

# O Virgin Daughter Israel!

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Scripture: Jeremiah 31:4–22

Lord's Day Worship — July 19, 2026

Rev. Sungjik Kim

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## Scripture Reading — Jeremiah 31:4–22 (ESV)

*4 Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers. 5 Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant and shall enjoy the fruit. 6 For there shall be a day when watchmen will call in the hill country of Ephraim: 'Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.' 7 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, 'O Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel.' 8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. 9 With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. 10 "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 keeps his flock.' 11 For the Lord has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. 12 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 be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more. 13 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. 14 I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the Lord." 15 Thus says the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." 16 Thus says the Lord: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. 17 There is hope for your future, declares the Lord, and your children shall come back to their own country. 18 I have heard Ephraim grieving, 'You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the Lord my God. 19 For after I had turned away, I relented, and after I was instructed, I struck my thigh; I was ashamed, and I was confounded, because I bore the disgrace of my youth.' 20 Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the Lord. 21 "Set up road markers for yourself; make yourself guideposts; consider well the highway, the road*

*by which you went. Return, O virgin Israel, return to these your cities. 22 How long will you waver, O faithless daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing on the earth: a woman encircles a man."*

## Introduction

Hallelujah!

I didn't want to leave the book of Jeremiah after just one pass, so I've come back to meditate on it further. Today's word concerns the identity of the saints — the identity God gives us when He calls out, "O virgin daughter Israel!" Let's look together at verses 4, 21, and 22.

*"O Virgin Daughter Israel!"*

*v.4 "O virgin Israel," again I will build you, and you shall be built; again you shall take up your tambourines and go out dancing with the joyful.*

*v.21 "O virgin Israel," set up your road markers, make your guideposts; consider well the highway, the road by which you went. Return, return to these your cities.*

*v.22 "O faithless daughter," how long will you waver? "The Lord has created a new thing on the earth" — a woman shall encircle a man.*

The Hebrew word for "virgin" here means, as in most cultures, "a woman set apart in purity, waiting for her bridegroom." So God speaks of a bridegroom-and-bride relationship, describing our purity and our being set apart in holiness. And at the same time, further down, He calls us "faithless daughter" — here God is describing our relationship to Him as Father and child.

So we are "virgin Israel," called to live in purity and holiness as the bride of the Bridegroom, and we are "daughter Israel," called to stop wandering and return to the Lord in obedience as His children. Put together — "O virgin daughter Israel!" — this, I believe, is the very identity by which the Lord calls us, His saints, today as well.

As we've considered before, let's meditate a little more deeply on today's word. Just as it says, "the Lord has created a new thing on the earth," my prayer is that all of us, as new creations in Christ, would become the "virgin daughter Israel" whom the Lord Himself is building up. We'll look at two points.

## I. Children Rebuilt Again! (The Restoration of the Saints)

First, the identity of "virgin daughter Israel" means we are "children rebuilt again" — and this speaks of the restoration of the saints. Let's read verse 4 again.

*"Children Rebuilt Again!" (The Restoration of the Saints)*

*v.4 "O virgin Israel, again I will build you, and you shall be built" (ESV). Again you shall take up your tambourines and go out dancing with the joyful.*

*v.22 "How long will you waver, O faithless daughter? The Lord has created a new thing on the*

*earth" (New Creation) — a woman shall encircle a man.*

⇒ *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

You — whose original, God-given beauty from creation had utterly collapsed; you — who, because of your weakness and sin, could never rebuild yourself no matter how hard you tried, virgin daughter Israel — to you God now says: "I Myself will build you up again! You shall be rebuilt!" As the ESV puts it, "Again I will build you, and you shall be built!" — this is a word of restoration. The word "build" here is *banah* — the same word used for reconstructing a building. God is saying He will personally renovate us, rebuild us, the way a demolished house is torn down and built again. "A building remade, a house completely renovated" — that is what you, virgin daughter Israel, are.

Verse 22 says something similar. "The Lord has created a new thing on the earth" is, in the end, the same as "New Creation" — exactly what 2 Corinthians 5:17 declares: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

As for the phrase at the end of verse 22, "a woman shall encircle a man," there are various interpretations, but the heart of the passage is this: something impossible becomes possible. Both "woman" and "man" here are singular — one woman encircling one man; and "man" here originally carries the sense of "a mighty warrior." For a single woman to encircle and overcome so mighty a warrior seems utterly impossible — and yet! When the Lord creates a new thing within us, when we become new creations in Christ, when we truly become "children rebuilt again," then everything that seemed impossible becomes, in the end, possible for restoration in us as well. This applies to the physical realm, but especially to the realm within us — the impossible within us becomes newly possible.

The person who once swore they'd never set foot in church now finds themselves walking to God's house on their own, because they've been newly rebuilt in Christ. The person who once refused to open a Bible now wakes up eager to read it, because they've become new in Christ. The person who once never yielded an inch, who never gave a thought to others, now finds their very countenance changed, and begins to look after others with tender care, because they've been newly created in Christ. The person who once couldn't put two words together now finds the name of Jesus flowing freely from their lips — this, I believe, is the true miracle: the impossible in the saints finally made possible, because of our Jesus!

When a house is torn down and rebuilt, when it's renovated, it should naturally come out better, more beautiful, cleaner than before. How much more so for us, who have become children "rebuilt again" by God in Jesus Christ! When we become new, our outward life changes, and so does our inner life — sooner or later, some real change, some real restoration, comes to us as virgin daughter Israel. Why? Because now, unlike before, Christ Himself lives in us — that's exactly why.

So, in keeping with our calling as “virgin daughter Israel” — called to live in purity, in holiness, in obedience — even with our ups and downs, this ongoing work of restoration, drawing us ever closer to the Lord, this new miracle of the impossible made possible, is, I’m convinced, certain to happen in us as well, only because of Jesus Christ.

So, more specifically — which parts of us are rebuilt, renewed, and restored? There are three restorations. Let’s read verses 4 and 13.

*“Children Rebuilt Again!” (The Restoration of the Saints)*

*v.4 “O virgin Israel, again I will build you, and you shall be built. Again you shall take up your tambourines and go out dancing with the joyful.”*

*v.13 “Then the young women shall rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry together; I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.” ⇒ (1) The Restoration of Relationships*

*v.8 “Behold, I will gather them from the farthest parts of the earth” (qabatz, “assemble”) — “among them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here.”*

*v.10 “O nations, hear the word of the Lord... He who scattered Israel will gather him” (assemble) “... and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.” ⇒ (2) The Restoration of Worship*

*v.7 “Thus says the Lord: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob... proclaim, give praise, and say, ‘O Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel.’” ⇒ (3) The Restoration of Mission*

(1) Before we were rebuilt as God’s children, our condition was exactly like Luke chapter 7 — “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep” — a broken relationship. But no longer! “The young men and the old shall be merry together!” No longer a generational divide between parents and children, no longer a division between men and women, husband and wife, no longer a breach between saint and saint! However difficult, however impossible it may seem — the new life we, called “virgin daughter Israel,” are meant to be built up into, is exactly this: “you shall take up your tambourines and go out dancing with the joyful” — this is “the restoration of relationships,” which is nothing less than the true fellowship of the saints. Hallelujah!

This “fellowship and restored relationship among the saints” is directly connected to our “relationship and fellowship with God” as well. Why? Because our relationship with God and our relationship with fellow believers cannot really be separated — they’re organically bound together as one, and this is what true worship looks like. When fellowship among the saints breaks down, when relationships suffer, our worship suffers too! That’s exactly why God also commands (2) the restoration of worship.

Looking at verses 8 and 10, God gathers worshipers together. The word “gather” here is the Hebrew *qabatz*. It doesn’t simply mean people coming together — in context, it carries the sense of “assemble — gather together to worship!” And the worshipers whom God personally gathers from the very ends of the earth, forming a great multitude, are by no means only the

whole and impressive people. Among them are the once-despised blind, the once-despised lame, the pregnant woman and the woman in labor once considered unclean, and even the Gentiles. Hallelujah!

So the change and restoration that happens in us, virgin daughter Israel, as “children rebuilt again,” is this: (1) the restoration of relationships, so that fellowship among the saints comes alive; (2) the restoration of worship, so that we strive together to offer worship that pleases God; and then (3) finally, the restoration of the saints' mission. Let's read verse 7 once more.

The mission that must ultimately be restored and transformed within the saints is this command of God: “Stand before the nations and proclaim, praise, and speak!” This is the very same Great Commission our Lord Jesus gave His disciples right before His ascension: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you!”

No matter how much restoration of relationship happens only among ourselves, no matter how much restoration of worship happens only among ourselves — if our mission is never restored in the end, then in truth, neither the restoration of relationship nor the restoration of worship ever really happened. Worship offered among ourselves while forgetting our mission is worship God will never accept, never receive with pleasure!

So I pray that we, as “children rebuilt again,” as saints called in this age “virgin daughter Israel,” would constantly examine and reflect on these three organically connected restorations — within ourselves, and within our church and homes: (1) Is there real fellowship among the saints? (2) What is our worship really like? (3) Are we truly walking according to our mission?

As we keep examining these things, remember: we have received the word, “O virgin daughter Israel! I will build you again!” So even if, right now, things feel clumsy and shaky, I'm convinced that this true miracle of restoration in these three areas will surely happen in us — only through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is leading us, even now, along the best possible path.

## **II. Children Who Set Up Signposts! (The Legacy of the Saints)**

Second, the identity of virgin daughter Israel is “children who set up signposts” — and this concerns what we leave behind, the legacy of the saints. Let's read verse 21 together.

*“Children Who Set Up Signposts!” (The Legacy of the Saints)*

*v.21 “O virgin Israel, set up your road markers” (sign-posts, gravestone), “make yourself guideposts; consider well the highway, the road by which you went. Return, return to these your cities.”*

*⇒ A signpost for myself, and a signpost for those who follow after me! (The mark of faith)*

“Road markers” and “guideposts” are similar expressions — both refer to the sign-post pillars that guide someone so they don't stray onto the wrong road, but stay on the right path. And this road, ultimately, is the road of the saint's life — the road we walk until the day we die.

(1) First, this is a signpost for ourselves. Without these markers, even we ourselves will constantly be confused, and if we simply guess our way along by rough instinct — “was this the right way?” — we will never be able to walk straight down the road of life. So first, we must plant these signposts firmly, like solid stone pillars, for ourselves.

(2) At the same time, this signpost also serves “those who follow after us,” “those who remember us,” “those who love us” — leaving them a mark of faith, a footprint of our walk with the Lord, so they too will know how to walk the right road. The Hebrew word for “signpost” here is *tziyun*, which can also mean “gravestone” — a marker set at one's grave. So ultimately, this word means: as I myself follow this signpost faithfully, then even after the Lord calls me home to heaven, those who remember me — especially my family, my children, my fellow saints — will look back and say, “Yes! That's exactly the kind of believer this person was!” That is the signpost, the mark of faith, that I leave behind.

So specifically, what are the signposts we ourselves must build and pass on? We can find three.

(1) The first is “the signpost of hope in Jesus” — a mark every saint must leave behind. Let's read verses 15 through 17.

*“Children Who Set Up Signposts!” (The Legacy of the Saints)*

*v.15 “Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.”*

*v.16 “Thus says the Lord: Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.”*

*v.17 “There is hope for your future, declares the Lord, and your children shall come back to their own country.” ⇒ (1) The Signpost of Hope in Jesus*

Verse 15 — “a voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel is weeping for her children” — first describes the devastating situation of Jeremiah's time, as the southern kingdom of Judah was collapsing, and countless mothers of Israel, personified as Rachel, lost their children — some to death itself. Rachel's tomb was said to be located in Ramah, and so the passage pictures grief so severe that even Israel's representative mother, though long dead, seems to weep from her very grave — vividly capturing the anguished cries of mothers in that terrible time.

This same verse 15 is later quoted at the very start of the New Testament, when the wicked King Herod, hearing that a “King of the Jews” had been born, feared for his throne and

slaughtered every infant boy under two years old in Bethlehem — a horrifying tragedy.

So these mothers — and fathers too — refused all comfort; nothing could console them, and there seemed to be no hope anywhere on this earth. That is the utterly rock-bottom situation verse 15 represents.

And yet! To this mother who has lost her child and can find no comfort anywhere on this earth, to this father who has lost his child and can find no hope to hold onto anywhere — our God speaks directly in verses 16 and 17: “Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares the Lord, and your children shall come back to their own country!”

“No! Your comfort does not end here! You still have hope to hold onto!” “Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears! There is a reward for your work! There is hope for your future!” — this is God our Father speaking directly to every saint enduring a hard life.

Here, “there is a reward for your work” doesn’t simply mean “you will receive some wage for your labor.” It means: “Pay back — I will repay you! Reward — I will make it up to you!” It’s God saying: I will repay all your sorrow with true comfort; I will reward all your pain with true hope.

And later, when we come into the New Testament and this same kind of grief resurfaces — when the voice is heard again in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, when Rachel again weeps for her children, when the mothers of Israel again refuse all comfort — at exactly that moment, the true living hope, the eternal name of comfort, the one and only name of hope, comes: our Lord Jesus Christ Himself comes into this world, comforts us directly, dies on the cross in our place, but then rises again — becoming, forever, our living hope, Himself. Hallelujah!

This is the very beginning of the signpost of faith we ourselves must build and pass down to the next generation: “the signpost of hope in Jesus” — for Jesus alone is our hope.

(2) Second is “the signpost of self-examining repentance.” Let’s read verse 18.

*“Children Who Set Up Signposts!” (The Legacy of the Saints)*

*v.18 “I have heard Ephraim grieving, ‘You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the Lord my God.’” ⇒ (2) The Signpost of Self-Examining Repentance*

*v.19 “For after I had turned away, I relented, and after I was instructed, I struck my thigh; I was ashamed, and I was confounded, because I bore the disgrace of my youth.” ⇒ (3) The Signpost of Being Trained by the Word*

“Grieving,” “repenting” — in New Testament language, this is *metanoeo*, which means “change my heart” — a change of my very core, my very center. It’s not just saying, “Lord, I’m sorry,

done!” — it's my whole life gradually turning from what was wrong to what is right. That's what real, self-examining repentance looks like.

It's the ongoing work of turning “all mine, my own things” into “the Lord's things”; turning “me-centered, stubborn self-will” into “Your will be done”; turning “things I never saw a problem with” into things I now recognize as wrong, once I see them through the Lord's eyes — as my spiritual conscience comes back to life and I begin, in earnest, to change what's broken in me. That is the work of self-examining repentance.

If this signpost of self-examining repentance isn't firmly planted within us, then we — who remain, our whole lives, “wretched people,” as Paul says — will, the moment we let our guard down even a little, stop examining ourselves at all. We'll convince ourselves we're always right, that we're doing fine, and blame everyone else — sliding into a proud, self-righteous life. That danger is very real.

So until the day the Lord calls us home, let's keep remembering: I am, just as verse 18 says, “like an untrained calf.” And yet the Lord does not simply leave us alone — what our translation calls “discipline” is really the Lord training us, forming us, refining us. In the end, it is our God Himself who refines us and leads us back to Him.

So as we ourselves build this signpost of self-examining repentance, I pray that we would leave behind, for our children, this same mark of faith: “My father was a man who repented his whole life long.” “My mother was a woman who always examined herself first.” “Whenever they did wrong, they were quick to say sorry — even to me.”

(3) The third and final signpost is “the signpost of being trained by the Word.” How could we ever examine ourselves without the Word training us? Let's read verse 19 together.

It says, “after I was instructed, I struck my thigh.” Our translations render this simply as “thigh,” but the Hebrew word here is *yarek* — the very same word used in Genesis 32 for Jacob's “hip” (thigh), the place where he was struck by God as he wrestled with Him at the Jabbok River.

And from that point on, he was no longer called Jacob, but “Israel” — his identity changed to “child of God.” Where Israel once needed to be struck to come to his senses — and even then often failed to understand — now, after receiving “instruction,” after receiving “the Word of God,” he strikes his own thigh, submitting himself completely before that Word, continually turning back to the Lord — becoming, more and more, a true Israel. That is how the Word itself leads us forward. Hallelujah!

Just as we must look in a mirror every day to see what's on our face, and consult a map to find our way when the road ahead is unclear, so I pray we would keep this perfect signpost — the Word of God — close to us always: meditating on it, sometimes pouring out our complaints in it,

sometimes being corrected by it, repenting through it, finding comfort in it, learning patience through it, and discovering hope in it. May we all become virgin daughter Israel, faithfully building and passing on this signpost of being trained by the Word.

## Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today, through Jeremiah 31, we've considered our identity as those whom God calls "virgin daughter Israel." To summarize:

*"Virgin Daughter Israel!"*

*1. Children Rebuilt Again! (The Restoration of the Saints)*

*Saints who, through Jesus Christ, are increasingly experiencing the restoration of relationships, the restoration of worship, and the restoration of mission.*

*2. Children Who Set Up Signposts! (The Legacy of the Saints)*

*Saints who leave behind, as a lasting footprint of faith, the signpost of hope in Jesus, the signpost of self-examining repentance, and the signpost of being trained by the Word.*

All of this restoration, all of this legacy, becomes possible only because our Lord Jesus Christ lives within us. I earnestly pray that each one of us would become this "virgin daughter Israel."

*Response Hymn: "What It Means to Live as God's Child"*