

# OpenTheo

## Q&A#15 What Should We Make of Jeremiah's Prophecy of a New Covenant

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My new Soundcloud account is here: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>.

Today's Question: "As a paedobaptist, I am curious how would you respond to the credobaptist argument from the nature of the new covenant as described in Jer 31:31-34. They argue that Jeremiah pictures the newness of the new covenant consisting in its being made with an entirely regenerate/forgiven/saved community. Credobaptists then would argue that this change in the nature of the covenant people implies a change in the administration of the covenant sign as well, such that it should now only be applied to those who evidence themselves to be regenerate by means of a credible profession of faith. In addressing this question, I would love to hear your basic view of how the various covenants in Scripture relate to one another and develop over time."

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### Transcript

Welcome back. Today's question is as follows. As a paedobaptist, I'm curious how you would respond to the credobaptist argument from the nature of the new covenant as described in Jeremiah 31, 31-34.

They argue that Jeremiah pictures the newness of the new covenant consisting in its being made with an entirely regenerate, forgiven, saved community. Credobaptists then would argue that this change in the nature of the covenant people implies a change in the administration of the covenant sign as well, such that it should now only be applied to those who evidence themselves to be regenerate by means of a credible profession of faith. In addressing this question, I would love to hear your basic view of how the various covenants and scripture relate to one another and develop over time.

This is a big question, so I probably won't touch on all of it, but I'd like to begin by reading Jeremiah 31, which I think will give a very helpful start for thinking about what the verses 31-34 mean. Beginning at verse 1. At the same time, says the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus says the Lord, the people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness, Israel, when I went to give him rest.

The Lord has appeared of old to me saying, yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore, with loving kindness, I have drawn you. Again, I will build you and you shall be rebuilt, O Virgin of Israel.

You shall again be adorned with your tambourines and you shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice. You shall yet plant vines on the mountains of Samaria. The planters shall plant and eat them as ordinary food.

For there shall be a day when the watchmen will cry on Mount Ephraim, arise and let us go up to Zion to the Lord our God. For thus says the Lord, sing with gladness for Jacob and shout among the chief of the nations, proclaim, give praise and say, O Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the ends of the earth.

Among them, the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child together. A great throng shall return there and they shall come with weeping. And with supplications I will lead them.

I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way in which they shall not stumble. For I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my firstborn. Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the isles of far off and say, he who scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.

For the Lord has redeemed Jacob and ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, streaming to the goodness of the Lord. For wheat and new wine and oil for the young of the flock and the herd, their souls shall be like a well-watered garden and they shall sorrow no more at all.

Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance and the young men and the old together. For I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them and make them rejoice rather than sorrow. I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, says the Lord.

Thus says the Lord. A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children because they are no more. Thus says the Lord.

Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears for your work shall be

rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future, says the Lord, that your children shall come back to their own border. I have surely heard Ephraim been moaning himself.

You have chastised me and I was chastised like an untrained bull. Restore me and I will return for you are the Lord my God. Surely after my turning I repented and after I was instructed I struck myself on the thigh.

I was ashamed, yes even humiliated, because I bore the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him I earnestly remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him.

I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord. Set up signposts, make landmarks, set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you came. Turn back, O Virgin of Israel, turn back to these your cities.

How long will you gad about, O you backsliding daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth. A woman shall encompass a man. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, they shall again use this speech in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I bring back their captivity.

The Lord bless you, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself and in all its cities together farmers and those going out with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.

After this I awoke and looked around, and my sleep was sweet to me. Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord.

In those days they shall say no more. The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity.

Every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord.

I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will

remember no more.

Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea and its waves roar, the Lord of hosts is his name. If these ordinances depart from before me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before me forever. Thus says the Lord, if heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth stretched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, says the Lord.

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that the city shall be built for the Lord, from the tower of Hananiel to the corner gate. The surveyor's line shall again extend straight forward over the hill Gareb. Then it shall turn towards Goath, and the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and of all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy to the Lord.

It shall not be plucked up or thrown down any more forever. Now I'm reading this whole passage because it gives a bit more of a context for the verses that are commonly extracted from this context, and discussed in abstraction. So when we see the wider context of this passage, we can see it very much as a prophecy given in the context of the foretelling of Israel's restoration after exile.

And also as something that's spoken to Israel as a people. Not just about how the people of God will be in an abstract theological statement in the future, but know how you, Israel, will be constituted in the future. How you, Israel and Judah, will be restored and established as a people before me by the Lord.

