

The Messiah's Covenant

Ben Walker

Text: Jeremiah

Introduction:

- I. ¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, **Jeremiah**, or one of the prophets.” (Matthew 16:13–14)
 - A. Matthew’s account is the only one to mention Jeremiah as one of the possibilities for Jesus’ identity.
 - B. Why did the crowds think that Jesus was possibly Jeremiah? Was there something in Jesus that reminded them of the prophet?
- II. Parallels between Jesus and Jeremiah
 - A. *Charles L. Feinberg*: “Probably no writer on Jeremiah has failed to mention certain resemblances between him and the Lord Jesus Christ. There are a number of parallels. The life of no other prophet has so close an analogy to the earthly life of our Lord. Jeremiah has been rightly called the most Christ-like of the prophets. Certain disciples saw in Jesus of Nazareth the prophet Jeremiah returned to life (Matt. 16:14).” (*The Expositor’s Commentary*, p. 360-316)
 - B. Feinberg noted these parallels:
 1. “Their historical settings were similar. Jerusalem was about to fall: the temple was soon to be destroyed; religion was buried in formalism; there was a need for emphasis on the spiritual life. Outwardly the life of Jeremiah closely resembled that of our Lord.
 2. “Both had a message for Israel and the world.
 3. “Both were conscious of the world of nature about them and used many figures from it.
 4. “Both came from a high tradition: Jeremiah from a priest-prophet background, Christ from divine-kingly planes.
 5. “Both were conscious of their call from God.
 6. “Both condemned the commercialism of temple worship and did so in a similar way (7:11; Matt. 21:13).
 7. “Both were accused of political treason.
 8. “Both were tried, persecuted, and imprisoned.
 9. “Both foretold the destruction of the temple (7:14; Mark 13:2). Two great external catastrophes struck the OT theocracy: Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and Titus’ similar destruction of them. Of the first Jeremiah was the prophet; of the latter, Christ Himself (Matt. 24).
 10. “Both wept over Jerusalem (9:1; Luke 19:41).
 11. “Both forcefully condemned the priests of their day.
 12. “Both were rejected by their kin (12:6; John 1:11).

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13. “Both were tender-hearted. Jeremiah (11:19) was so much like the Man of sorrows that the rabbis identified Jeremiah with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.
 14. “Both loved Israel deeply.
 15. “Both knew the meaning of loneliness (15:10; Isa. 53:3).
 16. “Both enjoyed unusual fellowship with God. One of the unique features of Jeremiah’s life was that he could be so free and honest in communion and conversation with God (20:7; cf. John 11:41-42).” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 360-361)
- C. It should not surprise us that the prophet who has so much in common with the Messiah is also one who reveals great truths about the Messiah. Jeremiah offers the Messianic hope in a time of great darkness for his nation.
- III. Our study will focus on these primary considerations:
- A. Jeremiah’s Messianic passages.
 - B. Jeremiah and the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31.
 - C. Messianic passages related to the doctrines of Premillennialism.
 1. God’s promises to David regarding his lineage and throne.
 2. God’s promises to Israel regarding the land of promise.

Body:**I. Messianic Passages In Jeremiah**

- A. One difficulty in seeing Messianic themes in the prophets is that the language is often vague and non-specific, therefore seeing a fulfillment in the Messiah is possible but not definitive.
 1. One reason the language is often vague and non-specific is due to prophetic blending and alternating.
 2. The prophets would often speak of more than one fulfillment simultaneously – a future fulfillment followed by a more distant future fulfillment (e.g. the return from exile and the Messianic age).
 3. “The prophets looked at matters that were close at hand but then immediately focused upon future events as though they were all to blend one into another.” (*Humphries, Truth*, p. 25)
 4. “It must also be noted that the prophets would often switch back and forth very abruptly between the Messianic ideal or promise and the present (or immediate future) circumstances in the nation. They would be discussing the nation’s present status but then alternate to a future glory under the Messiah. This makes it difficult at times to follow the prophet’s exact intent.” (*Humphries, Truth*, p. 27)
 5. This being true, there may be passages in Jeremiah which are possibly Messianic but are not included in my outline.

B. Jeremiah 3:14-18

1. Israel had been unfaithful to God and He allowed Assyria to punish them. Judah did not learn from Israel’s failings (3:6-8). Judah had not fully returned to God, despite Josiah’s efforts (3:10). God urges faithless Israel to return (3:12).

2. 3:14 – “one from a city, two from a family” is indicative of a **remnant** and not the whole nation.
 - a. *L. A. Mott*: “The prospect is not of a great national turning to Jehovah, but of a few individuals coming to repentance. Even if so few as *one of a city*, and *two of a family* heed the call to return, God will accept them. A spiritual kingdom composed of converted people is the prospect, unlike the former physical nation which was composed of believers and unbelievers.” (*Thinking Through Jeremiah*, p. 36)
3. God would provide shepherds after His own heart, in contrast to the current leaders (cf. Jer. 23:1-2; Ezek. 34).
4. In the Messianic Age:
 - a. The Ark of the Covenant would no longer hold any significant place in the minds of the people (3:16; cf. John 4:21-24).
 - b. Jerusalem will be called “The Throne of the LORD” and all nations will be gathered to it (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; Mic. 4:1-3; Heb. 12:22-23).
 - c. Israel and Judah would come together again and be blessed as a unified nation rather than a divided one.

