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Jeremiah 31:23 - 32:44



Jeremiah - Steve Gregg

In this passage from Jeremiah 31:23-32:44, Steve Gregg provides insight into the prophecy of a new covenant in contrast to the covenant given at Mount Sinai. The speaker notes the importance of the Holy Spirit as an inward teacher for Christians, and that all fields shall become holy in the eyes of the Lord. Additionally, the speaker references Paul's question in Romans 11 about whether God has cast off the people of Israel, arguing that there has always been a remnant of faithful people. Ultimately, the prophecy serves to reinforce the belief that God is good, wise, and powerful.

Transcript

We left off last time in the midst of chapter 31 of Jeremiah. We pick it up now again, just about the halfway point. At verse 23.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, they shall again use this speech in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I bring back their captivity. The Lord bless you, O habitation of justice and mountain of holiness. I guess they used to say that in better times, when Jerusalem could be called a habitation of justice and a mountain of holiness.

I don't know how far back that goes. Maybe back to the time of David? Maybe the time of Josiah? But it was no longer a fitting blessing to invoke on this city, because it was no longer a city of justice or holiness, but the time will come again when this will be an appropriate way to speak of Jerusalem and of Zion. And there shall dwell in Judah itself and in all its cities together farmers and those going out with flocks, for I have satiated the weary soul and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.

After this I awoke and I looked around and my sleep was sweet to me. Now I don't know if this means he went back to sleep and had a sweet sleep, or his memory of the dreams he had left a good taste in his mouth, as it were, so to speak. In any case, that's a strange interruption at verse 26, because the prophecy continues.

So I don't know what is meant by interrupting at this point with him waking up, unless we're to understand that he only woke up briefly, looked around, and fell back asleep, and had more of the same kind of prophecy. If so, then simply the insertion of this verse

simply gives realism to the thing. I mean, we know we're not reading a composition written artificially at some later date or something and pretending to be something.

He's kind of just telling it as it goes along. He woke up briefly, went back to sleep. Certainly not worth mentioning, unless it was really just what happened and what he remembered happening.

There's no reason to interrupt the prophecy at this point with that, unless to just tell a bit of detail that it's true. Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. This simply means that the land will be again populated.

There will be the seed of man populating the land, and the seed of animals too. Remember, the animals had also been given over to the king of Babylon, as several references were made previously. The animals probably meaning livestock, and not so much referring to wild animals in all likelihood, but livestock, which is a sign of prosperity and blessing.

It shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord. In those days they shall say no more. The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall set on edge. Now there's some interesting curiosities about this particular bit in verses 29 and 30.

This proverb, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge, is what it means basically is one generation did the deed that caused the consequence, but the consequence was experienced by the next generation. That is, eating sour grapes would normally make you grimace, set your teeth on edge, and therefore the fathers who ate the sour grapes, you'd think their teeth would be set on edge, but not so, it's their children's. So the children are experiencing the consequences of their father's actions, that's what the proverb means.

And it was used in the time of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, because both of them quoted, among the Jews as if to say, you know, we're suffering all of this because of what our fathers did. In other words, they were not taking responsibility themselves for their sins, and not acknowledging that they themselves had deserved these consequences, but rather this is just because our fathers did the wrong thing. And Ezekiel makes reference to this proverb also, although he is not in Jerusalem with Jeremiah, he is in Babylon with the exiles there, but apparently this proverb was popular among the Jews, and it traveled with them to the exile, and became you know, something they continued to say when they were complaining about where they were in Babylon.

Over in Ezekiel 18, at the beginning of the chapter, it says the word of the Lord came to me again, this is Ezekiel now, saying Ezekiel 18, 1 and 2, what do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. As I live says the Lord God, you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine, the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine, the soul whose sins will die.

And he goes on to say if a man sins, he'll die for his sins. If his son is not wicked, he won't die for his father's sins. In other words, the sons will not have their teeth set on edge for what their fathers do.

If the son's teeth are set on edge, it's because the sons have eaten the sour grapes themselves. That is, they have earned it themselves. God is not going to punish innocent generations for the deeds of a wicked previous generation.

That's what Ezekiel is saying, and Jeremiah is also saying in those days they will no longer use this proverb. In Jeremiah 31, 29. But it's not as clear how this mention of it functions in this chapter, because it's in the midst of God talking about blessing.

It's in the midst of God talking about the end of exile, the end of suffering. And it was while they were suffering that they were complaining, well, it's our father's sins that caused this suffering on us. It's possible that what he's saying is when I've turned things around and all things are good, people won't be talking and theorizing about how bad things are and why, because they won't be bad.

People are going to stop using this proverb that they're now using in Jeremiah's day. Our teeth are set on edge because of our fathers. They won't have occasion to discuss that anymore because their teeth won't be set on edge anymore.

Maybe that's what it means. But the way he goes on in verse 30 sounds like it might mean something else here. Because he says, but everyone shall die for his own iniquity.

Every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. It sounds like it's saying that even after the return of the exiles, even after the time of blessing has come, there will still be people who eat sour grapes and their teeth are set on edge, but it will not be anyone suffering for their father's sins. It'll be everyone taking responsibility for his own.

Now, the question in my mind, one of the questions is, what is the genealogical relationship between this saying in Jeremiah and the same saying in Ezekiel? Which came first? Were they independent? Did God independently speak to Jeremiah and Ezekiel and give the very same information, this proverb is inappropriate, only the person who sins will die, etc.? It could be, of course. The Holy Spirit could easily reveal the same truth to two different people in different places. After all, when you hear

something in your culture that's just not right, it's possible for you to reach the conclusion, this is a wrong saying, and for another Christian you've never met, to reach the same conclusion.

I remember back in the late 60s and early 70s when I first started hearing a strong emphasis on the need for self-esteem and for self-love. I used to think, well, wait a minute. I wasn't warned against it because it was kind of a new emphasis in our culture.

When I heard it, I thought, that doesn't sound right. Loving yourself just doesn't sound right. It's a bad emphasis.

Then, of course, later I heard other Christians saying the same thing because it became a cultural mainstream idea, and so lots of Christians were saying the same thing. We didn't get it from each other. We just heard it being said and thought, well, wait a minute.

From a Christian point of view, that's not true. Therefore, if both Ezekiel and Jeremiah heard this proverb used among the people of their day, they might both have gotten the same reaction. Wait, that's not true.

You guys are blaming your fathers for what's happened to you. It's not because of what your fathers did, although it's partly that. Jeremiah did say it's because of what Manasseh did, and Manasseh was now dead.

The problem is what Manasseh did had continued with his offspring. If his offspring had repented, there would be no wincing for the children, regardless of what Manasseh had done. The problem is what Manasseh did set in motion institutions of rebellion against God, which his offspring for several generations reveled in and continued in.

Even though it was Manasseh who set this ball in motion, which snowballed into a hopeless situation where God had to judge, and it could be said it's because of what Manasseh did, yet this generation is suffering because they're also doing what Manasseh did. They're not innocent people suffering for the guilt of an earlier guilty generation. They are themselves a guilty generation too, and that's the point here.

I don't know, since Ezekiel went into captivity, actually at a time after Jeremiah had started preaching Jerusalem and Ezekiel was from Jerusalem too, he might have heard Jeremiah give this prophecy and it's possible that he expounded on it himself to the exiles. In any case, there's an interesting, a remarkable similarity between verses 29 and 30 here and Ezekiel 18, both the same proverb and the same objection to that proverb are registered. Now verse 31, this is the most famous passage in this section of Jeremiah.

Verse 31. Now, the new covenant, it is here said to be something that contrasts with the covenant he gave them at Mount Sinai. The contrast that he gives is that it's written on

the hearts, although the writer of Hebrews in quoting this says there's even more benefits, more improvements over the old covenant than that.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that the new covenant is based upon better promises. If you look over at Hebrews chapter 8, where this entire passage is quoted and then it's quoted in order to amplify some commentary that the writer has already given, it says in Hebrews 8, 6, but now he has obtained a more excellent ministry as Jesus has obtained a better ministry than the priests of the Old Testament inasmuch as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, meaning the one at Mount Sinai, then no place would have been sought for a second.

And in case the readers are saying, what do you mean a second covenant sought? He says, well, let me quote from you, from Jeremiah 31, because finding fault with them, that is with the provisions and the promises of the first covenant, he says, behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I'll make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt because they did not continue in my covenant. And I disregarded them, says the Lord. I disregarded them as the Septuagint reading in the Hebrews says I was a husband to them.

Verse 10, for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws in their mind and write them on their hearts. And I will be their God. They should be my people.

None of them shall teach his neighbor and none his brother saying, know the Lord for all shall know me from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their lawless deeds. I will remember no more.

This is one of the longest quotations from the Old Testament in any New Testament book. It is the entire passage that we just read, Jeremiah 31 31 through 34. But then he says in verse 13 in that he says a new covenant, which he does in the passage, he has made the first that is the Sinaitic covenant obsolete.

Now what is becoming obsolete is growing old and ready to vanish away. This last ominous remark is a reference to the impending destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. No doubt it was about ready to vanish out all the trappings of the old covenant, but it's already obsolete.

Even before Jerusalem fell, the old covenant was obsolete because a new covenant has come. He says. And so we see a number of things about this passage in Jeremiah as a New Testament writer quotes it and applies it.

He says, first of all, it's a better covenant. It's not just new. It's new and improved.

It's a better covenant because it's based on better promises. Well, what are those? What are the better promises? There are promises in this passage in Jeremiah 31 that are not applicable to the old covenant and therefore are an improvement over it. The ones that I think the writer of Hebrews has in mind in quoting it are that the law will be written in the heart.

That's an improvement because of course the heart is the problem. The heart of the people is the problem. The laws are not the problem.

There is nothing wrong with the laws that God gave them at Mount Sinai. They were perfect laws. David celebrated how perfect and flawless the laws of God were in his psalms.

He talked about how there's no injustice in them. The law is holy and good and perfect. And Paul agrees.

In Romans chapter 7 he says, I know that the law is holy and just and good. Nothing is wrong with the law. The problem is the heart.

The Jews were like every other people. They were just fallen sinful people. Good rules can be imposed on fallen people but those rules are not going to predict their behavior.

Those rules are prescriptive but they're not predictive. They're not descriptive. They don't describe their behavior.

They just tell them how they should behave. But since they are fallen and sinful in heart the law only serves to underscore their disobedience. Because they don't seem to be able from the heart to obey those laws consistently and therefore the presence of those laws only sets the bar and defines how far they have fallen.

The new covenant takes that law and inscribes it on the heart. What that means, that's a figure of speech of course, but it means that it internalizes it. Obedience to God is no longer defined as an external law imposed on a rebellious heart that doesn't want to obey it but rather the law is internalized in the heart so that the heart loves it.

The heart embraces it. The heart, like Paul said when he's talking in Romans 7, he says, with my mind I agree with the law of God. That's the condition of a person who's had the law written in their heart.

It's their mind, their heart is favorable toward it instead of resistant toward it. It's an inward change. Ezekiel talked about this too using somewhat different language over in Ezekiel chapter 36.

In Ezekiel 36 verse 25 and following God said, then I will sprinkle clean water on you and

you shall be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you.

I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and you will keep my judgments and do them. So the new arrangement is a changed heart.

Ezekiel can talk about taking the hard heart, the stony heart, and putting in a soft and compliant heart of flesh and the spirit of God being put in them so that they are made from an internal impulse of the spirit of God to obey me, to walk in my ways. That's the same thing Jeremiah means when he says the law will be written in the heart. The law will now define what the heart embraces.

The heart wants to obey God. Now there's still a part of the Christian that wants to disobey. That's called flesh and that's why Paul talks about this conflict he has in Romans 7. He says with my mind I agree with the law of God that's good but there's something in my members that's still kind of in rebellion there.

But the heart of the Christian wants to obey. It's got a new heart. It doesn't have a new flesh yet.

That's going to be changed in later on but first things first. God writes his law in our hearts so that we now are inclined to obedience. That's a better promise.

That's the promise of a better thing than what the old covenant has. Another better promise in this passage is that God will not only be known by a few who then have the responsibility of making him known to others but everybody in the new covenant will know God personally. They will not say each one to his neighbor know the Lord.

You see under the old covenant since God was external to the community and lived in a tabernacle that was only accessible to a few people priests and the high priest and such and even the law of God wasn't accessible to anybody except the priests. The people depended on the priests to tell them who God was, what God said, what the laws were. People did not have a personal relationship with God under the old covenant.

They had a corporate relationship with God. The nation as a whole was seen as God's son. The nation as a whole was seen as the chosen nation but individuals not so much.

Individuals if they wanted to know about God had to talk to the few who knew something about God. The priests who alone could approach God. The priests who alone had custody of the laws of God and could teach them and so forth.

Under the old covenant there's a privileged class of clergy that everybody else depended on to know about God. That was the situation often in the Middle Ages too with the church in Europe because the church conducted their ceremonies in Latin which the

average person didn't understand. Therefore nobody and they didn't have printed Bibles.

The Bible wasn't in print until the 1500s so before that time the average churchman didn't have a Bible to read. Many of them probably didn't know the gospel and therefore didn't know God personally but they depended on the priests at the mass and the religious service to teach them the ways of God and this wasn't done very clearly because it was done in Latin which they couldn't understand. No wonder these people weren't very Christian.

They didn't know anything. That's how the Jews were too. But under the new covenant when people actually enter into this covenant with God every one of them not just as a corporate group but also as individuals come into a relationship where they all know him from the greatest to the least of them.

So that the circumstances are very different than the Old Testament in that respect. In 1 John 2. But the anointing which you have received from him abides in you. He means the Holy Spirit is in you.

And you do not need anyone to teach you but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie just as it has taught you you will abide in him. The Christian has an inward teacher the Holy Spirit. The law is written internally.

The Spirit is given to us internally. We are not dependent on teachers to tell us what to believe. Now teachers in so far as they are gifted by the Holy Spirit to teach are one means by which the Holy Spirit does teach us.

But the problem is not all teachers are gifted by the Spirit and not all teachers are speaking through the Spirit so some teachers mislead. But John says you don't have to worry about that. The Spirit in you can teach you what's right and wrong.

Teachers have their place and teachers can benefit the church but the individual Christian who has the Holy Spirit is not dependent on some clergyman to know God for him at second hand. They shall all know me. The new covenant is one where all of God's people as individuals come to know God.

In Moses' day Moses did. He had the Spirit of God upon him. He found it quite a burden to be the only man in Israel who did so he complained and said God this is too much of a burden for me.

And God said well bring 70 of the elders to the tent and I'll put the Spirit on them too and they'll bear the burden with you. So he brought 70 elders and the Spirit came down upon them and they also then would serve to help carry the load of judging the people and so forth. And there were a couple of these people who did not come to the tent and yet the Spirit came upon them.

And this is the stories in Numbers 11 26. It says two men had remained in the camp. The name of one was Eldad and the name of the other was Medad and the Spirit rested upon them.

Now they were among those listed but who had not gone out to the tabernacle and they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses and said Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp. Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men answered and said to Moses my Lord forbid them.

Why would that be? Well because they were prophesying but not under Moses' supervision. The Holy Spirit was going to be given to these men but Moses was still the overseer and these men were prophesying without his oversight. Now you might say what's wrong with that? Well not too much except that this was a community guided by prophets and Moses was God's chosen leader.

Someone who's prophesying independently of Moses or even pretending to might gather a following and lead them in the wrong direction and so it was safer to have all those who were prophesying doing so there at the tabernacle where they could be accountable. And these men were unaccountable for what they were doing and out in the camp speaking to the people in the name of God. This might be a bad situation depending on what they're saying.

And so Joshua who's jealous for Moses' leadership says Moses forbid these men to do that and Moses said to him are you jealous for my sake or zealous for my sake? Oh that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them. It'd be nice if we didn't have clergy he's saying. It'd be nice if just all the ordinary people had the spirit just like the clergy do.

Moses, the elders they've all got the Holy Spirit. They know God. God has revealed himself in them and to them.

Would to God he would do that to all of his people then you wouldn't need people like us clergy Moses seems to be saying. And of course Joel prophesied the day would come when God says I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh the very thing Moses wished would happen the prophet Joel later said is going to happen and Peter said it did happen on the day of Pentecost. He quotes Joel chapter 2 there in Acts chapter 2 when the spirit falls.

So the church is born the new covenant community and it's a community of the spirit. The Holy Spirit is in every Christian. He's poured out his spirit on all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your maids and menservants will prophesy Joel said.

And this is what has happened. There's no longer some priest craft that knows God for you. You don't know him.

They know him for you. They'll tell you about him. No that's not any longer the case.

Under the new covenant they all shall know me. They all have a relationship with God. The spirit dwells in all of them.

That anointing teaches them internally so they don't have need of teachers. That's what's meant in this prophecy in Jeremiah 31 where it says they will it says no more this is Jeremiah 31 34 no more shall every man teach his neighbor and every man his brother saying know the Lord for they shall all know me. Doesn't mean there'll be no need for evangelism.

He's not talking about the outsiders. He's talking about the people in the covenant. The covenant community will all be made up of people who know God themselves.

Of course there'll be a need to evangelize people who are outside. They don't know God. This is talking about the difference between the covenant community in the new covenant and the covenant community in the old covenant where not everyone did know God directly and most of the people the vast majority simply whatever they knew about God came from what the priests told them.

Not anymore. And then the other better promise associated with the new covenant that Jeremiah speaks of and which the writer of Hebrews quotes is he says I will remember their sins no more. Now the writer of Hebrews expands on this in chapter 10 and says you know the high priest would go into the holy of holies every year and offer sacrifices that would cover the national sin for either the previous or the upcoming year.

On an annual basis this had to be repeated. In other words it never finished anything. The writer of Hebrews says every time they did this it brought to remembrance their sin again.

But in the new covenant God said I will remember their sins no more. You don't have to have this continual remembrance of your sinfulness that is involved in this unfinished business of the sacrificial system in the day of atonement. This covenant ends sin once and for all.

It deals with the sin problem once and for all and that's what the writer of Hebrews says. Jesus unlike the priests who stand daily ministering with sacrifices that cannot make the conscience clear unlike them Jesus offered himself once for all and then sat down at the right hand of God because he was finished and the job was done. And that is what the writer of Hebrews sees as very important here when he quotes their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

And he then by the way in chapter 10 of Hebrews he quotes that part of Jeremiah 31 again. In Hebrews 10 verse 17 Hebrews 10 verse 17 he quotes that line their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. And then the writer makes his own

commentary.

He says now where there's remission of these meaning the sins and lawless deeds that God remembers no more they are now remitted where there is the remission of these there's no longer an offering for sin. That is there's no more sacrificial system. It's done.

So the new covenant brings an end to the sacrificial system because sins are now remitted no need for further sacrifices anymore. And that is no doubt why the writer of Hebrews in chapter 8 verse 13 says when we talk about a new covenant we've made the old one obsolete. The old one was the sacrificial system.

It's obsolete. God's already dealt finally with the sins and iniquities of his people. No need for ongoing sacrifices.

No need for any more temple. No need for any more Levites or priests. The whole job of the Levites and priests were to offer the sacrifices.

That's done. All the stuff of the old covenant and the sacrifices it's obsolete and that's why it's going to be swept away real quick he says. So it's about ready to be to vanish away.

God is going to destroy the temple and take it all away because the new covenant had replaced it. It's obvious that the writer of Hebrews is saying that the new covenant has come and has made the old covenant obsolete and that's why the temple is going to be swept away. I point that out because you might be surprised to know there are Christians who say the new covenant promise of Jeremiah 31 has not yet come.

And the reason they say that is because the way they understand this section of Jeremiah. They think this section of Jeremiah is talking about something yet future for Israel. The gathering of Israel back to their land.

The restoration of Zion. These things which the premillennialists especially the dispensational premillennialists they associate with the millennial kingdom when Jesus comes back. Therefore it is their view at least the view of many of them.

There are different kinds of dispensationalism. Some hold this view and some don't but you'll hear it. Many of them believe that the new covenant that Jeremiah is talking about is still future.

It's not happened yet. Because why? Because Jeremiah says the wording of the passage in Jeremiah 31 31 is I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Now obviously if we're thinking of the new covenant as already enforced it's with the church.

It's with the people who are in Christ. Their sins and iniquities are not being remembered

anymore. And yet the prophecy says I'm going to make this new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

And so they say you see this must be future. The nation of Israel is still lost. The nation of Israel has not returned to God.

They've not been regathered to their land and God hasn't entered into a new covenant with them. And therefore the new covenant is something Jewish which will come at a later time. That has not yet come.

Now this is simply ignoring what the New Testament actually says. For one thing what the writer of Hebrews says. He says in speaking of a new covenant he has made the old one obsolete.

That's happened. And that which is old and obsolete that is the old covenant which has been made old because the new covenant has come is ready to vanish away. So he's saying the very sweeping away of the temple system is because that system has been made obsolete because the new covenant has come and made it obsolete.

That's what the writer of Hebrews says. It's where he's quoting the passages where there is remission of these meaning one of the consequences of the new covenant. There is no more offering of sin.

The writer of Hebrews is saying we don't need animal sacrifice anymore because the new covenant has come. And these conditions that Jeremiah predicted do prevail now. The whole thought of the writer of Hebrews is this is now.

I'm not talking about some future eschatological covenant that God's going to make. And of course understandably because Jesus announced that the new covenant was now in the upper room where he sat with the remnant of Israel and Judah. That is the disciples.

They were the faithful remnant. They were Israel and Judah. Remember the promises of the Old Testament are often said to be to Israel and Judah but other times it makes it very clear this means the remnant.

Though the children of Israel be as the sand of the seashore a remnant shall be saved Isaiah said. Many times it points out it's the remnant that God's going to do this to. They are the ones who are called Israel and Judah and it is the remnant of Israel and Judah that were in the upper room with Jesus when he said in verse 20 of Luke 22 Luke 22 20.

Likewise he also took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you not will be someday in the future to the nation of Israel. This is now. This is the new covenant.

It's the covenant in my blood which is shed for you. The shedding of Jesus blood the

drinking of that cup was the official inauguration of the new covenant and when he says the new covenant he means of course the only new covenant that's ever spoken of in the Bible the one that Jeremiah predicted. So obviously this new covenant has come with Christ.

These sections of Isaiah therefore are established as belonging to the order that Jesus established at his first coming not some future order at his second coming. The New Testament writers do not apply any of this to the second coming but they apply it to the first coming. Now Jeremiah 31 35 Thus says the Lord who gives the sun for a light by day and the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night who disturbs the sea and its waves roar.

The Lord of hosts is his name if those ordinances depart from before me says the Lord then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before me forever. Thus says the Lord if heaven above can be measured and if the foundations of the earth searched out beneath I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done says the Lord. Now this verse was quoted to me in a debate recently by a Jewish Christian arguing that there is a future for Israel and this is a verse that's actually the one he most often quotes to make that point.

He's saying God has not cast off the nation of Israel as long as the sun is shining and the moon is shining God hasn't ended those ordinances yet and he says no sooner will I cast off Israel than I'll cast off these ordinances. He said if those ordinances he means the sun the moon the stars the sea and the waves verse 36 if those ordinances depart from before me then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before me forever which is explained in verse 7 37 that is verse 37 I will also cast off all the seed of Israel. If I get rid of the sun moon stars and sea then I'm going to cast off Israel too.

Now this may prove too much because the Bible actually does speak of the sun moon stars and sea coming to an end. In Revelation we read of the sun being dark and the stars falling and the heavens being rolled up and we read of the new Jerusalem there's no more sea. So there's a sense in which the book of Revelation almost alludes to a passage like this and of course the destruction of Jerusalem is what I have understood to be those passages in Revelation's subject matter.

So when it talks about the sun being dark and the heavens being rolled up like a scroll the stars fall like figs from a tree of course this is figurative but it may be saying you know God said when he gets rid of Israel it's the end of these things and so figuratively we're looking at the end of Israel in AD 70 and so it's described as if it's the end of these things and there's no more sea as we read in Revelation 21 and so there's at one level this has happened and God has cast off the nation but at a different level not so because he has not cast off all the seed of Israel as it says in verse 37 he says if I get rid of all this stuff and if heaven can be measured in the foundations of the earth searched out

beneath which presumably they cannot be he says then I will cast off all the seed of Israel. Well has God cast off all the seed of Israel? Of course not there's always a remnant that's saved in fact Paul raises that question in Romans chapter 11 in the very opening verse Romans chapter 11 Paul says I say then has God cast away his people? His answer is no. What do you mean Paul? What do you mean he hasn't cast them away? Well he says I'm an Israelite so I'm not cast away.

In other words some of us have not been cast away I'm an example and he goes on to talk about how God has not cast away the ones that he foreknew. Where's that those that he foreknew what does that sound like? That sounds like what Paul said two chapters earlier three chapters earlier in chapter 8 verse 29 whom he did foreknow. Romans 8 29 whom he foreknew he predestined to be conformed to the image of his son.

Who are they? They're the believers. They're the Christians. The ones he foreknew he has not cast off.

There were Jewish Christians. They were of the seed of Abraham. They have not been cast off they've in fact been brought in to the salvation that the prophets promised.

So Paul says no he hasn't cast off those that he foreknew he hasn't cast away his people. In other words he has cast away a lot of the Jews because they aren't his people he said and because they aren't among the remnant. But he says remember how Elijah this is Romans 11 2 Romans 11 2 he says remember how Elijah says he pleads with God and says Lord they've killed your prophets and torn down your altars and I alone am left and they seek my life.

But what does the divine response say to him I have reserved for myself 7000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Paul says even so then Romans 11 5 even so then at this present time Paul's not talking about eschatology here. Dispensationists think that Romans 11 is about eschatology someday God's going to save Israel.

Paul doesn't say a word about eschatology he says at this present time not some later time. Even so then at this present time there is a remnant according to election of grace. So has God cast off his people.

No he has not. He has preserved a remnant. I'm part of that remnant Paul says.

I'm a living proof that God hasn't cast off all his people because I'm alive and I'm a Christian and I'm saved and I'm a Jew. And there's always a remnant including now as there was in the days of Elijah there's a remnant today too. And so to say that God has cast off all the seed of Israel would be a huge mistake and Paul would deny that absolutely.

He has not cast off that portion of Israel that were his remnant. And all that God really

says here there's two things he says in Jeremiah 31 if these things end if all these if the natural order disappears completely well then you can figure God has cast off all the seed of Israel. Well no one's claiming that he's cast off all the seed of Israel.

He's only cast off the apostates not the remnant. But he says but also in verse 36 of Jeremiah 31 he says if those ordinances depart then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me forever. And this is what he's arguing.

There needs to be a restoration of the nation of Israel because what God promises is a continuance as long as the sun and moon and stars endure a continuance of the nationhood of Israel. But we have to remember that nation is not strictly a designation that has to do with ethnicity or with location because God told them they would be his holy nation when they're at Mount Sinai. Who is he talking to? Mostly Israelites but it was a mixed multitude that came out of Egypt.

There were Gentiles there too and God made a covenant with the whole group Jew and Gentile and said if you keep my covenant you'll be a holy kingdom a nation to me. He made them a nation. They didn't have a land yet.

He promised them one but they didn't see it for another generation. But they could be a nation without having a location. They could be a nation without being ethnically homogenous.

The original nation that God formed at Mount Sinai was not ethnically homogenous and it was not yet settled in any particular geographical area. Nationhood does not necessarily imply that. Nationhood suggests that you have a government.

You have a king. And we do. So that Peter refers to us as a holy nation in 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 9 and 10.

1 Peter 2 9 he says for you meaning the church. He does not mean to exclude himself but he's just speaking to them about what their privileges as Christians are. 1 Peter 2 9 you are a chosen generation a royal priesthood a holy nation.

His own special people that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. You're the royal priesthood now. You're the holy nation now.

The church. Has God cast off the sea of Israel from being a nation? No. He took the remnant and he made a nation out of them.

He happens to have allowed Gentiles to come in in large numbers too. Just like he allowed them to do in the Old Testament but there weren't as many who did. Under the New Covenant perhaps because of the requirement of circumcision being lifted more Gentiles have come in.

And the nation continues with the branches that were not broken off the tree. So to say that there must be a future for a political nation of Israel made up of ethnic Israel is to read into this passage first of all what the New Testament writers were not reading to it at all. And there's no reason to read into it.

Verse 38. Behold the days are coming says the Lord that the city shall be built for the Lord from the tower of Hananiel to the corner gate. The surveyor's line shall again extend straight forward over the hill of Gerab.

Then it shall turn toward Goath. Actually this is further than the corner gate as it turns out. It's saying that the city walls will extend further than before.

It used to be that the surveyor's line would extend from the tower of Hananiel to the corner gate and then turn. You see? It says there that it'll be built from the tower of Hananiel to the corner gate. That's the proper place for the wall to turn the corner, the corner gate.

But the surveyor's line shall extend beyond that, beyond the corner gate forward over the hill of Gerab, and then it shall turn later. In other words, it's going to be a bigger boundary than before. Which reminds us of at least a couple passages in Isaiah.

In Isaiah 49 and Isaiah 54, both places talk about the need for Israel to expand the size of their land or of their tabernacle, their tent. Extend the cords, add more curtains, make more rooms, make a bigger house, make a bigger land. All the Gentiles are going to come in there and say hey this land is too narrow for us.

Give us space to live. The imagery is simply saying Israel's going to be too small in its old boundaries to accommodate the true Israel that will be coming in, which will include Gentiles in great abundance. And so the measurements will be extended further.

Actually a similar vision in Zechariah makes the same point using a slightly different imagery, but in Zechariah chapter 2 it says, then I raised my eyes and looked, behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said where are you going? He says to measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length. And there was the angel who talked with me going out, and another angel was coming out to him, said run speak to this young man saying Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls because of the multitude of the men and livestock in it.

For I, says the Lord, will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst. Obviously this is the new Jerusalem. It doesn't need physical walls.

It's got God as the wall around it, and the glory lives in it. But he says this man's going out to measure Jerusalem, and he's thinking of Jerusalem the old way, you know, as the city that went down, that Nebuchadnezzar burned down. But not anymore.

Jerusalem's now going to be much too large to put walls around it because of the abundance of the people in it. And if you read further through the chapter, which we won't take time to do, I'll just point out that he does mention the Gentiles coming in. In verse 11, Zechariah 2.11 Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become my people, and I will dwell in your midst.

So the true Jerusalem's going to include a lot of Gentiles too. This is an Old Testament theme. Isaiah makes it a couple times.

Zechariah makes it there in chapter 2. Jeremiah makes it here in Jeremiah 31. The boundary's going to be bigger than you think. And the closing words of verse 40 in Jeremiah is that all the fields as far as the brook Kidron to the corner of the horse gate toward the east shall be holy to the Lord.

It shall not be plucked up or thrown down anymore forever. There will be in other words, parts that were not previously considered to be part of the holy territory. Fields in the valley of Kidron and so forth outside the walls that will be equally holy as the property inside the walls.

Again, the idea is the concept of Jerusalem as a holy place is extended beyond traditional borders. Now chapter 32. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah.

Now this is 587 BC, just a year before Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and was burned down. This is in the height of the crisis. The siege began in the ninth year of Zedekiah in the tenth month.

And this is obviously after that so that Jerusalem is under siege at the time this prophecy is given. It fell early in the next year after this. So it says, this was the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar.

For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison which was in the king of Judah's house. We read later on in the historical portion. See we're reading the prophetic portion.

A little later we have a historic portion talking about what was happening to Jeremiah and we find that he was shut up in the prison, the court of the prison. Chapter 37 verse 21 he was actually lifted up out of a pit, a dungeon and put into this court of the prison. So his imprisonment was actually somewhat of an improvement over an earlier imprisonment and that's at the end of chapter 37.

But here we have a prophecy given at that time. It says, Zedekiah the king of Judah had shut him up saying, why do you prophesy and say thus says the Lord, behold I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon and he shall take it. And Zedekiah the king of Judah shall not escape from the hand of the Chaldeans but shall surely be delivered

into the hand of the king of Babylon and shall speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye.

Then he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon and there he shall be until I visit him says the Lord. Though you fight with the Chaldeans you will not succeed. This is Zedekiah's representation of Jeremiah's message.

A rather long summary of it with all the details which of course feature the bad news for Zedekiah especially what will happen to him. And so Zedekiah is upset with that. He puts Jeremiah in the court of the prison.

Verse 6, And Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came to me saying, behold Hanumiel the son of Shalom your uncle will come to you saying buy my field which is in Anathoth for the right of redemption is yours to buy it. What this means is under the law if a person was in poverty or in a hard financial situation they could sell their ancestral fields that they had inherited that had been given to their family in the time of Joshua and passed down from generation to generation. These fields were not supposed to be permanently taken from these families but they could sell them for periods of time.

In the year of Jubilee all the fields would go back to the original owners and so forth. But in the meantime, Jubilee was every 50 years. You've got decades in between and sometimes a person would sell his field and then before the year of Jubilee wish he could get it back but no one could buy it back except a relative who had the right of redemption.

You couldn't just go back and say to the guy who bought it, okay I've got the money I want to buy my field back. The guy says no it's mine now. However anyone who is a close relative would have the right to go and say we're reclaiming that field now whether you want to or not.

Here's the money we're redeeming it. And so there was a field in the family of Jeremiah that had been lost and Jeremiah was the next of kin to whoever the original owner was and he had the right to buy it back for the family. Now I'll tell you that's a pretty insensitive prison visitor.

You're in prison and your family member comes to visit you just say hey I need to hit you up for some money here. Can you help us out here? We've lost some property. Would you buy this real estate for us? But to his surprise God told him to do it.

God told him in verse 6 that Hanumiel was going to come and make this request. In verse 8 it happened. Then Hanumiel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the Lord and said to me please buy my field.

That is in Anathoth which is in the country of Benjamin for the right of inheritance is yours and the redemption yours. Buy it for yourself. Then I knew it was the word of the

Lord.

But what does Jeremiah want with a field? He's prophesying that Jerusalem's going to be depopulated and he's a citizen. He happens to be in prison now but within a year Jerusalem's going to be wiped out and the environs. What do you need to own a field for? Why do you want to spend money at this time on real estate in the region? It's a bad investment.

But God tells him to buy it. He says so I bought the field from Hanumiel the son of my uncle who is in Anathoth and weighed out to him money 17 shekels of silver and I signed the deed and sealed it, took witnesses and weighed the money in the balances so I took the purchased deed both that which was sealed according to the law and custom and that which was open and I gave the purchased deed to Baruch the son of Neriah whom we hear for the first time here but he becomes one of the heroes and one of the few friends of Jeremiah later on and the man who actually wrote the book of Jeremiah for us. Jeremiah dictated it to him and Baruch wrote it.

He said I gave the deed to this man in the presence of Hanumiel my uncle's son and in the presence of the witnesses who signed the purchased deed before all the Jews who sat in the court of the prison. And so he goes through the legal transaction. He puts out 17 shekels of silver probably money that was hard to come by when you're in prison but must have gotten money from somewhere probably donors or gifts or maybe he had inherited money we don't know but he actually puts out the money, buys real estate that's going to be worthless.

He'll never own it. He'll never live on it. He'll never farm it.

The Babylonian exile is going to be 70 years. Jeremiah will be dead before that's done. He can't expect to ever make use of this purchase but he does it as a sign.

A sign of what? A sign that even though there will be this deportation of the Jews into exile there will be a return. And he gives the explanation verse 25 well that's not the explanation but the explanation is given verse 44 at the end of the chapter. The prophecy he gives on this occasion to explain his deed is men will buy fields for money sign deeds and seal them and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin in the places around Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah in the cities of the mountains in the cities of the lowland and so forth.

He says for I will cause their captives to return says the Lord. So purchasing this field was his way of putting his money where his mouth is. You would think that a man who really believed they're going into exile and wasn't sure they'd be coming back wouldn't spend a penny on any real estate in that region at this point in time but he was confident because the Lord told him that there would be a return of the exiles and this property would be of value again so it would be worth something to own.

And so that's what he's illustrating by making the purchase and God's telling him to do this. And then verse 16 now when I had delivered the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah I prayed to the Lord saying oh Lord God behold you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and your outstretched arm there's nothing too hard for you you show loving kindness to thousands and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them and the great and mighty God whose name is the Lord of hosts you are great in counsel and might in work for your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings. You have set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.

Now he's basically buttering God up and saying I realize you're big and smart and powerful and so forth but hey I don't understand what I just did. I know you're a good God a wise God a powerful God no one can answer to you everything's possible for you and then he says in verse 25 he comes to the end of this long extolling of God's virtues and wisdom and power and he says in verse 25 and you have said to me Lord God by the field for money and take witnesses yet the city has been given to the hand of the Chaldeans God I don't understand what you're telling me to do. You've been telling me this is going to the Chaldeans and I know you're smart and everything but it doesn't seem like you're acting smart here.

This doesn't seem like a good investment right now. Why'd you tell me to do this? And God answers in verse 26 the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying behold I'm the Lord God of all flesh is there anything too hard for me? In verse 17 Jeremiah has just affirmed that nothing is too hard for you. God says well is there anything too hard for me? Therefore thus says the Lord behold I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans etc.

And then if you go down further after he talks about the same kind of thing how he's going to give it to the Chaldeans he says in verse 36 and now therefore thus says the Lord God the God of Israel concerning this city of which you say it should be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword and by famine and by the pestilence behold I will gather them out of all the countries where I've driven them in my anger in my fury and in my great wrath I will bring them back to this place and I will cause them to dwell safely they shall be my people and I will be their God then I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me forever for the good of them and their children after them and I will make an everlasting covenant with them which is of course the new covenant that I will not turn away from doing them good but I will put my fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from me yes I will rejoice over them and do them good and I will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and with all my soul for thus says the Lord God just as I have brought all this great calamity on this people so I will bring on them all the good that I've promised them and fields will be bought in this land of which you say it is desolate without man or beast it has been given to the hand of the Chaldeans men will buy fields for money sign deeds and seal them take witnesses in the

land of Benjamin in the places around Jerusalem in the cities of Judah in the cities of the mountains in the cities of the lowlands and in the cities of the south for I will cause their captives to return says the Lord and so this whole chapter is devoted to this instruction that God gave him and the prophecy that is associated with it you buy this property you're telling the world that you really believe your message that this land although soon to be desolate that that's not it's final end there will be value in this property again someday because the people will return alright we take a break there