

SESSION 9

A New Covenant I Will Make

Hosea's Marriage, the Exile, and the Promise of a Heart Made New

TAKE-HOME SHEET

WHAT WE FOUND

The prophets turned out to be covenant lawyers: they summoned heaven and earth, the covenant's original witnesses, and read the indictment, and exile was the covenant's own sanctions executed, discipline inside the family, never abandonment of it. Then Hosea made the lawsuit a marriage, and we heard the worst sentence in Scripture: the child named *Lo-ammi*, "for you are not my people and I am not your God" (Hosea 1:9), our formula, the vow this whole study is named for, spoken in reverse. And we watched God do what only God does with divorce papers: plan an elopement. "I will allure her... and speak tenderly to her," a second exodus, a second honeymoon, and the formula raised from the dead: "I will say to Not my people, You are my people" (2:23).

Then the summit: the only place in the entire Old Testament that says "new covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31 to 34). Its four terms answer every failure we have catalogued: the law written on hearts, not stone; the formula made permanent, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people"; everyone knowing the LORD, least to greatest; and sins forgiven and remembered no more. Ezekiel added the surgical plan: clean water sprinkled, the heart of stone removed, a heart of flesh, God's own Spirit within, the promise of Deuteronomy 30:6 kept, with God holding the scalpel. And the prophets threw the doors open to the world: all nations streaming to the raised mountain, the Servant a light to the nations, the house of prayer for all peoples; the apostles would later read Hosea's reversal over the Gentiles themselves: "Once you were no people but now you are God's people" (1 Peter 2:10).

But we also found the hole, and it is the cliffhanger of the entire Old Testament: the new covenant promises total forgiveness and names no price, no blood, no lamb, no mechanism, nothing. The covenant story has run in blood since the garments of skins, from Noah's altar to the basins of Sinai; this covenant is a check written against a deposit no one can see. The answer to how is one sentence long, and next session you will find it yourselves. BRING YOUR TAKE-HOME 1 NEXT SESSION, sealed guess intact, unread. Everything converges.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Jerome *Commentary on Isaiah (Prologue)*

St. Jerome, who gave his life to the Hebrew Scriptures in his cave at Bethlehem, taught in the prologue to his Commentary on Isaiah that ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ. He read the prophets as men standing on the ridgeline of history: one foot in the ruin of their own day, one foot in the daybreak they could see but not date. Their sorrow was for the present covenant broken; their joy was for the covenant coming, which they served without living to see.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine *On the Spirit and the Letter*

St. Augustine placed Jeremiah 31 at the heart of his account of grace in *On the Spirit and the Letter*. The difference between the old covenant and the new, he taught, is the difference between the law written on stone,

standing outside a man and accusing him, and the law written on the heart by the Holy Spirit, moving a man from within so that he loves what God commands. The letter demands; the Spirit gives what the letter demands. That, for Augustine, is the entire gospel in one prophetic sentence.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons *Against Heresies, Book 4*

St. Irenaeus insisted that the same God gave both covenants, the old adapted to a people in training, the new bestowing the Spirit and liberty, and that the prophets themselves announced the change: the God of Israel was not replaced but was keeping, in the new covenant, the very promises the old covenant carried in figure. Novelty without discontinuity: the heir is new, the estate is ancient.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Pray Ezekiel 36:26 every day this week, slowly, turned into a personal petition (adapted from the verse): "A new heart give me, O God, and a new spirit put within me; take out of my flesh the heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh."
- Go to Confession this week if you are able, and on the way, read Jeremiah 31:34: "I will remember their sin no more." Walk in carrying the promise; walk out having received it kept: in absolution, God truly remembers your sin no more.
- FIND YOUR TAKE-HOME 1. The sealed guess you wrote in week one comes with you next session, unopened. Do not reread it yet. Also read, before next session, nothing new: instead reread Exodus 12:1 to 14 and Exodus 24:3 to 11, and come hungry.

SCRIPTURE 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: Reread Exodus 12:1 to 14 and Exodus 24:3 to 11, nothing new. Find your Take-Home 1 and bring it with the guess still sealed. Come hungry.

Catechism References: CCC 64, 218 to 219, 1611, 1965