And so this provides us with a clearer sense of what exactly is and is not going on here, and will enable us to make more sense of the references to this within the New Testament. Now as we look through the Old Testament, there are a number of different stages of God's work that develop over time. So at the very beginning we see the patriarchs and their wandering from place to place.

And then later on we see the development of the tribes, and in the story of the Exodus, Israel being sojourning in a foreign land, being led out by God's powerful work and his great right hand, and then led through the wilderness and placed within the promised land. There's conquest within the land, and then there's tribal life under the rule of judges scattered throughout the nation. Later on we see the establishment of Israel as a kingdom, as Saul is established as the first king, and then the Davidic kingdom, and then the separation of Israel into two separate kingdoms.

And this is a movement from an era that's very much defined by tribal life around wandering from place to place often, around a tabernacle at the heart, or some sanctuary location, where God dwells and there's a priestly activity that occurs there,

and God has a special condensed presence, as it were, within there, within the Shekinah glory. Later on we have a movement to the era of the kings, where you have the holy city and the temple at the heart of this city, the city of David, and within this temple God is present. And Israel is defined not so much by the law and the sanctuary and by the limitations of the immediate relationships within its life, but it's defined more by relationships to the nations roundabout, and as it finds its footing as a nation secure among these surrounding nations.

Later on we have another movement still, as Israel starts to deal with the wider nations and with the empires of the world on a greater scale. And so Israel is no longer defined so much by this temple at its heart, but by its ministry within a wider area, by the prophetic ministry. The prophetic ministry is not defined by a key sanctuary location, nor even by the boundaries of a royal nation.

It's defined by the Spirit blowing where He wishes and moving people all over the place. The Prophet has a peripatetic ministry, walking around from place to place and going into foreign lands and ministering there, speaking God's word, building up and pulling down kingdoms. That God is at work in places like the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar, or He's at work in Nineveh through the work of Jonah the prophet, or He's at work with Esther in Ahasuerus' court.

And in all of these things we see an example of God's work extending further and further beyond the immediate reaches of Israel. There are other movements that occur here, and here it's important to consider the significance of covenant developments within Israel, and the significance of the restoration of Israel after exile. This is just not a period that we consider enough.

We often see it as a kind of threadbare aftermath to the story of the kingdom. The great glories of the Solomonic kingdom, and then from that point it's just decline, and there's a meager return of the people to the land, and it's never quite the same after that. But yet the Old Testament speaks in very different terms often of this return, this period that comes after the return to the land.

Although the physical form of the kingdom and the temple are far less grand and far less imposing as they were within the reign of Solomon, there is something more glorious that has come, and if we fail to see this we will be missing a lot. So if you look through the story of Israel, what is the thing, the one sin that defines it all the way through, from the very beginning to the height of the kingdom, which brings down the kingdom ultimately, the thing that many of the earlier prophets are most vocal in speaking against? It's the sin of idolatry, the sin of not knowing who God is, the sin of worshipping the foreign gods, the gods of the nations, of giving their heart and their work and their service to gods that did not know them, to foreign gods, to gods other than the Lord. And so this challenge for the prophets, this challenge for Moses, this challenge for the kings,

is this constant battle against idolatry, the battle between Baal and the faithful prophet of God, the battle between worship on the high places and worship in the holy place in the temple, in the city of David.

And so we see this constant conflict between idolatry and the faithful worship of God that builds up and continues all the way throughout the Old Testament story, until the restoration. After the restoration, the sin of idolatry just does not seem to feature in the same way. There are struggles with idolatry within these foreign lands, but for the most part, idolatry no longer features.

The sin that had defined Israel to that point, the sin that had brought Israel down, the sin that had led to its wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, that sin largely seems to be eradicated. And that is a striking feature that many people don't pay enough attention to. This is something that represents a change in the heart of the people.

Now, the people are still unfaithful in many senses. They still sin, but there has been a decisive shift. There's also a shift in the way that the people are involved within the work of the covenant.

In the past, you have the work of key figures like Moses or Solomon or David in the heart of the people and the prophets like Elijah. These people often were struggling against a largely unfaithful nation or a nation that just simply did not know God, a nation that was unaware of who God was. And so you have a faithful witness, but struggling against a deep resistance and a deep hardness of the heart of the people.