C. Jeremiah 23:5-6

1. God rebukes the shepherds in Israel for their negligence (23:1-2) and promises that He will gather His people and care for them (23:3-4).
2. In contrast to the evil shepherds God will raise up the righteous Branch who is of the lineage of David (23:5-6).
3. The righteous Branch (Isa. 4:2; 11:1; cf. 53:2; Zech. 6:12).
 - a. He will reign as king and act wisely.
 - b. He will do justice and righteousness in the land (in contrast to the kings of Jeremiah's time).
 - c. He will bring deliverance and safety to Israel and Judah.
 - d. His name will be “The LORD our righteousness.”
 - 1) “This message was most likely delivered during the reign of King Zedekiah. His name means *The Lord is righteous* or *The Lord is my righteousness*. The name of the new ruler was intended as a repudiation of Zedekiah. He will be an exact opposite of rulers such as Zedekiah and Jehoiakim. He will be called ‘The Lord Our Righteousness.’” (*Huey, The New American Commentary*, p. 212)
 - 2) “As in Isa. 9:6 a symbolic name is given to the coming king, *Yahweh is our Righteousness*... It is probably a play on the name of Zedekiah, *My righteousness is Yahweh*... If the king failed to live according to the symbolism of his name, ‘Yahweh is my righteousness,’ it would be appropriate for a prophet to draw the contrast as though to say: ‘but our Righteousness is Yahweh.’” (*Thompson, TNICOT*, p. 490)
4. Also see Jer. 33:15-16 which is similar.

D. Jeremiah 30:8-9

1. Jeremiah 30-33 comprises the “Book of Consolation,” four chapters which highlight Israel’s future in glorious, hopeful language.
2. “These chapters speak of the perpetuity of Israel, the calling of the Gentiles, the amalgamation of Jew and Gentile alike under one New Covenant, the coming of Messiah, the Branch, the Son of David, the Mediator between God and man, Jehovah Our Righteousness, who as both Priest and King would bring a new age of prosperity to Israel.” (Coffman, *Jeremiah*, p. 332)
3. God will restore Israel to their land and restore their fortunes (30:3). This would happen after their horrible experiences in judgment and captivity by Assyria and Babylon (30:4-7).
4. 30:8-9: Their yoke of bondage would be broken off and they would “serve the LORD their God and David their king,” fulfilled in Jesus who was of the lineage of David (Ezek. 34:23-24; 34:23-24; cf. Amos 9:11; Matt. 1:17, 20).

E. Jeremiah 31:31-34

1. This section will be discussed in the section on the Messiah’s Covenant.

F. Jeremiah 33:14-26

1. This section is not included in the LXX.
2. This speaks of the restoration of the Davidic monarchy.
3. Note that 33:14-16 is similar to 23:5-6 but there are also slight differences:
 - a. Righteous Branch of David (33:15; 23:5).
 - b. 33:16 says *Jerusalem* will dwell in safety and in 23:6 it is *Israel* that dwells in safety.
 - c. 33:16 says *Jerusalem* will be called “the LORD is our righteousness” and in 23:6 it is *the ideal king* who is called such.
 - 1) “The name *Yahweh is our Righteousness* is attached to the city. There has been some uncertainty about the text over the centuries. Some Greek texts, Theodotion, and the Vulgate insert *the name* in verse 16. A few manuscripts and the Syriac Peshitta text read ‘his name’; the Targum, to agree with the feminine Jerusalem, adds ‘her name.’ It is clear, however, that all texts attribute the name to Jerusalem. The inference is that Jerusalem would so manifest the qualities of justice and righteousness (in contrast to her past bad record) that she would be worthy of such a name and exemplify the divine order for all the cities and all the people in Israel.” (Thompson, *TNICOT*, p. 601)
4. 33:17-18: Messiah will be both king and priest forever.
 - a. **King** (v17): reference to 2 Sam. 7:12-16, quotation of 1 Kgs. 2:4; 9:5; 2 Chron. 6:16; 7:18. (cf. Psalm 89)
 - b. **Priest** (v18): Jesus, the great High Priest over God’s people (Heb. 4:15; *et al.*).
 - c. While the nation faces captivity, doubts arise about 1) the nation ever existing again, and 2) if it does, would there be legitimate king and priesthood? The answer to both is “Yes.”

- d. Admitted difficulty here: 33:18 specifically says **Levitical** priesthood. If this is a reference to Jesus' priesthood, then how can it be Levitical (Heb. 7:11ff)? If this is not referring to Jesus, to whom does it refer?
- 1) Possible answer: It does refer to Jesus, but the language is accommodative to the needs of the Jews in Jeremiah's day.
 - a) *Payne Smith*: "The solution is probably as follows. It was necessary that the Bible should be intelligent to the people at the time when it was written, and in some degree to the writer. Neither writer nor the reader needed to know the whole meaning, but it must have had some meaning to them. But language can never rise above the ideas of the time; for words are merely symbols, taken at first from external objects, but gradually elevated and made to express mental emotions and spiritual conceptions... So here; the Davidic kingdom and the Levitical priesthood are symbols that represented to the Jew all that was most dear to his heart in the state of things under which he lived." (*Scribner's Bible Commentary*, p. 489. Quoted in Coffman, p. 374)
 - b) *James B. Coffman*: "The continuity of a succession of rulers on the literal throne of David and the perpetual ministrations of the Levitical order in their offerings of burnt-offerings, etc., represented to the Jew the full and perpetual restoration of his national life, along with freedom from oppressive foreign rule, and restoration of all the rights and privileges of his holy religion. Furthermore, it was impossible for the Jewish mind to have comprehended such marvelous blessings apart from such promises as are found in these verses." (*Jeremiah*, p. 375)
 - c) *Jim McGuiggan*: "And if he [God] wished to assure the pious Jew whose religion was now derided that one day his truth will be vindicated – would it really surprise us if he described that vindication in terms which meant something to the Jew? Since it was truth as embodied in the Mosaic and Aaronic administrations that went down in fire and smoke and blood should it surprise us that the vindication comes clothed in Levitical and Mosaic garments? What would it say to the Jew if he was told 'you and the truth you stand for will be vindicated,' and then he heard of a Messiah utterly foreign to his present conceptions and a worship system altogether different from what he had known?" (*The Kingdom of God and Planet Earth*, pgs. 54-55)
 - 2) Possible answer: It does *not* refer to Jesus but to Christians who serve as priests before God (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6) and offer up spiritual sacrifices before Him continually (Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5).
 - a) Even if true, this still does not address that they are said to be Levitical.
 - b) This answer must assume the first answer's notion of accommodative language.
5. 33:19-26: God's covenant with David would not be broken; it is as certain as the sun rising and falling each day.

G. Messianic References in the Book of Consolation (Jer. 30-33)

1. Serve David, their king (30:9; 33:14-16).
2. Ruler shall come from their midst (30:21).

3. Remnant will be saved (31:7).
4. You shall be My people (30:22; 31:1, 7, 14, 33; 32:38; 33:24).
5. Latter days (30:24) ??
6. Israel will go up to Zion (31:6, 12; 32:36-44).
7. I will restore (30:3, 17-18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7, 11, 26).
8. New covenant (31:31-34; 32:40).

II. Jeremiah And The New Covenant

A. Jeremiah had a keen awareness of the covenant of Yahweh with Israel as well as their forsaking of the covenant. His book speaks of the covenant directly and alludes to it regularly.

1. “Even a cursory reading of the book of Jeremiah will indicate its deep interest in the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. The word ‘covenant’ (בְּרִית) occurs some twenty-three times, most of these in reference to Yahweh’s covenant with his people, whether the Mosaic Sinai Covenant or the New Covenant, but five times in connection with the covenant that Zedekiah made with the people to liberate their slaves.” (Thompson, *TNICOT*, p. 59-60)
2. “Even where the term ‘covenant’ is not used we cannot help sensing that the background to much of Jeremiah’s thinking is the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, perhaps chiefly the fact that Yahweh’s judgment will fall on his people for their rebellion and disobedience to his laws. Terms like ‘listen’ (obey), ‘not to listen’ (disobey), ‘law,’ ‘commandments’ reflect covenant thinking.” (Thompson, *TNICOT*, p. 60)

B. Jeremiah and the Mosaic Covenant.

1. Jeremiah makes numerous references to the Exodus and election of Israel (2:2-7; 7:21-22; 16:14-15; 23:7-8).
2. Judah’s forsaking the covenant (11:1-17; 22:9; 31:32; *et al.*).
3. “What then was Jeremiah’s attitude to the covenant? The covenant of Moses was, of course, fundamental to his whole thinking. We may well believe that he was instructed carefully in the ancient traditions of Israel and that even as a boy he developed a distaste for much that went on in the religious and social environment in which he grew up. The vehemence of his attack on national sin can scarcely be exaggerated. He was an ardent contender for the ancient faith of Israel, for the ‘ancient paths’ (6:16).” (Thompson, *TNICOT*, p. 61-62)
4. The blessings and curses of the covenant (Lev. 26; Deut. 27-28).
 - a. Captivity was a curse, but was perhaps *the greatest* curse, for breaking the covenant (Lev. 26:25-33; Deut. 28:32-37, 63-65).
 - b. Jeremiah preached that the captivity was a judgment from God (5:19; 9:16; 17:4; 11:6-8; *et al.*).
 - c. Jeremiah understood that the captivity in Babylon was God’s just judgment on the people for their sin.

C. The New Covenant.

1. In the midst of these dark days for Jerusalem, Jeremiah preaches a message of hope under a new covenant of God (31:31-34).
 - a. This is the only passage in the Old Testament where the expression “new covenant” is found.
 - b. This is Jeremiah’s greatest contribution to our understanding of the scheme of redemption.
 - c. The section (31:31-34) is quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12 and Hebrews 10:16-17 and is central to the Hebrew writer’s argument in 8:1-10:18.
 - d. Jesus spoke of the new covenant which He enacted through His blood (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). He is the mediator of this new, better covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24).
2. Characteristics of the new covenant.
 - a. It is *new* (31:31).
 - 1) A new covenant implies that the first covenant was **inadequate** (Heb. 8:7).
 - a) Its inadequacy was not because of some fault with God. God’s purpose in giving the first covenant was accomplished.
 - b) The fault was with the people: “finding fault with **them**” (Heb. 8:8).
 - c) The old covenant was intended to point men to Christ, a goal which it accomplished (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:24-25).
 - 2) This covenant would be a better one (Heb. 7:22; 8:6) with better promises (Heb. 8:7).
 - 3) According to the book of Hebrews this covenant would be “new” both in **time** and in **quality**, both of which are reflected in the Greek terms used to describe it.
 - a) “The Greeks had two words for ‘new,’ *kainos*, meaning new in kind or character (occurring in Heb. 8:13; 9:15), and also *neos*, new in time (often translated in the N.T. ‘younger’), which the writer uses in [Hebrews] 12:24, ‘And to Jesus, the mediator of a new (*neos*) covenant.’” (Hailey, *Hebrews for Every Man*, p. 142)
 - b. It is *eternal in scope* (Jer. 32:40; Heb. 13:20).
 - 1) This new covenant would not be temporary as the first was.
 - 2) The first covenant was “growing old and ready to disappear” (Heb. 8:13).
 - 3) Illustration: buying a new vehicle. From the moment you begin talking about purchasing a “new” vehicle, your current vehicle becomes the “old” vehicle. So it was when Jeremiah spoke about a “new” covenant. The first one became the “old” one; it began to “grow old” and be “ready to disappear.”
 - c. It encompasses *all nations* (31:32).
 - 1) “Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers...”

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- 2) While certainly not the only way the new covenant is “not like” the first, the old covenant was made only with Israel and no other nation. It was made “with their fathers.”
 - 3) The new covenant would be broader in scope, encompassing **all nations** (Isa. 2:1-4; 11:10; Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 9-11; 15:7-12; Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:11-22; et al).
- d. It is to be *internalized* (31:33).
- 1) “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it.”
 - 2) The old covenant was written on tablets of stone (Ex. 31:18) and in a book (Ex. 24:7). The new covenant would be written on men’s hearts (2 Cor. 3:3; Jer. 32:38-40; Ezek. 36:26-27).
 - 3) The Jews’ hearts were so hardened that an iron stylus was needed to engrave upon them (Jer. 17:1).
 - 4) God wanted Israel to internalize the first law (Deut. 6:6). But instead they left his law engraved on the stones rather than on their hearts.
 - 5) Under the new covenant, God’s law *must* be written on our hearts. His laws are not external commandments to be obeyed superficially and without emotion. Rather we are to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, serving Him from the heart (Matt. 22:37). This *was* to be the case with Israel, but it *will* be the case with those under the new covenant.
 - a) *L. A. Mott*: “The concept of individual responsibility set forth in verses 29-30 and the parallel in Ezekiel is a key to understanding this passage. The former covenant was made with a physical nation, including believers and unbelievers. True, God desired the law to be on the hearts of the people (Deut. 6:4-9). And it was on some hearts (Ps. 1:2; 119:10-16, 47, 97, etc.). But many were unbelieving idol worshippers...But the new covenant is not a covenant with a physical nation, but with individuals who submit themselves to God’s law – the converted, true believers. That distinction is the key to understanding this passage.” (*Thinking Through Jeremiah*, p. 152)
 - b) *Bob Waldron*: “I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’ (Jer. 31:33). *This* difference between the covenants was to be a matter of emphasis. God wanted His law to be on the heart of His people in the Old Testament (Deut. 6:6). They failed to absorb His law. They allowed the law to remain engraved on stones rather than engraved in their hearts. Under the New Covenant, God stresses that His law *must* be written on our hearts. In other words, the revelation of His holy character expressed in positive and negative commands must not remain mere external rules but must become the principles of behavior by which each man’s conscience is guided. Instead of being “set before” them (an expression often applied to the Law of Moses), God’s revelation is to become the values by which men live. (Article, *God’s Law Written On Our Hearts*)
 - c) *Bob Waldron*: The point emphasized in the law’s being put in our inward parts is that we cannot view the New Testament as a list of 492 commandments, and think that the whole task of being a Christian is to
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make a checklist and mechanically tick off each item of obedience. These commandments remain only commandments when treated in such a fashion. They must become principles of living, in other words, we must learn to do these things not just because God wants us to, but because we want to be like God. (Article, *God's Law Written On Our Hearts*)

- e. It produces ***fellowship with God*** (31:33).
- 1) "I will be their God, and they shall be My people."
 - 2) Promise of the N.T. (Rev. 21:3; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).
 - 3) This was true of the Mosaic covenant as well (Ex. 6:7; 19:5-6).
 - 4) "There was a difference, however, for, under the first, they were a physical nation, separated from others by natural birth and divine selection as a nation whereas, under the second, they are His by a spiritual birth (John 3:1-7), a new creation (2 Cor. 5:16-17), individuals who offer themselves willingly (Ps. 110:3). Thus the relationship is strictly spiritual." (Hailey, *Hebrews for Every Man*, p. 143)
- f. It produces ***intimate*** fellowship with God (31:34).
- 1) "They will all know Me..."
 - 2) *Homer Hailey*: "Under the old, the individuals were physically born into the family of God's people, of whom all males were circumcised the eighth day, and later were taught to know Him. Under the new, it is different in that they must be taught first and then of their own volition enter into covenant relationship with Him." (Florida College Lectures, 1988: *Hebrews for Every Man*, p. 144)
 - 3) *Jim McGuiggan*: "...under the Mosaic covenant one could be a covenant member without knowing the Lord. But under the new covenant, one can't be included as a covenant member without first knowing the Lord..." (*The Kingdom of God and the Planet Earth*, p. 41)
 - 4) All will know Him, "from the least of them to the greatest of them."
 - a) Also used in Jer. 6:13 and refers to the entire nation.
 - b) All these under the new covenant would know the Lord. Perhaps in different measures, but each would know Him.
 - 5) Knowing the Lord involves close fellowship and relationship (John 17:3).
 - a) It also involves obedience that flows from that fellowship.
 - b) Contrast the relationship that Josiah had with Jehovah (Jer. 22:15-16) and the relationship the false priests and prophets had with Jehovah (Jer. 2:8).
- g. It will provide ***full forgiveness of sins*** (31:34).
- 1) The book of Hebrews explains this fully for us.
 - 2) Under the law there was a reminder of sins year by year (Heb. 10:3). But because of the sacrifice of Christ there is now complete forgiveness and no more sacrifices for sin are necessary (10:16-18). His sacrifice was sufficient to offer forgiveness to all men from all time (10:14).

III. Messianic Passages And Premillennialism

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- A. The doctrine of Premillennialism says that Jesus will return again and establish an earthly kingdom/reign for 1000 years. There are two things of relevance to the Messianic passages in Jeremiah:
1. Messiah will sit on the **throne of David**.
 - a. Jeremiah speaks of a king reigning on David's throne and the people of Israel serving him.
 - 1) ⁵“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “That **I will raise to David** a Branch of righteousness; A **King shall reign and prosper**, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. ⁶ In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (23:5-6)
 - 2) But they shall serve the LORD their God, And **David their king**, Whom I will raise up for them. (30:9)
 - 3) ¹⁵ ‘In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to **David** a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, And Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ (33:15-16)
 - b. Premillennialists believe that Jesus will reign on the earth on the **literal throne of David**. Are we to understand these promises as the Premillennialist does?
 2. The Jews will be **restored to their land**.
 - a. Jeremiah tells Judah that they will return to their land, the land of promise, and enjoy rest and peace.
 - 1) ¹⁴“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that it shall no more be said, ‘The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ ¹⁵ but, ‘The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For **I will bring them back into their land** which I gave to their fathers. (16:14-15)
 - 2) ⁷“Therefore, behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that they shall no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ ⁸ but, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ And **they shall dwell in their own land.**” (23:7-8)
 - 3) ³ For behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,’ says the LORD. ‘And I will cause them to **return to the land** that I gave to their fathers, **and they shall possess it.**” (30:3)
 - b. These “land” references are fulfilled in the return from captivity without any future, second fulfillment. The Premillennialist denies this.
 - c. The Premillennialist believes the Jews will one day be united in Jerusalem under the reign of Jesus on David's throne. Are we to understand these passages as **yet to be fulfilled** as the Premillennialist does?

- B. Premillennialists believe that God has not completely fulfilled His promises to Abraham.
1. *John Walvoord*: “Premillenarians consider the promises as given unconditionally as far as ultimate fulfillment is concerned and therefore hold that Israel has a bona fide ground for **future possession of the land**, particularly in the **millennial kingdom period**.” (Bold emphasis added, *The Abrahamic Covenant and Premillennialism*, <https://bible.org/seriespage/15-abrahamic-covenant-and-premillennialism>)
 2. *Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum*: “The first of these is the Abrahamic Covenant, which promised an eternal Seed developing into a nation that will possess the Promised Land with some definite borders. While that nation--the Jews--continues to exist, **never in Jewish history have they possessed all of the Promised Land**. For this promise to be fulfilled, there must be a future Kingdom.” (Bold emphasis added, *Premillennialism in the Old Testament, Part 1*, <http://www.ldolphin.org/otpremill.html>)
 3. *John Walvoord*: “The Abrahamic covenant required that **Israel continue as a nation forever** in order to fulfill the everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:7) and in order to have **the land as an everlasting possession** (Gen. 17:8). All the facts discussed previously, to the point that Israel continues as a nation forever, possesses the land forever, is not disinherited, is not supplanted by the church, and that Israel’s basic covenants are dependent upon God’s faithfulness alone for fulfillment, combine to require Israel’s restoration after these centuries of dispersion and chastening. The conclusion that Israel has a future restoration is based upon these facts along with the voluminous testimony of the prophets concerning Israel’s coming golden age.” (Bold emphasis added, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 184, quoted in Rodney Miller, *The Lion & The Lamb On Planet Earth*, p. 85)
 4. *J. Dwight Pentecost*: “Since the Abrahamic covenant deals with **Israel’s title deed to the land of Palestine**, her **continuation as a nation to possess that land**, and her redemption so that she may **enjoy the blessings in the land under her King**, it is of utmost importance to determine the method of the fulfillment of this covenant. If it is a **literal covenant** to be **fulfilled literally**, then Israel must be **preserved, converted and restored**.” (Bold emphasis added, *Things To Come*, p. 73, quoted in Rodney Miller, *The Lion & The Lamb On Planet Earth*, p. 86)
- C. Premillennialists believe that the promises to David require a literal fulfillment with David’s posterity, Jesus, sitting on his earthly throne.
1. *John Walvoord*: “The point of the Davidic covenant is that the Son of David will possess the throne of His father David. To make His person literal but His throne a spiritualized concept is to nullify the promise.”¹ (*The Kingdom Promises to David*, <http://walvoord.com/article/55>)
 2. *John Walvoord*: “If a literal interpretation be adopted, the **present session of Christ is not a fulfillment of the covenant**, and it must be referred to the future. It is clear that at the present time Christ is not in any literal sense reigning over the kingdom of David. From the content and circumstances surrounding the Davidic covenant, it is evident that a **literal fulfillment is anticipated**.” (Bold emphasis added, *Ibid.*)
 3. *John Walvoord*: “There are, however, **obvious difficulties** in interpreting the Davidic covenant in a **literal way** and expecting a **literal fulfillment**. The covenant was given almost three thousand years ago, and history has not contained any continuous

¹ John Walvoord’s writings can be found at www.walvoord.com. His writings were the most helpful in my study on Premillennialism.

development or continued authority of the political kingdom of David. A question may be raised whether history permits a literal fulfillment of the covenant. Does not the fact, viz., of Israel's captivity, with the **downfall of the kingdom of Israel argue against a literal fulfillment?** Do not the centuries which have elapsed since the coming of Christ prove that no literal fulfillment is intended?" (Bold emphasis added, *Ibid.*)

4. Walvoord is at least honest enough to admit this. However he also states that "The arguments in favor of literal interpretation are so massive in their construction and so difficult to waive that they are more commonly ignored by those who do not want to believe in literal fulfillment than answered by argument."
5. *J. Dwight Pentecost*: "Because of an anticipated **future literal fulfillment**, certain facts present themselves concerning Israel's future. (1) First of all, Israel must be **preserved as a nation**. (2) Israel must have a **national existence** and be **brought back into the land** of her inheritance. Since David's kingdom had definite geological boundaries, and those boundaries were made a feature of the promise to David concerning his son's reign, the land must be given to this nation as the site of their national homeland. (3) David's son, the Lord Jesus Christ, must **return to the earth, bodily and literally**, in order to **reign over David's covenanted kingdom**. The allegation that Christ is seated on the Father's throne reigning over a spiritual kingdom, the church, simply does not fulfill the promises of the covenant. (4) A **literal earthly kingdom** must be constituted over which the returned Messiah reigns. (5) This kingdom must become an **eternal kingdom**. Since the '**throne**', '**house**', and '**kingdom**' were all **promised to David in perpetuity**, there must be **no end to the Messiah's reign** over David's kingdom from David's throne." (Bold emphasis added, *Things To Come*, pp. 114-115, quoted in Rodney Miller, *The Lion & the Lamb On Planet Earth*, p. 112)

