

289

AN EXAMINATION OF JEREMIAH 31:31-34

I. Our present purpose is to study the Book of Jeremiah with a minimum of input from other sources.

1. The Bible was not given simply as a source of proof texts, but as a storehouse of divine wisdom, every part of which is vital for Christian knowledge and Christian writing.

2. When we start by reading into a passage ideas learned from another passage it is easy to overlook some particular aspect of truth that God intended the passage to give. When we look at a passage with a set idea of what it ought to teach, there is always a chance that we will fail to see what it actually does teach.

3. We should not approach a passage with only two questions: does it teach a certain matter, or does it deny it? We should always ask a third question: does it actually not deal with this particular matter at all?

II. We should recognize the difference between God's dealings with nations and His eternal purpose for individuals.

Both of these aspects are present in God's revelation, at least as early as the time of Abraham. Cf. Gen. 12:2; 18:18; Gal. 3:6-9, 17; Rom. 9:6-7.

God made many promises about whole nations, but the eternal fate of individuals was always tied to their faith and to forgiveness of sins through the deliverance promised to Adam and to Abraham and symbolized by the whole sacrificial system. Cf. Gen. 3:15; Exod. 12:13; Heb. 9:22.

III. Features of the New Covenant described in Jer. 31:31-34.

1. It points to a future situation--v.31.

2. It involves both Israel and Judah--v.31.

3. It differs from the Covenant made at Sinai--v.32.

4. God's law will be written on men's hearts--v.31.

Cf. Deut. 30:6; Rom. 2:28-29.

5. "I will be their God and they will be my people."--v.33.

Cf. Exod. 29:45-46; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 32:38.

6. It will no longer be necessary for a man to teach his neighbor to know the Lord, because all will know Him--v.34.

7. It involves forgiveness of sins--v.34.

Cf. Exod. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18; 2 Chron. 7:14.

IV. What is new about the New Covenant?

1. The references listed above after features 4, 5, and 7 show that these features were already present in previous covenants, and indicate that what is new in the New Covenant is not inwardness or spirituality as opposed to externality. Hebrews 11 points to Old Testament worthies as great men and women of faith.

2. Verse 32 says that this covenant will be different from the Sinaitic Covenant. There is no mention of any change from the Covenant with Abraham or with David. In Gal. 3:17 Paul explicitly declared that the Abrahamic Covenant was still in force.

3. The distinctive features of the Sinaitic Covenant, as over against other covenants, were its detailed presentation of those elements of law that were intended to be "a schoolmaster" to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24) and its detailed presentation of arrangements that would represent spiritual