What we see after the return from exile is a different situation. So, for instance, whereas the temple, the building of the temple is very much focused upon the work of Solomon and the work of Hiram and skilled craftsmen and the work of the tabernacle is focused upon Moses and Bezalel and there were free will offerings and things like that. But within the restoration, all of Israel is involved within these building projects, building the walls of Jerusalem, the walls of Jerusalem that are now defining, not just protecting the city location, but marking out a realm that will be seen from thenceforth as holy in a new sense.

The significance of measuring out these walls is a sign that this place is being taken as holy. So it's no longer just a sanctuary in the heart of the people that is considered holy. It's the city and it's the land.

And so there's a spread of God's presence. There's a spread of God's holiness. And so although there's no descent of the Shekinah glory upon the temple within after the restoration, God's presence is known in a fuller sense, a more extended sense.

So it's no longer concentrated so much within this building at the heart of the people. It's now spread throughout the larger nation and the people are all involved within this

building project, the building of the walls, the building of the temple. And there is a shift in their attitude.

They have turned to the Lord in a new way. And so if you read the prophecy of Jeremiah, if you go a few chapters earlier, you can see him talking about this, speaking about what is going to change at the restoration. The Lord showed me and there were two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord after Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had carried away captive Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths from Jerusalem and had brought them to Babylon.

One basket had very good figs like the figs that are first ripe and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten. They were so bad. Then the Lord said to me, what do you see, Jeremiah? And I said, figs, the good figs, very good and the bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten.

They are so bad. Again, the word of the Lord came to me saying, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for their own good into the land of the Chaldeans, for I will set my eyes on them for good and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them and not pull them down.

I will plant them and I will not pluck them up. Then I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart. And as the bad figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad, surely says, thus says the Lord, so I will give up Zedekiah, the king of Judah, his princes, the residue of Jerusalem who remain in this land and those who dwell in the land of Egypt.

I will deliver them to trouble into all the kingdoms of the earth for their harm, to be a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse in all places where I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence among them till they are consumed from the land that I give to them and their fathers. And so this prophecy is a prophecy of God accomplishing a death and resurrection.

Israel brought into exile. It dies. And God deals with the bad figs and the rotten apples at the heart of Israel.

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And God deals with the bad figs and the rotten apples at the heart of Israel. And God deals with the bad figs and the rotten apples at the heart of Israel. And so this is the first part in his prophecy of a new covenant.

That God is going to establish a new administration, a new restoration covenant with Israel and with Judah. No longer will it be a matter of struggling against idolatry and the failure to know God. Rather the people will be defined by a deeper and a broader knowledge of God.

So that they will all know God from the least to the greatest. This will be a people that's defined by a knowledge of God. Now there will still be sinners in their midst but it will be different.

Again the people will no longer be apostatizing as a group. There will be individuals who apostatize but there will no longer be this history and this gradual build up and development of these histories of unfaithfulness and of rebellion that we see define Israel in the past. The story of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and his sins defining Israel generation after generation.

As people repeat his sins and add to his sins and those sins gradually build up until Israel is taken by the Assyrians. There is a change. Israel and Judah are no longer going to be defined by these things in the same way.

There will be a shift in the heart of the people. And so we can see that as God promises that they shall all know him it's a reference to the end of the sin of idolatry. That there will be also this broader turning of the heart of Israel to God.

Something that we do see after the restoration. Now it's far from complete but we can see that something decisive has changed. Their sins and their lawless deeds will be remembered no more.

The sins that define them in all the period after the exodus, all the rebellion that built up that is going to be washed away. It's no longer going to be brought to mind. It's something that Israel's history starts anew after the exile.

There is a death and a resurrection. A new period of history that begins. Now there is clearly something that doesn't quite fulfill the promise in its full sense here.

And we'll get into that in a moment. But it's worth considering some of the other changes that occur. After the exile Israel is no longer defined as it was in the past as Hebrews for instance as defined by their ancestor Eber.

Nor are they defined as the sons of Israel defined by their relationship to Jacob. Or as Israel and Judah, these two divided nations. They are defined not even by their separate tribes, these different tribes.

They still exist but these are not the defining reality for them. After this point they are called Jews and that is a recognition that in some ways they're all Judahites. They're all people who are connected with the tribe of Judah, the kingly tribe.

They've been established in a new relationship. A new relationship with God and a new relationship with rule. So as we look through the history of Israel we can see this gradual expansion of God's work.

