

The Promise of Restoration

33: 1-13

DIG: This chapter summarizes some themes from earlier in Jeremiah's life. How might it also be an extension of his Book of Comfort in Chapters 30 and 31? Why does Jeremiah say a second time in 33:1? With the siege of Zion still underway, what must have happened to their hope, necessitating this second word? What three things does the LORD promise to do in and for His people? Toward what end does God bless them? What signs of hope are conveyed by the sights and sounds of verses 10-11 (also see 7:34, 16:9, 25:10)? What other activities would you use to express the same hope?

REFLECT: Have you ever doubted God's faithfulness? Why? What hope do you have in the times when you are unfaithful to YHVH? Some people have mixed thoughts on these promises of a Messiah. Do you ever wonder why ADONAI seems to wait so long to act? What answers seem to satisfy you for the time being? Isra'el needed constant reassurance. Why do you need to be reminded of the LORD's promises? Which promise, recorded in Jeremiah, do you need to remember right now?

587 BC at the end of the eleven-year reign of Zedekiah

While Yirmeyahu was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD came to him a second time (the first time was in 32:1). **The second message must have come shortly after the first.** The prophet was held as a political prisoner and wrote words of hope, resolutely contradicting not only the present condition of his people, but resolutely overriding his own personal circumstances. **This is what ADONAI says: He who made the earth, ADONAI who formed it and established it - YHVH is His name (33:1-2). God did not create the earth and then retire. He proceeded, and continues, to establish it. Never withdrawing. He is ever active in the unfolding of our development.**

The Creator of heaven and earth then promised to be available to the exiles who thought they were abandoned. The LORD of all power is the One who attends to the powerless. ADONAI who seemed to be absent is present, findable and approachable. **Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know (33:3).** The word translated unsearchable pictures an impregnable city protected by high walls - an apt image during the siege of Jerusalem. The idea is that YHVH's people don't learn the hidden things of the LORD by "storming the gates" through their own strength but by seeking Him through prayer and obedience. Because Yirmeyahu asked ADONAI to teach him, to show him the "hidden things" that related to the future of his people, the prophet knew the City was destined for destruction.

The present judgment of Jerusalem: For this is what the LORD, the God of Isra'el, says about the houses in this City and the royal palace of Judah that have been torn down to be used against the siege ramps and the sword in the fight with the Babylonians: "They will be filled with the dead bodies of the people I will slay in My anger and wrath. I will hide My face, **withdraw My protection**, from this City because of all its wickedness" (33:4-5). Their **resistance, however heroic, is futile and only adds to the heaps of the slain**. What happened in 586 BC would happen to an even greater degree in 70 AD (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Mt - The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple on Tisha B'Av in 70 AD**). YHVH had turned His face away. No wonder the Judeans could not understand what was happening to them.

The near historical healing of Jerusalem: The defiled nation would be healed and cleansed. Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal My people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security. I will bring Judah and Isra'el back (**shuwb**) from captivity in Babylon and will rebuild them as they were before. I will cleanse them from all the **iniquity** (Hebrew: *avon*) they have committed against Me and will forgive all their **sinning** (Hebrew: *chata*) and **rebellion** (Hebrew: *pasha*) against Me. As if to emphasize her guilt, three different Hebrew words for sin are used here. Then Tziyon would bring joy and glory to the LORD and be a testimony to all the nations of the world of the marvelous goodness and grace of God. Then the name of this City will bring Me joy, praise and glory before all the Gentile nations of the earth that hear about all the good I am doing for them; they will be overcome with fear and trembling at all the good and peace I am securing for it (33:6-9). The Gentile nations will shake and tremble because when God does this for Judah, at that time He will judge the Gentile nations.

The near historical return of peace and joy to Jerusalem: Again we have a contrast between the past and the future. Here is what ADONAI says: You say that this place is a wasteland, with neither people nor animals in the cities of Judah, and that the streets of Yerushalayim are desolate, without people or animals - no inhabitants (The readers of the scroll of Jeremiah in exile would understand this because it would have already happened). Three times earlier Jeremiah said people and animals would be removed from the cities of Judah and the streets of Zion along with the sounds of a wedding (7:34, 16:9 and 25:10). Yet the deserted City would one day be filled with people praising YHVH and expressing their joy to one another. There will again be heard the voices of those who sing, "Give thanks to ADONAI-Tzva'ot, for ADONAI is good, for His grace continues forever." These words are given as the benediction in Jewish weddings. As they bring offerings of thanksgiving into the house of ADONAI. For I will cause those captured from the land to return (**shuwb**), as before, says ADONAI (33:10-11 CJB). This is seen as the removal of previous judgments - a fresh start.

The flocks will flourish: The pasturelands, ruined by devastating judgment, would one day be full of flocks and herds, and the little towns would once more enjoy happiness. ADONAI-Tzva'ot says: In this place, which is a wasteland without people or animals, and in all its cities, there will once again be pasturelands where shepherds can let their flocks rest. In the towns of the hill country, of the western foothills and of the Negev, in the territory of Benjamin, in the villages around Jerusalem and in the towns of Judah, flocks will again pass under the hand of the One who counts them, says the LORD (33:12-13). What is referred here is the Jewish mode of tithing sheep. As the sheep passed through a narrow gate, one-by-one, the person counting stood by, holding in his hand a rod colored with ochre. Every tenth sheep he touched with his rod, thus putting a mark on it.³⁴¹ In other words, things will return to normal. This description of the Land reiterates the same reference points of 32:44: the territory of Benjamin, villages around Jerusalem, the towns of Judah, the towns of the hill country, the western foothills and the Negev. These six geographical points emphasize it will be true of the *whole* Land. All the Land will be restored and healed.

The fresh metaphor that reshapes the text is that of **flock, shepherd and pasture**. The tranquil pastoral scene of grazing with adequate food, water and protection will again be established. To be counted by the shepherd means that the shepherd knows the name of each sheep, counts them, and pays attention to any missing one. After a season of chaos, such an image speaks of a settled, well-organized, caring and attentive community with healing governance. This scene witnesses the radical, healing restoration intended by God.³⁴²