

1. Chapters 30 and 31 of Jeremiah are called the “Book of Comfort.”
2. Jeremiah, like Isaiah, spends a good bit of the book encouraging and building hope in the people. When God called Jeremiah, He told him that he would uproot and pull down nations. But God also told him that he would build and plant. That is what these chapters are about.
3. Some portions of these chapters clearly point even further into the future than the return from Babylon, which resulted in the rebuilding of Judah’s cities. Chapter 31 says that Jerusalem will be permanently established. Since the city walls, rebuilt by Nehemiah, were thrown down again in 70 A.D. by Rome, these verses must refer to something later - perhaps the reestablishment that took place in 1948, or perhaps even further into the future.
4. There is one other event which forces us to put the fulfillment of this prophecy beyond the return from the Babylonian exile, and that is the “new covenant” paragraph in chapter 31. Jesus Christ gave us the interpretation of this when He took this passage and tied it to His own death upon the cross. Jeremiah 31:31-34 - its presence here is important because of its content.
5. This covenant would be different from the one their fathers had broken. By implication it would succeed where the old one failed. Second, it would involve an internalization of the law, placing the law in the hearts of the people. An inward transformation would occur. Third, it would be for everyone, not just the priests, or even just for the Jews. Fourth, it would deal with sin in a complete and effective way, not just covering it over, but definitively dealing with sin.
6. When Jesus took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant of my blood,” He was thinking of this passage in Jeremiah 31. His death was the fulfillment of this passage. When the Holy Spirit came in the Book of Acts, our hearts were transformed and the law internalized, so that we can know the Lord in a way that was never before possible. The last provision is that sin was dealt with in a final and definitive way. That is what happened at Calvary when Christ cried, “It is finished.” That is what was involved when Jesus instituted the new covenant and gave it to His disciples and us as the Eucharist, or Last Supper.
7. Some Bible students have a little difficulty with this interpretation, because it assumes that these words refer to the church of Jesus Christ, not just the nations of Israel, Ephraim and Judah. We have noted before that the relationship between Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament is a problematic one. Some people (dispensationalists) want to keep them separate. Whatever God says to Israel applies only to Israel and not to the church. With that understanding Jeremiah 31 is not for us. Other students believe that the church in the New Testament completely takes the place of the Old Testament nation of Israel, so that the promises made to Israel find their complete fulfillment in the church and only in the church. With this view what happens to modern day Israel holds interest for us, but has no theological significance because God is finished with the nation of Israel. A third group, and this is where I find myself, sees an overlap between Israel and the church.
8. Much of what the Old Testament promises to Israel and the covenant people of God are now applicable to the new Israel – the covenant people of God who have exercised faith and are obeying Him now. We have been grafted into the olive tree by the grace of God according to the Book of Romans. At the end of the age, (Romans 9-11 is one of the strong supports for this view), God will do a new thing with the physical nation of Israel and many will be saved. At that time some of the Old Testament prophecies relating to the land and the people will be fulfilled and the church (the new Israel) and the nation of Israel will experience a merging of identities.
9. When we encounter Old Testament prophecies made to the nation of Israel we need to be very careful about how we apply them - “Rightly dividing the word of truth” - to see if the New Testament gives us help with the interpretation. The words of Jesus are the key to Jeremiah’s words about the new covenant.

10. Jeremiah mentioned the weeping of Ramah and Rachel for her children. This verse is mentioned by Matthew in reference to King Herod's killing of the children after the birth of Christ. This is a 'type' rather than an actual prophecy. Jeremiah is looking at the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C.

11. God said to Jeremiah, "Write these words in a book, Jeremiah." All through the Old Testament era, as God revealed His will and ways to the people of Israel, He told them over and over again to write these things in the Book. The book is the Bible and it is the record of God dealing with His people down through the ages.

1. Jeremiah is told by God to buy a piece of property from a relative just outside the city of Jerusalem. He knows that within weeks this property will be worthless because Judah is going to be invaded by Babylon and taken into captivity. Under arrest by King Zedekiah, Jeremiah buys the property, acting by faith on God's promise to return the people to Judah. He places the deed into a strong clay pot that will preserve it until the 70-year captivity has passed. As he puts the deed into the pot he prays, "Ah Lord God, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great power and by Thine outstretched arm. Nothing is impossible for Thee..." This is a chorus that we sometimes sing in our worship.

