

Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 1, Jeremiah as an Old Testament Prophet

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This is Dr. Gary Yates leading us in a presentation of the book of Jeremiah. In lecture 1. He's going to discuss Jeremiah as an Old Testament Prophet.

Hi, I'm Gary Yates. I'm an associate professor of Old Testament at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, and I'm looking forward to the opportunity of leading us through a study of the book of Jeremiah.

I love the book of Jeremiah because I believe that he has a message for our society and our culture today, and also because of his love and his passion for God and for God's word, and I hope that's something that will rub off on us. I'd like to begin our study with a couple of sessions just thinking about Jeremiah in the context of the Old Testament prophets.

The prophets tend to be a part of the Bible that we're not very familiar with, and so I'd like to just generally introduce us to the message of the prophets and to think about Jeremiah as an Old Testament prophet. The first way that I would like to present and help us understand the prophets is that they are described in the Old Testament as God's watchmen. And what that means is that a watchman had the role of standing on the walls of a city and warning the people about the attack of an enemy army.

And the prophets, in a real sense, are God's watchmen warning the people of Israel that judgment is coming against them. In the book of Jeremiah, chapter 6, verse 17, we see this picture of the prophets. The Lord says, I set watchmen over you saying, pay attention to the sound of the trumpet, but they said, we will not pay attention.

So, in other words, the prophets were announcing that judgment was coming, that an enemy was about to invade and attack Israel. They were warning them about something that was coming in the near future, and that was their role and their mission. First of all, God sent the prophets during the Assyrian crisis as the Assyrians were coming to punish God's people for disobedience.

Then, there was a wave of prophets during the Babylonian crisis, which Jeremiah belongs to. And then there were the Persian prophets during the post-exilic period, as the people were coming back to the land. God was still warning them that there would be more judgment if they did not change their ways and turn back to him.

The role of the prophets and the reason that God raised these prophets up in the first place was to prepare the people for the crises that they were preparing to face.

Ezekiel chapter 3 also talks about the prophet as God's watchman. And he says, if the prophet warns the people of the judgment that's coming, he sees the sword, and he prepares the people, then the prophet has fulfilled his mission and done his job.

It's the people's responsibility then to listen and to pay attention. So, they were warning the people about a crisis that was coming. I remember a number of years ago when I was living in Florida and there was the first time that we had experienced a hurricane while I was there and decided that I wanted to go down to the beach and see a hurricane up close.

And I remember a policeman being on the bridge as we were going across the intercoastal waterway, warning us with some very colorful metaphors that we needed to get away. And when I think of the prophets, I think about that policeman standing on the bridge warning about the imminent danger. And that was the role and the mission of the prophets and of Jeremiah in particular.

Jeremiah is warning the people that the Babylonians are coming and that they need to repent and change their ways because God is preparing to judge them. Now, I think the second way that we should think about the prophets is that they are the spokesmen of God. The word prophet essentially means called one.

The prophets are messengers of God. 350 times in the prophets, we see the expression, Thus says the Lord. Some people imagine that Old Testament prophets were like political commentators who had especially keen insight into the political or religious affairs of their day.

That's not really a biblical understanding. More than that, they are messengers of God who are speaking the word of God. Second Timothy chapter three reminds us that all scripture is God-breathed.

It's spoken by God. As the prophets were speaking their message, they were not just brilliant observations of people who had insight into their culture and their circumstances. They were speaking a message from God.

Second Peter chapter one says that no scripture or no prophecy ever came by private interpretation, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved along by the spirit of God. The image that Peter uses is of a sail being guided by the wind. That's the way the prophets were guided and directed by God.

So, we're going to be looking at Jeremiah as a spokesman of God. And in the book of Jeremiah, that's especially important in the way that the prophet is portrayed. Throughout the book of Jeremiah, the words of God and the words of the prophet are going to be identified as one and the same.

