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OLD TESTAMENT

Jeremiah 31:7-14

ISRAEL GATHERED

For thus says the Lord:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
“Save, O Lord, your people,
the remnant of Israel.”

See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labor together;
a great company, they shall return here.

With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back;
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path where they shall not stumble,
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him
and will keep him as a shepherd does a flock.”

For the Lord has ransomed Jacob
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.

Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy;
I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow.
I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the Lord.

OVERVIEW

Jeremiah 31:7–14 is part of a broader prophetic section often referred to as the "Book of Consolation" (Jeremiah 30–33), in which the prophet Jeremiah offers hope and restoration to the people of Israel after foretelling judgment and exile. These verses describe a joyful return from



exile, God's tender care for His people, and the transformation of their mourning into celebration.

This passage overflows with images of divine restoration, echoing themes of redemption, rejoicing, and abundance. It anticipates a future in which God's scattered people are gathered and comforted.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Jeremiah was a prophet during the final decades of the Kingdom of Judah (7th–6th century BCE), a time filled with political instability, idolatry, and looming conquest by Babylon. Most of the book contains strong messages of warning and judgment. However, chapters 30–33 serve as a striking interlude of hope and renewal.

In **Jeremiah 31**, the prophet declares that God will **bring back the remnant** of Israel (the Northern Kingdom, already conquered by Assyria in 722 BCE) and Judah (soon to be exiled by Babylon in 586 BCE). Verses 7–14 envision a reunited, rejoicing people—restored physically to their land and spiritually to their God.

Key phrases such as:

- "O Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel" (v.7),
 - "They shall come and sing aloud" (v.12), and
 - "I will turn their mourning into joy" (v.13)
- point to both national restoration and a deeply personal healing.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

This passage was likely composed or circulated during or shortly before the **Babylonian exile (586 BCE)**. Politically, the region was dominated by massive shifts of power: Assyria had fallen, and Babylon was rising. Judah, a small vassal state, was caught between empires.

The promise of return was radical in this context: Babylon was known for relocating conquered peoples to assimilate them. To claim that a remnant of Israel and Judah would return and flourish again was to challenge the perceived finality of empire and exile. It asserted **God's sovereignty over geopolitics** and His ongoing covenant faithfulness.

From a broader Ancient Near Eastern standpoint, promises of divine restoration weren't uncommon in royal inscriptions. However, Jeremiah's vision uniquely centers on **God's mercy** rather than military power or royal legitimacy.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **722 BCE** – Assyria conquers the Northern Kingdom (Israel), and its people are dispersed.
- **586 BCE** – Babylon destroys Jerusalem and exiles many from Judah.
- **538 BCE** – Persian King Cyrus issues a decree allowing Jewish exiles to return (Ezra 1:1–4).
- Jeremiah 31:7–14 looks prophetically ahead to this post-exilic return and spiritually reflects the future **restoration of God's covenant people**.



SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION & MODERN-DAY CONTEXT

Metaphorically, this passage is often interpreted as **a movement from brokenness to wholeness, from exile to homecoming**—a journey applicable to both individuals and communities today.

- **The "remnant"** can symbolize marginalized, overlooked, or wounded people finding restoration.
- **Weeping turned into joy** (v.13) mirrors psychological and emotional healing after trauma, grief, or loss.
- **The gathering "from the farthest parts of the earth"** (v.8) metaphorically affirms God's global and inclusive outreach, which in Christian theology prefigures the Gospel's universal scope.

Modern-day context examples:

- Communities recovering after natural disasters, war, or displacement can find hope in God's promises of restoration.
- Individuals enduring seasons of depression, alienation, or personal "exile" may hear these verses as affirmations of divine presence and future joy.
- In an age of division, Jeremiah's vision encourages the Church and society to pursue unity, compassion, and inclusive joy.

SUMMARY

Jeremiah 31:7–14 is a jubilant prophecy of restoration for the people of Israel and Judah. It pictures a compassionate God gathering His people from exile, leading them with care, and turning their mourning into dancing. Historically rooted in the aftermath of national trauma, the passage prophetically anticipates physical and spiritual renewal. It reassures readers—ancient and modern alike—that **God's mercy is not constrained by political or personal ruin**. Restoration is not only possible—it is promised.



NEW TESTAMENT (GOSPEL)

John 20:19-31

JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord."

But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

OVERVIEW

John 20:19–31 captures two post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to His disciples. The first occurs on the evening of the resurrection day, and the second takes place a week later. This passage contains the well-known encounter between Jesus and "Doubting Thomas," ending with a theological statement about belief and the purpose of John's Gospel.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This passage comes near the conclusion of John's Gospel. John 20 begins with the discovery of the empty tomb and Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene. Verses 19–31 continue that resurrection narrative by shifting the focus to how Jesus appears to His disciples and commissions them for ministry.

Key theological elements include:



- **Peace** (Jesus says “Peace be with you” three times),
- **The Holy Spirit** (Jesus breathes on them),
- **Faith** (especially through Thomas’s doubt and confession),
- **Mission** (sending the disciples just as the Father sent Jesus).

This is not just a personal encounter; it’s a theological and ecclesial commissioning. It builds the foundation for the post-resurrection church.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

Roman Rule and Jewish Tensions:

- The disciples were hiding “for fear of the Jews” (v.19), referring not to all Jewish people but to the Jewish authorities (like the Sanhedrin) aligned with Roman power structures.
- Political and religious leaders had conspired to crucify Jesus; thus, His followers were in danger too.

Locked Doors:

- This detail isn’t just literal; it symbolizes fear, uncertainty, and isolation. The resurrection breaks through both physical and spiritual barriers.

Commissioning & Authority:

- Jesus breathing the Spirit recalls both **Genesis 2:7** (God breathes life into Adam) and **Ezekiel 37** (the valley of dry bones). This gesture establishes a new spiritual creation and mission for the disciples.
- The forgiveness of sins (v.23) signals a major theological shift: Jesus is entrusting this sacred responsibility to His followers—an act with both religious and social implications in the early church’s development.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Setting:** Evening of Resurrection Sunday (~30–33 CE) and one week later.
- **Timeline within John:** Follows immediately after the empty tomb account and precedes the final chapter (John 21).
- This occurs during **Passover Week**, which would have heightened the religious and political tension in Jerusalem.

Theologically and liturgically, this passage is often associated with “**Low Sunday**” or “**Thomas Sunday**” in the Christian liturgical calendar, the Sunday after Easter.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION & MODERN-DAY CONTEXT

Peace in a Locked Room (vv.19, 21, 26)

Metaphorically, this represents how Christ meets us **behind closed doors**—when we’re anxious, isolated, or doubtful. Jesus brings peace *not by removing fear*, but by appearing in the midst of it. Today, this may resonate with people hiding from the world due to trauma, shame, illness, or even disillusionment with religion.

Breathing the Spirit (v.22)

This is symbolic of **spiritual rebirth**. Scholars view this as a prelude to Pentecost (Acts 2) or as John’s unique take on it. In a modern sense, it signifies **empowerment in**



vulnerability—how God equips ordinary people to do extraordinary things through the Spirit.

Thomas's Doubt and Confession (vv.24–28)

Rather than being shamed, Thomas is **invited to question** and then to believe. His confession ("My Lord and my God") is the most explicit affirmation of Jesus's divinity in the Gospel. Today, this passage speaks to **spiritual seekers** who struggle with blind belief and need to touch truth personally. Faith, in this view, is not the absence of doubt, but the journey through it.

Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen (v.29)

This anticipates future generations who won't witness Jesus physically. It reassures believers today that **faith without physical proof is not inferior**, but blessed.

Purpose Statement (vv.30–31)

John gives us his "why": this Gospel is written so readers may believe Jesus is the Messiah and have life. The modern equivalent might be found in a testimony, a podcast, or a blog—intentionally crafted to evoke belief, not just to inform.

SUMMARY

John 20:19–31 narrates two appearances of the risen Jesus to His disciples. In the first, He offers them peace, breathes on them the Holy Spirit, and commissions them for a mission of forgiveness. In the second, a week later, Thomas—who had doubted the resurrection—is invited to see and touch Jesus's wounds. His resulting confession leads to a blessing for all who will believe without seeing. The passage closes with a purpose statement affirming that John's Gospel was written to inspire belief and offer life.