



ADVENT SERIES: "GOD WITH US"

THE SILENT GOD • JEREMIAH 31:31-34; ISAIAH 53:1-12 • 11.28.21

MAIN POINT

The prophets foresaw that God's plan would be fulfilled through the Messiah.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever had to wait a really long time for something? Are you waiting on some news right now?

What is the best news you heard last week? What made it so special?

Today's discussion looks at how Jesus, the Messiah, was always a part of God's plan for His people. Did the people in the Old Testament understand that God was going to send a Messiah? Did they understand that keeping the law was not going to save them from their sins?

What was necessary for the people of Israel to be saved? Why did they need God to send the Messiah? Why do you think the people of Israel had difficulty believing this good news?

The prophets of the Old Testament knew about the Messiah. Peter wrote that “concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that would come to you searched and carefully investigated. They inquired into what time or what circumstances the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating when He testified in advance to the messianic sufferings and the glories that would follow” (1 Pet. 1:10-11). The coming of the Messiah was not something that God planned after the Old Covenant failed; the Messiah’s coming was something God planned from the very beginning (Genesis 3:15). In today’s study, we will see that the prophets saw the coming of the Messiah, and that they knew that a New Covenant would be ushered in by God. They knew that this was gospel, or good news, to the people of Israel. They knew that the Messiah would be the fulfillment of God’s plan for the world.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ JEREMIAH 31:31-34.

How did Israel break the Old Covenant? What would be the difference between the Old and the New Covenant, according to Jeremiah?

Why would the Lord say, “I will be their God, and they will be my people”? Was Israel not already His people? Have we yet seen the day when “they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them”?

Was the promise of the New Covenant for Israel only? How can we know from this passage?

The Old Covenant had to be replaced. Paul taught that “you are Christ’s letter, produced by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God—not on stone tablets but on tablets that are hearts of flesh” (2 Cor. 3:3). When God gave the Commandments to Moses, He wrote them on tablets of stone; yet in the New Covenant, God promised to write the law on our hearts. Ezekiel spoke of the New Covenant like this, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26). The New Covenant gave a promise that God would change His people’s hearts so that obedience is our natural response instead of rebellion.

Thankfully, the promise of the New Covenant is not only for Israel! In this passage, Jeremiah spoke directly to Israel. However, in the Book of Hebrews, this exact passage is applied to all of the church (Hebrews 8:10; 10:16). We also know that Gentiles are not excluded from the promise of the New Covenant in Galatians 3:7, “Understand that those who have faith are Abraham’s sons.” Gentiles also can count on the promise of the New Covenant. Anyone, from any language or tribe, is able to be saved through the New Covenant that Jesus Christ inaugurated.

READ ISAIAH 53:1-9.

What kind of person did Isaiah foresee the Messiah would be? How might this have differed from the Messiah that Israel expected?

What does it mean that the Messiah would bear the iniquity of us all? How has Jesus done this?

The New Covenant was coming, but it would have to come at a price. The rightful King of Israel, the Messiah, would appear less than kingly. In fact, Isaiah foresaw that the Messiah would be “like someone people turned away from” and that He would be “despised and rejected.” Isaiah foresaw that the Messiah would be “struck down by

God,” even though the Messiah “had done no violence and had not spoken deceitfully.” Jesus the Messiah bore “the iniquity of us all.” This is how He ushered in the New Covenant. Because Jesus loved the Father with all of His heart, He never sinned against Him. He perfectly kept the demands of the Old Covenant and, as such, He was able to perfectly bear “the iniquity of us all.”

How can the Messiah “see His seed” and God “prolong His days” if He was already in His grave in verse 9?

READ ISAIAH 53:10-12.

What is the guilt offering found in verse 10? How did the “righteous Servant justify many” (v. 11)?

The Lord crushed the Messiah. Jesus struggled on the eve of the fulfillment of this prophecy in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Father, if You are willing, take this cup away from Me—nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). At this moment, Jesus was “in anguish...and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground” (22:44).

Isaiah foresaw that the Messiah would bear the iniquities of His people, that He would die, and that He would rise from the dead. This is why Isaiah knew that the Messiah’s days would be prolonged after His death. Because Jesus bore the sins of His people and rose from the dead, the Holy Spirit takes out our old hearts of stone and gives us hearts of flesh when we trust in Christ by faith. There are many joys in the New Covenant, and some of the chief joys are that we are now in communion with God by faith in Jesus Christ, that we have the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, and that God has promised to also raise us from the dead, as He did Jesus Christ. All of these promises and joys were the hope of the prophets and the fulfillment of the promises in the Old Testament.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Where do you currently feel most needy for Jesus to bear your iniquities and carry your sorrows? How will you submit these areas before Him this week?

How does the need for a Savior and the New Covenant make everyone on the same ground in the family of God? How should this affect how we interact with one another and those outside the church?

How will you seek to share the good news of the suffering servant, Jesus, this week?

PRAYER

Close with a time of prayer centered on thankfulness for God's fulfilled promises in Jesus Christ. Thank God for sending His Son to usher in the New Covenant. Thank God for preserving the witness of the prophets for us in His Word. Ask the Lord to help us be bold to declare the beauty of the New Covenant, as the prophets did before us.

COMMENTARY

The New Testament frequently used this passage about the new covenant (Lk 22:20; 1Co 11:25; 2Co 3:5-14; and Heb 8:8-12, the longest quote from the OT in the NT). It is a classic text that has shaped much of Christian theological reflection.

31:31. The new covenant is set in eschatological times of the Messiah and the consummation of history (the days are coming). The name of this new covenant suggests a radical break from past covenants. But the word for “new” in Hebrew can also mean “renewed covenant,” especially since three-fourths of the contents of this covenant recall the Abrahamic-Davidic covenants. The principal parties of the covenant are the house of Israel and the house of Judah. While there has been a cleavage between the 10 northern tribes and the two southern tribes, both parts are included here, suggesting a rejoining of the two parts. This new covenant also applies to the church, because Gentiles were part of this continuing Abrahamic-Davidic new covenant when God promised that in Abraham’s seed all nations would be blessed. Among the other names given to this new covenant in the Old Testament is “Everlasting Covenant,” which speaks to its duration.

31:32. The problem with the old covenant was not with its maker or its contents, but with God’s people who broke their marriage vows to Him (cp. 11:10). God said this covenant would not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors at the exodus or on Sinai, but it would be made “after those days” (v. 33) when the people of Israel are restored to their land.

31:33. God will still place His law within them and write it on their hearts. This law or instruction is a point of continuity between the old and new covenants, only this time God would write the law internally rather than externally on tablets. Gone would be the evil will and heart of the people, which had characterized Israel in the past (13:10; 18:12; 23:17).

31:34. Once the merely external law is a thing of the past, no longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me . Teaching will also be a thing of the past. From the least to the greatest of them indicates all people no matter their social class (“great” to the “poor,” cp. 5:4-5) or age (“youngest” to the “oldest,” cp. 6:13). The phrase I will forgive... and never again

remember their sin reflects the grace of God that forgives sin and the omniscience of God that chooses not to call it to mind or to hold it against us.

ISAIAH 53:1-12

53:1. The speakers of these verses (we) are likely the prophet and the community that he represents. The “arm of the Lord” refers to His victorious power, ironically revealed through a Suffering Servant.

53:2-3. A young plant growing up in dry ground would be withered, thus providing an appropriate image of the man of suffering. Just like a withered plant is uprooted and thrown away, so the Suffering Servant was rejected by men.

53:4-6. For the first time the reader learns that the Servant suffered on behalf of others. Even so, people did not recognize it, and He was rejected as One struck down by God for His own supposed sins.

53:7. Though not suffering for His own sins, the Servant suffered silently and willingly. Philip used this passage to tell the Ethiopian eunuch the good news about Jesus, who silently bore His crucifixion (Acts 8:31-35; 1 Pet. 2:23).

53:8. For the first time the passage reveals that the Servant’s suffering culminated in death.

53:9. The Servant died unjustly and was buried as if He were an evil man. The pairing of the wicked with the rich man implies that the wealthy man got his riches by deceit. This may be confirmed by the final statement of the verse that the servant had not spoken deceitfully. Jesus was literally buried with a rich man when He was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50-56).

53:10-11. That God was pleased to crush the Servant sounds mean-spirited, but His pleasure is explained by the fact that the Servant’s suffering will justify many. What seems harsh will turn out to be gracious. The Servant’s pain, suffering, and death will function like a restitution offering (Lev. 5:14-6:7; 7:1-10) for the sin of God’s people.

53:12. Returning to the theme at the beginning of the poem (52:13), the suffering of the Servant will give way to His exaltation. Jesus’ suffering culminated in the crucifixion but gave way to the resurrection.