In fact, in the first verse of the book of Jeremiah, it says the words of Jeremiah, and then in verse two, through whom the word of the Lord came. There's an idea often that the Bible contains the word of God, or the Bible is a testimony to the word of God, that really doesn't go along with the theology of Jeremiah because Jeremiah is going to say the words of the human prophet are actually the words of God himself. And we're going to see that in various ways in the book.

Jeremiah also, as a man, literally becomes a living embodiment of the word of God as well. In one passage, he will say, I ate, I consumed the words of the Lord. I internalized them into my life, and they were my delight.

When Jeremiah did that, he became a living expression of God's word for the people to see. God did not just want to send the people a message; he wanted to send them a person who conveyed that message.

And when they saw the grief or the weeping of Jeremiah, what they could literally see in Jeremiah's life was the weeping of God himself. They could see a living expression of that word. And so, Jeremiah is a spokesman of God.

He's a watchman of God announcing a judgment, a disaster, a catastrophe that's about to happen. And this is not his word. These are the words of God.

The third way that I think we need to think about the prophets and to view them and understand them is that in the Old Testament, the prophets are God's covenantal messengers. In the ancient Near East, a king would implement his rule through the establishing of covenants. And in the political world of Jeremiah's day, kings would make covenants with other people.

Great kings who were leaders of empires made covenants with their vassals. And so, the Old Testament, as it talks about the kingship of God, God exercises his kingship through a series of covenants. And when a king wanted to remind the people that were under his rule or the vassal nations that paid tribute to him of their covenantal responsibilities, he would often send out his ambassadors or his messengers.

That's what the prophets were doing for the Lord. If a king sent out his ambassadors, his messengers and reminded the people of their covenantal responsibilities, and they fulfilled those, then things would go well. But if a vassal nation did not pay attention to the covenant messengers, if they were not fulfilling their responsibilities, then they would ultimately have to answer to the king.

So, the prophets are going out as God's ambassadors, as God's messengers. Scott Duvall and Danny Hayes, in their book, *Grasping God's Word*, summarize the covenantal message of the prophets with four points. The first point they're going to

say is, the prophets come to announce as God's covenant messengers, you have sinned and you have broken the covenant.

The terms and the agreement, the arrangements that we have made, you have not lived up to your covenant responsibilities. The second part of their covenantal message is you need to change. You need to repent and turn around.

One of the key theological terms in the book of Jeremiah is the term to turn, shub, which means to repent. Literally, it means to turn around. And so, the prophet is telling the people, you need to make a u-turn.

You need to change your ways because you've broken your covenant and you need to come back to those responsibilities that God has given to you. The third point in their covenantal message is that the prophets would say that if there is no repentance, then there is going to be judgment. And here's where they become the watchmen.

The judgment of God is around the corner. The judgment of God, the day of the Lord, is about to occur. And so, if you do not repent, here are the consequences of your choices.

Finally, the fourth part of their covenantal message is that after the judgment occurs, there is going to be a restoration. And the prophets never speak of God's judgment without also speaking of God's restoration. Israel was God's covenant people, and the Lord may judge them, but the Lord was not going to cast them away.

As a parent, when my children do something to disobey me, there have been many times when I've had to punish them or correct them, but there was never a time when I considered tossing them out of my family. God is not going to break his covenant relationship with Israel in spite of the fact that they have broken their covenant with him. And so, after this judgment, there is going to be restoration.

In the book of Jeremiah, there is an intense message of judgment in this book, but right at the very center of the book, in chapters 30 to 33, there's a section where God talks about the fact that he will restore the fortunes of his people. Even a prophet like Amos, who probably has the most severe message of judgment in all of the prophets, at the very end of the book, the Lord is going to rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David, and he's going to restore his people. And so, those are the key aspects of their covenantal message.

You've sinned. You've broken the covenant. Number two, you need to repent, you need to change your ways. Number three, if there is no repentance, there is going to be judgment.

