

Jeremiah 33

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[0 : 00] If you've ever read through the prophecy of Jeremiah, you may know that Jeremiah had a very hard time. If you haven't read through Jeremiah, I would commend it to you.

Set yourself a target to read through Jeremiah in a week or two. Jeremiah was prophesying at a very difficult time. Israel, the northern kingdom of Israel, had gone off into captivity.

The Assyrians had come and taken that nation away. What was left was the kingdom of Judah, ruled over by the descendants of David. But they had largely turned their back on the truth.

They had introduced idolatrous worship. There was wickedness. There was immorality. The church was in a very low state. And it was into that context that Jeremiah was sent to prophesy.

His initial message was, turn back to God. Turn away from your sin. And judgment will not come.

[1 : 08] But as Jeremiah prophesied over some decades, the message changed. The message became very much one of, you've had your chance.

Judgment is coming. It's inevitable. And something of that comes through in the passage we've looked at, that we've read together. The earlier part of the chapter says, This is the word of the Lord.

Judgment is coming. My wrath, my anger against sin is going to happen to Judah. Nothing's going to stop it now. Jerusalem is going to be attacked. Men, thousands of men, are going to die.

Not an easy message for Jeremiah to proclaim. And Jeremiah, often he does complain to God. We have an insight into Jeremiah's character and the way he felt.

Something that we don't get from Isaiah. Jeremiah. But Jeremiah felt the burden of this message so often. And he ends up in trouble. Here he is in prison.

[2 : 21] But into that situation. A very bleak and difficult situation for Jeremiah in prison. There comes a gracious invitation. And that's what I want to consider, first of all.

This gracious invitation that God brings. In verse 2. This is what the Lord says. He who made the earth. The Lord who formed it and established it.

The Lord is his name. Call to me. And I will answer you. And tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. A gracious invitation that came, first of all, to Jeremiah.

We don't know for sure how Jeremiah received his messages from the Lord. Whether he heard an audible voice. We know on occasions he certainly had dreams and visions.

Whether it was just something he felt inside of. We don't know. But here is God saying, Jeremiah, I want to reveal things to you. I want to tell you more about myself.

[3 : 26] I want to tell you more about my plans for this nation. So ask me. So ask me. And it's a very gracious invitation.

Because God, first of all, here states who he is. This is what the Lord says. This is God speaking. Not a little God like the gods of the nations.

Who are just idols. But this is the God who made the earth. Who made the universe. And established it. Who cares for it. And sustains it every moment. The Lord is his name.

The word you may see in the text there. It's translated in uppercase letters. In capitals. That's the translation of the Hebrew word Yahweh.

The Hebrew for I am. It's very close to that. God is saying, this is the great I am speaking. This is the God who revealed himself to Abraham.

[4 : 29] This is the God who has never had a beginning. And will never have an end. This great God is coming to you, Jeremiah, and saying, Just ask me. And I'll tell you.

Great and wonderful things that you don't know. The rest of the chapter is really God answering Jeremiah's prayer.

I think we could assume that Jeremiah said, Yes, Lord. I want to know more. Tell me more. Reveal more of yourself. And God brings him these messages. First of all, of judgment.

We'll consider that in a minute. But also restoration. This is the character of God. He loves to reveal himself.

Whenever you go in the world, you will find people worshipping something. Every one of us, because we're made in the image of God, we have that sense that there is something out there.

[5 : 42] There is some higher power. Some have called that God Allah. Others worship spirits in the forest or spirits in the water.

Others worship the ancestors. This higher power that has some influence over our lives. But God, in his grace, has said, I'm like this.

I want you to know what I'm like. I have written it down for you. Friends, you could not know what God is like unless he had taken the initiative and said, Here I am.

Through the pages of the scriptures, he is telling us what kind of God he's like. And he encouraged us and said, Do you ask me?

If you don't know what I'm like, ask me. Because I just want you to know me. When God created Adam in the Garden of Eden, he had this relationship with him.

[6 : 50] Adam spoke with God. I think God appeared in a human form in the Garden of Eden. They were friends. God spoke to Adam and Eve. And they spoke to him.

Adam knew God. It was only when sin came, that that division was broken. That relationship was broken. And there was a Baha'i between them.

God loves to reveal himself to his creation. And he comes with his gracious invitation to you and to me. And say, Do you want to know me? Well, ask me.

And God doesn't speak primarily in the way that he spoke to Jeremiah. Primarily now he speaks through his words. Do you want to know God?

Read his book. Do you want to know what God's like? Study Jesus Christ. Because he is God in the flesh. Years and years ago, shortly after we'd moved to Castletown up north, I remember we had a speaker who'd be working amongst some of the, what was called the Klondikers, fishermen from Eastern Europe who were working in Shetland in the rich waters of the North Atlantic.

[8 : 10] And these people, this was in the time when the Iron Curtain had just come down. And Eastern Europe was open to the gospel. And I remember this man saying, he had provided New Testaments for some of these Eastern European fishermen.

And they'd read it. And they'd come to him and said, we've read this book, we've heard a lot about this, and we've read it for ourselves, but what does it mean? They had read the New Testaments.

But they hadn't got the insight into what it meant for them. We can read our Bibles, we can know the Bible stories, but it's only God himself that actually connects what we read to their own personal situations.

You need the enlightenment of God to understand this book. And God says, I will do that for you. Ask me. Call on me.

And I guarantee, I will answer you, and I will speak to you. And I will reveal myself to you. And I will show you the wonderful things that I've done for you in Jesus Christ.

[9 : 33] And the wonderful things that he's going to carry on doing for you in this world. And the glorious things that he's got in store for you. And the world yet to come. A gracious invitation.

It's for you. It's for me. I would suggest, friend, when you read your Bible, before you read your Bible, ask God, show me yourself.

Speak to me through your words. and hear your answer. Well, God graciously answered Jeremiah and did go on to show him things that he couldn't have known.

Jeremiah had had this message that there was going to be destruction. The Babylonians were going to come and annihilate so many of the Jews in Jerusalem.

But God graciously reveals more. Tells Jeremiah things that he couldn't possibly have known otherwise. He promised a restoration.

[10 : 40] Keep going to verse 6 and 7. God has said in the earlier verses there's going to be death. The Babylonians weren't going to come, going to destroy the city. But, verse 6, Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it, to Jerusalem.

I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security. I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity and will rebuild them as they were before.

I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me. So, he goes on. He has a promised restoration.

God has promised there's going to be restoration for Israel. A few weeks ago I was, I stopped at a friend's home in our own village and across the road was an old tractor and I knew that the owner of the tractor was just coming out of his house at the time and he told me that he'd found the tractor in a field.

It was rusting, it was decaying, it wasn't working, there were various bits of it, were in boxes. And he had spent weeks and months restoring this.

[12 : 02] And it was working, it was looking very smart, it's not finished, but it had been restored. Why do people like restoring things?

Why do people like taking something that's fallen into disrepair and into decay and getting it back to the way it was before? Some weeks ago there was television program, Restoration Village, and millions of people were phoning in saying what building they wanted to see restored.

There's something within us that likes to take things that have decayed and restore them. And I believe that that is because we're made in the image of God.

God loves to restore things. He loves to set things back the way they're made to be. And that's why he comes to Israel in his grace and he says there's going to be judgment, there's going to be destruction, but that's not the end.

I don't want to leave it like that. I want to see Israel restored. I want to see them the nation that they're meant to be. A godly nation fulfilling their role in the history of the world to be a light to the Gentiles.

[13 : 22] I'm going to see that day come. And so he promises Jeremiah everything looks so black, so bleak, and you've been predicting these faithful things are coming, but after that there's going to be restoration.

Friends, why did Jesus Christ come into this world? Why did God, the eternal son, become one of us? Because he loves to see the restoration.

of sinful people to himself. He loves to see that relationship that has gone wrong, that's gone into decay, that's been spoiled by your sin and mine.

He loves to see that person being restored and brought back into a relationship with God, to know God, to enjoy God, to live for God, to serve God, to become a tribe of God.

God, that's why Jesus died, to restore you and me. And as we were thinking this morning, it goes further than that.

[14 : 35] Jesus died to restore you and me, but also to restore this creation. when Jesus returns in his glory and all his people will be gathered to him and he'll remake this universe and paradise will be restored.

What God created in the first place for Adam and Eve was a perfect world, a perfect universe. It was spoiled when he didn't decay. But God is going to bring that restoration.

what he was going to do for Israel, he's going to do for the whole world. Now when we read these words here in Jeremiah's prophecy, they may seem a bit of an exaggeration.

If you know anything of the history of Israel after the exile, Jeremiah's words were fulfilled. The Babylonians came and destroyed Jerusalem. They took many of the Jews off into exile until Babylon, what we would call Iraq today.

And then they came back, just as God said they would. But from that day, Israel was always a little, despised, insignificant nation.

[15 : 55] There was all kinds of oppression through the period up to the beginning of the New Testament. Of course, they were under the domination of Rome when Jesus came to this world. Jerusalem and then in the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Jews lost their lands.

These words of God, I will rebuild them as they were before. I don't believe they've been fulfilled yet.

They've been partially fulfilled. still, yes, God did restore them as a nation. He has protected them and kept the Jewish nation over the last 20 centuries. But these words aren't yet fulfilled.

I believe God has still got great plans for the dukes. Paul taught the same thing in the reference to the Romans. Paul was looking forward to a day when the Jewish nation would accept Jesus as Saviour.

And then what wonderful blessing is going to come to the rest of the world. More and more I've become convinced from what scripture teaches. Therefore, in spite of all the bleakness of the international situation that preaches, a day is yet to come where the vast majority of this world will be Christian.

[17 : 29] And it will be Christian. Where Jesus reigned as we were singing in Psalm 72, where he sang from sea to sea, where all the kings, all the nations of the world will bring tribute to him, will acknowledge him to be the Saviour of the world.

What God promised here has been fulfilled to a certain extent. But friends, there's much more to come. God loves to restore.

If any of you here tonight are still far away from God, if your relationship with God is still in disrepair, God wants you to know that he wants to restore you.

He wants to bring you back to himself. Whatever you've done, however sordid your life may have become, whatever dreadful secret sins you've got that no one else knows about, and you don't want anyone else to know about, God says, I want to restore you.

I don't want you to go on in that sort of life. There's much, much better things for you. And I want to do it, if only you'll come to me. And you can be part of my great plan of salvation for the whole world.

[18 : 57] God loves to restore. He loves to restore relationships between people. Where marriages break down.

Where relationships at work break down. Where you fall out with your friends at school. God's interested in these. He loves to see restoration.

He loves to bring people together. It's one of the great things about the gospel. It brings people together who by nature were divided.

In New Testament times there was this great gulf between Jew and Gentile. The Jews despised the Gentiles as dogs, second class citizens, as almost inhuman.

But in Christ there was union. There was restoration. The way humanity should live together. God promised a restoration to Israel.

[20 : 01] That's his character. He loves to restore things. God promised an eternal kingdom and priesthood.

An eternal kingdom and priesthood. If you go on to verse 15 or verse 14. The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

In those days and that time I will make a righteous branch right from David's line, he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.

This is the name by which it will be called the Lord of Righteousness. For this is what the Lord says, David will never fail to have a man sit on the throne of the house of Israel.

Nor will the beast who will leave I ever fail to have a man stand before me continually to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to present sacrifices.

[21 : 12] It would be tempting to read these words and say, well, these things can't be true. Israel is not a kingdom. There is no king in Israel.

So democracy is run by a government. There are no Levites offering sacrifices anymore. That God, the temple was destroyed and all the ritual worship went with it.

So how can these words be fulfilled? God, of course, is speaking the truth. He keeps his words.

And the promise he made to David was that one of his descendants was going to rule over his people forever. a righteous branch.

Someone who came out of the line of David. Friends, you and I have a privilege that Jeremiah did not have. We are able to look back in history and say, there is one person in history who fulfills these words.

[22 : 21] For Jeremiah, it was just a promise in the future. But for you and me, we can look back to the life of Jesus Christ. And in that carpenter from Nazareth, recognize the fulfillment of these, of both these prophecies.

That Jesus is now exalted as the King of Kings. He has passed through death. He has risen again. And he has ascended to the right hand of God.

Don't think of Jesus sitting on God's right hand side. The image is of the most prestigious, the most exalted, the most elevated position in the universe.

That's where Jesus belongs. He's the King. And his kingdom is growing. So often Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God.

For instance, he says, you cannot enter the kingdom of God unless you become like a little child.

[23 : 28] You young people here, you've got an advantage on us older people. It's easier for you young people to enter the kingdom of heaven because you're young and trusting.

And you take people at their words in a way that adults don't. adults are often much more suspicious and they come up with all kinds of complicated arguments as to why they shouldn't believe the Bible.

We were fortunate to have a work amongst youngsters in our own congregation. And I have never heard any of them ever saying, I don't believe that.

When they hear God's word, when they hear the Bible stories, they accept it as true. That's the way we enter the kingdom of heaven.

That's the way we become citizens of the kingdom of heaven. We accept God at his word. We take him at his word. We accept what he's revealed to us.

[24 : 30] We believe it and we obey it. Jesus is the king of this glorious kingdom that's growing.

And Jesus is also the priest. In the history of Israel, the kingdom and the priesthood were strictly divided. There was one occasion where one of the kings of Israel, or kings of Judah, he thought, I'm a king, I can do anything.

I'll go and offer some insights in the temple. And as he did so, God struck him with leprosy. That was strictly for the Levites to do, for the priests.

God has appointed Levites there to be priests, there to offer the sacrifices. The king has got nothing to do with that. But in Jesus, these two functions have come together.

He's the one who has offered the perfect sacrifices. You see, all these lambs and rams and blokes and all the rest of the animals that were sacrificed time after time in the Old Testament, they did no spiritual do.

[25 : 44] Not one sin was forgiven because a lamb had been sacrificed. They were just pictures, symbols, pointing to the fact that there was going to be someone who by his death would pay the price of sin.

And that was Jesus, the Lamb of God. And Jesus offered himself. You see, the priests had to take that animal and the priest offered that sacrifice.

When Jesus died, he wasn't taken kicking and screaming to his death. He went willingly. He said, no one takes my life from me.

I'm just laying it down. because I want to. I'm offering my life as a sacrifice for sin. Part of the role of the priesthood was that they offered incense.

Incense, as it burned, it produced a sweet smell that rose upwards. It was a symbol, it was a picture as well of the prayers that the priests were to offer for the people.

[27 : 00] They were to intercede for the nation of Israel. they were to bring all the cares and the troubles and difficulties that Israel faced. They were to bring them to God. Lord, bless Israel.

Deliver us from our enemies. Make us prosperous. Make us righteous. That's a work Jesus continues to perform. If you're in Christ tonight, Jesus is so concerned for you.

He loves you and he cares for you and he's bringing those troubles and cares and problems and difficulties you have. He's bringing them to his father. And he says, Father, look, this is what they're going through.

Support them. Care for them. Heal them. Restore them. Strengthen them. Resolve their problems. Give them wisdom.

Give them guidance. And then, Jesus has been on earth. He knows what it's like. And he can turn to his father and he can say to his father, Father, I know what that's like.

[28 : 14] I know what it's like to have people hate you. I know what it's like to be sick. I know what it's like to feel pain. I know what it's like to be disappointed by my friends and let down by those I trust.

Father, help them in that situation. Jesus intercedes for his people. This is the eternal kingdom that's been described here.

It's not about an earthly king. It's not about a continuing sacrificial system and levitical peace. It's about Jesus Christ. He's the eternal king.

He's the one we were singing about in Psalms 72. He's the one that's the peace of the order of Melchizedek. He's the new king.

Does that bring you joy and encouragement to think tonight that this world, in all its trouble, is actually been reined over by the man of compassion and grace, the son of God?

[29 : 24] Does it encourage you that the decisions that you're having to make in life, Jesus knows about them and he's praying for you.

That your life is not just a chaotic series of events. It's not just that accidents happen and things come and things go.

It's actually Jesus ruling over your life. His kingdom is eternal. His priesthood is never going to end.

And then lastly in this passage there is an absolute guarantee. guarantee. An absolute guarantee. Look at verse 20. Another message for Jeremiah.

This is what the Lord says. If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so the day and night no longer come at their appointed time. Then my covenant with David my servant, and my covenant with the Levites who are faced ministering before me, can be broken.

[30 : 37] And David will no longer have a descendants to reign on his throne. Imagine poor Jeremiah, struck in the jail.

Life was pretty hard. It may well have been a scarcity of food because the city was under siege. The future looked pretty black.

And into that blackness God has revealed this message of hope. And of restoration and of prosperity.

And you can imagine Jeremiah saying, well, if only. If only it were true. If only these things were actually going to happen.

I think God in his grace comes to encourage Jeremiah with his absolute guarantee. He says, Jeremiah, you think this is fanciful.

[31 : 42] You think this can never happen. But here's a guarantee for you. If you can break my covenant with night and day, if you can stop night following day and day following night, then you're right.

I'll break my covenant with David and the Levites. Jeremiah, you know that's not possible. You know that day always follows night.

And night always follows day. There's always that cycle. It never ends. So, Jeremiah, be assured, what I've told you about the future is absolutely guaranteed.

what a wonderfully gracious God we have, don't we? God could come in his power and say, look, Jeremiah, I speak the truth.

How dare you even begin to question that I'm not telling the truth and that these things aren't really going to happen. God's not like that.

[32 : 54] He comes to Jeremiah and says, look, Jeremiah, I want to be assured. I want you to know of absolute certainty, it's going to happen. God did something similar with Abraham.

Abraham had been promised by God, you're going to have a son. Going to make you into a great nation. And the years went by, no sign of any son.

Sarah was getting on, she was past the age of childbearing, and Abraham was just a wonderful, is God really able to keep his word? And God comes to Abraham and repeats the promise, and he swears by himself.

God takes an oath to give Abraham this absolute guarantee, you're going to have a son. However impossible it looks to his name, Abraham, I guarantee, I swear on myself, you will have that son.

And of course, Abraham was blessed to do. God's God's word. And do you ever doubt God's word? Do you ever think, that could never happen to me, I could never be a Christian, God would never forgive me, I've done such dreadful things in my life, if God really knew what I was like, people want nothing to do with it.

[34 : 33] Do you ever doubt that God's not able to provide for your needs, to sort out your problems, to resolve the difficulties in your relationships, to provide you with work, to help you through your exams, to enable you to get on with your brothers and sisters, and your neighbours?

Do you think God can't do these things? Do you think God fails to keep his word? Well, God graciously comes to Jesus in this message to Jeremiah and says, look, I'm speaking the truth, I'm speaking to you, I want you to believe everything I say, because it's true.

It's true. Over two and a half thousand years have passed since this message came to Jeremiah.

And we haven't seen its fulfilment in its entirety yet. We do see Jesus as the king and the priest forever. But there are glorious things yet to come for Israel and for this world.

God loves to restore. He's at work in all the affairs of the nations. He's at work in your life. He wants to reveal himself to you.

[36 : 08] He wants to do great things for you. Will you let him? Do you trust him? Do you believe him? Let's do it together.

Let's do it together. Let's do it together. Let's do it