

A Vision of the Future

Jer 30:1-3; 18-22

SS Lesson for 09/07/2014

Devotional Scripture: Jer 29:11-14

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson reviews how God provided Jeremiah **A Vision of the Future**. The **study's aim** is to understand that the comfort God offers is rooted in the certain hope He provides. The **study's application** is to assure Christians that although God may chasten us when we sin, He will comfort us by drawing us back to Himself and showing us His love (Adapted from *the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*).

Key Verse: Jer 30:3

For behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the Lord. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.' "

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

God had threatened Judah with judgment for her disobedience, but the nation refused to mend her ways. The stage was set and the curtain was about to rise on the final act of Judah's history as a nation. But before this sad scene of suffering started to unfold, Jeremiah inserted "The Book of Consolation," a collection of prophecies that offered hope in desperate times. These prophecies looked beyond Judah's imminent collapse and pointed to a new age when Israel and Judah would be returned to their land, reunited as a nation, and restored to their God.

God told Jeremiah to write His promises of comfort in a book so they would be available to the exiles after Jerusalem fell. This book would declare a note of hope that the days are coming... when God will... restore His people. Jeremiah's use of "the days" was significant because it described two different periods of time. The first "day" to which Jeremiah pointed was the day of destruction when God would judge Judah for her sin (cf. 5:18; 7:32; 9:25; 19:6). This day was fulfilled when Judah fell to Babylon. However, the second "day" to which Jeremiah pointed was a day of restoration when God will bring the nations of Judah and Israel into a new relationship with Him and when He will set straight His accounts with the Gentile nations (cf. 3:16, 18; 16:14; 23:5, 7, 20; 30:3, 24; 31:27, 29, 31, 33, 38; 33:14-16; 48:12, 47; 49:2, 39; 50:4, 20; 51:47, 52). This day has an eschatological perspective. It is the day when God will fulfill the blessings of restoration promised in Deuteronomy 30:1-10. However, as in all prophetic material one must keep in mind the principle of "foreshortening." That is, though Jeremiah saw all these predictions as one continuous series of events, they were fulfilled over a long period, with intervening gaps of time. Thus, for example, prophecies about the suffering Messiah and the ruling Messiah appear together though they describe two different Advents of Christ (e.g., Isa. 9:6-7; 61:1-2). In the same way Jeremiah described the restoration of Judah after the Babylonian Captivity and the still-future restoration of Judah within some of the same passages. Therefore one should be cautious in interpreting the various parts of Jeremiah's predictions concerning "the coming days." God's first promise was to bring the nations of Israel and Judah back from captivity. God promised to restore them to the land He had given them (cf. Deut. 30:3-5). This promised return of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms served as an introduction to these chapters and provided hope to those who would soon be dispossessed from their land.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

When the people of Israel were taken captive, it was because they had strayed from following the Lord's commands. They strayed first in their hearts, and their actions soon followed. But God knew that there would be those among His people who would remain faithful to Him. He also knew that in the midst of their captivity, many would return to Him. So God spoke to Jeremiah to offer the Israelites hope. Even though we serve a gracious and merciful God, there are still consequences to our sins. Hebrews urges us, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (12:5-6). The captivity of the Israelites was God's discipline to cause them to see the error of their ways. Unless we experience the ramifications of our actions, we have no reason to change our actions. Captivity will not last forever! God promised His people that they would not only be free from their oppressors but would also possess the Promised Land again. God declared a future for Israel when He said, "And ye shall be my people, and I will be

your God" (Jer. 30:22). When we turn our hearts to God through repentance, we become His people. Know this: God's people always have a Promised Land. Sometimes we may feel as if our hopes and dreams were held captive by the enemy of our souls. Sometimes we may feel we have roamed forty years in the desert, and we wonder why God has forgotten us. Sometimes we may doubt that a change in our circumstances is even possible. Through the Prophet Jeremiah, God promised that His people would possess the land that He had given to their fathers (vs. 3). Possession is ownership. God still makes promises to His people today. We are His people if we call on His name. We all have a Promised Land, and we will possess it. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

After a city is destroyed, should it be rebuilt? Historically, a devastated city would be rebuilt if the original reasons for its existence still served. In Bible times, a city needed a location that was defensible; thus cities often were built on elevated locations. This allowed a tremendous tactical advantage because a foreign army was more easily repelled if it had to charge uphill when attacking the city. Cities also needed ready access to food and water; these resources needed to be very close at hand, given the limitations of ancient transportation methods and lack of refrigeration. Cities were also established in relation to trade routes. A city located at a crossroads of such routes (whether by land or by water) could become a center of commerce. All these reasons were important factors in determining whether a city was rebuilt after being destroyed by war or natural catastrophe. Another powerful factor for reestablishing a city was religion, a factor that may be difficult for us to understand today. Places deemed to be holy needed to be rebuilt simply because of that fact. Today's lesson looks at a city that met this criteria as well as the others above: the city of Jerusalem—perhaps the most famous city in the history of the world with regard to religion. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC, and the text we will study will help us understand why there was such a strong impetus to rebuild it.

The city of Jerusalem dates to the earliest strands of biblical history. The first mention of Jerusalem in the Bible is in Genesis 14:18 in association with Melchizedek, who is identified as the "king of Salem." (This may be dated to around 2000 BC; compare Hebrews 7:1, 2.) Salem—the second half of the word Jerusalem—is an ancient word related to shalom, the Hebrew word for "peace." It is very likely that the Salem of Melchizedek's day eventually became the Jerusalem of Israel about 1,000 years later, when King David defeated the Jebusites inhabiting the city, taking it as his capital. After this conquest, Jerusalem also began to be known by the designations Zion and the city of David (2 Samuel 5:5-9; compare Joshua 15:63). King Solomon, David's son and successor, built a temple in Jerusalem as a permanent "temple of the Lord" to replace the portable tabernacle that had been in use for several hundred years (see 1 Kings 6:1). As a result, the temple became the new home for the ark of the covenant (8:1). The capital city thus became the temple city. The magnificent temple was dedicated around 960 BC. It stood until it was destroyed by the Babylonian army of King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC (described in Jeremiah 52). Jeremiah's 40-year career as a prophet witnessed both sides of that disaster as God used him to warn Judah and its kings of pending divine judgment. God's patience with his people had ended. He spoke (through the prophet) of the problem as a wound that would not heal (Jeremiah 30:12). Even though Judah had had a brief period of religious revival under King Josiah, it did not persist after that man's death (2 Kings 22-25). Jeremiah's message moved from a call for national repentance, to a warning of national disaster by the hand of the Lord, to promise of restoration. The latter is the subject of today's lesson. The arrangement of material in the book of Jeremiah is not necessarily chronological, so we cannot be sure when the prophecies in Jeremiah 30 should be placed during the prophet's career. They speak of a return from the exile in Babylon, but it is likely that these prophecies are part of a series given before the destruction of the temple in 586 BC. Supporting this conclusion is the fact that the chapter ends on a note that sees the outpouring of God's wrath as something yet to come (Jeremiah 30:23, 24).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

The biblical concept of hope differs considerably from our common understanding of it today. When we say "I hope so," we mean that we would like something to be true but are not sure it will be. But in the Bible, "hope" refers to the certainty that what is anticipated will come to pass. A believer's hope rests on the promises made by God, whose Word is trustworthy. Our study gives examples of how the Lord sustained the people of Israel in especially hard times. Through Jeremiah, He reminded them of the better days that lay ahead. In spite of the wretched disobedience that had

brought them into their present distress, He would yet fulfill all He had promised them. They would eventually be cleansed by His grace and made fit to enjoy His blessings. Israel's true King, the Lord, gave the people His law and decreed that they live by it. Obedience would bring blessing; disobedience would lead to punishment. Hope for the future would come from keeping the law. Despair and chaos would result from disobeying it. God's prophets were preachers of the Mosaic Law. They not only foretold future events but also told forth God's displeasure with sin. Much of the prophecy recorded in Scripture calls God's people back to Him through obedience to His law. False prophets told lies. One even sent God's people in Babylon letters that "taught rebellion against the Lord" (Jer. 29:32). To correct this false teaching, God sent His word by Jeremiah, His messenger, telling the people that after they had spent a long and difficult seventy years in Babylon, He would restore them to their land. God comforts His children, even when they sin against Him. In order to better understand God's comfort, we need to see how it worked in the lives of God's people, Israel. What was God's comfort like to them? What should His comfort be like for us today?

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

A Promise of National Restoration (Jer 30:1-3)

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,
2 "Thus speaks the Lord God of Israel, saying: 'Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you.
3 For behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the Lord. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.' "

Promise of restoration of people (1-2)

Restoration that cannot be hindered by distance (Deut. 30:4)

4 Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back.

Restoration that is promised (Acts 3:21)

21 He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Restoration of the soul (Psalm 23:3)

3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Restoration of joy (Psalm 51:12)

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Restoration of God's pleasure (Psalm 85:4)

4 Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us.

Restoration through God's refreshing (Acts 3:19)

19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

God restores out of His grace (1 Peter 5:10)

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Promise of restoration of land (3)

Restoration of land that proves God's grace (2 Chron. 30:9)

9 If you return to the Lord, then your brothers and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will come back to this land, for the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him."

Restoration of land that produces food plentifully (Isa 30:23)

23 He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows.

Restoration of land that belongs to God (Ps 24:1)

24 The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

Restoration of land through prayer (2 Chron 7:14-15)

14 If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

Restoration of land that God had that previously been banished (Jer 29:12-14)

12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

A Promise of National Blessing (Jer 30:18-22)

18 "Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will bring back the captivity of Jacob's tents, And have mercy on his dwelling places; The city shall be built upon its own mound, And the palace shall remain according to its own plan.

19 Then out of them shall proceed thanksgiving And the voice of those who make merry; I will multiply them, and they shall not diminish; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

20 Their children also shall be as before, And their congregation shall be established before Me; And I will punish all who oppress them.

21 Their nobles shall be from among them, And their governor shall come from their midst; Then I will cause him to draw near, And he shall approach Me; For who is this who pledged his heart to approach Me?' says the Lord.

22 'You shall be My people, And I will be your God.' "

Blessing of rebuilt dwellings (18)

Rebuilt dwellings by God the Redeemer (Isa 44:24-26)

24 "This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, 25 who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, 26 who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,' of the towns of Judah, 'They shall be built,' and of their ruins, 'I will restore them,'

Rebuilt dwellings that are to be holy to God (Jer 31:38-40)

38 "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when this city will be rebuilt for me from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. 39 The measuring line will stretch from there straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goah. 40 The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown, and all the terraces out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the corner of the Horse Gate, will be holy to the Lord. The city will never again be uprooted or demolished."

Rebuilt dwellings filled with God's glory (Hag 2:7-9)

7 'I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord Almighty. 8 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty. 9 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty."

Rebuilt dwellings through the compassion of God (Zech 10:6)

6 "I will strengthen the house of Judah and save the house of Joseph. I will restore them because I have compassion on them. They will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.

Blessing of restored families (19-20)

Restored families that keep the ways of God (Gen 18:18-19)

18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

Restored families that serve God (Josh 24:15)

15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Restored families that are devout and God fearing (Acts 10:1-2)

10 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. 2 He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.

Restored families that should be committed to becoming mature in Christ (Deut 4:9)

9 Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

Restored families that should praise and be committed to each other (Prov 31:27-28)

27 She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. 28 Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

Restored families that should respect and be obedient to its head (1 Tim 3:4)

4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

Blessing of government (21-22)

Blessing of government because they are God's servants (Rom 13:1-5)

13 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

Blessing of government because they are to help separate the good from the bad (Prov 20:26)

26 A wise king winnows out the wicked; he drives the threshing wheel over them.

Blessing of government because God avenges through them (Luke 18:1-8)

18 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" 6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Blessing of government because they punish the evildoers (1 Peter 2:13-15)

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.

Blessing of government because Jesus was born to have the government on His shoulders (Isa 9:6)

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts From Ray C. Stedman

If you look at Chapter 32 you will note that this section is dated in the tenth year of King Zedekiah, who, you remember, was the last of the kings of Judah. The captivity of Judah by Babylon took place in the eleventh year of his reign, so things are very close to the end. When we last saw our hero, Jeremiah, he was awaiting trial, under the indictment of the government for what they regarded as his treasonable activities against the king and the country, because he was recommending that people actually desert Jerusalem and give themselves up as captives to the Babylonians. We find Jeremiah now as a prisoner in the court of the guard. Nebuchadnezzar and his armies are at the gates of Jerusalem for the third time. The city has been under siege for over a year, and already sharp famine has set in. There is no bread in the city at all, and it looks to be only a matter of weeks before the city must capitulate to the siege of the Babylonian forces. There is no relief in sight, no one on the horizon to help them. The nation is facing perhaps the darkest hour in all its history. It is out of this darkness that the two chapters we will look at today, 30 and 31, arise. They are part of what we might call "The Song of Jeremiah", a beautiful section of hope and confidence in the midst of despair and distress. It might be more accurate if we were to call it "The Dream Of Jeremiah," Martin Luther King was noted for a great speech in which over and over he used the phrase, "I have a dream," as he outlined the hopes and desires and longings of the Negro people in America. This song really is a dream of Jeremiah, for in Chapter 31, Verse 26, a very strange statement is suddenly introduced. Jeremiah says, "Thereupon I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me." Then he goes back again to the vision he is expounding. So this prophecy evidently came as a dream to Jeremiah in the night, a vision of the restoration and the glory God has promised his people. But it is far more than that, because as you and I read through the account, we will see that this is the way God is working in our lives as well. God always works the same way. He is a God who does not change. The revelation of the great purposes and programs of God in the Old Testament is given to us to show us what is happening to us. So there is much to learn from this account as we look at it together.

