

Sermon Series: The Big Picture
Sermon title: Restoration & Return
Scripture: Jeremiah 32:36-42

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Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church
S.C. Brown, Pastor

We've been walking through the Bible to try and grasp the major storyline. We began in Genesis and today we'll get to the end of the Old Covenant or Old Testament.

There have been two major characters that we've seen over and over again. First, we've seen God. God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. He rules over his creation. He's building a kingdom on earth and man should live *under* his loving rule to experience his goodness and blessing.

Secondly, we've seen man. What we've learned about man is that he is sinful. Man, consistently and perpetually rejects God's rule over him. We've seen phrases like, "*every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" and "*they turned their back toward me and not their face*" and "*they've forsaken me, the fountain of living waters.*"

The biggest problem all along is that man's heart is bad. He cannot keep the standards and requirements that God has because from his very nature he is sinful.

Something needs to happen to change man's heart.

We left off last week with the children of Israel rejecting God's rule again and following gods of wood and metal. So, God exiled them out of his land.

But if you remember, God has made some promises and so far we are still waiting on these promises to be completely fulfilled.

In **Genesis 3:15**, God promised that there would come an offspring from Eve who would succeed where they failed. Instead of giving into the serpent's temptation, HE will crush the serpent's head.

In **Genesis 12:2**, the news of this offspring pops up again, this time to a man named Abraham. God says that Abraham will become a great nation of people and that he'd give them a land and that one of Abraham's offspring (same offspring) would bless all nations of the world.

Genesis 49:8, we see this offspring pop up again. He will come from Judah's tribe and he will be a ruler and king; a king that all nations will obey.

In **2 Samuel 7**, God makes promise to David, who is from the tribe of Judah, that his descendants will always rule because a king will come who will live and rule forever.

So, we've been finding pieces here and there and putting this Bible puzzle together. It's starting to take shape, but things are not clear yet. In fact, things aren't getting better, they're getting worse. It looks like God has forgotten his promises.

At this point in the story, Jerusalem has been burned to the ground. The people are gone, kicked out of the land and taken captive to Assyria and Babylon. And things look hopeless.

We are going to back up in the story just a bit, right before the Exile because there's another promise here that we need to see. A promise that is going to solve the biggest problem.

Turn in your Bibles to **Jeremiah chapter 32**.

[Read Jeremiah 32:1-3]

The Babylonians are camped outside the city of Jerusalem and Jeremiah is in prison for prophesying bad news. He told the king the truth that the city will be destroyed and that the king will be taken to Babylon.

Look in verse 6

[Read Jeremiah 32:6-9]

God tells him to buy a piece of property.

What? You're in jail for one. And two, the strongest army in the world is at the gates and getting ready to destroy the city, burn it to the ground and take everyone captive to Babylon.

"You want me to buy property God? Quite a risky investment don't you think."

Usually, when an army is knocking at your door, you don't want to buy property.

I read this week that Li Kai Shing did what many didn't think was a good idea in the year 1967. As Hong Kong was dealing with riots and the fear that the Communists Red Guards would take over Hong Kong, many people left Hong Kong and real estate prices plummeted. Li Kai Shing, a plastic flower maker, seized the chance to buy while many others were selling.

So, in verses 1-15 we have this account of God telling Jeremiah to buy some property at the worst of times

from man's perspective. Yet, we find there's a reason why God is telling him to buy it and we see that in verses 14-15.

14 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time. 15 For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.'

Then, in verses 16-25 we have Jeremiah's prayer of bewilderment at God's strange request.

He says in verses 24 & 25,

"24 Behold, the siege mounds have come up to the city to take it, and because of sword and famine and pestilence the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. What you spoke has come to pass, and behold, you see it. 25 Yet you, O Lord God, have said to me, "Buy the field for money and get witnesses"—though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans."

What is God's response in verse 26?

**26 The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah:
27 "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?"**

So, the buying of property is a sign. A sign of hope. It's a sign of hope and a promise that is "fixed in the heavens." He says that in chapter 31 and 33. And it's not just a promise but the promise of something amazing that God is going to do.

After all the rebellion, after all the idolatry, after all the rejecting of God's law, after all the ingratitude, God is going to show compassion yet again. He is a God who is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Take a look at the contrast here in chapter 32. Look at verse 28-35. We need to read this to see the contrast. We looked last this last week.

[Read 32:28-35]

But the transition in verse 36 is almost unbelievable! This whole section just oozes with GRACE!

36 "Now therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, 'It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence': 37 Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. 38 And they

shall be my people, and I will be their God. 39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. 40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. 41 I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.
42 "For thus says the Lord: Just as I have brought all this great disaster upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I promise them.

I will bring them back. [He brought them back he had promised 70 years later through King Cyrus of Persia. God put it in his heart to let them go back and build the temple. By grace. Read Ezra 1-3]

I will make them dwell in safety.

I will be their God.

I will give them one heart that they may fear me.

I will make with them an everlasting covenant.

I will not turn away from doing good to them.

I will put the fear of me in their hearts.

I will rejoice in doing them good.

I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.

I will bring upon them good.

In chapter 31 he had already said something similar.

[Read Jeremiah 31:31-34]

A New Covenant.

I will put my law within them

I will write it on their hearts

I will be their God.

I will forgive their iniquity.

I will remember their sin no more.

So, God says this New Covenant will not be like the Old Covenant. (31:31-32)

The Old Covenant hinged on personal and perfect obedience. But since the fall, no mere human has been able to keep the law of God perfectly but consistently breaks it in thought, word and deed.

This New Covenant will be different.

Chew on **Jeremiah 32:40** for a moment.

“I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.”

Wow. What grace. What love. What mercy. They have done nothing but rebel and here he promises that he will do whatever it takes. He will change their hearts. That’s amazing and earthshaking.

That's like saying, "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

Ezekiel 28:26-27

That's like saying, "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." **Micah 7:18-19**

Has God put the fear of himself in your heart?

Has God taken away your heart of stone and given you a heart of flesh?

Has God cast all your sins into the depths of the sea?

How can God do this? How does he do this?

How does God save and change a person?

Through the New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised inheritance since a death has occurred that redeemed them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

[Hebrews 9:15,26]

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

How many times has the LORD brought you back from your waywardness?

How many times has he restored you?

How many times has he returned you from bondage?

He is a God who is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.