

Jeremiah 35:1-19 • An End Times Role Model

Introduction

We need to pay particular attention to what went on in the period of Israel's history leading up to the Captivity as it foreshadows how things will take place in the Last Days leading up to the Great Tribulation. Through these events the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us something about our present situation. And in the midst of a time when it seems like everyone has fallen away, that there are no more true believers and that there are ten thousand false prophets for every true prophet, we are provided a very interesting example of faithfulness by a remnant in the midst of these circumstances.

¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, ²“Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak to them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.”

³Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons and the whole house of the Rechabites, ⁴and I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the doorkeeper. ⁵Then I set before the men of the house of the Rechabites pitchers full of wine and cups; and I said to them, “Drink wine!”

[Read v.1-5]

Q: Who, exactly, are the Rechabites? Why is their heritage in Israel particularly unique?

A: According to the genealogy in 1 Chronicles they are descended from the Kenites of Hamath. (1 Chr. 2:55) If we follow their lineage back further we will discover that they are ultimately descended from Moses' father-in-law known both as Hobab and Jethro. (Ex. 18:9; Num. 10:29-32; Judges 1:16) They would have originally been known as “proselytes”, not native-born Israelites, who came into Canaan side-by-side with the Israelites but chose to live as nomads in tents rather than in fixed buildings.

Point: *Strictly speaking, the Rechabites represent those who weren't naturally born into Israel but were incorporated spiritually. As we shall see coming up, their spiritual heritage seems to have instilled in them spiritual faithfulness, not relying on the physical birthright natural Jews so fervently relied on.*

Q: Why do you suppose God commanded Jeremiah to bring them into the Temple?

A: In order for their example to be witnessed by the priests, leaders, and people most closely associated with the temple. In other words, to provide a right spiritual example to those who thought of themselves as the right spiritual example but were not.

Q: Why does Jeremiah select “the chambers of the sons of Hanan” as the place in the Temple where this will all take place?

A: This family is known publicly as the sons of “Igdaliah, the man of God”. The Hebrew designation “the man of God” is an Old Testament way of stating in the culture of the time that this person was so highly thought of by everyone that no one would call into question his descendants' spiritual standing. Therefore whatever occurred in the presence of the sons of Hanan would not be questioned as they were regarded as a very respectable, unrepachable third party witness of these things.

Q: What might be significant about the location of this meeting being located directly “above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the doorkeeper”?

A: This person is thought to be the Treasurer of the Temple, the one who actually retained the keys to the treasure rooms. In other words, he represents what many people at that time believed was the most important thing in the Temple, its extensive physical treasure. This will be contrasted by the more important example about to take place **above** it, the spiritual treasure which was supposed to be held in higher esteem than the physical.

Q: What is particularly important about Jeremiah's command to drink?

A: Jeremiah does not say, "The Lord commands, 'Drink wine!'", v.5 clearly states that it is Jeremiah personally giving this command. Since the command is coming from another man they are not obligated to obey him and therefore their obedience is actually being tested, but if it came from the Lord it would supersede everything else and they would be required to obey regardless.

Application: *Someone with a heritage and foundation of faithfulness is the example God holds up. Like us, the Rechabites were called out of the old life to a new one based on faith. New believers are a constant reminder to seasoned believers of what they might be missing or taking for granted.*

⁶But they said, "We will not drink wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, 'You shall not drink wine, you or your sons, forever. ⁷You shall not build a house, and you shall not sow seed and you shall not plant a vineyard or own one; but in tents you shall dwell all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn.' ⁸We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, not to drink wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons or our daughters, ⁹nor to build ourselves houses to dwell in; and we do not have vineyard or field or seed. ¹⁰We have only dwelt in tents, and have obeyed and have done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. ¹¹But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, 'Come and let us go to Jerusalem before the army of the Chaldeans and before the army of the Arameans.' So we have dwelt in Jerusalem."

[Read v.6-11]

Q: Who is Jonadab?

A: Jonadab might be most famously remembered in 2 Kings 10 as the one who encouraged Jehu in his war to reform the house of Ahab. (2 Ki. 10:15, 23) He assisted Jehu in the removal of Baal worship from Israel during one of the only known spiritual reforms that took place in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Q: Why do you suppose they are obedient to the dictates of Jonadab, but they ultimately identify Rechab as "our father"?

A: It's a tribute to the one whom they see as having established their spiritual heritage. In other words, Jonadab didn't come along and change things or introduce something entirely new, but rather expanded upon the spiritual legacy of his father before him.

Q: What might be significant that the command was for "you or your sons" together?

A: It's continuing that spiritual heritage handed down from Rechab. In other words, their heritage of faithfulness was in turn to be instilled in all those to come as well as maintained by each current generation. It's really an Old Testament example of discipleship.

Q: What were the specific commands?

1. "You shall not drink wine". (v.6)
2. "You shall not build a house". (v.7)
3. "You shall not sow seed". (v.7)
4. "You shall not plant a vineyard or own one". (v.7)
5. "In tents you shall dwell all your days". (v.7)

Q: What is the reward for following these instructions?

A: "...that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn." (v.7)

Q: What does the phrase "that you may live" mean? Is it physical longevity?

A: In Old Testament terms this references the original purpose of occupying the Promised Land, that the greater blessing was being able to live in spiritual harmony with God. The physical blessings were always intended to mirror the greater spiritual condition of Israel's faith.

Q: What is significant about their assertion in v.8 about not drinking wine?

A: The specific inclusion of "we, our wives, our sons or our daughters" is proof that they were not just personally obedient but an example that carried over into the lives of everyone around them. Their faith was

proven not just by how it changed them personally, but instilled the right result in everyone around them.

Q: What might be particularly important for them to forsake houses, vineyards, field or seed?

A: Within the culture of that day no one would envy them for their physical wealth or their social position. All they offered as an example to others was their spiritual position, people who were not committed to the things of this life.

Q: But why does it appear that they ultimately abandoned their principles? Why did they forgo obedience to these rules and seek the safety of a walled city?

A: Ultimately we have to understand that these specific rules were not divine edicts given by God and passed down through Jonadab. When attacked by the enemy (Babylon), they recognized the necessity to suspend the rules in order to preserve life until such time as they could resume them. These were rules from an earthly leader, not commandments from God.

Q: So what was it that they obeyed in spite of having to flee to Jerusalem?

A: The commandment not to drink wine. This is the one thing they could do regardless of their location. It shows that the intentions of their hearts never changed.

Observation: *Because of their lack of physical attachment to buildings and land, the nomadic lifestyle of living in tents actually proved to be extremely beneficial when the enemy attacked. It was easier for them than everyone else to simply pick up and move to safety, and in reality they didn't suffer the extensive loss of possessions like everyone else because all they required could be easily moved with them. This is a good example of living **IN** the world but not **FOR** the world.*

Application: *Their spiritual heritage not only served as a visible example to others, but when faced with adversity provided a solid foundation by which to live through and endure even the worst circumstances.*

¹²Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ¹³“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Go and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words?”’ declares the LORD. ¹⁴“The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are observed. So they do not drink wine to this day, for they have obeyed their father’s command. But I have spoken to you again and again; yet you have not listened to Me. ¹⁵Also I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending them again and again, saying: ‘Turn now every man from his evil way and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to worship them. Then you will dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your forefathers; but you have not inclined your ear or listened to Me.

[Read v.12-17]

Q: So what is the specific contrast presented here?

A: It's the contrast of a clan who receives instructions by listening to the words of their earthly father as opposed to the entire nation who refuse to “receive instruction by listening to My Words”. (v.13) The Rechabites obey their earthly father better than Judah obeys their heavenly Father. The Rechabites were faithful to an earthly father who died more than 300 years ago, but Judah was unfaithful all along to their Living Father in Heaven.

Q: What is different about HOW instructions were given to each of these opposing examples?

A: In v.14 the clear implication is that Jonadab only needed to speak his commands once and they were faithfully obeyed; God spoke over and over and over again the same things to His people through a variety of means and was repeatedly ignored.

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¹⁶Indeed, the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have observed the command of their father which he commanded them, but this people has not listened to Me.””

¹⁷“Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am bringing on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them; because I spoke to them but they did not listen, and I have called them but they did not answer.’”

Q: Why is it important to note that Jeremiah is told to go “to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem”?

A: He is being instructed to take the message and example originating in that particular chamber in the Temple and preach it to everyone at large.

Q: What is the difference between v.14 and v.15?

A: In v.14 it is God personally who spoke “again and again” as He personally did to the likes of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and others, and in v.15 He continued speaking but through “all My servants the prophets...again and again”.

Q: What is implied in the contrast of the giving of God’s Word versus the giving of man’s word through Jonadab?

A: If Jonadab’s commands, which from an earthly perspective were arbitrary and not actual divine moral obligations in themselves were obeyed, how much more should the divine Word of God, which is absolute and fixed, be obeyed.

Q: What might be ironic about God’s admonition in v.15 that the result of obedience to His Word is that they will then be able to “dwell in the land”?

A: It’s another direct contrast to Jonadab’s justification as to why his earthly commandments were given, that his descendants might “live” in the land (v.7) with the right kind of life. Even more so is this true for those obedient to God’s Word and ways.

Observation: Note how v.16 summarizes the whole situation.

“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?’ says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, ‘How have we despised Your name?’
Malachi 1:6

“Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you.
Deuteronomy 32:6

Q: What is implied in v.17? Could judgment have been avoided?

A: What is implied here is the same as what happened in Jonah’s day with Nineveh. God’s judgment was pronounced but He subsequently chose not to go through with it because the Ninevites properly responded to His Word with repentance and a sincere return from the heart. This same opportunity was offered over and over again to Judah but because of their persistent refusal to respond, the opportunity to mitigate the consequences is now gone.

Application: The result of being consistently disobedient to God’s Word is revealed to us in v.15. Backsliders begin by engaging in evil, they build a history of bad deeds, and ultimately it leads to going after and worshiping a false god in place of the One True God. It didn’t matter that they “knew” the Law, or they “knew” the prophets, or that they even “knew” God because they did not engage in the biblical definition of “listening”, which is to put God’s Word into practice.

¹⁸Then Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, kept all his commands and done according to all that he commanded you; ¹⁹therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me always.’””

[Read v.18-19]

Q: What do we know for sure about what happened to the Rechabites?

A: They were among those who returned from captivity in Babylon. Their standing among the people of Israel, according to the Old Testament record, continued as a reflection of their greater spiritual standing.

Overall Application

Luke 1:18b: “However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”