That's ultimately what happened. But then fourthly, after the judgment, there is going to be restoration. Now, to look a little bit more specifically at the prophets as messengers of the covenant, I'd like us to think about the specific covenants that God established with his people in the Old Testament and how those covenants are related to the larger message of the Old Testament, and to the message of the prophets in particular.

After Adam and Eve sinned in the garden and after the fall took place, God began to administer his kingship through a series of covenants. And at the beginning of creation, God had said that he blessed humanity. He said I want you to be fruitful and multiply.

I want you to enjoy my creation. I want to bless you. But when humanity sins, God has to work.

God has to do a work of redemption. And through this series of covenants, God is bringing people back into the blessing that he originally designed for them. The first mention of the covenant that we have is in Genesis 6-9, and God, in those chapters, makes a covenant with Noah.

And in that covenant with Noah, we sort of see the design for all of the covenants. There are going to be promises. There are also going to be responsibilities.

The promise that God gives to Noah after the flood is that he will never again destroy the earth by a flood, by the waters in the way that he has just destroyed it. But the obligation that the Lord places on Noah is that man, as they eat animals, are not to consume the blood because it represents life itself. And humanity is also to punish those who shed human blood.

Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. And so God makes a promise that the earth and creation can continue. God also places obligations on humanity so that the conditions of blessing can be enjoyed and experienced.

After humanity rebels against God again at the Tower of Babel and chooses to go its way rather than God's way, God institutes a second covenant. God makes a covenant with Abraham, and now God's design is that he's going to work through one man, through one group of people, through one nation, so that they might become the instrument of that blessing to all of humanity. When God originally calls Abraham, the word to bless appears five times.

That's the goal of the covenant. As this covenant works itself out in Genesis chapter 12, Genesis 15, Genesis 17, and Genesis 22, God ultimately makes three promises to Abraham. He says to Abraham, number one, I'm going to make you a great nation.

Number two, I am going to give you a land for your possession forever and for all time. And number three, I am going to use you to be the instrument of blessing to all people. So, God, again, is not just interested in Abraham, not just interested in his descendants.

Through Abraham, all the nations on earth will be blessed. In that covenant, God also places obligations on Abraham. He says you are to walk before me and to be blameless so that you can become that instrument of blessing.

And then, along with that, Abraham and his descendants are to practice circumcision as a sign of the covenant. So, God establishes that arrangement with Abraham. He seals that with an oath when Abraham is willing to sacrifice his son.

And through this, Israel, Abraham's descendants, will become the chosen people of God. The third covenant in the Old Testament is the Mosaic or the Sinaitic covenant. And God has already redeemed Israel.

He's established them as his people. Through Abraham, he has chosen them as his nation. But this covenant establishes them as a nation.

It provides a constitution for them, and in a sense, it informs them how to live their lives as God's chosen people. However, keeping the law did not save the Israelites in the Old Testament.

The Lord says I have carried you on eagle's wings. I have brought you to myself. I've already brought you into a relationship.

This is how you live that relationship out. And in Exodus 19, chapter 19, verses 5 and 6, the Lord explains the special relationship that God has with Israel. He says I'm going to make you a kingdom of priests.

I am going to make you a holy nation. And I am going to make you my treasured possession in all of the earth. Now, as a kingdom of priests, what that meant is that Israel would be a royal nation, but they would also be a priestly nation.

And they would mediate God's presence and God's blessing to all of the nations of the earth. The way that they would do that is by obeying the terms of the covenant, the 10 commandments that God gave them that summarize that message, and then the 613 commandments that laid out all of the details. And in this covenantal relationship, the Lord said, if you obey this covenant, I will bless you.

I will give you prosperity. I'll give you long life. I will allow you to enjoy all of the great things that I've prepared for you in the promised land.

But if you disobey this covenant, I will punish you. I will drive you out of the land. And instead of experiencing life and blessing, you'll experience cursing and death.

The terms of this covenant are laid out a little bit more clearly for us in two passages, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. And in those passages, the Lord gives us the blessings and the curses of the covenant. Here's what I will do for you if you obey.

Here's the great things that I will give you. I'll give you large families and long life and the privilege of living in this land flowing with milk and honey. But the curses, which ultimately Israel will experience, are going to be exile and death and impoverishment and slavery to these other nations.

And the Lord says that if you disobey me, I will eventually even drive you out of the land and send you back to Egypt, the place that you came from. And so, the terms of that are laid out very clearly. By living out God's law, they would show the nations the greatness of God and bring him back into the sphere of his blessing.

Deuteronomy chapter four says that when the nations around Israel would observe them obeying the law, they would say, what nation has a God like Israel's that is so great and so wonderful to give them these laws that they could live by? When they saw how much God would bless Israel by their obedience, the nations would be drawn to Israel and say, please tell us about your God. We want to know him. And that was God's missionary concern and missionary emphasis in the Old Testament.

In Isaiah 42, the Lord says, I have made my law great and glorious so that the nations around you would want to follow the Lord and know him. But we know from reading the story of the Old Testament, from the history of Israel, that God's design did not exactly work out in that particular way. Instead of leading the other nations to worship God, what happened is that Israel was drawn to worshipping the gods of the nations.

Instead of keeping and following God's commands in every way possible, we have a story of hundreds and hundreds of years of disobedience and God's plan, and God's design was ultimately not going to be fulfilled just by the Mosaic and the Sinaitic covenant. So, the fourth covenant that God establishes is that God makes a covenant with a specific individual and family within Israel, and that's the Davidic covenant. And a key passage for that Davidic covenant is in 2 Samuel chapter 7. What God was doing through the Davidic covenant was ultimately providing a way for the blessings and the promises of those earlier covenants to be fulfilled.

God had promised to Abraham, I'll give you a land. Israel needed a king who would help them to keep and possess that land. The Lord said I will bless you if you obey the covenant.

Israel had failed. Even up until David's time, they were not living according to God's commands. God provided them with a leader who would give them a model of what it meant to follow God.

The king was actually to write out his own individual copy of the commandments of God as he came to the throne so that he would know the way that he was supposed to rule. He was not just your typical ancient Near Eastern king who could rule any way he wanted. He was to live under the rulership of God.

And the Lord even made the special promise that even if this one man will obey and follow me, then I will bless the entire nation. The Lord knew it was going to be very difficult for this entire people, this entire nation, to follow him. And so, the Davidic covenant said, if this one man, if he will follow God, I will bless and I will prosper the nation.

But again, we know that the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah, in many ways, were no more successful in following the Lord than the people themselves were. They were drawn into the model of being like an ancient Near Eastern king who could do whatever he wanted or sleep with whomever he wanted or take whatever he wanted, or acquire wealth and military power for himself in any way he wanted. And so, in spite of the good kings that were part of the Davidic line, they became as much a part of the problem as they were a solution.

And so, we have this series of covenants. God, first of all, made a covenant with Noah and all of humanity. God made a covenant with Abraham.

God made a covenant with Moses and the people of Israel. God made a covenant with David. But in a sense, the story of the Old Testament is one of a long history of failure.

And so, what happens is the prophets come along is that they announce a fifth covenant that God will make with his people. And again, a covenant that ultimately will extend to all the peoples and all the nations of the world. The prophets promise that God is going to make a new covenant with the people of Israel.

And in a sense, what's going to happen is that God is going to tear up the old contract where there have been so many failures, and God is going to make a new covenant and a new contract. By the time that we get to Jeremiah, the people of Israel and Judah have disobeyed the terms of the Mosaic covenant for 800 years. And the Lord says, in my grace and in my mercy, what I'm going to do is I'm going to establish a new covenant with my people.

