

“I will restore their fortunes, declares the LORD.”

This is where we started at the beginning of the Book of Consolation, in Jeremiah 30.
And this continues as the refrain throughout Jeremiah 30-33.

“I will restore their fortunes.”

The phrase is used 7 times in these four chapters – three times in this chapter alone.

“I will bring back the captivity” of Jerusalem.

God promises that you have a future!

But how can you be sure that *you* have a future?

In Jeremiah’s day, Jerusalem’s confidence was shaken.

Hasn’t God rejected us?

Our sin has removed us far from his presence.

What hope do we have?

Are there times when you feel that way?

It would have been very easy for Jeremiah to have the same question.

After all, in chapter 1, God had promised Jeremiah

that his enemies would not prevail against him!

But now Jeremiah is imprisoned in the court of the guard,

while the whole city of Jerusalem is besieged by Nebuchadnezzar.

Introduction: The Siege of Jerusalem and the Imprisonment of Jeremiah (chapter 32)

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. 2 At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem,

Think about the context:

the army of Babylon is besieging the city.

This is the moment that Jeremiah has warned them of repeatedly!

God's judgment is coming.

They will go into exile for 70 years.

And...

and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah. 3 For Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him, saying, “Why do you prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the LORD: Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall capture it; 4 Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye. 5 And he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall remain until I visit him, declares the LORD. Though you fight against the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed’?”

Zedekiah is the last son of Josiah.

Two of his older brothers – and his nephew –
have reigned in Jerusalem before him.

In chapter 21, we heard how King Zedekiah had sent a messenger
to ask Jeremiah to inquire of the LORD:

“Perhaps the LORD will deal with us according to all his wonderful deeds
and will make [Nebuchadnezzar] withdraw from us.”

Perhaps God will do for us what he did for Hezekiah in the days of Isaiah the prophet!

At that time, Jeremiah had replied with the word of the LORD
that declared that Zedekiah would be given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar,
and the city would fall – and only those who surrendered would live. (21:1-10)

Now we hear that king Zedekiah has imprisoned Jeremiah for the answer that Jeremiah gave.
In the eyes of his king Jeremiah is a traitor.

Jeremiah has encouraged the people of Jerusalem to surrender –
contrary to the command of Zedekiah.

So he has imprisoned Jeremiah
(probably to prevent him from spreading his “treason” among the people!)

So Jeremiah is in a rather difficult position.

Jerusalem is under siege, and he is viewed as a Babylonian sympathizer!
He has already prophesied that the exile will come – and will last for 70 years.

But while he is imprisoned in the court of the guard,
the LORD comes to him and brings a message of hope:
What will God do in response to all this wickedness, idolatry, and rebellion?

*Now therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel (verse 36)
concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon
by sword, by famine, and by pestilence’:
Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them
in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation.
I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety.
And they shall be my people and I will be their God.*

Jeremiah had always challenged the “orthodoxy” of his day –
the prophets and priests reminded the people that in Hezekiah’s day,
the Assyrians had threatened – but God had delivered Jerusalem.
Therefore, they concluded that so long as the temple of the LORD was standing,
and they were conducting the proper rituals,
they were safe.

And Jeremiah warned that *this time* it would be different.

This time judgment was coming – and there would be no last minute escape.
But he also says that *salvation* is coming!

God will deliver his people and restore their fortunes –
“they shall be my people and I will be their God.”
God promises that *he* will make all things right.

So now in chapter 33, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah a second time...

1. From a Barren Wasteland to a New Creation: The Promise of the New Covenant (33:1-13)

Introduction: A Reminder to Captives that God Is the Creator (v1-3)

The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the guard: ² “Thus says the LORD who made the earth,^[a] the LORD who formed it to establish it—the LORD is his name: ³ Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.

Back in Jeremiah 4:23, Jeremiah had invoked the language of Genesis 1,
“I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light.
I looked on the mountains, and behold they were quaking,
and all the hills moved to and fro.
I looked, and behold there was no man,
and all the birds of the air had fled.
I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert,
and all its cities were laid in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger.”

Jeremiah had spoken of how Israel’s rebellion has returned creation to its primordial state.
Creation has been undone.

In the beginning, the earth was without form and void –
in the beginning, God had taken the barrenness and emptiness
and God made it bring forth fruit.

That’s the emphasis of verse 2 here:
“the LORD who formed the earth to establish it.”

The Creator of the heavens and the earth is able to make all things new.
“Call to me and I will answer you.”

Here’s the thing:
if you are preoccupied with your own situation –
if you are obsessed with yourself – curved in upon yourself –
then you won’t hear a thing!

That’s why the LORD says “Call to me.”
I am the Creator.
You need to recognize that I am God – and you are not!

“Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things

that you have not known.”

And then God goes on to tell Jeremiah the great and hidden things!

The “hidden things” are the things that God will do in the future for the salvation of his people.

Sometimes when you are preoccupied with your personal situation, God’s answer to you is to turn your focus to what *he* is doing!

There are the three “Thus says the LORD” statements in verse 4, verse 10, and verse 12, showing that God’s purpose is to bring life out of death.

Verses 4-9 move from death and destruction to prosperity and praise.

Verses 10-11 move from silence to joy.

And verses 12-13 move from wasteland to habitation.

In other words, God’s message to his people –

God’s message to *you* in the midst of your affliction –
is that his purpose is to bring about a new creation.

[This ties in *exactly* with what Paul is doing in 2 Corinthians in our morning series...]

a. From Death and Destruction to Prosperity and Praise (v4-9)

Jeremiah starts in verses 4-9 with the movement from death and destruction to prosperity and praise.

i. The Houses Filled with Dead Bodies I Will Bring to Health and Healing (v4-6)

⁴ For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah that were torn down to make a defense against the siege mounds and against the sword: ⁵ They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans and to fill them^[b] with the dead bodies of men whom I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil. ⁶ Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.

During a siege, one of the primary ways of capturing a city was by building “siege mounds” – namely, piling up dirt and rubbish outside the wall in order to build up external pressure and cause the wall to collapse.

And one of the ways of combating siege mounds was by piling up dirt and rubbish on the inside of the wall to counteract the external pressure!

But where can you find dirt and rubbish inside the city?
By tearing down houses!

Likewise, the beams from houses could be used to reinforce the city gates.

So while the besiegers are tearing down houses outside the city,
the besieged are tearing down houses within the city!

And God declares that he will fill the houses of Jerusalem with the dead bodies of his people –
“for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil.”

If your house is torn down, you are poor and vulnerable.
Disease, poverty, and insecurity all go together.

I pray that you never have to deal with a house full of dead bodies.
But for most of human history – and still in much of the world today –
most people could expect to have to deal with this at least once in their lifetime.

But peace and security are fleeting things –
and so you need to be prepared for the possibility
that war and famine will come once again.
The way to prepare is not by stock-piling lots of food.

The way to prepare is by remembering what God has promised!

Because God will not remain angry forever!
“Behold, I will bring to it health and healing,
and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.”

Prosperity, security, and health go together
as God promises to restore the houses of Jerusalem.

Verses 7-9 then expand the image from the house to the city – and indeed to all the earth!

ii. This City Shall Be a Name of Joy, a Praise, and a Glory before the Nations (v7-9)

⁷ I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. ⁸ I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. ⁹ And this city^[c] shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.

God had said in Deuteronomy 26:18-19 that Israel was a “people for his treasured possession,
as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments,
and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor
high above all nations that he has made,
and that you shall be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.”

Why is Jeremiah invoking the language of Deuteronomy 26?

In Deuteronomy God calls Israel (his son) to go into the Promised Land
and live faithfully before him.

The Promised Land should remind you of Eden – a land flowing with milk and honey –
a land of blessing and prosperity and peace.

And when Israel lives faithfully in the land, then God’s blessing flows to the nations.

Jeremiah has borrowed language from Deuteronomy 26 before:

In chapter 13, verse 11 – God says,

“For as a loincloth clings to the waist of a man,
so I made the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the LORD,
that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory,
but they would not listen” –

and so God told Jeremiah to take his loincloth to the Euphrates
(there is actually another river with a similar name –
so it is possible that Jeremiah was told to take it to that other river –
but if so, the reason why God chose that river
was because it *sounded* like Euphrates,
and so would make us think of the River of Babylon!)

And then God spoke of the judgment that he would bring against the house of David,
and how God would send them into exile!

In other words, Israel is like a new Adam,
and Israel was placed in a new Eden –
and Israel was called to succeed where Adam failed.

But now Israel has failed – and just as Adam was exiled from Eden,
now Israel will be exiled from the Promised Land.

And the Land will return to the barren wasteland – the “tohu vbohu” (empty and barren)
of Genesis 1.

But God promises a new creation – in which the land will be restored from silence to joy!

b. From Silence to Joy (v10-11)

¹⁰ “Thus says the LORD: In this place of which you say, ‘It is a waste without man or beast,’ in
the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man or inhabitant or
beast, there shall be heard again ¹¹ the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the
bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings
to the house of the LORD:

The focus in verses 10-11 is on the spoken word.

‘It is a waste without man or beast’ –
uninhabited means silent.

But once again will be heard “the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness,

the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,
the voices of those who sing,
as they bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD.

And what will they sing?
The language of verse 11 -

“Give thanks to the LORD of hosts,
for the LORD is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!”

is drawn from Psalm 107 or Psalm 136 –
both of which are filled with “new exodus” – “new creation” language.

As God says at the end of verse 11:

For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the LORD.

And the new creation language continues in verses 12-13
as the uninhabited wasteland is filled with man and beast.

c. From Waste to Habitation (v12-13)

¹² “Thus says the LORD of hosts: In this place that is waste, without man or beast, and in all of its cities, there shall again be habitations of shepherds resting their flocks. ¹³ In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin, the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the LORD.

Cities will be filled.

Flocks will flourish among their shepherds.

The wasteland will become filled with people and animals –
creation will be restored.

Jerusalem will again be inhabited.

2. Four Oracles Concerning God’s Covenant Faithfulness (33:14-26)

With verses 14-26, we are reminded of the differences
between the Babylonian text and the Egyptian text of the book of Jeremiah.

Verses 14-26 are simply *not* in the Egyptian text (as reflected in the LXX).
In other words, in the LXX, verse 13 is the end of chapter 33 –
the end of the second oracle.

But in the Babylonian text, we have verses 14-26.

As we have said before,

we have two different texts of the book of Jeremiah –
both of which appear to come from the time of Jeremiah.
Jeremiah had two scribes – who were brothers –
Baruch, who went with Jeremiah down into Egypt –
and Seraiah (Baruch’s brother)
who took a scroll of Jeremiah’s teaching to Babylon.

Given that the LXX was translated in Egypt –
it would appear that Baruch’s text of Jeremiah’s prophecies
forms the basis of the LXX,
and given that the Masoretic Text was based on the text of the Babylonian exiles,
it would appear that Seraiah’s text was the basis for the MT.

I keep bringing this up
because many of you young people
will encounter those who reject the authority of scripture
because of all sorts of textual problems.

What you need to know is that the church has known about these problems for 2,000 years!
We have had these two different manuscripts of Jeremiah for over 2,000 years.
The western church has used one – and the eastern church has used the other.
And in all of the controversies between east and west,
the fact that we use different manuscripts for Jeremiah
has *never* been an issue.

But the simple fact is that the eastern church does not have Jeremiah 33:14-26 in their bibles!

So who wrote Jeremiah 33:14-26?
Either Jeremiah or Seraiah wrote this –
but either way, the content comes from Jeremiah.

Verses 14-16 are taken almost verbatim from Jeremiah 23:5-6.
Verse 17 comes from Jeremiah 22:30.
Verses 19-22 are taken from Jeremiah 31:35-37 (as are verses 25-26).

In other words, it’s entirely possible that as Seraiah copied the book of Jeremiah,
he brought together a pastiche of a couple different sections of Jeremiah’s preaching
in order to apply Jeremiah’s teaching to the church in Babylon in captivity.

But it is undoubtedly *Jeremiah’s* teaching that we are hearing.
And Jeremiah 33:14-26 applies the message of verses 1-13 in four oracles,
each focusing on a particular covenantal theme.

First the theme of *righteousness* (in verses 14-16).

a. Righteousness – God’s Faithfulness to David (v14-16)

¹⁴ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’

Verses 14-16 are simply a quotation from Jeremiah 23:5-6
(except for the additional phrase “when I will fulfill the promise...”)
– which makes clear that 23:5-6 was the original promise,
and now God is quoting back his earlier promise!

The problem in Israel is a lack of righteousness (8).
Instead of righteousness – instead of a right ordering of the community –
there is rebellion and sin.
And when you lack righteousness in the land, you lack security.

You see this in the home.
Show me a home that is dominated by sin and rebellion,
and I will show you a home where no one is secure!
Show me a neighborhood that is dominated by sin and rebellion,
and I will show you a neighborhood where no one feels safe.

We live in a nation where sin and rebellion have become the law of the land.
No wonder we feel increasingly insecure!

But God promises that he will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David,
“and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

Jesus *is* that Branch.
Jesus *is* the Son of David – the King – who sits enthroned at God’s right hand.
And King Jesus has sent his ambassadors – pastors and teachers –
who proclaim the message of the King.
And we – as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem –
are called to live according to the righteous standard of King Jesus.

This is why Paul – in the NT – is so resounding unafraid!
Jesus is King.
Righteousness has been restored.
In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely.
We live in *those days*!
Paul – who was getting beaten and stoned and imprisoned
by the Jews and by the Romans –
lived in the days of security and peace!

This is why I keep telling you not to worry about the rebellion of America!

Empires come and empire go.
Nations rise and fall.
But the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ endures forever.
And *you* live as citizens of *that* kingdom of righteousness.

b. Presence – God’s Faithfulness to David and Moses (v17-18)

¹⁷ “For thus says the LORD: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, ¹⁸ and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever.”

Our second covenantal application is *presence* in verses 17-18.
David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel.
And the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in God’s presence to offer sacrifices.

Now, as we know from the book of Hebrews,
the Levitical priesthood is superseded by the order of Melchizedek.
Jesus is the *one man* who fulfills both verse 17 – the son of David –
and verse 18 – the great high priest.

But as King, Jesus sits on the throne of David.
And as Priest, Jesus offered up himself as the once-for-all sacrifice,
and thus intercedes for us forever through that once-for-all sacrifice.

The high priest could only enter God’s presence once a year.
The blood of the offerings that he brought was insufficient to pay for sin.
That’s why he had to keep coming back over-and-over!

Jesus is the one righteous man who can remain in God’s presence forever.

c. Reliability – God’s Faithfulness to David and Moses and Abraham (v19-22)

¹⁹ The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ²⁰ “Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, ²¹ then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. ²² As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me.”

But this is why verses 19-22 turn to the question of *reliability*.
How do we know that there will always be a Son of David – and a Levitical priest?
After all, according to the Law of Moses, Israel has failed.
The sons of David have *not* walked according to God’s law!
The Levitical priests have turned to idolatry.

What happens when the kings and priests break God’s covenant?

Well, according to the Mosaic Covenant, God will send Israel into Exile for that!

So, how do we avoid exile and death?

How can God be faithful to his covenant without condemning us?

How can God be just and yet justify the ungodly? (Romans 4:5)

For this Jeremiah points us back to God's covenant with Abraham.

How can God be faithful to his promise to David?

It's *not* because of anything in the sons of David.

(Earlier in Jeremiah, Jeremiah was condemning the sons of David for their sin!)

God will be faithful to his promise to David

because of his promise to Abraham.

“As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured”
(that was the language of God's covenant with Abraham!)

And yet, here in Jeremiah 33, the promise to Abraham is applied to David and the priests!

“...so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant,
and the Levitical priests who minister to me.” (v22)

You can rely on God to do what he promises.

God is *reliable*.

d. Rejection – God's Faithfulness to David and Abraham and Creation (v23-26)

²³ *The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:* ²⁴ “Have you not observed that these people are saying, ‘The LORD has rejected the two clans that he chose’? Thus they have despised my people so that they are no longer a nation in their sight. ²⁵ Thus says the LORD: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, ²⁶ then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.”

But finally, the LORD says to Jeremiah,

what about those who say that God has rejected Israel and Judah?

And in his answer, the LORD reminds us not only of his covenant with Abraham,

but even the covenant with Noah – the covenant with creation.

How do you know that God will do what he promises?

Have you ever known a day when the sun did not rise?

If ever there is a day when the sun does not rise –

if God ever forsakes his covenant with day and night

and the fixed order of heaven and earth –

then you can believe that God will fail in his promises!

Think about that!

When darkness fell at the cross –

Luke goes so far as to say that “the sun’s light failed” (23:45) –
this was the moment of truth!
This was the moment when all of creation would find out –
would God be faithful to his promises?

Yes, creation itself wavered as the Son of God entered into the realm of death.
But it was not possible for death to hold him –
for death has no power over the innocent!
Death is the wages of sin!
And so for an innocent man to descend into death
meant that death itself was overthrown.

But innocent men have died before.
Abel was innocent – but Cain killed him!
Naboth was innocent – but Jezebel had him murdered for his vineyard.

Abel and Naboth were innocent – but death still held them fast.
They did not rise again from the dead!

Innocence isn’t enough!
“It was his task to swallow up death.
Who but the Life could do this?
It was his task to conquer sin.
Who but very Righteousness could do this?
It was his task to rout the powers of world and air.
Who but a power higher than world and air could do this?
Now where does life or righteousness, or lordship and authority of heaven lie
but with God alone?
Therefore our most merciful God, when he willed that we be redeemed,
made himself our Redeemer in the person of his only-begotten Son”
(Calvin II.xii.2)

As Jeremiah had said in verse 16 –
“In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell securely.
And this is the name by which it will be called, ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’”

Jesus is the LORD our righteousness –
he has become for us,
“wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30)

All of God’s covenants come together in him.
He is the seed of Abraham – the Son of David – the Second Adam
In him you see the righteousness of God – the presence of God – the reliability of God,
and even the *rejected one* who endured that rejection
so that we might have God’s presence with us.