

The New Covenant

Jeremiah 30-31

WHAT WE FOUND

Tonight the seals opened, and so did the book. In Jeremiah 31:28, the six verbs of the prophet's call came back in order, pluck up, break down, overthrow, destroy, and then build and plant, carried by the almond-branch verb of chapter 1: "so I will watch over them to build and to plant." The watch held. Two promises from the first night of this study converged in a single verse, and then God answered the question we sealed in envelopes seven weeks ago with four verses containing a phrase found nowhere else in the entire Old Testament: "Behold, the days are coming... when I will make a new covenant" (31:31).

What is new is the location. The old covenant was broken from the human side, "though I was their husband" (31:32): the betrayed marriage of chapter 2. The new one relocates the law from stone to the heart: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts" (31:33), which means God changes the wanter, healing the faithlessness He promised to heal in 3:22. All shall know Him, least to greatest, and the covenant God keeps no archive: "I will remember their sin no more" (31:34), a promise the Sacrament of Reconciliation makes real and audible every time absolution is spoken.

Then the summit. The phrase "new covenant" appears next in the Bible on the lips of Jesus, at Passover, the night before He died: "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20). Six hundred years of waiting, answered in a chalice. At every Mass, the words of consecration, "the blood of the new and eternal covenant," proclaim this chapter over the altar. You have been hearing Jeremiah 31 every Sunday of your life. Now you know.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine · *On the Spirit and the Letter*

St. Augustine made this passage a centerpiece of his treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter*: the law written on hearts is the grace of the Holy Spirit, poured into us so that we love what the law commands. The law was given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas · *Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 106, quoted at CCC 1966*

Asked what the New Law actually is, St. Thomas answered: chiefly the grace of the Holy Spirit itself,

given to those who believe in Christ. Jeremiah said it first: within them, on their hearts.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ignatius of Antioch · *Letter to the Ephesians*

Writing around the year 107 on his way to martyrdom, St. Ignatius called the Eucharist the medicine of immortality. Take his words to this text, as the Church's worship invites us to: the new covenant is not a document to consult but a cup to receive. Where the earliest Christians guarded the Eucharist, Jeremiah 31 found its home.

Live It This Week

- At Mass this Sunday, when you hear “the blood of the new and eternal covenant,” answer silently: Jeremiah 31, fulfilled. Receive Communion as what it is: the covenant entering you, to write on your heart.
- Keep your opened guess. Tape it inside your Bible at Jeremiah 31 as a permanent reminder that God's answers outrun our best questions.
- Take one “stone tablet” area of your life, the resolution that keeps failing, and change the prayer this week from “help me try harder” to “write it on my heart.” Pray it daily and watch what changes first: usually the wanting.

Memory Verse

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Jeremiah 32. While the city is under siege, the prophet goes shopping. Come find out why.

Catechism References

CCC 1965-1966 · CCC 1365 · CCC 64