Now, sometimes today, whenever an athlete has a really good year and a good season, he will come back to his team at the end of the season and say, I'd like to

renegotiate my contract. You're not paying me enough money. But what happens when an athlete has a terrible year and a terrible season? He doesn't come back and say, look, I'd like you to, you know, take money away from me.

I didn't earn it. I didn't deserve it. Well, what God does is that his people have definitely failed the contract.

They have not lived up to the terms and conditions. But God graciously says, I'm going to make a new covenant with the people of Israel. One of the key passages about that new covenant is actually found in the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 31, verses 31 to 34.

And what the Lord says in that covenant are two things. He says, first of all, I am going to forgive the failures of the previous eight centuries. And the Lord says, their sins and their iniquities, their transgressions, I will remember no more.

The God of the universe who knows everything, the one thing that he is going to choose to have selective memory loss about are the sins of his people. And so that promise of the new covenant takes care of the failures of the past. But what the Lord also says is that I am also going to provide enablement and empowerment for the future where I'm going to take my law and I'm going to write it on the hearts of my people.

And I'm going to give them the desire and the ability and the enablement to live by my commands so that they will never again have to experience my judgment. They will never again have to go through the exile and all of the things that the people experienced during the life and times of Jeremiah. I imagine this almost like when we see a sign that says, do not walk on the grass or wet paint.

Our natural tendency is to want to walk on the grass, or our natural tendency is to want to touch the wall and see if it's still wet. What God is saying is, I'm going to take those laws that are external to you, and I'm actually going to place in your heart a desire to follow that and to obey that. And so, as we study the book of Jeremiah and as we come to look at the message of the prophets, what we're going to understand is that the message of the prophets was based on those five specific covenants that God makes throughout the Old Testament.

On the basis of the Noahic and the Mosaic covenants, God is going to announce judgment. And in Isaiah chapter 24 verses one to five, the prophet Isaiah pictures a time when God is going to judge the entire world. And it says the whole world is going to shake under God's judgment.

And it says that judgment will occur because they have broken the everlasting covenant. That covenant is not talking about the Mosaic law. That was a covenant that God made with Israel.

The covenant that he's referring to is the Noahic covenant that said man is not to shed blood. Man is not to perpetrate violence. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.

God is going to hold the nations of the earth accountable for their violations of the Noahic covenant. In Habakkuk chapter two, when the Lord announces a woe on the people of Babylon, he says, they are a city that has been built on bloodshed. And so as a result of that, they have violated the Noahic covenant.

God is going to bring judgment. In Amos, chapters one and two, God announces judgment on the nations that are surrounding Israel and Judah. And the basis of that judgment is the violence and the inhuman things that they've done to each other, the atrocities they've committed.

God has observed that. God has seen that. And on the basis of the Noahic covenant, God judged nations in history.

And on the basis of the Noahic covenant, God is going to judge nations in the future. And so the prophets, their message of judgment was based on that covenant. Now on the basis of the Mosaic covenant, and on the basis of the 613 commands, and specifically the 10 commandments that God had given to Israel, God announced that he was going to judge the people of Israel.

When we come to Jeremiah chapter seven, the Lord says this to the people as Jeremiah is delivering a message at the temple. He says this, verse five, chapter seven: If you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will allow you to dwell in this place. If you listen to what Jeremiah is saying there very closely, what you end up hearing are the words of the 10 commandments.

And Jeremiah is saying, you violated this covenant, and as a result of that, God is going to bring judgment. The prophet Hosea does the same thing in Hosea chapter four, verses one and two. He's going to bring an indictment.

He's going to announce God's judgment. And the basis of that judgment is the fact that the people have not lived up to God's commandments. Here's the message.

Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel. For the word of the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love.

There is no knowledge of God and land. They haven't lived up to the terms of the covenant. Here's what they are.

There is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery. They are breaking all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. If you read that closely, what you hear are five of the 10 commandments.

God is saying you have not lived up to the terms of the commandments. Therefore, God is going to bring judgment. The Lord is also on the basis of the Mosaic covenant.

