

Jeremiah Chapters 30-31 John Karmelich

1. After endless chapter after chapter of horrid predictions of coming disaster, we now get a section of Jeremiah saying, "It's ok, it'll eventually get better". It made think, why is it always necessary to "break people" before transforming them into something better? For example, armies are famous for taking people, stripping them of all dignity and all the habits they've learned to make them to be the kind of person an army wants. Consider the bible Exodus. In effect it was God working to change the Israelites to live, as He desires. An old joke is, "It took 40 days to get the Israelites out of Egypt, but it took 40 years to get Egypt out of the Israelites". My whole point is "breaking us" is usually a necessary prerequisite to living as God desires just as it is for many aspects of life!
 - a) OK, John, after 29 chapters telling us in effect how horrid the Babylonian invasion will be, I would say it's time you (ok Jeremiah) hit us with the good news. So what is it already?
 - b) Essentially it's the idea that God's not through with the nation of Israel. Let's be honest, if you were kicked out of your homeland and that same land was destroyed, you'd think, so much for that life, I can never look back. However, God loves to work where we can't. If there is one thing we learn from studying the bible, it's that God loves to prove He can do what people can't. If you study bible miracles carefully, they are always things that can't be explained by human interaction. In other words, it's things we can't do for ourselves.
 - c) That leads back to the idea of salvation. One of the great differences between Judaism vs. Christianity is the concept of "proving our worth to God". Christians do believe that we're to do good works, but it's based on gratitude for our salvation, not proving our worth. I'm getting into this because here, as the Israelites "gave up" defeated, as they were kicked out of that land. God effectively responds, "Wait a minute. Just because you've had it, doesn't mean I've had it". As an example, a "Higher Power" is a necessary part of all of the 12-step programs. It's to realize that when realize we've hit rock bottom, God can still do what we can't do for or by ourselves. It's why we have hope when all seems lost in life!
 - d) Bottom line, these chapters describe God's future restoration plans for the nation of Israel. We will get some passages here quoted in the New Testament.
 - e) At this point let me give my lesson title. It's the word "Hope". It's to understand that God has a plan even when He breaks us down and takes away all we have. Our hope is in the fact that despite all the horrid things that have occurred in our live, we need to still have a lot of hope because eternity is well, immeasurably longer than this life. All we go through in this life in effect is God "breaking us" to make us into the kind of person He wants us to be for all of eternity. In other words all of this is worth it!
2. With all of this understood, I need everyone to realize these two chapters are a "Jewish thing". In these chapters we're going to read of God's plan to restore the nation of Israel one day. So what's that mean for us Christians? OK, God's going to restore the Nation of Israel one day so they'll live as He desires. Good for them. What does any of that have to do with us Christians? So glad that you asked. To answer, I need you to consider Paul's letter to the Romans. He has three chapters dedicated to discussing Israel's past (pre-Jesus, Chapter 9), Israel in the Christian era (Chapter 10) and finally Israel in the "post-Christian" era. (Chapter 11.) In fact Paul quotes Jeremiah Chapter 31 to support his argument. However, Paul doesn't just give that illustration to show how God will one day restore Israel. He gives it to show our hope in Jesus is "worth it".
 - a) To quote my favorite Jewish teacher Dennis Prager, "I've got nothing against Evangelical Christian theology, because if they're right, we, the Jewish people win in the end".
 - b) What we need to grasp is if they (The Jewish people win), realize we non-Jewish believers will win as well. Our trust in Jesus means we're "grafted in" to the family of God. All that I'm getting at is we should have hope that no matter what we're going through, we win in the end, based on our trust in Jesus.
 - c) That's good news and should give us cause to be joyful and hopeful of our future!

3. OK John, you're definitely preaching to the choir again. We may not grasp all the details over the future of the Jewish nation although I'm sure this lesson will teach us those things. Why should I care about all of this stuff if I already believe I'm saved based on my trust of Jesus dying for all of my sins and being Lord of my life? How does any of this help me go through my day? You just know that I love that question:
 - a) First, it gives us perspective. It's the reminder that no matter how much we mess up, we'll be saved based on that trust. It's the reminder that no matter how hard life gets at times, it is a reminder that "this too shall pass". It's a reminder that God has a purpose for allowing us to go through whatever we're dealing with at this time.
 - b) Remember that Jeremiah's talking to a big bunch of Israelites who are about to lose all that they have, know or care about. In spite of that God's telling them that He's not done with His corporate relationship with them. It reminds us, "If God's not through with them, then He is not done with us either". It's a great reason to have hope for our future.
 - c) If we get all of that, what do we do in the meantime? Never give up. It means making the best decisions we can given the situation in front of us. It means we continue to live by all the principals taught in the bible as a witness for Jesus, not to earn His love. It means that we are to go through life being joyful because we have a duty to be a witness for Jesus as well as because we have a hope that our eternal wonderful future is certain!
 - d) Recently a had a nephew ask me, "How do you know for sure that the Bible is the word of God?" I told him that 30% of the bible is predictions about the future. It's there to teach us that God knows the future before it occurs. It verifies the bible as coming from outside of time as we know it. I state that here because these chapters are predictive of Israel's short-term future (70 years after Jeremiah's prediction) as well as the long-term prediction of the future of that nation. So how do you know it's also long term? That's what Jeremiah 31 is all about. That's why Paul quoted it in Romans 11. It's the reminder that "it's all worth it". I'm talking about whatever suffering we must deal with in this life. That's why we should be joyful no matter the situation. It's the idea that we can't lose, so be full of joy!
4. With all that said, I'm not going to do my usual summary of these two chapters. We don't get any specific date time stamps. Jeremiah states how God will restore the 100-year dead North Israelite kingdom. Then he expands that to say, "Since I'm discussing how God will restore the long dead North kingdom, let me expand on that to include the fact He's going to restore all of Israel again. Yes we get references to life after that 70-year prediction comes true. We also get predictions that are obviously in the distant future. It keys on the fact that Jeremiah predicts that all of Israel "will know" God. If you know anything about modern Israel, I would say it's very secular for the most part. Therefore, to predict that everyone there will know God has to be future to us living today.
5. Yes I'm well aware that whenever one talks future predictions, it's a debatable topic over how it'll exactly occur. What I'm going to teach is fairly "standard" among Evangelical views of the future for Israel. A reason we should care is because if we can't trust God's predictions about Israel how can we ever trust His promises about God's plans for us Christians? The fact that so many of the bible predictions have literally come true support that. Peter himself stated that the fact he spent several years personally with Jesus is not as convincing as bible prophecy to validate all that He's promised to us as Christians will come true. (See 2nd Peter 1:18-19.)
6. As far as the text itself, it's hard to give my usual chapter summary. It all covers the topic of hope as it focuses on God's plans for the future of that nation. We're going to cover a lot of verses here so I ask for your patience as we go through it all. Just realize as we discuss God's future plans for the nation of Israel, what we need to be thinking in the background is, "If God's going to be doing all of this for them in spite of how bad they've messed up, how much more is His promises going to come true for us Christians even though we blow it just as badly". These chapters give us hope that it's our faith in what Jesus did that saves us, not our works. We only do good works as that's the best way to live life and as a witness for Him. OK then, enough of that. Let's get rolling.

7. Chapter 30, Verse 1: This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you. ³ The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,' says the LORD."
- a) We're not positive when this section was written, but "best guess" is it was soon before the final Babylonian invasion occurred that destroyed what was left of Israel as a kingdom.
 - b) Jeremiah wrote this almost as if he's saying, "I'm tired of stating how bad things are going to be for Israel. Let me take a little time now to say how good things will be one day". No it won't be because we deserve it. We deserve to be in hell for not living as God calls us to live. What we will get is forgiveness not because we deserve it, but just because God loves us unconditionally. I don't know why He chose me. I just accept that He did and live my life as a witness for Him out of gratitude not so I can prove my worth to Him.
 - c) Anyway, that's why Jeremiah switches from the "judgment's coming" that prevailed in the first 29 chapters of this book, to a message of hope that'll be prevalent in Chapters 30-33.
 - d) To state it bluntly, Jeremiah's predicting that God will not only restore the "South" Israel Kingdom (called Judah), but He'll also return the long dead North Kingdom called Israel.
 - i) Time for a quick historical background for the newcomers. Israel first became one kingdom under a man named Saul about 1000BC. Next came King David. At the time of David's grandson ruling, Israel split into two kingdoms. The North one is called Israel and they got taken into captivity about 721 BC if memory is correct by an empire called the Assyrians. About a hundred years later, the Babylonians did conquer the Assyrians and inherited all their lands and their conquered. So when the Babylonians conquered the Southern Kingdom of Judah around Jeremiah's day around 600 BC, that meant all the surviving Israelites got scattered in the Babylon Empire that existed for only about a 100 years before the Persians conquered them.
 - ii) With that understood, here's Jeremiah predicting that not only will the "South" one be restored, but the "North" will as well. If you think that's no big deal, realize that in the history of civilization, no country has ever been conquered, scattered and then came back together again to be a country, except for Israel who's did it twice in the history of civilization. That alone is a great proof of the bible as God's word!
 - iii) For those of you that only think bible predictions are "ancient history" it has some predictions that have come true in the last century! OK then, let's move on!
8. Verse 4: These are the words the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah: ⁵ "This is what the LORD says: "Cries of fear are heard-- terror, not peace. ⁶ Ask and see: Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor, every face turned deathly pale?
- a) Unfortunately, before Jeremiah can focus more on the positive, he want to emphasize just how painful it will be in the meantime. Again it's the reminder of the fact that God works in our life to break us of ways we're disobedient to Him so He can use us for His glory.
 - b) The illustration here is a little unusual, but I'll explain it. The essential idea is that a male's body is not designed to produce children. However, because of the pain of the land being destroyed, men will "bend over in pain" as if they're in labor. Yes it's a strange illustration but it gets the point across that life will be really painful. Remember that the "South" had most if not all of their remaining men fighting to preserve their nation from destruction.
 - c) Jeremiah's saying the loss will be so bad, it's as if all the fighting men are bending over in pain like they're in labor. OK we get the point, move on.
9. Verse 7: How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it. ⁸ " ` In that day,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them.
- a) You're about to learn that these two chapters are full of expressions that tie to stuff in the New Testament. The first of the is the expression, "time of Jacob's trouble" (Verse 7.)

- i) To discuss that expression, first remember that we're dealing with a "Jewish thing" because Jacob was the original name of the father of the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - ii) The next thing to remember is that prophecy is "patterns". Some argue this only is referring to the Babylonian captivity. However, Verse 8 ends with "No longer will foreigners enslave them". Obviously after the Babylonians the Israelites were part of other empires all the way until 1948. Some will even argue it refers to the WWII Holocaust. However again the express is "No longer will foreigners enslave them" in Verse 8. So can it refer to Israel being a nation again? Could be, but given all of the hatred of that nation, I think it's something different. Drum roll:
 - iii) It refers to the horror period that is most of the book of Revelation. Without going into all that detail, let's just say the whole world will be at war with Israel as a key factor. It's a time when God's temple is rebuilt and the Antichrist puts a stop to all the return of animal sacrifices and demand he be worshipped. Anyway, this is the Old Testament term ("time of Jacob's trouble") for the "Revelation show".
- b) Now for the important question. Why bring that up here? After all the focus of Jeremiah is on upcoming the Babylonian invasion. Why is "Jacob's trouble" brought up here? This is here (in my opinion) to say in effect the effort to wipe out the Jewish nation doesn't end with the Babylonians. We know that's true in history as the Romans did their best to wipe out that nation, let alone what Hitler did. Anyway, it's here to make us realize the Jewish nation will always be at risk up to and including the time of "Jacob's trouble". Why? As I love to point out is because Jesus needs a Jewish nation to be there when He shows up. I'd also argue there is a resentment of the idea of a Jewish guide who rules over our world.
- c) OK enough bad news. I promised this is a positive lesson; so let's get back to it.
10. Verse 9: Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.
- a) Keep in mind when Jeremiah wrote this, David's been dead for close to 400 years. In some commentaries, they will argue it refers to a literal resurrection of David. It's the idea that when Jesus rules over the world, David himself will be in charge of Jerusalem. We won't know until that future day, but it's a possibility based on this text.
 - b) The other interpretation that most commentators lean toward is this is a reference to Jesus as the promised Messiah and a direct descendant of David ruling the world from there!
 - c) With that established, let's get back to Jeremiah.
11. Verse 10: " `So do not fear, O Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, O Israel,' declares the LORD. `I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid. ¹¹ I am with you and will save you,' declares the LORD. `Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished.'
- a) We're back to the "hope message". The beginning of Chapter 32 seems to indicate that this was organized as a message shortly before the Babylonians wiped out Jerusalem once and for all. I can't be positive that Chapters 30 and 31 were composed then, but it does give us a message of hope when all seems lost. The message to Israel is despite the fact they'll lose the battle for the land now, God's going to wipe out every place that took Israel captive.
 - b) I've mentioned before that my favorite t-shirt when I went to Israel a few years back had a list of all the nations and empires who conquered Israel. Each of them had a line through them as none of them exist anymore and Israel still stands. My point is we can now see of the fact these verses have literally come true. It also doesn't say much for all those nations that threaten Israel today and what's their future. I'm not saying modern Israel is perfect. I'm just saying I don't want to mess with God who considers Israel "His land".
 - c) At the same time, notice near the end of Verse 11 God says He'll discipline you (Israel) but only "with justice". The short version is they'll suffer, but it will never be permanent.

- d) OK John this is all interesting. Why should we care? Keep in mind we're "grafted into the kingdom" because of God's unconditional promises to us as Gentiles. OK, that's old news. Why should we care about all these details for Israel? Because if God can give them hope about their plans for their eternal future, what does that say about us, when things are not looking good for us at the moment. Remember that one of the big bible themes is that God likes to discipline us to prepare us for our eternal destiny. Therefore, if there's hope for the nation of Israel, that would also imply there's hope for us as Christians despite whatever's the situation of the moment. Obviously it doesn't mean we will be rescued quickly out of each situation. Sometimes God allows the death of His saints for a greater purpose. All I want us to grasp is the fact that God gives us hope as well, but it's the eternal kind!
12. Verse 12: "This is what the LORD says: "Your wound is incurable, your injury beyond healing.¹³ There is no one to plead your cause, no remedy for your sore, no healing for you.¹⁴ All your allies have forgotten you; they care nothing for you. I have struck you as an enemy would and punished you as would the cruel, because your guilt is so great and your sins so many.¹⁵ Why do you cry out over your wound, your pain that has no cure? Because of your great guilt and many sins I have done these things to you.
- a) The first question to ask here is Jeremiah condemning the Israelites or their enemies? We read of both being discussed in these chapters, so let's clear that up as neither groups gets blatantly messaged in these verses. If we back up a few verses, we read that Jeremiah was talking of "Jacob" (Verse 10). He's the father of the 12 brothers who became the 12 tribes of Israel. My simple point is we're definitely talking about the Israelites in this passage.
- b) This is Jeremiah explaining in effect, why God had to "break them" before He can start His restoration program that will be described throughout this lesson. In other words, before we can get the good news, we have to deal with the bad news. Jeremiah's key point is the sins of the Israelites are "incurable". Yes he's referring to the idolatry that was dominating the land of Israel at that time (first in the Northern Kingdom that led them into captivity) and then roughly a century later, in the Southern Kingdom that required their captivity.
- c) As I've stated a bunch of times, the good news of the Babylonian captivity is it cured them of their "grand scale" idolatry of the Israelites literally turning to other gods.
- d) OK John that's neat and I'm glad that worked. Why should we care? Because another way to read these verses is to remind us of the biblical principal that our sins are "incurable" in the eyes of God. It's saying in effect that none of us are perfect and we're trying to please a perfect God with our efforts. In that sense, these verses are arguing against "works" for us to prove our worth to God. As I stated in the introduction Christians should believe in the concept of good works, but not to prove our worth to God, but only to show our gratitude for what He's done for us. If you reread these verses that way, the principal is there!
- e) But God doesn't literally kick us out of our land to lead us to Him. However, I would say He makes our life miserable in the sense we sense we're "missing something" when we're not living our lives to make a difference for Him. One of the jobs of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is to convince us of our sins again to draw us closer to Him.
- f) Meanwhile, while I got philosophical Jeremiah's still picking on those Israelites:
13. Verse 16: "But all who devour you will be devoured; all your enemies will go into exile. Those who plunder you will be plundered; all who make spoil of you I will despoil.
- a) It's one thing to realize God's going to restore our nation one day. It's another to realize it may cost us our life in the meantime. A lot of those Israelites did die trying to prevent the inevitable. A lot of them died in captivity. In the last 2,000 years many people did die as a witness for Jesus. My point is God never guarantees us long life as one of His. What He is promising is if we use the time He has given us as a witness for Him, we'll live forever. It is a reminder that the purpose of life is to do His will, not ours and yes often that means it will cost us a long life in this lifetime. The point as it applies here is the captivity is needed in order to accomplish God's goal. The good news is coming next:

14. Verse 17: But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the LORD, 'because you are called an outcast, Zion for whom no one cares.'¹⁸ "This is what the LORD says: " `I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's tents and have compassion on his dwellings; the city will be rebuilt on her ruins, and the palace will stand in its proper place.
- a) Let's be honest if you were going to get killed defending Israel or died in captivity I doubt this verse is comforting. Again the important thing is to see the big picture. That living in this life is much more than our life span. If we realize that the reason God made the world in the first place was to glorify Him. It's so those called to live forever can use their life as a witness for Him. That's the purpose of life. If we realize that, it gives us purpose greater than anything else we can use our lives for!
 - b) That leads us to the "hope" of this chapter. It's not just that saved people will be in heaven forever. It's so God can fulfill His purpose in this world. One way He does that is to work in ways we can't. He takes a dead nation who got scattered and bring it back again. In the history of civilization it's never happened to another nation. When the Hebrew language was brought back for modern Israel, it was the first time in the history of civilization that a dead language was brought back for daily use! All I'm saying that if you want proof of God's plans being bigger than man's plans look at Israel's history. You and I get to watch that play out as we see it happening today.
 - c) Remember that when Jeremiah wrote this, it's all in the future. He didn't get to see Israel be restored as a nation. It's one of the great bible predictions that came true over time! It's there "hope" and God never disappoints when we have hope in Him.
15. Verse 19: From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of rejoicing. I will add to their numbers, and they will not be decreased; I will bring them honor, and they will not be disdained.²⁰ Their children will be as in days of old, and their community will be established before me; I will punish all who oppress them.²¹ Their leader will be one of their own; their ruler will arise from among them. I will bring him near and he will come close to me, for who is he who will devote himself to be close to me?' declares the LORD.
- a) First question, is this "end times" or after they return from Babylon? Some of both. God's trying to get it through them that despite the fact they're being taken into captivity, this is not "the end". Yes a relatively small percentage did return 70 years later. I'm sure they did celebrate their return. There are a few bible books written after their return and Nehemiah discussed punishment of people who tried to oppress them then.
 - b) However, bible predictions are often in patterns as I've stated over and over again. There's usually short-term fulfillment to validate the prophet as one of God's. There's often a long term one in focus and as we read these two chapters as a whole, one can sense that's what Jeremiah often had in mind. Did Jeremiah fully understand the long-term prediction? My guess is no, but it's what God told him to say, so what choice did he have? The reason I'm saying all of this is because the text describes the leaders in Israel after the return as being a person after God's own heart. Yes it can refer to Ezra and Nehemiah but as we'll see it's probably focusing more on the Messiah ruling from Israel forever.
 - c) Time for a quick "why should we care" speech again. Whether we like it or not, when the return of Jesus occurs, He'll be ruling the world from Israel. That's way it's necessary for a Jewish population to exist when He's there. That's why Israel was there 2,000 years ago as it was necessary for His first coming and Israel must exist at the time of His Second.
 - i) That leads back to us. What do you think Christians will do when He returns? We will not be sitting in heaven without a care in the world. Just as God saved us for a purpose in this lifetime, I suspect He's got purposes for us in the next one. We will be working for Him in some capacity when He returns.
 - ii) Can I prove that? No, it's just what I suspect. I don't see God saving us so we'll be sitting in heaven watching television all day! Just as He has a purpose for us now, He'll have a purpose for us then. Meanwhile, back to the Israelites.