D. Premillennialists believe that the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 is not yet in force.

1. *John Walvoord*: "In contrast to the post-millennial and amillennial views, the premillennial position is that the new covenant is with **Israel** and the fulfillment is in the **millennial kingdom** after the second coming of Christ." (Quoted in Jim McGuiggan, *The Kingdom of God and the Planet Earth*, p.38-39)
2. *Jim McGuiggan*: "Premillennialists such as these [Walvoord, Darby, Scofield, Chafer - BW] insist that the 'new covenant' cannot be operative at this time because it is associated in the Old Testament with – 1) The **return of the literal David** (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24-26); 2) The **restoration of Israel to her land** (Ezekiel 37:21, 25-26; Jeremiah 31:23-24). Since these haven't occurred, we are told, the **new covenant can't have been enacted**." (Bold emphasis added, McGuiggan, p.38-39)
3. *H. Wayne House*: "Once again God will lead the nation of Israel into the land they were promised. The promises to Abraham, in which his descendents [sic] would enjoy and possess forever the land promised will find their fulfillment in the New Covenant. The **fulfillment to these promises is still future**, and will be honored in the millennial kingdom."²
4. *H. Wayne House*: "If Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant includes the nations of Israel being gathered back into her land, then the final fulfillment must include a **literal Israel** back in the **literal land of promise**. '...[W]hen the eschatological New Covenant is realized, it will have some type of exodus motif or re-gathering into the

² <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/House-TheHermeneuticsofHis.pdf>, *The Hermeneutics of Historic Premillennialism and Jeremiah 31:31-34*, p.21. Bold emphasis added.

land... The direct addressees who are Israel and Judah must be re-gathered into the Promised Land.”³

5. *H. Wayne House*: “New Testament believers are recipients of the blessings of salvation that come through the New Covenant, but the New Covenant **will not be directly fulfilled** until the nation of **Israel has seen the promises of Jeremiah 31** and other passages literally and physically come to pass.” (Bold emphasis added, House, p. 22-23)

E. Premillennialism's major assumption.

1. Premillennialists argue that prophecy must be interpreted “literally” and not “spiritually.”
2. I don't care for these terms but perhaps there are no better alternatives.
 - a. I believe that Jesus “literally” took away my sins in that He *actually* did what was necessary to remove them and I bear them no longer. However I do not believe that my sins are “literally” sitting on the ocean floor as Micah says (7:19).
 - b. To Premillennialists the word “literal” means *physical* in contrast to *spiritual/non-physical*.
3. To say that all prophetic scripture must be interpreted literally is **not sustainable**.
 - a. Are Daniel's “seventy weeks” *literally* seventy weeks/490 days (Dan. 9:24-27)?
 - b. Malachi 4:5 and “Elijah”?
 - c. *Jim McGuiggan*: “What would you make of the first prophecy in the Bible (Genesis 3:15)... an unending conflict between humans and snakes?” (*The Kingdom of God and the Planet Earth*, p. 53)
 - d. *Louis Berkhof*: “Moreover this literalism lands them in all kinds of absurdities, for it involves the future restoration of all the former historical conditions of Israel's life: the great world powers of the Old Testament (Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians), and the neighboring nations of Israel (Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Philistines) must again appear on the scene, Isa. 11:14; Amos 9:12; Joel 3:19; Mic. 5:5, 6; Rev. 18.” (*Systematic Theology*, p. 713)

F. Has God fulfilled the promises to Abraham?

1. God promised Abraham a great nation that would come from him, and land for that nation, and that in him all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). Combining the nation and land promises gives a two-fold promise: one physical (nation-land) and one spiritual (Messianic).
2. The nation-land promise was **unconditional**. “Its fulfillment rested solely on the immutability of Him who made it.” (Hailey, *Hailey's Comments Vol. I*, p. 289)
3. The promises were made again to Abraham as well as Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 13:15; 17:8; 26:1-5; 28:4, 13).
4. Several passages show that the nation-land promises were fulfilled.

³ House, p. 22. In this quotation he cites Alexander R. Gonzales, “The Significance of the New Covenant in the New Testament.”

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- a. Joshua 11:23 – So Joshua **took the whole land**, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.
 - b. Joshua 21:43-45 – ⁴³So the LORD **gave Israel all the land** which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they **possessed it and lived in it...** ⁴⁵Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; **all came to pass.** (cf. 23:14; 24:13)
 - c. Nehemiah 9:7-8 – ⁷You are the LORD God, Who chose Abram and brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, and gave him the name Abraham. ⁸”You found his heart faithful before You, and made a covenant with him to give him the land of the Canaanite, of the Hittite and the Amorite, of the Perizzite, the Jebusite and the Girgashite—To give it to his descendants. And **You have fulfilled Your promise**, for You are righteous.
 - d. Jehoshaphat confirmed that God fulfilled His promise to give Israel the land (2 Chron. 20:7).
 - e. The establishment of six cities of refuge.
 - 1) *Wayne Jackson*: “When the law of Moses was given, provision was made for the establishment of cities of refuge where the manslayer who had killed without premeditation might flee for the preservation of his life. **Initially, three cities** were to be set aside for this purpose. Moses declared, however:

