

JESUS AND JEREMIAH

One of my favorite spots in Israel is the mountain brook at Caesarea Philippi. The place is so beautiful and refreshing - once you've visited, there's little wonder why Jesus chose it as a site to get-away and retreat with His disciples.

And it was at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus asked His merry men a question. He said, "Who do men say that I the Son of man, am?" Of course they came back with the popular opinion polls, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Then Jesus dropped the vital question...

He asked them the most important question any of us will ever answer, "But who do you say that I am?" It doesn't matter what your mom or dad, aunt or uncle, neighbor or friend says about Jesus... what do *you* say about Jesus?

Of course, Peter's final answer was correct, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." But notice the disciples' earlier comments. Apparently many of the Jews at the time had mistaken Jesus for Jeremiah. "Some say...

Jeremiah..."

When you study the book of Jeremiah you realize how much the two men had in common. In many ways the life of Jeremiah was a type of the ministry of Jesus.

Both had the rare combination of toughness and tenderness.

Both ministered just before the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple.

Both were a priest and a prophet.

Both were accused of political treason.

Both addressed the corrupt practices of the temple, and foretold its destruction.

Both wept over Jerusalem and loved God's people deeply.

Both were forsaken by friends, and were rejected by their hometown.

Both were tried, persecuted, and imprisoned.

Both angered the priests of their day.

Both enjoyed a peaceful early ministry, but encountered later opposition.

Both never married.

GOD'S NEW DEAL

Jeremiah 31:3-4 are incredible verses. The Lord speaks, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel!"

Earlier in the book Jeremiah referred to God's people as a whore - an adulterer - now he calls her "O virgin of Israel". That's a testimony to just how far God will go when He extends His mercy and grace. When God forgives He really forgives. His forgiveness is so complete, once forgiven God treats us as if we'd never sinned. It was Faber who wrote the prayer, "How Thou can think so well of us, yet be the God Thou art - is darkness to my intellect, but sunshine to my heart."

Verse 10 predicts the future regathering of Israel, "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.'" The regathering we've seen in our day is just the tip of the iceberg. Today, there are 17.4 million Jews in the world, and only 6.5 million live in Israel. God will regather His people.

The New Covenant consists of 3 parts: *Regather, Regenerate, Reestablish*. God will *regather* His people to their land - will *regenerate* their hearts through the blood of Christ - and Jesus will return to *reestablish* God's kingdom in Israel. Write down the 3Rs of the New Covenant. They outline the rest of the Bible.

Verse 33 is the kernel of the New Covenant - the reason a new deal was needed.

"I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Under the Old Covenant God's commands were written on stone tablets, but under the New Covenant God writes them on hearts. He embeds His will into our very nature, so that our natural instincts are to please God and love others. As we learned this morning, we become the kids who make straight As without having to study. Under the Law we were limited to sheet music, but under the New Covenant God gives us ability to play by ear - we hear God's song in our hearts.

The New Covenant also guarantees God's kid a firsthand relationship with their Heavenly Father. A priest is no longer needed to mediate. Now we can dial direct.

A covenant sets forth the terms of a relationship. On the cross Jesus died to establish a whole new basis for our interaction with God. Rather than earn God's favor by our performance, now we come to God by our faith in His Son's performance. It's all faith - not works.

Bible Scan - Jeremiah 16-33

JEREMIAH'S JARRING SERMON

In chapter 18 Jeremiah pays a visit to the house of the potter.

Throughout Scripture God uses the potter as an example of His dealings with His people. As the potter molds the clay God molds our lives – and the *clay has no say* what the potter will make him. His job is to be pliable and impressionable.

My youngest son's middle name is "Clay", because it's my prayer for him to be moldable, and for God to take his life and fashion it according to His will.

Jeremiah sees the potter working a piece of clay. It's turning on the spindle, but He doesn't like what he sees. He hammers it down, and begins to reshape it into another vessel. Here's the point of the parable, the potter can change his mind, and shift directions with the clay, without the clay's permission or approval.

This is what's happened with Judah. God intended to build her up, and make her great – but because of her sin He has chosen instead to tear her down.

In chapter 19 God speaks through a cracked pot.

If you've been coming to Calvary Chapel for any length of time you're aware that God can speak through a *crackpot* – but this is literally a *cracked pot*.

Studies show you remember 10% of what you hear - but 50% of what you see. That's why God instructed his prophets to use visual aides. They would act out a spiritual skit in order to teach a vital lesson. This is what happens in chapter 19.

Jeremiah takes a pot, or jar - and calls the nation's leaders and priests to the Valley of Hinnom. This valley which was just outside the city's gates was the spiritual red light district. It was the center for the city's idolatry.

In verse 5 God describes the child sacrifices made to the evil Baal. And to describe how appalled He is at Judah's sin, God notes that He gave no specific command against the practice. He never thought they would stoop that low.

Of course, God is omniscient and knows all things. When He says this evil never came into His mind He's using a literary device. It's an *anthropomorphism* – or *the ascribing of human characteristics to nonhuman entities*. God's speaks as if He is a man in order to get across to men how appalled He is at their conduct.

Jeremiah tells the leaders of the nation that God will bring a catastrophe. The Valley where they're standing will be renamed "*The Valley of Slaughter*". God's hammer of justice is about to fall, and his description is grisly and gruesome...

Jerusalem will be surrounded. The people will be so hungry they'll eat their own babies to survive. In the end the birds will feast on their dead carcasses.

After his sermon Jeremiah throws down the pot, and shouts, "Even so I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot be made whole again..." The crash of broken pottery was the exclamation point!

THE PROPHET'S SCARS

Jeremiah's sermon in chapter 19 *jarred* the leaders of Judah, and they decided to crack back. Pashur, the captain of the temple guard, arrested Jeremiah. Pashur had Jeremiah beaten – probably with 39 lashes – then thrown in the stocks.

In verse 2 the Hebrew word translated "stocks" means "*to cause distortion*". Apparently, these stocks were not just chains or handcuffs used for restraint. They were designed to inflict pain. They were a means of physical torture.

But all Jeremiah's suffering never altered his message. He was faithful to speak God's truth even when it cost him his ease, security, and prosperity. Rather than cause him to back down the persecution Jeremiah suffered caused him to grow braver and bolder.

This is always the case when believers are persecuted. The enemy's attempts to shut us up only backfires. When we're pinned against the wall that's when we trust the Lord, and His power energizes us and intensifies our boldness. As Augustine wrote of the early Christians, "The martyrs were bound, imprisoned, scourged, racked, burnt, torn, butchered... and they multiplied."

If you've never been persecuted for Jesus' sake you will be. 2 Timothy 3:12 promises, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." When we get to heaven God won't look us over for medals, but for scars.

My favorite poem is by Amy Carmichael. In the poem, Jesus speaks to us, "Have you no scar? No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand? I hear you sung as mighty in the land. I hear them hail your bright ascendant star. Have you no scar? Have you no wound? Yet, I was wounded by the archers, spent, leaned me against the tree to die, and rent – by ravenous beasts that encompassed me I swooned. Have you no wound? No wound? No scar? Yes, as the master shall the servant be, and pierced are the feet that follow Me, but yours are whole. Can he have followed far – who has no wound? No scar?"

Trust me, Jeremiah had his share of scars.

Devotion Box - When Dreams Become Nightmares

In the remainder of the chapter Jeremiah warns the people of the false prophet who boasts of his dreams and visions – his supernatural revelations. But Jeremiah is unimpressed. He says in 23:28-29, "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. "Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"

On occasion God does speak through a dream, but dreams are nowhere near as dependable as the Word of God. Always check the dream against the doctrine.

Dreams are the chaff - empty shells. The Word is like whole wheat. Whenever a false teacher tries to intimidate or impress you with a dream that conflicts with Scripture just reply, "*Ah shucks!*" That's what it is... just chaff, or shucks.

You've got to be careful of dreams. They can come from God – but they can also come from Satan, or last night's pizza. It reminds me of the woman who said, "I dreamed I was eating spaghetti. When I woke up, my pajama string was gone."

Devotion Box - When You Want to Quit

Jeremiah has been through a lot. He's tired, and ready to give up. He turns in his notice in 20:9, "Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name." That's it – it's over. I've had enough. Jeremiah is hanging up his prophetic cleats. It's time to retire.

It reminds me of the pastor who read his letter of resignation at the Sunday service. Afterwards a lady came up sobbing. He tried to comfort her, "Ma'am, don't worry—the Church Board will find a new pastor far better than the current pastor." She shook her head, "Sure, that's what they promised last time."

Jeremiah wanted to quit – made up his mind to quit – was determined to quit – but he just couldn't quit. He went home that night and got out his Bible. He thought he'd read a short passage before he went to bed. That's when he said, "But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not." As he turned the pages of Scripture his passion returned. Nothing stirs up spiritual vision and motivation like God's power-packed Word. DL Moody once said, "I know the Bible is inspired because it inspires me."

It's amazing how Jeremiah's attitude changed. In verse 11 He remembers how the Lord is with him. He knows the people need the truth. He's heard their mockings, stubbornness, ridicule. Before long he comes full circle – the reasons he got frustrated were the very reasons he was needed in the first place. Sometimes even a prophet's perspective can become clouded. Ministry can be taxing, and the pressures can distort reality. That's why a pastor needs to maintain a case of divine heartburn. Only God's Word will keep our heart aflame for God.

JEHOVAH TSIDKENU

David's heir is the subject of chapter 23. The chapter looks beyond the scattering of the Jews to their re-gathering in the end times.

In that day the Lord will raise up a branch, or a descendant of David, to rule over all the earth. Jesus is that king. And Jeremiah calls him "*Jehovah Tsidkenu*", or "the Lord our righteousness." Jesus is the only way a person can be and stay right with God.

GOD'S PROMISES

Jeremiah 31:35-36 adds the exclamation point to God's new covenant with Israel. As sure as the sun lights up the day and the moon the night, God will be faithful to fulfill His promises.

Is God through with Israel? Absolutely not!

United States policy toward Israel may change month to month – but every new sunrise testifies to God's faithfulness. Every other nation on earth will come and go, but Israel will remain forever.

God's promises are sure! It reminds me of the little boy who was asked how much money he had. He replied, "I have \$5." His friend disagreed, "But I looked in your wallet and you only had a dollar." The little boy answered, "Yes, I have only one dollar, but my dad promised me \$4 when I come home tonight. Which means I have \$5." Hey, with our Father in heaven a promise is money in the bank.

Devotion Box - True Repentance

Jeremiah was a patriot. He loved his country. That's why God's message was so difficult to deliver.

God said His judgment was inevitable – thus, a repentant attitude was one that cooperated with the consequences of their sin. God told His people not to buck the Babylonians.

In chapter 24 God uses more visual aides. Jeremiah finds two baskets of figs outside the temple. One basket is full of choice figs. The other is full of rotten figs. God tells Judah that everyone who submits to Babylonian capture will turn out a good fig. Hey *go figure* – after they learn their lesson – God will give them a new heart, and bring them back to the land. But if they fight against the will of God

they'll suffer severely. They'll be deteriorate and rot – like the bag figs.

Guys, it's okay to ask God to spare you from the consequences of your sin. It's proper to plead for mercy. But when the die has been cast, and God's punishment ordered the degree to which you submit is the degree to which you're repentant.

Try to by-pass the judgment – buck it – fight against it – try to shirk and slip past the consequences – and you'll only make matters worse. A repentant person wants to turn from his sin, so he's ready to learn even from God's discipline.

THE MESSIANIC PUZZLE

If you were a Jew waiting on the Messiah 22:30 was a shock. God places a blood curse on the family of Jeconiah. No son of his will sit on the throne of David. A King named *Zedekiah* succeeds Jeconiah, but he was his uncle, not his son.

For centuries this curse confused the rabbis. How could Messiah, the future king, be of the family of David, and still be a member of the royal succession of kings? The crown was passed from father to son, and since Jeconiah's son would never sit on the throne, God had a problem. Here's how God solves the puzzle...

According to Matthew's genealogy of Jesus – Joseph, Jesus' stepdad, was a descendant of Jeconiah and Solomon. Thus, Jesus was the successor to the royal line – but since God was his Father he didn't have the cursed blood of Jeconiah.

But the prophecies said Messiah had to be David's *blood relative*. That's where Luke's genealogy kicks in. Jesus' mother, Mary, was also a descendant of David, but through his son, Nathan, not Jeconiah. Jesus then, was David's natural heir through Mary, and his legal heir through Joseph. God had the puzzle solved.

Bible Scan - Jeremiah 16-33

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - January 14, 2001 - Bible Conference, January 17-19; Pastor Chuck, Wed 17th @ 7:30; Gayle Erwin, Thu 18th @ 7:30 - Check out Calvary Connections (home fellowships) - Pastor Sandy's "State of the Church" address, Sunday night January 28 @ 6:30 (we'll review our plans for our sanctuary expansion, new parking lot, outdoor recreational area, and the addition of new classrooms) - CC Christian School Open House February 4 @ 2:00
Next Bible Scan - February 4 - Jeremiah 34-52

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." - Jeremiah 29:11

**Bible Scan
Memory Verse**

HEY, HANANIAH... THE YOKES ON YOU!

The word "duel" means "a war of two" - and that's what we have in chapter 27. A duel between two prophets - our hero, Jeremiah, and the villain, Hananiah.

God tells Jeremiah to make several yokes - the wooden harness used to steer the oxen that ploughed the fields. He sends a yoke to each of the kings bordering Judah. *And the yoke is no joke!* It sent a choking message. Each king would be harnessed by the Babylonians, and forced to serve Nebuchadnezzar.

Jeremiah likewise brought this message to his own people, Judah. Apparently, there were false prophets who predicted God's deliverance. Already, the Babylonians had invaded Jerusalem, and stolen many of the temple treasures. The false prophets predicted God would turn the tide, and in short order restore the stolen vessels. Jeremiah says "not so". Not only will the vessels not be returned any time soon, the treasures that are left will likewise be stolen. In essence, Jeremiah says, *it's going to get worse before it gets better.*

And that's when the false prophet, Hananiah, enters the picture. As Jeremiah delivers his message he's been wearing a yoke around his neck - a visual aide.

In a daring, dramatic maneuver Hananiah breaks the yoke off Jeremiah's neck, and shouts, "God will break the yoke of Babylon, and in two years bring back the temple treasures." It's a lie. It won't happen. But Hananiah has presented his lie with such boldness and flare the people leave impressed. He

shows up Jeremiah.

Guys, never be impressed with a person's style. A speaker can be passionate, and powerful - funny and articulate - and be spouting nothing but lies.

After Hananiah's demonstration, Jeremiah just walked away. He'd been made a laughingstock - and Jeremiah just walked away with yoke all over his face. He had been out-performed, and apparently that was okay with Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's example teaches a lesson. Our job is to simply declare the truth. We're not expected to look good, or defend ourselves, or out-perform anyone - but be faithful to the message. God will take care of his messenger!

And that's exactly what happens in this situation.

God sends Jeremiah back to Hananiah, and tells him he's speaking lies. God will not bring back the temple treasures from Babylon in two years, rather within the year Hananiah will die. Two months later Hananiah is pushing up daisies.

It's interesting, Hananiah dies in the 7th month of the year or around the feast of tabernacles - which means he died while everyone was in Jerusalem for the feast. In the end, everyone saw that *Jeremiah was vindicated, Hananiah refuted, and God's Word confirmed.* After all was said and done, the yoke was on Hananiah.

Devotion Box - God's Thoughts Toward You

God promises in 29:11-12, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you." What a glorious promise, and it applies to all God's people - even you and me.

God's thoughts toward us are always full of peace, and hope, and future blessing. God is like any good parent - He would never wish harm or evil on His kids. Guys, God's intentions can be trusted. No matter how difficult our current circumstances become God has a plan that culminates with blessing!

He says too in verse 13, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." God has the attitude of a two year old playing hide and seek. He'll hide in the middle of the room where everyone can see him, because he wants to be found. For him the fun is not in hiding, but in being discovered.

God also wants to be discovered. If we seek Him, God sees to it He gets found. AW Tozer once wrote, "It's not that we don't want God, we do. We just want other things more." Do you want God enough to seek His face with all your heart?