An expansion from dealing with this small group of people wandering around focused upon a sanctuary to people finding their footing within the boundaries of a nation. And then to a people that are scattered out and dealing with the nations and witnessing to God's truth within the environment of these nations. And we can see something of this already prefigured within the story of the patriarchs.

As Joseph for instance brings blessing to his family but also to the whole of Egypt as he is faithful. That Israel is the means to bless the world. And so the movement out of the people of God so that when we get to the Gospels and the early mission of the apostles there are Jews in every part of the empire.

There are Jews who have communities of faithful belief and they are prepared for the Gospel. And so there's a shift in the constitution of the people here. A shift from a definition very much around tribal identity within an order around a tabernacle to a movement to a period defined by a land and the borders of that land and the king and the city and the temple in the heart of that.

To a greater ministry within a wider world. A more prophetic ministry as Israel is scattered abroad. But scattered abroad of salt and light.

And so these are significant movements. Not significant in the ways that many people think as a sort of decline of Israel. But there's a movement into something greater.

A development of Israel's identity. A development also in faithfulness. So that no longer are they defined by the sin of idolatry.

There are other sins but the sin of idolatry is no longer defining them in the same way. They all have a holier status. Whereas God's presence was once condensed within the very heart of the people.

In this, in the center of the people in this tabernacle and the Shekinah glory and in the Ark of the Covenant. Now we have God's presence being more generally known throughout the whole nation. There is no Shekinah glory but there's a broader presence of God.

And beyond this we can see that the heart of the people has changed. The heart of the people in the past was, you could describe as the tablets of stone. The law that God had inscribed upon these tablets of stone.

And now increasingly that law is being written onto willing hearts. Hearts are being turned so that they will serve God willingly. Israel no longer defined by a rebellion

constantly against the covenant.

But now the covenant is being written within them so that they are willing and obedient when the day comes. And so we can see already an initial fulfillment of this within the restoration of the exile. And this is what Jeremiah is immediately referring to.

This period when Israel is re-established in the land will be one where the hearts are turned back to God. It will be one where they all know God in a new way, in a way that they did not know Him before. It will be a period where they are no longer defined by the sins that defined them in the past.

It will be a period again where it will no longer be a case of large-scale national apostasy. But individuals will apostatize but the larger nation will be faithful. And so these are significant and decisive shifts in the people of God.

How do we relate this to the new covenant in the more proper sense that we speak about it in relationship to Christ? Well Christ is a fuller fulfillment of this. Christ is the one where we can see God writing. Christ is the law made flesh.

Christ is God's word made flesh. Christ is God's purpose expressed fully embodied and expressed in human life in that form. And whereas in the past the people were always at risk of national exile, of being cut off from God's presence as a result of their unfaithfulness, and being alienated from the land and the realm of God's presence, now the heart of the people, the king at the heart of the people, is one who will ever live to intercede for us.

One who is at God's very right hand. One who can never be alienated from God. And so we cannot be separated from God in Christ.

There is no separation that is possible. There is no exile that the church can experience in the same way. The church can experience sin and the consequences of sin, and there can be apostasy within the church, and there can be all these other sorts of problems, but the church as a whole can never apostatise.

There is a union between the church and God that is established in Christ that cannot be broken. And so there's a significant change here. And the knowledge of God is spread even further.

The knowledge of himself is given in the gift of his son. He reveals himself in a way that he never did before. So whereas within the period after the restoration there's a more general knowledge of God among the people, and the people are more familiar with the word of God, the word of God, and the law of God that was often unknown among the wider people, and they were led into all sorts of idolatry, after the exile and the return there is this more general knowledge.

But in the new covenant that knowledge is extended even further. The spirit is given to the church, and the spirit enables us to know God in a fuller sense yet. The spirit reveals to us the deep things of God.

The spirit connects us to Christ so that we know God personally in a way that people would not have known in the past. The Shekinah glory, the temple of the spirit, the realm of God's presence is now no longer so defined by a building at the heart of the people, but it's defined by the people themselves. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, a building formed of Jew and Gentile, of slave and free, of male and female.

It's a new body, and it's a new people. And so there's a significant change there, but it's yet incomplete. The spirit of God has not yet fully conformed us to the image of Christ.

The spirit of God has not yet fully given us his life. We have not yet been raised and perfected and glorified. And so we're waiting for a fuller fulfillment of the new covenant.