“⁸If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, just as He has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which He promised to give your fathers – ⁹if you carefully observe all this commandment which I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in His ways always – then you shall **add three more cities** for yourself, besides these three.’ (Deut. 19:8-9)

“Thus, **six cities of refuge** would be evidence of the substantial fulfillment of the land promise to Abraham’s seed. A reading of Joshua 20:7-8 reveals that the cities of Kedesh, Shechem, Hebron, Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan were assigned as havens of refuge—six cities. Thus, “**all the land**” had been given; the land covenant has been fulfilled!” (Bold emphasis added, Article, *Examining Premillennialism*)
5. Israel’s reception of the land was unconditional but the **retention** of it was **conditional**. If they did not heed the commandments of the LORD they would be thrust out of the land (Deut. 28:1-2, 11, 15, 63 – “if you obey”).
 6. *Homer Hailey*: “God has fulfilled the promise; the Jews possessed the land; they broke the covenant and were thrust out... To teach or to indicate a return of the Jews to Palestine is nothing short of infidelity, for it flatly contradicts all that God has said on the subject.” (*Hailey’s Comments*, p. 294)
 - a. Premillennial objection: “God said He would give Abraham’s descendants the land **‘forever’**” (Gen. 13:15)
 - b. Response: Forever doesn’t always mean forever. Circumcision was “an everlasting covenant” (Gen. 17:13) but under the new covenant “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything.” (Gal. 6:15)
 7. The premillennial doctrine of the Jews being restored to the land of Palestine has **no support from New Testament** either.
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- a. *Louis Berkhof*: “It is remarkable that the New Testament, which is the fulfilment of the Old, contains **no indication whatsoever** of the re-establishment of the Old Testament theocracy by Jesus, nor a single undisputed positive prediction of its restoration, while it does contain **abundant indications of the spiritual fulfilment** of the promises given to Israel, Matt. 21:43; Acts 2:29–36, 15:14–18; Rom. 9:25, 26; Heb. 8:8–13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10.” (Bold emphasis added, *Systematic Theology*, p. 713)
- b. *L. A. Mott*: “But what is the New Testament expectation for the future? A regathering to Palestine? If that is still the hope of the Jews **we would expect some reference to it in the New Testament**, just as the Old Testament prophets before the exile had predicted scattering to be followed by regathering and return. But what is found in the New Testament? See John 4:20-24; Romans 4:13; Galatians 3:16 (Note reference to ‘land’ passages!); 4:25-26; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 10:34; 11:13-16; 12:22 (in context); 13:14; Rev. 21-22.” (Bold emphasis added, *Thinking Through Jeremiah*, p. 157)
- G. Has God’s promise to David been fulfilled?
1. In what way would Christ sit on David’s throne?
 - a. *Wayne Jackson*: “The question is not whether Christ was to sit on the throne of David; the controversy is concerning the **nature** of that throne—i.e. was it to be a **material** throne, or was it to be the **spiritual** throne of David? (Bold emphasis added, Article, *Examining Premillennialism*)
 - b. *John Walvoord*: “The problem of fulfillment does not consist in the question of whether Christ is the one who fulfills the promises, but rather on the issue of *how* Christ fulfills the covenant and *when* He fulfills it. Concerning this question there have been two principal answers: (1) Christ fulfills the promise by **His present session** at the right hand of the Father **in heaven**; (2) Christ fulfills the promise of His return and **righteous reign on earth** during the millennium.” (Bold emphasis added, *The Kingdom Promises to David*, <http://walvoord.com/article/55>)
 2. What does Jeremiah say about David’s posterity?
 - a. That David would **never lack** a man on his throne (Jer. 33:17-26).
 - b. But, then we have the **message against Coniah** (Jer. 22:24-30)
 - 1) Coniah would be carried off into captivity after only three months’ reign in Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 24:8-12). He will die in captivity (22:26-27).
 - 2) The important verse is verse 30: “Thus says the LORD, ‘Write this man down **childless**, a man who will not prosper in his days; For **no man of his descendants** will prosper sitting on the **throne of David** or ruling again in Judah.’”
 - a) “Childless” does not mean no children. He had several children, and Jesus was of his lineage (1 Chron. 3:17-18; Matt. 1:12; Lk. 3:27).
 - b) “Childless” means that Coniah’s children **did not see the throne**. After Coniah’s deportation his uncle, Zedekiah, was placed on the throne.
 - c) The important expression is “ruling again **in Judah**.”
 - 1] *Hardeman Nichols*: “If the Scriptures had left off that final clause in Jeremiah’s prophecy, Jesus **could not occupy** the throne of David **at all**. The restriction, however, is that neither Jesus, nor

any other descendant of Coniah, would ever occupy the throne of David 'in Judah' where Jerusalem is located." (Bold emphasis added, *Will There Be a Thousand Year Earthly Reign? The Spiritual Sword*, Vol. 23, No. 3, April 1992, p. 10)

