

A. Connected to Moses

In the first exodus, God's people were led out from Egypt's captivity and into a relationship with God based on the covenant given to Moses. An exodus that led to a new relationship through a new covenant also followed the captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah spoke of the release from Babylon as a second exodus (Jeremiah 16.14-15; 23.7-8). That pattern of bondage, release, and relationship will be fulfilled at the end of this age when God brings complete release from the bondage of sin and death and allows the creation to enter into an unhindered relationship with him. That will be the third and final exodus from bondage to freedom. Jeremiah 31.32 speaks of Israel's inability to keep the Mosaic covenant, thus excluding her from the blessings of Abraham.

The new covenant would bring with it the ability to keep God's ways, thus opening up unhindered participation in the fullness of God's promises to Abraham concerning the land, the nation, and God's presence.

B. Release, Victory, and Rule

Jeremiah described Israel's restoration as a time of release from captivity, victory over hostile nations' attacks, and the establishment of God's perfect rule through the fulfillment of Abrahamic and Davidic promises. Jeremiah described this time as if the release, victory, and rule would happen one right after the other and soon after the captivity took place. However, as Daniel found out, the release from Babylon and the full restoration of Israel's promises were separated by seventy weeks of years (Daniel 9.24-27), and as Jesus noted, the future time of full restoration was known only to God (Matthew 24.36).

Certainty, not chronological closeness, was the point of linking release, victory, and rule together. Although actually separated by thousands of years, the promised releases from oppression, victories over the nations, and the establishment of God's perfect rule will certainly happen. The actual time frame is secondary to God's people basing their present hope on a certain future. Knowing the certainty, not the date, is what provides a foundation for present repentance and hope. God's people tended to take God's threats or promises seriously only after it was too late. They put off making important decisions if they thought the deadline was far off. Jeremiah's point of present urgency would have been lost if he had told Israel that the events of victory and rule were thousands of years away. He presented future events as inevitable and certain, with present consequences for decisions of repentance and commitment, no matter how far in the future the fulfillment of the prophecies might be.

C. Connected to Abraham

God's word to Abraham was that the nations would be blessed in him (Genesis 12.3), but how were the Gentiles related to Israel's blessing? Jeremiah spoke of a time when God's blessing would be international, for both Jew and Gentile. At that time, all the nations would be obedient to the Lord (Jer. 3.16-18) and find their blessing in him (4.2). Jews and Gentiles are equal when it comes to God's evaluation of their hearts (9.25-26). All the nations of Jeremiah's day were subject to exile and, if they had responded in obedience to God, they would have been given his restoration (12.14-17; 25.29-31).

That accountability of the Gentiles before God went back to God's claim as Creator. The covenant with Abraham included all the people of the world. The covenant with Moses focused on the Jewish nation as an evangelistic witness to all the nations concerning God's salvation. The New Covenant broke down all ethnic barriers between Jews and Gentiles while maintaining the centrality of the seed of Abraham and of David through the promised Messiah (i.e., Jesus). The international blessing inherent in the promises to Abraham (Gen. 12.3) was no longer mediated by the priests in the Jerusalem temple, but by the Son at the Father's right hand. Earthly ethnic and religious distinctions were done away with.

D. Connected to Jesus

God's promises were not frustrated by Israel's disobedience (Jer. 31.35-37). His promises, though delayed from a human standpoint, would be fulfilled. God's words to Jacob (30.3, 7, 10) and David (30.9) were still in force, even in the light of Israel's disobedience and disastrous captivity. Paul (2 Cor. 3) and the writer to Hebrews (Heb. 8-10) explained what Jesus meant when he spoke of the new covenant in his blood (Luke 22.20). Indeed, the name "New Testament" shows that the entire New Testament is an exposition of the New Covenant's meaning and implications. Jeremiah 31 begins an explanation of the New Covenant that will be completed by the New Testament books.

PURPOSE

The book was designed to show the exiles the reasons for their captivity. They were not in Babylon because God had forgotten his promises to Israel, but because Israel had been unfaithful to him. The book also taught the captives to wait patiently for the 70 years to elapse and not to seek a quick release through military or political means by trusting in other nations for deliverance. Finally, the book encouraged the captives that, after their bondage, there would come a time of restoration and renewal under the New Covenant.