

Jeremiah (pt.3)

Is God through with Israel?

The word of our God stands for ever ISAIAH 40:8

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says Jehovah, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. JEREMIAH 29:11

Chapters 29-30

29:1-14 But how can God be SURE that these promises will come true? (hint: how did He know the exile would last 70 years?)

[29.1] According to 52:28, 3023 persons had been carried captive to Babylon in 597 BC, including Jehoiachin, his household, and certain priests and prophets. Word had reached Jeremiah in Jerusalem that some of the exiled false prophets were predicting, as Hananiah had done, a speedy collapse of Babylonian power and a consequent return of the exiles to their homeland. Jeremiah, realistic as always, felt it his duty to warn his exiled compatriots against any further self-delusion, and wrote a letter TO THEM IN 594 BC [editor's note: that is, 615 BCE according to Watchtower chronology, 8 years before Jerusalem's destruction] [Harrison 131]

The negative effect of the 'end is near' message of the false prophet (esp.vv. 4-9)

[29.4-9] The exiles were to settle in Babylon and live normal lives there, even praying for their captors (cf. Matt.5:43). They would have considerable freedom in their exile. Instead of expecting an early return to their homeland, they were to settle down in Babylon and even to work and pray for its peace and prosperity. Otherwise, their influence would be negligible and their exile all the more galling. What unusual advice for Jeremiah to give his exiled countrymen! History shows that in all the centuries of their world-wide dispersion, the Jews have tried to follow this pattern. They have identified themselves with the country of their residence, while at the same time looking toward eventual restoration to their native land ... To this day they pray in their worship on the Sabbath and on festivals for the rulers under whom they are living ... In Babylon, as in Judah, false prophecy was flourishing (cf. vv.15,21). The theme was always the same: a speedy return to the homeland. Rosy predictions were the stock in trade of the falsifiers. [Feinberg 553-54]

29:15-32 (esp.15,19,21,23,31,32) What does Jehovah consider the ultimate rebellious act -- worthy of canceled the land promises?

30:1-11 Jeremiah was CONFIRMED as God's true prophet by short-term predictive success (e.g. Hananiah would die same year; exile would end, not after 2 years, but 70). What now is Jeremiah inspired to foretell as the final destiny of Israel? (Daniel 12:1; Luke 1:69; 21:24; cf. Matt.24:21,22)

[30.1] The remarkable feature of chapters 30-33 is that, though written during a time of deep distress for Jerusalem, they foretell a glorious future for the nation ... The overall theme is that Israel will not perish as a nation. [Feinberg 558]

NOTE VERSE 11: Has Jehovah fulfilled? To which nations were the Jews scattered (primarily)?

[30:10-11] Now Jeremiah makes a telling distinction between the fate of God's people and that of their oppressors: the oppressors may be removed finally from the scene of history, but God's people never (v.11; cf. 4:27; 5:10,18; 46:28). This is not partiality on God's part, for he will not overlook his people's sins. They can no more sin with impunity than any other persons or nation. The Lord must chasten them and he will do so with justice, not capriciously. It is no wonder that Isaiah refers to Israel (i.e. Israel and Judah) as an eternal nation; for whereas Ammon, Assyria, Edom, Moab, and others no longer exist, Israel is present throughout the world, even though in the divine chastening of dispersion. [Feinberg 561]

Chapter 31

A hornet's nest-- if you believe in salvation by merit!

31:1-3,4a On what basis can God guarantee that ALL families of Israel will be His people? (Deut.4:32-40, esp.v.37; 7:6-11; Romans 5:6-9)

There are two significant covenant terms here, love (both the verb *ahab* and the noun *ahaba*) and faithfulness (*hesed*). The latter occurs in the OT 245 times, mostly in a covenant or treaty context. [Thompson 566; he translates v.3b Therefore I have prolonged unailing faithfulness to you]

HORNETS:

v.4a God knows what THEY will do because He knows what HE will do

5,6 Where's paradise, and where's Jehovah? (cf.vv.12,24)

7-14 Who is proclaiming THIS 'word of Jehovah' to the nations? Draw JW's attention especially to v.10? (and to the attribute of Jehovah which causes Israel's final conversion, cf. Hosea 3:5)

[31:10-14] The word is to be spread afar that the Lord has regathered Israel (v.10). The nations will be told that it was the Lord who exiled his people and that it is he who restores them. [Feinberg 568]

15-30 Why won't Rachel's lamentation last forever? Again, draw attention especially to vv.18,19 and the certainty of Jehovah's knowledge (v.20), based on the certainty of His love (Hos.14:4)

God the Lord, in virtue of His unchangeable faithfulness, would not alter the relation He had Himself established in His love, but simply found it anew in a way which obviated the breaking of the covenant by Israel. For it was a defect connected with the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, that it could be broken on their part. This defect is not to exist in the new covenant which God will make in after times. [Keil Vol.2 p.38]

31-34 What makes the New Covenant different than the former (Mosaic) covenant (2 Cor.3:3; Deut.30:11-20)

[31:33] Instead of changing his covenant relationship to his people because they broke the covenant, in his grace God finds a way whereby they will not break the new covenant,. How can this be done? God will write the law within them; on their heart he will inscribe it. The old covenant had been engraved in stone. The new covenant will include a revolutionary change in WILL, heart, and conscience ... The core of the new covenant is God's gift of a new heart (cf. Ezek. 36:25-27). Herein lies the sufficient motivation for obeying God's law. Basic to obedience is inner knowledge of God's will coupled with an ENABLEMENT to perform it, all founded on the assurance that sins are forgiven. [Feinberg 576]

[v.34] The verb know here probably carries its most profound connotation, the intimate personal knowledge which arises between two persons who are committed wholly to one another in a relationship that touches mind, emotion, and will. [Thompson 581]

35-37 How sure is the restoration of Israel? God gives us the perfect comparison (for JW's)

31.35 God's immutability is reflected by the fixed order of the heavenly bodies. Only the creator of the cosmos could give such a firm undertaking as that which follows. Divine love for wayward Israel is a striking and consistent theme in the prophecy. [Harrison 137]

37 The only out for JW's: CAN'T be literal Israel, on account of all they have done in unfaithfulness

38-40 In case some should attempt to spiritualize these promises! As with Zechariah 14, God has closed the exit doors by geographical specificity [The Watchtower Index 1930-85 has no references at all to these verses]

The rebuilding is not for themselves or for secular purposes but for the glory of the Lord. It will be dedicated and separated to him ... A permanent nation calls for a permanent capital ... this passage will not permit an interpretation that applies it to a spiritual, heavenly, or symbolic Jerusalem. If that were possible, why is it so full of literal detail? [Feinberg 579]

Chapters 32-33

32:1-25 The drama of the purchase deed indicated the certainty of the land promises to Israel -- to the nation if not to the individual Jew. [e.g. Jeremiah must have related to the illustration of 31:29,30; his teeth HAD been set on edge by his fathers' sin, in that individual Jews must suffer (or prosper) with the majority under the terms of the Mosaic covenant -- but NOT under the New]

32:26-44 Isolate the secret of the success of the New Covenant (stress v.27 to JW, also a certain repeated declaration in vv.37-42 (cf. Ezek. 36)

33:1-11 Note the triple iteration of YHWH in v.2, the creation again connected with the restoration of Israel (cf.vv.20,22,25), and the praise and honour of YHWH bound up with that restoration (v.9 -- and the repeated 'I will' of vv.6-8)

[v.9] In that day Jerusalem will be a source of joy and praise and honor for Yahweh before the nations whereas once she was a shame and a disgrace. There was universal significance in Israel's standing before Yahweh. [Thompson 599]

33:12-26 COMMON GROUND, BUT ... earthly paradise (vv.12,13) but with an earthly King (vv.15,17,21,22), earthly priesthood (vv.18,21,22) and an earthly capitol (v.16), named after YHWH Himself, and owing its restoration to HIS righteousness

The establishment, institution of the order of nature, is a work of divine omnipotence.. This omnipotence has founded the covenant of grace with Israel, and pledged its continuance, despite the present destruction of the kingdom of Judah and the temporary rejection of the guilty people ... Israel will therefore continue to exist, and that, too, as a nation which will have rulers out of the seed of David ... [Keil Vol.2 p.77]