

# **Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 24, Jeremiah 30-33, Book Of Consolation, Part 1**

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his teaching on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 24 on Jeremiah 30-33, The Book of Consolation, The Promise of Restoration.

I'm looking forward in this session to talking about Jeremiah chapters 30 to 33, which is referred to as the book of Consolation and which helps us to see the message of hope that Jeremiah was giving to the people after this terrible judgment that he prophesies is going to take place.

We have throughout the book of Jeremiah, seen an incredible emphasis and a prevailing emphasis on judgment and the side of Jeremiah's ministry that involved overthrowing, tearing down, uprooting, and the reality of that. Jeremiah says that the fierce anger of the Lord will not turn back until it's accomplished all that he intended. As we've been studying chapters 26 to 45 in the second major section of the book, we've been seeing also a very discouraging, depressing part of the book as well because it deals with all of the different episodes of disobedience, failure to listen to the prophetic word.

But in the midst of all of the chaos, in the midst of the judgment, that judgment is a message that we need to hear today. As we think about the culture and the society that Jeremiah was living in and the crisis that they were in, in many ways, it reminds us of the culture and the society that we live in, in light of the moral decline, in light of the fact that we are drifting further and further away from God. In fact, in light of the spiritual condition of the church itself, we understand judgment is coming.

Billy Graham once said that if God doesn't judge America, he'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. So, we're not God's chosen people in the same way that Israel was. But we realize that when our society begins to be characterized by moral breakdown and sin and injustice and all the things that were true of Judah, then God's judgment is coming to us as well.

But we also need to remember that the prophets preach restoration and salvation as well. Their message involves both judgment and salvation. In fact, at the beginning of the sessions that we were doing on Jeremiah, we talked about the fourfold covenantal message that Danny Hayes and Scott Duval talk about with regard to the prophets in their book, Grasping God's Word.

Those four aspects involve Israel has sinned, they have broken the covenant. Number two, they need to repent and turn around. The third aspect of this is that if there is no repentance, if there is no turning around, then judgment will come.

But the fourth aspect of that message that we're going to look at in this video is that after God has executed judgment and carried that judgment out, there is going to be restoration. When we go to the book of Deuteronomy, as Moses is preparing the people of Israel for life in the land before they go into the promised land, there's a passage in Deuteronomy chapter 30, verses one to 10, that actually gives the history of Israel before it ever happens. If we see this as a mosaic passage, it says there that here's what's going to happen to Israel when they go into the land.

They're going to take possession of it, they're going to experience all the good things that God gives to them, and then they're going to experience the curses when they turn away from God, and God is going to drive them out of the land, send them into exile, bring those covenant curses upon them. But when they are in exile and when they turn to God, then God will restore them. God will circumcise their hearts, bring them back into the land, and restore them so that they will always enjoy his blessing.

That's really the message of Jeremiah as well. After this devastating judgment, after the fierce anger of the Lord has executed and done all that he intended, there is a restoration. It's encouraging to see that in this book that focuses so much on judgment at the center of this book, really there's a message of hope.

In chapters 26 to 45, which is telling us this depressing story of how Judah turned away from the Lord, they did not listen to the prophets, they experienced judgment because they did not take advantage of the opportunity to repent, they did not listen to the word of God. Even in the midst of that section, it's contrasted by the promises of hope and future salvation. God is not going to abandon his people.

As a parent, there are times when my children do things that disappoint me. But there's never, even when I have to discipline them, never the idea that I'm going to throw them out of my family. As a parent, I love them.

That love is unconditional and unending. God has that same kind of love to an even greater degree for his people. It's a comforting thing to know as we think of God's love for his people.

There is nothing that we could ever do that would cause God to love us more. But even with our sin, there is nothing that we can do that would cause God to love us less. The emphasis on restoration in the book of Jeremiah is obviously in this one section of the book.

But remember that there have been brief glimpses of the hope that God has for Israel's future, even in the very first message of the book, where Jeremiah is charging the people with being an unfaithful wife to the Lord and encouraging them to come back to him. When they do come back to him, Jeremiah chapter 3, verses 15 to 18,

says, here's what God will do for his people. He says, "...I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

And when you have multiplied and increased in the land in those days, declares the Lord, they shall no more say, the ark of the covenant of the Lord. It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed. It shall not be made again.

At that time, Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord and all of the nation shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem. And they shall no more stubbornly follow their own heart. In those days, the house of Judah shall join with the house of Israel.

