

3/30/25

Sermon Title: The Promise of the Restoration of Northern Israel

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soon-bae

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:1-22

(Jeremiah 31:1) "At that time," declares the Lord, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people."

(Jeremiah 31:2) This is what the Lord says: "The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought rest,

(Jeremiah 31:3) the Lord appeared to me in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.'

(Jeremiah 31:4) Again I will build you, and you will be rebuilt, Virgin Israel. You will take up your timbrels and go out to dance with the joyful.

(Jeremiah 31:5) Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit.

(Jeremiah 31:6) 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.'"

(Jeremiah 31:7) This is what the Lord says: "Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, 'Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel.'

(Jeremiah 31:8) 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.

(Jeremiah 31:9) 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.

(Jeremiah 31:10) Hear the word of the Lord, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.'

(Jeremiah 31:11) For the Lord will deliver Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.

(Jeremiah 31:12) 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 olive oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more.

(Jeremiah 31:13) Then young women 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.

(Jeremiah 31:14) I will satisfy the priests with abundance, and my people will be filled with my bounty," declares the Lord.

(Jeremiah 31:15) 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 they are no more."

(Jeremiah 31:16) 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.

(Jeremiah 31:17) So there is hope for your descendants," declares the Lord. "Your children will return to their own land.

(Jeremiah 31:18) "I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: 'You disciplined me like an untrained calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the Lord my God.'

(Jeremiah 31:19) 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."

(Jeremiah 31:20) "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.

(Jeremiah 31:21) "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. Return, Virgin Israel, return to your towns.

(Jeremiah 31:22) How long will you wander, unfaithful daughter? The Lord will create a new thing on earth—the woman will protect the man."

God declares the restoration of Israel throughout chapters 30 to 33 of this book. He proclaims the renewal and recovery of His people.

God gave this message to Jeremiah during the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah. At this time, the southern kingdom of Judah had already suffered two invasions by Babylon, and its people had been taken captive in two deportations.

Jeremiah weeps bitterly over the impending destruction of Judah.

The northern kingdom of Israel had already been destroyed by Assyria in 722 BC, about 130 years before Jeremiah's prophetic ministry, and its people had been taken into exile.

In this situation, God comforts the exiled people of Judah by delivering, through Jeremiah, His promise of restoration—not only for Judah but also for the northern kingdom of Israel.

This passage specifically speaks about the restoration of the northern kingdom of Israel within the broader context of Israel's restoration.

God declares that He will be the God of all Israel, including the northern kingdom, and they will be His people.

When the time comes for Israel's return, God will be the God of all the tribes.

(Jeremiah 31:1) "This is what the Lord says: 'At that time, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people.'"

(Jeremiah 31:2) "This is what the Lord says: 'The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought rest, I appeared to them.'"

(Jeremiah 31:3) "The Lord appeared to me from afar, saying, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.'"

God promises that when the time comes, He will extend His grace just as He did during the Exodus—when He rescued Israel from Pharaoh's army pursuing them to the Red Sea and when He guided them through the wilderness with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, providing manna for their sustenance.

Jeremiah recalls how God had previously appeared to him and declared, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."

This signifies that God is faithfully upholding the covenant He made with David. The covenant God made with David is not a conditional covenant based on human actions.

Rather, it is a covenant of grace, fulfilled solely by God's mercy.

Therefore, even if Israel sins, God will remain faithful to His covenant, loving them to the end and leading them to become His people.

Though He may discipline them with the rod and the staff, He will never remove their lampstand from His presence.

Northern Israel will be restored once again.

They will return to the land of Canaan and live a joyful life.

(Jeremiah 31:4) "Virgin Israel, I will build you up again, and you will be rebuilt. Again you will take up your timbrels and go out to dance with the joyful."

(Jeremiah 31:5) "Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit."

(Jeremiah 31:6) "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.'"

The term *Virgin Israel* refers to Northern Israel, in contrast to *Virgin Zion*, which refers to Southern Judah.

Samaria was the capital of Northern Israel, while Zion refers to Jerusalem, the capital of Southern Judah.

However, in this context, Zion represents the unified Israel's central place of worship.

Zion was home to the Jerusalem temple, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, making it the holiest site in Israel.

When Jeroboam rebelled against David's dynasty and established Northern Israel, he built rival religious centers in Bethel and Dan to compete with Jerusalem.

Yet, when the time of Israel's restoration comes, even the people of Northern Israel will gather in Zion.

Through God's discipline, they have undergone transformation.

In the past, they worshiped Baal, Ashtoreth, and other foreign idols.

But now, they have repented and are turning back to God.

God promises to save the remnant of Israel and bring them back to their homeland.

(Jeremiah 31:7) "This is what the Lord says: 'Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, 'Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel.'"

(Jeremiah 31:8) "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."

(Jeremiah 31:9) "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."

The remnant—those who were taken into exile—will all return, whether they are blind, lame, pregnant, or in labor.

They left their homeland in tears due to God's judgment.

But now, they will return with tears of repentance.

God will ensure that none of them stumble as He leads them on a straight path by streams of water.

God declares that He is the Father of Israel and that Ephraim is His firstborn, revealing His boundless love for them.

Just as a father welcomes back his prodigal son, God receives Israel with open arms.

He clothes them in new garments, places a ring on their finger, and prepares a feast with a fattened calf.

Overwhelmed by God's grace, they will weep in gratitude, repent of their past sins, and commit themselves anew to Him.

Jeremiah proclaims to the nations that God will restore Israel.

He declares that the Lord will be their good shepherd and protect them.

(Jeremiah 31:10) "Hear the word of the Lord, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and watch over them as a shepherd does his flock.'"

(Jeremiah 31:11) "For the Lord will deliver Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they."

(Jeremiah 31:12) "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 olive oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more."

(Jeremiah 31:13) "Then young women 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."

(Jeremiah 31:14) "I will satisfy the priests with abundance, and my people will be filled with my bounty," declares the Lord.

They will return and sing praises on Mount Zion, and God will bless them abundantly.

With grain, new wine, oil, and flocks of sheep and cattle, they will rejoice greatly. Through God's power and the life-giving blessings He bestows, their hearts will be like a well-watered garden.

Young women will dance with joy, and both young and old will celebrate together. God will turn their sorrow into joy, comforting them and filling their hearts with gladness.

Even the priests will be richly blessed, and the people will be fully satisfied with God's goodness.

The mourning of Rachel, the mother of Northern Israel, will come to an end.

(Jeremiah 31:15) 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 they are no more."

(Jeremiah 31:16) 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."

(Jeremiah 31:17) "So there is hope for your future," declares the Lord. "Your children will return to their own land."

The prominent tribes of Northern Israel were Joseph's descendants—Ephraim and Manasseh—and the tribe of Benjamin, all born of Rachel.

Ramah was the location of Rachel's tomb and also the gathering place where the people of Judah were assembled before being taken into Babylonian exile.

A sorrowful cry is heard in Ramah

It is the sound of Rachel weeping for her lost children.

Her children are gone before her eyes, and no words of comfort can reach her ears.

Rachel symbolizes the mother of Israel, representing the sorrow of parents as they watch their children taken into captivity.

There is no one who can console them.

Yet, God Himself brings comfort.

He assures them that their children will return from the land of their enemies—

So He tells Rachel to dry her tears, for there is hope.

Northern Israel repents.

(Ezekiel 31:18) "I have surely heard Ephraim's lament: 'You have disciplined me, and I was like a calf unaccustomed to the yoke. You have punished me, and I am in distress. You are my God, the Lord; bring me back, and I will return.'

(Ezekiel 31:19) "After I turned back, I repented; after I was instructed, I struck my thigh. I was ashamed and disgraced because I bore the disgrace of my youth."

Northern Israel, after receiving God's discipline, realized their mistakes and repented in sorrow.

They confessed, "You are my God, the Lord," and earnestly asked for guidance, desiring to return to the Lord.

Hearing the repentance of Northern Israel, God shows them compassion.

He promises to bring back Northern Israel, who had been wandering in foreign lands due to their rebellious sins, to their homeland, Jerusalem.

(Ezekiel 31:20) "Is Ephraim not 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 will surely have mercy on him," declares the Lord.

Even when God punishes Israel, He has never forgotten them.

He calls them "my beloved son, the child in whom I delight."

While He disciplines them to turn them from their sin, His heart is torn seeing the suffering of His beloved son.

God allows them to return.

If the path they took into captivity was a path of punishment, then the path back to their homeland is one of forgiveness and salvation, granted by God.

(Jeremiah 31:21) "Set up road signs for yourself; make yourself guideposts; consider well the highway, the road by which you went. Return, O virgin Israel, return to these your cities."

(Jeremiah 31:22) "How long will you wander, O faithless daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing on the earth— a woman will surround a man."

The journey back to their homeland is a long one, so they must prepare thoroughly.

They are instructed to set up signposts and markers so they do not stray from the path.

However, some of the exiles seem to have not responded actively to God's promise of salvation and continued to wander.

"The faithless daughter" refers to those who reject and refuse to accept the Lord God's promise of salvation.

Beloved members of Church of God's Dream,
God pronounces judgment upon Israel, who walks the path of sin and rebellion.
However, this judgment is not meant to destroy them.
It is meant to set them on the right path.

The heart of God is utterly devastated as He watches the painful and tragic sight of His beloved people, His children, suffering from the severe punishment He has imposed upon them.

If only they would repent and return, He would receive them again...

God, with a heart torn in grief, watches and waits.

In the end, they cry out to God, and hearing their cries, God quickly turns His heart and receives them back.

This is the heart of a parent, and this is God's heart.

God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to save us, who were suffering as captivities of Satan because of sin.

He allowed Jesus to die on the cross, shedding His blood in our place, to pay the price for our sins.

And for those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ, God cleanses them with the blood of Jesus Christ and grants them justification.

Let us not be like the 'rebellious daughter' among the captives of Israel, who did not believe in God's promise of salvation and rejected it.

Instead, let us all repent and return to God.

Then God will hear our cries, forgive us, and receive us back.

We will once again become God's people, and God will be our God.