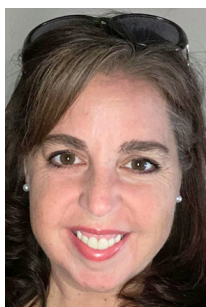


Bible Studies for Life: July 14

*God's Promise of a New Covenant • Focal Passages: Jeremiah
31:31-34; Luke 22:14-20*

By Jessica McMillan



McMillan

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Up to this point in our Sunday School series, we have looked at covenants God made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, specifically taking notice of how God establishes relationship with His people to accomplish His plan. This week, we will examine God's promise of a new covenant – one that would be written on the hearts of His people and result in a deep down knowledge of the true character of God.

Jeremiah 31:31-32

Israel's history was a circular pattern of covenant renewals due to the sins of the people and their inability to stay true to the one true God. Remember that a covenant is a type of agreement made between at least two parties in which certain obligations must be met. In this passage, the Lord proclaims that He will "make a new covenant" (v. 31). In the only reference to a "new covenant" in the Old Testament, Jeremiah presents a profound insight into God's character and His word. The new covenant would be established with the people of

Israel and Judah, in other words, the entirety of the Israelite people. This covenant was not like the previous ones, but it did build upon them. "This one will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors...my covenant that they broke..." (v. 32 NIV). In His kindness, God chose to use covenants as a way to communicate the type of relationship with Him available to them. A new covenant was necessary since they did not uphold the standards set before them.

Jeremiah 31:33-34

Reminiscent of the covenant made at Sinai (Exodus 19-24), acknowledgment of God as sovereign and obedience to Him were the requirements of this new covenant. In this one, however, God will transform the hearts of the people, thereby rendering them able to be obedient. He states, "I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts" (v. 33a NIV). While previous covenants required outward symbols, this new one would touch people deeply – in their heart, mind, and will. Typically, there were "if/then" statements in a covenant, and the "then" portion of this one is "I will become their God and they, in their part, will become my people" (v. 33b NIV). Without this internal transformation, there could be no recognition of God's sovereignty nor true obedience and submission to Him.

"No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them...for I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin" (v. 34 NIV). This kind of "knowing" as indicated by the original language is the true, deep-down, intimate kind. A definition of intimacy given by a retired seminary counseling professor is "to know and be known – and loved anyway." This verse captures the idea that God's people will *know* Him, and He will *know* them – and He will love them anyway.

Luke 22:14-20

God used this "new covenant" to show Israel and Judah that restoration and relationship would replace the righteous judgment that should fall on them due to their disobedience. At the last supper, Jesus declared, "This cup is the new covenant of my blood, which is poured out for you" (v. 20 NIV). A new covenant, indeed, was to come, and Jesus is the fulfilment of it. God promises a new and eternal life in Christ! There is no external requirement on believers to receive this blessing, only the transformation of the heart that comes through faith in Jesus.

McMillan is a member of Prentiss Church, Prentiss.