And together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave to your fathers for a heritage." So, in the future, God is going to restore his people. They will never sin again and turn away from him in apostasy. So, there will never be the need for exile.

There will be a reunification of both north and south. These are the things that God is going to do for his people. And even the presence of God is going to be experienced and enjoyed by Israel in a deeper and fuller way.

There won't be a need for an ark of the covenant and a holy of holies for the people to go into God's presence in that way because all of Jerusalem is going to be holy to the Lord. And they're going to be able to know the Lord and experience the Lord in an even deeper way. Jeremiah 23, we see another glimpse of the hope that God has in store for Israel's future.

And this is in a passage, remember, where Jeremiah is talking about the poor leadership that Judah had in his day. And in chapter 22, you had the kings of Judah whose disobedience brought judgment upon the people. God ultimately temporarily terminates his relationship with the line of David because every one of them did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord.

Chapter 23 says, Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture. We realize from reading the story of the Old Testament that every one of the kings in the line of David somehow was a disappointment. Even David, who's a man after God's own heart, sins deeply.

Hezekiah made mistakes. Josiah, even at the end of his life, makes a fatal mistake that leads to his death. All of them in some way are a disappointment.

God is ultimately though going to replace the faulty leaders of the past with leaders in the future that are going to shepherd Israel in the right direction. The priest and

the prophets chapter 23 focuses on the false prophets. The Lord is going to raise up spiritual leaders for Israel that will be everything that God intended them to be.

And here's the promise in verse 3. Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all of the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set my shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more nor be dismayed. Neither shall any of them be missing, declares the Lord.

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch and he shall reign as a king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days, Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called.

The Lord is our righteousness." So, all the failures of the past and all of the judgment of the present in Jeremiah's time, all of that is going to be reversed and changed. And so that idea is touched upon at various places in the book, but it becomes the primary focus in chapters 30 to 33. We read at the beginning of this section that God had commanded Jeremiah to write these words on a scroll.

So, it seems like in their initial stage, these particular words of the prophet were a separate scroll and had been isolated out for emphasis and to really highlight this idea that God has a future for Israel. Now, critical scholars, as they've looked at the prophetic books, have often argued that the real message of the prophets was one of judgment. And that later editors or redactors came along and added words of hope to somehow bring something positive out of all of this.

And that these words of hope and restoration and salvation may not have been authentic to the original prophet because it would have blunted the original word of judgment. The problem with that idea is that there is not a single prophetic book in all of the corpus where there's not some word of salvation. I think the most scathing message of judgment is the book of Amos.

There is very little in that book that's positive. Amos talks about the day of the Lord, and he says, you think that it's going to be a day of light for Israel, that God's going to defeat his enemies. It's actually going to be a day of darkness.

It's going to be as if a man is running away from a lion and runs into a bear. And then, if he's able to somehow escape the bear and gets into his house and leans on the wall to rest himself, a snake is going to come out of the wall and bite his hand. They will not escape God's judgment.

And he pictures the remnant that is coming out of the judgment. Only one-tenth of the nation is going to survive. The nation, the remnant, is going to be like a lamb that is ripped out of the mouth of a predator.

And all that's going to be left is a bit of an ear, a piece of a tail, a part of a leg. But at the end of the book of Amos, even with that message of judgment, chapter 9, verses 11 to 15, God is going to rebuild the fallen Tabernacle of David. And in the future, as God blesses his people and brings them back into the land, the hills are going to flow with wine and there's going to be blessing and joy and prosperity.

So, if we think that the message of the prophets was exclusively judgment, we really have a problem in the prophetic corpus because there's always, in every prophetic book, some promise of salvation. In Jeremiah, it happens to be highlighted in chapters 30 to 33. There's an expression that occurs at the beginning and the end of this section, and a couple of times inside chapters 30 to 33 as well, that describes what this restoration is going to be.

The Lord says that I will restore the fortunes of my people. We see that in chapter 30, verse 3 at the beginning, and then chapter 33, verse 26 at the end of this. So, this promise that God is going to restore the fortunes actually provides an inclusio for the book of consolation.

The expression is also in chapter 30, verse 18, chapter 31, verse 23. The Hebrew of, I will restore the fortunes of my people, is the word *shub shabut*. So, two forms of our word *shub* that is so theologically important in the book of Jeremiah.

God has commanded the people again and again to return to him, to come back to him, and they have repeatedly and recurrently refused to return. So what the Lord promises to do at the end of this entire process is that the Lord is going to be the one who *shubs* and restores his people, and he's going to restore their fortunes, bring them back into the land, and do exactly what Moses had promised that God would do for Israel back in Deuteronomy chapter 30. Now, in the prophetic literature, and again, I think this is something that might help you as you read the prophets and get more familiar with them.

