

## Jeremiah Chapters 32-33 John Karmelich

1. The last chapter ended with God telling us about His eternal plans for Israel as a nation (the end of Chapter 31). Now we jump into of all things what could be considered either the worst or best real estate deal in history. I've worked in that industry all my adult life. I've seen lots of good and bad deals occur. The one we'll read of in Chapter 32 is a horrible deal for Jeremiah well except for the fact God told him to do it and it'll benefit his extended family in the long run. Investments are based on good information. The better informed we got the better the decision we'll make. If God made it obvious for you or me to do "this deal", in effect what choice do we have?
  - a) OK so these chapters focus on the consequences of a strange real estate deal that occurred over 2,500 years ago. Let me ask the important question first: Why should we care? No it's got nothing to do with about learning how real estate was transferred, but we will get that in this lesson to explain the deal. It's also not just about the Babylonian Empire who ruled over Israel for about 70 years. It's not even to realize what's obvious to us, the fact that the nation of Israel is around today. The most important thing to get out of this lesson is that God interferes in our affairs and "moves the pieces" when He wants for His glory.
  - b) So if that's true, why does God allow all the horror that occurs in this world? The answer is that He allows free will and He allows the consequences of sin to play out. In spite of all of that, God still will work behind the scenes to control the events of history as He desires, if for no other reason than to give evidence of His existence and lead people to Him.
  - c) Let me explain it another way: Do you want proof that the bible is God's word? Consider the history of Israel. As I state often, no other nation in the history of civilization has ever been conquered, scattered and came back together to be a nation, except Israel, who did it twice in human history. If one ever travels there, the "land" is full of evidence that it's true history did occur as the bible teaches. In summary, this real estate deal is here to show us evidence that God interferes in the affairs of man. That makes it worth studying.
2. John, you're preaching to the choir again. Most of us already accept the bible as His Word and we accept that the Israelites are the chosen people whether they like it or not. Give those facts, tell us why we should study about this real estate transaction and why does God want us to know all of these details? In other words, what's in it for us? For starters, learning about how Jewish real estate transactions work give us another reason why Jesus had to be a man in order to redeem the world. We'll get to that in this lesson. Understanding why God's punishment is often necessary before He can bless us is "extended" in this lesson just as it was discussed in the last one. What I'd like you to consider over and above all of that, is simply the fact that because God will sometimes work on the "Grand scale" as He does with Israel, is the fact He an also work on with individuals such as you and me. OK, we know that because we've given our lives to Jesus. More than that, is simply the fact that God saved us for a purpose. He wants us to use our lives to make a difference for Him. As we do that realize that at any time God wants He can "step in to interfere" just as He did of all things to do a real estate deal with Jeremiah over 2,500 years ago.
  - a) With that speech out of my system, let me go over some of the facts in this text.
3. Chapter 32 opens up by giving us the real estate deal setting. The short version is it occurred soon before Babylon would destroy Jerusalem. At that time Jeremiah was in that city in prison as their leaders didn't like the fact he was preaching "surrender". Apparently he was allowed visitors and even had some money on him in order to do the deal. Keep in mind that if the Babylonian army's surrounding Jerusalem, that means they've already conquered and controlled the land outside of that city, which would include the land that's the source of the real estate transaction. If there is no government to enforce "title", what good is this real estate transaction? Let's be honest, would the Babylonians as the conquerors ever acknowledge any Israelite real estate ownership. All that I am getting is, is this is a real estate deal that no logical person would ever agree to! Yet Jeremiah did the deal essentially because God told him too. In this lesson I discuss how this affects us.

