

Through the Bible - Jeremiah 21-35

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Zedekiah

- **[SLIDE - Timeline]** Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah, Jeconiah's uncle, the brother of Jehoiakim, king of Judah.
- Zedekiah reigned for 11 years. I'm sure Nebuchadnezzar picked him because he thought Zedekiah could be controlled, but that turned out to not be the case.
- Zedekiah rebelled, and in January 589 BCE Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem again.
- Jeremiah 21:2 tells us that when this happened, Zedekiah asked Jeremiah if God was going to save them.

God Will Fight Against Judah

- **[READ Jeremiah 21:4-5]**
 - Exodus 6:6 — Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the labors of the Egyptians, and I will rescue you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments.
 - Deuteronomy 4:34 — Or has a god ventured to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, just as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?
- Jeremiah 21: 8 — You shall also say to this people, 'This is what the LORD says: "Behold, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death."
 - **[READ Deuteronomy 30:15-20]**
 - This prophecy is the promised effect of Israel violating the covenant of Sinai.
- **[READ Jeremiah 22:3]**
 - What does God want? What is he asking them to do?
 - He's pretty clear about why the city is going to be destroyed
 - **[READ Jeremiah 22:8-9]**

Chapter 22 — About the Kings

- God tells the kings of Judah that they are all bad news.
- Jehoahaz/Shallum
 - Josiah had four sons: 1 Chronicles 3:15 — "The sons of Josiah were Johanan, the firstborn, the second was Jehoiakim, the third, Zedekiah, and the fourth, Shallum."
 - Shallum was also called Jehoahaz.
 - Jeremiah 22:11 — "For this is what the LORD says regarding Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who became king in the place of his father Josiah..."
 - 2 Kings 23:31 tells us that when Josiah died, Jehoahaz was made king in his place. He was 23 years old and reigned for 3 months.
 - Pharaoh imprisoned Jehoahaz and took him prisoner, and made his older brother Jehoiakim (who was 25 years old at the time) king in his place.
 - All of that happened in 610 BCE, about 20 years before the prophecy. But Jeremiah here says that Jehoahaz is not coming home.
- Jehoiakim
 - Jehoiakim reigned for 11 years.
 - He was a servant of Nebuchadnezzar for three years, but then he revolted.
 - During his reign, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and took captives, including Daniel.

- 2 Kings 24:4 says “he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and the LORD was unwilling to forgive.”
- He eventually died (not in battle), and Jeremiah says:
 - **[READ Jeremiah 22:18–19]**
- Jeconiah/Jehoiachin
 - Jehoiakim’s son Jeconiah became king after he died, and Nebuchadnezzar invaded just a few months later in 597 BCE
 - **[READ Jeremiah 22:24–30]**
 - God has apparently just had enough. Regardless of Jeconiah’s rightful kingship, the time has come for the kingly rule over the Land of Israel to end.

Chapter 23 — Bad Shepherds and the Branch

- Jeremiah 23 contains a dire rebuke against the kings of Judah, but instead of calling them kings, he calls them shepherds.
- The kings had a duty to shepherd the people, to lead the people in righteousness.
- **[READ Deuteronomy 17:18–20]**
- The kings of Israel did not act like shepherds.
- Jeremiah 23:3 — “Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply.”
 - Two things I want you to notice in this passage.
 - 1. The people will be driven out, but a remnant of Israel will always return. The remnant of Israel is always there, and God always has them in mind.
 - 2. This promise has not yet been fulfilled. If you know the story of the Bible, you might be tempted to think that the return of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin from captivity in Babylon was the fulfillment of this prophecy.
 - However, that’s not what God says in this passage. He says that the remnant will return “out of all the countries where I have driven them.” Countries is plural. He’s talking about ALL of the tribes of Israel, not just the two southern ones.
 - He says that explicitly in verse 6: “In His days **Judah** will be saved, And **Israel** will live securely...”
 - That same pattern continues throughout the prophets. Ezekiel 37 says:
 - “Now you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, ‘For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.’ 17 Then put them together for yourself one to another into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand.... Behold, I am going to take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; 22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.”
 - This means that the Jewish people are still in exile. **Until a redemption comes that brings the entire nation back to the Land, these prophecies will not be complete.**
- How will the remnant return?
 - By the Branch of David
 - **[READ Jeremiah 23:5–6]**
 - The Branch is another name for Messiah
 - **[SLIDE]** It comes originally from Isaiah 11:1–2 — Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch (*נֶצֶחַ* *netzer*) from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

- Zechariah 3:8-10 — I am going to bring in My servant the Branch (*נְצִמָּח* *tzemach*).... On that day,' declares the LORD of armies, 'every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.' ”
- Zechariah 6:12–13 — The LORD of armies says this: “Behold, there is a Man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD. 13 Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the majesty and sit and rule on His throne.
- Sidebar: Nazareth
 - In the late first century BCE, worried about being killed by Herod because of their legitimate claims to the throne he was sitting on, a Davidic clan left their ancestral territory in the vicinity of Bethlehem and colonized two small Galilean villages in the north: Nazareth and Cochaba. The majority of the people in Nazareth came from the family of David, and those Davidic families originally pioneered the village.
 - Nazareth in Hebrew is Netzeret, and it comes from the word for Branch (*נְצִי*, *netzer*).
- Back in the Jeremiah passage, note that the Branch will be called “Hashem is our Righteousness”
- The salvation of the Branch will be so important, so integral to the story of Israel, that it will overshadow even the salvation from Egypt.
 - **[READ Jeremiah 23:7–8]**

Chapter 23 — Against the prophets

- They are bad, too.

Chapter 24 — Vision of the Figs

- Good figs will return.
- **[READ Jeremiah 24:5–7]**
- Note v. 7 — “I will also given them a heart to know me”
 - What God really wants. This will come up again soon
- Bad figs = Zedekiah and the people who are left in the land.

Chapter 25 — World War

- **[SLIDE - Timeline]** Fourth year of king Jehoiakim, first year of King Nebuchadnezzar = 605-606 BCE
- Message of the prophets
 - **[READ Jeremiah 25:5–7]**
- A key prophecy in Jeremiah:
 - Jeremiah 25:11 — “these nations (Israel and the nations to its north) will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.”
- Then after that 70 years, God will judge Babylon and bring it to ruin
- Then God says he will make all the nations drink the cup of his wrath, and lists off all the nations, everyone from north to south.
 - Why against everyone?
 - **[READ Jeremiah 25:28–29]**

Chapter 26

- **[SLIDE - Timeline]** Beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim == 609 BCE
- **[READ Jeremiah 26:4–6]**
 - Why like Shiloh? What happened there?

- During the days of Eli the priest, the Philistines attacked. Eli's sons took the Ark of the Testimony into the battle and it was stolen. The city of Shiloh was destroyed by the Philistines, though apparently the other tabernacle implements were saved.
- Jeremiah 7:12 -- "But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the beginning, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.
- The Priests and Prophets were angry about this prophecy! They wanted to put Jeremiah to death.
- But the officials and the people refused.
 - They used the prophet Micah as an example.
- Jeremiah had a high official named Ahikam son of Shaphan protecting him. This is the same Ahikam we see in 2 Kings 22 who worked for King Josiah and helped lead the people back to repentance.
 - Ahikam's son Gedaliah was later made the Governor of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Chapters 27-28 — Get under the Yoke of the King

- [SLIDE - Timeline] Beginning of the reign of Zedekiah = 597 BCE
- Jeremiah to wear yokes and restraints
- Tell the nations coming to congratulate the new king that they all need to submit to the Babylonians
- If they fight they will be destroyed.
- [READ highlighted parts of Chapter 27 (vv. 2, 4, 6, 8, 11)]
- Then in verse 16 he started speaking to the priests and to the people.
 - [READ Jeremiah 27:16]
 - The false prophets were telling the people what they wanted to hear.
 - What vessels of the Lord's House?
 - 2 Kings 24:13 — He also brought out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and he smashed all the articles of gold that Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, just as the LORD had said.
 - Then Jeremiah calls the false prophets out.
 - [READ Jeremiah 27:22]
 - 2 Kings 25:13–15 — Now the Chaldeans smashed to pieces the bronze pillars which were in the house of the LORD, and the stands and the bronze Sea which were in the house of the LORD, and carried the bronze to Babylon. 14 And they took away the pots, the shovels, the shears, the spoons, and all the bronze utensils which were used in temple service. 15 The captain of the bodyguards also took away the firepans and the basins, what was fine gold and what was fine silver.
- In chapter 28 we read a story of Jeremiah's encounter with another a false prophet named Hananiah.
- Hananiah was prophesying that God was going to break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar within two years.
- Notice how Jeremiah initially deals with this false prophet:
 - [READ Jeremiah 28:6–9]
- Then, to make his point, Hananiah took the yoke off of Jeremiah's neck and broke it.
- Jeremiah didn't say anything in front of the people about this.
 - Jeremiah 28:11 — Then Jeremiah the prophet went his way.
- But he did go talk to Hananiah personally, and his response was not so nice this time:
 - [READ Jeremiah 28:13-17]
- What can we learn from this?

Chapter 29 — Letter to the Exiles

- Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles who were living in Babylon around this same time.
- What is his message? Is it a message of imminent redemption?
- [READ Jeremiah 29:4–7]
 - Redemption is not near. Make a life for yourself. Get married, have children, raise the next generation.
 - Pray for the prosperity of the city in which you are exiled.

- **[READ Jeremiah 29:10]**
 - 70 years will pass. That's not your generation, and maybe not your kids generation. That's preparing for your grandkids generation.
- **[READ Jeremiah 29:11–14]**
 - What is the context of this passage?
 - Who is this promise made to?
 - This promise is first and foremost to the Jewish people who live in exile, and not just in the Babylonian Exile, but in the current exile, as well.
- After that, he deals with some other issues he's hearing about among the exiles.

Promises of Return and Restoration

- In chapters 30 and 31, the LORD speaks through Jeremiah to the people of both Israel (the Northern tribes that were taken into captivity by the Assyrians) and Judah (the southern tribes), all of which make up the Children of Israel, the Jewish people.
- **[READ Jeremiah 30:3]**
 - Despite the exile, the LORD will restore the fortunes of the Jewish people and bring them back to the land of Israel.
- **[READ Jeremiah 30:8-9]**
 - He will break the yoke of oppression, and they will no longer serve anyone but the LORD.
 - He will raise up David to be their king again (a reference to King Messiah).
- **[READ Jeremiah 30:11b]**
 - The destruction coming upon them is discipline for disobedience.
 - But the LORD is fair in His discipline.
- **[READ Jeremiah 31:1]**
 - He will be the God of ALL of the families of Israel.
 - This means the restoration of all of the lost tribes, those taken into Exile and scattered among the nations.
- **[READ Jeremiah 31:3]**
 - God's love for the Jewish people is an EVERLASTING love.
- **[READ Jeremiah 31:7]**
 - There is always a remnant of Israel, a part of the people who have stayed true to Him.
 - Paul talks about the remnant of Israel that was present in his day, as well:
 - Romans 11:5 — In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.
- **[READ Jeremiah 31:9b]**
 - Exodus 4:22 — “Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son,”
 - Hosea 11:1 — “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”
 - God has adopted Israel as His firstborn son, the בְּכוֹר (b'chor), the son who receives a double portion of the inheritance (see Deuteronomy 21:15 17).
- What happens before the LORD brings them back and redeems them? What always comes first in any restoration?
 - **[READ Jeremiah 31:18b-19]**
 - Repentance.

New Covenant

- Now we get to arguably the most important prophecy in the entire book of Jeremiah.
- **[READ Jeremiah 31:31-34]**
- Who is the New Covenant made with?
 - The house of Israel and the house of Judah. The Children of Jacob/Israel. The Jewish people.
- How is the new covenant unlike the covenant at Sinai?

- They were able to break that covenant.
- Does that mean that the covenant at Sinai (what is sometimes called the “old covenant” is abolished)?
 - **[READ Matthew 5:17–20]**
 - The sign of the Mosaic Covenant is the Sabbath, and the Jewish people are obligated to keep the sabbath to remember the covenant.
 - Exodus 31:16 — So the sons of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to celebrate the Sabbath throughout their generations as a permanent covenant.’
 - The LORD is a covenant-keeping God. It is in His very nature.
 - Deuteronomy 7:9 — Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His faithfulness to a thousand generations for those who love Him and keep His commandments;
 - Judges 2:1 -- Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you,
- What does the New Covenant do?
 - It writes the Torah, the laws of God, on our hearts.
 - The Mosaic covenant, the covenant from Sinai, does not get replaced with the New Covenant. It is supported and enhanced. The Laws that God set down for Israel, and for those who join themselves to Israel, are still in force.
 - Even more, when the New Covenant is finalized in the Messianic Kingdom, we will all know the LORD.
- **[READ Jeremiah 31:36-37]**
 - Note the promise here for the Jewish people.
 - As Jesus said, the covenants of God with Israel will continue “until heaven and earth pass away.”
 - The descendants of Israel, the Jewish people, are still the chosen people, the heirs of the covenants of God, and the nation with which the Messiah will inaugurate his New Covenant when he returns.

The Field and What It Represents

- **[SLIDE - Timeline]** Tenth year of the reign of Zedekiah, eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar == 587 BCE.
- The Babylonian army had surrounded Jerusalem, and was in the middle of a multi-year siege.
- Jeremiah had been imprisoned by Zedekiah for not telling him what he wanted to hear.
- The people knew that the end was coming. The Babylonians were not likely to stop their attack, and Zedekiah was intent on not giving up.
- Jeremiah got a word from God telling him that his cousin would come to him and ask him to redeem a piece of land that his cousin owns in Anathoth.
 - The law of redemption is found in Leviticus 25:25
 - “If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor that he sells part of his property, then his closest redeemer is to come and buy back what his relative has sold.”
- **[SLIDE - Map]** Anathoth is northeast of Jerusalem. At this time, it was likely under the direct control of Nebuchadnezzar.
- As such, it is telling that Jeremiah’s cousin was even thinking about selling the property. It makes no sense to do land transactions when the Babylonians are besieging the city!
- It’s also interesting to me to see that Jeremiah has the seventeen shekels of silver necessary to purchase the property.
- What did he have his servant Baruch do with the signed deeds?
 - Jeremiah 32:14 — “put them in an earthenware jar, so that they may last a long time”
 - This is the same thing that was done with the Dead Sea Scrolls 500 years later. Earthenware jars were the plastic totes of their day.
- What’s the point of the story?
 - Jeremiah 32:15 - For this is what the LORD of armies, the God of Israel says: “Houses and fields and vineyards will again be purchased in this land.” ’

- After completing the sale, Jeremiah prays and asks God why he was commanded to do that.
- **[READ Jeremiah 32:27, 31-32]**
- However, despite the just judgement that is coming, God still brings hope.
 - **[READ Jeremiah 32:37–41]**
 - One heart and one path.
 - An everlasting covenant, just as he spoke of before.
- God continues this explanation in chapter 33.
 - **[READ Jeremiah 33:8]**
 - **[READ Jeremiah 33:10–11]**
- But it's not just about cleansing the people of Israel from their wickedness and bringing joy in Jerusalem.
- The Branch will also come.
- **[READ Jeremiah 33:14–18]**
- And again, we get a reiteration of God's faithfulness to His covenants, this time the covenant He made with David.
- **[READ Jeremiah 33:19–22]**
- and the covenant he made with Israel:
- **[READ Jeremiah 33:25–26]**

Chapter 34

- Chapter 34 contains a prophecy against King Zedekiah and against the people in Jerusalem who continue to fight against the will of God that they just give up and accept God's discipline.
- **[READ Jeremiah 34:6–7]**
 - These verses tell us what was going on when this prophecy was given. The mention of Lachish and Azekah is particularly interesting.
 - **[SLIDE]** The Lachish Letters are ostraca (pottery fragments on which people wrote letters) that were found in the city of Lachish during excavations of the layer from this time period.
 - The pottery shards are messages sent from a commander somewhere outside the city of Lachish to a commander inside the city.
 - Pottery was used because it was readily available, unlike papyrus or other paper substances.
 - It was also common for the cities under siege to light signal fires. As a fire was lit at the city, others were lit on hilltops along a predetermined path to spread the news that the city was still safe.
 - **[SLIDE]** In Lachish Ostrakon #3, the commander sending the letter to Lachish says, "for we cannot see any more, the fire-signals of Azekah."
- Throughout the prophecy in chapter 34, we see God once again calling out the people for not following the Torah, for breaking the commandment specifically to release their Hebrew servants every sabbatical year.
- He recalls once again the covenant the people of Israel made at Sinai, and reminds them that they are in violation of that covenant.

The Rechabites

- Chapter 35 tells the story of Jeremiah's interaction with the Rechabites.
- They are a nomadic clan who came into the city for protection.
- What's special about the Rechabites?
- **[READ Jeremiah 35:6–10]**
- We actually heard about Jonadab the son of Rechab earlier in our study.
 - 2 Kings 10:15–17 tells us how Jehu was the commander of the army of the Northern Tribes of Israel, and Elisha anointed him King.
 - Jehu then sought out the king of Israel, Joram the son of Ahab, and killed him, then he found Joram's mother Jezebel and killed her.
 - As Jehu was cleaning house and ridding Israel of all of the remaining family of the evil king Ahab, he encountered Jonadab (who is called Jehonadab) the son of Rechab.

- Jonadab joined Jehu on his chariot and went with him to Samaria to take out the rest of Ahab's men.
- Anyway, what's so important about the Rechabites? What do they do that's so special?
- **[READ Jeremiah 35:14]**
- God rebukes Israel because, unlike the Rechabites obeying their forefather for generations, they are unwilling to listen to even the most basic commands God has given them.