So what we can see are these various stages of fulfillment, an initial fulfillment in the restoration, a greater fulfillment in the work of Christ, and a greater fulfillment yet in the age to come. Now this is something that we see in a number of occasions with Old Testament prophecy. For instance, the prophecy about David and his son that God gives in 2 Samuel 7 refers to this son that David will have and the establishment of his kingdom forever.

And that can refer to Solomon in some senses, but there seems to be something more that's pushing us beyond Solomon. And so with very good reason, people have applied this to Christ, that Christ is the greater son of David, David's greater son, David's Lord. And so in Christ, we can see the fulfillment of the covenant to David.

But yet there are also parts within that covenant that can only be referred to Solomon and his heirs, their promise of judgment and punishment if they are unfaithful. These are things that refer particularly to unfaithful human kings who are not the same as the word made flesh. These are different references, but yet that prophecy has reference both to its immediate fulfillment in Solomon and its greater fulfillment in God's own son, Jesus Christ.

Getting back to Jeremiah, this is the same sort of thing that we see. There is an initial fulfillment in the restoration where the sins and the lawless deeds, the identity that defined Israel since the Exodus of sinful straying from God's word will no longer be something that defines it in the same way. But it will be forgotten and that has been dealt with and they can move forward.

That is an anticipation of an even greater forgiveness, an even greater forgiveness that's affected by Christ's death and his resurrection and all that that brings to us. That forgiveness, again, is one that finds its root within the history of Israel and its history and

the history of Judah. God is forming a people over the course of history and Christ comes as the king of the Jews and he dies as the lion of the tribe of Judah.

This is a development within the story that Jeremiah is talking about. The story that reaches back to the patriarchs, the story that goes through the Exodus, the story that goes through the kingdom and its unfaithfulness and the rise of the early prophets and the period of the exile and then the restoration. It's into that story that Christ comes.

It's into that story that Christ acts and restores. Now, we often see all of this as a sort of background that's detached from the new covenant. The new covenant being what Christ has achieved and all of this is just a picture of that.

But yet the promise of the new covenant is rooted in God's formation of this people, in God's formation of Israel and Judah, that his restoration of them will be one that deals with them as a people, as corporate body, not just as a set of individuals. God does not achieve his promise merely by getting rid of all the unfaithful, of atomizing the whole nation and just saving the faithful individuals. Rather, he establishes them as a people, as a body and he deals with them graciously in that way.

He restores them as a body. He sets their heart right as a body so they're set towards him. And this setting of the people right is from the least to the greatest.

It's from the poorest to the richest. It's from the youngest to the oldest. And it's something that if we see this purely in terms of adult believers, we are missing the scope of this promise.

That this is a promise given to a nation, to a whole people, that they will be restored. That their children, the relationship between father and child will be restored. The hearts of the fathers will be turned to the children and the children to the fathers.

And there will be a covenant, a tradition of covenant faithfulness that will define the people, not unfaithfulness as it once did. And this shift is something that is expressed in the way that Jeremiah introduces his prophecy. In Jeremiah 31 verse 1, at the same time, says the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel and they shall be my people.

That this is something addressed not just to a set of individuals that are extracted from the nation. Or a set of individuals from all over the world, regenerate individuals. But it's a nation, a group of families and these families are being restored.

Now obviously infants and young children are not going to have a full knowledge of God in their infancy. In the full knowledge in the way that we have in a knowledge within our minds and a comprehension of or an apprehension of God's truth and these sorts of things. But they do know the Lord.

They know what it means to be in a situation of love and grace. They know what it is to

be in a context of God's faithful covenant dealings. Now that is not something that they know necessarily cognitively.

But they know in the sense of experience. And they grow up into this in a fuller sense as they start to know God personally for themselves. Now this is how God fulfills his promise to a people.

Not by dealing with everyone as if they were detached individuals. Needing to attain to that level of maturity and God can't deal with them in their proper capacity as infants. No, God shows grace to the whole nation.

And he shows grace to people according to their station and ability in life. And so that includes infants within it. What does this mean for our reading of the new covenant in the story of Christ? What it means is we are seeing a progression of promises that have their seeds already sown within the story of the Old Testament.

We have already seen part of God's restoration in the bringing back from the exile. And we can see the connection of these events. For instance, in the prophecy of Daniel who talks about there were 70 years of exile.

But there are 70 weeks of years that are coming up. These weeks of years that will lead to this restoration on a bigger level as the Messiah does his work. And so these two periods are related together.