This is not just in the book of Jeremiah. Messages of salvation tend to be conveyed by two primary genres. There are two primary types of salvation messages that we have in the Old Testament prophets.

The first one is what is referred to as a salvation oracle. Salvation oracle. Okay, here's a definition of that or a description of it.

A salvation oracle is where God gives a promise to deliver his people out of a dangerous, desperate, and sometimes even a hopeless situation. That obviously is

going to be an important genre here in Jeremiah 30 to 33 because the exile is going to represent for the people of Israel a desperate, dangerous, hopeless situation. Particularly, what we have in a salvation oracle is that there will often be a command to fear not, don't be afraid.

Something that we see recurrently in the Old Testament. And then part of the oracle and a major component in it is that the oracle is going to contrast the present situation with the deliverance that the Lord is going to bring. So you're in the midst of this difficulty.

It may, from your perspective, seem to be absolutely hopeless, but fear not. I am going to deliver you. I'm going to bring you out of this.

It is a promise that God is going to act. And sometimes, when people were in dangerous or difficult situations, they would often ask the Lord, Lord, why are you sleeping? Where are you at? When are you going to intervene? The salvation oracle is a specific promise from God that he is going to intervene in the midst of this situation. All right now, we sometimes see salvation oracles, these fear-not promises, being given to individuals in the prophetic books.

And looking at a couple of examples in the book of Isaiah. So, this is not just something in the book of Jeremiah. It's true of the prophets in general.

The prophet Isaiah comes to King Ahaz in Isaiah chapter 7 and gives him a salvation oracle. And in the midst of this, Ahaz, just to remind you a little bit about him, is one of the worst kings that Judah ever had. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

He did not trust in the Lord. He sacrificed his sons in the fire. I mean, one of the worst representatives of the Davidic dynasty of all times.

But in Ahaz's day, Judah is under attack from the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. Syria and Israel are attacking Judah. And in the midst of that, Isaiah comes to Ahaz and gives him a salvation oracle.

And Isaiah chapter 7 verse 3 says this: the Lord said to Isaiah, go out and meet Ahaz, you and your son, Sheer the upper pool on the highway of the washer's field. So, Israel or Judah is under attack by Israel and Syria. Jerusalem is about to be invaded by an enemy army.

Ahaz is out checking the water supply to see if, you know, we're going to be able to survive this. The message that Isaiah gives to him is this. It says, be careful, be quiet, do not be afraid, and do not let your heart be faint, because these two smoldering stumps of firebrand.

You're worried about these two kings that are going to come into the land, they have these great armies. Don't be afraid, don't be upset about this, don't be disturbed. God is about to snuff these guys out.

They're just two smoldering stumps of firewood. Don't be worried about the fierce anger of Rezan and Syria and the son of Amalia, these two kings that are attacking. Don't be afraid because Syria and Ephraim have devised evil against you, saying let us go up to Judah.

Their attack is not going to work. Rest in God's promise. That's a salvation oracle.

They're in a desperate situation. Don't be afraid. God is going to intervene.

The sad thing is, is that King Ahaz, because of the evilness of his heart, doesn't believe in the salvation oracle, and he tries to solve this problem on his own, and he brings disaster on Judah as a result. Later on, Ahaz's son, Hezekiah, though, is going to receive a salvation oracle. And this is the time when, again, we've talked about this story a number of times, Jerusalem is surrounded by the Assyrian army.

Hezekiah turns to the Lord in prayer and faith and believes that God is going to deliver him. As a result of that, Isaiah comes to him and gives him a salvation oracle. Chapter 37, verse 5. Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the young men of the king of Assyria have reviled me.

So, the prophet says, look, don't be afraid of the threats that the Assyrians are bringing against you and the blasphemies they've committed against God. Verse 7, behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he shall hear a rumor and shall return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land. Don't be afraid.

You're in a desperate situation. I'm going to reverse that. I'm going to take care of the king who has invaded you.

I'll protect you. The difference between Hezekiah and his father is that Hezekiah believed in fear, not promise. When God gives a salvation oracle, he wants people to respond in faith.

So, later in the book of Isaiah, chapter 43, verses 1 to 3, God is going to give a salvation oracle to the people of Israel as a whole, to the exiles living in the land—the same people that Jeremiah is focusing on. So, this is a very relevant passage to our study of the book of Jeremiah.

Listen to what Isaiah says to the exiles. But now, thus says the Lord and this is one of my favorite passages in all the prophets because of the promise here. Thus says the

Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, who formed you, O Israel, fear not for I have redeemed you.

And now, the salvation oracle, don't be afraid. It pictures the salvation that is going to happen as if it's already taken place. I have redeemed you.

I have called you by name. You are mine. There's a relationship that I have.

And on the basis of that relationship, I'm going to deliver you. And then the Lord says, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And when you go through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you, for I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. All right.

When they take the journey back to the promised land, it doesn't matter what they go through, whether they have to pass through water or walk through fire, God is going to be with them. God will get them back to the promised land, and he will rescue them out of the desperate situation they're in. In the book of Isaiah, what then becomes the issue for the exiles? Are they going to respond to this fear, not promise in the way that Ahaz did or in the way that Hezekiah did? So, in Jeremiah 30-33, Jeremiah is also going to come to the people with some fear-not promises.

And promises that are salvation oracles where the Lord is going to say, I know the desperate situation that you're in, but I'm going to take care of you, and I'm going to rescue you. Let's look at chapter 30, verses 10 and 11. Chapter 30, verses 10 and 11, says, then fear not, O Jacob, my servant declares the Lord.

Same message that we saw to Ahaz, to Hezekiah, to the people in the book of Isaiah. That's what Jeremiah is coming back to the exiles with as well. Do not be afraid.

Calm yourself. O Jacob, my servant. All right.

The reason God's going to act and do this for Israel is because there's a special relationship that He has with these people. He's chosen them. He's elected them out of His free grace to be their people, and that's not going to change.

Do not be dismayed, O Israel, for behold, I will save you from far away. And your offspring from the land of their captivity, Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with you to save you, declares the Lord.



I will make a full end of all of the nations among whom you are scattered, but none of you, but of you, I will not make a full end. So, there's a desperate situation. They are in the midst of captivity.

They're in a foreign land. They have been oppressed by these enemies. God promises to step in to deliver.

I will save you. Yashah, one of the important Hebrew words about salvation in the Old Testament. The Lord is going to take their present situation and reverse it.

They're under judgment by their enemies. The Lord is going to destroy their enemies and save Israel. So, there's this reversal that comes about in these salvation oracles.

That idea continues as the prophet expands upon this salvation oracle in verses 12 to 17 in chapter 30. What's going to happen in the early part of this salvation oracle is that there is an extensive, detailed focus on the present desperate situation that Judah is in. In fact, as you look at Judah in exile, it looks like this is a hopeless situation.

And here's what the Lord says. Your hurt, verse 12, is incurable. All right? You've been wounded.

You have a disease. It's incurable. This is a hopeless situation.

Your wound is grievous. There is none to uphold your cause. There is no medicine for your wound and no healing for you.

It reminds us of earlier in the book when the people are looking for a bomb in Gilead, and there's nothing there. All your lovers have forgotten you. Talking about the nations that they've allied with to try to get out of this situation.

They care nothing for you, for I have dealt you the blow of an enemy and the punishment of a merciless foe. Because your guilt is great, your sins are flagrant. Why do you cry out over your hurt? Your pain is incurable because your guilt is great, and because your sins are flagrant, I have done these things to you. Is there anything here that seems hopeful at all? It's incurable.

They have no medicine. They have no help. And they have been under the judgment of God.

And then, verse 16 seems to be like the hammer's really going to fall here because the prophet says, therefore, laken, which, as we've looked at the judgment speeches, often is introducing a sentence of judgment, something that God is going to do against them. And so we're expecting, in light of verses 12 to 15, we're expecting a

verdict of judgment, of guilty, and here's what I'm going to do. Your sins are flagrant, your guilt is great, I've done these things to you, laken.

But then listen to what the Lord says. All who devour you will be devoured, and all of your foes, every one of them, shall go into captivity. Those who plunder you shall be plundered, and all who pray on you, I will make a prey.

For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, declares the Lord, because they have called you an outcast. It is Zion for whom no one cares. That's a beautiful passage because it begins by saying there is no healing, there is no cure, there is no hope; therefore, I'm going to destroy your enemies, and I'm going to heal you and restore you.

Tim Keller says that this passage is a beautiful illustration of God's illogical grace, where there's nothing in the present situation that would cause them to think there was any hope for their future, but therefore I will restore health to you, your wounds I will heal. So, in a salvation oracle, the promise not to be afraid, the promise that God would in some special way step into this situation, that God will rescue, redeem, save, deliver, and then as a result of that change that hopeless situation, that's what a salvation oracle is all about. Now, the other primary salvation genre in the Old Testament prophets is what's referred to as a salvation portrayal.

