

Gleanings of Grace

Jeremiah 29

Lesson 30

The people of Judah had rebelled against the principles upon which their nation had been founded and fallen from grace. Judah had turned its back upon God and rejected any attempt by those sent to her to call her back. As promised, God withdrew His protection from her. He had warned that if His people became faithless that He would employ a pagan power to conquer them and lead them back into captivity. He had led them from Egyptian bondage 800 years before, and now, because of their infidelity, He would allow them to return to bondage; this time in Babylon. Yet, the story of Israel certainly doesn't end in captivity. The LORD, through Jeremiah, reminded His people of His thoughts toward them; *thoughts of peace and not of evil.*

OBSERVATION: Jeremiah 29

1. Read Jeremiah 29 using the Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework). After reading through the chapter, what would you say to someone if they asked you what it is about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text. Remember to mark any personal pronouns/titles that refer to *God*, and any people designated as key words.
Key Words: *God* **References to:** the people who were carried away captive (verses 6-16, 19-22, 24, 32), the people who had not gone out into captivity (verses 16-23), and those who misrepresented the LORD (false prophets or evil rulers; verses 21-26, 31, 32)
3. The term of conclusion, *therefore*, is used four times in Jeremiah 29. Mark the word. Choose one instance and record what it is based upon.
4. The word *because* is used six times explaining the basis of God's actions. Mark the word and list the reasons given for God's judgments.

Background:

1. The promises of Jeremiah 29 to free the Jews from captivity and judge those who disobeyed the word of the LORD did not happen in a void. Israel's captivity was a result of their own rebellion. Using the following verses, describe their sin.

Jeremiah 2:5

Jeremiah 2:11

Jeremiah 2:13

Jeremiah 2:19

Jeremiah 3:6

Jeremiah 5:31

Jeremiah 8:5,6

- a. Reflect on their behavior. What are your thoughts?

2. The chapters of Jeremiah not only record the sins of Israel, but they expose the heart of God for His people. Coupling His pronouncements of judgment with promises of hope, God reveals His faithfulness to those He calls *My people*. What do the following verses teach us about God?

Jeremiah 4:1

Jeremiah 5:25

Jeremiah 9:23,24

Jeremiah 31:3

Jeremiah 33:3

Jeremiah 33:15-17

- a. In what ways is this revelation of the heart of God different than how many view the God of the Old Testament?

Read Jeremiah 29:1-9 – A letter to the exiles – Part 1

1. This chapter contains four letters written by Jeremiah the prophet. To whom was this first letter written?

2. We are told the time in Jewish history of this letter. It was the time of Babylonian captivity. Most of the Jews were now living in Babylon under Babylonian rule. Note the phrase *carried away captive* in verses 1 and 4. According to:
verse 1, who *carried them away captive*?
verse 4, who *caused them to be carried away captive*?
 - a. What are your thoughts as you consider man's accountability for his actions and God's determination to accomplish His purposes?

 - b. God had warned the Jews that they would be taken captive by Babylon, if they did not repent and return to Him. What did Micah the prophet say to them in Micah 4:10?
 - 1.) God does not inadvertently judge. He warns of judgment. Judgment is His last choice. His first words to those who rebel are: *return to Me*. What do the following verses say that verify this?
Nehemiah 1:9
Zechariah 1:3
 - a.) Judah had even watched God warn the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the resulting captivity due to their failure to repent. Write the heartbreaking words of Jeremiah 3:7.

 - b.) What are your thoughts when you consider the heart of God and the heart of His people as reflected in these verses?

3. Israel still had not understood the gravity of their new living conditions. The LORD gave to Jeremiah instructions for them. What practical advice did He give them? Jeremiah 29:5,6
 - a. In giving them this advice, the LORD was telling them that they were going to be there for a while. He also encourages us to have a pilgrim attitude, a thinking that this life on earth is temporary and we are citizens of heaven. What can you learn from realizing God wants us to build dwellings and relationships in a world that is temporary?
 - 1.) According to verse 6, why were they to *take wives and beget sons and daughters*?

4. Jeremiah 29:7 instructed them to *seek and pray for the peace of the city*. Why?
 - a. King Cyrus valued the prayers of God's people. He ordered that they be treated well in their journey back to Jerusalem. According to Ezra 6:10, what was his reasoning?
 - 1.) Reflect upon Cyrus' statement. Share your thoughts about an ungodly person valuing the prayers of God's people.

5. Israel had been plagued with deceptive *prophets and diviners*. When the people were still in Judah, the false prophets told them they would not be taken captive. Now, in captivity, they were telling the people that the captivity would be brief. What did Jeremiah tell them about these men?
 - a. Why must we be especially careful when people, who claim to represent God, tell us things we want to hear?

Read Jeremiah 29:10-14 - A letter to the exiles - Part 2

1. Contrary to the deceptive *prophets*, God had designated a time for their captivity. What did God promise?
 - a. God made many promises to Abram (Abraham). What did He tell Abraham about his *descendants*? See Genesis 15:13
 - 1.) What does Exodus 12:40 reveal that shows the reliability of God's word?

2. Although Israel was experiencing the consequences of their rebellion, God was not through with them. Write the blessed reminder of Jeremiah 29:11.
 - a. What did David declare about God's *thoughts toward us* in Psalm 40:5?
 - b. Why do you think the LORD had Jeremiah write this promise at this time?
 - c. What does this verse personally mean to you?
 - 1.) What has God done for you that shows you that His *thoughts toward you* are thoughts of *peace*?

2. Listen to the heart of God for His people as you read Jeremiah 24:5-7. What do you hear?

3. Jeremiah 29:12,13 remind us of the importance of prayer. Using these verses, describe our part.
 - a. What does God promise to do when we do our part in prayer?
 - 1.) What do you think it means to *search for the LORD with all your heart*?

 - b. Specifically, for Israel, what did God promise to do? verse 14

Read Jeremiah 29:15-23 – A letter to the Jewish false prophets in Babylon

1. *Because you have said, “the LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon”* – Men in Babylon were making pronouncements as if they were speaking for the LORD. The people were listening to their false prophesies. Jeremiah turned his attention to another group of people. According to verse 16, who were they?

2. What did God say He would do?
 - a. Jeremiah referred to the *rotten figs* immediately after he spoke of the *good figs* in Jeremiah 24. Compare Jeremiah 24:8-10 with Jeremiah 29:16-18. What do you see?

3. Why was God sending this judgment? verses 19,23
 - a. Define the word *disgraceful*.

4. What is your criteria in determining whether someone is speaking for God or not?

Read Jeremiah 29:24-29 – Shemaiah’s letter to the priests concerning Jeremiah

1. Jeremiah’s next words were to Shemaiah, a man who claimed that the LORD had made him *priest*. Shemaiah wanted certain men, specifically Jeremiah, to be *put in prison and in the stocks*. His statement regarding Jeremiah’s words was true. What did he quote Jeremiah as saying? verse 28

- a. Matthew 27:63 quotes the words of the priests and Pharisees, men who claimed to be of God. What did they say about Jesus?
 - 1.) Both Jeremiah's and Jesus' words did not make sense at the time. What do you do when you are confronted with a word of the LORD that doesn't make sense to you or clashes against your will?

Read Jeremiah 29:30-32 - A letter to the exiles concerning Shemaiah

1. When the letter (verses 26-28) from Shemaiah came to Jerusalem and Zephaniah, Jeremiah heard the letter exalting Shemaiah and criticizing Jeremiah. God spoke words of judgment regarding Shemaiah. According to verse 32, what would Shemaiah *not see*?
 - a. Why?
 - 1.) Shemaiah *taught rebellion against the LORD* by convincing the people to disregard God's words through Jeremiah. What are some ways we can *teach rebellion against the LORD*?

REVIEW: Jeremiah 29

1. Explain what it means to you that God's thoughts toward you are *thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope*.

2. The Bible tells us many of God's intentions and thoughts toward us. What are some of your favorites?

It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

- Lamentations 3:26

Observation Worksheet

Jeremiah 29:1-32

¹ Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive--to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. ² (This happened after Jeconiah the king, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.) ³ The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying, ⁴ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. ⁶ Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters--that you may be increased there, and not diminished. ⁷ And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace. ⁸ For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. ⁹ For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD. ¹⁰ For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive. ¹⁵ Because you have said, "The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon"-- ¹⁶ therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, concerning all the people who dwell in this city, and concerning your brethren who have not gone out with you into captivity-- ¹⁷ thus says the LORD of hosts: Behold, I will send on them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like rotten figs that cannot be eaten, they are so bad. ¹⁸ And I will pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence; and I will deliver them to trouble among all the

kingdoms of the earth--to be a curse, an astonishment, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, ¹⁹ because they have not heeded My words, says the LORD, which I sent to them by My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; neither would you heed, says the LORD. ²⁰ Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all you of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon. ²¹ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who prophesy a lie to you in My name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall slay them before your eyes. ²² And because of them a curse shall be taken up by all the captivity of Judah who are in Babylon, saying, "The LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire"; ²³ because they have done disgraceful things in Israel, have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and have spoken lying words in My name, which I have not commanded them. Indeed I know, and am a witness, says the LORD. ²⁴ You shall also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying, ²⁵ Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: You have sent letters in your name to all the people who are at Jerusalem, to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying, ²⁶ "The LORD has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, so that there should be officers in the house of the LORD over every man who is demented and considers himself a prophet, that you should put him in prison and in the stocks. ²⁷ Now therefore, why have you not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth who makes himself a prophet to you? ²⁸ For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, 'This captivity is long; build houses and dwell in them, and plant gardens and eat their fruit.' " ²⁹ Now Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the hearing of Jeremiah the prophet. ³⁰ Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: ³¹ Send to all those in captivity, saying, Thus says the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, and I have not sent him, and he has caused you to trust in a lie-- ³² therefore thus says the LORD: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his family: he shall not have anyone to dwell among this people, nor shall he see the good that I will do for My people, says the LORD, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD.