Jer. 33, Comfort in Prison 1-13: Temporal Blessings October 23, 1990 H. Van Dyke Parunak

Overview

1. Encouragement for Prisoners Life isn't perfect. In fact, it can be pretty bad at times. Where should we look for encouragement when we are feeling down? In today's passage, we find Jer languishing in prison, and we study the encouragement that the Lord gives him. It is not an attempt to persuade him that his perception is off and things really aren't so bad, nor a string of platitudes to "Look on the bright side, it could be worse." Rather, the Lord points him to the future deliverance that is being prepared, not only for Jer but also for the entire nation. So for us, comfort comes not by fooling ourselves into thinking that this life isn't so bad, but by loving the appearing of the Lord Jesus and living daily in the expectation of his return.

2. Setting

v.1 shows that this is the second revelation that Jer received while he was imprisoned in the court of the prison. The first, reported in ch.32, is the Lord's answer to his prayer about buying Hanameel's field. He continues to be shut up without access to the the people at large, but the Lord still has access to him, and encourages him with a vision of deliverance to come.

3. Structure

Often an artist, before painting a large picture, will do several studies or sketches to arrange his material or to show his patron for approval. In this chapter we see the full painting for which the Lord has already given Jer two sketches. He develops most fully the portrait of Israel's future blessing that has already been sketched out in 30:18-22 and 31:3-6. Each element that in the sketches was only a sentence or two is here a separate paragraph introduced by "thus saith the Lord" or "behold, the days come."

	30	31	33
a) Physical rebuilding	18	4a	4-9
b) Joy and Thanksgiving	19a	4b	10-11
c) Prosperity	19b-20	5	12-13
d) Messiah's Salvation	21-22	6	14-26

The events are not presented chronologically, but in order of increasing importance. God's blessing includes the simple physical restoration of the nation, and also greater things, the greatest of which is Messiah's salvation. This is so important that two short additional oracles are given to emphasize it.

This study covers the first three aspects of the blessing. The

next deals with the last, the Messianic promise.

A. 2-3, Summary

What do you say to someone who's locked up in prision? God offers Jer three things to consider.

1. 2, Remember God's sovereignty.
v.2 is a puzzle: what is it that God makes, forms, and
establishes? (Not "formed;" no warrant for past tense; all three
verbs are participles or infinitives, without time reference.)

No antecedent for the pronouns. NIV guesses "the earth," but without support in the text. Some modern scholars emend the text to remove the pronouns entirely.

I think the Lord is more subtle here. The pronoun is purposely indefinite. It anticipates, rather than recalls; it looks forward to the promises later in the chapter, those which the Lord "thus says." Paraphrase: "This is what the Lord says, the Lord who is also the one who will perform that saying." In other words, God is not just describing what will happen independently of himself; he is declaring the plan that he himself is going to execute.

- 2. 3a, Call upon God. A simple instruction, far too often neglected. God wants us to cast our care on him, to tell him of our troubles. The point is not to ask God for information, but to cry to him in trial and suffering.
- 3. 3b, Expect to learn something new.
 "Mighty" is actually "fortified," "shut up." That which God will tell Jer is great, but it is shut up, inaccessible to human reason, available only to those who are willing to receive God's revelation. That's the way it is with all of the great truths of Scripture.

These great and hidden truths, which Jer has not fully apprehended, are the aspects of future blessing that God now unfolds.

B. 4-9, Physical Rebuilding

First, God points to the physical reestablishment of the nation (cf. 30:18; 31:4a). His prophecy is preceded by an elaborate statement of the subject, to which we must pay special attention if we are to understand the prediction correctly.

1. 4-5, Statement of the Subject.

The grammar is quite confusing. The ASV best captures my understanding of the structure, spelled out further in the analysis below. The quotation doesn't begin until v.6. "For thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are broken down [to make a defence] against the mounds and against the sword, while [men] come to fight with the Chaldeans; and to

fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger and in my wrath, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city:" Note the following points.

- a) In the face of the siege, the people have destroyed their houses for two purposes.
 - 1) As part of the battle against the Chaldeans. Isa. 22:10 shows that this strategy was used 120 years earlier against the Assyrians: "The houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall." Perhaps also to have something to drop on the heads of the attackers.
 - 2) To provide burial space. Because of the siege, they can no longer take people outside of the city to bury them.
- b) The destruction is God's judgment, yet the houses are falling by Jewish hands!

Application: Such is God's judgment, that those who reject him end up destroying themselves. God's law is intended for our good. When we disobey it, we not only anger him, but we walk in ways that will ultimately bring about our own destruction.

- c) No house is exempt. Even the king's house is destroyed. War is a great leveler. An arrow kills a rich man as quickly as a poor one. Before God's judgment, all are equal.
- d) The subject statement shows that we are to understand what follows with respect to the city. The prophecy itself says much about the people, but as the residents of the city. Like many prophecies of the New Covenant, it is impossible to lose sight of the geographic implications without doing violence to the text.
- 2. 6-9, Promise of Rebuilding God outlines what he will do for the city and its inhabitants, and then the results.
 - a) 6-8, What God will do. (Notice the first person verbs, "I will ... I will)
 - 1) For the city: "I will bring it health and cure." "It" is feminine; the only feminine antecedent in the context is "this city" in v.4. With its houses broken down, the city looks like an ulcerated body, a person with measles or chicken pox. In fact, in 30:12 God said of the entire society, "Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous." But now he promises to cure.
 - 2) Because the subject was declared so strongly to be the houses, I prefer to interpret the "them" in 6b as the houses rather than the people. But the reference could also be to the dead bodies of v.5, and the ambiguity continues

into v.7, an intentional mechanism for welding together the fate of the people and of their land. God is in the process of destroying both; in time, he will heal both.

"Abundance of truth and peace." A commentary on this may be Ps. 85:10, probably written after the return from captivity (Ps. 85:1), "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Mercy as the source of forgiveness and peace as its result seem opposed to God's truth and righteousness, which demand that we be judged for our sins. Jer simply joins the opposites together in a slightly different way: truth vs. peace. But God has found a way to bring these opposites together. Rom. 3:26 explains that it is the blood of Christ that permits God to be both just (righteousness and truth), and the justifier (mercy and peace) of those who believe in Jesus. The writer of Ps. 85 saw some of this, but when God truth and peace will be revealed.

3) vv.7,8 clearly turn our attention to the people who live in the houses. God will restore their fortunes, "build them" (note ambiguity with the houses), and forgive their sin.

NB: They do not return because they have become less sinful, but because God has forgiven them, as promised in the terms of the new covenant. We do not get saved by keeping the law, but by receiving God's forgiveness for our sin against his law.

- b) 9, The Results Again, the discussion focuses on the city ("it," feminine, 2nd and last word in the verse).
 - 1) Start at the end of the verse. God brings the city "goodness and prosperity."
 - 2) As a result, it becomes "a name of joy, for praise and for honor" among all nations. That is, everyone who sees what God has done for this city will rejoice and bring him praise and honor.
 - 3) This joy will be so great that it causes them to fear and tremble, an expression of their new-found reverence for the Lord.
 - 4) Application: This is an important motive for God's blessings of his people: that unbelievers may see his care for them and turn to him. When others perceive us as blessed, do we turn it "for [God's] praise and honor," or do we miss the opportunity? When others praise us for our intelligence, or the happiness of our families, or the wisdom of our decisions, we must be careful not only to thank God privately, but also to tell them that these are

the signs of God's blessing toward his people.

Physical restoration is wonderful, but by itself it is sterile; think of a sick millionaire dying amid piles of gold that cannot help him. The next blessing to which God draws our attention is greater than the physical restoration of the city.

C. 10-11, Joy and Thanksgiving

The Lord not only gives them back their city, but brings them joy and thanksgiving in it. Cf. 30:19a; 31:4b.

- 1. 10, First he reminds them of the prospects for the city, humanly speaking: a ghost town, without people or animals, doors falling off their hinges, no human activity at all.
- 2. 11a, Then he calls up the vision of a bustling city, with the sounds of many different activities echoing back and forth. The promise reverses 7:34, with one more twist.
 - a) "The voice of joy and the voice of gladness." Birthday parties, children playing in the streets, laughing and singing.
 - b) "The voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride."
 People will once again enter into marriage and look forward
 with eager anticipation to building a life together.
 - c) The sound of worship. The quotation is from Ps. 106:1; 107:1; 2 Chron. 5:13; 7:3; Ezr. 3:11. In the historical books it is part of the worship at the dedication of the temple; so here it anticipates the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of worship. This sound reminds us of people hurrying happily on their way to the temple services to worship the Lord.

This is the one point that is not a reversal of 7:34. Neb. caused joy and gladness to cease, and the sound of marriage, but he did not cause the sound of true worship to stop, because there wasn't any. It had stopped years before as the people forsook the Lord.

3. 11b, Finally God reminds Jer of the reason for this reversal by repeating the formula describing the restoration: "I will restore the fortunes of the land as at the first."

First the ruins turn to a rebuilt, "healed" city. Then the city is populated with happy people. But happiness alone is not enough. It might be short-lived, or based on the wrong reasons. The next blessing deals with the grounds for this joy: renewed prosperity.

D. 12-13, Prosperity

Each of the corresponding elements in the three passages emphasizes a different aspect of this prosperity. 31:5 anticipates the fruitfulness of the crops. This section describes the abundance of

the herds. 30:19b-20 views the increase in population that results from a plentiful food supply. The Lord here emphasizes to Jer that the flocks will be restored "in all its cities," and lists the different regions of the country. The prosperity will not be restricted to one single area. There will be plenty of sheep to provide for the people, and plenty of people throughout the land to care for the sheep.

Yet even physical prosperity is not the greatest blessing. The Lord reserves that for last: the nation finally enjoys the rule of its Messiah. That we consider in the next study.

Conclusion:

As believers, we are in a warfare; the world, the flesh, and the devil are hostile to our spiritual interests. As a *company* of believers, one of our greatest responsibilities is to encourage one another. When we are together, I need you to encourage me on spiritual matters. And today's passage shows the direction that encouragement should take.

- 1. Don't try to persuade me that I'm paranoid and the world is really all right; it isn't.
- 2. Sometimes you may be able to help me see that things could be worse, but that won't help me deal with the things that really are bad.
- 3. Let us encourage one another as the Lord encouraged Jer, with the sure expectation of his promises. Let us love our Lord's appearing; remind one another of it; provoke one another to be ready for it; and live daily in the full expectation that what he has promised, he is able also to perform.

Psalm: 85:7-13

Analysis

- A. 33:1-18, quote p: promises of restoration
 - 1. quote f
 - a) 33:1 WA/Y:HIY D:BAR-Y:HWFH)EL-YIR:M:YFHW. \$"NIYT
 - b) W:/HW.) (OWD/EN.W. (FCW.R B.A/X:ACAR HA/M.A+.FRFH L"/)MOR
 - 2. quote:
 - a) quote p: invitation to call on the Lord
 - 1) quote f: 33:2 K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH (O&/FH. Y:HWFH YOWC"R)OWT/FH. LA/H:AKIY/NFH. Y:HWFH \$:M/OW
 - 2) quote: 33:3 Q:RF))"L/AY W:/)E(:EN/EK.F W:/)AG.IYDFH L./:KF G.:DOLOWT W./B:CUROWT LO) Y:DA(:T./FM S
 - b) 33:4-9, quote p: rebuilding
 - 1) quote f: comment p
 a> text: 33:4 K.IY KOH) FMAR Y:HWFH):ELOH"Y YI&:RF)"L

- (AL-B.FT."Y HF/(IYR HA/Z.O)T W:/(AL-B.FT."Y MAL:K"Y Y:HW.DFH
- b> comment <BFT"Y>: double purpose p
 - 1> text: HA/N.:TUCIYM
 - 2> purpose-1: temporal p
 - a: text:)EL-HA/S.OL:LOWT W:/)EL-HE/XFREB
 - b: time: purpose p
 - 1: text: 33:5 B.F) IYM
 - 2: purpose: L:/HIL.FX"M)ET-HA/K.A&:D.IYM
 - 3> purpose-2: comment p
 - a: text: W./L:/MAL:)/FM)ET-P.IG:R"Y HF/)FDFM
 - b: comment <HF) FDFM>: reason p
 - 1: text:):A\$ER-HIK."YTIY
 - 2: reason: B:/)AP./IY W./BA/X:AMFT/IY WA/):A\$ER HIS:T.AR:T.IY PFN/AY M"/HF/(IYR HA/Z.O)T (AL K.FL-RF(FT/FM
- 2) quote:
 - a> 33:6 HIN/:NIY MA(:ALEH-L./FH.):ARUKFH W./MAR:P.") W./R:PF)TIYM health and cure (cf. 30:12,13)
 - b> W:/GIL."YTIY L/FHEM (:ATERET \$FLOWM WE/):EMET
 - c> 33:7 WA/H:A\$IBOTIY)ET-\$:BW.T Y:HW.DFH W:/)"T \$:BW.T YI&:RF)"L
 - d> W./B:NITIY/M K.:/BF/RI)\$ONFH
 - e> 33:8 W:/+IHAR:T.IY/M MI/K.FL-(:AWON/FM):A\$ER XF+:)W.-L/IY
 - f> W:/SFLAX:T.IY {L:/KOWL} [L:/KFL]-(:AWONOWT"Y/HEM):A\$ER XF+:)W.-L/IY WA/):A\$ER P.F\$:(W. B/IY
 - g> 33:9 W:/HFY:TFH L./IY L:/\$"M &F&OWN LI/T:HIL.FH W./L:/TIP:)ERET L:/KOL G.OWY"Y HF/)FREC):A\$ER YI\$:M:(W.)ET-K.FL-HA/+.OWBFH):A\$ER)FNOKIY (O&EH)OT/FM
 - h> W./PFX:ADW. W:/RFG:ZW. (AL K.FL-HA/+.OWBFH W:/(AL K.FL-HA/\$.FLOWM):A\$ER)FNOKIY (O&EH L./FH. S
- c) 33: 10-11, quote p: voice of joy and praise (pervasive in 30b-31a)
 - 1) quote f: 33:10 K.OH) FMAR Y:HWFH
 - 2) quote:
 - a> (OWD YI\$.FMA(B.A/M.FQOWM-HA/Z.EH):A\$ER)AT.EM)OM:RIYM XFR"B HW.) M"/)"YN)FDFM W./M"/)"YN B.:H"MFH B.:/(FR"Y Y:HW.DFH W./B:/XUCOWT Y:RW.\$FLAIM HA/N:\$AM.OWT M"/)"YN)FDFM W./M"/)"YN YOW\$"B W./M"/)"YN B.:H"MFH 33:11 QOWL &F&OWN W:/QOWL &IM:XFH QOWL XFTFN W:/QOWL K.AL.FH QOWL)OM:RIYM HOWDW.)ET-Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT K.IY-+OWB Y:HWFH K.IY-L:/(OWLFM XAS:D./OW M:BI)IYM T.OWDFH B."YT Y:HWFH K.IY-)F\$IYB)ET-\$:BW.T-HF/)FREC K.:/BF/RI)\$ONFH)FMAR Y:HWFH S
- d) 33:12-13, quote p: restoration of shepherding (cf. 31:24)
 - 1) quote f: 33:12 K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT
 - 2) quote:
 - a> (OWD YIH:YEH B.A/M.FQOWM HA/Z.EH HE/XFR"B M"/)"YN-)FDFM W:/(AD-B.:H"MFH W./B:/KFL-(FRFY/W N:W"H RO(IYM MAR:B.ICIYM CO)N
 - b> 33:13 B.:/(FR"Y HF/HFR B.:/(FR"Y HA/\$.:P"LFH

W./B:/(FR"Y HA/N.EGEB W./B:/)EREC B.IN:YFMIN W./BI/S:BIYB"Y Y:RW.\$FLAIM W./B:/(FR"Y Y:HW.DFH (OD T.A(:ABOR:NFH HA/C.O)N (AL-Y:D"Y MOWNEH

- 3) quote f:) FMAR Y: HWFH S
- e) 33:14-16, temporal p: the Lord our Righteousness: see next study.
- f) 33:17-18, quote p: restoration of David and Levi: see next study.
- B. 33:19-22, quote p: restoration of David and Levi: see next study.
- C. 33:23-26, quote p: restoration of David and Levi: see next study.