

**Key Passage: Jeremiah 31:33****Key Thought: God promises a new covenant after a long exile.¹****Background:²**

1. Assyria dominated the Middle East for 150 years. End of 7th Cen BC, Assyrian empire collapsed. Babylon becomes great power in the region.
2. Lots of turbulence for decades in Judah. Lots of cries for independence (as Assyrian rule collapses). Josiah ushers in his reforms. But lots of uncertainty with Babylon and Egypt fighting it out.
3. Enter Jeremiah.
 - (a) Priestly background
 - (b) Knew what covenant loyalty should be; repulsed by what he saw in frequent visits to Jerusalem.
 - (c) Exposed sins of his culture with vivid preaching and illustrations.

¹ Note, key passages, key thoughts, and hook questions come from Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*. These notes are compiled from 4 principal sources. In addition to Michael Williams book, notes are also derived from Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences*, Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, and H. H. Drake Williams, *Making Sense of the Bible*.

² See Christopher Wright, *The Old Testament In Seven Sentences*

- (d) He warns the people of disaster lying ahead (including Temple itself), weeping at the thought of it
 - (e) repeatedly calls for repentance
 - (f) He shows great courage and experiences unpopularity; death threats, physical beatings, near-fatal imprisonment in a slimy pit. After Josiah, the later kings hated Jeremiah (Ex: Johoiakim burns a scroll representing 23 years of Jeremiah's preaching).
 - (g) the people refuse to listen
4. Jeremiah pours forth his anger, protest, and depression to God. All preserved by Baruch (his scribe)—including the burned scroll he re-wrote from scratch.
Jeremiah 2:1-3, 9-15, 20-24
5. He witnesses the besiegement of Jerusalem from the inside (588-587 BC). He is freed by Babylon, but then taken captive by his own people fleeing to Egypt (against his advice). He and Baruch die in Egypt.

Jeremiah's Approach:³

1. Word pictures meant to conjur up vivid images (see Jer 2:1-3, 5-15, 20-24)
 - (a) Bride 2:2
 - (b) Firstfruits 2:3
 - (c) Spring and cistern 2:12
 - (d) Lions 2:15
 - (e) Vine 2:21
 - (f) Soap 2:22
 - (g) Camels and donkeys 2:23-24
2. Dramatic actions
 - (a) Purchases a field (Jer 32). Everyday thing but shows great faith.
 - (b) Smashes clay pot outside city in front of political leaders (Jer 19). Takes great courage.
 - (c) Jeremiah buys new linen sash, then buries it until it becomes rotten and worthless to show what Israel has become (Jer 13)
 - (d) Jeremiah puts an ox-yoke on his shoulders the burst into a conference in Jerusalem to tell leaders of other nations to submit to Nebuchadnezzar, because God has raised him up for this moment (Jer 27)
 - (e) Isaiah goes around naked to show the shame of captivity that lies ahead (Isa 20)
 - (f) Ezekiel lies on his side "besieging" a clay model of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 4-5)
3. Key Prophetic Concerns
 - (a) God is in sovereign control of world history [God is king over all]
 - (b) God demands justice, and politics matter to God [submission to God's

³ See Christopher Wright, *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences*.

kingdom demands radical ethical change'

Social, religious, economic, and political intermingling: people matter!

It is never easy. Will be hated by insiders and outsiders. (Isaiah 1)

Strongest message is often for insiders. Though any call on outsider is fraught with difficulty!

(c) Outward religion without ethical transformation is abominable to God.

[Practical obedience matters far more than religious observance]

Sacred rites do not compensate for social wrongs.

Righteousness, justice, faithfulness and love required to know and worship God (Jer 9:23-24; 22:15-17)

(d) God's desire for firstborn son (Israel) to live up to covenant so God could bring many sons to glory—i.e., other nations (See Jer 3:4-5, 19; 4:1-2)

Jesus and the Gospel in Jeremiah:⁴

1. Jesus looks like Jeremiah. [similar background]

2. Jesus sounds like Jeremiah. [dramatic words and actions]

3. Jesus preaches the message of Jeremiah. [Key concerns]

4. The promise to make a new covenant and to do the work necessary to keep it secure (one that can't be broken): Jer 31:33. Compare with Jer 17:1—sin like a flint engraved in their heart.

(a) accomplished by God becoming human to keep the human side (perfect union; unbroken faithfulness)

(b) drinks the cup of wrath (see Jeremiah 25:15-29) so we don't have to.

(c) covenant now as secure as the faithfulness of His son.

Hook Questions:⁵

1. Is God's love for you conditional? Have you been living as though it is? Does your confidence in your relationship with God on your faithfulness or on Jesus? Have you made Jesus your representative in faithfulness and in judgment?

2. Are you more demanding than God is with yourself or with others? Do you feel the need to pay for sins that have already been paid for? Is your behavior more motivated by guilt or by gratitude?

⁴ See Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*.

⁵ Taken from Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*, p.68.