A Vision of the Future

Bible Background • JEREMIAH 30
Printed Text • JEREMIAH 30:1-3,18-22 | Devotional Reading • JEREMIAH 29:10-14

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: REVIEW God’s written promise to restore the people and the land of Israel and Judah as of old; IMAGINE and EXPRESS the feelings of safety in a community that has great promise for the future; and PLAN a way to invite people who are not part of the covenant community to become members of the church and Sunday School.

In Focus

Shirley cried softly as she packed the last of the kitchen items. Four months ago Fred, her husband of three years, had told her that he had fallen in love with one of his co-workers and wanted a divorce. After Fred moved out, Shirley had struggled emotionally and financially. Now, she could not afford to pay the rent with her part-time salary. Shirley had repeatedly called Fred and tried to get him to go to marriage counseling, but he refused. He told her, “It’s over. You need to accept that and move on with your life.” When she and Fred had married, he had accepted a position with a firm that required them to move more than six hundred miles from her friends and family. She was too embarrassed to call her sister and tell her that Fred had left her. As she closed the last box of dishes, she wondered what was going to happen to her and how she would manage without her husband. In the midst of her suffering Shirley realized she was not alone. God was present and had a plan for her life.
Jesus Christ has promised never to leave us alone. In spite of the darkness around, He is ever present. In today’s lesson, we will see that although Israel and Judah had been punished for their sins, God had every intention of redeeming and restoring them.

Keep in Mind

“For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it” (Jeremiah 30:3).

Focal Verses

KJV  Jeremiah 30:1  The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2 Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.

3 For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

18 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.

19 And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

20 Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.

21 And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD.

22 And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

NLT  Jeremiah 30:1  The LORD gave another message to Jeremiah. He said,

2 “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Write down for the record everything I have said to you, Jeremiah.

3 For the time is coming when I will restore the fortunes of my people of Israel and Judah. I will bring them home to this land that I gave to their ancestors, and they will possess it again. I, the LORD, have spoken!”

18 This is what the LORD says: “When I bring Israel home again from captivity and restore their fortunes, Jerusalem will be rebuilt on its ruins, and the palace reconstructed as before.

19 There will be joy and songs of thanksgiving, and I will multiply my people, not diminish them; I will
honor them, not dispise them.

20 Their children will prosper as they did long ago. I will establish them as a nation before me, and I will punish anyone who hurts them.

21 They will have their own ruler again, and he will come from their own people. I will invite him to approach me,” says the LORD, “for who would dare to come unless invited?

22 You will be my people, and I will be your God.”

People, Places, and Times:

Judah. Located between the Mediterranean Sea and Dead Sea, Judah lies in southern Palestine. Following the death of King Solomon, the united kingdom of Israel split into two. Two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, remained loyal to King Rehoboam and became the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The other ten tribes followed King Jeroboam and are generally referred to as the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Judah’s capital city and central place of worship was the city of Jerusalem. Prior to its destruction by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., Judah was ruled by a succession of nineteen kings, all from the line of David.

Jeremiah. Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet, so much so that there is an entire book of the Bible dedicated to his sorrow: the book of Lamentations. Most of the anguish he experienced was due to the sinful nature of the Israelites and their rejection of God. Subsequently, this also led to their captivity. But, Jeremiah also experienced grief because both he and his message were rejected by the people.

Jeremiah’s ministry stretched from 626 B.C. to some time after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., which places him after Zephaniah and a contemporary with Ezekiel, and Habakkuk in history. A very popular and often quoted Scripture is derived from God calling Jeremiah to be God’s prophet: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you” (from Jeremiah 1:5, NIV).

Background

In the book that bears his name, Jeremiah was clearly operating as a prophet. Throughout the book, Jeremiah declared the sins of the people (including idolatry) and God’s judgment against them. One cannot fail to see the prophet’s sadness and sympathy as he denounced Judah’s ungodly behavior and the impending doom it would bring about. Present-day Christians should be just as sad when we see unchecked sin abound. While Jeremiah frequently issued harsh denunciations, the prophet’s love for the people was evident. His prophecies, however, fell on deaf ears. The people of Judah were using the temple as a good luck charm. They mistakenly believed that no real harm could befall the city that housed the magnificent temple of Jerusalem. They ignored the fact that Shiloh, which was Israel’s central place of worship before David elevated Jerusalem, had fallen to the Philistines as punishment for the wickedness of Israel. This was proof that God recognized the difference between hypocritical ritual and true religion. The nation of Judah failed to heed the words of Jeremiah and would not repent or turn away from its wickedness.
At-A-Glance

1. The Prophet Called to Write the Vision (Jeremiah 30:1–2)
2. A Future of Restoration (v. 3)
3. A Future with a Kingdom (v. 18)
4. A Future with Joy and a Renewed Covenant (vv. 19–22)

In Depth

1. The Prophet Called to Write the Vision (Jeremiah 30:1–2)

Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah, who continues to speak out against false priests and prophets, is imprisoned for treason. It is important to note that God no longer has the prophet speaking directly with the people. His people still have access to His Word even though they will no longer have access to His messenger. God tells Jeremiah to write all the words that He had given him in a book. Here we see a loving God making a way for a people who have been continually unfaithful to Him.

Often referred to as the “Book of Consolation,” it is believed that this portion of Jeremiah’s prophecy comes to him shortly after the sacking of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Jeremiah’s ministry covered a period of about forty years. He is the last prophet to Judah, and, more importantly, he is a first-hand witness to the moral decay of the nation. He had warned that God’s judgment was imminent. Jeremiah saw for himself how the nation made alliances with the idol-worshiping nations around them and even began to adopt pagan worship and religious practices. For these sins and the injustice that resulted from them, God would soon judge the nation of Judah.

2. A Future of Restoration (v. 3)

Just as God said, and just as Jeremiah prophesied, Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 587 B.C. The city was utterly destroyed and many of the people were deported. Jeremiah emphasizes that God had not forgotten nor forsaken His people—a people who had failed to heed the Word of God, refused to repent, and were now suffering the consequences of their sin. God’s love for His people was enduring. Even in captivity, His thoughts were turned toward them. Yes, they were being punished, but God intended that the people of Judah would be restored to Him and returned to their land.

In this verse, we see Jeremiah delivering a more specific message of hope to the people of Judah. His message is not simply one that contains words of comfort and consolation to a suffering people. It is, actually, a vision for their future! Even though it is their fault that they have come into captivity, we will see that God still loves His people and that He cares deeply for them. We must be careful to remember that it is only a trick of the enemy to make us believe that our sins separate us from the loving care and concern of God. Through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ, we are always in the thoughts of God, and there is nothing that can separate us from His love.

3. A Future with a Kingdom (v. 18)

In this verse we see that God’s vision for His people’s future includes their liberation and restoration. This vision is divinely comprehensive and includes all of God’s people. Jeremiah’s referral to “Jacob”
informs us that God is addressing Israel as a united nation and not just the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Just as God had been present with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so too would He be present with their captive children. The prophet references “tents” and “dwellingplaces” as a reminder to the people of both Israel and Judah that they have now become wanderers and sojourners in foreign and alien lands, but this is coming to an end.

Jeremiah continues to show that even more acts of mercy for the people of God are forthcoming. God will once again rebuild Jerusalem, and He will do it on the “heap” or ruins of their former capital. Although Jerusalem had been destroyed, remnants of its foundations and portions of the walls surrounding the city remained. God would use these painful physical reminders to restore the city. The mention of a “palace” implies that the restoration would not only include the rebuilding of the city but a restoration of the kingdom itself.

4. A Future with Joy and a Renewed Covenant (vv. 19–22)

Jeremiah prophesies that following their restoration the people of Israel would finally give the appropriate response to the God of their salvation—thanksgiving. Recognizing, at last, the source of their joy, the people would now worship God honestly and joyfully. Then the worship of the people would not only be true but also marked by joyfulness. Jeremiah goes on to prophesy that God would increase their numbers. This would be a sign to the pagan nations around them that the blessing of God rested once again on the nation He had called out of nothingness.

Here, we are now given even further glimpses of God’s vision for His people. No longer would foreign and ungodly rulers govern the people of God. Instead, their ruling class would rise from among them. The God-appointed “nobles” would be men who both knew and understood their prior suffering and afflictions. More importantly, we are now presented with a clear pre-figuration of Christ as both our Mediator and Righteous Judge. Like the governors, Jeremiah predicts in this verse, Christ knew the full suffering of mankind. As Mediator, it is the role of Christ to “draw near” or to go to the Father, not for Himself, but for the express purpose of intervening on behalf of man. Christ’s role as a High Priest is also seen here. In the same way Moses drew near to God to plead for the Children of Israel who had sinned in the desert wilderness, so too did Jesus draw near to His Father to plead for us. It was only Jesus who could and did bridge the gap between the Creator and the creation.

Search the Scriptures

1. How did God instruct Jeremiah to communicate with the people (Jeremiah 30:2)?

2. Where did God tell Jeremiah the city of Jerusalem would be rebuilt (v. 18)?

3. What were some of the signs of restoration that would accompany God’s people (vv. 18–20)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, what are some of the promises God has given us about our future?

2. How do you imagine the captives reading these promises felt about their future? How much do you think it prompted them to reflect on their past sins?
Lesson in Our Society

We need only walk down the streets of any major urban city to see ruin and decay. Once-prosperous cities and towns are full of abandoned and boarded-up buildings. There are no signs of thriving businesses, and entire neighborhoods are blighted and empty. The people who remain in these areas sometimes look as forlorn as the property surrounding them. These are all signs of hopelessness. Through Jesus Christ, there is hope for the restoration and renewal of the communities and the people who live in them. We must be as diligent as Jeremiah in sharing the Word that God not only loves but also cares for His people and that He has a plan for their future.

Make It Happen

Consider ministries that are helping to rebuild and restore communities that have been devastated by crime, poverty, or natural disaster. Pray and ask God to show you where there is time in your busy schedule to demonstrate His love through you. Next, ask Him to give you a tender and understanding heart.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

**Jeremiah 30:1–3, 18–22**

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.

For most of the preceding chapters of his book, Jeremiah has been instructed by God to speak words of condemnation to the nation of Israel for their behavior. Beginning with this chapter, however, Jeremiah receives “word” (Heb. *davar*, *dah-Vahr*, message or edict) from the Lord to “write” (Heb. *katav*, *kah-TAHV*, to register or record in writing) his message to the nation of Israel. God wants Jeremiah to write down the prophecy instead of speaking it because His message is to be preserved for future generations to read and understand. God knew that Jeremiah would not be taken into captivity with the rest of the Jewish nation, and by having him write the prophecy instead of speaking it, those Jews in captivity to the Babylonians could have a source of hope that even their bondage was in accord with God’s divine plan for them. Later, while a captive of the Babylonian empire, Daniel would read and take heed of Jeremiah’s prophecy, responding with a repentant heart (cf. Daniel 9:2–4).

3 For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.
Through Jeremiah, God wants His chosen people to understand that their “captivity” (Heb. shevut, sheh-VOOT, exile or ill fortune) to the Babylonians will come to an end. The nations of Israel and Judah are to be consoled with this promise. For that reason, many scholars assert that this chapter of Jeremiah begins a Book of Consolation to the Jewish nations held in captivity. God has promised that He “will bring again the captivity” (Heb. shuv, SHOOV, turn back or ever turn away), the exile of His chosen people. Jeremiah is to write the prophecy so that there will be no misunderstanding by future generations of God’s sure hand on their situation. Jeremiah is to write the prophecy so that when the captivity has ended and the nations of Israel and Judah are restored to their former land in Palestine, there will be no doubt how the restoration came about and who was the source of that restoration. Through Jeremiah, God pledges to the Jewish nations that the promise He made to “their fathers” (Heb. ’av, AHV, father or ancestor), that they would “possess” (Heb. yarash, yah-RASH, to seize, inherit, or occupy) the land of Palestine, would one day be a reality.

18 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.

Through Jeremiah, the Lord continues His promise to the Jewish nations now in bondage. The nations are to understand and believe that they will not always feel like nomads or wanderers living in “tents” (Heb. ’ohel, OH-hel, nomadic dwelling thus symbolic of wilderness life) like their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had to do. Tents will one day give way to permanent dwelling places in the land that God has promised to them. God also promises to “have mercy” (Heb. racham, rah-KHAM, to have pity or compassion) on those dwellings, a promise of divine protection. Further, the city will be rebuilt upon her own “heap” (Heb. tel, TEL, former ruins). In ancient times, sites for cities were often chosen for their strategic importance, whether commercial or military, and for that reason, when a city was destroyed, a new city would often be erected on the exact same spot. Finally, God promises that the “palace” (Heb. ’armon, ar-MONE, royal citadels or temple) will once again be “after the manner thereof” (Heb. mishpat, meesh-PAHT, what is proper and right). It will once more be a place of righteousness and judgment. Even the palace is to be rebuilt to its former glory and in its former spot and will once more be the host of sacred feasts with offerings of sacrifice to the Most High God.

19 And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. 20 Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.

All of these promises (permanent dwellings, divine protection, increase of children, the restoration of the cities and temple in their original places) were to result in the people offering “thanksgiving” (Heb. todah, toe-DAH, hymn of praise) to the Lord God. This thanksgiving would be accompanied by voices expressing great joy and happiness. God would have demonstrated His faith fulness and love for His chosen people. In their present state of bondage, such an occurrence would have been hard to imagine, but the nations were to have faith in God. Their sufferings were to be mixed with hope for their future. As in many African societies, children in Israelite culture were a valuable possession and a sign of prosperity. Thus the size and fortunes of the various tribes of Israel would be restored and increased and children would be “as aforetime” (Heb. qedem, KEH-dem, from of old)—bountiful, playing in the streets of their cities, and inheriting their parents’ estates. Further, God will sit and watch over their “congregation” (Heb. ‘edah, eh-DAH, assembly) to protect their worship practices and will “punish” (Heb. lakhats, lah-KHATS, to force themselves upon or afflict) any who would seek to “oppress” (Heb. lakhats, lah-KHATS, to force themselves upon or afflict) His chosen nation.
21 And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD.

It must have pleased Jeremiah to be writing a prophecy that was intended to assure the Children of Israel that at the end of their captivity to the Babylonians, their leadership structure would once again be in place. This is because the leaders were primarily responsible for the nation’s exile. Their “nobles” (Heb. 'addir, ad-DEER, leading men or rulers) would be selected from their own tribes. Moreover, their “governor” (Heb. mashal, mah-SHAL, king or one who exercises authority over) will come from one of their tribes and the Lord God will cause him to “draw near” (Heb. karav, kah-RAHV, to approach or be brought close) to Him. Scholars agree that this is a foreshadowing of the Messiah who is to come and who will be able to offer Himself to God on behalf of the people. God, who sees and judges on the basis of the “heart” (Heb. lev, LEV, the seat of the affections, intellect, and memory), is mindful of any who would seek to approach Him. Only Christ the Messiah would be found worthy for such a task. Only Christ, acting as the High Priest of the people, could have so “engaged” (Heb. ‘arav, ah-RAV, pledged as security) His heart.

22 And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

God will accept the sacrifice of this King and Ruler, thus ensuring the continuing relationship between Himself and the Jewish nations. Christ as High Priest and King will be the Mediator between God and the people. As the people accept Christ, God will accept the people.