

### The Days Are Surely Coming

So, I have a question for you. Did what you just heard sound like good news or bad news? Because to me it sounded like a threat. *“The days are surely coming.”* You’re gonna reap what you have sown. What goes around comes around. *“All shall die for their own sins.”* No more hiding behind your forebears’ skirts. The next time you eat sour grapes, it’s your own teeth that are gonna be set on edge. Is this good news, or bad news?

*“The days are surely coming,”* he says again. That’s not merely a threat, that’s a promise. *“When I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.”* The Hebrew here should actually be translated, “When I will cut a new covenant with you.” Sounds painful.

And what is a covenant, anyway? Sounds like something binding. Sounds like ropes and chains and bars.

It’s true. A covenant is a binding agreement. It does come with ropes (or should I say “strings”) attached. A great big “if/then.” If you obey my commandments, then I will be your God. But if not, all bets are off.

God made a lot of covenants with his people in the Old Testament. Were they good news, or bad news? There’s the one he made (or cut) with Noah. The Bible mentions it eight times! [Genesis 6:18; 9:9; 9:11; 9:12; 9:13; 9:15; 9:16; 9:17] Here’s one of those times: *“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants with you.”* [Gen 9:9]. What is this covenant, exactly? If any of you sin, ever, I’m going to drown you all over again?

There’s the covenant he made with Abram. The Bible specifically mentions it thirteen times. [Genesis 15:18; 17:2; 17:4; 17:7; 17:9; 17:10; 17:11; 17:13; 17:14; 17:19; 17:21]. Here’s one of them. *“God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.’* Gen 17:9. Good news or bad news?

There’s the one God made with Moses. The Bible mentions it loads of times—too many to list.

There’s the one he made with David. As you can imagine, that was a doozy.

Probably something like, “If you ever so much as look at Bathsheba again. . .” Well, are you ready for a big surprise? All of the covenants God has made with his people were indeed promises of good news. To never again destroy the world with a flood. To make Abraham and Sarah’s descendants as numerous as the stars. To make King David’s dynasty of faithfulness eternal.

And let’s look more closely at the covenant God made with Moses. Here we can clearly see how God’s covenants are good news, through and through. You know the story. God heard the cries of his people. With a mighty voice, he brought them out of Egypt, and to the land he promised them, a land flowing with milk and honey. And he said to them, “Obey my voice, and I will be your God.” Of course, there is still an implied “if/then”—if you obey my voice, then I will be your God. But here we can see that even God’s “if/thens” are not so much bad news as good news. They’re not threats. They’re invitations!

The problem was, they didn’t obey his voice. And as a consequence, God allowed them all to be taken into exile. Not quite as bad as a catastrophic flood, but almost. We know about exile, don’t we?

And now we come to Jeremiah. *“The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make [or “cut”] a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.”* A new covenant. That’s interesting. How will it be new? *“It will not be like the covenant that I made [“cut”] with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke though I was their husband, says the Lord.”* He’s talking of course about the covenant he made with Moses and his people! The covenant he wrote on two tablets of stone and gave to the people. And told them, if they obey this covenant, He will be their God.

Okay, so how will this one be different? *“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 within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”* Did you hear the difference? No tablets of stone. God’s putting His law directly on their hearts. *“No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.”* Wow! That’s quite a promise! That’s incredibly good news!

My people, God is making a new covenant with us. The days are surely coming. The days are surely coming when God will write his law upon our hearts. When Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, will sit down with us and walk with us and read and sing that law with us. When God’s own Holy Spirit will burn within us in a new way.

The days are surely coming when our pews will once again be full. When the joyful voices of children will once again will be heard within these four walls. When the young will have visions, and the old (which right now is most of us!) will dream dreams. The days are surely coming when people will come not out of old habit but because of new energy and excitement. When they and we can’t wait to be here. When we will carry that new energy and excitement with us out into the world, just as God intended. When others will hear us and see us and exclaim, “I want to have what they have. I want to be part of that.

*“Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old”* the prophet Isaiah adds. He’s excited too, just like Jeremiah. *I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”* Isaiah 43:19.

Jeremiah jumps back in. *“The days are surely coming. . .”* Yep, sounds like Jeremiah! . . . *“for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.”*

The days are surely coming.

Amen? Amen!