

THE NARRATIVE OF SCRIPTURE, PART 8

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” (Jeremiah 31:31, NIV)

AN INCREASING REALITY IN OUR TIME is the number of golf facilities that have put up a sign we usually see hanging near the entrance of a restaurant or small business. It reads: UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT.

Because of the trying economic conditions of recent years, as well as the overbuilding of courses and clubs when times were better, many golf properties have had to begin again, so to speak. They have sold or restructured, or both. Some have simply shut down. It’s a world of change, and if you’re a golfer, it’s typically not for the better. We don’t like our favorite courses to become rundown, nor do we like it when too many golfers flood too few courses. Often, change stinks!

In Jeremiah 31, however, God spoke with thoroughly positive language of the greatest of all changes. This change would make an eternal difference.

You may be aware that the Bible features several covenants—firm promises between God and man. Among them are the Adamic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the Davidic Covenant. For the most part, these covenants were unconditional, with God fulfilling their purpose regardless of the qualities or actions of the people. But at the time of Jeremiah, the people as a whole were functioning under the Mosaic Covenant, wherein God’s favor was dependent on the righteousness of the people in fulfilling the laws of God. For too many reigns, the kings and their people had proven that sin had a tighter grip on them than obedience. They were in deep violation of the Mosaic Covenant.

When we read forward into the New Testament, Paul explains that the purpose of the Law was to reveal the sin of the people. It was to make them desperate for salvation from their own inability to meet God’s standards and for relief from the consequences of that sin. In other words, it was to make them eager to hear words like those that came through Jeremiah: “A new covenant is coming. This is the covenant that will restore relationship between God and man.”

The New Covenant, as it has been called into our time, was fulfilled by the atoning work of Christ. This is the full narrative of Scripture—that what we cannot do on our own has been done by the one pointed to by the prophets. Jesus came to give us new life, according to the promise of God.

Opening questions What kind of changes are good for a golf course? Which changes are not so good? • Talk about a change in your life that has had lasting impact until this day.

READING Jeremiah 31:31-34, Romans 2:17-29, Psalm 119:9-11

The wonders of the New Covenant

What are some of the promises of the Jeremiah passage? How do these affect you?

The Law and the heart

What do you think is meant by “circumcision of the heart”? How does this idea align with the New Covenant? How has your heart been changed?

Knowing the Word

In Jeff Cranford’s accompanying video, he talks about the value of knowing the Word of God for the purpose of conversing with those investigating or challenging the faith. How do the Psalms 119 verses support the value of knowing God’s Word?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today’s study at http://youtu.be/KLNNEE_s_c0