16. Verse 22: " `So you will be my people, and I will be your God.' "
- a) Does that mean all the Israelites who returned to Israel were saved? Of course not. Just as it does not mean everyone who has godly parents is automatically saved. What you need to understand is that Jesus desires His people united under His leadership. It's the idea of the importance of the "Land". I've always found it strange that the God who created all of the universe looks at the real estate of Israel and says "It's mine, don't mess with it". That's what the bible teaches. In fact Jesus stated how much He desires that His people be united under Him there and it grieved Him that they refuse. (See Matthew 23:37 or Luke 13:34.)
 - i) Anyway, the point is God desired to gather His people "all in one place". So how's that going to work eternally? It gets back to my theory that we'll exist in more than three dimensions eternally. I'll leave it at that. All I wanted to get across here's the fact that God desires His people gathered together to under His rule.
 - b) So explain again how we Christians fit in this picture? As an illustration, Jesus said there was a king who wanted to give a big banquet. Picture throwing a wedding and you knew exactly how many seats there were. In that illustration people made excuses not to come. Jesus said to invite other people in effect until the place was filled up. It's not perfect, but it sort of gives an example of how we Gentiles were "grafted into" His plan while He still is keeping His unconditional promises to the nation of Israel. (See Luke 14 for this story.)
 - c) Now that I've explained that, let's get back to Jeremiah:
17. Verse 23: See, the storm of the LORD will burst out in wrath, a driving wind swirling down on the heads of the wicked. ²⁴The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand this.
- a) What I pondered as I read this is "in the days to come, is that after the 70 years or is that a reference to life after the "full number of Gentiles come in."
 - b) Time for a New Testament lesson. Paul spends three chapters on God's relationship with the nation of Israel. Romans 9 focuses on Israel pre-Jesus. Romans 10 focuses on Israel in the Christian era and Romans 11 focuses on Israel in the "post-Christian era". My point is that there is coming a day when a specific number of people will be saved that form the church (See Romans 11:25). Then God focuses on Israel once again. We'll discuss it more in the next chapter, (later in the lesson). Can non-Jewish people still go to heaven after that? It's debated, but I'll argue yes, but I'll save that discussion for another day.
 - c) My point of getting into all of this is the "short-term" fulfillment is obviously after that 70-year period is completed. Verse 24 above mentions God's anger will not turn back until it is "fully satisfied". My point is God's anger at the sin could only be satisfied at the cross. I am just saying these verses definitely have end time implications here.
18. Let me pause for a moment before I jump into Chapter 31. A lot of you may be reading all of this "end time stuff" and think, "Well that's neat, but how does it affect me today?" My answer has to do with realizing the big picture of God's plan for salvation. For us to be a part of it, obviously it begins with accepting Jesus as God, paying for all our sins and accepting Him as being in charge of our lives. However, that's step 1. The rest of our lives should be dedicated to using it to make a difference for Him. That's why we were saved in the first place. So until God wraps up the era of the Christian church, our job is to stay busy making a difference for Him.
- a) With that necessary speech out of my system, time for Chapter 31.
19. Chapter 31, Verse 1: "At that time," declares the LORD, "I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they will be my people." ²This is what the LORD says: "The people who survive the sword will find favor in the desert; I will come to give rest to Israel."
- a) Again after the captivity only a small percentage of them returned. Yes there were people from all the tribes of Israel. There are no lost tribes by the way. The North Israel one went into captivity by the Assyrians. The Babylonians conquered them and inherited all of the groups they had. My point is members of all the tribes returned. However, I don't think the verses are just referring to life for those who came back. We'll get to that next:

20. Verse 3: The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.
- a) One of the things to grasp about God is He loves His people "unconditionally". No it does not mean all Jewish people are saved because they're Jewish. It just means all of us who've used their lives to make a difference for Him because we've "walked by faith" to put it in a simple term, are loved by God unconditionally. I hold the view that if we trust in Jesus as I stated earlier (believe He's Lord of our lives, paid the full price for our sins, is God) then I will argue we can't blow it if we tried. If there was a way for me to blow it, I guarantee I would have found it by now! With that thought in mind, God states in effect that He has a love for His own that is unconditional. It's the idea that many are called, but few respond in a way that God demands (that we use our lives as a witness for Him). What about those who die before an age of accountability? I believe they get a "free ticket". I'll leave that up to Him to judge, but just as Jesus commanded that we come to Him as little children, I do believe that babies who die are automatically saved.
 - b) Anyway a key verse here is simply the fact that God loves us "just because He does". It is not something we can explain, just something we must accept. It doesn't mean we ignore Him and say, "Thanks God, see you in the next life!" It means out of gratitude for what He has done for us we live as He desires we live. No we're not perfect but we should try!
21. Verse 4: I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel. Again you will take up your tambourines and go out to dance with the joyful. ⁵ Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit.
- a) The first thing to realize is Jeremiah's saying the return won't just be the "South" kingdom but all of Israel. Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel that died over a 100 years prior to the Babylonian captivity.
 - b) I'm fascinated how God refers to the Israelites as "Virgin Israel". This is after they've been collectively guilty of turning from Him for years. So what's the deal? Think of describing our spouse when we first met them! We don't focus on all their faults that we know after a very long-term relationship. Calling Israel "My virgin" is God describing His desire of a healthy relationship with His people!
 - c) With that said, notice the promise of "hope" in these verses. This four chapter section was most probably written (or organized) while the Babylonians were "knocking on the door" for the final destruction. Yet here is Jeremiah saying, "you're going to come back here not as prisoners, but dancing with joy as He will do what we can't do for ourselves." Then we get the reference to the fact that Samaria will be rebuilt. The reason that's emphasized is to state the fact that it's not just the Southern Kingdom that will come back, but "everyone" is welcome. Grant it only a small percentage actually returned, but again it's God promising hope for those who desire to draw close to God again!
22. Verse 6: There will be a day when watchmen cry out on the hills of Ephraim, 'Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.' " ⁷ This is what the LORD says: "Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, 'O LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.'
- a) To understand these verses, remember that Israel has been living with the idea of being a divided nation for centuries. The idea of these verses is that those living in the territory of the "North" will come to Jerusalem. Need to explain with some key words:
 - i) The largest tribe in the North kingdom was Ephraim. When the text says those in the hills of Ephraim want to go to "Zion", it's the idea of traveling to Jerusalem.
 - ii) The word Zion is usually associated with all Israel. Sometimes it specifically refers to Jerusalem in terms of the Israelites gathered to worship there.
 - b) OK, John all of this is sort of interesting. I gather that God's obsessed with gathering all of His people in "one spot" to worship Him. Why should I care? The answer is one day we'll be a part of those people gathered together to worship Him.

- c) So does this mean we'll all be living in Israel for all of eternity? What if I don't like all that heat? First, relax. When Jesus was resurrected, one of the stories told was He entered into a locked room. (John 20:19). The same writer tells us that when we're resurrected we'll be "like him". That's why I'm convinced that when we're resurrected we'll exist in more than three dimensions. That's how Jesus entered that locked room. My point here is God wants us gathered in one spot to be with Him. I'm pretty sure the weather won't be a factor. I'm also sure it will be a joyful experience so however we're all gathered together it'll work!
 - d) In the meantime, Jeremiah is telling those Israelites despite the problems they should have a strong sense of joy as their descendants will return to their land with great joy.
 - e) For what it's worth the chapters going to expand to just describing that return after the 70-year period to end times predictions about Israel. My point is to hang tight through this!
23. Verse 8: See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor; a great throng will return.
- a) I want to focus on the phrase "land of the north" first. If one looks at a map, Babylon is in effect due east of Israel. Why north? Some argue it refers to the fact the path to Israel is a path from the north as that's the main "highway" from Babylon to Israel. It's the way that the Israelites were taken in captivity. Maybe it's just saying, "The same way they went out will be the same way they come back in!"
 - b) OK so much for the "how". Next is the "who". It doesn't mention kings. It mentions those who are blind, lame, expecting mothers, and a "great throng". So why those people? Well for starters, it adds to the miracle. It isn't like the Israelites will conquer the Babylonians a day in the future and come home victorious. This is Jeremiah adding to the miracle of the return to the land. It's as if he's saying, "Even those people will make it back here".
 - c) Again, keep in mind Jeremiah wrote this in Israel's final days before their captivity. We've got God saying in effect, "Have hope, it's not the end for God's people despite all the ways you've collectively messed up (sinned)." This idea it gives us hope that no matter how bad we've messed up, we may lose our witness for Jesus but not our salvation.
24. Verse 9: They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son.
- a) The emphasis here is that the return will be a happy time. The crying is the idea that they can't believe this is happening. Again, in civilization history, no nation got conquered and then scattered then came back to be a nation again. It's one of those things when it's very obvious there is a God and He rules over the world. The related idea is the return will not be a time of suffering. There will be running water in Israel so they can survive there.
 - b) A quick side note here. The term "firstborn" does not always mean "first born". It can also be used as a title as "first in most important". I say that here because Ephraim was not the firstborn. He was the second son of Joseph. Of the 10 tribes that formed the North Israelite kingdom Ephraim was the largest and it's a nickname for the "north". The key point is the Northern tribe will be part of the return and not just the South one who was threatened at the time Jeremiah wrote this.
25. Verse 10: "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.' ¹¹ For the LORD will ransom Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.
- a) Keep in mind another reason why God's doing all of this. He wants Israel to be a witness to other nations around them. The proof of Israel returning as a nation (and nobody else got that privilege) is a proof that the God of the Israelites is "the" God. The same way He wants us to be a witness for Him to those around us, so God wanted the Israelites to also be His witnesses to those "in the neighborhood". The text also correctly states they came home in spite of the fact the empires that ruled were much stronger than them!

26. Verse 12: They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD-- the grain, the new wine and the oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more. ¹³ Then maidens will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow. ¹⁴ I will satisfy the priests with abundance, and my people will be filled with my bounty," declares the LORD.
- This section ends with a few more "happy" verses. Again, picture the Israelites scared out of their minds as the Babylonians have them surrounded. Most of them will die soon. In spite of all of that Jeremiah's saying in effect, "Yes life's bad now, but it's not the end! God has great things planned for the future of our nation". Grant it that may not be comforting when facing certain death, but God's saying, "It's not over until I say it's over!"
 - Stop and consider all the Christians who've died as martyrs for Jesus. Think of all of those who've died of say cancer despite lots of prayers for them. God never promises us a great life in this one. He promises eternal salvation for those who trust in Him. He promises if we live our lives as a witness for Him, the eternal benefits are far greater than whatever it is we must deal with in this life.
 - OK John, that's encouraging. What does it have to do with these verses? Jeremiah's telling the Israelites that when they return to the land they'll be good farm land to return to. That day will be a day of dancing and celebrating. It'll be a day of comfort.
 - Remember how I preached that prophecy often has more than one fulfillment. That's what we have here. Yes it's past tense about the return, but I'm also convinced it's eternal when the Messiah rules the world one day from Jerusalem. More on that coming up.
27. Verse 15: This is what the LORD says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more." ¹⁶ This is what the LORD says: "Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded," declares the LORD. "They will return from the land of the enemy. ¹⁷ So there is hope for your future," declares the LORD. "Your children will return to their own land.
- If Verse 15 sounds familiar, it's because Matthew uses to describe the horror when Herod ordered the killing of the babies in Bethlehem in order to kill "The Messiah". (Matt. 2:13.) I suspect Verse 15 was a "proverb". A little background is helpful here. The father of the 12 tribes of Israel was named Jacob. The 12 tribes came from 4 women. Rachel was one of the four. Her children were Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph had two sons named Manasseh and Ephraim. Because Joseph rescued the family from Egypt, his father gave him a "double blessing" so his two sons each got a tribal area in Israel. The point is those two tribes are associated with Northern Israel and Benjamin was part of the South Kingdom. So Rachel weeping for her children is the idea of Israelites from both of those kingdoms suffering tragedy. The reason Matthew uses that proverb is Rachel was buried near Bethlehem. All I'm saying is "Rachel weeping for her children" is a proverb for Jewish tragedy.
 - That leads me back to the idea that when this was written, the Babylonians were knocking at the door, so to speak. So there was a lot of fear and suffering then. That's why we read of "Rachel's suffering" here. That's why Jeremiah is preaching "hope" here. He's saying as sure as you're going into captivity, your children will be brought back here again!
 - In fact Verse 17 even mentions the idea of hope itself! The underlying message for us is to be faithful when things are not looking well or even "doom" is on the horizon.
28. Verse 18: "I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: `You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD my God.
- As I stated earlier, Ephraim was the largest tribe in the "long dead" Northern kingdom. It is mentioned here to say to the dying Southern Kingdom, "Hey everyone, I'm bring back the long dead North one, so there is hope for the future!" The verse mentions the fact they were disciplined and still God's going to bring back people from the "North" as well!

29. Verse 19: After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.²⁰ Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him," declares the LORD.
- a) Notice the phrase "beat my breast" in Verse 19. That's a Jewish way of showing repentance of sin. Verses 19 and 20 are both "repentance" with Verse 19 from the Israelites viewpoint while Verse 20 gives it from God's viewpoint. Let me explain:
- i) Verse 19's essentially a prediction that when the Israelites return to the land they'll be sorrow they messed up and show it to God. If it's 70 years later, obviously that's the next generation coming back. The idea of repentance here is "national" and not an individual thing. It's like praying on behalf of our nation, "We really messed up and we blew it. We recognize that and recognize that You've given us the hope of salvation in spite of that. Guide us by Your spirit to live as You desire."
- ii) Verse 20 is the idea of repentance from God's perspective. God allowed the nation of Israel (both kingdoms, but the North is emphasized here) to go into captivity. In this verse it's God saying in effect, "The Israelites are my people. Yes discipline as well as breaking them was necessary in order to get them to realize that living as I (God) desires is the best way to live." This verse shows that despite the fact He did allow them to go into captivity, He still loves them and wants the best for them.
- iii) It's sort of an Old Testament Version of Romans 8:28 that essentially says all things work together for God's good for those who love Him.
30. Verse 21: "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. Return, O Virgin Israel, return to your towns.²² How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter? The LORD will create a new thing on earth-- a woman will surround a man."
- a) As I've stated a few times so far, this was probably written shortly before the South group was taken into captivity and the land of Israel was essentially destroyed. I mention that as Verse 21 says in effect, "Pay attention to the route as you leave as you'll be coming back by way of the same path". If one thinks "all is lost", giving hope of one's return is a great way to give comfort when something horrible is about to occur.
- b) Let me use an extreme here. Suppose one is dealing with someone dying of cancer. What we would say to comfort them is to preach on eternity. Another option is to remind them of how their lives have made a difference to others so that God's work may continue. My point is there is always hope even in the worst of situations.
- c) The fact that the term "Virgin Israel" is used, is a subtle way of saying God forgives them as a group. Yes judgment is an individual thing. At the same time it's a reminder that He is keeping His relationship with Israel as a nation despite all the sins they committed.
- d) That leads to Verse 22: What's the "new thing of a woman surrounding a man"? Yes that is a confusing passage. Most likely it refers to the idea that Israel was thought of as God's "bride", the same way Christians use the word picture of the "Bride of Christ". (Rev. 19:7.) The idea is simply that a day will come where the Jewish nation will be accepting God as their God as a newlywed bride embraces her husband.
31. Verse 23: This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "When I bring them back from captivity, the people in the land of Judah and in its towns will once again use these words: 'The LORD bless you, O righteous dwelling, O sacred mountain.'²⁴ People will live together in Judah and all its towns--farmers and those who move about with their flocks.²⁵ I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint."
- a) In the last few verses, Jeremiah talked about the Northern tribes coming back. However, I can see the in his audience in the Southern Kingdom saying, "Well what about us?" That is why these verses talk about "the land of Judah" which is the southern Kingdom. Again we are reading of the Israelites returning to their land. Realize the Babylonians wiped out the nation completely, so the hope is about all the towns being occupied once again!

32. Verse 26: At this I awoke and looked around. My sleep had been pleasant to me.
- a) Ever have a night where you woke up and thought, "Wow, that was a nice dream, hope it comes true". Jeremiah had the advantage of being a prophet of God. Does that mean all of His dreams were God inspired? Of course not. I'm sure a late spicy food dinner affects his dreams like anyone else. So how do we know this dream is God inspired? Easy, recorded history as well as the bible tells us the Israelites were allowed to return to that land after it was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire. So how do we know the new guy in charge wasn't just being Pro-Jewish? Part of the proof is that it was exactly 70 years as predicted. That decree didn't apply to all nations, just the Israelite one.
 - b) Anyway, Jeremiah had a positive dream, which is the last bunch of verses we read.
33. Verse 27: "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will plant the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the offspring of men and of animals.²⁸ Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant," declares the LORD.
- a) Well, Jeremiah has been on a roll describing how good life will be after the return so he is continuing here in these verses. (Things are about to change in a few verses, so enjoy the last of it here.) In Verse 27 he gets blunt and says people from both kingdoms will return to this land along with animals. Just as it was God ordained to have both of the kingdoms taken into captivity, so it'll be God's will to bring them back. If you know your history, it wasn't a permanent thing. Even when they came back they were still under the domain of the Medo-Persian Empire, then the Greeks then the Romans. In 70AD the Romans got sick of the Israelites rebelling and "leveled the place" again. I'm emphasizing that here just as a reminder that the return wasn't permanent. That'll be important by Verse 31. But first we need to read Verses 29 and 30.
34. Verse 29: "In those days people will no longer say, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'³⁰ Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes--his own teeth will be set on edge.
- a) Here we get a proverb that's "lost in translation". It sort of means if "dad's in pain the kids will suffer". The more literal translation is the father eats sour grapes the children's teeth also hurt. Instead Jeremiah's predicting people will die for being a bad witness for God as it has been all through the history of God's people but the next generation won't suffer.
 - b) Obviously there are many exceptions as many people die young. It also is not meant as a "It'll be permanent right after the Persians set us free". Again they suffered under them as well as the Greeks and the Romans wiped out that land again and scattered them.
 - c) Quick side note for those who don't know. The word Palestine is derived from "Philistine" by the Romans. It was meant as an insult to the Jewish people as "it's not your land".
 - d) What I'm getting at is all this jubilation about returning isn't permanent. That leads us to a key passage that's quoted in the New Testament:
35. Verse 31: "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.
- a) First thanks for sticking around this far in the lesson. I'm about to reward us as I run long to describe the future to us. Let's face it, all this prediction stuff we've had in this lesson is stuff that happened long ago. We're about to get into predictions that is future to us too!
 - b) Before I do that, notice the word "covenant". That's how we get the term "New Testament" as it refers not to the fact it's written later than the Old. The word "covenant" is a synonym to "Testament". The idea's the Old Testament focuses on God's promise to bless Israel only if they are obedient. The idea of the New Testament is the idea that God Himself will pay the complete price for our sins. With that debt completely paid, we're then free to use our lives as a witness for Him. Here's the "bonus": Israel as a nation will benefit too!

- c) That in effect is what these verses are saying. That the Israelites "broke" that covenant as it is necessary for God to make a new one with them as they failed to keep the old one!
 - d) What that covenant is, is explained in the next verse.
36. Verse 33: "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.
- a) If it's not amazing enough that God decided that He alone pays the complete price for all our sins, it's equally as amazing that a future day will come where He will once again be the God of the Israelites! Think of it this way, if Jesus is going to rule the world from the nation of Israel, it would be necessary for them to be "Pro-Jesus". Israel as it stands today is very secular. Yes there is a minority of Orthodox Jews. However, there will be a strong conversion rate when the "Revelation Show" occurs as they accept Jesus as the Messiah!
 - b) So again, this is a "Jewish thing", but we can see how it fits into His plans for Israel when Jesus rules there. OK John, how do we know all of this isn't a "fairy tale"? After all it has been 2,000 years. That's why the bible is 30% predictions including the return of them to their homeland. It's been that long for God to gather in all the Gentiles who He desires to be a part of His kingdom. Yet a day will come where God will say, "OK that's it. It's time for Me to focus on Israel as a nation again." That's what we have here!
37. Verse 34: No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."
- a) The way I look at this verse is if God can forgive us of all our sins, then He has every right to forgive them for rejecting Him corporately. This is why Paul says in Romans 11 there is coming a day when "All Israel will be saved." (Romans 11:26). Paul got this just as He got the fact a day will come when all the Jewish people in Israel will be saved. We have no idea when that day will occur, but that's what's being taught here. It's essentially the idea that the Israelites will realize Jesus is and was the Messiah, and accept Him for a complete payment of all their sins. If you get that, you understand the true hope of this section!
38. Verse 35: This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar-- the LORD Almighty is his name: ³⁶ "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the LORD, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me." ³⁷ This is what the LORD says: "Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the LORD.
- a) My loose translation: As long as the world continues, Israel will never cease to be a nation before Me. If you know you're history, the Israelites were kicked out of that land in 70AD and they were not a country again until 1948. Even after they returned from Babylon, they were parts of different empires up to and including the Romans. Therefore this has to be a future prediction "post-Jesus" return.
 - b) So how do religious Jewish people see this passage? They believe it's Messianic and there will be a Messianic figure who will rule the world from Israel and Jewish people will trust in Him, so it's not that different. They fail to see it's Jesus, but He'll "fix that one day!"
 - c) Verse 37 says in effect if man is ever able to count all the stars or fully comprehend all that is in the earth then I'll reject the Israelites. Even with all our modern technology, we still do not know all that information.
39. Verse 38: "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when this city will be rebuilt for me from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. ³⁹ The measuring line will stretch from there straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goah. ⁴⁰ The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown, and all the terraces out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the corner of the Horse Gate, will be holy to the LORD. The city will never again be uprooted or demolished."
- a) Short version, Jerusalem will be rebuilt to exact specific sizes as laid out here.

- b) I have to admit, I'm fascinated by some of the 18th Century preachers. At that time, Israel was still in ruins. Yet many bible preachers studied this passage and believed in a literal return of the Jewish people to that land.
 - c) I could give you details about all of the specific location markers given in these verses, but I'm running way long. Let's just say they are literal.
 - d) What about modern Jerusalem. The old city stands today under Jewish control. Does that mean this is fulfilled? Partially in terms of the city's dimensions, but again most of Israel is secular so I'd say this is future. Could God wipe them out and bring them back again? He can do what He wants. I just know the "pieces are in place right now ". Jesus return is obviously on God's timing. Our job is just to be a good witness for Him until that time!
40. OK, I ran way long on this lesson. You probably know more now about the future of literal Israel than you ever cared to know. Here's the hope for us non-Jewish Christians: If we don't trust His promises to the nation of Israel, how can we ever trust in His promises to us Christians? Belief in all of this is as necessary as our trust in what Jesus will do one day. Again to keep it simple, if He is going to rule the world one day, He will do it from Israel and that means believing Israelites do live in that land when it happens. That's the eternal hope that underlies this lesson.
41. With that said, we're way overdue to close in prayer: Heavenly Father, none of us can grasp why You picked us to be a part of this eternal plan. We're just grateful You did. None of us know how long we get to live. All we know is that You created us to glorify You with our lives. Help us by Your spirit to make it obvious to us how we are to use our lives to make that difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen