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Jeremiah 33 - 36



Jeremiah - Steve Gregg

In "Jeremiah 33-36", Steve Gregg discusses the theme of comfort that runs through these chapters. He highlights the prophecy of the coming of a righteous Davidic ruler who will execute judgment on the earth. Gregg also examines the covenant made by God and Israel, with a focus on the unfaithfulness of the people and their lack of integrity. Finally, Gregg outlines the story of the burning of Jeremiah's scroll and discusses the obedience of Baruch in rewriting it.

Transcript

Jeremiah 33 then brings us to the end of the little book of comfort, which began in chapter 30, and we've been all lingering longer in this section than we would in the most of the chapters, because it is relevant to the new covenant and some of its passages, most of it. It is sort of the counterpart in four chapters of what Isaiah has in 27 chapters at the end of his book. And we come to chapter 33.

Moreover, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time while he was still shut up in the court of the prison. Now that, in other words, the same time that he bought the field. He was shut up in the court of the prison at the beginning of chapter 32 when his cousin, Hannah Mel, came to him and requested that he buy a field, to redeem a field, which he did at the instructions of God in order to illustrate his promise that the real estate, which was pretty much worthless in Jerusalem at that time or around it, would again have value when God would restore the fortunes of Judah and Israel.

Chapter 33, moreover, while he was still shut up in the prison, says, Thus says the Lord who made it, the Lord who formed it to establish it, the Lord is his name. Call to me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you do not know. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah, which have been pulled down to fortify against the siege mounds and the sword.

They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but only to fill their places with the dead bodies of men whom I will slay in my anger and my fury for whose wickedness I have hidden my

face from this city. Behold, I will bring it health and healing. I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth.

You remember that when we talked about this imagery of healing in Isaiah, also we see it here in Jeremiah consistently, the healing that is necessary is a restoration of peace. And that is what's even suggested in Isaiah 53, verse five, where it says, The chastisement for our peace is upon him and with his tribes we are healed. Peace is ultimately being on good terms with God.

Israel and Judah's sickness was that they were alienated from God, not on good terms with God, because of their sins. They needed to be forgiven and healed and restored and brought back into a peaceful circumstance where God is at peace with them and therefore their circumstances are now blessed by God again. And so this comparison of healing or health with being at peace is found both in Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Verse seven, And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return and will rebuild those places as at the first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against me. Then it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, an honor before all nations of the earth who shall hear all the good that I do to them.

They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that I provide for it. Now, this is the kind of prophecy that made the Jews at a later generation who did come back from Babylon anticipate great things. He says, It's amazing.

The nations are going to be amazed by what I'm doing here. Israel will be a glory, an astonishment to all the people because of all the good things God will do, the way he prospers it and so forth. Well, when they actually did come back, it didn't happen quite like that.

It's only a remnant of them actually returned. The ones who did had a limited budget. They built a temple, but it wasn't anything like the temple Solomon had built, not anywhere near as good.

Their crops were not as good as they thought they would be. The prophet Haggai says that they had hoped for much and reaped little and that they're experiencing great hardships. However, Haggai says the reason for that is because they had not put God first.

They came back to Jerusalem, but their hearts were not yet as they should be. The spiritual renewal was yet to come. And the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel regularly speak about these two things together.

They talk about the return of the exiles physically to Jerusalem, which did occur. After

the time that Cyrus conquered Babylon and gave a decree allowing all the captive peoples to go back to their homelands, including Israel, in 586 B.C., and they came back. And that is predicted, but it's also predicted that God would pour out his spirit upon them.

He'd make a new covenant with them. He'd take out their heart of stone, give them a heart of flesh. He'd prosper them.

He'd change everything for them. And it wasn't all that changed when they came back. And that's because there are two aspects of the promise.

There's that which is fulfilled in the return from the exile, and then there's the fuller fulfillment with the coming of the Messiah. The return from exile is a type and a shadow of the fuller salvation, which they did not experience. And the fact that they didn't is seen by the fact their hearts were not holy to the Lord.

Jeremiah had said in his letter to the exiles in chapter 29 that they would return and find God when they return with their whole heart. That was his promise to them when he wrote to the exiles in Jeremiah 29, 13. You will seek me and you'll find me when you search for me with all your heart.

This is something perhaps they thought that God himself would make happen. This is something they have to make happen. They have to search for him, and they have to apply themselves wholly, their whole heart.

That was not immediately the case with the exiles. There was a restoration, but it wasn't all that they hoped for. However, the New Testament writers see the new covenant in Christ, the age of the spirit beginning at Pentecost, the fulfillment of these prophecies in the present age.

In other words, the real fulfillment of the return of exiles is in Christ. So that Isaiah had said in Isaiah 10, he said, the remnant shall return. Paul quotes that verse in Romans 9 and says, the remnant shall be saved.

So the idea is that returning in the prophets finds its ultimate fulfillment in people being saved as they return to Christ and find in him the new covenant blessings. Verse 10, Thus says the Lord again, There shall be heard in this place of which you say, It is desolate without man and beast. In the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate without man and without inhabitant and without beast, the voice of joy, the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say, Praise the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for his mercy endures forever.

There will be people praising God, rejoicing, getting married again, having fun again. And these are the things that were said repeatedly in the past were going to be removed

from Jerusalem by the Babylonian exile. They're restored now.

Verse 12, Thus says the Lord of hosts, In this place, which is desolate without man, without beast, and in all its cities, there shall again be a habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down in the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the low land, in the cities of the south and in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah. The flock shall again pass under the hand of him who counts them, says the Lord. So this is kind of the same thing that verse 44 of the last chapter said.

Although this was apparently a separate prophecy, it looks like it continues on the same theme. Because in chapter 32, it was that fields will be purchased again in all these locations. Verse 44 mentions all the same locations as chapter 33, 13 does.

Only here it says there will be flocks and shepherds and so forth. A return to the pastoral bliss, as it were, that was known in more peaceful times. Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a branch of righteousness. He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell safely.

And this is the name by which she will be called, the Lord, our righteousness. It's interesting that it says she will be called. Does it read that way in your New American Standard also? In verse 16? Yeah, but what's interesting is that this same prophecy verbatim was given back in chapter 23 in verses 5 and 6. And it said there, it said this is the name by which he will be called, Jehovah Tzidkenu.

But now the city itself is called that, called by the name of the Messiah. It's an interesting transposition of thoughts. Everything is the same as in chapter 23, verse 5 and 6. But the change is that now it's the city of Jerusalem that is called by the name of the Messiah, Yahweh Tzidkenu.

Now verse 17, thus says the Lord, David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before me to kindle grain offerings and sacrifice continually. This is one of the promises that pre-millennialists who are of a dispensational sort feel needs to be fulfilled in the millennium. Because it suggests that the Levitical priesthood will have a perpetual continuance.

Because Levi will not lack a man to offer burnt offerings to me. There shall always be a Levitical priesthood, it says. And there will always be a Davidic king.

Now the dispensationalists will say, well that hasn't happened yet. And in the millennium there will be a millennial temple and animal sacrifices and Levites and so forth. And

there are passages in Ezekiel, especially chapters 40 through 48, that are thought to pertain to that period of time too.

And in Zechariah 14, the suggestion of a rebuilt temple, reestablished Levitical priesthood. It sounds like God saying it will always be. However, remember what God said in Jeremiah chapter 18.

Whenever I say I'm going to establish, if they turn from me, I will not establish them. I will repent of the good I said to them. In other words, this is what I will do if they are faithful.

There's no statement about the if here. But in Jeremiah chapter 18, verses 7 through 10, he made it clear there's always that if implied. Anytime I say such things, it depends on their faithfulness.

If you look over at 1 Samuel chapter 2, when God is rebuking the priest Eli. In 1 Samuel 2, in verse 30, a prophet comes to Eli the priest and says, Therefore, the Lord God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before me forever. That is, would be priests forever.

The house of Levi, the house of Aaron. God says, I said you guys would walk before me forever. You'd be priests forever.

I had not stated any conditions. But now the Lord says, far be it from me. For those who honor me, I will honor.

And those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. That is, the promise I made is conditioned on you honoring me. I didn't state it at the time.

You might have thought it was unconditional. It isn't. And likewise here.

Because we read in Isaiah 66, in a description of what is apparently the present age, described in figurative language, but quoted by Paul as if it applies to himself and his own ministry. It says, at the end of Isaiah 66, 19, that's a long verse, but the last line says, They shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. Then verse 20 says, Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord out of all nations, there's the Gentiles, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and camels, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel unto the house of the Lord.

So the Gentiles will be an offering brought to the Lord. And of course I mentioned when we studied Isaiah that Paul quotes this verse or alludes to it. He doesn't quote it outright.

In Romans 15, 16, it says that his ministry was bringing Gentiles as an offering to the Lord. And then it says in verse 21, And I will also take some of them, that is the Gentiles,

for priests and Levites, says the Lord. So the Gentiles are going to come in and God's going to use some of them to replace priests and Levites.

Why would that be necessary? Only if the Levites are no longer in their position. Only if the Levites have been removed. It was the priesthood, after all, that ran the Sanhedrin.

It was the chief priests and elders that condemned Jesus, plotted against him and condemned him, and persecuted the church. It was they that came under judgment and were removed by the judgment in 70 A.D. God has now brought in Gentiles and taken them for Levites instead. So although God says, you know, Levi shall not lack a man to offer burnt offerings to me, Levi might not be any more literal than David is.

David is actually the Messiah here. And Levi might simply represent the priesthood. Levites can be replaced by Gentiles, according to Isaiah.

Now verse 19, And the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, Thus says the Lord, If you can break my covenant with day and my covenant with night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then my covenant may also be broken with David my servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, my ministers. As the hosts of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister to me. Well, we are that Davidic kingdom and we are that kingdom of priests, the Levites, and so this is to be understood, I believe, spiritually.

If he is saying in the sixth century B.C. that the Levites will never lack a man to be priests, that has failed to come true because they lack a man now. There are no Levite priests. You can go to Jerusalem and see.

There's no priesthood, there's no temple, there's none of that. Nor has there been for almost 2,000 years. This is some kind of not lacking a man.

They've lacked men for 2,000 years. So if the prophecy is literal, it's mistaken. But if it is in fact conditional or spiritual, either one, it could be seen to be true.

