

LECTURE 3

Last week we left Jeremiah standing in the refurbished temple. He delivered four discourses (which is a lot like four sermons). In his first discourse, he told the people they were trusting in religious ritual, heathen gods and themselves. Secondly, he accused them of rejecting the Word of God and the priests were not teaching the true Word. Thirdly, Jeremiah lamented the fact that the people's lost state was unnecessary because God's grace from heaven was at their disposal if only they would repent. He reminded them of the two universal truths – salvation for all who know God and judgment for all who reject Him and are unbelievers. Fourthly, he tried to show them there was no other God, no greater power, no other cause behind the universe, no one like the sovereign God and Judge.

Today's lesson opened up with Jeremiah telling the people they had broken the covenant. Here may be a good place to talk a little about covenants. Our Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. Testament is another word for covenant. In the Bible there are a number of covenants we should be aware of. I want to give you a brief overview of each. In the broadest concept there is the covenant of law and the covenant of grace. Only two people ever lived under the covenant of works – the first Adam, whose perpetual obedience sustained fellowship with God. He could not keep it and it ended in death. The second Adam (Jesus Christ) was perfectly obedient to the work God gave Him to do and through His obedience the covenant of works was fulfilled and no longer exists. I ask you, How were the people of the Old Testament saved? The answer is, the same way we are, by faith counting as righteousness (as outlined in Hebrews 11) and the grace of God. That is the broad concept. The Bible, however, also mentions some specific covenants.

1. The covenant in Eden. (Genesis 1:28-30; 2:15-17)
 - a. Man responsible to replenish the earth, have dominion over creation and keep the garden, abstain from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - b. "Conditional" – if fail to do it, resulted in physical death.
 - c. Concluded with expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

2. The covenant with Adam. (Genesis 3)
 - a. “Unconditional” – consisted of a curse and a promise.
 1. Curse on Satan.
 2. Judgment on woman (multiplied conception, maternal sorrow, subordination to man).
 3. Judgment on man (must labor for his living).
 4. Curse on creation – thorns, thistles, etc. to make cultivation difficult.
 5. The promise in Genesis 3:15 “I will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise Him on the heel.” (A reference to Jesus)
 - b. Will conclude when the earth is renovated by fire.
3. Covenant with Noah. (Genesis 8:20-9:17)
 - a. “Unconditional” – God will not again destroy the earth by water, natural order of seasons will prevail, law of capital punishment established.
 - b. Sign – the rainbow
 - c. Will conclude when the earth is renovated by fire.
4. Covenant with Abraham. (Genesis 12 begins)
 - a. “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (12:2-3)
 - b. Sign – circumcision
 - c. Concluded when the New Covenant was established.
5. Mosaic Covenant (Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy)
 - a. Contains the Ten Commandments and the 613 laws found in Leviticus.
 - b. Sign – Sabbath
 - c. “Conditional” on blessings if obeyed – promise of punishment if disobeyed. This is the covenant Jeremiah speaks of as being broken. Many equate the Mosaic covenant with The Law. They say the Law is past. The Law is still in existence . . . Jesus summed up the whole law by saying, “You shall love

God with your whole heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.” The Law was good, it was not intended for salvation by works as we discussed, but it was to show us what sin is. Paul tells us in Romans 2:12, “All who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law.” The Mosaic Covenant merges with what is called the Palestinian Covenant.

6. Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10)
 - a. This is a continuation of the Mosaic Covenant that foresees the dispersion of the Jews and promises regathering of the people from among the nations, the conversion of Israel, judgment on those who persecuted Israel, great blessing and prosperity.
 - b. “Conditional” – on the repentance of scattered Israel.
 - c. Ends with the new heavens and the new earth.
7. Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:8-19)
 - a. “Unconditional” – “I will raise up a descendant, I will establish his kingdom, your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever, your throne shall be established forever.” David said in 2 Samuel 7:19, “. . . you have spoken about the future of the house of your servant.”
 - b. Sign – the son of David (Jesus) Luke 2:11-12 and Jeremiah 33:14-21
 - c. Conclusion – forever.
8. New Covenant
 - a. It was made with Israel and Judah as we will see in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (read). It was further explained in Hebrews 8:8-12. It promises a personal knowledge of God and a promise of sanctification through grace. We have the promise of resurrection and eternal completeness in the New Testament Scriptures. Christians enjoy all the fullness of the New Covenant. We come into the covenant through union with Jesus Christ. Let me read Ephesians 2:11-20.
 - b. “Unconditional” – God declared it.
 - c. Sign – Jesus’ blood.
 - d. Runs beyond the millennium to the new heavens and the new earth.

As you can see, we can't just lump the Old Testament into a preconceived mold that it's all over and done with. Some of the covenants are still with us.

But let's get back to Jeremiah . . . you recall when Israel entered the promised land after their 40 years of wandering, they had been instructed to have six representatives of the tribes stand on Mt. Gerizim and six on Mt. Ebal. They were to recite the blessings and curses of the Mosaic Covenant that we reviewed and the people were in the valley saying "Amen" as a sign of acceptance. We can see that God really had it spelled out. God was concerned with their obedience – and the lack thereof. James reminds us we need to be doers of the Word not just hearers.

The Lord called Judah "a green olive tree, a beautiful fruit," yet the branches are worthless and a fire would be kindled against it.

Then Jeremiah recognized that a plot was being formed against him by those from his hometown of Anathoth. Basically they were saying, "quit preaching or we'll kill you." But God assured Jeremiah that He would bring judgment – their sons and daughters would die and there would be no remnant left.

Now while Jeremiah was preaching at the temple, he seemed to offend some people . . . especially when he said the temple (this beautiful new structure) would be left as desolate as Shiloh. So the priests and prophets seized him and wanted him put to death. All of this commotion brought out the princes (another name for the public officials) to see what was going on. Jeremiah's defense was basically, "I spoke the Word of the Lord and warned you to amend your ways in hopes God would forego His planned destruction. That's the truth now do whatever you want with me . . . ONLY know for certain that you'll bring innocent blood upon yourselves."

Now whether that was his human attempt to get out of a bad situation or not, I don't know, but it couldn't hurt. Spread a little guilt trip on them.

Some of the elders came to his defense by citing Micah the prophet to whom King Hezekiah had listened. But there are always two sides and the other said, "Oh yeah, well, King Jehoiakim killed Uriah for the same thing." But fortunately Jeremiah was spared when Ahikam was able to keep him from being put to death.

Good king Josiah had died and Jehoahaz lasted only three months before Neco of Egypt deposed him and put Jehoiakim in his place. As we saw, Jehoiakim did evil in the sight of the Lord.

It's easy to visualize the discouragement of Jeremiah. People in his hometown wanted to kill him and he'd had a close call at the temple. Also, now there was a wicked king in power. So Jeremiah had some questions for God.

1. Why do the wicked prosper?
2. Why do those who are faithless have it so easy?
3. How long will the land mourn?

Those are really questions we ask today. Isn't it wonderful though that God is so much smarter than we are? We'd make the wicked suffer and the righteous prosper. But how would we ever know we were loved for ourselves? It would be easy to be a Christian with the promise of prosperity, but would we love God for who He is? Is there anyone here who can say he hasn't suffered as a Christian? We love Jesus because we love Him – not for what we expect to get out of it. There are blessings to be sure, but a Christian loves God through adversity as well.

We notice that God doesn't answer Jeremiah directly but says, "If you've run with footmen and they tire you out, how can you compete with horses?" God has each one of us in training. We run with footmen in our daily trials, but you must train like an athlete if your endurance is to hold out in a big race. God never takes you to a place but what you've been prepared in advance. He goes before us and prepares the way. Think back over your life . . . isn't there something you've overcome in your past that is helping you meet the challenges of today?

In vs. 7 God calls Judah "the beloved of my soul" and mourns for her destruction. There is a promise in chapter 12 to Judah's neighbors and that is, If you'll learn from the Jews about Me, the true God, and will put away your idols, I will restore you to the land.

Do you suppose now that Jeremiah's faith might have had a low spot? Even God wasn't too sympathetic. We all have that experience once in a while. In the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, God give some wonderful illustrated sermons and I think He gave a special one to Jeremiah by having him encounter the Rechabites. He was told to bring them to the temple and serve them wine. They came to the temple, but refused the wine

because their forefather had forbidden it. This was generations later, yet they were still obeying his commandment.

Wouldn't you marvel at this testimony to obedience? Doesn't the outstanding example of others inspire us to renewed faith? I think Jeremiah got a firsthand object lesson. Of course, we can see beyond this to the contrast between the faith Rechabites and faithless Judah. And then the wonderful promise of reward for faithfulness.

Our review question asked what we learned about Jeremiah the man in this lesson.

1. He stood up to his accusers and offered to lay down his life rather than recant despite his human fears.
2. He had honest questions of God – we all have.
3. He faced persecution from friends and neighbors.
4. He perhaps was strengthened by the example of others – something we can relate to.
5. He had the happy opportunity to give the Rechabites “good news – God would reward their faithfulness.

Let's be doers of the Word this week and follow Jeremiah – you be a spreader of good news this week –let's tell someone about the good news of Jesus Christ.

Questions?

Prayer