

## Journey through Jeremiah Part 40, The Obedience of the Rechabites

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017

† **Jeremiah 35:1-19:** The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2 Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.

We find that this prophecy in Chapter 35 deals with the time period of Jehoiakim's reign, which was around 10-years prior to Chapter 34 that we studied last week which was during Zedekiah's reign. So, we are faced once again with chapters in Jeremiah not being in the order that we expect them to be in. I feel like a broken record when I say this but the Book of Jeremiah is not in chronological order. In our study next week, we are going to go into detail of why this is so. Jeremiah himself addresses part of the reason in Chapter 36 which, Lord willing, we will study next Wednesday.

The prophecy Jeremiah is dealing with in this chapter is concerning the obedience of the **Rechabites**. Their "**obedience**" is referred to 5 different times throughout this chapter; verses 8, 10, 14, 16, 18.

**Rechabites**; that's not a name you hear very often. The Rechabites were a nomadic tribe, meaning that they dwelt in tents. They didn't have a land, but were more or less wanderers. They were not Israelites but were Jewish proselytes, meaning they had left their pagan ways and gods and were worshippers of Yahweh, the God of the Israelites. They chose to pitch their tents in the Israelites land and got along with them.

We can trace their lineage starting in the Book of **1 Chronicles 2:55** And the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites. These are the Kenites that came of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab.

The Rechabites take their name from Rechab. Down in **verse 6 of Jeremiah 35** we see that they refer to him as their "**father**," much like the Jews call Abraham their father. Rechab was also a descendant of Moses' Father-in-Law, Jethro, the Priest of Midian. -- Rechab had a son named, **Jonadab**; he is the one that instituted the rules of the Rechabites. We read about him in **2 Kings 10:15-28**. He was a very noble man and had great zeal for the LORD. He helped King Jehu rid Israel of the prophets of Baal and the inhabitants of King Ahab.

In our opening text, the LORD instructs Jeremiah to take these Rechabites to the Temple and give them wine to drink. Now this seems like an odd thing for the LORD to have Jeremiah to do, but He has a purpose for it. Everything that God does has a purpose. We will see what that purpose is as we continue.

**3** Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites; **4** And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door:

**Jaazaniah** was probably the chief leader of the Rechabites at this time. That is why his name is mentioned first. Then there are several other Rechabites mentioned that are invited to the Temple. All of this is being done in the open so there are many witnesses. The LORD wants this incident to be known.

**5** And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

Jeremiah has large bowls of wine set before them and cups to drink out of and invites them to drink the wine. Pay particularly close attention that he does not say, "The LORD says to drink the wine." If he had said that they would have been forced to drink it instead of having the choice.

**6** But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, *neither* ye, nor your sons for ever: **7** Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have *any*: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye *be* strangers.

None of the Rechabites drank the wine. We don't know exactly how many of them were there but apparently there was a large number of them. They tell Jeremiah that Jonadab the son of Rechab their father, commanded that they not drink any wine.. ever. It was one of the rules of their religion.

We see that they have more rules than just abstaining from wine. They cannot build a permanent dwelling place or plant gardens. They are to live a life to where if they needed to move they could just pull up stakes and leave. There would be nothing there for them to want to cling to or hold on to. They would just be pilgrims and strangers.

Since they were forbidden to have permanent dwelling places, we see why it might have been one reason they were not to drink wine. Wine represented a settled life. To make wine you had to grow vineyards which would require planting and cultivating. They were forbidden to grow vineyards. Also, proper places to make the wine and store it would be needed. These would need to be permanent places, not tents.

The Rechabites would have drank milk from the herds that they would have and of course water.

Notice the reason they were given for living this way: "**that ye may live many days in the land where ye *be* strangers**" They were not Jews but they lived in the Jews land. If they would continue to live in the manner they were instructed then they would live peacefully among the Jews.

**8** Thus have we **obeyed** the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; **9** Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: **10** But we have dwelt in tents, and have **obeyed**, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

Here the Rechabites state that they have kept the commandments of their forefathers in everything that they told them. They state that they "obeyed." They lived a very obedient lifestyle. Thus the reason none of them drank of the wine that Jeremiah placed before them.

**11** But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

It seems that the Rechabites made an exception though in time of war. When Nebuchadnezzar and his army invaded the lands of Judah, they went into the walled city of Jerusalem for safety. This was another sign that they got along well with the Jews since they were allowed to come and stay in the city during that time.

12 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 13 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD. 14 The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but **obey** their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.

Now we see the purpose of the LORD having Jeremiah bring these men into the Temple and offer them wine to drink. It is to show the inhabitants of Judah, God's own people, that even this tribe of nomads who were not even Jews, were obedient to their fathers, unlike the Jews who were disobedient from the day the LORD led them out of Egypt's bondage.

You call it the LORD shaming His people for their disobedience.

15 I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

He goes on to rebuke them for their disobedience even though he had sent godly men to them to instruct them and to warn them of what would happen if they did not obey him. But they did not listen to him.

16 Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have **performed** the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: 17 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.

The LORD mentions the obedience of the Rechabites again. He says they have "**performed**" the commandment of their father. The word performed is the indication of obedience.

Then the LORD pronounces judgement upon his people because of their disobedience. He makes the stark contrast between them and the Rechabites. Since even the Rechabites can remain faithful and obedient but the Jews cannot, then he will allow evil to come upon them. He will remove his hand of protection from them and allow their enemies to have their way with them.

18 And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have **obeyed** the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: 19 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

Wow, did you read that? This should prove to us how important obedience is to the LORD. Obedience is more important than your worship style, your skill, your success, and your happiness. Obedience is the most important thing in the eyes of God.

Even these Rechabites who were not Israelites, are receiving blessings from the LORD because of their obedience.

The Children of Israel knew the repercussions for disobedience, as they were warned when the Law was first given to Moses:

**Deuteronomy 11:26-28:** Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; 27 A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: 28 And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

This should be a wakeup call to all Christians. When the LORD gives us a commandment, He is serious about it. When we choose to disobey there are consequences to our actions.

In this chapter we see that God uses the most unlikely of people to make an example out of His own people.

---

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible