

# **Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 27, Jeremiah 30-33, Stages of Restoration, Part 1**

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his instruction on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 27, Stages of Restoration from Jeremiah 30-33.

Throughout our study of the book of Jeremiah, we've certainly taken time to look at the prophet's messages of judgment, but we've also had an opportunity near the end of the course here to talk more about the positive aspects of Jeremiah's message of restoration.

The key passage in Jeremiah 30 to 33, of course, is the promise of the new covenant and this new covenant that God is going to make that really bridges the story of salvation in the Old Testament over into the fulfillment of all that God is designing and intending to do in Christ. As we look at the promise sections of the Old Testament prophets, there are basically four key promises that are central to what they understand: the future restoration of Israel, the kingdom of God, and what that will look like. Number one, they talk about a return to the land and God bringing his people back from exile.

Number two, they talk about rebuilding the cities in Judah, particularly Jerusalem and the temple. That aspect is definitely present in the book of Jeremiah, although emphasis on the rebuilding of the temple is not really there. The coming of the future Messiah is the third important element.

And then fourthly, this promise is not just for Israel. Ultimately, the blessings of restoration, the kingdom, will include the nations as well. And so, those are the key promises that we're looking at in the book of restoration.

I want us to think about in a couple of sessions, as we apply this message in light of all of Scripture, when does this restoration occur? And how do we understand the fulfillment of these promises of restoration and new covenant and coming kingdom? How do we understand their fulfillment? And there's a key concept that is going to run through this session and the next one. It's the idea that the promises of restoration are both now and not yet. In terms of Israel's history, there is an aspect of this restoration from Jeremiah's perspective that is near and far.

There is going to be a restoration that takes place in 70 years when God brings his people back from exile. But that restoration really looks forward to a further restoration, a return that is going to bring the kingdom of God to earth. And that's something that in the prophets has spoken about being in the last days.

Now, the prophets did not always see the difference between the near and the far restorations. But as we see the unfolding of salvation history, as we're given the additional perspective of New Testament revelation, we understand that these prophecies about the last days, the restoration, the new covenant, the return to the land, and the kingdom of God are fulfilled in stages. And I would like us to think about this from the perspective of the promises of restoration being fulfilled in three distinct stages.

First of all, stage number one, and this is definitely part of the perspective of Jeremiah, is that there is a restoration that comes about as the people return from the exile and the return to the land that took place in history in 536 BC. Remember, Jeremiah prophesied that exile is going to last for 70 years. And if we imagine 605 being the beginning of the exile, 538 being the end of that, we have 67 years.

We have a slightly different date if we date that from 586 to 538, but there are basically 70 years used as a round number to talk about the time of exile. The generation that went down into exile is not going to be the generation that basically returns. There's going to be an entire lifetime when the people of Israel will be in the land.

But when Babylon fell to the Persians and to Cyrus in 538 BC, Cyrus issued the decree in 536 that allowed the Jews to return to the promised land. And that is the first stage of the fulfillment of the promises of Jeremiah and the other prophets regarding the return to the land. But that return to the land was really only stage one of the fulfillment.

It did not completely fulfill all of the promises that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other Old Testament prophets made about the restoration. In fact, if that is the only fulfillment of those promises, Isaiah and Jeremiah seem to have missed things by a wide margin. And sometimes, we see things that are advertised for us.

Maybe we can find a hotel on Expedia.com. And when we get there, we find out that maybe the people advertising this shot it with an interesting angle or some different pictures than what we're really seeing. And if the return from exile that occurred in history is all that the prophets were talking about, their language is incredibly idealistic. So, there seems to be a fulfillment that has to extend beyond that.

There has to be a return that will go beyond the return. There has to be a restoration beyond what was experienced in history. And I think we come to an understanding through the rest of Revelation and even in the history of the Old Testament from Jeremiah to the return to the land, the exile in some sense is not ended simply by the people coming back to the land.

And let me give us a few passages that I think help us to see this. In the book of Jeremiah, in Jeremiah chapter 29, the prophet himself is going to talk about God's plans for the people who are living in exile. I know the plans that I have for you plans to prosper you, to give you a hope and a future.

Here's what that future entails in Jeremiah chapter 29, verses 12 to 14. You will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me, and you will find me when you seek me with all of your heart, and I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes, the key expression that's used in 30 to 33, and I will gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back.

Jeremiah says God has committed himself to bring about the restoration and to work toward Israel's future through the exiles. But this is not simply an automatic guarantee of their future blessing. They will be found by, or they will come to experience these things when they seek the Lord.

When they seek the Lord with all of their heart, they will experience the full blessings of restoration. The reality, as we look at the historical return from exile that occurred in 538 to 536, is that the people returned to the land, or at least many of them did, but they changed their geography without really changing their spiritual condition and their heart for God. And the full restoration would depend upon them seeking God with all of their heart.

So, there's a balance in all of this between God's saving initiatives to restore his people and the responses that they would have to those saving initiatives that God would bring. We see that in the book of Daniel as well, and we've talked about this passage previously. Daniel, based on the promises of Jeremiah that the exile would last for 70 years, in Daniel chapter 9, is praying for God to fulfill his promises.

He's confessing his sin, he's confessing the sin of the people, and he's praying on the basis of God's promises that the restoration would come about. Well, God is going to give an additional revelation to Daniel in response to that prayer that clarifies for us, to some degree, the message of Jeremiah. And God is going to say to Daniel, yes, Jeremiah prophesied that within 70 years, the people would return to the land.

But in Daniel 9, 24 to 27, we receive the additional revelation that the full restoration of Israel, making a full end to sin, the full restoration of the covenant relationship, the reestablishment of the temple, Israel being securely established in the land, will not happen for 70 weeks of seven years. Whether we take that as a literal 490-year period or look at the way that dates and time periods are used in apocalyptic literature, simply a reference to a long time, we have the reality here that the full restoration is not going to occur simply when the people come back to the land as a

result of Cyrus' decree. We have an interesting prayer from Nehemiah, who is one of the civil leaders of the people of Israel, as they come back to the land.

And I just want to read this prayer in Nehemiah 9, verses 36 and 37. Listen to what Nehemiah says; the people have already come back to the land; they're beginning to experience the blessing of return that Jeremiah prophesied about. In fact, Nehemiah is leading one of the later waves of that return.

And here's what he says: behold, we are slaves this day. In the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves. And its rich yield goes to kings whom you have set over us because of our sins.

They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress. Now, the people have been in the land for basically a hundred years. The first return occurred in the previous century.

But Nehemiah, as he's looking at this, says we're still in bondage and in slavery. All of the promises of deliverance and the yoke being broken, we're still under foreign oppression. And so, the return from exile that began with Cyrus's decree is not the complete fulfillment of the promises that God made to Jeremiah about the return and restoration of the people of Israel.

We start looking at the message of the post-exilic prophets and we see that, I think, in a clear way. The prophet Joel, who appears to be, from certain clues and indicators that we get in the book, a post-exilic prophet, talks about a locust invasion that God has brought against the people that severely devastated the land. And that locust plague was specifically brought as punishment for their sin.

Joel warns them that if they don't listen to what God has done or pay attention to the judgment that God has brought against them, the Lord is going to bring an army against them that's going to bring even greater devastation than the locust plague. And Joel, as a prophet of judgment, is going to say the same thing that the prophets had said to the people before the exile: beware, the day of the Lord is coming. Now, fortunately, it seems that the people, as we read Joel chapter 2, responded to those warnings and repented.

But the reality is, even in the post-exilic period, there are further warnings of judgment because the people have not fully come back to God. Another post-exilic prophet, Zechariah, who encouraged the people in the rebuilding of the temple and may have come before the time of Joel, he's going to talk about, in Zechariah chapter 8 verse 7, he's going to talk about a return that is still future to the return that has already been experienced. He says the Lord is again going to bring the people of Israel from all the far and distant lands to which they have been exiled.

So, the return that had begun before the time of Zechariah did not exhaust the promises that were given by prophets like Jeremiah. In fact, Zechariah at the end of his book, as he has visions about Israel's future, he envisions another exile and another invasion and judgment of the people of Israel that's going to look in many ways like the judgment that was experienced in the days of Jeremiah. Listen to this vision that Zechariah gives about the future of Israel.

This whole scenario of unfaithfulness, disobedience to God, covenant curses, judgment, military invasion, exile, defeat, and death is all that's going to happen again because the people have not fully come back to God. And Zechariah says, behold, a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all of the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the house is plundered, and the women raped.

So, the terrible things that Judah experienced in the days of Jeremiah, Zechariah, as a prophet in the post-exilic period, said, this is going to happen all over again. And it says, half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.

So, there's going to be a judgment. God will ultimately intervene. He will restore his people, and the survivors of both Israel and the nations will come to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

But there's an exile, return, restoration, and deliverance that goes beyond what was experienced in the return that took place in the post-exilic period. The final prophet that we see in the Old Testament, the Old Testament, closes with the prophet Malachi. Malachi definitely envisions that there is a broken spiritual relationship between God and his people in the post-exilic period.

And in many ways, the spiritual condition of the people in his day looks very similar to what we see during the time of Jeremiah. In fact, the book of Malachi is built around a series of disputes between God and his people, where the Lord is indicting them for not paying their tithes, not loving him, not obeying him, not following his covenant dictates. And in one place, the prophet gives a word from the Lord to the people: I have loved you.

And it talks about God's covenant love for Israel. The people's response to that is, how have you loved us? So, obviously, there's a definite problem with the spiritual condition of Israel in the post-exilic period. Malachi's final promise is that in the last days, the Lord is going to raise up a prophet, the prophet Elijah.

The purpose of this eschatological Elijah, we understand from the New Testament that's fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist. The purpose of this eschatological

Elijah will be to turn the hearts of the people back to the Lord and back to covenant faithfulness to him. So, Jeremiah was calling upon the people to shew, to return to God.

The Lord promises in the restoration that he is going to restore the fortunes of the people. But Malachi is still talking about the fact that there is a need for the people's hearts to turn back to God. Okay.

So, this restoration that Jeremiah is prophesying, as we start to look at how it unfolds, it becomes kind of messy. And even in the book of Jeremiah, I think as we look at what's going on in the immediate aftermath of exile and the continued disobedience that we talked about and narrated in chapters 40 to 43, there's a theology of unending exile, even in the book of Jeremiah itself. The last episode and story in the book of Jeremiah is this appendix in chapter 52 about the fall of Jerusalem and the fact that the kings of Judah are in exile.

There's this glimmer of hope with the release of Jehoiachin from prison, but the conditions of exile, that's the final word that we see in Jeremiah chapter 52. Now, remember that in the new covenant, the promise that God gives to Israel is that he is going to circumcise their hearts. That's what Deuteronomy chapter 30 says.

Jeremiah says that God is going to write the law on the people's hearts, and Ezekiel says that the Lord is going to give Israel a new heart. I think those three images basically say the same thing.

God is going to transform the hearts of his people. Now, some scholars, when they look at this, and they see these images of God circumcising the heart or writing on the heart or giving a new heart, believe that the prophets are reflecting an idea that they have referred to. One writer says God is going to impose on his people an enforced repentance.

You're going to repent no matter what. And basically, what you end up having here is that God finally gets the response that he wants from his people, but in the process, he has to remove their free will. John Collins, who is a very brilliant Old Testament scholar, says that as we think about Jeremiah 31 and these promises of a new heart and writing on the heart and circumcision of the heart, the only way that we get to a utopia, he says, is that we have this problem.

God has to take away human freedom. Well, as I look at the unfolding of how this restoration is going to take place, in many ways, the interaction between God and his people seems as messy after the fall of Jerusalem as it did before. And the way that God is calling his people back to them and God is performing these acts of salvation where he's trying to bring the people back, God is initiating all kinds of things to implement this return.

The struggle between God's initiatives and human responses to those things is just as real after the exile as they were before. I believe that the promises where God says, I'm going to circumcise the heart, I'm going to write on their heart, I am going to give them a new heart, God ultimately wins. And God, as the sovereign Lord, knows ultimately what it will take to bring about the right response of his people, and God will bring that about.

In the working out of salvation history, God will accomplish bringing about the full restoration of his people. God will create this new covenant where everyone who is in that covenant has a new and transformed heart where they will finally be able to obey him. But we definitely do not see in the working out of this process that God simply removes human response in this process.

Sometimes in discussions of theology, I even see these passages where God is writing on the heart or giving a new heart or circumcising the heart, used to promote the idea of irresistible grace and personal salvation. I think we have to be careful here. The Bible is often much messier than our rigid theological systems.

As God is in the process of bringing this restoration about, we still see the messy interplay of divine initiative and human response. If we imagine God as the master chess player, God is ultimately going to win and accomplish his purposes. But it does not appear that God wins simply by directing his opponent to make every move that he wants.

For some people, their idea of God's sovereignty is basically that's what he's doing. He's moving all of the pieces. I think the more biblical idea of God's sovereignty is that God is so incredibly sovereign in accomplishing his purposes that he can do that while still allowing all the interplay and the contingencies of human response. He still wins.

But God is not enforcing repentance on the people. God is not removing their free will as they respond to him. I believe this messy interplay carries over even into the New Testament.

We have a statement in Acts chapter five, verse 31, and all of this is related to Jeremiah. It's important because it's based on the theology of repentance and Jeremiah's constant calls for the people to return to God. Jesus came to ultimately bring about that return that Jeremiah had promised.

Acts chapter five, verse 31 says that Jesus, through his death, his resurrection, and his ascension, has given to the people of Israel the gift of repentance. So that sounds like, well, God's going to do it, give it as a gift. However, in Acts chapter three, verse

19, as Peter stands up to preach to the people of Israel, he confronts them with the fact that they've murdered their Messiah.

And he says you need to repent. You need to shove so that the blessings and the time of restoration that God has promised to bring about will come. So even as we get to the New Testament and God is bringing this new covenant into effect, the death of Jesus implements that covenant.

The messy interplay of divine initiative and human response is still there. And I think we need to respect that and to understand that's part of the biblical message. So, as we come to the end of the Old Testament era, we understand that there has been a partial return, but it is not the full return that God envisioned.

Stage one has taken place, but if we're going to take the promises of the prophets seriously, there has to be something beyond this. So, we're going to fast forward through the intertestamental period, and we're going to come to the New Testament era in the time of Jesus. N.T. Wright and a number of other scholars have developed this important idea that in Jesus' day, we've seen this, I think, in Nehemiah's prayer during the time of the post-exilic period in the Old Testament.

In Jesus' day, there was still the idea that even though Israel was in the land, they were still living in exile, and they were still in bondage. They were in bondage to the Romans, and they were still as much under foreign oppression as they were back in the days of exile are still there. Even though they're back in the land, even though for a little while they enjoy a period of independence and then the Romans take that away, they're still living under the conditions of exile.

There is a New Testament use of the book of Jeremiah in the Gospels that I think reflects this idea of continuing exile. Remember back in Jeremiah 31 verse 15, as Jeremiah describes the conditions of exile, it's a time of weeping and mourning. In fact, he says in chapter 31, verse 15, a voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children. In light of the death and the exile, Rachel, the mother of many of the tribes, is grieving over what has happened to her people. That describes the conditions of exile.

And remember that Jeremiah's message is that when the return comes about, their weeping is going to be turned into rejoicing. That's the reversal that God is planning to bring. Well, in Matthew chapter 2, in that horrible incident where Matthew tells us about Herod putting to death the children and the infants around Bethlehem because he's trying to remove Jesus as a rival to the throne.



Matthew says that what took place there as the people in Jesus' day grieved over the death of the innocents. He says this was to fulfill what was written in Jeremiah 31, verse 15. Rachel, again, is weeping for her children.

Now, Matthew is a very interesting use of the Old Testament there. If you go back to the context of Jeremiah chapter 31, you say, I don't see this being a prediction of something that's going to happen in Jesus' day. Well, the idea here of fulfillment is not necessarily one of prediction.

Matthew is speaking about a pattern, a pattern that was true in the days of Jeremiah. Rachel was weeping over her children and the death and the destruction and the exile and all the catastrophes that went along with that. What Matthew is saying is that that pattern continues and is ultimately reaching its culmination in the life and ministry of Jesus.

