

Hope for Restoration

The prophets were known for telling the people that they had broken God's covenant. As the time came for the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., Jeremiah and Ezekiel were clear about this. Jeremiah said, "They have turned back to the

iniquities of their ancestors who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers" (Jer. 9:10). Ezekiel, likewise, said, "For thus says the Lord God, 'I will also do with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant'" (Ezek. 16:59). This is why Jerusalem fell, and this is why the people went into captivity. They broke the covenant and refused to repent, but that's not the end of the story.

The prophets interspersed the messages of judgment and repentance with glimpses of hope. This hope would be found both in the initial return from captivity and in the future coming of the Messiah. Jeremiah spoke of the new covenant that would be made (31:31-34), and he also spoke of the hope of initial restoration:

"For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will



call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you,' declares the Lord, 'and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations

and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the Lord, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'" (Jer. 29:10-14)

God would bring His people back out of the captivity and restore them to their place. To illustrate the power of this hope, let's return briefly to a couple of the visions of Ezekiel:

1. Ezekiel 37 describes the valley of the dry bones. The point of this was to point to the future restoration of the people, to bring them to life once again. Only God would have the power to do this.

2. Then, Ezekiel spends much time on the restoration of the temple from chapter 40 and following. This included sacrifices, the priesthood, and the ordinances. Most importantly, it was a depiction of the return of God's glory and presence in and among the people. "Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me. He said to me, 'Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever...'" (Ezek. 43:6-7a).

Ultimately, these restoration promises are fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah. Ezekiel ends his message with the words, “The Lord is there” (Ezek. 48:35). This is echoed in the promise of Isaiah, that the son to be born is Immanuel, God with us (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). Jesus was God manifested in the flesh, and He “dwelt” (tabernacled) among us, demonstrating the glory of God (John 1:14, 18).

Waiting for the fulfillment of hope is difficult. God’s people needed patience, especially when they didn’t understand exactly what God’s purposes and time-frame were going to be. The prophets themselves often wanted to understand and know more than they did (see 1 Peter 1:10-12). Yet they needed to be still and wait on the Lord (recall Habakkuk’s message).

As Jeremiah walked through the broken down and burned city of Jerusalem, he was deeply sorrowful and downtrodden. Yet even in the midst of this, he could recall the words that would help provide a sense of hope. He knew that judgment had to happen, but he also was well aware of the promises of restoration. Couple that with the fact that God is always faithful to His word, and we know why he could say this:

This I recall to my mind,
 Therefore I have hope.
 The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never
 cease,
 For His compassions never fail.
 They are new every morning;
 Great is Your faithfulness.
 “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,
 “Therefore I have hope in Him. (Lam. 3:21-
 24)

For God’s people today, we are also aware of judgment to come (Acts 17:30-31). Even so,

we serve the Lord in hope because we have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3-5). With this hope in place, we can endure the difficulties of the present and future, knowing something far better is coming. “For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come” (Heb. 13:14).

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