

“My Law on Their Hearts”

While many of Jeremiah’s prophecies concerning God’s mercy were directed at the return of the people from Babylonian captivity, some of his prophecies looked far beyond a physical return to Jerusalem. God speaks through Jeremiah not just of a return from exile, but also of a new covenant. In Jeremiah 31:33, God describes this new covenant as follows: “...I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God and they shall be my people.” A transformed heart is not just a New Covenant idea. The Law itself called for whole-hearted service as well as “circumcised hearts” (Deut. 6:5; 10:12, 16; Deut. 30:6; Ps. 51:10). The writing of God’s Law on the heart does seem to be in contrast to the writing of the Mosaic Law on stone, however (2 Cor. 3:3). So what is the difference? How is the New Covenant better, and how is it written on the hearts of God’s people? The key seems to be forgiveness of sins. Jeremiah 31:34 says, “...For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” This is precisely how the Hebrew writer uses this passage in Hebrews 10—a section devoted to Jesus’ sacrifice as the final sacrifice for sins. The Old Law prepared the way for Christ and God’s final revelation, but it was never intended as God’s final covenant for man. The Law of Moses called people to circumcise their hearts, but there was a built in “fault” with the Mosaic Law; whenever someone transgressed one portion of the Law, they were a transgressor, and could not be forgiven. The blood of bulls and goats could roll forward their sins year by year, but only the sinless blood of Jesus would be able to truly offer forgiveness of sins. His sacrifice would completely wipe away sins. Earlier in Jeremiah 31:4 God speaks of “...virgin Israel.” How could the nation which was condemned for spiritual harlotry be called virgin Israel? Because of redemption! Christ’s blood would offer full salvation and redemption from sins. Finally, God’s people could be cleansed, and the law of grace and truth could be written on the hearts of the redeemed!



Questions:

1. How long would Judah “serve the king of Babylon”? _____
2. Micah of Moresheth prophesied during the days _____
3. What was Jeremiah told to put on his neck as a sign of service to Nebuchadnezzar? _____
4. Summarize Jeremiah’s message to the exiles in Babylon (ch. 29) _____

5. Which gospel writer quotes Jeremiah 31:15? _____
6. “I will put My law in their _____ and write it on their _____; and I will be their _____, and they shall be my _____.” (NKJV)
7. What group of people was used as an example of what obedience looked like because they obeyed their forefather by not drinking wine, planting vineyards, or sowing seed? _____
8. What was the name of the king who burned the scroll Jeremiah wrote? _____

“That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



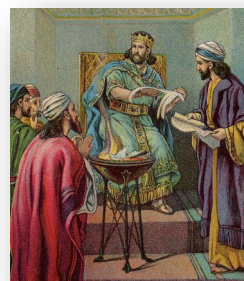
Jeremiah 25-36 Captivity and Covenant

Overview

In this week’s reading from Jeremiah, we read prophecies and events that took place when Nebuchadnezzar was moving against Jerusalem. By this time, God had decreed that Judah would be taken into captivity for 70 years, but many people still rejected the Lord’s word. Many priests and prophets spoke against Babylon, even claiming that they spoke for the Lord by claiming Babylon would not succeed. After the first deportation of captives, some false prophets claimed that the captivity would only last a couple of years. Instead of preaching peace and deliverance, Jeremiah exhorted the people to accept the Lord’s judgment, to not withstand Babylon, and for captives to settle into their lives of captivity. Obviously, this wasn’t the message people wanted to hear, and thus Jeremiah was persecuted further. Priests and false prophets tried to kill Jeremiah, and they continuously contradicted his words with their own false prophecies. Despite the terrible treatment, Jeremiah continued to teach all the words of the Lord. Intermixed in these chapters are several prophecies of God’s plan to deliver the people, including prophecies that point forward to a new covenant and the Messiah. While God had to punish His people because of their hard-hearted ways, He foretold of a time when their hearts would be different, for they would have God’s law written there!

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Jeremiah 25-26
Tuesday: Jeremiah 27-29
Wednesday: Jeremiah 30-31
Thursday: Jeremiah 32-33
Friday: Jeremiah 34-36



The Fireproof Word

In Jeremiah 36, the prophet is instructed to write down on a scroll all the words God had spoken. Jeremiah’s assistant, Baruch, then took the scroll and read it publicly in Jerusalem. Some of the king’s officials heard the message, and were alarmed and concerned by the message of judgment. They determined the king needed to hear the prophet’s words, and arranged for the scroll to be read to the king. Sadly, while the officials seemed to recognize the importance of the warning, king Jehoiakim did not. As the scroll was read to him, he would cut pieces of the scroll off and throw them in the fire. Jehoiakim may have felt smugly satisfied as he burned the message of judgment, but his actions did nothing to change the truth. In fact, his rebellious actions simply sealed his own fate. The Lord spoke to Jeremiah again, instructing him to write another scroll. This time the Lord said of Jehoiakim, “He shall have none to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night.” Jehoiakim’s rejection and even the destruction of God’s Word did nothing to change the truth. We may be appalled that someone would be so flippant and arrogant that they willfully burn the Word of God—but we should be warned! If we ignore God’s Word and refuse to live by it, we too act like Jehoiakim. We should also realize that ignoring God’s Word does not negate its message, its promises, or its warnings. Instead of “burning the scroll,” we should hear God’s warnings, and make the changes needed in our lives to repent of sins and obey God’s Word!

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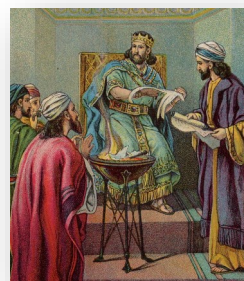
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