

The Prophets

Lesson #30

Jeremiah 31:1-35:19

Outline

I. *Prophecies From The Reigns Of Jehoiakim And Zedekiah (21:1-39:18)*

- A. The book of consolation (30:1-33:26).
 - 1. The new covenant (31:1-40).
 - a) God's mercy for Ephraim (31:1-5).
 - b) The restoration of Israel in joy (31:7-14).
 - c) Israel's lamentable present (31:15-22).
 - d) Judah's bright future (31:23-26).
 - e) God the sower (31:27-30).
 - f) God's new covenant (31:31-34).
 - g) The perpetuity of Israel (31:35-40).
 - 2. The manifestation of faith (32:1-44).
 - a) The setting for Jeremiah's act of faith (32:1-5).
 - b) The Lord's command (32:6-8).
 - c) The purchase (32:9-15).
 - d) Jeremiah's doubts and prayer (32:16-25).
 - e) The Lord's answer (32:26-35).
 - f) Promises of restoration (32:36-44).
 - 3. The righteous reign of the Davidic ruler (33:1-26).
 - a) The exhortation to call on the Lord (33:1-3).
 - b) The certainty of the fall of Jerusalem (33:4-5).
 - c) Days of return and rejoicing (33:6-13).
 - d) Restoration of royalty and priesthood (33:14-22).
 - e) Confirmation of the promises (33:23-26).
- B. Messages and events before the fall of Jerusalem (34:1-39:18).
 - 1. Zedekiah and the mistreated slaves (34:1-22).
 - a) The warning to Zedekiah (34:1-7).
 - b) The deception against the slaves (34:8-11).
 - c) The sin of the nation (34:12-16).
 - d) The Lord's retribution for the deception (34:17-22).
 - 2. The faithfulness of the Rechabites (35:1-19).
 - a) Jeremiah's test of the Rechabites (35:1-5).
 - b) The Rechabites' loyalty to Jonadab (35:6-11).
 - c) The rebuke to Judah (35:12-17).
 - d) The Rechabites' reward (35:18-19).

Notes

Prophecies From The Reigns Of Jehoiakim And Zedekiah (21:1-39:18)

- The book of consolation (30:1-33:26).
- The new covenant (31:1-40).
 - God's mercy for Ephraim (31:1-5).
 - One side is the Lord's pledge to protect them and bless them. The other side is their own pledge to serve Him wholeheartedly.
 - The talk of love and drawing Israel to the Lord in vs. 3 echoes the language Hosea used in Hosea 11:4 to describe the wilderness period.
- The restoration of Israel in joy (31:7-14).
 - A few allusions to the prophecies of Hosea can be seen in these verses as well.
 - Jeremiah's principle theme is the rejoicing that will replace the mourning and sorrow currently exhibited by the people of Jerusalem.
 - Jeremiah's message of hope can be greeted with confidence, because only Jeremiah has accurately predicted the misery they now endure.
- Israel's lamentable present (31:15-22).
 - Jeremiah speaks of the anguish of his contemporaries over the final collapse of Judah. The tears of the exile are now being "fulfilled" -- i.e., the tears begun in Jeremiah's day are climaxed and ended by the tears of the mothers of Bethlehem (cf. Matthew 2:18). The heir to David's throne has come, the exile is over, the Son of God has arrived, and He will introduce the new covenant (26:28) spoken of by Jeremiah.
 - God's fatherly concern for the prodigal Ephraim is beautifully expressed. Divine love will not be denied him in spite of his sin.
- Judah's bright future (31:23-26).
 - One sees the Lord here enthroned securely as king, ruling over a kingdom known for its peace and prosperity (cf. Ezekiel 47:1-12).
 - Jeremiah's sleep was sweet because the truths he received were comforting predictions of future glory for God's people.
- God the sower (31:27-30).
 - The Lord presents Himself as the Sower of seed from which men and cattle shall issue.
 - The Lord has been vigilant about punishing those guilty of sin; now He will be just as vigilant to ensure the nation's restoration (cf. 1:12).

- God's new covenant (31:31-34).
 - This portion of the book has been acclaimed as one of the most important passages in the entire Old Testament. It is likely the concept of the New Covenant is Jeremiah's greatest contribution to biblical truth.
 - The new covenant is built on the fact of Israel's failure under the old covenant.
 - The new covenant will include a revolutionary change in will, heart and conscience. It will be an internal covenant. The law now becomes a principle of life (cf. Romans 8:1-4), a part of the nature of God's people (cf. 2 Peter 1:4).
 - The climax of this wonderful section comes in the revelation that the basis of the new covenant is forgiveness of sin.
- The perpetuity of Israel (31:35-40).
 - The two sayings in this section both assert the Lord's unwavering allegiance to His covenant promises to Israel.
 - The final prophecy speaks of Jerusalem's restoration in a couple of practical ways: the rebuilding of the walls and the Kidron Valley.
- The manifestation of faith (32:1-44).
 - The setting for Jeremiah's act of faith (32:1-5).
 - The officers had confined Jeremiah in Jonathan's house (37:15), but Zedekiah had moved him into the palace (37:21).
 - Even though Zedekiah witnessed the fulfillment of Jeremiah's predictions, he was angry enough to imprison him, as if this could alter what was happening. Zedekiah, then, is ultimately responsible for Jeremiah's imprisonment.
 - The Lord's command (32:6-8).
 - His purchase of the field from Hanameel, his cousin, was meant to encourage the people regarding their return from captivity and to show Jeremiah's firm faith in their future despite their desperate situation.
 - When Hanameel came, Jeremiah knew that the Lord was behind the offer. He had not doubted the Lord's word and had its confirmation in vss. 6-7. Now he realized all the meaning of the purchase in relation to the nation's future.
- The purchase (32:9-15).
 - The transaction was carried out with legal precision. This is the only account in the Bible of a purchase of this kind.
 - Up to this point, Baruch had kept himself in the background; this is the first mention of him in the book.
 - Jeremiah stated that his purchase of the field symbolized the restoration of Israel to her land after the captivity. This af-

forded comfort to the beleaguered people of Judah. Jeremiah had availed himself of the opportunity the Lord had given him of showing his full confidence in the prophecy that had been revealed to him.

- Jeremiah's doubts and prayer (32:16-25).
 - God acknowledges the Lord as a God who is loving, yet who punishes sin, who demonstrated His "name" by bringing the people out of Egypt, giving them victory over their enemies, providing for them with prosperity, but then punishing them with exile for sinning continually.
 - The "mounts" were earthworks used in capturing a city. The Babylonians had already reached the city walls. The siege was successful, the city was doomed, and there was no hope of escape.
- The Lord's answer (32:26-35).
 - As impossible as a bright future for Jeremiah and his people might seem, it was not outside the range of the Lord's power.
 - The reference to the work of their hands probably includes not only their idols but also their deeds in general. This was what aroused God's wrath in punishing them.
- Promises of restoration (32:36-44).
 - The people are now wallowing in the middle of these miseries, expecting a future of nothing but woe and death when the Lord tells them that He is promising a reversal of their current situation.
 - The certainty of destruction -- which they cannot deny -- is now balanced by the certainty of a return to a normal, settled life. Jeremiah's act of redemption serves as an example of what will happen throughout the land.
- The righteous reign of the Davidic ruler (33:1-26).
 - The exhortation to call on the Lord (33:1-3).
 - This new message probably came to Jeremiah soon after the Lord spoke to him about the field.
 - The pronouncements now to be given Jeremiah are weighty; so the Lord underscores their veracity by affixing His eternal name to them.
 - The certainty of the fall of Jerusalem (33:4-5).
 - All the efforts of the king and his people to save Jerusalem would be futile. Theirs was a lost cause.
 - Opposing the invaders could not change the situation, for God had withdrawn His favor from His people because of their wickedness.

- Days of return and rejoicing (33:6-13).
 - Past trials will yet be turned into blessings. So Jeremiah sets forth promises of prosperity: health, restoration, joy and peace (cf. John 14:27; Philippians 4:7).
 - Judah and Israel will be restored as one kingdom, just as they were before the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam. The main portion of this restoration is the pardon and cleansing from the Lord.
 - Joy and gladness will not only mark the relationships of God's people but will also mark their worship.
- Restoration of royalty and priesthood (33:14-22).
 - "Those days" are the Messianic times (cf. 23:1-8). It is through the Messiah, the righteous One, that the restoration and attendant blessings will be realized. Jeremiah's picture of the Messiah is varied and unique:
 - "The fountain of living water" (2:13).
 - The good "shepherd" (31:10; cf. John 10:11).
 - The "righteous Branch" (33:15 and 23:5).
 - The "Redeemer" (50:34).
 - "The Lord Our Righteousness" (23:6).
 - "David their king" (30:9).
 - The mediator of "the new covenant" (31:31-34; cf. Hebrews 12:24).
 - By divine command, night and day were created. When the "covenant" with those ends, history and time as humans know them will end. The Lord furthers this by making promises to these houses which are identical in form to the Lord's promises to Abraham (Genesis 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; 32:12; Exodus 32:13).
- Confirmation of the promises (33:23-26).
 - The fear and lament of the people shows that they considered that God had forsaken them utterly and finally.
 - The Lord will allow no one to impugn His promises to Israel. The mention of the patriarchs points to the whole chain of promises repeatedly given them. Nature will utterly collapse before God goes back on the slightest promise to His people.
- Messages and events before the fall of Jerusalem (34:1-39:18).
 - Zedekiah and the mistreated slaves (34:1-22).
 - The warning to Zedekiah (34:1-7).
 - This passage serves as a bridge from the ultimately hopeful words of the preceding chapters back into the gloom that hung over Jerusalem during and after the Babylonian siege of the city.

- Through Jeremiah the Lord counseled Zedekiah to surrender. The Lord promised him that he would not be slain but would die in captivity.
- The deception against the slaves (34:8-11).
 - No reason is given in the text for the freeing of slaves. Whatever the reason, the people enter into a covenant with the king for this change.
 - When the siege was temporarily lifted, the Jews forced the liberated slaves back into former bondage. This was not only a repudiation of their covenant but a violation of Deuteronomy 15:12; it also profaned the Lord's name, in which they had made the covenant.
- The sin of the nation (34:12-16).
 - The Lord reminds the people that He had made the very same covenant with them many centuries before.
 - There is no record of such an evaluation of the people ("ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight") of Jerusalem after the reign of Josiah until here.
- The Lord's retribution for the deception (34:17-22).
 - The people were not willing to give freedom to their countrymen, so He will serve as an example of a liberator for them -- by "freeing" them to die as they choose.
 - The Babylonians had only temporarily lifted the siege to meet Pharaoh Hophra (cf. 37:5, 7-10). The Lord assured Zedekiah and the people that the destruction would finally be consummated. The Babylonians did return and destroyed the city.
- The faithfulness of the Rechabites (35:1-19).
 - Jeremiah's test of the Rechabites (35:1-5).
 - The origin of the Rechabites is not absolutely certain, although descent from the Kenites is the most certain (1 Chronicles 2:55; Judges 1:14-16).
 - The three leaders (cf. 52:24; 2 Kings 25:18) probably had charge of the inner and outer court of the temple and the entrance door. They ranked next to the high priest and his deputy.
 - The Rechabites' loyalty to Jonadab (35:6-11).
 - The abstinence from wine does not reflect a general moral prohibition or divine disapproval of wine. Rather, it is part of a restricted custom chosen by one man and imposed by him on his descendants.
 - In fact, all of the items forbidden by Jonadab are understood by the biblical writers to be signs of God's blessings on His people (Deuteronomy 6:10-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-3).

- Even though their ancestor was mortal and even though it is clear that violating his command would not constitute an act of sin against the will of the Lord, they persist in their obedience to him.
- The rebuke to Judah (35:12-17).
 - The Rechabites have obeyed an earthly father, while the people of Judah have disobeyed the Lord Almighty.
 - Jonadab gave his commands to the Rechabites only once; God repeatedly sent His messages to His people.
 - The restrictions that bound the Rechabites did not deal with eternal issues; God's messages to His people had eternal as well as temporal implications.
- The Rechabites' reward (35:18-19).
 - The main theme of the commendation is the reverse of the preceding charge or accusation.
 - One can readily contrast this promise to the curse pronounced upon Jeconiah (22:30).