There's an initial fulfillment of the greater deliverance that's awaited at the end of the 70 weeks of years that occurs after the 70 years. The restoration is a foreshadowing of the greater restoration that will occur with the work of the Messiah. And in the work of the Messiah, as God writes, as God gives his word made flesh.

And then through the word made flesh at the heart of the people, ensuring their faithfulness, restores people and conforms people to that word made flesh. To the law in human flesh and gives us hearts of flesh that changes us to serve God from the heart. As God deals with our sins and our lawless deeds decisively in the death of Christ.

As God gives us the knowledge of himself by the spirit shed forth, poured forth on the day of Pentecost. And as God deals with us in a gracious way, defining us as his people, as the temple of his Holy Spirit. And in all of these different things, we see a greater level of that, an escalation of the original fulfillment.

And so just as we see the parallel between the 70 weeks and then the 70 weeks of years, these two periods that lead to different stages of fulfillment. So we are seeing an initial covenant fulfillment in the work of Christ that anticipates a great fulfillment. Christ is the firstborn from the dead, the one in whom we see what we will all one day become.

We are being conformed to him. And so, again, there is this promise, but a promise that

is not quite yet fulfilled. A promise that strains forward towards something greater yet.

And so this is not achieved just by a sort of procrastinating of the people of God, just cutting off anyone who's not an adult believer, a mature believer. Rather, it's God dealing with his people in a new way. It's a reconstitution of the people of God according to faithfulness.

And this is something that can be seen in families. It's something that must be seen in families if this promise is to be fulfilled. And as we see on the day of Pentecost, the promise is given to you and to your children.

God is going to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. This is going to be a new constitution of the people of Israel as a corporate body of people, not just as a set of individuals that are detached from a body of people. From these organic bodies of people that we see within families and elsewhere.

God is going to restore that. And so it is a matter of faith. It is a matter of leading us into a new form of life that's defined by faith.

Children that are raised within faithful homes are expected to be raised into the faith, expected to participate in that, to come into it the full realization of its life and the knowledge of God. This is not just lowering of the standard and saying that we can just ignore faith and its significance. No, faith is absolutely central.

God is reconstituting his people around that. But yet we have faith according to our station in life, according to our proper stage of development. And for an infant, that involves their participation within the life of faith of their family.

It involves being thrown upon the loyalties of their parents. It involves participating in those loyalties and participating in the life that those things create. It's like adoption in that sense that the adopted child does not decide for themselves, but they participate in the new life of the family that one day they will choose and enter into a more voluntary and full manner from their own volition.

But as they are adopted as a young child or as an infant, they are already participating in that life. They're already knowing their parents, even though they do not know them in the fullest sense that they will know them in the future as they know them in a more cognitive way. And they know what it means for them to be adopted and all these other things.

So there is a development that we see, a development through a number of stages as the new covenant promise first given to the people in the context of a threat of, in the context of exile can then be seen to foreshadow a greater deliverance in the future. There is an initial fulfillment as Israel is brought back in a far more faithful form. And then there's a greater fulfillment yet as Christ works and he restores Israel.

He, their sins and their lawless deeds are remembered no more. The forgiveness is not just an individual forgiveness of private sins. It's the forgiveness of a people, the restoration of a people before God.

And this is what Christ establishes, not primarily the salvation of individuals, although he does that and the forgiveness of individuals, but the establishment of a people, a forgiven people, a corporate body that is brought before God's presence and restored in his sight. And so looking back at this prophecy, this is something that can be read as applying to our situation. It can be something that's read as applying to the situation of the first people who returned from exile.

And it can be read as something that refers to the greater promise of the nature to come. And it should be read in all of these different levels without collapsing them in upon each other. While recognizing that when we read biblical prophecy, there is this anticipation, this awaiting of some greater thing that God is going to do in the future, that God's work has not yet completed.

There is this resolution, but within each resolution, there is some detail, some aspect that's straining forward for an even greater resolution in the future. There are these musical cycles of history, and each one of them propels us towards the next while fulfilling and resolving things that happened in the past. And so it's an exciting thing to look at these passages and to see how these are fulfilled in Christ.

But to see that, we need to also look back to see how they were fulfilled in an initial sense within the return from the exile. I hope this is helpful. If you have any further questions, please leave them in my Curious Cat account.

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I'll hopefully have it set up on iTunes soon as well. Thank you very much and hope to get back with further questions in the next day or so.