And what a salvation portrayal is, again, it's a message of hope, it's a promise. Sometimes, telling the difference between a salvation oracle and a salvation portrayal is not that easy, but what you have in a salvation portrayal is that it provides a poetic description of the conditions that will exist in the future time of salvation when God restores his people. So often, in very exaggerated, poetic, beautiful ways, this is what God's restoration is going to be like. In the prophets, when God brings his people back from exile, this is what their lives are going to be like.

Remember in Amos, the hills are going to drip with wine because there is going to be just incredible prosperity. So, this kind of exaggerated, over-the-top, poetic description of what life will be like in the time of salvation is what a salvation portrayal is. And we understand as we look at these things that the prophets are really looking beyond simply the time when the people would come back to the land. They are ultimately looking forward to the future kingdom of God.

Now, some of us might ask the question, well, are they talking about the millennial kingdom or the eternal kingdom? In the prophets, I think if you were to ask Isaiah or Jeremiah, or Ezekiel that question, they might not know what you're talking about. They are simply looking forward to the kingdom. And they're looking forward to this future time of restoration and salvation, and they use these beautiful, poetic

portrayals of life and blessing and peace and prosperity to describe for the people, this is what God is going to do for you.

Again, it's not just Jeremiah who does this. This is characteristic of the prophetic literature as a whole. So, listen to this passage from Isaiah chapter 11, verses 6 to 9. I think we're familiar with this one.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together, and a little child will lead them. So, can you imagine a little child taking along his pets or her pets, and it involves a calf, a lion, and a leopard? And he's petting the leopard on just peaceful conditions here.

The cow and the bear shall graze together, their young shall lie down together, and the lion is going to eat straw like an ox. The nursing child will play over the hole of the cobra and won't have to worry about being bit. The weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den, their absolute security.

They shall not hurt or destroy in all of my holy mountain. So, this beautiful poetic description uses the animal kingdom as a representation of the conditions of absolute peace and harmony that are going to exist in the future kingdom. Now, is this language literal, or is it figurative? Well, I think, in some sense, it may be both.

Because the Lord is going to reverse the curse and reverse death and all the things that are experienced in the new heavens and the new earth, but beyond that, I think it is a poetic way of describing absolute harmony in the political realm, in the human realm, in the realm of nature. It's this great expansive promise.

There's another promise like this. What's the future kingdom going to look like? Well, Isaiah portrays it this way in Isaiah chapter 65. And Isaiah 65 says this, for behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.

And again, from a New Testament perspective, we want to ask the question, well, is this the millennial kingdom or the eternal kingdom? The prophets don't see things that clearly. They simply see a kingdom. The former things shall not be remembered or come to mind, but be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create.

For behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy and her people to be a gladness. And so, think about all the suffering and think of the misery and the heartache and the disaster the people had experienced. Well, when God restores it, Jerusalem is again going to become a place of joy and celebration.

The Lord says I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people. No more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cries of distress. All right, now here's an interesting verse.

Isaiah 65 verse 20. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days or an old man who does not fill out his days. For the young man shall die at a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

So again, we get wrapped up in questions about whether it is the millennium. Is this the eternal kingdom? I think it is simply a poetic way of saying that the conditions of death and the effects of the curse that we see now are going to be radically altered in the future kingdom. And in that time, death is going to be diminished to the point where if someone dies at a hundred years old, they're going to be considered a child. They're going to be considered a curse.

Now, there are other places in the prophets where, in this future kingdom, death is going to be completely extinguished. So those images sort of bounce against each other. We're not always supposed to read these in hyper-literal ways.

It's simply saying the conditions and the effects of the curse are going to be reversed. And here's what God promises to the people. They shall build houses and inhabit them.

They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build, and another inhabit it. They shall not plant and another eat.

And for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen one shall long enjoy the works of their hands. So, what happened in the exile where an enemy came in and invaded the land and destroyed their cities and took them away, that's never going to happen again. And they're never going to build houses and not be able to live in them.

They're never again going to plant vineyards and have someone else eat the fruit of it. They are going to live in the land as long as a tree exists. They're going to have long lives, blessings, and prosperity.

That's what a salvation portrayal looks like. And in Jeremiah chapter 30 to 33, we also have these over the top elaborate, expansive promises of what the peace and the prosperity of the future kingdom is going to be like when Israel returns to the land. In Jeremiah's day, they are taken away in three waves of exile.

