

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
September 21, 2014

Lesson Text: Jeremiah 32: 1-9, 14-15
Lesson Title: A New Future

Introduction

There comes a time in everyone's life when the future looks dark. For the prophet Jeremiah and the Israelites, that time had come. As Jeremiah pens the words of Jeremiah 32 the Babylonians are about to overrun Jerusalem and the fall of Jerusalem was inevitable. Jeremiah himself was shut up in prison. If the future ever looked dark, it was now.

In Jeremiah 32 God gives Jeremiah a vision in which he was commanded to buy a field in the city of Anathoth, Jeremiah's home town (Jeremiah 1:1). From a real estate perspective the purchase of land was foolish with the Babylonians about to overrun the city. From a prophetic perspective obeying God and buying the land was an act of faith on the part of Jeremiah. It showed that he believed God would one day restore the nation of Israel to the Promised Land and that God's people had a future.

Much like the people of God in Jeremiah's day, believers today face some very difficult and challenging situations. Do you sometimes have feelings of despair and hopelessness as you look at what lies ahead? Do you ever wonder how God is ever going to make all the wrongs right in this world? If so, then Jeremiah 32 should be an encouragement to your faith. No matter how dark the day there is a new future for the children of God.

A Prison (Jeremiah 32:1-5)

Verse 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."

This unique story of Jeremiah's land purchase begins in the "tenth year" of the reign of "King Zedekiah of Judah." For nine years Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of the nation and that King Zedekiah would be taken into captivity. During the years of Jeremiah's prophecy King Zedekiah had not persecuted Jeremiah. But now that the Babylonians are about to lay siege to Jerusalem, the king had Jeremiah arrested because his prophecies were discouraging to the people. He placed him in "the court of the prison" which was a place where

the more affluent prisoners were housed. It was not as difficult a place as a dungeon but it was still a prison.

In spite of the invading armies surrounding Jerusalem, the actions of King Zedekiah in placing Jeremiah in prison, and the discouraging atmosphere among the people of God, there was a “word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD.” Many of the greatest and most encouraging words from God came to those who were “shut up” or in the “prisons” of life. No matter what the situations of life may hold for us, there is always a word from God!

Verse 3

“For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it;”

The reason Zedekiah “shut him up” was because he couldn’t understand why Jeremiah prophesied the things he did. The king asked Jeremiah, “Why do you prophesy and say, “Thus said the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it?” Zedekiah thought Jeremiah should be prophesying like all the other prophets and encouraging the people instead of prophesying this gloom and doom message. It seemed unpatriotic to the king for Jeremiah to be telling everyone they were going to Babylon to pay for their sins.

The reason Jeremiah prophesied what he did was because it was true. King Zedekiah should have known the truth but he didn’t because he was a spiritually weak man. He should have endorsed Jeremiah’s prophesy and led the nation to repentance, but like most politicians and religious leaders today, repentance is not even open for discussion.

Verse 4

“And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes;”

Jeremiah’s message not only prophesied that the “king of Babylon” would take the city, it also declared that “Zedekiah” would himself “not escape” but “be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.” Jeremiah’s message was not only *nationally offensive* to the king, it was *personally offensive*. According to Jeremiah, “Zedekiah” would “speak with” the king of Babylon “mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes.” For a captive king to stand face to face with his conquering king was humiliating. But that was what was going to happen and Jeremiah proclaimed it.

Verse 5

“And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper?”

As further humiliation for “King Zedekiah,” the king of Babylon would “lead Zedekiah to Babylon.” Like a captured animal or a trophy of victory the king of Babylon will put “Zedekiah” on display for all Babylon to see. This did happen as the Bible says, *“And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon”* (2 Kings 25:7).

A Purchase (Jeremiah 32:6-9)

Verse 6-7

“And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.”

While in prison, the “word of the LORD came” to Jeremiah and God told Jeremiah that his cousin “Hanameel” the son of his uncle “Shallum,” would be coming to him and ask him to buy a piece of land he had in Anathoth. It is possible that a lull in the siege of Jerusalem had occurred and the people took this window of opportunity to do business. The siege had no doubt placed families in financial difficulty resulting in their need to sell land to get some cash flow. It would be almost impossible to sell property with the Babylonians on the verge of capturing everything the people possessed.

God told Jeremiah what his cousin would say when he offered him the land. He would say, “Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.” Land was a sacred possession to the Jewish people. If at all possible land was to be kept within the family. Since Jeremiah was a relative, he could “redeem” it, “buy it,” and keep it in the family.

Verse 8

“So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.”

When “Hanameel” made the offer of the land to Jeremiah, the prophet responded, “Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.” Jeremiah was not a real estate agent but he was no fool either. He knew that with him in

prison and the Babylonians outside the wall ready to attack at any moment that it was no time to be buying land. But when “Hanameel” says the very words God told Jeremiah he would say, Jeremiah “knew” this was the hand of the Lord.

Verse 9

“And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver.”

As a result of “knowing” God was in this transaction, Jeremiah “bought the field of Hanameel” his “uncle’s son, that was in Anathoth.” Jeremiah’s actions are an act of faith. The amount paid for the transaction was “seventeen shekels of silver” and the record of the entire transaction is recorded in verses 9-12.

It is difficult to know the market value of the land or exactly how much “seventeen shekels of silver” would be in value today. What is interesting is that although in prison, Jeremiah had “silver” which he needed to buy food for himself during the Babylonian siege. To hand over coins of silver to his cousin in exchange for land he had no guarantee he would ever need or occupy is indeed an act of faith. Remember, Jeremiah is doing everything based on “the word of the LORD!”

A Promise (Jeremiah 32:14-15)

Verse 14

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.”

According to Jeremiah 32:10-12 (not in today’s text) Jeremiah followed all the proper procedures in purchasing the land and completing the proper documents in the presence of official court witnesses. What transpires in these verses is similar to what would take place today in the office of the Register of Deeds or Clerk of Court when someone sells or purchases property. But there is more going on in Jeremiah’s transaction than just the selling of property.

After completing the transaction, Jeremiah took the “evidence” or legal papers and in front of everyone he spoke the words of verse 14 to “Baruch,” his scribe or secretary (Jeremiah 32:13). This is the first mention of “Baruch” in Jeremiah’s prophesy. “Baruch” will be mentioned some twenty times more in Jeremiah, primarily in chapter 36.

Twice, Jeremiah refers to the “God of Israel” as “the LORD of hosts.” That phrase means “the God of the armies.” By using this phrase twice Jeremiah is

emphasizing that what is taking place in this land transaction is serious and secure. Every action taken is under the scrutiny and security of “the God of armies.”

There are two documents of purchase in this transaction as indicated in the words “both.” While “both” documents are “sealed,” one document could be looked at the other was locked up, not for viewing. “Both” documents were “sealed” with wax to prevent rain or moisture from ruining them and placed “in an earthen vessel” or clay jar for safe keeping. The “earthen vessel” was usually buried for security purposes. This was common practice in that day and obviously very effective in preserving documents.

Verse 15

“For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.”

The reason Jeremiah wants the “evidences” or deeds preserved is because he believed God for the future of the nation of Israel. He didn’t buy the land from his cousin because he planned to make a financial profit in the future. It wasn’t even about Jeremiah building a home and living on this land he bought in the future. Jeremiah knew he would never occupy or live on this land. At least not in this life.

The purchase of the land is a symbolic and prophetic act of this great prophet. He believes Israel has a future (Jeremiah 32:44). “Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land” are words of hope, faith, and trust in God for a return of His people to the Promised Land. “Houses” speak of families and identity. “Fields” speak of labor, investment and a harvest. “Vineyards” speak of fruit, life, hope, sustenance and sweet days ahead. The land will one day again be what God intended it to be.

Conclusion

While the Bible doesn’t tells us how the public reacted to this land transaction, one can only imagine that Jeremiah was the talk of the town. The prophet who preached doom and gloom is now buying land. People must have laughed in disbelief, some thinking Jeremiah was crazy.

True biblical faith is viewed by many today as crazy, unrealistic, and pie in the sky dreams and hopes. But faith is real. It is just as real as the air that we breathe and the flesh that is on our bones. The Apostle Paul said, “...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

Jeremiah had a word from the Lord and he believed it. What about you? Are there times in your life when the future seems dark? Do you have difficulty believing God during those times? Are your decisions often viewed as against conventional wisdom? Taking God at His word and believing what God has promised does not always look or seem logical. But it is what God requires. He calls it faith (Hebrews 11:1).

Jeremiah will not live to see what he believes and prophecies in this chapter. But he was certain God would bring it to pass. The Apostle Paul told the young Christians at Thessalonica, *“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it”* (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Amen.