But the conditions of exile are still there because Rachel is still weeping for her children. And the people of Israel are still living under foreign bondage where an oppressive evil king is killing their children. That's exactly what was going on in Jeremiah's day.

It continues and carries over into the time of Jesus. So, the conditions of exile are still there. Now, a couple of passages in the New Testament that I think make this even more explicit are some of the infancy and birth narratives that are found in the gospel of Luke.

I want to read a couple of these passages: Why was Jesus born? What did Jesus come to do? I think Luke is going to introduce the message right at the front of his gospel: Jesus came to deliver the people of Israel from their exile. That deliverance did not come about simply by their return when Cyrus issued the decree.

They're still under bondage. They're still under oppression. Even more importantly, they're still under the bondage to their own sins.

And the Lord comes to bring, or the Lord sends Jesus as Israel's Messiah to bring about their full deliverance. So, here's what verse 68 says. And this is Zechariah, the father of John the baptizer, his response to the coming and what God is doing through John and Jesus.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people. I mean, he's using even some of the same terminology that's used to talk about the return in the book of Jeremiah. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant, David.

He's going to fulfill the covenant promises to David as part of this. As he spoke of old by the mouth of the holy prophets that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. To show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear.

So he says, look, the reason that Jesus is coming is to fulfill all of those covenant promises to Israel. God is not finished with Israel in spite of all the things that have happened in their history. God has not set aside the covenant promises that he's given to Israel, and the Lord, to ultimately make those covenant promises a reality, is going to have to deliver Israel from their enemies.

The real full return from exile still has to happen. Now, in the next chapter of Luke, Anna, this prophetess that the Lord allows to live long enough to see the coming of Jesus, celebrates and rejoices in the coming of Jesus because she understands that all of those promises about restoration and kingdom and last days—Jesus is the fulfillment of those promises. And so here's the reaction and response that Anna is going to have.

It says in verse 36 that there was a prophetess named Anna, and she was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin and then a widow until she was 84. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer day and night. And because of her devotion to God, God gives her this wonderful blessing of being able to see the beginning of the promises that, the fulfillment of the promises that God made to Israel.

She says this, and coming up at that very hour, she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. You know what she was waiting for? She was waiting for the fulfillment of the promises that Jeremiah made when he promised that the Lord would restore the fortunes of his people. And so, we come to the time of Jesus, and the first coming of Jesus to be Israel's savior is stage two of the fulfillment of those promises that Jeremiah made about the kingdom, the restoration, a new David, the blessing of Jerusalem, all of those things.

One of the things that Scott McKnight has reminded us of in his book, *The King Jesus Gospel*, is that you know, Jesus came to earth to do a lot more than simply to die on the cross and pay for my sins and give me a ticket to go to heaven. Now, that's a wonderful thing. And that personal salvation that we experience is a great blessing.

But Jesus ultimately came at his first coming to bring about the restoration of Israel. And through that, to fulfill the last day's kingdom promises that God had made to the people of Israel through the Old Testament prophets. And then ultimately through all

of that, to bring about what the Bible refers to as the restoration of all things that would come about when the kingdom of God came to earth.

So, our personal salvation and Jesus as my savior is an important thing. And that's changed my life, knowing Jesus in that way. But Jesus came to do much more than simply to be my personal savior.

He came to be the restorer of Israel. And he came to bring about the promises of the new covenant and God writing the law in the hearts of his people and creating this people of God that would finally be faithful to him. That's all part of what Jesus is doing in his first coming.

So, what all of this means now, and this is hugely important as we think about the prophets and eschatology and understanding how the Old Testament and the New Testament work together. And I remember in seminary beginning to come to an understanding of this, and it began to unlock for me how the Old and New Testaments relate together. And it's simply this idea, the last days, when the prophets speak about in the last days, in the days that are coming, remember it's kind of an indistinct, they don't know exactly, they don't have the timetable, but the last days, the kingdom of God, the eschatological era of blessing, whatever we want to call this, that time that the prophets in the Old Testament were prophesying about.

And when Jeremiah is speaking about the restoration in the last days and the kingdom of God and the eschatological, that time period began at the first coming of Jesus. It is not just something that relates to his second coming. And so, the kingdom of God is not just the future.