But the promise in the book of consolation is that the Lord brings them back and they are again going to enjoy this land that is flowing with milk and honey. They're going to enjoy it forever. And the Lord is going to change the hearts of his people so

that they will never again have to experience this kind of devastating judgment that they've gone through.

Let me read a couple of these in the book of Jeremiah in 30 to 33. We have a salvation portrayal in Jeremiah 31, verses 11 to 14. Okay, Jeremiah 31, verses 11 to 14.

For the Lord has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands that are too strong for him. They shall come and sing aloud on the heights of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd. Their lives shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more.

Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy. I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow.

I will feast the soul of the priest with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the Lord." What you should hear there is that in the portrayal of the future conditions of the restoration in the kingdom of God, when all of this is completely fulfilled, is an absolute reversal of what the people experienced in Jeremiah's day. They had experienced the horrors of siege, famine, and pestilence. And remember the picture in 2 Kings of Samaria during the time of siege.

A donkey's head is selling for 80 shekels of silver. A fourth of a liter of dove dung for five shekels of silver. The horrible conditions of famine and siege, now they're going to experience plenty.

In Jeremiah's day, there is mourning and grief. And one of the things that impressed me as I read through this section that struck me as I was again studying in preparation for these lessons is that there is a heavy emphasis in 30 to 33 on the fact that exile was characterized by weeping and mourning and grief. That is going to be changed into a riotous celebration.

In some places, the young women are playing tambourines, they're dancing, they're rejoicing. That's what's going on here. The people are singing and they're praising God.

It is an absolute reversal of things that we've read about in other places in the book. Remember, in chapter 9, death is climbing through the window, and the situation is so severe in the land of Judah that Jeremiah says we need to call for the women who are professional mourners. And they need to come in and express the grief of our people because death has climbed through the window.

Jeremiah himself is the weeping prophet and O that my head were a fountain of tears so that I could just ceaselessly weep for my people because of what they're going through. All of that weeping is going to be turned into joy. Remember, in Jeremiah's situation, one of the sign acts or one of the things that Jeremiah acted out in his own life is that God tells him in Jeremiah 16 verses 1-4 he is not to marry, he is not to bear children, he is not to go to a place of feasting and celebration.

Well, if God were to give Jeremiah that command in the restoration, he'd have to leave Jerusalem because every place in the city is going to be a place of celebration. But that deprivation and that discouragement, that grief, the famine, all those things are going to be reversed. In verse 18 in Jeremiah 31, a voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children because they are no more. So, the mother of the tribes of Israel is portrayed as grieving over the fact that her people have been destroyed, but God is going to bring them back with rejoicing and joy and celebration.

Listen to the description of the city of Jerusalem that's given to us. The passage I want to look at here, chapter 31 verses 38 to 40. We have another salvation portrayal here.

Thus says the Lord, sorry, behold the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the city shall be rebuilt for the Lord from the tower of Hananel to the corner gate. And the measuring line shall go out further straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goa. The whole valley of the dead bodies and the ashes and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron to the corner of the horse gate toward the east shall be sacred to the Lord.

It shall not be uprooted or overthrown anymore. And so, we hear those words of judgment that have characterized Jeremiah's ministry, uprooting, tearing down, but God is about to do the work of planting, restoring, and rebuilding his people. And the entire city of Jerusalem is going to become sacred to the Lord.

It's not just going to be the temple precincts. A number of the prophets, when they talk about the future restoration, they're really basically four ideas that keep constantly being repeated about the restoration. Number one, God is going to bring Israel back from exile.

Number two, he's going to rebuild and restore their cities. Number three, specifically, he is going to restore the city of Jerusalem, and the people will rebuild the temple. Ezekiel 40 to 48 gives us an elaborate description of what that future temple is going to be like.

Jeremiah doesn't really talk that much or doesn't really mention the temple at all. He simply talks about the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. In chapter three, he said they're not even going to remake the Ark of the Covenant.

They're not going to need it anymore. The whole city of Jerusalem is going to be sacred to God. Remember what the city of Jerusalem was like in Jeremiah's day.

In chapter five, they go through the city trying to find one righteous person, and they can't find it. There are places like the Valley of Hinnom where there have been the Tophet and the sanctuaries to the pagan gods and the practices of child sacrifice. Even those places that have been filled with dead bodies that have been contaminated are ultimately going to become places that are sacred to God.

All of Jerusalem is going to be a place of joy and celebration. The fourth promise that the prophets are going to give is that the nations will ultimately participate in the blessings of that salvation as well. We'll talk about that in a later session.

Now let's think about Jeremiah 30 to 33. We've seen salvation oracles and salvation portrayals. We've seen this beautiful message.

Let's think about Jeremiah 30 to 33 in light of the message of the book of Jeremiah as a whole. The plot of the book, the story of the book, we have definitely seen that Jeremiah does not follow the linear progression that we normally expect in a book. Even when the book is telling us basically the story of the life and ministry of Jeremiah, there are only parts of it that are chronological.

There's more of this type of paneling and narrative parallelism. In spite of this sometimes confused structure, I do believe that the book of Jeremiah is basically built around a certain plot. Even though it's a book of messages and sermons and oracles, there's a movement going on here where there's a problem and a resolution that's coming about.

Remember that the problem in the very first message of the book is that there is a fractured relationship between God and his people. Specifically, the images that are used there in chapter two, the primary one, Judah and Israel, have been an unfaithful wife. They have committed prostitution.

They have flagrantly committed adultery again and again against the Lord by worshiping these other gods. The other relationship that is described there in chapter three, verses 19 and 20, is that they have been unfaithful sons. So, the plot of the book, the book of Jeremiah, it's just not all about this random destruction.

It's not just about God venting his anger and saying, wow, these people have abused the covenant. I'm going to get even with them. The purpose of all of that is that

ultimately, God is acting to punish the sins of the past, but to purge them and restore them so that those broken relationships can be reestablished.

So, at the beginning of the book, we have an unfaithful wife and an unfaithful son. Chapter 30 to 33, what's going to happen at the end of the process? Jeremiah doesn't wait until the end of the book to give this to us. The resolution is in chapters 30 to 33, God is going to restore that relationship.

Remember what it says about Judah as God's people in Jeremiah chapter two, verse 20. They are an unfaithful wife who have committed whoredom and prostitution on every hill and under every green tree. They have been like animals in heat.

And then in Jeremiah 13, as a result of that, God is going to punish his wife severely. And there's some pretty disturbing imagery to describe that we talked about earlier. God is going to expose their nakedness.

God is going to expose their shame to the nation, and God is physically going to punish his unfaithful wife. But what happens in 31, 21 to 22 is that that marriage is going to be restored. And the Lord says, I'm going to make a new covenant with the people that will not be like the covenant I made with them when they were in Egypt when I was a husband to them.

So, this new covenant, this marriage is finally going to work. And the book of Jeremiah is about this incredible story of God working in the lives of his unfaithful people, even though they don't listen to the prophet. Even though he has to bring this judgment, God is ultimately going to bring his people back and he's going to restore this marriage.

And we see an indication of this in chapter 31, verses 21 and 22. Here's what God says to the people, set up road markers for yourself and make yourself guideposts. Consider well the highway, the road by which you went.

And so, God is imagining Israel. Put up these markers so that you can find your way back to the promised land. And I think about those Burma shave signs that were always by the side of the road back in the old days for an advertisement. Those signs are going to take Israel back to the promised land.

And here's what the Lord says, return, O virgin Israel. Now, when you think about the grace that takes a woman, Israel, as God's wife, who was a shameless prostitute and turns her into a beautiful and pure virgin. That's the grace of God.

The book of Isaiah does the same thing. Chapter one, my faithful city has become a prostitute, and it's filled with injustice, and bloodshed, and unfaithfulness to the



Lord. But by the end of the book, do you know what Jerusalem becomes? It becomes a joy to the Lord.

It becomes like a barren woman that God takes back in marriage. He remarries her, and through his grace, he transforms her from this faithless prostitute into a pure and beautiful virgin that he takes again as his wife. That's the grace of God.

That's the grace of God that the Lord showed to Israel. That's the grace of God that he shows to each one of us, regardless of our sin. He's able to cleanse us, to make us pure, to make us holy in his sight.

That's why Jesus went to the cross to make that possible. But that's what the Lord is going to do for his people, Israel. And it says, return, O virgin Israel, return to your cities.

How long will you waver, O faithless daughter? Okay. That's been the characteristic of Israel and Judah throughout their history, but they're going to come back to the Lord. And then it says this, for the Lord has created a new thing on the earth.

The Lord's going to do a work of new creation. A woman encircles a man. And there's a lot of discussion about what this expression means.

Some people have talked about a woman overcoming a man and talking about how Israel, as this weak exiled nation, would ultimately become more powerful than her captors. And it would be like God turning a woman into a warrior. But another possibility is that the idea of encircling may convey the idea of a woman embracing a man.

And God does this work of new creation where, ultimately, this unfaithful wife is going to love him. And this relationship is going to be restored. So, you know, there's often, we've talked about feminist critics who are bothered by the feminine imagery.

And honestly, it is disturbing in many ways. But we understand that the way that the prophet ultimately uses this metaphor is to picture something very beautiful and how God is going to restore that broken relationship. There is also a broken relationship between God and his people like that between a father and a son.

Some of us have experienced that with our own children. And it's encouraging to know that even God goes through those kinds of things when we experience that. Others of us have ministered to people who are in those situations.

Some of us may face that in the future, regardless of, you know, our best efforts to do what we can to raise them, to know and love the Lord, this is reality. And this was

a reality for God and his people. And in the first part of Jeremiah, they are faithless sons who will not come back to the Lord, who will not confess their sin.

But listen to what it says in chapter 31, verses 18 to 20. The Lord says, I have heard Ephraim, which typically is associated with the northern kingdom. I have heard Ephraim grieving.

You have disciplined me. And I was disciplined like an untrained calf. God's had to discipline his people because they have been stiff-necked and rebellious.

And now they're grieving to the Lord. Bring me back. Return me, restore me so that I might be restored.

For you are the Lord, my God. For after I had turned away, I relented. And after I was instructed, I struck my thigh.

I was ashamed, and I was confounded because I bore the disgrace of my youth. And then the Lord says, is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling son? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore, my heart yearns for him.

I will surely have mercy on him, declares the Lord. We saw through the tears of Jeremiah as the weeping prophet, and he was a living embodiment of the tears of God. And there have been many parents who have wept tears and shed over a broken relationship with their children.

And God experienced that hurt, and God experienced that pain. And even as he was judging the people, he was not simply venting the fury of his anger, which is part of this. He was also grieving over the rebellion of his son.

But what we finally see happening in this book is that all of this disaster and chaos, and even in a book that sometimes appears to be reflective of that chaos and the way that it's been put together, you almost get an idea of Jeremiah composing this in the midst of all the ruins and the devastation of this exile. Finally, Israel comes to a place where they realize their sin through the discipline of God. They acknowledge God, and because of the discipline of God, they acknowledge to God what they would not say during the time of Jeremiah.

Remember some of the things that the people have said to the Lord throughout the book of Jeremiah. And they have a history of saying all of the wrong things to God. In chapter two, when the Lord confronts them with their sin and their idolatry, verse 23, I am not unclean.

I have not chased after the Baals. Chapter two, verse 35, Lord, what are you talking about? I am innocent. How could God possibly be angry at us? In chapter 14, they

give the Lord two confessions of sin and the words sound pretty good, but the Lord doesn't accept them because he says it's just words and there's no real turning.

They're just saying what they think I want to hear. In chapter 18, verse 12, they refuse to return. And remember, the Lord has given them opportunity after opportunity.

Jeremiah goes to the potter, and the clay can still be shaped, but at the end of that sign act, the people say it's impossible. We will not return. We will follow our own ways and act according to the stubbornness of our own hearts.

And this passage says Ephraim was like an untrained calf. We even come to the end of the book in the last actual chronological event in Jeremiah's ministry, the people say we will not listen to you, and we will continue to offer our sacrifices and make our vows and carry out our offerings to the pagan gods because we believe they're the ones that can help us. So, throughout this book, from the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry in chapter two to the end of Jeremiah's ministry in chapter 44, the people have said the wrong things to God.

They have been a rebellious sign. But in this chapter, finally, chapter 31, they will come to a place where they repent, where they acknowledge the Lord and the broken relationship will be restored. Jeremiah is a book that I believe we need to take seriously for two reasons.

Number one, because of the warnings of judgment against a godless society, and we live in the midst of that. We are, I believe, on the cusp of experiencing maybe many of the things that the people in Jeremiah's day experienced. But we also need to take this book seriously because it is a beautiful statement of God's mercy and God's grace.

It's the grace that we experience in personal salvation when we come to know the Lord, when we turn from our sin, when we turn away from our idols and turn to the living God and to what Jesus has done for us. But it's also the grace that God shows to us as his people and that we experience in our daily lives. Jeremiah has a frightening picture of judgment, but along with that, a wonderful and beautiful expression of God's grace, God's mercy, and the compassion that he's ultimately going to pour out on the people of Israel when he restores them.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his teaching on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 24 on Jeremiah 30-33, The Book of Consolation, The Promise of Restoration.