There are four notes sounded, in this song. They are blended and entwined together, but they are clearly distinguishable. We will not attempt to read the entire chapters, but will select from them the passages which mark these definite notes sounded out in this great vision. The first and most dominant is the note of certainty of joy. This is the most often expressed feeling in this song. Chapter 30, Verses 8-9. This passage looks far beyond the return from the Babylonian captivity. It looks down through the years beyond our own day to the time when God promises to restore the fortunes of Israel, and even to raise up David to be king over the people again. Therefore, it is a promise not yet fulfilled. God is still waiting for this time to come. There are other beautiful expressions of this in the song. Notice Verses 16-17 of Chapter 30. All through the record of history it has been noteworthy that every nation which has attacked the Jews has found itself suffering as a result. God promises here to watch over his people, and to return evil

upon those who harm them in any way. Further on in this passage, Verses 18-22. It is evident that these words have never been fulfilled in all the history of Israel. In all the restorations they have gone through they have never come to anything like this describes; so this awaits the future. There are many other passages -- I am picking only a few.

Adapted from URL: <http://www.raystedman.org/old-testament/jeremiah/the-secret-of-strength>

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

We wonder how today's prophecy was received by Jeremiah's audience! When they looked around, they did not see a Jerusalem in ruins. They saw no need for rebuilding. Only with a tremendous leap of faith could those folks understand that God's wrath was to destroy their city, and thereby see the promise of future restoration as a message of hope. They had neither the hindsight of our perspective nor the foresight of Jeremiah. They could not conceive of the destruction of the mighty temple that had stood for over three centuries (see Jeremiah 7:4). For this reason, history records they did not heed Jeremiah's call for repentance and for trust in the Lord (17:7). Many Christians today view events of the twentieth century in the land of modern Israel as necessary fulfillment of various prophecies, and therefore crucial to the outworking of God's plans. The establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948 was followed by the immigration of hundreds of thousands of Jewish people from all over the world. The Western powers endorsed these moves, partly to atone for the genocide of European Jews by the Nazis. The city of Jerusalem did not lay in ruins in 1948, but it was nothing like the city promised by Jeremiah and the other prophets. It had no palace for the king, and if it had such a structure, it would have remained empty. It had no temple, for a Muslim shrine stood in its place. It was hardly "Salem," a city of peace, but a place of great tension and sectarian street violence. Some still look to a day when a new temple will be built in Jerusalem to fulfill their understanding of prophecy. But these are not the concerns of Jeremiah's vision of the future. He speaks of a restored city (Jeremiah 30:18), but he does not mention a restored temple in this chapter. He speaks of the restoration of a king in the line of David (30:9), but not of a new temple of the Lord like Solomon's grand structure. Jeremiah's vision is more like that of Revelation 21, where the apostle John has a vision of the new Jerusalem descending from Heaven. There will be no temple in that perfect city, for the Lord himself will be its temple (Revelation 21:22). That city will be populated by peoples from all nations; it will be a city of great songs of thanksgiving and praise. Jeremiah's promises are not just for the people of Judah facing and looking beyond the Babylonian oppression. They are also for us, the people of God, who look forward to joining our King Jesus in the city prepared for all eternity.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Even in the worst of situations, the Lord never leaves us without hope (Jer. 30:1-3)
2. God's mercy ensures that His plan for His chosen people will be fulfilled (vs. 18)
3. The desire of all God's children should be to glorify Him, since He has in a different sense glorified them (vs. 19)
4. Those who belong to the Lord enjoy His protection (vs. 20)
5. Leaders who acknowledge God bring His blessings upon their people (vs. 21)
6. God is Lord of all, but in a special way He is also Lord of those who trust in Him (vs. 22)