- a) From there the scene changes to explain why Jeremiah was in prison. He explains to the king in effect, "Hey, you put me in prison for proclaiming God's word, let me now tell you what will happen to you, your highness". The short version is Jeremiah states how he will not win and he'll be taken prisoner to Babylon. What's interesting is the Babylonian king's the one who put the Jewish king in power. The fact that Jerusalem is fighting them won't be a good thing if he's taken prisoner!
  - b) By Verse 6 we're back to the real estate deal. Jeremiah's hometown was a few miles away. His cousin shows up to the prison saying in effect, "As the closest living relative to all our family, you have the right to buy your uncle's land if he chooses to sell it, which he is." In Israel, all land belongs to God, so buying it is technically leasing it. What all of this means is God desires that land designated for the priests (Jeremiah was one) stays in their family.
  - c) Anyway, despite the fact the deal didn't make sense with Babylon taking over, Jeremiah is agreeing to buy it and publicly gives his cousin the money. Also keep in mind Jeremiah's got no children, so what he's agreeing to is keeping the land in the "family hands" if Israel ever gets to control "title" again.
  - d) By Verse 17, Jeremiah breaks out in prayer. Let's face it, lacking children of his own, given the fact the Babylonians are about to destroy Israel as God told Jeremiah, he pondered the whole transaction if this is the right thing to do.
  - e) By Verse 26, God responds in effect with, "Is anything to hard for me? If I say all of this is going to happen, who are you Jeremiah to question me? Then God "rehashes" His plan for the land of Israel. He goes over the plan for its destruction and then gives the good news of its "resurrection" as a nation. In effect it's a big reassurance that the real estate deal is a good one and despite everything looking bad, Israel's "resurrection" will fix everything! If that isn't a clue, I don't know what is!
4. In Chapter 33, Jeremiah gets a second vision from God while he's still "stuck in prison". This one's for all those in Jerusalem fighting the Babylonians. It's a "you're all wasting your time" message. The details discuss the horrible aspects of Israel's fall along with all the dead bodies.
- a) By Verse 6, Jeremiah gets positive again. He says in effect, despite all of that, I'm going to "resurrect" it (Jerusalem along with all of Israel). Not because you deserve it, but only due to the fact that I'm keeping my word that Israel is God's chosen and they will be united in this place to honor me as God.
  - b) To state what hopefully is obvious, there's the short-term fulfillment of their return after a 70-year period in captivity and a long-term fulfillment that hasn't happened yet. I say that the real prediction is "millennial" as in describing a future 1,000-year period where Jesus is going to rule over the world from Jerusalem (see Revelation Chapter 20). In fact we'll get some of the same "language" as the last few verses of Chapter 31 when Jeremiah predicted The Messiah (A Jewish title for Jesus role in His Second Coming) would be ruling over the world for eternity.
5. With all that said, I was torn between two titles: One is "Understanding the bad real estate deal", or "National Resurrection". Both fit the text well. I think I'm going to stick with the latter is we've got to realize that Israel's resurrection, past tense and future tense, affects us Christians as well. I would argue that our resurrection trusts in the necessity of theirs as a nation with Jesus ruling for 1,000 years for "them" and eternally for us. For those of you who love "bible details" there are lots of neat little things to learn from this text. If all that stuff bores you, even the big picture stuff that deals resurrection affects all of us as believers so for that reason alone I encourage you to read the rest of this lesson.
- a) For those of you interested in learning about how to do a real estate deal, "God's way" I'm afraid this won't be much help. Like any major decision in life the more information we've got the better the decision. Like any investment, it is risk and nothing's certain in life. We simply have to make the best decisions we can and success in life requires taking risks.
  - b) With all of that out of my system, I welcome you to join me for the details!

6. Chapter 32, Verse 1: This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>2</sup> The army of the king of Babylon was then besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was confined in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace of Judah.
- a) Verse 1 gives a date stamp. It's about 587 BC, that is shortly before Babylon wiped out the Israelites "once and for all" so to speak. Think about being a situation that looks hopeless. Jeremiah predicted doom and destruction and was essentially locked up for preaching it.
  - b) This is one of those moments when God says to us, "I never said the job I've asked you to do was going to be easy. However, if we trust in His power, we can do whatever it is that He's called us to do. As I said in the introduction, Jeremiah is going to preach "doom" and resurrection of the nation. Let's be honest, the promise of preserving the nation would not interest people there if they also heard they're about to die! However, a resurrection hope is all Jeremiah could offer at this time.
  - c) The text also says that Jeremiah was confined to a courtyard set up as a prison. It's logical that he's in there. Let's face it, if your army is defending this city with their lives, having a person saying, "You might as well give up, it's over", wouldn't be good for morale!
  - d) Also keep in mind that if the army had surrounded Jerusalem that means they've already conquered most of that kingdom or else just going through it for the big price (Jerusalem).
7. Verse 3: Now Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him there, saying, "Why do you prophesy as you do? You say, 'This is what the LORD says: I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will capture it. <sup>4</sup> Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape out of the hands of the Babylonians but will certainly be handed over to the king of Babylon, and will speak with him face to face and see him with his own eyes. <sup>5</sup> He will take Zedekiah to Babylon, where he will remain until I deal with him, declares the LORD. If you fight against the Babylonians, you will not succeed.' "
- a) Here we get a speech by the last Jewish king who was a direct descendant of David. Keep in mind that the Babylonian king placed this guy in power during his last visit there. The fact that the Israelites kept rebelling against them (some of the leaders turned to Egypt to get out of the Babylonian grip). That didn't exactly help this king. I'm sure he's fearing for his life at this point. Having someone preach "we're going lose", isn't good for morale as I explained earlier, so Jeremiah was locked up.
  - b) Meanwhile Jeremiah himself, despite the fact he's in prison, despite the fact I'm sure he is afraid himself of being killed by the Babylonians, kept preaching the message God gave to him about the fact "they're going down for the count". In fact he said that the king would be taken prisoner to Babylon. I'm sure that king feared that as much as death itself!
  - c) The king had to be thinking, "Well, Jeremiah's been right to date. Here I am not doing the will of God right now. This can't be good for my eternal future! I have to encourage men to fight because that's the only choice I have here". My point is the king's "stuck between a rock and hard place". He can't order surrender, even if He suspected it was God's will.
    - i) The point for you and me is it may be hard to do God's will at times, but in effect, what choice do we have? It's one of those situations where one has to realize that to please God is always better than to please man, even at the cost of our lives.
    - ii) On that scary thought, we can get to the heart of the chapter.
8. Verse 6: Jeremiah said, "The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>7</sup> Hanamel son of Shallum your uncle is going to come to you and say, 'Buy my field at Anathoth, because as nearest relative it is your right and duty to buy it.'
- a) Keep in mind that Jeremiah was born a Levite, which simply means he had to be a priest whether he liked it or not. Realize certain cities existed in Israel back then for the priests to live. Jeremiah came from one of those "priest cities" a few miles from Jerusalem.
  - b) I'm guessing God put the thought of Jeremiah's uncle in his head. He probably thought I am in prison and my cousin is going to show up? Wow, will that be strange!

