

Jeremiah's Message of Hope

READ JEREMIAH 29; 31

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

JEREMIAH 31:33

Jeremiah remains in the devastated Judah. He does not support continued resistance to Babylon; those who do are quickly killed. Instead, Jeremiah counsels those in Babylon to move on with their lives: “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29:4–7).

Jeremiah foresees the people returning to Jerusalem as a living community: “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Once more they shall use these words in the land of Judah and in its towns when I restore their fortunes: ‘The LORD bless you, O abode of righteousness, O holy hill!’ And Judah and all its towns shall live there together, and the farmers and those who wander with their flocks. I will satisfy the weary, and all who are faint I will replenish” (Jeremiah 31:23–25).

Most important, God will re-create the people. Instead of only following the externals of the Law, forgetting its heart, the people will be open to speaking heart to heart with God.

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31–34)

From the ashes of despair rises a spring of new hope.

CCC, 2562–64: The Holy Spirit and prayer