- 2] *Homer Hailey*: "This does not say that no more should one of his seed sit upon the throne of David and rule, but that no more shall one of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and *ruling in Judah*. It is *in Judah* that no more shall one of his seed sit upon the throne and rule. This is clear. Jesus Christ nor anyone else of the seed of David can sit upon the throne of David *and rule in Judah* without violating this decree of God." (*Hailey's Comments*, p. 130-131)
- c. Therefore Christ **cannot** sit on the physical throne of David **at any time** without violating this decree of God. This strikes at the heart of premillennial doctrine.
3. Jesus' Davidic kingship was fulfilled when He ascended to heaven to sit at the Father's right hand.
- a. Jesus and the Davidic kingdom.
- 1) Gabriel announced that Jesus would sit on David's throne and that his "kingdom would have no end" (Luke 1:32-33).
 - 2) Jesus announced that the kingdom was "at hand" (Mk. 1:15; Matt. 4:17).
 - 3) Jesus accepted the testimony of those who claimed His Davidic kingship (Mk. 11:9-10; Lk. 19:38-40).
 - 4) Daniel prophesied that the Son of Man would receive His kingdom when He **went to** the Father (7:13-14), not, as premillennialists say, when He **comes from** the Father.
 - 5) Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18) and all things have been "put under His feet" (Ps. 110:1; Eph. 1:20-22).
- b. Premillennial objection: "The New Testament does not connect the present session of Christ with the Davidic throne."
- 1) *John Walvoord*: "The New Testament has in all fifty-nine references to David. It also has many references to the present session of Christ. A search of the New Testament reveals that there is **not one reference** connecting the present session of Christ with the Davidic throne." (Bold emphasis added, *The Kingdom Promises to David*, <http://walvoord.com/article/55>)
 - 2) Response: Peter does *exactly* that in Acts 2.
 - a) Acts 2:29-33: ²⁹Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS **ON HIS THRONE**, ³¹he looked ahead and spoke of the **resurrection of the Christ**, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. ³²This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. ³³Therefore having been **exalted to the right hand of God**, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

- b) Premillennial objection: “It does not say that Jesus had to sit on David’s throne **immediately after** being raised up.”
- c) Response: “Having received” (v33) shows that it does.

H. Is the new covenant still future?

1. It would seem the answer is “No” based upon numerous passages.
 - a. Luke 22:20: And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying “This cup which is poured out for you **is the new covenant** in My blood.”
 - b. 1 Cor. 11:25: In the same way He took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup **is the new covenant** in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”
 - c. 2 Cor. 3:6: who also has made us adequate as **servants of a new covenant**, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
 - d. Heb. 8:6-8: ⁶But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of **a better covenant**, which has been enacted on better promises. ⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. ⁸For finding fault with them, He says, “Behold, days are coming, says the LORD, when **I will effect a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...”
 - e. Heb. 9:15: For this reason He is the mediator of **a new covenant**...
2. It seems clear that Jesus is mediating the second covenant which Jeremiah spoke of. To deny this defies logic. But not according to premillennialists.
 - a. Some premillennialists say the blood of Jesus produced *two new covenants*.
 - 1) *John Walvoord*: “The difference in point of view is occasioned by the question of whether the new covenant promised Israel is being fulfilled now, in the present inter-advent age, as the amillenarians contend, or whether Israel’s new covenant will be fulfilled after the second coming of Christ in the millennial kingdom, as the premillennarians contend. Most premillennarians (Darby excepted) would agree that **a new covenant has been provided for the church, but not the new covenant for Israel.**” (Bold emphasis added, *The New Covenant With Israel*, <https://bible.org/seriespage/18-new-covenant-israel>)
 - 2) *John Walvoord*: “This conceives the sacrifice of Christ as making possible **two covenants, a new covenant for Israel** as well as **a new covenant for the church**. This view has the advantage of not complicating the promises given expressly to Israel with promises given to the church.” (Bold emphasis added, *Ibid.*)
 - b. Darby contended that the church participates in the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ but that “the gospel is not a covenant, but the revelation of the salvation of God.” Thus, the new covenant is still yet future. (Walvoord, quoting Darby in *The New Covenant With Israel*)
 - c. Walvoord says that Hebrews 8 doesn’t really say what it appears to say.
 - 1) [Regarding Hebrews 8 and its citation of Jer. 31.31-34] “It should be noted that **nowhere in this passage** is the new covenant with Israel **declared to be in force**. The only argument is that which was always true—the prediction of a new covenant automatically declares the Mosaic covenant as a

temporary, not an everlasting covenant.” (Bold emphasis added, *The New Covenant With Israel*)

- 2) “He [amillennial writer - BW] states that the passage ‘declares that this new covenant has been already introduced.’ A careful reading of the passage will reveal it **makes no such statement**. It declares a ‘better covenant’ than the Mosaic covenant has been introduced (Heb 8:6), but it **does not state here or anywhere else that this better covenant is ‘the new covenant with the house of Israel,’** or that Israel’s new covenant has been introduced. Allis not only reads in statements which are not to be found in this passage, but also ignores the argument of the writer of Hebrews. **The argument does not depend upon the introduction of the new covenant for Israel,** but only on the question of whether the Old Testament anticipates an end to the Mosaic covenant. The fact that the Old Testament predicts a new covenant for Israel establishes this point.” (Bold emphasis added, *The New Covenant With Israel*)
 - a) I would argue the very opposite.
 - b) Hebrews 8:6 does not simply say that a better covenant has been “introduced.” It says **enacted**. Jeremiah introduced it, Jesus enacted it.
3. If the new covenant in Jesus’ blood has not been enacted, then what of our sins? “Since the Bible knows of only one ‘new’ covenant and it deals with the sin problem – if it is not now operative, we’re all in real trouble.” (McGuiggan, *The Kingdom of God and Planet Earth*, p. 41)

Conclusion:

- I. Jeremiah gave the Jews a description of their coming Messiah at a time when their national future looked bleak.
 - A. He would be a king ruling on the throne of David.
 - B. He would be a king that ruled wisely and righteously.
 - C. He would be a shepherd-king who keeps His people safe and secure.
- II. Jeremiah’s message of the new covenant is his greatest contribution to our understanding of the scheme of redemption.
 - A. *James E. Smith*: “Replacing the old covenant that had been written upon stone would be a new covenant written upon the tables of the heart—an inward, spiritual, everlasting covenant of pardon and grace.” (An Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah: Introduction, p. 24)

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