And, of course, it is true. Moreover, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying, verse 24, Have you not considered what these people have spoken, saying, They say the two families which the Lord has chosen, he has also cast them off. Thus they have despised my people as if they should no more be a nation before me.

Thus says the Lord, if my covenant is not with the day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David, my servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will cause their captives to return, and I will have mercy on them. This is apparently referring to actual Jewish people, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Of course, the Bible in the New Testament does say we are children of Abraham, too. We don't find the New Testament listing Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in our lineage, though. That seems to refer to Jewish people.

But I believe it's referring to the remnant of the Jewish people, the remnant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's descendants. We'll always have a descendant of David ruling them. Absolutely.

Jesus is a descendant of David, and he rules forever. So there will never lack a Davidic ruler ever again over God's people. The true Jews, the Jews who are Jews not only outwardly but also inwardly, and also whatever Gentiles God has brought in to be part of their movement as well, their kingdom.

Now, we're done with that section, and we return to the bad old days. Chapter 34 is about a broken covenant. You might think when it talks about those who break my covenant as a reference to Mount Sinai's covenant, but it's not.

What happened here was that when the Babylonians were besieging the city, one of the ways that Zedekiah, the king, tried to manipulate God to do something for them, was he decided we'll make a covenant with the Lord that we will proclaim liberty to all our slaves, like the Jubilee year. In Leviticus 25, there's the law of the Jubilee, beginning at verse 8 and so, and it says every 50th year they're supposed to proclaim liberty to all the slaves and captives. And that's what they actually do in verse 8 of this chapter.

Apparently, this was one of the provisions of them making a covenant. They're like making a promise to God. The other provisions of the covenant are not mentioned.

We might only speculate about them. It may be that the covenant was, okay, God, we will do this for you if you'll do this for us. That's usually what a covenant involves.

And therefore, what we will do is observe the Jubilee, which we've been neglecting to do. We've been disobedient about that. We'll start being obedient.

We'll proclaim the liberty to our slaves. And the implication is you can fix our problem with the Babylonians. And actually, something happened that was encouraging.

The Babylonians got involved with the skirmish with the Egyptians. When Pharaoh Hophar came up and attacked, or intended to attack, actually, as it turns out, the Egyptians withdrew without engaging in battle. But when the Babylonians heard, the Babylonians who were besieging Jerusalem heard that the Egyptians were coming, the Babylonians left Jerusalem to go and engage Egypt.

And so briefly, the siege was left off. And the people in the city decided, oh, never mind, God. And they broke their covenant, and they took their slaves back into captivity.

It's like a man who's on a desert island and saying, God, if you just get me off this island, I'll serve you forever. And then all of a sudden he sees a ship in the distance. Never mind.

It's like God answers the prayer, or seems to answer the prayer, and he takes it as, okay, I'm not obligated to do what I said I'd do for you. How many times have people who are not even Christians just said, God, if you save my life in this horrible situation, I'll serve you forever. And then they live.

And they figure, oh, never mind. It worked out. Don't have to keep my promise.

And that's what Zedekiah and the people were doing. They'd let their slaves go as a means of manipulating favor from God. And then things turned around to get better, briefly.

And they said, oh, never mind. And they decided not to keep this covenant. And it's this breaking of the covenant that this chapter is writing to denounce them for.

The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and all his army, all the kingdoms of the earth under his dominion, and all the people fought against Jerusalem and all its cities, saying, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Go and speak to Zedekiah, king of Judah, and tell him, Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will give this city to the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. And you shall not escape from his hand, but you shall surely be taken and delivered into his hand. Your eyes shall see the eyes of the king of Babylon.

He shall speak with you face to face, and you shall go to Babylon. There's these repeated references to the fact that Zedekiah's eyes would see the king of Babylon. This is significant because actually the king of Babylon's face was one of the last things that Zedekiah's eyes ever saw.

He was captured when he tried to escape after the walls were breached. He was brought back to the king, and his sons were brought, and his sons were slain in front of him, and then his eyes were poked out. They put his eyes out.

So the last thing he got to see, besides the king of Babylon, was the slaughter of his own sons. Pretty nasty judgment. But the man had so many warnings.

It's like he's just a jerk. He just doesn't care. And once God poked his eyes out, I imagine he had a lot of time to wish he had listened to this prophecy, which was given to him so many times.

Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah, king of Judah. Thus says the Lord concerning you, you shall not die by the sword. Now you're not going to be so lucky as that.

You're going to be taken captive into Babylon as a blind man and live out your life that way, but you're not going to die by the sword. Now, by the way, the ability of Jeremiah to predict that accurately is amazing because you'd expect once the Babylonians conquer the city, the first thing they'd do is punish the king by killing him. That'd be the thing you'd predict.

But it didn't happen that way, and Jeremiah actually knew it wouldn't, and a man could only know such, of course, if he's a true prophet. But you shall die in peace, blind but in peace, in the ceremonies of your fathers, the former kings who were before you. So they shall burn incense for you and lament for you, saying, Alas, Lord, for I have pronounced the word, says the Lord.