2. God said to Jeremiah, "Give away your money and buy some worthless land; there is a point that I want to make to the people." Jeremiah obeyed God.

3. Jeremiah is branded a traitor to his country. The king hates and fears him. The false prophets have convinced the people that Jeremiah does not speak for God. Everyone, except a few people like Baruch, hates him.

4. There is a second chorus that we sometimes sing found in chapter 33. Jeremiah said that God has promised that one day the people will again rebuild the temple and bring thank offerings. When they do they will sing, "O give thanks to the Lord for He is good and His steadfast love endures forever..." Jeremiah is teaching the choirs to sing when there is absolutely nothing they can possibly be thankful about.

5. It is only by faith that Jeremiah can buy a field, and teach the people a song of thanksgiving when he is under arrest as a traitor, and the Babylonian army is at the city gates. He tells the people the promise of God, that there will be a return to Jerusalem and there will be a time when a descendant of David will sit on the throne and govern in such a way that Jerusalem will be called "the Lord our righteousness"- Jehovah Tsidkenu. We have been given many names of God, but they were either names that God gave himself, or names the faithful gave to Him. This name, "Jehovah Tsidkenu", "the Lord, our Righteousness", is actually given in the text as a name of Jerusalem and not as a name of God. It comes as a part of a prophecy and we are to understand that there will be a time when the people of Jerusalem are so connected to the Lord that the very name of their city will reflect their relationship with Him.

6. This passage shows us the nature of God's commitment to His covenant. He establishes a covenant and He will not break it no matter what the people do. The covenant God established with Abram, Moses, and David was one that Israel broke. God says in the New Testament, "Though we are faithless, yet He remains faithful."

7. God's ruler, a son of David, will sit upon the throne and rule the house of Israel forever. Jesus is that ruler and He is ruling now and will rule visibly and physically upon the earth at the time of the millennial kingdom. Amillennialists believe that the present rule of Christ over His church will continue forever, through the present age and into the age to come. They believe this fulfills these prophecies. Others believe that there will be a literal millennial kingdom when Christ will reign upon the earth from the city of Jerusalem, "Jehovah Tsidkenu", but they do not expect that a literal sacrificial system will be reinstated in the Temple of Jerusalem. Some specific teaching in the book of Hebrews reminds us that Christ's sacrifice on the cross finished the work of sacrifice. Any further sacrifices would undermine the effectiveness of what Jesus Christ did on Calvary. Still others take this passage, and others like it, to build a case for a reinstatement of the whole Temple system in Jerusalem at the end of this age and into the millennial age.

8. We may not be certain how God will fulfill all of His promises, but we can be certain that He will keep them. We can believe that every promise contained in the Word of God which pertains to us will be fulfilled.

9. When the Jews returned from Babylon they thought that they were experiencing the fulfillment of all the promises of Jeremiah, but they were experiencing only the fulfillment of some of them. The throne was not reestablished, and a son of David did not rule in Jerusalem either temporarily or permanently from then on. That forces us to view that latter part of Chapter 33 as a prophecy of something that would come much later and involve a son of David named Jesus of Nazareth.

10. We should take note of the relative of Jeremiah's who came to ask him to buy a field. He refers to Jeremiah's "right and duty to buy it." This refers to the concept of the "kinsman redeemer" that we heard of previously when we studied the Book of Ruth. The custom existed to protect the right of a family to keep its own property within the family. The nearest relative was responsible to redeem the property, awaiting the year of jubilee when it would be restored to its original owner.

11. Jeremiah 33:3 says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and mighty things you do not know." This is cited as an encouragement to pray. It was God's promise to His faithful prophet, Jeremiah. We also need to meditate specifically on the many wonderful promises that Scripture contains which refer to us and every child of God.

12. God's unwillingness to give up on the people He chose to be His own is a picture of the way He deals with us as individuals and as the church. Rebellion brings punishment, but God does not simply give up and walk away from those He loves. He will do whatever is necessary to chasten and restore those who belong to Him. This can be both a comforting thought and also a very disturbing thought.

