

Jeremiah 31:1-22

The first 22 verses of Jeremiah 31 highlight God's love for Israel despite her spiritual idolatry and sinfulness. These verses, once again, reinforce that the Jewish people will return to the land of Israel from their world-wide captivity and have a personal relationship with God.

- 1 At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.**
- 2 Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.**

Two thoughts highlight chapter 30.

The restoration of the Jewish people to the Lord and the land.

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

And the destruction of Israel's (and God's) enemies.

23 Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked.

24 The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.

At the same time refers to the two main thoughts of chapter 30. Jehovah (Jesus) will be the God of all the families of Israel. The context of these chapters (30-33) require us to understand Israel as all twelve tribes - not just the northern kingdom. The same eschatological phrase used in 30:22 is used in verse 1: **[I] will be [their] God, and they shall be my people.**

Those **which were left of the sword** probably refers to the Assyrian captivity (and possibly the coming Babylonian captivity). **Found grace in the wilderness** is likely alluding to the wilderness wanderings after the exodus and speaks of the same God providing for the Israelites in the wilderness can provide grace now.

- 3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.**
- 4 Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.**
- 5 Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.**
- 6 For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.**

God's grace and love for Israel is seen in these verses.

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| 1. | God has loved Israel with an everlasting love | vs. 1 |
| 2. | God will build Israel once again | vs. 2 |
| 3. | God will bless the agriculture of Israel | vs. 3 |
| 4. | God (Jesus) will dwell on Mt. Zion and people will come worship Him | vs. 4 |

- 7 For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.**
- 8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.**
- 9 They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.**

God commands things concerning Israel:

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| 1. | Sing and shout with gladness among the most important of the nations for Israel | vs. 7 |
| 2. | Publish, while praising God, asking God to save Israel. | vs. 8 |
| 3. | God will bring the Jewish people back to the land because He is their father | vs. 8-9 |

- 10 Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.**
- 11 For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.**

The nations of the world are told to hear what God has said: that is, God has scattered Israel and God will re-gather them. God has ransomed them from an enemy stronger than them.

- 12 Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.**
- 13 Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.**
- 14 And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.**

God has many promises for Israel:

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| 1. | They shall sing in Zion | vs. 12 |
| 2. | They shall have abundant harvests | vs. 12 |
| 3. | They will no longer sorrow | vs. 12 |
| 4. | They will be comforted and joyful | vs. 13 |
| 5. | The priests and the people will be satisfied with God's goodness | vs. 14 |

- 15 Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.**

Verses 15-22 now focus on the sorrow the nation is experiencing. Verse 15 is quoted in Matthew 2:17-18 and has caused misunderstanding on how it is used in Matthew 2 where it says this verse was fulfilled in the weeping and sorrowing in Israel after the killing of children two years and under by Herod.

- 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,
- 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

We need to understand the Bible in the historical context in which it was written. The Jewish writers of the New Testament used the Old Testament in four ways. "They often gave a spiritual meaning or a new application to an Old Testament text without denying that what they said literally did or will happen," Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, rev. 1993, Ariel Ministries, pg. 842. There are four general types or classifications of prophecy. Each one of these types is used in Matthew 2.

"Essentially, history and prophecy are written upon the same basic principles. History tells what has occurred; predictive prophecy tells what will be. The same fundamental laws of logic and of language govern in both instances. If one gets these facts clearly in mind and approaches prophecy just as he does history, recognizing that the same principles obtain, in both cases, he is in a position to understand prophecy more nearly accurately than is usually the case....All the prophecies in the Scriptures fall into four general types, or classifications. A sample of each of these is found in Matthew 2," David L. Cooper, *Messianic Series # 5, Messiah His Historical Appearance*, Biblical Research Society, page 26-30, 1961.

- A. Literal Prophecy** - Matthew 2:6
- B. Literal Prophecy plus a Typical Import** - Matthew 2:15
- C. Literal Prophecy plus an Application** - Matthew 2:18

The third type of prophecy, the literal plus an application, is illustrated in Matthew 2:18. When Herod realized that the *Wisemen* had returned to their land without telling him where the Christ-child was, he became very indignant and issued an order that all the male children of Bethlehem under two years of age should be slaughtered. When this decree was put into effect, there was great mourning and lamentation among the mothers of Bethlehem. Matthew states that Jeremiah 31:15 was fulfilled in this event:

From the context out of which this passage is taken, one learns that Jeremiah was speaking of the sorrow and grief which the Jewish women experienced when they bade farewell to their sons who were in concentration camps in Ramah, and who were ready to be deported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. This historic fact was a literal one. That which is spoken about the sorrow of the Hebrew mothers of Jeremiah's day was equally literal concerning the mothers of the babes of Bethlehem of the first century. As is quite evident, Matthew simply applies the language of this prophecy to a similar situation of his day. Thus this passage is a literal statement plus an application.