He is going to say there are specific curses that the Lord is bringing against the people of Israel. And when we look at those curses, they go directly back to Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, the passages that we talked about just a few minutes ago. The Lord is going to bring exile.

The Lord is going to bring enemy nations. The Lord is going to bring on you all of the things that he warned you about if he disobeyed. And so, what the prophets are doing is that, listen, people, you need to understand the covenant curses.

Moses warned about them 800 years ago. Those curses are here in the present, and you need to change your ways or things are going to get worse. Moses in 1400 BC, the covenant curses are coming.

The prophets are saying the covenant curses are here. You need to wake up and realize what God is doing. When Moses made the original covenant with the people as they were preparing to go into the land, he said, I am calling heaven and earth as witnesses.

They will silently observe and testify to whether you keep this covenant. When we come to the first chapter of the book of Isaiah, Isaiah says, hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth. And what the prophet is doing, he's bringing the witnesses into the courtroom.

He's bringing the heavens and the earth. Let's listen. How has Israel kept the covenant? The answer is obviously, they have not.

And so, on the basis of that, God is announcing judgment. The prophets were God's ambassadors. They were bringing this message based on the covenants that God had established.

But along with that, what we also see is that the promises of the prophets are based on the covenants that God has made as well. The promise that God made to Noah is the reason that God patiently gives people opportunity to repent and patiently why God has not destroyed people. The New Testament tells us God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

As a result, the Lord is delaying the final judgment of the day of the Lord, when the whole world will be judged. The Lord is delaying that on the basis of his promises. Based on the Mosaic covenant, God wants his people to enjoy the blessings of this land that is flowing with milk and honey.

God gave them a special place. And so, the Lord is going to act to restore them and to bring them back. On the basis of the Davidic covenant, God promises that there is going to be a future David who will fulfill all of the promises that God had made to Israel.

Remember the terms of the covenant that God made with David. God said in 2 Samuel 7, I am going to raise up a son after you who will reign in your place. That promise is related to Solomon.

But on top of that, I am going to establish your family and your dynasty and your throne, and they are going to rule forever. And the Lord confirmed that promise with an oath to David. And he says it's not going to be like with Saul.

I'll never take that promise away from you. But the Lord had also said to the house of David, David I will bless your sons if you obey. I will punish your sons if they disobey.

I will scourge them. I will punish them with whips if they disobey. And so, every individual king within that Davidic line was either blessed or punished on the basis of their obedience to the Davidic covenant.

Things become so bad in Jeremiah's day that the Lord ultimately removes the Davidic kings from the throne. There has not been a Davidic king reigning in Jerusalem now for 2,500 years. But what the prophets are also going to say is that God is not finished with that promise as well.

The Lord has a future for David because after the exile, after they have been off the throne, even if it's 2,500 years, the Lord is going to restore a Davidic king. All of these kings in the past have been failures. Even the good kings like Josiah or Hezekiah or David were failures in some way.

But this future Davidic king is going to be everything that God designed the house of David to be. And so, throughout the prophets, we see dozens of promises where the

Lord says, I'm going to raise up a new David. I'm going to restore the fallen tabernacle of David's house.

In Jeremiah chapter 23, there is going to be a righteous branch that will sprout out from this tree stump that the Lord has felled this tree, but there's a branch that's going to spring out from that. Jeremiah says David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne. God's going to continue the Davidic line.

All of those promises are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The promise that David's sons would reign forever is being fulfilled today as Jesus reigns at the right hand of God. But those promises are found in the prophets.

R.E. Clement says that 2 Samuel 7 and the covenant promise that God made to David is the seed of all of the messianic prophecies and promises that we have in the Old Testament prophets. So, at Christmas time, when you hear Isaiah chapter 9, or you hear the Messiah, unto us, a child is born. Unto us, a son is given and the government will be upon his shoulders.

Ultimately, those promises are going back to that Davidic covenant. When we see Jeremiah saying, the Lord's going to raise up a righteous branch, those promises are going back to the Davidic covenant. And then, finally, the new covenant is ultimately the thing that will cause all of these covenants, all of these promises to come about because the Lord is going to fix the sin problem that had always brought failure and misery into this.

And so, Jeremiah is a prophet of the new covenant. The key passage, Jeremiah chapter 31 verses 31 to 34. But Jeremiah is not the only prophet who talks about this.

Isaiah says that the Lord is going to make an everlasting covenant with his people in Isaiah chapter 59 verses 20 and 21. And he's going to put his spirit within them. And by putting his spirit within them, that's how he's going to write the law on the people's hearts.

Ezekiel chapter 36, verses 26 to 28, which is almost an exact parallel text to Jeremiah chapter 31, is going to say, I'm going to give the people a new heart. And how is the Lord going to do that? How is he going to write the law on his heart? As Jeremiah talks about it, he says, I will wash them with water. I will cleanse them.

I will put my spirit within them. The prophet Joel says that in the last days, there will be a great pouring out of the spirit of God. And it will not be back like in the days of the old covenant, where the spirit primarily was poured out on the kings and the judges and the prophets.

But the Lord is going to pour out his spirit on all of the sons and daughters of Israel. And it's that empowerment of the spirit. It's that pouring out of the spirit.

That's what's going to enable all of this to come about and to take place. The amazing thing in the New Testament, and I believe that in many ways, the prophetic promises of the new covenant are the bridge from the Old to the New Testament, is that Jesus announces that his mission is to bring that new covenant into place. Jesus announces to his disciples when they observe the Lord's supper together, the last meal. This is the blood of the new covenant.

This brings about the forgiveness that the new covenant has envisioned. This is my blood poured out for you so that you can enjoy and experience this. Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, who is sufficient for the calling that God has given to us? None of us are sufficient for that.

But God makes us sufficient because we are messengers of the new covenant. And taking that idea of the law being written on the hearts of God's people, Paul says to the Corinthians, you are my epistle written on my heart. The changes that God has brought about in your heart, in your life, their testimony, this new covenant is real.

When we get to the book of Hebrews, in Hebrews chapter 8 and Hebrews chapter 10, we have some of the longest quotations of the Old Testament in any place or any passage in the New Testament. The passage that the writer of Hebrews quotes for us is Jeremiah chapter 31, saying, why do you want to go back to the old covenant? Why do you want to go back to the sacrifices? Why do you want to go back to the temple? Why do you want to go back to the Levites? Jesus has come to actualize and bring into place for us today the new covenant that the prophets have promised for us. So, in our first session today, we've looked at the prophets in three ways.

First of all, we've been reminded of the fact that they were God's watchmen. They were given an awesome responsibility. They stood on the wall, and they announced to the people, look, judgment is coming.

It's around the corner. You need to change your ways. Second, the prophets were messengers of God, and they came to say, thus says the Lord.

This is not my opinion. This is not, in fact, the prophets in many ways often tried as much as they could to get out of this. This is not my idea.

This is the message of God. And finally, they were messengers of the covenant. On the basis of both the covenants of judgment and the warnings of judgment and the promises and the blessings and the oaths that God had made to Israel and to all of humanity, the prophets preached there is going to be judgment and there is going to be salvation.

As we look at the whole of scripture, we understand that all of these covenants are like an arrow that is ultimately leading us and pointing us to Jesus. And so, as we study Jeremiah the prophet, we're going to see that the things that Jeremiah was announcing to the people in that day were ultimately leading them to Christ and ultimately can help us to know and to enjoy and to experience and to understand all that we have in Christ in a fuller and deeper way. I look forward to the time that we have together to study this book and learn more about the message of the prophets.

This is Dr. Gary Yates leading us in a presentation of the book of Jeremiah. In lecture 1. He's going to discuss Jeremiah as an Old Testament Prophet.