

(Jer. 31:31-32) - *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord”* is a prophecy of two great events in redemptive history: (1) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW COVENANT BY THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST; and (2) THE ABOLISHMENT OF THE OLD COVENANT BY THAT SAME GREAT WORK. A covenant is a binding agreement or promise between two or more parties. *“That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah”* - This is the New Covenant established for God’s SPIRITUAL people in and by Christ. *“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt;”* - God made the Old Covenant with the Hebrews at Mount Sinai when He gave them the Law by Moses, the mediator of that covenant. It was a BILATERAL covenant between God and the Hebrews. God promised blessings and benefits to Israel conditioned upon their national obedience. The New Covenant is a UNILATERAL covenant where the promises are conditioned on one, the Lord Jesus Christ. It involves the Lord God and His chosen people (spiritual Israel). God promises spiritual and eternal blessings to the elect conditioned on Christ, the Surety and Mediator of the New Covenant.

The Gospel of salvation by God’s grace sets forth the terms of the New Covenant - SALVATION FROM SIN CONDITIONED ON CHRIST AND HIS WORK OF REDEMPTION FOR HIS PEOPLE. The Old Covenant was not a covenant of salvation. It was a legal covenant having to do with temporal blessings for Israel conditioned on their obedience. *“Israel”* and *“Judah”* in this prophecy are not the physical nation under the Old Covenant, which was divided into two nations. They are SPIRITUAL Israel, God’s elect out of every nation, under the New Covenant and united under one king - the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:26-29; 6:14-16*).

“Which my covenant they brake” - The Old Covenant promises were conditioned on the people who broke the covenant by their unbelief and idolatry. Much of their history under that covenant for 1500 years was the story of people being punished with famine, captivity, and destruction. *“Although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD”* - God continued with them because His purpose was to bring the Messiah into the world through this nation in spite of their sinfulness. When the Messiah came and finished His work, God divorced Himself from them, first, from the Northern Kingdom, Israel (*Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:6-8*), and later from the Southern Kingdom, Judah. It was prophesied in *Genesis 49:10* that the *“sceptre”* would depart from Judah when *“Shiloh”* (the Messiah) came (*Heb. 8; 10:9*).

(Jer. 31:33) - The Old Covenant was a burden imposed upon a rebellious people. It was written on tablets of stone but not in the hearts of the people. It could show them their sinfulness, but it could not provide the remedy for sin. Paul called it the ministration of death and condemnation (*2 Cor. 3:7,9*). But the New Covenant was a better covenant because of the better Mediator (Christ) and better promises - forgiveness of sins, righteousness, spiritual and eternal life (*Heb. 8*). Paul called it the ministration of the Spirit and righteousness (*2 Cor. 3:8,9*). All of its blessings and benefits are the work of the Lord - *“GOD WILL”* and *“THEY SHALL.”* God says, *“I WILL put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts”* - This is the invincible and effectual work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth to give spiritually dead sinners spiritual life and the gift of faith in Christ (*John 3:3-7; Rom. 2:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:3,6,17*). The law is written on our hearts when we see it fulfilled perfectly by Christ Who has worked out a perfect righteousness that God has imputed to us for our justification (*Rom. 3:19-31; 10:4*). This law is the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace grounded upon the righteousness that Christ accomplished as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (*Rom. 1:16-17; 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*).

In the New Covenant God says, *“I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”* This is the language of a marriage union that cannot be broken (*Rom. 7:4-6*). There can be no bill of

divorcement in this covenant because its conditions are not upon the bride but upon the Husband who cannot fail (*Heb. 10:16-17*). Because their sins were imputed to Christ and He paid the full redemption price for their sins, their sins cannot be imputed to them (*Rom. 8:33-34*). They have Christ's righteousness imputed to them, and they cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ (*Rom. 8:35-39*).

(Jer. 31:34) - "*For they shall all know Me*" - Although God was ceremonially and temporally joined to Israel, the vast majority of the people did not know Him savingly (*Isa. 45:20; Jer. 5:4; Hos. 4:1,6; John 16:1-3*). But under the New Covenant, all of the people will be brought by God to know Him savingly as He reveals Himself to them in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 6:44-45; Rom. 10:1-4; 2 Cor. 4:4-6*). "*For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*" - Even though the animal sacrifices in the Old Covenant pictured the one sacrifice of Christ for the sins of His people, there was no remission or forgiveness of sins by the blood of animals (*Heb. 10:1-4*). But in the New Covenant, because of the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, God has forgiven our iniquity, and He will not impute our sins to us (*Rom. 4:6-8; Heb. 10:18*). When God says He "*will remember their sins no more,*" it does not mean that God forgets their sins, for God is immutable. It means He will not hold our sins against us, and bring them to mind at Judgment. We have already been judged completely for all our sins as we were judged in Christ on the cross.

(Jer. 31:35-36) - The New Covenant is virtually the same as the eternal covenant of grace made before time as it is the establishment of that covenant in time. This covenant is as permanent as the fixed order and cycles of creation which was set in order by God and will not change until His appointed time when He will make all things new. By God's decree the Gospel covenant of God's grace will never end.

(Jer. 31:37-39) - This is a prophecy of the restoration of Jerusalem fulfilled in SPIRITUAL Jerusalem (*Gal. 4:21-31; Heb. 12:18-29; Rev. 21*). As man cannot measure the heavens, God cannot cast off His spiritual people. He has promised to save us and cannot lie (*Rom. 11:1ff.; Lam. 3:22-23; Mal. 3:6*). This city will extend beyond the physical Jerusalem as God's grace goes beyond the Jews to all His elect people. The "*measuring line*" shows that all IN CHRIST, under His blood and righteousness imputed, measure up and are qualified to live eternally in this holy city (*Acts 17:31; Rev. 21:15*). Those who seek to measure up by their works or their wills will not enter and live in this city (*Matt. 7:21-23; John 3:36; Rom. 9:31-10:3*). All who are found IN CHRIST fully measure up as they are righteous in and by Him (*Php. 3:7-9*). They enter the city BY HIM, and they are eternally secure IN HIM. The walls of the earthly Jerusalem were constantly breeched by enemies, but the walls of this holy Jerusalem will never be breeched because of Christ, "*the Captain*" of our salvation (*Heb. 2:10*), the "*Author and Finisher of our faith*" (*Heb. 12:2*).

(Jer. 31:40) - The entire city, including the graveyard and ash dump in the valley, and all the fields out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the Horse Gate, will be holy to the LORD. The city will never again be captured or destroyed. Obviously, this does not speak of physical Jerusalem which was destroyed in A.D. 70. Some believe it refers to a future physical Jerusalem, but this is speaking the spiritual and eternal city and kingdom of God as established by Christ for His people. When Christ returns in His glory, whatever is left of physical Jerusalem will be destroyed with the whole earth. But this SPIRITUAL city and kingdom will never be destroyed!