Then Jeremiah the prophet spoke all these words to Zedekiah, king of Judah in Jerusalem, when the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem and all its cities of Judah that were left against Lachish and Azekah, for only these fortified cities remained of the cities of Judah. All the others had fallen already. This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord after king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people who were at Jerusalem to proclaim liberty to them, that every man should set his male and female slaves, a Hebrew man or a woman, that no one should keep a Jewish brother in bondage.

Now when all the princes and all the people who had entered into the covenant heard that everyone should set free his male and female slaves, that no one should keep them in bondage anymore, they obeyed and they let them go. But afterward, they changed their minds. Now it does not say here why they changed their minds, but later at the end of verse 21, it makes it clear, it's because the Babylonians had withdrawn to go and face Egypt.

See at the end of verse 21, the prophecy to Zedekiah is that the Babylonian army, which has gone back from you, behold, I will command, says the Lord, and cause them to return to this city. So there's a brief reprieve. Apparently the people took advantage of that hopeful moment to decide to renege on their promise to God, and they somehow retook their slaves.

Now I'm not sure how that would actually happen. I'm not exactly sure what procedure it was. It's told in a very brief space here, but there would have to be some kind of legal proceedings to release a slave, and then, especially once he's a free man, to simply go and say, no, you're my slave again.

It seems like he'd have some kind of papers or something that showed that he's emancipated, and they couldn't just take him again. So they probably used the courts and things like that to find some kind of legal loopholes that annulled their former transaction, so that those slaves were then obligated to come back to them again. And so, verse 11, afterward they changed their minds and made the male and female slaves return, whom they had set free, and brought them into subjection as male and female

servants.

Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, At the end of seven years let every man set free his Hebrew brother, who has been sold to him, and when he has served you six years, you shall let him go free from you. That's Exodus 21, verse 2. But your fathers did not obey me, nor incline their ear. Then you recently turned and did what was right in my sight, every man proclaiming liberty to his neighbor, and you made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name.

So this is a solemn thing they did at the temple before God, made promises to God, a covenant with God, probably an elaborate ceremony, it's not passed over without much description, but it was something that was solemn. He says, Then you turned around and profaned my name, and every one of you brought back his male and female slaves, whom he had set at liberty, at their pleasure, and brought them back into subjection to be male and female slaves. Therefore thus says the Lord, You have not obeyed me in proclaiming liberty, everyone to his brother and everyone to his neighbor.

Behold, I proclaim liberty to you, says the Lord, the sword, to pestilence, to famine, and I will deliver you to the trouble among all the kingdoms of this earth. So I'm going to liberate you from your homeland here. I'm going to liberate you from your life.

I'm going to have you killed. I'm going to have you delivered over to your enemies. That's the deliverance you're going to get.

And I will give the men who have transgressed my covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts, the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf, I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their dead bodies shall be meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth. Now, there's some interesting aspects of the mentality of God about the covenant and of the people too.

For one thing, there's a reference to the custom of cutting an animal in two and the participating parties in the covenant physically passing between the parts of the animal. This custom is known from archaeological records from other cultures besides that of Israel. And from what we know, because there's not much said here in the Bible about this custom, the ideal was that as a person would make a covenant with another person, they would take an animal, kill it, cut it in two, put its pieces apart from each other, and they would physically pass between the pieces while making a vow that says, if I break my vow, may I be cut in pieces like this animal is.

And therefore, the animal being dismembered like that is invoking on oneself the same fate as that animal suffered if he would break the vow. Now, that's what's referred to here. There's only really one other place in the Bible that makes reference to this custom.

It's much earlier, back in the days of Abraham. So it's a very ancient custom. In Genesis 15, Abraham made a covenant with God, and it was somewhat modified.

He was told to take these animals and cut them in pieces and set the parts aside from each other. And Abraham was not actually required to pass between the pieces, but instead there was a smoking pot and a burning lamp or torch that passed between the pieces. Most evangelicals believe that this is a reference to the father and the son covenanting together and not even involving Abraham because he didn't have to meet any conditions.

I don't necessarily interpret it that way, but virtually all the commentators do. I myself think that the burning lamp and the furnace represent the Egyptian captivity and the deliverance from it. Deuteronomy refers to the Egyptian captivity as a furnace of iron or an iron furnace.

And salvation is referred to in Isaiah as a lamp that burns. And I believe that the words that God speaks after Abraham sees this, Abraham sees this burning lamp and this iron furnace or this burning furnace passing between the pieces, God says, your people will be in a land that is not their own for 400 years and then I'm going to deliver them. In other words, the two elements, the captivity and the deliverance, seem to be merged in the prophecy that explains what he's seen.

And therefore the passing between the parts are not really two human parties or even divine parties, but elements of what is promised. But that's a strange alteration of the normal custom. In Jeremiah's day they apparently followed the custom normally.

They pass themselves through the pieces of the animal when they make a covenant. But they do so invoking upon themselves a disaster if they would break it. And they have broken it.

It shows how unfaithful human beings are, how little integrity they have that they can make a solemn vow and then think nothing of the danger of violating it. How little they feared God. How little they believed in God apparently.

And God says of them in verse 16, they profaned my name. That's because they swore in the name of Yahweh and then broke their oath. That's dragging his name through the mud.

As it were, the word to profane means to not hold it as sacred. They didn't treat God's name as sacred. They used his name in an oath, but they didn't treat it like it meant

anything.

It was no different than using any other word in the vocabulary. It didn't bind them in any sense in their conscience. So he says, I'm going to give them and their dead bodies shall be meat for the birds of the heaven.

Just like this calf or this cow that they cut in two probably. Verse 21, and I will give Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which has gone back from you. Behold, I will command, says the Lord, and cause them to return to this city.

They will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitants. Now, in contrast to the faithless covenant breakers in Judah, chapter 35 brings attention to some very faithful people who are not Jewish, the Rechabites. They were descended from the Kenites.

The Kenites are mentioned as far back as the days of Abraham as one of the tribes whose land Abraham and his descendants were going to inherit. The Kenites were somehow related to Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. He was their priest, apparently.

He was a Midianite, but there's some connection between Jethro and the Kenites in the scripture. And one of the Kenites in Moses' family, in his wife's family, became a guide to them, teaching them the local plants and animals and so forth as they traveled through the wilderness. And the Kenites became close to the Israelites.

They dwelt among them safely, and they were sort of merged with the Hebrews in the land of Israel. Their fate and Israel's fate was pretty much shared because of the merging of these two ethnic groups, the Jews and the Kenites. In particular, there was a family of Kenites who were descended from a man named Rechab.

Rechabites, they were called. And they dwelt as nomads in the region, but within the boundaries of Israel, usually. But they had come to live in Jerusalem because of the threat of the Babylonians and the Syrians.

And so they came to live inside the city walls. In doing so, they were kind of violating their family policy. Because they had a notable ancestor, two and a half centuries before Jeremiah's time, a man named Jonadab, the son of Rechab.

He was an influential religious reformer. Though not a Jew himself, he was very interested in the overthrow of Baal worship in the Northern Kingdom. When King Jehu staged his rebellion against Jezebel and Ahab, he sought the support of this man, Jonadab, the Rechabite.

We are not told why he did. As Jehu was killing everyone in his path, he encountered

Jonadab and he didn't kill him. Instead, he sought his favor.

He says, come with me and I'll show you my zeal for Yahweh, which he knew would be pleasing to Jonadab. Jonadab was a religious man, obviously a believer in Yahweh, though not a Jew himself. He had descendants in Jeremiah's day, two and a half centuries after the time of Jehu, two and a half centuries after the time of Jonadab, who were still living under the instructions Jonadab had given his children.

In particular, he told them to never drink wine so they'd be a little bit like Nazarites. He also told them never to build houses or plant fields but to live nomadic lives. These instructions probably were to instruct them to not corrupt themselves with the world.

Somehow, the Rechabites could still be counted on to follow Jonadab's instructions, though they were now many, many generations after his time. They had remained faithful to what he told them to do, for the most part. They had made one compromise, according to verse 11 of this chapter, and that is that they had moved inside the city of Jerusalem because of the threat of the enemies out there.

But otherwise, they were still following instructions. Now, Jeremiah is going to be told to go and offer these people wine. When he finds out, they will not drink wine because their father or their ancestor, centuries ago, told them not to do so.

God makes a point of this. Now, look at that. These Rechabites obey Jonadab, and they've been obeying him for 250 years.

But my people don't obey me at all. They don't obey me for a single generation. And so he's pointing out the Rechabites' uncompromising attitude in order to obey their ancestors' rules, as a contrast to Israel's total compromise and refusal to obey God.

And it is a remarkable thing when you think about it. How is it that a man could teach his children to live apart from the world, a separated life, and after he's dead, two and a half centuries later, his descendants are still doing it? It's hard to even imagine a Christian family where three or four generations remain Christian, where people stay in the faith that they're taught. But these people were remarkably faithful to their convictions, and they are therefore brought forth as an example to shame Israel for their lack of obedience to God.

Now, Jonadab's instructions were not God's instructions. It's not as if there was something particularly right in the sight of God that these people should wander around or should avoid wine. They're just doing this because their ancestor said he wanted them to do that, and so they're doing it.

So he's not saying the Rechabites in general are living a way of life that everybody should live, or that is more obedient to God than someone else. It's not God that gave them these instructions. It's their ancestor.

But the point is that they're conscientious and maintaining the distinctives of their family and of their tribe, which Israel doesn't conscientiously maintain generation after generation the distinctives of their nation. And so that's what this chapter is about. The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying.

Now, this is going backward because in chapter 34 it was in the reign of Zedekiah and very near the end of the reign of Zedekiah, and he reigned for 11 years. So this is going back at least a decade or more from the previous chapter. So why is this chapter stuck in here out of chronological order? It may be in order to deliberately contrast the faithfulness of the Rechabites in chapter 35 with the unfaithfulness and the covenant-breaking nature of the Jews in the previous chapter.

Go to the house of the Rechabites, speak to them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. Now, this is spoken of very briefly. I mean, it's just bare-bones description.

He actually does it. He takes them to the house of the Lord and offers them wine to drink is what happens. However, there may have been more to it than that.

He may have actually prepared a feast in which wine would be served, which would be a natural situation in which to encourage people, oh, have some wine. If you just bring people to the temple and sit them down and put wine in front of them, they think there's something weird going on here. Is this a test? And I think that the idea was to see if he could persuade them to drink wine, and that may be a little easier to do if the setting seemed like a natural setting for drinking wine.

He apparently rented or obtained a chamber in the temple, a large place where the whole tribe or the whole clan of Rechabites could be accommodated. They all came. It's like they're invited to something special.

Of course, they may have had a great respect for Jeremiah and just come because he wanted them to and would have come no matter what. But then when he told them to drink wine, they didn't obey him then. So, you know, I have a feeling they weren't coming just because they would do anything Jeremiah said, because they wouldn't.

But they may have been invited to a feast that Jeremiah was hosting or whatever in which there would also be wine served. They would come unsuspecting. Maybe it was on a religious occasion or something.

And we don't know all the details. All we know is that part of this event was that these people were going to be offered wine and God wanted to make a point of what it would be that Jeremiah would see their response to be when offered. So, verse 4, I brought them into the house of the Lord, into the chamber of the sons of Hinnah and the son of

Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber.

There weren't many of those men of God, but there was a good man who apparently either owned I don't know about these chambers of the temple. It seems like they were owned by individuals and they rented them out or let people use them or something. But this man, Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, was a man of God and apparently had a chamber, which was by the chamber of the princes, above the chamber of Meaziah, the son of Shalom, the keeper of the door.

Then I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine and cups, and I said to them, Have some wine. But they said, We will drink no wine. For Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, You shall drink no wine, you nor your sons, forever.

You shall not build a house, sow seed, plant a vineyard, nor have any of these. But all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you are sojourners. Jonadab apparently recognized the tendency of cities to soon move to corruption.

Urban life has many temptations, and cities all eventually tend to go bad. And so he said, You stay aloof from those cities. You live in tents.

You stay out in the fields. Don't build permanent dwellings. That will just develop into a city.

You move around like Arabs do and just move from place to place, and you will then not be corrupted by the world, and God will not have to judge you and send you out of the land. Thus we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, nor to build ourselves houses to dwell in, nor do we have vineyard, field, or seed. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab, our father, commanded us.

But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came up into the land, that we said, Come, let us go into Jerusalem, for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians. So we dwell at Jerusalem. The occasion of this is therefore identified as the time when the armies of the Babylonians and of the Syrians were a threat.

We then are directed to the time of 2 Kings chapter 24, in verse 2, where the Syrians and the Babylonians, or the Chaldeans, are attacking Jerusalem. In 2 Kings 24, 1 and 2, it says, In his days, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.

And the Lord sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of

Moabites, and bands of people of Ammon. He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord. Now, this was not the downfall of Jerusalem.

This was talking about the reign of Jehoiakim. But remember, this chapter of Jeremiah has flashed back to, as it says, the days of Jehoiakim. In chapter 34, we were within a year of the total destruction of Jerusalem in the reign of Zedekiah.

But this chapter has gone back a decade or so, when Jerusalem is not really that close to being destroyed. It's still 10 years off, or 11. But there was a time when Jehoiakim, the earlier king to Zedekiah, had made an oath and a pact with Nebuchadnezzar.

But he broke that pact after three years. And it was the breaking of that pact that caused Babylonians and Syrians and others to come down. And we see that the Rechabites were afraid of the Babylonians and the Syrians.

So this must be the occasion when Jehoiakim had broken his agreement with Nebuchadnezzar, which makes him a lot like Zedekiah and the men of the previous chapter. These people make oaths, they make agreements, they make treaties, they make covenants, and they don't have any interest in keeping them. You make a treaty with Nebuchadnezzar and you break it.

So these Rechabites are also then in contrast to Jehoiakim, as well as to the men in the previous story, which was about Zedekiah and his time. So the Rechabites have explained to Jeremiah why they won't drink wine, and what were the distinctives of their tribe that their father had told them to maintain. And they had done so.

Now Jeremiah didn't know what the message from the Lord would be here. After all, what they were doing wasn't, strictly speaking, righteous. To avoid wine was not more righteous than to drink wine.

Israel doesn't have any rules against drinking wine. Living in tents isn't more righteous than living in cities. There's nothing about the Rechabites that would have struck Jeremiah as these are a more righteous people than the average people.

They might be more aloof, maybe in some ways more uncompromising, but the distinctives of their lifestyle are not commanded by God, and therefore it's not like telling them to drink wine is telling them to sin. And the fact that the prophet told them to drink wine and they refused, it's possible Jeremiah expected the word of the Lord to come and say, Thus says the Lord, you have violated the word of the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah. Shame on you, or whatever, you know.

Jeremiah didn't know what was up here until God now gave the explanation. It's possible that Jeremiah thought that God was going to use him to kind of balance these people out from their kind of strange nomadic lifestyle and get them to settle in and be more mainstream, not in this evil culture but just in normal Jewish life, which at that time

wasn't really quite as close to the destruction of Jerusalem as it was at a later time. But Jeremiah is told that actually these people are to be commended, not so much because of the specifics of their lifestyle, but because of their reason for doing it, because they're being loyal to earlier teaching they'd received from their ancestor, which is something the Jews will not do.

Verse 12, Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts to the God of Israel, Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction to obey my words, says the Lord? The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed. For to this day they drink none, and they obey their father's commandment. But although I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, you did not obey me.

I have also sent to you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Turn now, everyone from his evil way, amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them. Then you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers, but you have not inclined your ear nor obeyed me. Surely the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them, but this people has not obeyed me.

Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring on Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the doom that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them, but they have not heard, and I have called them, and they have not answered. And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, Now he's got a word for them. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before me forever.

So there must be some Rechabites around somewhere today. If forever is literal, maybe there are. There's none identified.

They may be living out in tents where you don't see them. Who knows? Certainly not at the bars. Chapter 36.

Now it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, that this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, Take a scroll of the book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, against all the nations from the day that I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day. So he began speaking in the thirteenth year of Josiah. It was now the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

That's about twenty years or twenty-one years had passed. All the prophecies he had spoken previous to this. Now he may have summarized them.

After all, there was a fair bit of repetition as we have discovered in his prophecies. We find that this book that he writes can be read through three times in one day. So it seems like it's a little shorter than the book of Jeremiah as we have it now.

But obviously, like I said, there's a lot of repetition in the book of Jeremiah. Maybe just all the things he said multiple times were written down one time. You don't need to say it that many times.

But anyway, he wrote down the book. And probably because of these instructions, we actually have these chapters. And they were not written by Jeremiah's own hand but by his friend Baruch.

But God says, and this is still early in the reign of Jehoiakim, quite a while before the fall of Jerusalem, back when God was still calling people to repentance rather than surrender, says, Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah. And Baruch wrote on a scroll of the book, at the instruction of Jeremiah, all the words of the Lord which he had spoken to him. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, Now, I don't know in what way he was confined.

Obviously, several times in Jeremiah's life he was actually incarcerated. Though it does not appear that he was incarcerated this time because it turns out that a warrant was issued for his arrest by the king, but Jeremiah was not arrested because it says in verse 26, So he obviously was not in some place that the king had him under control and could find him easily. He was not, therefore, in prison.

But he was confined in some way. Maybe he's just saying, I've got other business God has me doing. I can't go out and read this.

I'll give you, you take dictation. I've got other things I have to do. I'm restricted in my time or my activities or something.

We don't know why he's confined. He's just saying, I need you to do this for me. You go, therefore, and read from the scroll which you have written at my instruction, the words of the Lord in the hearing of the people in the Lord's house on the day of fasting.

And you shall also read them in the hearing of all Judah who come from their cities. It may be that they will present their supplications before the Lord, and everyone will turn from his evil way. For great is the anger and the fury that the Lord has pronounced against this people.

And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him. Reading from the book of the words of the Lord in the Lord's house. And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, in the ninth month that they proclaimed a fast before the Lord to all the people in Jerusalem, to all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem, then Baruch read from the book

the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, the scribe, in the upper court of the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, in the hearing of all the people.

Now notice he said in verse 6, go read this on the day of fasting, which is probably, it is not actually the day of atonement, because we're told it was in the ninth month. Verse 9 says it was in the ninth month of the following year. You see these instructions were given to him in the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

But the fast that he read this out was the fifth year of Jehoiakim, verse 9 says, in the ninth month. So at least almost a year, if not more, passed between the writing of the book and the reading of it. And yet at the time that it was dictated, Jeremiah says, you're going to do it at the day of fasting, which was apparently quite a ways off still.

It was apparently not a day of fasting prescribed in the law, because the law only prescribed a fast in the seventh month on the day of atonement. The ninth month, they had some other thing they were mourning about, or maybe they're just in trouble, and so they're fasting to get help from God. In any case, that would be the time when the book was read by Baruch.

Now when Micaiah, the son of Gamariah, the son of Shaphan, heard all the words of the Lord from this book, he then went down to the king's house, into the scribe's chamber, and there all the princes were sitting. Elisha, the scribe, Deliah, the son of Shemaiah, Elnathan, the son of Akbar, Gamariah, the son of Shaphan, Zedekiah, the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. These were all some kind of petty political officers who were hanging around the king.

Then Micaiah declared to them all the words that he had heard when Baruch read the book in the hearing of the people. Therefore the princes sent Jehudi, the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shalamiah, the son of Cushi, to Baruch. I'm not sure why it's considered so helpful for us to know that so many ancestors of this man Jehudi, who was simply the messenger who went to get the book.

We know his grandfather, his great-grandfather. We don't even know that much about Jeremiah's ancestry, but this guy Jehudi must have had an impressive family line. He went to Baruch saying, Take in your hand the scroll from which you have read in the hearing of the people and come.

So Baruch, the son of Neriah, took the scroll in his hand and came to them. Now here he might have been sweating bullets because he had not intended to read this before the king. Most of the prophecies denounce the king.

If you're going to go stand before the king and read this kind of stuff, you've got to be pretty strong. You've got to have some backbone. He had read it in the temple.

That was dangerous enough, but he just read it to the people. Now the king's going to hear it from him. He goes and he does what he's told.

And they said to him, Sit down and read in our hearing. So Baruch read in their hearing. Now it happened when they had heard all the words that they looked in fear from one to another and said to Baruch, We will surely tell the king all these words.

So he first read it to these princes, and then they took him to the king. You don't get that easy access to the king without someone telling the king there's a reason for you to come. So these guys were screening the material first for the king, and now they're going to take it and make sure the king hears it.

These guys were good guys. Not very often were the princes good guys. Remember, there was a time when the people wanted to kill Jeremiah back in Chapter 26, and some princes intervened for him and said, No, he doesn't deserve to die.

Remember what Micah said? Hezekiah didn't kill him for that. So some of the princes were men with some conscience, as we shall see even further on here. But they said the king needs to hear this stuff.

So they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, how did you write all these words at his instruction? So Baruch answered them, He proclaimed with his mouth all these words to me, and I wrote them with the ink in the book. Then the princes said to Baruch, Go, hide, you and Jeremiah, and let no one know where you are. So they were sympathetic toward him.

They knew the king was going to be upset about this. They thought the king needs to hear this, but he doesn't need to be in the position to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah. They'd both be in danger.

So these princes warned him, Go, hide yourself. Don't tell anyone where you are. Don't even tell us, because the king might ask us.

We don't want to know where you are. You just go hide, and we'll take this book to the king. And they went to the king into the court, but they stored the scroll in the chamber of Elisha, the scribe.

So they didn't even carry the book in directly. They had to get the king's mind on whether he wanted to hear it or not. And they told all the words in the hearing of the king.

In other words, a summary, they told him. So the king sent Jehudi to bring the scroll, and he took it from Elisha, the scribe's chamber, and Jehudi read it in the hearing of the king and in the hearing of all the princes who stood beside the king. Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month.

That's December, so it was cold, with a fire burning on the hearth before him. And it happened when Jehudi had read three or four columns that the king cut it with a scribe's knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth until the scroll was consumed, piece by piece in this way, in the fire that was on the hearth. Now consider the contrast between this king's attitude and that of his own father, Josiah.

When the priests brought to Josiah the scroll of Deuteronomy, in 2 Kings chapter 22, in verse 11 it says, when Josiah heard the scroll, he tore his clothes and was repentant and started reforms in Judah. But here's his own son, Jehoiakim, faced with similar material, really, a similar revelation from God about the danger therein that Josiah had reacted so well to. This man is heartless.

He doesn't pay any mind. He just kind of casually just cuts it into pieces, throws it in the fire. The impression is he's just showing total disdain toward it.

And it says in verse 24 that those watching, probably most of his courtiers, they were not afraid, nor did they tear their garments, the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words. Now this is his yes-men servants. This is not the princes that we heard about before.

We're going to see that they objected to what he was doing. But the king's regular attendants, they were heartless. They were not afraid when they saw him do this.

They didn't tear their garments like Josiah had done when he heard the book. The king, in this case, did not, and his servants didn't. But Elnathan, Deliah, and Gamariah, these are the princes we read about earlier, they're the ones who told Baruch, go hide, you and Jeremiah, hide yourselves.

They implored the king not to burn the scroll, but he would not listen to them. So there were some men in government who had some conscience, who had some good sense, but the king wouldn't listen to them. And the king commanded Jeremiel, the king's son, Saraiah, the son of Azariel, and Shalamiah, the son of Abdeel, to seize Baruch, the scribe, and Jeremiah, the prophet.

But the Lord hid them. So Jeremiah was not arrested this time. He was on other occasions, and Baruch escaped also.

But he was definitely bold. Now, after the king had burned the scroll with the words which Baruch had written at the instruction of Jeremiah, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, has burned. And you shall say to Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, thus says the Lord, you have burned this scroll, saying, why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land and cause man and beast to cease from here? Therefore thus says the Lord, concerning

Jehoiakim, king of Judah, he shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out in the heat of the day and in the frost of the night.

We actually don't have a specific reference to how Jehoiakim died and what happened to his body, but there was an earlier prophecy that said he'd die the death of a dog, or his burial would be the burial of a dog. He would not be honored in his burial. That he would have no son or none of his to sit on the throne of David came true also.

Jehoiakim was his son. He reigned for three months, but then he was taken off into captivity permanently into Egypt. Then Zedekiah, who was the last king before Babylon destroyed the city, was not a son of Jehoiakim.

So he had no one, after his son was taken into captivity after a three-month reign, no one to sit on the throne of David. I will punish him, his family, and his servants for their iniquity, and I will bring on them all, on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and on the men of Judah, all the doom that I have pronounced against them. But they did not heed.

Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it. Now, you might think Baruch at this time is thinking, do we really want to do this again? There's an arrest warrant out for us. You're asking me to go through this again? Okay.

The guy's an obedient guy. And by the way, he receives a whole chapter. Baruch receives a whole, very short chapter in his honor, in chapter 45.

It's only five verses long, but Jeremiah has a special word of promise from the Lord to Baruch for his unusual faithfulness. So Jeremiah gave this scroll to Baruch, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, had burned in the fire. And besides, there were added to them many similar words.

So he remembered those prophecies, probably had them memorized. He dictated them. He even expanded on them a little bit, added some more words of the same sort.

And we don't think he sent this one to Jehoiakim. Probably Baruch put this one in storage. And that's why we have the book of Jeremiah, because much of our book of Jeremiah is what Baruch wrote down.

Anyway, that's the end of that session.