

CHAPTER 33

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter — to confirm the promise of the restoration of the Jews, notwithstanding the present desolations of their country and dispersions of their people. And these promises have, both in type and tendency, a reference as far forward as to the gospel church, to which this second edition of the Jewish church was at length to resign its dignities and privileges. It is here promised,

I. That the city shall be rebuilt and re-established “in statu quo — in its former state” (v. 1-6).

II. That the captives, having their sins pardoned, shall be restored (v. 7, 8).

III. That this shall redound very much to the glory of God (v. 9).

IV. That the country shall have both joy and plenty (v. 10-14).

V. That way shall be made for the coming of the Messiah (v. 15, 16).

VI. That the house of David, the house of Levi, and the house of Israel, shall flourish again, and be established, and all three in the kingdom of Christ; a gospel ministry and the gospel church shall continue while the world stands (v. 17-26).

◀261▶ JEREMIAH 33:1-9

ENCOURAGING PROSPECTS

Observe here,

I. The date of this comfortable prophecy which God entrusted Jeremiah with. It is not exact in the time, only that it was after that in the foregoing chapter, when things were still growing worse and worse; it was *the second time*. *God speaketh once, yea, twice*, for the encouragement of his people. We are not only so disobedient that we have need of *precept upon precept* to bring us to our duty, but so distrustful that we have need of

promise upon promise to bring us to our comfort. This word, as the former, *came to Jeremiah* when *he was in prison*. Note, No confinement can deprive God's people of his presence; no locks nor bars can shut out his gracious visits; nay, oftentimes *as their afflictions abound their consolations much more abound*, and they have the most reviving communications of his favour when the world frowns upon them. Paul's sweetest epistles were those that bore date out of a prison.

II. The prophecy itself. A great deal of comfort is wrapped up in it for the relief of the captives, to keep them from sinking into despair. Observe,

1. Who it is that secures this comfort to them (v. 2): It is *the Lord, the maker thereof, the Lord that framed it*, He is the maker and former of heaven and earth, and therefore has all power in his hands; so it refers to Jeremiah's prayer, ^{<2837>}Jeremiah 32:17. He is the maker and former of Jerusalem, of Zion, built them at first, and therefore can rebuild them — built them for his own praise, and therefore *will*. He *formed it, to establish it*, and therefore it shall be established till those things be introduced which cannot be shaken, but shall remain for ever. He is the maker and former of this promise; he has laid the scheme for Jerusalem's restoration, and he that has formed it will establish it, he that has made the promise will make it good; for *Jehovah is his name*, a God giving being to his promises by the performance of them, and when he does this he is known by that name (^{<4183>}Exodus 6:3), a perfecting God. When the heavens and the earth were finished, then, and not till then, the creator is called *Jehovah*, ^{<4183>}Genesis 2:4.

2. How this comfort must be obtained and fetched in — by prayer (v. 3): *Call upon me, and I will answer them*. The prophet, having received some intimations of this kind, must be humbly earnest with God for further discoveries of his kind intentions. He had prayed (^{<2836>}Jeremiah 32:16), but he must pray again. Note, Those that expect to receive comforts from God must continue instant in prayer. We must call upon him, and then he will answer us. Christ himself must *ask, and it shall be given him*, ^{<4183>}Psalm 2:8. *I will show thee great and mighty things* (give thee a clear and full prospect of them), *hidden things, which*, though in part discovered already, yet *thou knowest not*, thou canst not understand or give credit to. Or this may refer not only to the prediction of these things which Jeremiah, if he desire it, shall be favoured with, but to the performance of the things themselves which the people of God, encouraged by this prediction, must

pray for. Note, Promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer. See ⁴³⁶⁷Ezekiel 36:37.

3. How deplorable the condition of Jerusalem was which made it necessary that such comforts as these should be provided for it, and notwithstanding which its restoration should be brought about in due time (v. 4, 5): *The houses of this city, not excepting those of the kings of Judah, are thrown down by the mounts, or engines of battery, and by the sword, or axes, or hammers.* It is the same word that is used ⁴³⁴⁹Ezekiel 26:9, *With his axes he shall break down thy towers.* The strongest stateliest houses, and those that were best furnished, were levelled with the ground. The fifth verse comes in in a parenthesis, giving a further instance of the present calamitous state of Jerusalem. Those that *came to fight with the Chaldeans*, to beat them off from the siege, did more hurt than good, provoked the enemy to be more fierce and furious in their assaults, so that the houses in Jerusalem were filled *with the dead bodies of men*, who died of the wounds they received in sallying out upon the besiegers. God says that they were such as he had *slain in his anger*, for the enemies' sword was his sword and their anger his anger. But, it seems, the men that were slain were generally such as had distinguished themselves by their wickedness, for they were the very men *for whose wickedness* God did now *hide himself from this city*, so that he was just in all he brought upon them.

4. What the blessings are which God has in store for Judah and Jerusalem, such as will redress all their grievances.

(1.) Is their state diseased? Is it wounded? God will provide effectually for the healing of it, though the disease was thought mortal and incurable, ⁴¹⁷²Jeremiah 7:22. *“The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint* (⁴¹⁶⁵Isaiah 1:5); but (v. 6) *I will bring it health and cure; I will prevent the death, remove the sickness, and set all to rights again,”* ⁴³¹⁷Jeremiah 30:17. Note, Be the case ever so desperate, if God undertake the cure, he will effect it. The sin of Jerusalem was the sickness of it (⁴¹⁶⁵Isaiah 1:6); its reformation therefore will be its recovery. And the following words tell us how that is wrought: *“I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth; I will give it to them in due time, and give them an encouraging prospect of it in the mean time.”* *Peace* stands here for all good; *peace and truth* are peace according to the promise and in pursuance of that: or *peace and truth* are peace and the true religion, peace and the true worship of

God, in opposition to the many falsehoods and deceits by which they had been led away from God. We may apply it more generally, and observe,

[1.] That peace and truth are the great subject-matter of divine revelation. These promises here lead us to the gospel of Christ, and in that God has revealed to us *peace and truth*, the method of true peace — truth to direct us, peace to make us easy. *Grace and truth*, and abundance of both, *come by Jesus Christ*. Peace and truth are the life of the soul, and Christ *came that we might have that life, and might have it more abundantly*. Christ rules by the power of truth (~~GEN~~ John 18:37) and by it he gives *abundance of peace*, ~~PSA~~ Psalm 72:7; 85:10.

[2.] That the divine revelation of peace and truth brings health and cure to all those that by faith receive it: it heals the soul of the diseases it has contracted, as it is a means of sanctification, ~~JOH~~ John 17:17. *He sent his word and healed them*, ~~PSA~~ Psalm 107:20. And it puts the soul into good order, and keeps it in a good frame and fit for the employments and enjoyments of the spiritual and divine life.

(2.) Are they scattered and enslaved, and is their nation laid in ruins? “*I will cause their captivity to return* (v. 7), both that of Israel and that of Judah” (for though those who returned under Zerubbabel were chiefly of Judah, and Benjamin, and Levi, yet afterwards many of all the other tribes returned), “*and I will rebuild them, as I built them at first.*” When they by repentance do their first works God will by their restoration do his first works.

(3.) Is sin the procuring cause of all their troubles? That shall be pardoned and subdued, and so the root of the judgments shall be killed, v. 8.

[1.] By sin they have become filthy, and odious to God's holiness, but God will cleanse them, and purify *them from their iniquity*. As those that were ceremonially unclean, and were therefore shut out from the tabernacle, when they were sprinkled with the *water of purification* had liberty of access to it again, so had they to their own land, and the privileges of it, when God had *cleansed them from their iniquities*. In allusion to that sprinkling, David prays, *Purge me with hyssop*.

[2.] By sin they have become guilty, and obnoxious to his justice; but he will *pardon all their iniquities*, will remove the punishment to which for

sin they were bound over. All who by sanctifying grace are cleansed from the filth of sin, by pardoning mercy are freed from the guilt of it.

(4.) Have both their sins and their sufferings turned to the dishonour of God? Their reformation and restoration shall redound as much to his praise, v. 9. Jerusalem thus rebuilt, Judah thus re-peopled, *shall be to me a name of joy*, as pleasing to God as ever they have been provoking, *and a praise and an honour before all the nations*. They, being thus restored, shall glorify God by their obedience to him, and he shall glorify himself by his favours to them. This renewed nation shall be as much a reputation to religion as formerly it has been a reproach to it. The nations *shall hear of all the good that God has wrought in them by his grace and of all the good he has wrought for them by his providence*. The wonders of their return out of Babylon shall make as great a noise in the world as ever the wonders of their deliverance out of Egypt did. and *they shall fear and tremble for all this goodness*.

[1.] The people of God themselves shall fear and tremble; they shall be much surprised at it, shall be afraid of offending so good a God and of forfeiting his favour. ^{<388>}Hosea 3:5, *They shall fear the Lord and his goodness*.

[2.] The neighbouring nations shall fear because of the prosperity of Jerusalem, shall look upon the growing greatness of the Jewish nation as really formidable, and shall be afraid of making them their enemies. When the church is *fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, she is terrible as an army with banners*.

^{<389>}JEREMIAH 33:10-16

ENCOURAGING PROSPECTS

Here is a further prediction of the happy state of Judah and Jerusalem after their glorious return out of captivity, issuing gloriously at length in the kingdom of the Messiah.

I. It is promised that the people who were long in sorrow shall again be filled with joy. Every one concluded now that the country would lie for ever desolate, that *no beasts* would be found in the land of Judah, no

inhabitant in the streets of Jerusalem, and consequently there would be nothing but universal and perpetual melancholy (v. 10); but, though weeping may endure for a time, joy will return. It was threatened (²⁴⁷³Jeremiah 7:34 and 16:9) that *the voice of joy and gladness should cease* there; but here it is promised that they shall revive again, that *the voice of joy and gladness shall be heard* there, because *the captivity shall be returned*; for then was *their mouth filled with laughter*, ⁴¹⁶³Psalm 126:1, 2.

1. There shall be common joy there, *the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride*; marriages shall again be celebrated, as formerly, with songs, which in Babylon they had laid aside, for their harps were hung on the willow-trees.

2. There shall be religious joy there; temple-songs shall be revived, *the Lord's songs*, which they could not *sing in a strange land*. There shall be heard in their private houses, and in the cities of Judah, as well as in the temple, *the voice of those that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts*. Note, Nothing is more the praise and honour of a people than to have God the glory of it, the glory both of the power and of the goodness by which it is effected; they shall praise him both as *the Lord of hosts* and as the God who *is good* and whose *mercy endures for ever*. This, though a song of old, yet, being sung upon this fresh occasion, will be a new song. We find this literally fulfilled at their return out of Babylon, ⁴¹⁸¹Ezra 3:11. They sang together in praising the Lord, *because he is good, for his mercy endures for ever*. The public worship of God shall be diligently and constantly attended upon: *They shall bring the sacrifice of praise to the house of the Lord*. All the sacrifices were intended for the praise of God, but this seems to be meant of the spiritual sacrifices of humble adorations and joyful thanksgivings, *the calves of our lips* (²⁸⁴⁸Hosea 14:2), which *shall please the Lord better than an ox of bullock*. The Jews say that in the days of the Messiah all sacrifices shall cease but *the sacrifice of praise*, and to those days this promise has a further reference.

II. It is promised that the country, which had lain long depopulated, shall be replenished and stocked again. It was now desolate, *without man and without beast*; but, after their return, the pastures shall again be *clothed with flocks*, ³⁵¹³Psalm 65:13. *In all the cities of Judah and Benjamin there shall be a habitation of shepherds*, v. 12, 13. This intimates,

1. The wealth of the country, after their return. It shall not be a habitation of beggars, who have nothing, but of shepherds and husbandmen, men of substance, with good stocks upon the ground they have returned to.

2. The peace of the country. It shall not be a habitation of soldiers, nor shall there be tents and barracks set up to lodge them, but there shall be shepherds; tents; for they shall hear no more the alarms of war, nor shall there be any to make even the shepherds afraid. See ^{<4843>}Psalm 144:13, 14.

3. The industry of the country, and their return to their original plainness and simplicity, from which, in the corrupt ages, they had sadly degenerated. The seed of Jacob, in their beginning, gloried in this, that they were shepherds (^{<4478>}Genesis 47:3), and so they shall now be again, giving themselves wholly to that innocent employment, *causing their flocks to lie down* (v. 12) and to *pass under the hands of him that telleth them* (v. 13); for, though their flocks are numerous, they are not numberless, nor shall they omit to number them, that they may know if any be missing and may seek after it. Note, It is the prudence of those who have ever so much of the world to keep an account of what they have. Some think that they *pass under the hand of him that telleth them* that they may be tithed, ^{<6273>}Leviticus 27:32. Then we may take the comfort of what we have when God has had his dues out of it. Now because it seemed incredible that a people, reduced as now they were, should ever recover such a degree of peace and plenty as this, here is subjoined a general ratification of these promises (v. 14): *I will perform that good thing which I have promised*. Though the promise may sometimes work slowly towards an accomplishment, it works surely. *The days will come*, though they are long in coming.

III. To crown all these blessings which God has in store for them, here is a promise of the Messiah, and of that everlasting righteousness which he should bring in (v. 15, 16), and probably this is *that good thing*, that great good thing, which in the latter days, days that were yet to come, God would perform, as he had promised to Judah and Israel, and to which their return out of captivity and their settlement again in their own land was preparatory. *From the captivity to Christ* is one of the famous periods, ^{<4017>}Matthew 1:17. This promise of the Messiah we had before (^{<2215>}Jeremiah 23:5, 6), and there it came in as a confirmation of the promise of the shepherds whom God would set over them, which would make one think

that the promise here concerning the shepherds and their flocks, which introduces it, is to be understood figuratively. Christ is here prophesied of,

1. As a rightful King. He is a *branch of righteousness*, not a usurper, for he *grows up unto David*, descends from his loins, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and is that seed with whom that covenant should be established, so that his title is unexceptionable.

2. As a righteous king, righteous in enacting laws, waging wars, and giving judgment, righteous in vindicating those that suffer wrong and punishing those that do wrong: *He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land*. This may point at Zerubbabel, in the type, who governed with equity, not as Jehoiakim had done (^{<207>}Jeremiah 22:17); but it has a further reference to him to whom all judgment is committed and who shall *judge the world in righteousness*.

3. As a king that shall protect his subjects from all injury. By him *Judah shall be saved* from wrath and the curse, and, being so saved, *Jerusalem shall dwell safely*, quiet from the fear of evil, and enjoying a holy security and serenity of mind, in a dependence upon the conduct of this prince of peace, this prince of their peace.

4. As a king that shall be praised by his subjects: “*This is the name whereby they shall call him*” (so the Chaldee reads it, the Syriac, and vulgar Latin); “this name of his they shall celebrate and triumph in, and by this name they shall call upon him.” It may be read, more agreeably to the original, *This is he who shall call her, The Lord our righteousness*. As Moses's altar is called *Jehovah-nissi* (^{<2075>}Exodus 17:15), and Jerusalem *Jehovah-shammah* (^{<3485>}Ezekiel 48:35), intimating that they glory in Jehovah as present with them and *their banner*, so here the city is called *The Lord our righteousness*, because they glory in Jehovah as their righteousness. That which was before said to be the name of Christ (says Mr. Gataker) is here made the name of Jerusalem, the city of the Messiah, the church of Christ. He it is that imparts righteousness to her, for he is *made of God to us righteousness*, and she, by bearing that name, professes to have her whole righteousness, not from herself, but from him. *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, (^{<2451>}Isaiah 45:24. And *we are made the righteousness of God in him*. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall have this name of the Messiah so much in their mouths that they shall themselves be called by it.

~~2887~~ JEREMIAH 33:17-26

SECURITY OF GOD'S COVENANTS

Three of God's covenants, that of royalty with David and his seed, that of the priesthood with Aaron and his seed, and that of Peculiarity with Abraham and his seed, seemed to be all broken and lost while the captivity lasted; but it is here promised that, notwithstanding that interruption and discontinuance for a time, they shall all three take place again, and the true intents and meaning of them all shall be abundantly answered in the New Testament blessings, typified by those conferred on the Jews after their return out of captivity.

I. The covenant of royalty shall be secured and the promises of it shall have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, v. 17. The throne of Israel was overturned in the captivity; the crown had fallen from their head; there was not *a man to sit on the throne of Israel*; Jeconiah was written childless. After their return the house of David made a figure again; but it in the Messiah that this promise is performed that *David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of Israel*, and that David shall have *always a son to reign upon his throne*. For as long as the man Christ Jesus sits on the right hand of the throne of God, rules the world, and rules it for the good of the church, to which he is a quickening head, and glorified head over all things, as long as he is *King upon the holy hill of Zion*, David does not want a successor, nor is the covenant with him broken. When the first-begotten was brought into the world it was declared concerning him, *The Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, ~~413~~ Luke 1:32, 33. For the confirmation of this it is promised,

1. That the covenant with David shall be as firm as the ordinances of heaven, to the stability of which that of God's promise is compared, ~~2885~~ Jeremiah 31:35, 36. There is a covenant of nature, by which the common course of providence is settled and on which it is founded, here called *a covenant of the day and the night* (v. 20, 25), because this is one of the articles of it, That there shall be *day and night in their season*, according to the distinction put between them in the creation, when God divided between the light and the darkness, and established their mutual succession, and a government to each, that *the sun should rule by day* and

the moon and stars by night (^{<0004>}Genesis 1:4, 5, 16), which establishment was renewed after the flood (^{<0022>}Genesis 8:22), and has continued ever since, ^{<0012>}Psalms 19:2. *The morning and the evening* have both of them their regular *outgoings* (^{<0018>}Psalms 65:8); *the day-spring knows its place, knows its time*, and keeps both, so do *the shadows of the evening*; and, while the world stands, this course shall not be altered, this covenant shall not be broken. *The ordinances of heaven and earth* (of this communication between heaven and earth, the dominion of these ordinances of heaven upon the earth), *which God has appointed* (v. 25; compare ^{<0033>}Job 38:33), shall never be disappointed. Thus firm shall the covenant of redemption be with the Redeemer — God's servant, but David our King, v. 21. This intimates that Christ shall have a church on earth to the world's end; he shall see a seed in which he shall prolong his days till time and day shall be no more. *Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*; and when *the end cometh*, and not till then, it *shall be delivered up to God, even the Father*. But it intimates that the condition of it in this world shall be intermixed and counterchanged, prosperity and adversity succeeding each other, as light and darkness, day and night. But this is plainly taught us, that, as sure as we may be that, though the sun will set tonight, it will rise again tomorrow morning, whether we live to see it or no, so sure we may be that, though the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world may for a time be clouded and eclipsed by corruptions and persecutions, yet it will shine forth again, and recover its lustre, in the time appointed.

2. That *the seed of David* shall be as numerous as *the host of heaven*, that is, the spiritual seed of the Messiah, that shall be born to him by the efficacy of his gospel and his Spirit working with it. *From the womb of the morning he shall have the dew of their youth*, to be his *willing people*, ^{<0013>}Psalms 110:3. Christ's seed are not, as David's were, his successors, but his subjects; yet the day is coming when they also shall reign with him (v. 22): *As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, so will I multiply the seed of David*, so that there shall be no danger of the kingdom's being extinct, or extirpated, for want of heirs. The children are numerous; *and, if children, then heirs*.

II. The covenant of priesthood shall be secured, and the promises of that also shall have their full accomplishment. This seemed likewise to be forgotten during the captivity, when there was no altar, no temple service, for the priests to attend upon; but this also shall revive. It did so;

immediately upon their coming back to Jerusalem there were priests and Levites ready *to offer burnt-offerings* and to *do sacrifice continually* (^{<Ezra>}Ezra 3:2, 3), as is here promised, v. 18. But that priesthood soon grew corrupt; *the covenant of Levi was profaned* (as appears ^{<Malachi>}Malachi 2:8), and in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans it came to a final period. We must therefore look elsewhere for the performance of this word, that the covenant with the Levites, the priests, God's ministers, shall be as firm, and last as long, as the covenant *with the day and the night*. And we find it abundantly performed,

1. In the priesthood of Christ, which supersedes that of Aaron, and is the substance of that shadow. While that great *high priest of our profession* is always appearing *in the presence of God for us*, presenting the virtue of his blood by which he made atonement in the incense of his intercession, it may truly be said that *the Levites do not want a man before God to offer continually*, ^{<Hebrews>}Hebrews 7:3, 17. He is a priest for ever. The covenant of the priesthood is called *a covenant of peace* (^{<Numbers>}Numbers 25:12), of *life and peace*, ^{<Malachi>}Malachi 2:5. Now we are sure that this covenant is not broken, nor in the least weakened, while Jesus Christ is himself our life and our peace. This covenant of priesthood is here again and again joined with that of royalty, for Christ is a *priest upon his throne*, as Melchizedek.

2. In a settled gospel ministry. While there are faithful ministers to preside in religious assemblies, and to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, *the priests, the Levites*, do not want successors, and such as *have obtained a more excellent ministry*. The apostle makes those that preach the gospel to come in the room of those that served at the altar, ^{<1 Corinthians>}1 Corinthians 9:13, 14.

3. In all true believers, who are *a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood* (^{<1 Peter>}1 Peter 2:5, 9), who are *made to our God kings and priests* (^{<Revelation>}Revelation 1:6); they *offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God*, and themselves, in the first place, *living sacrifices*. Of these Levites this promise must be understood (v. 22), that they shall be as numerous *as the sand of the sea*, the same that is promised concerning Israel in general (^{<Genesis>}Genesis 22:17); for all God's spiritual Israel are spiritual priests, ^{<Revelation>}Revelation 5:9, 10; 7:9, 15.

III. The covenant of peculiarity likewise shall be secured and the promises of that covenant shall have their full accomplishment in the gospel Israel. Observe,

1. How this covenant was looked upon as broken during the captivity, v. 24. God asks the prophet, “Hast thou not heard, and dost *thou not consider, what this people have spoken?*” either the enemies of Israel, who triumphed in the extirpation of a people that had made such a noise in the world, or the unbelieving Israelites themselves, “*this people among whom thou dwellest;*” they have broken covenant with God, and then quarrel with him as if he had not dealt faithfully with them. *The two families which the Lord hath chosen*, Israel and Judah, whereas they were but one when he chose them, *he hath even cast them off.* “*Thus have they despised my people*, that is, despised the privilege of being my people as if it were a privilege of no value at all.” The neighbouring nations despised them as now *no more a nation*, but the ruins of a nation, and looked upon all their honour as laid in the dust; but,

2. See how firm the covenant stands notwithstanding, as firm as that with day and night; sooner will God suffer day and night to cease than he will *cast away the seed of Jacob*. This cannot refer to the seed of Jacob according to the flesh, for they are cast away, but to the Christian church, in which all these promises were to be lodged, as appears by the apostle's discourse, ^{<510>}Romans 11:1, etc. Christ is that seed of David that is to be perpetual dictator to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and, as this people shall never want such a king, so this king shall never want such a people. Christianity shall continue in the dominion of Christ, and the subjection of Christians to him, till day and night come to an end. And, as a pledge of this, that promise is again repeated, *I will cause their captivity to return;* and, having brought them back, *I will have mercy on them.* To whom this promise refers appears ^{<816>}Galatians 6:16, where all that *walk according to the gospel rule* are made to be the *Israel of God*, on whom *peace and mercy* shall be.