The kingdom of God that the prophets were looking forward to is not just about the second coming of Jesus. It is something that began to be realized in its initial stages at the first coming of Jesus. So, the way that we look at this, the future kingdom of God that Jeremiah saw in the future, the future kingdom, and all these blessings that Isaiah and other prophets saw in the Old Testament prophets, that time was inaugurated by the first coming of Jesus.

It will be consummated at his second coming. And for me, coming to understand that, I think, really revolutionized my understanding of how the Old and New Testaments really relate to each other. People often ask the question, are we living in the last days? And what they're really asking about that question is, do you, by that question is, do you believe that Jesus is coming back soon? But really, the biblical answer to that question is we are definitely living in the last days.

The last days began with the first coming of Jesus to earth. John says in 1 John 2.18, my little children, it is now the last hour. Those last days that Isaiah and Jeremiah saw began with the first coming of Jesus.

We've been living in the last days for more than 2,000 years. And so maybe you're a little skeptical about that and you're like, can you prove that? Is there any way that you can really demonstrate, is that just sort of your theological system or can you really demonstrate this? Well, let's go back to some Old Testament passages and let's look at some places where the prophets are talking about the kingdom and God coming to rule and reign and the deliverance and the blessing that he's going to bring to Israel. First of all, Isaiah 52 verses 7 to 10, how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who publish peace, who bring good news of happiness, who publish salvation and say to Zion, your God reigns.

God is king. And beyond the idea that simply God is the eternal and everlasting king and he's always been that, in a new way, God is beginning to reign by defeating his enemies, by bringing Israel home, by fulfilling these covenant promises. Well, what's the promise that John and Jesus and the announcement that John and Jesus begin their ministry with? The kingdom of God is at hand.

So, the beautiful messengers that are blessed in Isaiah 52 for saying, your God reigns, John and Jesus are those messengers. Isaiah 61, talking about the time of Israel's restoration, says this, the spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor and he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to those that are bound and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. So God is sending a prophetic herald to announce the coming of the kingdom and the deliverance from exile.

Isaiah, in a sense, was the first fulfillment of this. But in Luke chapter 4, at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, Jesus stands up in the synagogue, and he reads out of the scroll of Isaiah, and the passage that he reads is the one that we just read here in Isaiah 61, and Jesus closes that reading by saying today, this scripture is fulfilled in your midst. Do you know what Isaiah was talking about when he was talking about God's future restoration and the deliverance from exile, the release of the captives, and the year of God's favor? I'm announcing to you that I'm the beginning of that.

The era of the kingdom that the prophets talked about, the time when God would bring about the restoration that Jeremiah was promising, begins with the first coming of Jesus. On the day of Pentecost, when God pours out the spirit on the disciples, Peter says this is to fulfill what was prophesied by Joel, who said that in the last days, the Lord would pour out his spirit on all flesh. In Jesus' ministry, when John is in prison, he's really discouraged and disappointed because things haven't exactly turned out the way he thought they would, and he sends messengers to Jesus to say, are you the one that's promised? Are you the Messiah? Are you going to bring about

the restoration or should we wait for someone else? Jesus tells those messengers to go back to John and he quotes Isaiah 35 verses 5 and 6 that talk about the kingdom and the restoration.

And he says, go back to John and report. The eyes of the blind are being opened. The ears of the deaf are being unstopped.

The lame are leaping like deer. The blessings of the kingdom that the prophets promised are beginning. The last days have arrived.

Now, as we think about stage two, the kingdom blessings have come. The time of the kingdom announced by the prophets has come, but Jesus would ultimately bring about this restoration from exile for the people of Israel by dying for their sins. Ultimately, there had to be a sacrifice for their sins.

So, Jeremiah had promised that in the last days, God would make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah in Luke 22:20 at the time of the last supper, as Jesus is preparing to die. He says this cup that is being poured out for you represents the blood of this new covenant that Jeremiah promised. How is the new covenant? How are the blessings of the covenant going to be fulfilled? And how are the promises of the kingdom going to be brought about? They are brought about through the death of the one who is the king himself.

I mean, that's the irony of just how God works out salvation history. The one who comes to bring this kingdom is ultimately going to have to die so that his people can experience all of these blessings. What that means is, is that we had stage one, when the people returned from exile by the decree of Cyrus 70 years after the beginning.

We had stage two with the coming of Jesus at his first coming. The kingdom is inaugurated at that time, but the king actually has to die. There will need to be a stage three associated with the second coming of Jesus when those kingdom and those restoration promises are going to be consummated.

All the promises that Jeremiah, why have they not been realized? Why has the kingdom still not fully achieved and reached everything that the prophets promised? Well, because there's a stage three. And that stage three is going to occur at the second coming of Jesus. And so, have the prophecies and the promises of Jeremiah been fulfilled? Yes and no.

They are now and not yet. The blessings of the new covenant have been brought into effect by the death of Christ, but the full experience and the restoration of all that God promised to his people, Israel, have not been realized yet. Part of the reason why there's a need for stage three is that Jesus came at his first coming to bring

about the fulfillment of the blessings of the kingdom, to announce that the time of God's favor had come.

Even as Jesus comes to announce that and to announce the blessings of the kingdom that he is bringing, his ministry is met with rejection and unbelief. So, the people of Israel in Jesus' day, Jeremiah announced the blessings of the new covenant five to 600 years before the time of Jesus. They are still living in exile, waiting for deliverance from oppression and waiting for deliverance from their sin.

But as Jesus comes to announce, hey, I'm the one who is the fulfillment of that. His ministry is met with rejection and unbelief. You don't look like the kind of king we're anticipating. How can you be the one who is bringing about this glorious restoration that's promised by Isaiah and Jeremiah? And so, Jesus is met with opposition.

Stage two has arrived, but it's only going to be a partial fulfillment of what was promised because of that unbelief. The response of rejection and unbelief that Israel has toward the ministry of Jesus means that all that the new covenant had promised and all that was envisioned for the restoration of Israel by the prophets was not going to be fully realized in the first coming of Jesus. As a result of that unbelief, Jesus is going to play another role for the people of Israel.

This is where the book of Jeremiah again comes into play. Sometimes, in New Testament studies, Jeremiah is treated as the lesser cousin of the book of Isaiah. And I understand why, because Isaiah has influenced the message of the New Testament and how much the restoration, as it's portrayed in the New Testament, is done so from the perspective of Isaiah.

But I think we need to give Jeremiah his due as well. The role of Jeremiah in how salvation history is working out, Jeremiah plays a significant role as well. And what happens in the ministry of Jesus as he confronts this unbelief, and we deal with the reality that the people of Israel are not going to respond to his message and faith, is that Jesus becomes a Jeremiah-like prophet in confronting the unbelief of the people of Israel.

In the Matthew version of the episode where, Jesus asks his disciples, who do men say that I am? The disciples say some of them are saying that you're one of the prophets or you're Jeremiah. And I think as you look at the ministry of Jesus, there's an obvious reason why the people of Israel may have associated Jesus with a prophet like Jeremiah. Like Jeremiah, because of the unbelief of his people, remember Jesus has come to be their savior, their Messiah, but he is also going to become a prophet because of their unbelief, who announces that God is going to destroy Jerusalem and the temple just like Jeremiah did.

In Mark chapter 11, we have the story where, near the end of his ministry, Jesus goes in, cleanses the temple, and takes the money changers out. Looking at this from the perspective of the Old Testament, I would say Jesus is a prophet performing a sign act depicting what God is getting ready to do with his people because of the corruption of their worship. As Jesus performs this sign act and announces to the people God's judgment on Jerusalem and the temple, he actually borrows some of Jeremiah's old material.

Remember, Jeremiah preached the temple sermon announcing the destruction of the temple. That was a pretty good sermon. And so, Jesus uses that expression that Jeremiah had used to describe the people in his day and said, you have turned God's house into a den of Robbers.

Jesus took that expression directly from the Old Testament, directly from the book of Jeremiah. And what it shows us is that the same judgment that came on Judah in 586, this judgment of exile because of their unbelief, this judgment of exile because of their rejection of God's messenger, they're going to experience that all over again. There is going to be another exile.

Richard Bauckham says that the destruction of Jerusalem that's going to occur in 70 AD, as you understand it from a biblical perspective, is a second stage of the exile that occurred already in 586. And so, Jeremiah had preached the destruction of the temple. Jesus does not exactly the same thing.

And in the message of Jeremiah, Jeremiah had said, think about Shiloh. And remember how God had judged Shiloh in the past. Well, if God has judged Shiloh in the past, then he can judge Jerusalem in the present.

I think Jesus is doing something very similar as he cleanses the money changers out and then talks about the den of robbers from Jeremiah 7. He's saying, remember what happened in 586. Remember the fulfillment of the prophecies of Jeremiah. The same thing is about to happen to you in 70 AD.

In the account of the cleansing and the taking of the money changers and the cleansing of the temple, in Mark chapter 11, in that particular account, the cleansing of the temple is sandwiched between another event. And it's where Jesus curses the fig tree. And as you read the story in Mark chapter 11, it kind of follows this progression.

Jesus sees this barren fig tree. He curses it. He goes to the temple.

He performs the sign act there. And then after that's over, he explains to his disciples the significance of why did you curse this tree? And we get the explanation from Jesus that this fig tree is representative of the spiritual barrenness of the people of

Israel. If they had been rightly related to God, they would have rightly responded to God's messenger.

Throughout Israel's history, God has looked for the right kind of fruit from his people and has not gotten it. The story of Jesus and how Israel responded to him is basically the same as the story of how Israel responded to God throughout the Old Testament. But it's interesting that he makes reference to and uses it as his visual image of the fig tree.

Because we go back to Jeremiah in Jeremiah chapter 8, which again comes after Jeremiah chapter 7. And let me remind you, what's in Jeremiah chapter 7? It's the temple sermon. It's the place where Jeremiah accuses them of turning the temple into a den of robbers, exactly what Jesus had said.

And here's the statement that Jeremiah makes in chapter 8, verse 13. When I would gather them, declares the Lord, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree. Even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them.

So, Jeremiah had to announce the coming destruction of the temple because of the unbelief, the disobedience, and the fruitlessness of the people. Jesus comes to bring the fulfillment of the covenant promises that Jeremiah had promised, but he is going to pronounce a curse on Israel as well because they reflect the same spiritual condition that Jeremiah had encountered. So as a result of this, Jesus, who had been sent by God as the herald of salvation, has to become the prophet announcing God's judgment before that restoration can occur.

Jesus begins to preach the destruction of the temple in the same way that Jeremiah did in his ministry. He tells the disciples in Matthew 24 as they look at the temple, not one stone that belongs to this place will be left standing. Jesus preaches his own temple sermon.

And Jesus, just like Jeremiah, becomes a weeping prophet who weeps and laments the destruction of Jerusalem and the people that are there. And in Luke 13, verse 34, he says, O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that kills the prophets that God has repeatedly sent to you. You can't read that verse without hearing, after all that we've studied about Jeremiah, without hearing Jeremiah say, Oh, that my head was a fountain of tears, that I could weep over the destruction of my people.

You can't hear that passage where Jesus says, you have repeatedly killed the prophets that I sent to you without hearing Jeremiah 7. The Lord says, I have repeatedly, recurrently sent my servants, the prophets, to you, yet you have not listened. How do we understand the promises of restoration, the promises of the kingdom, the promises of the last days, and the promises of the new covenant that



are found in Jeremiah in light of the New Testament? Those promises are now and not yet. And as followers of Jesus Christ, because of his death for us, we experience the transformative blessings of that new covenant.

Remember what they are. We have forgiveness for our past sins. We have enablement for the present and the future to live as God designs us to be.

But as God is working out salvation history, there is still a not yet component. And we look forward to that as we think of the second coming of Jesus. We live in a time of now and not yet.

The new covenant blessings, what Jeremiah promised in this restoration, we're experiencing as God's people, but we are looking forward to the final restoration. We are looking forward to the time when God will complete everything that he promised to Jeremiah to the people of Israel. And we do that anticipating that the Lord will keep his promises, that he will be faithful to what he's promised to his people.

We know that because of what God has already done for us in Christ and the ways that we have already begun to enjoy what Jeremiah promised when he spoke of this new covenant that God would make with his people.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his instruction on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 27, Stages of Restoration from Jeremiah 30-33.