

Jeremiah Ch 34 & 35 • “A Covenant With Your Fathers”

- Background Ch 34 @ time of Zedekiah (c.588BC); Ch 35 @ time of Jehoiakim (609-598BC)
Why arranged next to each other? Compare / contrast in re faithfulness!
- 34v1 After siege begins (589BC); before fall (586BC). Learn later (v21-22)
time is 588BC during Egypt’s attack and Babylon’s temporary withdrawal.
- v2-5 Repeat of earlier prophecies; fulfillment described in 2 Kings 25.
- v6-7 Lachish and Azekah only remaining strongholds in Judah vs Babylon.
Both located near Egyptian border; probably why Babylon slow to attack.
Archeological evidence substantiates what we read here!
- v8-10 Slavery an option in Israel (Judah) for people who couldn’t pay debts.
Supposed to last six years max (Sabbatical year) – see Ex 21; Deut 15.
Israel had ignored Sabbatical year in other aspects, probably this as well.
But at some point during siege Zedekiah ordered slaves free.
(Why? Could be practical, could be spiritual)
- v11 When Egypt attacks and siege breaks, the people go back on commitment
and enslave again those previously freed (another violation of Mosaic Law).
- v12-16 Apparently when slaves were freed, people entered into covenant in temple.
Might be evidence they were trying to demonstrate repentance?
Unfortunately for them, God takes commitment seriously!
- v17-20 See Genesis 15 for description of similar covenant ritual.
- v21-22 God declares that Babylon (which has withdrawn to combat Egypt)
will return and destroy Jerusalem. Question: what would have happened
if the slave owners in Jerusalem had kept their vow?
- Ch 35v1 Law of sowing and reaping swings both ways.
Ch 34 @ example of unfaithfulness; Ch 35 @ example of faithfulness.
- v2 J. gets instructions from God – another living illustration.
But who exactly are the Rechabites?
Rechabites are subset (family) of Kenites.
Friendly with Israelites in days of Moses (Jethro was a Kenite).
Apparently traveled w/ Israelites to Canaan; Saul spared them (1 Sam 15:6)
- v3-5 “Man of God” in context means “prophet.”
Maaseiah is father of Zephaniah the priest (see Ch 21, 29, 37).
Shallum is doorkeeper (monitors who enters; manages finances for repair)

- v6 Rechabites decline Jeremiah's offer of wine.
Reference to Jonadab connects to 2 Kings 10 – another time when Rechabites come to aid of Israelites (help Jehu cleanse Israel after Ahab).
- v7-11 Essentially a “Rechabite Vow” (cf Nazarite Vow) ☞
No wine, no houses, no farming, no vineyard. Maintain nomadic lifestyle!
Unclear what the cause and effect was. Cities corrupt?
More likely recognized tendency to idolatry in Israel – let's keep distance!
- Rechabites lived as nomads for 250+ years until Babylonian invasion.
Moved into Jerusalem for protection when Nebuchadnezzar invades.
But clearly intend to leave as soon as they can do safely.
- v12-16 Moral of the story is NOT “live as the Rechabites” – God clearly called Israel to settle the land, build houses, plant vineyards, etc.
Moral of the story is that God respects how they kept their vow.
Jonadab gave instructions 1x and Rechabites followed for 250+ years.
God gave instructions repeatedly and His people ignored for 400+ years.
- v17 Irony: God has warned Judah about impending judgment but He knows they will ignore that warning just as they've ignored everything else He's told them. All that's left is judgment.
- v18-19 Faithfulness begets faithfulness. Neh 3:14 mentions descendent of Rechab serving after return from exile. Is 66 – gentiles serve as priests in kingdom!

Application *Don't trade what we know for what we don't know!*
Joy & peace we're looking for isn't found in knowing what we don't know;
it's found in doing what we do know.

I don't need to know exactly how salvation works to tell people they need it!
I don't need to know timing of Jesus' return to tell people it's urgent!

Also

If I'm a Christ-follower, I should be as committed to the truth as Jesus.
The fact that other people aren't is sad, but also an opportunity.
Light shines brightest out of darkness.
What a time to be radical truth-tellers and commitment-keepers.

We talk a lot about radical love (and will again on Sunday)
But radical follow-thru on commitments is just as much a witness to a God
who always keeps His promises (and always will).