

BETWEEN THE LINES

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SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 31; Matthew 15

The entire Bible is about Jesus. Sometimes it is obvious, but other times you have to read between the lines to see how the Bible points to Jesus.

Today we are going to see Jesus between the lines of the Old Testament, specifically the prophecy of Jeremiah.

Last week we saw how Jesus was the story between the lines as the Israelites were freed from the bondage of Egypt. He is the Lamb of God, John says, who takes away the sin of the world.

Later in Israel's history, the prophet Jeremiah tells of the new way that God will interact with his chosen people.

Let me set the scene...

After the Israelites are set free from Egypt, God leads them to the land He promised to Abraham.

Israel has a permanent home, is allowed to have a King, and eventually has a place to worship God in the Temple built in Jerusalem.

But Israel has one big problem. She is consistently unfaithful.

Here's the thing about God. He is completely faithful, and though He is patient,

God will eventually allow us to go where we want to go.

God may let us go where we want to go, but He will always be ready, and will always make an even better way for us to come back home.

I love the parable Jesus tells in Luke 15.

Luke 15:3-7

³Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

No matter where you've been, no matter what you've done, no matter how bad you think you are...

God loves you. He will never stop pursuing you to bring you home. God allows Israel to go where they wanted to go, but he never stops pursuing them.

It was during Jeremiah's lifetime when Babylon destroyed Israel's southern kingdom of Judah along with Jerusalem.

Jeremiah's carries us back and forth in place and time as we turn its pages, yet its themes are consistent.

The message of judgment for wrongdoing is followed by the restorative power of forgiveness and new life: to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

³²It 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.

³³"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.

³⁴No 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.

"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

GOD'S PURSUIT.

The Old Covenant was never intended to be the end all be all. God has always known that His pursuit of man would extend beyond Israel.

The new covenant is better than the old. The new provides greater access to God.

*The problem was **never** with the Old Law, it was with humanity... the people refused to keep the Law.*

ACCESS TO A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP.

The New Covenant Jeremiah predicts is centered on relationship not ritual.

Jeremiah 31:33a

³³This is the covenant **I will make with the people of Israel** after that time," declares the Lord.

Notice that Jeremiah predicts a new way to approach God that is not dependent on someone else for access.

Throughout the OT, Israel's access to God had to go through the ritual of the priests.

The New Covenant promises personal access to God.

Hebrews 10:19-22

¹⁹Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Under the new covenant in Jesus, we are not dependent on a High Priest to intercede for us, now it is much more personal.

Jesus is not only the Lamb of God, but also the High Priest. We can approach God, through Jesus.

Occasionally God rips aside the veil, and you begin to see this very fact: All things happen for you. All things. Everything is knit together." –Tim Keller

ACCESS TO FORGIVENESS OF SINS

The New Covenant Jeremiah predicts gives us permanent not temporary forgiveness of sins.

Jeremiah 31:34a

³⁴ "For I will forgive their wickedness and will **remember their sins no more.**"

The OT talks about reconciliation with God in different terms than the NT.

Micah 7:18

¹⁸Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.

Micah 7:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and **passing over transgression** for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

There is this sense in the OT that God simply puts his justice on hold, he overlooks sin for a time.

Remember in the story last week?

God moved through Egypt and when He saw the doorposts of the faithful, he passed over them.

The OT does talk about forgiveness of sins, but most of the time it points to a time in the future when sins will be forgiven.

Jesus said...

Matthew 26:28

²⁸This is my blood of the *new* covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

There is no question in the NT that there is forgiveness, not just God overlooking sin.

Jeremiah says God will "Remember your sins no more."

Finally, the new covenant grants...

ACCESS TO GOD IN US

The New Covenant Jeremiah predicts gives us internal not external access to God.

Jeremiah 31:33b

³³ "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.

Throughout God's pursuit of man, He has continually made access available to more people and more personal.

Think about how God has communicated with man throughout the story of the Bible until now.

First He speaks to certain people, from afar. People like Noah and Abraham.

Then He speaks to Moses up close... at the burning bush, on Mt. Sinai. But not face to face.

Then God communicates by writing in stone his will for Israel. OT Law including the 10 Commandments.

Then God sends Jesus. For the first time people could talk to God face to face. God in human form. Can you imagine what it must have been like to have a conversation with God face to face?

Jesus predicted it would get even better.

John 14:15-17

¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷the Spirit of truth.

And God's Holy Spirit did come. Look at Acts 2...

Acts 2:37-38

³⁷When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

God promises that His Spirit will come and live in each Christian. The New Covenant brings forgiveness of sins and the indwelling gift of God living in us.

Small Group Questions.

1. Even though God is patient, He will eventually allow us to go where we want to go. How do we fight against following our heart as opposed to following God's heart?
2. Have you ever thought about the idea that God pursues you? What does that tell you about how God feels about you?
3. In Old Testament times, people came to God through priests. Their job was to perform sacrifices and rituals that helped people be close to God. How do you come close to God today? What things do you do that makes you feel like you are closer to Him?
4. What does a covenant mean?
5. God made a lasting covenant with us. He first acted and made the agreement. What do you feel like your part is in this covenantal agreement.
6. Discuss some ways in which God interacted with man. (Priests and prophets). How is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit better than the other ways?