

JEREMIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Jeremiah chapter 33 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we have seen in our previous studies, Jeremiah chapters 30-33 make up a section of Scripture that has been called, “The Book of Consolation.” These are words that God gave to Jeremiah, words of comfort, of hope for the future to a nation that was now going into captivity. And Jeremiah wrote these words down to encourage the captives that one day they would return home. Now Jeremiah chapter 33 is going to conclude this section of consolation, of hope and encouragement.

Keep in mind that Zedekiah is King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and he is the last King in the nation before they are brought into captivity by the Babylonians. At this point they are about 1 year away of the third and final assault by the Babylonians. In fact the enemy has already taken captive most of the nation of Judah and now they have surrounded the walls of Jerusalem, preparing to take it.

And Jeremiah’s message has not changed. He continues to proclaim that the captivity is coming, it is at the door, don’t fight against it, surrender to them, for this is the will of God for you. And the King of Judah, Zedekiah saw it as treason, and it demoralized the people even more. Because of what Jeremiah was saying Zedekiah put Jeremiah in prison.

Now this is tough because when you speak forth the truths of God people don’t like to hear it and they will try to silence you just as they did with Jeremiah. You see, Jeremiah was placed in this prison for speaking the truth, the Words of God.

I think that is a good lesson for us to learn. Ministry can be tough, people will come against us for shining the light of Jesus and Jeremiah is a good example of that as he was shining the light of God, the Words of God to the people and they tried to put that light out or cover it up. But you can't silence the Words of God as Jeremiah shows us. Also keep in mind that as we get into Jeremiah chapter 33 Jeremiah is still in prison.

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Jeremiah chapter 33 beginning in verse 1 as we finish up this section of Jeremiah that has been called "The Book of Consolation" and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JEREMIAH 33

VERSES 1-3

1. Put yourself in Jeremiah's shoes. You are speaking for the Lord; you are doing all that the Lord has told you, and you are in prison for serving the Lord. He just purchased land in Anathoth, which was already under Babylonian control. It was not the time to buy real estate! I am sure that this was a very difficult time and a confusing time for Jeremiah.

And here we see the Lord bringing words of comfort to try to encourage Jeremiah. The Lord tells Jeremiah not to fear, that He, God, has made heaven and earth and the Lord uses His covenant name, **YAHWEH** to make sure Jeremiah understands His faithfulness to what He has said, even though things may look dark right now.

2. So sitting in this prison probably wondering what in the world is going on, confused by all of this, we see the Lord tell Jeremiah to **“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”** Jeremiah 33:3.

Not only does God reassure Jeremiah of His power and faithfulness, but He challenges Jeremiah to call out to Him with those questions he has; those doubts that he has, so that the Lord can answer him and show him what He is going to do. He wanted Jeremiah to understand that He did not forget about him in prison, but is still working, all Jeremiah has to do is call and God will answer.

3. I believe God extends that same promise to each of us. Call to Him, speak to Him and let Him comfort you, reassure you, and show you things that are inaccessible by human knowledge. And God will bear witness by His Spirit to our spirit the things He wants to show us.

Now let me also share this with you. There are times that God speaks very clearly to us about a situation, He tells us what or why. But there are many times that He doesn't share that with us, we don't see the whole picture.

In saying that, some of you may be thinking, “Then how am I comforted? What good is that to me?” God's comfort to us comes from the promises He has given to us in His Word. Can we trust Him and walk by faith.

It is not always easy but that is where faith comes in. You know the character of God, you know the attributes of God and thus, when you don't understand something that is happening in your life you give it to God and you rest in His promises to you!

In Deuteronomy 29:29 we are told, **“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”**

Isn't it interesting how people try to seek out things of God that He has not revealed to them and yet they do not obey what God has clearly spoken to them! What a warning this is to us, that God has given to us His Word, and we may not understand everything, but the things we do understand, we are responsible to keep them.

Also, there is no way we can know everything about an infinite God! Think about this. How well do you do when you watch Jeopardy? I don't do too well, my wife does a lot better but she too falls far short of knowing every answer as well as do the contestants. And since that is true, how can we expect to know everything about an infinite God, we can't!

In Isaiah 55:8-9 we are told, **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’”**

Thus, the call for us is to listen to the voice of God, be obedient to His Word, the things that He is showing us. Jesus reminds us in Revelation 2:29, **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** May we not only hear but may we also obey what the Lord is telling us, not out of the Law or compulsion but out of love for Him! Again in Revelation 1:3 we are told, **“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”** The blessing is not only for hearing but also for keeping what is written in the Word of God. God has what is best for us, may we listen and obey! And that is where we find comfort, resting in Him and His Word that He has given to us because His Word is truth!

VERSES 4-5

1. The day of their captivity is drawing closer as the Babylonians have surrounded the city, making siege walls and preparing to push down the walls or come over the top of them. So the people of Jerusalem were demolishing their homes which were by the wall and removing the flammable material and strengthening the wall at the point where the battering ram and other siege machines would attack.

This was the very thing that the Lord was telling them not to do, not to fight against the Babylonians because they were going into captivity. God spoke through Jeremiah who told the people to surrender but they wanted to fight and it was a futile effort on their part. You can't fight against God and win!

Because they refused to listen to God they were going to be killed by the sword, by pestilence, by starvation and that was already happening! They were fighting against the will of God and like I have said, they were not going to win and we will never win!

2. As people read of God's judgment in the Scriptures they have a hard time with it. But once again we need to fall back on the character, the attributes of God, that He is good, righteous, just, holy and-so-on. That means when God judges people or nations it is always a righteous judgment that He pours out and He does season it with His mercy. And don't think this is a punitive action on God's part; He is not trying to wipe His people out, although they did deserve it. God chastens His people to draw them back but for those that reject Him the judgment is punitive! But they were His people, and verse 6 shows us what God is doing to them.

VERSES 6-9

1. God hurts them to heal them. Sounds strange I know, but that is exactly what is taking place here. When we rebel against God He will do whatever it takes to get us back on track again. For the Southern Kingdom of Judah, captivity was the hurt that would eventually bring about healing in their lives. God means it for good, not for evil!

Listen again to what the Lord said, **“Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth.”** Jeremiah 33:6. You see, before God could build them up He had to tear some things down in their lives. He had to tear down their pride, their arrogance, their turning from Him. And it is out of breaking them of these things that the Lord would then build them up.

2. And look at what the Lord is promising them. There truly are some amazing things that God speaks of here in regards to his people. First of all God is not going to wipe them out. To make that point as they are on the verge of going into captivity is that the Lord tells them that they are going to return home again, both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. That had to be words of comfort to all who believed in God’s promises. I don’t see this as a complete fulfillment with their return from the Babylonian captivity. Ultimately I see this happening at the end of the Tribulation Period!

It also speaks of cleansing them and that is done as they return to Him. I will speak more on this in a minute because I don’t think we see a complete fulfillment with this in their return from the Babylonian captivity.

And the third thing I see here is that God is going to restore their place of honor among the nations and once again I see this fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation Period.

3. Yes, we do see this partially fulfilled with their return from Babylon, but the ultimate fulfillment is at the end of the Tribulation Period and on into the Kingdom Age. They have never occupied all the land that God promised them in the book of Joshua. Their borders were to be Lebanon to the north, Sinai to the south, the Euphrates to the east and of course the Mediterranean Sea to the west. During the conquest of the land, after seven years of fighting they got tired and made friends with the enemy instead of driving them out. And that was a continual problem to them.

Has the Lord “**... pardon[ed] all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against [Him]**”? Well we can answer that “Yes and No!” What I mean by that is that Jesus has paid in full for all their sins but the Jews, as a nation have not appropriated that pardon into their lives because they have rejected Jesus.

Daniel tells us that one of the things that the seven year Tribulation Period will bring about in the lives of the Jewish people is “**... an end of sins.**” Daniel 9:24. And again this is speaking of the Jewish people and there is no remission of sin without the shedding of blood. Also, the blood of bulls of rams could never take away your sin, only cover it for a time. But the shed blood of Jesus has cleansed us from all our sins for He is the Lamb of God who has come to **TAKE AWAY** the sins of the world!

And it is at the end of the Tribulation Period that the nation of Israel will come to Jesus and receive the forgiveness of their sins! Their land will be restored in the Kingdom Age and the nations will look to them with honor once again! The “**Times of the Gentiles**” will have come to an end, the Jews will no longer be in subjection to them! (Luke 21:24)

VERSES 10-11

1. Notice the picture that God is painting for us here. Yes the Babylonians were getting ready to take the city of Jerusalem and the nation captive but God already sees Jerusalem taken away captive, He already sees it as barren.

Not too encouraging until you see the next picture and God says that Jerusalem will be a place where joy is found, praise unto God is given. There is coming a day when the captives will return and there will be great joy as they see the land that God has promised them once again.

Now keep in mind that this is also looking towards the future when the enemy, the Antichrist comes and kills over 10 million Jews sending the rest fleeing for their lives. And at the end of that period known as the Great Tribulation the Lord will come and gather His people in the land once again. He will set up His Kingdom here on the earth.

Of this time that is coming, we read in Isaiah 51:11, **“So the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”** That is the joy that is spoken of here!

VERSES 12-16

1. What a picture the Lord is painting for us with this illustration. We may miss the point but it is powerful and we need to understand what the Lord is speaking of here in this illustration of the **“... shepherds causing their flocks to lie down.”** And having them **“... pass under the hands of him who counts them . . .”**

This is what the Lord is saying. The shepherds would bring the sheep into the sheepfold at night so they could watch over them closely and protect them from the wolves. As these sheep would enter in one at a time, before they entered the sheepfold, the shepherd would stop them with his rod and with his other hand he would check them over to see if they had any wounds, diseases, and-so-on. If they didn't, or after he fixed them he would then let them enter the sheepfold. They also needed to be his sheep!

What does that mean in regards to Israel? We are told in Daniel 12:11, “**And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.**”

Now those last 3½ years of the seven year Tribulation Period only comes to 1,260 days. What are those extra 30 days for? Maybe our Shepherd, Jesus Christ, will be inspecting *HIS* people to see who will enter into the Kingdom Age during those 30 days as they will have to, “**... pass under the hands of him who counts them ...**”

2. Now this phrase, “**the days are coming**” is used some 16 times in the book of Jeremiah. Seven of those times it is used in regards to the judgment of God. But nine of those times it is speaking of the future period of blessing that will come for the Jewish people, for the nation of Israel!

You see, God's blessings always outweigh His judgment as Psalm 30:5 says, “**For His anger is but for a moment, his favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.**” Praise the Lord for that!

Now the blessing here is the coming of the Messiah from the seed of David, just as God had promised would happen. Of course this is ultimately looking ahead towards the Kingdom Age when Israel as a nation will know Jesus as their Messiah. We see this spoken of as ***THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*** or ***YAHWEH-TSIDKENU***, (Jeremiah 23:6) as He sits on the throne of David in Jerusalem and righteousness will fill this land or Jerusalem will itself take on the characteristics of righteousness! What a day that will be!

VERSES 17-22

1. We see the Lord speaking of the Davidic covenant. We see this covenant spoken of in II Samuel chapter 7 as God made this covenant with David. We are told that it is from David's seed that this everlasting Kingdom will come forth.

Now the descendants of David could have remained on the throne until Messiah came if they would have walked in the ways of God. The problem came when they transgressed the Laws of God, they refused to listen to the prophets, they refused to repent and get right with God, which caused the Lord to bring judgment upon them. That was the only way He could get their attention, and He did!

Thus, Zedekiah was the last King to sit on the throne of David. His reign ended in 586 B.C. as the Babylonians came and took him and the nation away captive to Babylon. Now did God break His promise? Not at all! One day the Messiah will come again, Jesus Christ will return to set up His Kingdom, which will be an everlasting one. This will come to pass!

Now to show us that this is an everlasting covenant, that this will not be broken God uses this illustration. He says that if the sun stops shining, then the covenant will be broken. If that does happen we are in bigger trouble. We are in for a deep freeze, life is over. But that is not going to happen.

He illustrates this again by saying if you can count the number of stars in the heavens or the number of grains of sand on the earth, then this covenant can be broken. Long before telescopes were invented, someone took on the task of counting the stars and he came up with 6,019! Someone else, in double checking this count, came up with 6,026! They, of course were not even close. Today it has been estimated that there are over 10^{22} power of stars in the universe. And there are over 10^{22} power of grains of sand on the earth. But these are only estimates, they can't be counted! Thus, God's covenant will not be broken, it is everlasting!

And lastly He speaks of the priests, the Levitical system, that they would remain. Remember, in 586 B. C. the Temple was destroyed and the Babylonians took the people captive with them. Was this covenant broken? No!

Then in 70 A. D. the Temple was destroyed once again by the Romans. Was this covenant broken? No! You see, the Levites were still around, they were not eliminated and even today we see the descendants of Levi being trained in the Law so they can function in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem during the Tribulation Period. God's covenant was not broken and it will never be broken! Jesus the Messiah will rule and reign in the Kingdom Age and on into eternity with us!

VERSES 23-26

1. Again He is speaking of the descendants of David and the Levites. Remember, the final assault and captivity is less than a year away and many had already been taken away captive in the first two invasions, 606 B. C. and 597 B. C.

And some of those in captivity were saying that God had broken His promise with them, His covenant with them. And God is trying to assure them that He has not done that, that He is faithful and His covenant will stand as sure as the sun shines and the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea can't be counted. Obviously words they needed to hear during this dark and hopeless time.

Even in chaos God is in control, He has a plan; He does things for a reason. Let me explain. In the prologue of his best-selling book, "Chaos," James Gleick made this observation,

Now that science is looking, chaos seems to be everywhere. A rising column of cigarette smoke breaks into wild swirls. A flag snaps back and forth in the wind. A dripping faucet goes from a steady pattern to a random one.

Chaos appears in the behavior of the weather, the behavior of an airplane in flight, the behavior of cars clustering on an expressway, the behavior of oil flowing in underground pipes. [But] no matter what the medium, the behavior obeys the same newly discovered laws.

- James Cleick, Chaos: Make a New Science, p. 5

In other words, the laws of heaven and earth are fixed by God and thus, we can trust what God has said to us, including our salvation that is only found in the Messiah! God's promises are sure and what He has said will come to the pass. Jesus came the first time to pay in full the penalty for man's sins and He is coming again to put away rebellious man and establish His Kingdom on this earth. He will sit upon the throne of David because He has promised this to the Jewish people and to us!

2. Now as we get into Jeremiah chapter 34 we will see the reason why Jeremiah was put in prison by King Zedekiah. Remember what we read back in Jeremiah 32:1-2, "**The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth 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.**"

Jeremiah is locked in prison for the things he was saying and now in chapter 34 we are going to get some insight to what he said to the King that got him in so much trouble. That got him thrown in prison. Look at verse 1 of Jeremiah chapter 34.

JEREMIAH 34**VERSES 1-7**

1. Picture what is going on here. It was not just the armies of Babylon, but all the nations that Babylon had conquered were now assisting in this assault of Jerusalem. Talk about disheartening. You would look out over the walls and see this massive army gathering and you would recognize it was only a matter of time till they broke through the walls.

And Jeremiah was to go before King Zedekiah, the King of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and tell him that he is going to be captured by the Babylonians and he will be their prisoner in Babylon! The Babylonians will not kill the King but he will die in peace in Babylon.

How would you respond if someone told you news like that? Probably not too well and neither did Zedekiah. You see, he obviously did not want to hear those words; it probably made him very mad. He listened to what the false prophets were saying about not going into captivity and he may have even been confused by what Ezekiel was saying, who was already in captivity in Babylon. Ezekiel was saying that Zedekiah would not see Babylon.

No please understand that Ezekiel and Jeremiah did not give opposing views on what would happen to Zedekiah, the both were right! You see, as the Babylonians broke through the walls of Jerusalem Zedekiah and his family tried to escape through a tunnel and made it as far as Jericho. It was there in Jericho that he and his family were captured by the Babylonian soldiers.

As Zedekiah and his family were taken captive they were brought before King Nebuchadnezzar. Now what took place next was brutal. Zedekiah watched as Nebuchadnezzar had Zedekiah's sons killed right before him, and then had Zedekiah's eyes put out. So the last thing that King Zedekiah saw was the murder of his sons. He then was carried away captive to Babylon, but he never saw it, for he was now blind. And there in Babylon he died. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke forth the Words of God, they were not in conflict. If it seems like the Word of God is in conflict, give it time, God will show you He never contradicts Himself!

2. Now we know that things were bad because we are told that outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem there remained only two cities that were left. The Babylonians had taken the rest of them captive. Lachish was about 23 miles south of Jerusalem and Azekah was about 18 miles south of Jerusalem. Not a very hopeful picture that Jeremiah is painting for the people and the King. But they should have already known by looking, things were bad, they just didn't want to accept it. They should have known because Jeremiah as well as the other prophets warned them of this judgment that was now upon them but they refused to listen and they refused to see their sin!

VERSES 8-9

1. This is interesting, King Zedekiah wants the people to let their slaves go free, he has proclaimed liberty for them. Make no mistake about it; Zedekiah was an ungodly King and man. Then why did he do this? A desperate measure for desperate times is what we are seeing here.

Under the Law if you couldn't pay back a debt, you could sell yourself into slavery, but that Jewish master could only work you for six years and in the seventh year he had to let you go free. Now that was only in regards to Jewish slaves. We read of this in Deuteronomy 15:12-15, which says, **“If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the LORD has blessed you with, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today.”** (Also see Exodus 21:2-11)

But the nation was not walking with God and thus, they were not obeying the Words of God. They kept their brethren as slaves for longer than the six years. But now things are tough, the King knows they are in trouble so he tells the people to let their slaves go hoping to get on God's good side so that He could wipe out the Babylonians.

It is kind of like the saying, ***“There are no atheists in a fox hole!”*** The situation here was desperate, things looked hopeless so the call is to try and placate God so they would be spared. And as we are going to see, this was an empty ritual on their part; their hearts were far from God.

VERSES 10-22

1. Initially the people listened to the King and they let their slaves go free. But things changed quickly when they realized they let their slaves go and now they had to do the work. It reminds me of what Pharaoh did when he finally let the children of Israel go free and then went after them when he realized all his slaves were gone!

2. Now there is also another reason for them taking their slaves back. The Babylonians had surrounded the city but it seems that the Egyptians at this point were coming to put down the Babylonians. So Nebuchadnezzar took his army and went after the Egyptians, to put down their attack. And now, as the Jews look out over the walls of the city, the enemy is gone!

Guess what? “The crisis is now over! This is great!” And what is the first thing they did? No, they don’t praise the Lord for what was happening, but they go and get their slaves back! And it just shows you where their hearts were at. Not towards God, obviously, and God was showing them these things if they were willing to see and hear, but they weren’t!

3. Now before we are too harsh on them we do the same today. People are in trouble, they cry out to God, promise God all kinds of things, and then when the crisis is over they are back to their old ways and God is out of the picture and self is the priority of their life. And God is not impressed and will hold them accountable as we see with the promise that the Jews made and went back on.

And yes they initially did what was right, that was not the problem. The problem was that they did not stick with it, they did not go through with what they promised but they went back on what they promised! In other words, they fell far short of what they should have done.

May we as Christians, no matter how tough, no matter how difficult things may get, stick it out. At one point in His ministry Jesus said some pretty difficult words and many left Him to follow Him no more.

And Jesus asked His apostles if they wanted to go also, and we read in John 6:68-69, **“But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”**

Don’t forget that. Remember the words of Paul in I Corinthians 15:58, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** Look to Jesus, keep looking to Him, and don’t give up, stick with it. Only He has the words to eternal life and He gives to us the ability to produce fruit in our lives which means that our labor is never in vain in the Lord!

Remember what Paul said at the end of his life, **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”** II Timothy 4:7-8. May we finish the race strong!

4. So they broke this covenant that they made with God by not letting the slaves go free and now God is going to let them go free to die by the sword, by pestilence and by famine! He is going to take His hand of protection away from them!

5. Now keep in mind that covenants were made by **“cut[ting] the calf in two and passed between the parts of it”** That is what the word **“covenant”** means “to cut.” And as they ratified a covenant, made it binding, they would cut an animal in two and then walk between the pieces. That sealed the deal. You can read of a covenant like this in Genesis chapter 15 where God made a unilateral covenant with Abraham. This covenant was based on God’s faithfulness and not mans. You see, as God walked through the halves of these animals Abraham slept. And God is saying here in Jeremiah that if you make a covenant with Him you need to keep it. Like the marriage covenant!

6. Yes God brought about a devastating judgment upon the nation because of their wickedness. But He did not mean it for evil but to bring about good in their lives, to awaken them out of their spiritual sleep and to repent of their sins. And as I have said before, they learned their lessons in captivity. As a nation they have never transgressed into full blown idolatry again. As Jeremiah 29:11 says, **“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”**

JEREMIAH 35

VERSES 1-5

1. This message from the Lord came when Jehoiakim reigned in Judah, from around 609 B. C. to 598 B. C., and he was the third to the last King to reign in Judah before the Babylonian captivity. It is during his reign that the Lord is going to speak to Jeremiah and use the Rechabites as an object lesson to the nation.

2. Let me set the stage for what is taking place here by having you picture in your mind the Temple area. As you would enter you would go past the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Women, the Court of the Priests, the Holy Place with the Table of Showbread on the right side, the Oil Burning Lamp on the left side, and the Altar of Incense in the middle.

Beyond the Holy Place was the Holy of Holies, which was separated by an 18 inch thick curtain. Also, along the sides of the Temple were three levels of compartments that were used as storage areas, apartments for the Levites who were on duty in the Temple and then large meeting rooms. Jeremiah invites the Rechabites into one of these meeting areas which was located right in the vicinity of the Temple proper.

3. Now who are these Rechabites? First of all they are not Jewish. They were a nomadic people that were the descendants of the Kenites, (I Chronicles 2:54-55). And they can be traced all the way back to Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. And thus, they were not Jews but they had a very close relationship with the Jews. And God is going to use these people as an object lesson for His people in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. As they all gather in this room Jeremiah places wine before them and tells them to drink it down, to enjoy a little wine. Their response is an interesting one.

VERSES 6-11

1. This is amazing to me. We are told that these men kept this covenant that their ancestors made over 300 years earlier. You see, Jonadab gave a command that his people should live nomadic lifestyles, not to have any permanent homes, and not to drink any wine. And generation after generation this has been passed on and kept. And this faithfulness, this obedience is going to be used as an object lesson against the Southern Kingdom of Judah as we will see shortly.

2. What is interesting to me is that even today you can go to Israel and you will see a group of nomadic people called Bedouins. It is very possible that these people may be the descendants of the Rechabites. These people live in tents and even when the government of Israel tried to build them homes, they put their tents next to them and they let their animals stay in their homes at night. They also will not drink any wine. Their drink is coffee, which they have many varieties depending on the occasion. And their occupation remains that of shepherds. They still are keeping the commands that were made by Jonadab almost 3,000 years ago!

Now we don't know for show why Jonadab gave forth these commandments, and that is not the point of this lesson. God is showing us how this earthly father gave a command and that command has been faithfully kept all these years. God is showing us their obedience to Jonadab's words.

3. Now as the Babylonians were taking city after city in the Southern Kingdom of Judah the Rechabites saw the handwriting on the wall and they moved into the safety of the walled city of Jerusalem.

4. Now what lesson is here for us to learn? Think about what our heavenly Father has told us in His Word and He desires us to obey His Word. May we be like these Rechabites and say, “I don’t care what the rest of the world is doing, I know what my Father has told me and I will obey Him! I don’t care what the religious leaders are saying, I know what God’s Word says and I will obey the Lord!” May we have a backbone and do what is right. May we not be a bunch of dead fish floating downstream but swim against the current of this world and keep our eyes focused on the finish line, the Lord!

5. Now we will see God show His people how unfaithful they were to His Words while these Rechabites were faithful to what their father told them. Let’s read on and see what the Lord has to say.

VERSES 12-14

1. Notice the contrast that God is showing us here. The Rechabites were obedient to the voice of their earthly father. On the other hand, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was disobedient to their heavenly Father. A pretty sad picture when you think about it. But even today people will listen to the voice of man over the voice of God!

Let me show you what I mean. In the Roman Catholic Church for instance, there is this dogma of the infallibility of the pope. Supposedly, because he is the alleged “Vicar of Christ,” the Roman pope never makes a mistake in his teachings. In fact, devout Roman Catholics are convinced that the pope’s word even supersedes the Bible; so if there is a doctrinal contradiction, the pope is assumed to be right.

Here is the problem and it is a big one. In the Bible we are told that God magnifies His Word above His very Name. In Psalm 138:2 we are told, **“I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.”**

If God Himself magnifies His Word above His very Name, is it not also right that we should honor and exalt His Word above the words of any mere human, even if that human is the pope? Furthermore, if the pope contradicts Biblical teachings, then he is the liar, and not God. Consider what Paul says in Romans 3:4, **“... let God be true but every man a liar....”** May we heed the Words of God and not the words of man!

VERSES 15-17

1. God’s Words were not to punish His people or to rob them of pleasure. God’s Words, the keeping of them, would result in blessings in their lives. The problem, if we can call it a problem, is we let the patience and longsuffering of God cause us to come to the wrong conclusion.

We think that either God can’t do anything about our actions or God doesn’t care what we are doing or even worse, that God condones our actions. But if you continue to reject His Words, His warnings, judgment will come for your disobedience. And instead of the blessings that God desires for you, you will be cursed.

As the Lord said in Deuteronomy 30:19, **“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.”** It is our choice!

2. Let me share this with you to show you how important God's Word is to our lives. We are told,

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” John 10:27.

The term “sola Scriptura” or “the Bible alone” is a short phrase that represents the simple truth that there is only one special revelation from God that man possesses today, the written Scriptures or the Bible. Scripture states this concept repeatedly and emphatically. The very phrase “It is written” means exclusively transcribed, and not hearsay. The command to believe what is written means to believe only the pure word of God. What is at stake before the All Holy God is His incorruptible truth.

In the very last commandment in the Bible God resolutely tells us not to add to nor take away from His Word.

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”

- Revelation 22:18-19

His Word is absolutely sufficient in itself (Psalm 119:160).

The Biblical message breathed out by God is revelation in written form. (2 Timothy 3:15-16). The Biblical claim is that what God has inspired was His written word (2 Peter 1:20-21).

When the Lord Jesus Christ said, “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35), He was speaking of God’s **written** word. The events, actions, commandments, and truths from God are given to us in propositional form, i.e. logical, written sentences. God’s declaration in Scripture is that it and it alone, is this final authority in all matters of faith and morals.

Thus, there is only one written source from God, and there is only one basis of truth for the Lord’s people in the Church. . . .

The Lord himself looked to the authority of the Scriptures alone, as did His apostles after Him. They confirmed the very message of the Old Testament. “*The law of the LORD is perfect*” (Psalm 19:7). The believer is to be true to the way of the Lord, holding alone to what is written: **“Thy Word is truth.”**

- <http://christiananswers.net/q-eden/sola-scriptura-bible.html>

The Lord rebuked the Southern Kingdom of Judah for not obeying His Word and may we learn the lesson and follow what He has told us.

VERSES 18-19

1. Judah, because they refused to listen and obey the Words of God, would be punished. On the other hand, the Rechabites, because of their faithfulness, would continue on, their tribe would not get wiped out. And as I said earlier, maybe the Bedouins in Israel today are the descendants of the Rechabites. If not, there are a people today who are.

2. In regards to these Rechabites, one commentator wrote,

Some think that the Rechabites were absorbed into the tribe of Levi and that this is how God's promise is fulfilled. Though we cannot identify the Rechabites today, we believe that their identity will become known in the Millennium.

- William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary, p. 1019

3. Let me close with this. The Rechabites stood by their conviction and God honored them greatly. May we be like the Rechabites and stand by the convictions that God has given us, may we obey His Word to us not out of the Law but out of love for Him knowing He has what is best for us!