- D. Literal Prophecy plus a Summation** - Matthew 2:23

- 16 **Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.**
- 17 **And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.**

God tells the people to stop mourning as they will return to the land from the nations of the world. Israel is promised hope in the end.

Biblical **hope** is based on the certainty of a future event occurring. "Most people understand hope as wishful thinking, as in "I hope something will happen." This is not what the Bible means by hope. The biblical definition of hope is "confident expectation," <https://www.gotquestions.org/hope-Bible.html>.

Christianity stands on three great pillars, faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 13:13). It seems that of these three pillars, hope may be the weakest today. Actually, I cannot recall ever hearing a sermon on hope. I have heard a few hopeful sermons, and certainly some hopeless ones, but never a sermon on hope.

I believe hope was one real secret of New Testament Christianity. Unfortunately, this does not seem true today. The opposite of hope is hopelessness or despair, and these things permeate our world and sometimes even the church. A good portion of our philosophy and theology since Renaissance times is laced with hopelessness. I am thinking particularly of such philosophers as Nietzsche and Sartre. They concluded basically that existence is pointless and absurd and that there is no hope for the world. This hopelessness has spilled over into our literature, films, music and art. We see numerous movies with absolutely no meaning and much of our modern art expresses this meaningless and absurdity of life. Our youth listen to this hopeless music, watch these hopeless films and are so overwhelmed that they often rush into drugs or suicide.

Our modern and postmodern philosophers, writers, musicians and filmmakers tell us that there is no hope in the world. In one very real sense they are absolutely correct. The world can offer us no hope. Hope comes only from God. Long ago the Psalmist expressed this: "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God...." (Psa. 42:5).

Hope should set off real Christianity from the world.

Elements of Christian Hope, part of a message preached by Jim Gerrish at Christ Church in Jerusalem, 1996

1. Israel

The future of Israel is promised, secure, and certain. There are scores of promises (prophecies) concerning the glorious future for Israel.

2. Jesus - Hebrews 12:2-3

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

3. Believers in Messiah

Prior to salvation: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, **having no hope**, and without God in the world," Ephesians 2:12.

With salvation: "And **now abideth** faith, **hope**, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity," 1 Corinthians 13:13.

"Now **the God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," Romans 15:13.

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**," Colossians 1:27

"**In hope of eternal life**, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began," Titus 1:2

- 18 I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.**
- 19 Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.**
- 20 Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.**

Vs. 18-19 In these verses we have the contrition and repentance of the people, having recognized their sin and need to turn back to God.

Vs. 20 Ephraim (Israel) is God's son ("And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn," Exodus 4:22), and God's discipline was necessary, but His love and mercy for Israel won't change.

- 21 Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.**

Israel is told to prepare for her return back to the land. Despite Israel's spiritual adultery through the centuries, God still sees her as the "virgin of Israel." This speaks of God's grace and forgiveness and Israel's place in the plan of God.

- 22 How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.**

Israel is now called a "backsliding daughter." She left her exalted calling for other gods.

for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

Ryrie - The meaning is uncertain. Some understand it to indicate the security of Israel in the Millennium when a woman can provide all the protection needed. Others take it as a reference to Israel (A woman) embracing a man (i.e., God). Still others relate it to the Incarnation.

Criswell - The promise to Israel involves an unusual reversal. Instead of a husband "encompassing" his wife, the wife, even with her weaker physical nature, "encompasses" her husband (cf. 1 Pet. 3:7). "Encompass" is used here in the sense of faithful encompassing love, one which indicates clinging to an object (cf. Gen. 2:24). Israel, the "woman" or "virgin," (v. 21) will "encompass" her divine Bridegroom and cling to Him.

Cundall - The reference in verse 22, where, in this new situation, a woman protects (Hebrew compass, as in AV [KJV]) a man, is best interpreted as signifying the absolute security Israel will enjoy. The menfolk will be able to go about their work, for the risk of attack will be so minimal that security can safely be left to the weaker sex!

"To what does this refer? In context it would appear to refer to the return of Israel to their land, a return in repentance, not in unbelief (as she is now), which speaks of a yet to come "new thing." Dyer agrees writing "This time of promised restoration will be so remarkable that it will be as if God will create a new thing on earth." National repentance will not occur until the Messiah returns at which time Israel (1/3 of the nation - Zech 13:8) will repent and return to Him.' https://www.preceptaustin.org/jeremiah_31_commentary

This is one of the most difficult and disputed verses in all of Jeremiah. Charles Feinberg comments, "With such an abundance of interpretations, it is foolhardy to be dogmatic about the meaning of these puzzling words. On the whole, it seems best to take them as a proverbial saying about something amazing and hard to believe. The meaning is beyond present solution."