1. Jeremiah 34, 35, and 36 are not in chronological order. Chapter 34 concerns the events of the last year or so of the life of the city of Jerusalem. Chapters 35 and 36 concern events that happened earlier, during Jehoiakim's reign.
2. Chapter 36 records the scroll-burning incident. It occurred in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim's reign. That was the same year that Jeremiah had the revelation recorded back in Chapter 25. That was when Jeremiah told the king and the people that the city of Jerusalem would fall to Nebuchadnezzar. He also brought a message about Egypt to the people that year. That message is written down in Jeremiah 46, nearly 20 years before the events of Chapter 34.
3. Jeremiah got a message from the Lord. It began with the instruction to write it down. His scribe, Baruch, wrote the words that Jeremiah dictated to him from God. Then Baruch went to the Temple and read the words aloud to the people who were there, gathered for worship. Baruch had to do it because Jeremiah was not allowed to go to the Temple. This was 20 years before the fall of Jerusalem and yet Jeremiah was kept away from the Temple and the people.
4. The probable reason Jeremiah was kept from the Temple was related to the incident recorded in Chapter 19, where he smashed the clay vessel in the Temple and then told the people that was what God was going to do to Judah. Both Jeremiah and Baruch remained faithful, though they were rejected for many years.
5. The words filled the officials with fear. They had questions. Where did these words come from? Did Jeremiah dictate this message? They instructed Baruch and Jeremiah to hide before they took the scroll to the king. They realized that if Jeremiah dictated this message then it was from Jehovah God and they should be afraid. They were afraid to harm him or allow the king to harm him. They knew he was truly speaking for God and they were afraid to silence him.
6. There are people like that today. When they hear the Word of God spoken to them they do not like it. They do not want to listen or do what God wants them to do, but they know it is true. That is the reason we must not stop speaking to them, just as Jeremiah did not stop speaking to the people for 20 years because someone might respond and obey God, and neither should we.
7. When the words were finally read to the king, he and those closest to him were not afraid. The king and the people did not repent. The people begged the king not to burn the scroll, but he did not listen. And so the words of God were burned. At God's command Jeremiah wrote the words down again and added a terrible postscript which sealed Jehoiakim's fate. He died a terrible death and was succeeded on the throne of Judah not by his son, but by his brother.
8. The incident recorded in chapter 35 probably took place sometime later in the reign of Jehoiakim, who reigned for another 8 years. The Recabites were a nomadic tribe, related to the Kenites, who lived near and among the Israelites. They were historically friendly to God's people.
9. Jeremiah, in the presence of the religious officials of the Temple, offered the Recabites some wine to drink. They refused because of a commandment laid down to them by their ancestor Jonadab. Nearly 250 years before, Jonadab had helped King Jehu destroy Baal worship in the Northern Kingdom. Jonadab made his descendants swear to abstain from wine and to live in tents instead of houses. They kept that promise for the next 250 years. The Bible does not tell us why they were to live in tents. Jeremiah's object lesson was intended to show that some people had remained true to the vows they had made. The Recabites were faithful. The Israelites were faithless. Because of their faithfulness, Jeremiah prophecies that Jonadab, the son of Recab, will never fail to have a man serve the Lord.

10. Chapter 34 tells us about the state of things the last 15 months before the walls fell. Only three cities had not fallen to Nebuchadnezzar's army. The king had issued an order that all the slaves were to be freed. There may have been two reasons for this. First, King Zedekiah may have been hoping that if he acted righteously, God would change His mind and spare the city. Second, he may have hoped that free men would fight harder in defense of the city than slaves. Then a strange thing happened – the siege was lifted because the Babylonians were concerned about what the Egyptian Pharaoh was doing in the south.

11. Nebuchadnezzar moved his army south and sent a letter to Zedekiah promising that he would return soon.

12. Instead of thanking God, Zedekiah reneged on the promise to the slaves and returned them to bondage. This is the background for Chapter 34. Moses' law provided for the possibility of a man falling so deeply into debt that he had to sell himself into slavery. The law strictly prohibited what we would call permanent slavery. It stipulated that after the man worked off his debt he was to be freed. No such indentured servitude could last longer than seven years. After that the slave had to be freed. That was the law of God, but not what the Jews were practicing. They had had a full-fledged system of slave labor from Solomon's time.

13. The Bible never tells us this, but this chapter may be the last chance that Judah had to repent.

Was this coincidence? Not if you believe in the sovereignty of God. Nebuchadnezzar had to leave and go to Egypt. What would have happened if Zedekiah had kept his word and left the slaves free? The Bible does not tell us. Jeremiah tells us that God says, "I will lay to waste the towns of Judah so that no one can live there."

1. When Nebuchadnezzar withdrew his army from Jerusalem, Jeremiah was apparently free. Zedekiah sent messengers to Jeremiah to find out what the Lord would say about what was going to happen next. Jeremiah sent the king the message from God. Zedekiah did not like the message. Jeremiah was imprisoned, but the king talked to him in secret. Jeremiah gave him the message again from God. This happened again in the New Testament when Herod imprisoned John the Baptist.
  
2. Zedekiah could have eased the punishment if he had repented, but he did not. The Babylonian army took the city and the king tried to sneak away. As punishment he then had to watch as his own sons died in front of him. That was the last thing he saw before his own eyes were put out. Zedekiah was taken in chains to Babylon. He knew all along that Jeremiah was telling him the truth, but kept on doing what he wanted.
  
3. Today when dealing with an individual who is in Full-fledged rebellion against God, tell them the truth, but do not try to argue them into submission to God. Sinners who know they are killing themselves will keep on doing what they are doing. That is the lesson of Zedekiah's life.
  
4. Officers of the king saw Jeremiah leaving the city one morning and arrested him. He was imprisoned in the dungeon and then dropped into a cistern. He would have died if not for the intervention of Ebed-melech, probably some type of diplomat. Ebed-melech intervened on Jeremiah's behalf and he was pulled from the cistern. It seems that many times God has one of his servants in place to help the people of God just when needed. Ebed-melech was protected by God when the Babylonians overran the city.
  
5. An officer in the Babylonian army, while checking the identity of the prisoners, found Jeremiah. He unlocked the chains and told Jeremiah that King Nebuchadnezzar had heard about him and knew who he was. The king had heard about the messages Jeremiah had given to his own king and people. The officer told Jeremiah that he was free to go, or he could come to Babylon with them. He could be a counselor to Gedaliah, the new governor.
  
6. Nebuchadnezzar's knowledge of Jeremiah and his activities is significant. Through it he gained his knowledge of the Lord Jehovah, the God who could accurately predict the future and communicate to His prophet exactly what would happen. Nebuchadnezzar was wise enough to credit the fall of Jerusalem not to his military power, but to the fact that the Jews had offended their God and were given over to him as divine punishment.
  
7. God has a great deal of patience; much more than we have. He is full of mercy, and if we repent of our sins He will withhold His judgment. However, if we resist too long and refuse to repent often enough, His judgment will fall. In the days of Noah, God withheld the flood for a very long time, but one day it started to rain. In the days of Zedekiah, God gave opportunities to repent, but one day Nebuchadnezzar came and destroyed the city of Jerusalem.

1. Again Jeremiah finds himself in the position of asking God what the people should do. Johanan comes to Jeremiah and asks him for advice from God. The people do not want to do what God tells them to do, but they want God to bless their plans. This is the kind of reasoning we follow today.
  
2. Jeremiah tried to warn Johanan saying, “You made a fatal mistake when you sent me to the Lord your God and said, ‘Pray to the Lord our God and tell us everything He says and we will do it’.” Do not say that to God unless you are committed to do what He says.
  
3. The rebellion continued and the people who were afraid that Nebuchadnezzar would punish them for the deeds of others fled to Egypt. So Jeremiah, who spent his life warning the people about Egypt, ends up against his will in exile in Egypt. Shortly he began to prophesy that God was sending Nebuchadnezzar to Egypt.
  
4. At this time in his life, Nebuchadnezzar was not a devout follower of the Lord. He was just the instrument of God’s judgment. God many times uses men and nations who do not understand that they are His instruments. God often uses unrighteous instruments to accomplish His work, but when He is finished he will judge those instruments according to His set of scales. Judgment usually begins with the people who have the greatest knowledge of Him, those who ignore His grace.
  
5. We, who are of the household of faith, have a great obligation to carefully consider all we learn from the Old Testament people. God has not changed. If God is getting ready to pour out His judgment on the earth, where will that purification begin?
  
6. If the pattern of asking God to bless our plans and then refusing to obey what He really wants us to do is as prevalent as I think, we need to do some repenting. In I Corinthians, Paul tells us that if we judge ourselves, then we will not be judged by God. Instead we will have the full assurance of His forgiveness and blessing.