hearts of His people even before He put His Word in them.

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6. Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, he took it from the secretary Elishama, then he read it in the hearing of the king and all the princes. (*Verse 21*)

King's officials: These two named officials of Jehoiakim seemed to have respect for God's Word.

7. The king is sitting in the winter house in the ninth month (early January) with the fire-pot burning; and, as Jehudi read three or four columns, he cut them with a pen-knife and threw them in the fire, until the whole scroll was consumed. (*Verses 22-23*)

Hatred of God's Word: Jehoiakim so hated God's Word that he cut it piece by piece and threw each piece in the fire-pot until it was all burned.

8. Then the Word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah: Turn, take another scroll and write on it all the words on the first scroll which Jehoiakim has burned. (*Verses 27-28*)

God's Word is established and unchanging: People cannot destroy God's Word. God is showing great grace to the evil king by giving him an un-deserved second opportunity to hear His words.

May we all, unlike Jehoiakim, repent on hearing God's Word.

II. In the offering of His Body and Blood on behalf of His people, Jesus establishes THE new covenant. (Luke 20:19-20)

- A. They receive His Body given on their behalf in remembrance of Him. (*Verse 19*)

1. Having taken bread and having given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them. (*Verse 19a*)

Bread: Earlier Jesus had called Himself the bread of life from heaven, and whoever eats this bread of His flesh will live forever (*John 6:30-58*).

After thanksgiving: Jesus demonstrates thanking God always for everything. (*Ephesians 5:17-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*)

Broke and gave: As He broke the bread and gave it to His disciples, He was speaking.

2. This IS My Body, on behalf of you all, being given. (*Verse 19b*)

Body: Jesus uses the specific verb of being in the present tense to say the bread IS His Body.

3. This, you all must be doing in the remembrance of Me. (*Verse 19c*)

Remembrance: As we receive the bread of communion, we must remember all Jesus Christ has done for us: His death for us to pay the price of death we owe to God; His resurrection to give all who surrender to Him in obedient faith life both now and forever; and His sending of the Holy Spirit to teach us what He meant when He inspired all of Scripture.

- B. Likewise, His Blood is THE new covenant being poured out continuously on their behalf. (*Verse 20*)

1. And the cup likewise after the supper. (*Verse 20a*)

Likewise: He took the cup of wine, He gave thanks for it and He gave it to them while saying to them:

2. This cup [IS] THE new covenant in My Blood, which, on behalf of you all, is being poured out. (*Verse 20b*)

Cup and blood: Jesus is saying the wine in the cup IS His Blood. And His Life-Blood is being poured out on their behalf, paying the penalty of death for their sins.

New: They knew the Jeremiah passage, and all their Covenant God had said about THE new covenant in which He would put His Word in them, writing it on their heart.

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Being poured out: The verb Jesus uses for the 'pouring out' of His Blood is in the continuous present tense.

This may mean that when His people take communion, the wine in the cup becomes His Blood: full transubstantiation.

On 'our' behalf: Every time we take communion, we should remember and re-affirm our faith in The Gospel of Jesus. His giving of His sinless Life for us on The Cross means He paid the price of death we owe to God for our sins.

IF we believe this and we acknowledge our sins to God so we turn from our own efforts to have the life we desire for ourselves AND ask forgiveness based on Jesus' Blood being poured out for us, THEN God will forgive our sins so we may share in His resurrection Life! This is how people of every generation can share in God's new covenant announced through Jeremiah and being established continually by Jesus on the basis of His Blood being poured out on our behalf.

Jesus' death establishes THE new covenant

Conclusion: The Covenant God, Father-Son-Holy Spirit, gave THE new covenant because people broke the covenant He gave through Moses. This is exemplified by the evil king of an idolatrous people who burned God's Word given through Jeremiah.

So, God will write His instruction for living on their heart and they will know Him intimately. Finally, by Jesus offering His Body and Blood on behalf of people, He is continuously establishing THE new covenant.

In THE new covenant, God puts His Word in His people