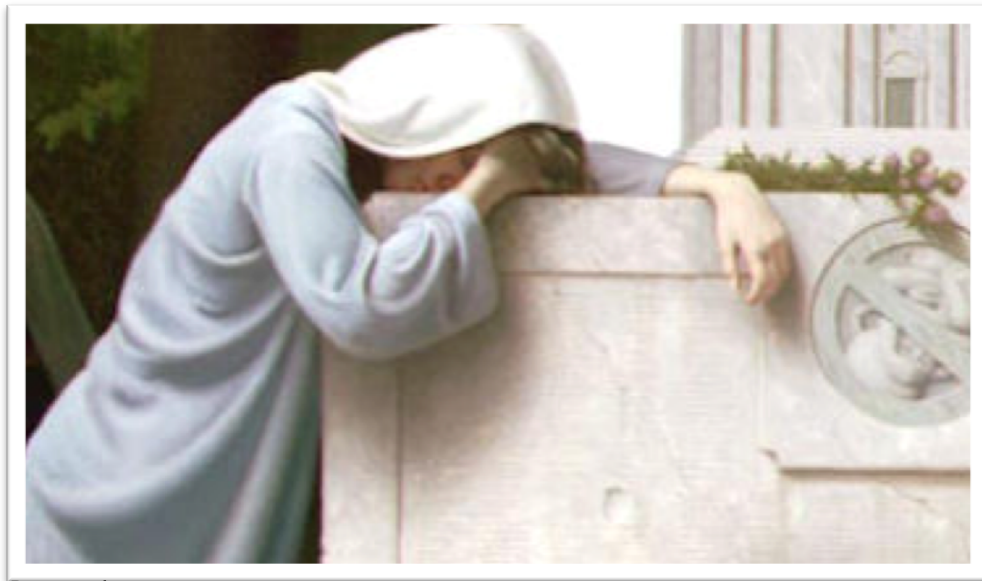


## I will be **THEIR GOD** and **THEY** will be **MY PEOPLE**

What does that mean?

From the time the rebellious house of Israel was taken into captivity in 721 B.C and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they have remained in exile.

**“A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more” (Jeremiah 31:15).**



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Keil and Delitzsch provide insight into the identify the children of this weeping mother. **“Rachel, the mother of Joseph, and thus the ancestress of Ephraim, the chief tribe of the Israelites who had revolted from the royal house of David, weeps bitterly over the loss of her children, the ten tribes who have been carried away into exile.”** From the highest situated border-town of the two kingdoms, Rachel could be heard.

The pain this mother feels cannot be eased. She begged to conceive and waited many long years for her womb to be opened by God to miraculously birth her first son, Joseph and die giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. She won't be consoled; she won't accept *that* loss—the loss of her children—cut-off from the covenant family.

This imagery provides a level of insight into God's love for Israel and the pain He too, suffers for His spiritually lost people. **“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel” (Jeremiah 31:3-4).**

Keil and Delitzsch continue, “Rachel, the beloved spouse of Jacob... the great ancestress of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh is here named as the representative of the maternal love shown to Israel and the pain felt when the people are lost.” Rachel, here is presented as a symbol of the true, caring, faithful church of God stressed and weeping bitterly over their lost family members—the lost sheep of Israel.

“Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for **your work will be rewarded,**’ declares the Lord. **‘Your children will return to their own land’**” (Jeremiah 31:15). God has heard her cries and witnessed her work—the teaching of the **pure word of God** will be rewarded. Children will be born from her—spiritual sons of God; and there will be many.

The birthing of sons of God is a painful process; it begins with repentance. Keil and Delitzsch comment on God’s promise to Rachel, “The Lord will put an end to this wailing. ‘Cease thy weeping,’ He cries to the sorrowing ones, ‘for **there is a reward for thy labour.** פְּעִלָּה **is the maternal labour of birth and rearing of children. The reward consists in this, that the children shall return out of the land of the enemy into their own land.**”

God holds close to his heart, the hope for Israel. “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, **‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’**” (Jeremiah 29:11).

God sees into the future the repentance of thirteen nations living in the 21st century without His kingship. Keil and Delitzsch note, “This hope is grounded on the circumstance that **Israel will become aware, through suffering, that he is punished for his sins, and repenting of these sins, will beseech his God for favour.** The Lord already perceives this repentant spirit and acknowledgment of sin.”

**The object of God’s plan** is that **He will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they will be His people** (Jeremiah 31:1) and it will happen “at that time” after Jacob’s trouble.

“**The recognition of suffering as chastisement by God excites a desire after amelioration and amendment. But since man cannot accomplish these through his own powers, Israel prays, ‘Lead me back,’ sc. from my evil way, i.e., turn me. He finds himself constrained to this request, because he feels regret for his apostasy from God,**” states Keil and Delitzsch.

“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, says the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but **the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: THEY SHALL CALL ON MY NAME, and I WILL HEAR THEM: I will say, it is MY PEOPLE: and they shall say, THE LORD IS MY GOD**” (Zechariah 13:8-9).

“I have surely heard Ephraim’s moaning: You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and **I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD my God**” (Jeremiah 31:18).

Prepare to return from exile God announces from the scriptures. Do not delay, He cries out to the thirteen nations of 21<sup>st</sup> century Israel, "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. Return, O Virgin Israel return to your towns. How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter? **The Lord will create a new thing on earth, a woman will surround a man**" (Jeremiah 21-22).

A woman will surround a man?

The mysterious imagery of a woman surrounding a man as a new thing on earth is written by God to entice Israel back to Him. But, what does it mean?

The imagery morphs from sketch into a high-resolution photo when the meaning of the new covenant is understood. Keil and Delitzsch provide a comprehensive analysis of this imagery. "Israel is to think seriously of returning; and, inasmuch as this return to Palestine presupposes return to the Lord, Israel must **first turn with their heart to his God**. This exhortation [to prepare to return] is finally enforced by the statement, 'Jahveh creates a new thing on earth' (cf. Isaiah 43:19). This novelty is, 'a woman will encompass a man.' With regard to the meaning of these words, about which there is great dispute, this much is evident from the context, that they indicate a **transformation of things, a new arrangement of the relations of life**. This new arrangement of things which Jahveh brings about is mentioned as a motive which should rouse Ephraim (= Israel) to return without delay to the Lord and to his cities.

The general statement, 'a woman shall encompass (the) man,' i.e., lovingly embrace him - this **new relationship which Jahveh will bring about in place of the old**, that the man encompasses the wife, loving, providing for, protecting her - can only be referred, agreeably to the context, **to change of relationship between Israel and the Lord**.

And the new thing that God creates consists in this, that the woman, the weaker nature that needs help, will lovingly and solicitously surround the man, the stronger. Herein is expressed a **NEW RELATIONSHIP OF ISRAEL TO THE LORD**, a reference to a new covenant which the Lord, Jeremiah 31:31., will conclude with His people, and in which He deals so condescendingly towards them that they can lovingly embrace Him. This is the substance of the Messianic meaning in the words. **This new creation of the Lord is intended to be, and can be, for Israel, a powerful motive to their immediate return to their God.**"

This new relationship is not limited to the house of Israel (the ten tribes) but it will include the house of Judah. "This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: 'When I **bring them back from captivity, the people of Judah** and its towns will again say, 'The LORD bless you, O righteous home, O holy mountain!'" (Jeremiah 31:23).

Keil and Delitzsch add, "**Both portions of the covenant people** will be led back into their own land and re-established there, both are now combined, since they are again, at the restoration, to be united under **one king, the sprout of David** (cf. Jeremiah 3:15, Jeremiah 3:18), and to both there is **promised great blessing, both temporal and spiritual**. The house of Israel and the

house of Judah, as separate nations, are represented as a fruitful field, which God will sow with men and cattle.”

God will bless them because they are obeying Him. He will increase and protect them, as opposed to the many years of their rebellion when God watched over them to destroy them because of their apostasy. Upcoming events on the close horizon, will bring them to their knees. During their time of trouble, they will remember their God from ancient times and cry out to Him for help, while the nations of the world worship the rogue heavenly powers: Satan and the Antichrist with their coalition. These defeated nations will feel trapped and will surrender.

“One of the heads of the beast appeared to be fatally wounded. But the mortal wound was healed, and **the whole world was astonished and followed the beast**. And **they worshiped the dragon**, for **he had given his authority to the beast**, and **they worshiped the beast**, saying, “Who is like the beast, and **WHO CAN FIGHT AGAINST IT?**” (Revelation 13:3-4).

God will go to war against this rogue heavenly coalition and call on His rescued people to fight the vast rebel armies of the nations on earth. The remnant of 21st century Israel will be a drop in the bucket compared to the sea of soldiers before them. They will not fear because they are ecstatic about their new relationship with the Almighty God who will guarantee their victory. God uses this great battle to reveal to all of mankind that He and He only is the Great God. Satan, the Antichrist and their coalition cannot topple the throne of God, the Mighty One of Jacob, the Almighty Creator of all things.

“As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, **I WILL FREE YOUR PRISONERS** from the waterless pit. Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope; even now I announce that **I WILL RESTORE TWICE AS MUCH TO YOU**. **I will bend JUDAH as I bend my bow and fill it with EPHRAIM**. I will rouse your sons, Zion, against your sons, O Javan, and **MAKE YOU LIKE A WARRIOR'S SWORD**” (Zechariah 9:12-13).

God will make the house of Judah “like a proud horse in battle” and “The Ephraimites will become like mighty men, and their hearts will be glad as with wine” (Zechariah 10:3,7).

“The Lord will appear over them; his arrow will flash like lightning. The Sovereign Lord will sound the trumpet; he will march in the storms of the south, and **the LORD ALMIGHTY WILL SHIELD THEM**. **They will destroy and overcome** with slingstones... **THE LORD THEIR GOD WILL SAVE THEM on that day as the flock of his people**” (Zechariah 9:14-16).

The people of Israel, now a re-united kingdom, are awe-struck and amazed by their rescue and the invitation back into the family. A new relationship blossoms, the relationship prophesied by Jeremiah hundreds of years earlier.

Keil and Delitzsch describe this beautiful moment for Israel. “The experience of the unmerited love and compassion of the Lord softens their heart so much, that the favoured one no longer

doubts the righteousness of the divine punishment. Such knowledge of true blessedness cannot be called elementary; rather, **it implies a deep experience of divine grace and a great advance in the life of faith.**”

The ancient kingdom of Israel, as God’s inheritance (Deuteronomy 32:9), has worked the Almighty God to the bone for the past 4,000 years. Their humble God-fearing beginnings grew into a kingdom of arrogant rebels sold into sin. God worked to implement measures for their salvation, which only a few throughout history have accepted. The rest within the thirteen nations remain in rebellion to this day, but on the near horizon, trouble is brewing that will bring the repentant to call on God, while the unrepentant will be destroyed. For the repentant, God will offer a new covenant.

The new covenant is the old covenant but with an added, critical life-saving ingredient. God’s Holy Spirit made available since the church began on that infamous Day of Pentecost is the missing piece to our salvation. Keil and Delitzsch provide the rarely understood events leading to the new covenant and the changes that transpire. **“The re-establishment of Israel reaches its completion in the making of a new covenant, according to which the law of God is written in the hearts of the people; thereby Israel becomes in truth the people of the Lord, and the knowledge of God founded on the experience of the forgiveness of sins is such that there is no further need of any external means like mutual teaching about God (Jeremiah 31:31-34). This covenant is to endure forever, like the unchangeable ordinances of nature (Jeremiah 31:35-37); and in consequence of this, Jerusalem shall be built as the holy city of God, which shall never be destroyed again (Jeremiah 31:38-40).**

**God the Lord, in virtue of His unchangeable faithfulness, would not alter the relationship He had Himself established in His love, but simply found it in a new way** which obviated the breaking of the covenant by Israel. For it was a defect connected with the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, that it could be broken on their part. This defect is not to exist in the new covenant which God will make in after times.”

#### **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS NEW COVENANT DESCRIBED IN JEREMIAH 31:**

- **JEREMIAH 31:32:** The new covenant will not be broken because the receiving of the Holy Spirit of God provides the spiritual mechanism for which God’s people, all people, can keep it.

“It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,’ declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 31:32).

- **JEREMIAH 31:33:** The law of God is written in the hearts of the people opposed to writing on them on tablets of stone.

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. **“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Keil and Delitzsch explain, “In the old, the law was laid before the people that they might accept it and follow it, receiving it into their hearts, as the copy of what God not merely required of men, but offered and vouchsafed to them for their happiness; while in **the new it is put within, implanted into the heart and soul by the Spirit of God,** and becomes the animating life-principle, 2 Corinthians 3:3.

The law of the Lord thus forms, in the old as well as in the new covenant, **the kernel and essence of the relation instituted between the Lord and His people;** and the difference between the two consists merely in this, that **the will of God as expressed in the law under the old covenant was presented externally to the people, while under the new covenant it is to become an internal principle of life.** Now, even in the old covenant, we not only find that Israel is urged to receive the law of the Lord his God into his heart, - to make the law presented to him from without the property of his heart, as it were, - but even Moses, we also find, promises that God **will circumcise the heart of the people,** that **they may love God the Lord with all their heart and all their soul** (Deuteronomy 30:6). But **this circumcision of heart and this love of God with the whole soul, which are repeatedly required in the law** (Deuteronomy 6:5, Deuteronomy 10:12, Deuteronomy 10:16), **are impossibilities, unless the law be received into the heart.**

It thus appears that the difference between the old and the new covenants must be reduced to this, that **what was commanded and applied to the heart in the old is given in the new,** and **THE NEW IS BUT THE COMPLETION OF THE OLD COVENANT.”**

- **JEREMIAH 31:34A: The knowledge of God will be known to everyone.**

“No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 31:34a).

“All your children will be taught by the LORD, and great will be their peace” (Isaiah 54:13).

Keil and Delitzsch conclude from their study that “The knowledge of Jahveh, of which the prophet speaks, is **not the theoretic knowledge** which is **imparted and acquired by means of religious instruction;** it is rather **knowledge of divine grace based upon the inward experience of the heart, which knowledge the Holy Spirit works in the heart by assuring the sinner that he has indeed been adopted as a son of God through the forgiveness of his sins.** This knowledge, as being an **inward experience of grace,** does not exclude religious instruction, but rather tacitly implies that there is intimation given of God's desire to save and of His purpose of grace.

**The putting of God's law in the heart results in the knowledge of the Lord no longer communicated by the outward teaching of every man to his fellow, but all, small and great, will be enlightened and taught by the Spirit of God ([Isaiah 54:13](#)) to know the Lord; cf. [Joel 3:1](#), [Isaiah 11:9](#).**

Under **the old covenant the knowledge of the Lord was connected with the mediation of priests and prophets**. Just as, at Sinai, the sinful people could not endure that the Lord should address them directly, but retreated, terrified by the awful manifestation of the Lord on the mountain, and said entreatingly to Moses, "Speak thou with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die" ([Exodus 20:15](#)); so, under the old covenant economy generally, **access to the Lord was denied to individuals, and His grace was only obtained by the intervention of human mediators. This state of matters has been abolished under the new covenant, inasmuch as the favoured sinner is placed in immediate relation to God by the Holy Spirit. [Hebrews 4:16](#); [Ephesians 3:12](#).**"

- **JEREMIAH 31:34B: The law brings an awareness of sin. With the penalty paid and through the gift of grace, our sins are completely forgiven.**

"For I will **forgive their wickedness** and will **remember their sins no more**" (Jeremiah 31:34b).

Keil and Delitzsch illuminate the power of the grace of God in their commentary, "Nevertheless, **the difference is not merely one of degree, but ONE OF A KIND. The demands of the law, 'Keep the commandments of your God,' 'Be ye holy as the Lord your God is holy,' cannot be fulfilled by sinful man. Even when he strives most earnestly to keep the commands of the law, he cannot satisfy its requirements. The law, with its rigid demands, can only humble the sinner, and make him beseech God to blot out his sin and create in him a clean heart ([Psalm 51:11](#)); it can only awaken him to the perception of sin, but cannot blot it out. It is God who must forgive this, and by forgiving it, write His will on the heart.** The forgiveness of sin, accordingly, is mentioned, [Jeremiah 31:34](#), at the latter part of the promise, as the basis of the new covenant.

But the forgiveness of sins is a work of grace which annuls the demand of the law against men. In the old covenant, **the law with its requirements is the impelling force**; in the new covenant, the grace shown in **the forgiveness of sins is the aiding power by which man attains that common life with God which the law sets before him as the great problem of life**. It is in this that the qualitative difference between the old and the new covenants consists.

Certainly, even under the old covenant, God bestowed on the people of Israel grace and the forgiveness of sins, by the institution of sacrifice, had opened up a way of access by

which men might approach Him and rejoice in His gracious gifts; His Spirit, moreover, produced in the heart of the godly ones the feeling that their sins were forgiven, and that they were favoured of God. But even this institution and this working of the Holy Spirit on and in the heart, was no more than a shadow and prefiguration of what is actually offered and vouchsafed under the new covenant, Hebrews 10:1. **The sacrifices of the old covenant are but prefigurations of the true atoning-offering of Christ, by which the sins of the whole world are atoned for and blotted out.**”

- **JEREMIAH 31:35-37: The new covenant is eternal.**

“This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and start to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the Lord Almighty is his name: ‘Only if these decrees vanish from my sight,’ declares the Lord, ‘will Israel ever cease being a nation before me.’ This is what the Lord says: ‘Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done,’ declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 31:35-37).

A close study into the words of God bring out the subtle and powerful messages. Keil and Delitsch share their studies, “In order to give **good security that the promise of a new covenant would be fulfilled**, the Lord, in Jeremiah 31:35, **points to the everlasting duration of the arrangements of nature**, and declares that, if this order of nature were to cease, then Israel also would cease to be a people before Him; i.e., the continuance of Israel as the people of God shall be like the laws of nature.

Thus, **the eternal duration of the new covenant is implicitly declared**. Considered in itself, the putting of the sun for a light by day, and the appointment of the moon and stars for a light by night, are works of the almighty power of God, just as the sea is roused so that its waves roar; but, that these phenomena never cease, but always recur as long as the present world lasts, is a proof of the immutability of these works of the omnipotence of God, and it is this point alone which here receives consideration.”

- **JEREMIAH 31:38: Jerusalem will be rebuilt again; it will be the holy city of God.**

“‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when **this city will be rebuilt for me** from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. The measuring line will stretch from there straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goah. The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown, and all the terraces out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the corner of the Horse Gate, will be holy to the Lord. **The city will never again be uprooted or demolished**’” (Jeremiah 31:38).

Keil and Delitzsch provide the final commentary of Jeremiah 31, “**This image of the new Jerusalem** thus forms a very suitable conclusion to this prophecy regarding the restoration of Israel, which, although **it begins with the deliverance of the covenant**



**people from their exile, is yet thoroughly Messianic. Though clothed in an Old Testament dress, it does not implicitly declare that Israel shall be brought back to their native land during the period extending from the time of Cyrus to that of Christ; but, taking this interval as its stand-point, it combines in one view both the deliverance from the exile and their redemption by the Messiah, and not merely announces the formation of the new covenant in its beginnings, when the Christian Church was founded, but at the same time points to the completion of the kingdom of God under the new covenant, in order to show the whole extent of the salvation which the Lord will prepare for His people who return to Him.**

Finally, then **the essential element of the new covenant will be achieved** as Keil and Delitzsch conclude, "**I will be their God, and they shall be my people,**" was set forth as **the object of the old covenant**; cf. [Leviticus 26:12](#) with [Exodus 29:45](#).

Zechariah understood the power by which God's kingdom would grow and cover the earth. "Not by might nor by power, **but by my Spirit**" (Zechariah 4:6) will the kingdom of God be established.

When God's work is done and His Holy Spirit is imparted to all of mankind, not only will the kingdom of Israel declare the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as their God and they His people, but all nations will come to the God of Israel to worship Him and they, too, will be His people and He will be their God.

*Compiled by Janette Andrejowich with gratitude to the great work of Keil and Delitzsch for their in-depth research and interpretation. <https://www.studydrive.net/commentaries/kdo/jeremiah-31.html>*