- c) Then we get the first reference to the "real estate deal". As I stated in the introduction, the land of Israel in effect belongs to God. Therefore, the Israelites use of it is a leasing type of situation. One of the Israelite laws given by Moses says in effect that if one needs to sell it for some reason, it has to be first offered for sale to the nearest living relative. Therefore it was necessary for Jeremiah's cousin to visit him in prison and make that offer. I'm sure his cousin had no idea what Jeremiah would say, but the ritual was necessary.
- i) Quick side note, for those of you familiar with the book of Ruth, this transfer ritual is similar to the one performed in Ruth Chapter 4. There a man named Boaz was a relative of Ruth's mother in law and did that real estate transaction.
  - ii) Here's another interesting thing to think about for this ritual. When Satan tempted Jesus as told in Matthew Chapter 4, one of the temptations was Satan promised he would give the "kingdoms of the world" to Jesus if He'd bow down to Satan. That would only be a temptation if Satan were in control of the world. He got control at the time he got Adam to sin. My point is it took a "kinsmen" to pay for the sins of Adam and the world to redeem the world. That's a key reason why Jesus has to be fully man as well as fully God in order to fulfill that ritual.
  - iii) While you're digesting that thought time to get back to the "real estate deal".
- d) A number of things crossed my mind as I thought about this passage. Where did Jeremiah get the money in the first place to buy the land? God must have worked that out so he did have the correct amount in the first place and his cousin agreed to it. I also pondered if the area of land was already under Babylonian control at that point. Did his cousin escape just to make this deal? The chapter implies it was. Still, Jeremiah knew that the Israelites were "going down for the count" so even if he bought it, the Babylonians probably won't honor a contract claiming the Israelites lost the land. Also you might recall Jeremiah didn't have any descendants. God told him he can't take a wife. (Jeremiah 16:1). So even if he had the right to this land, he knew the captivity would be 70, so he wouldn't have a descendant to claim it. Being the redeemer simply means if the Israelites could say in the future control the land again, that Jeremiah's cousin's descendants would get that piece of land. Bottom line, if this deal worked, the descendants of Jeremiah's cousin in effect would get the land back "free of charge".
- i) Gee John all of this is interesting, why should we care? Because we effectively got bought the same way. God Himself paid the complete price for our redemption as we had nothing to do with it except "go along with the deal". My whole point here is simply that this whole section is a model for what Jesus did for us!
- e) Now that I explained all of that, we can read the story that repeats some of these points.
9. Verse 8: "Then, just as the LORD had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard and said, 'Buy my field at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Since it is your right to redeem it and possess it, buy it for yourself.' "I knew that this was the word of the LORD;<sup>9</sup> so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver.<sup>10</sup> I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales.<sup>11</sup> I took the deed of purchase--the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions, as well as the unsealed copy--<sup>12</sup> and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard.
- a) In these verses, we learn more about the Jewish ritual of the transfer of real estate than we ever probably cared to know. First, the transaction itself. Jeremiah's cousin came to him as he couldn't leave prison. Imagine walking into a prison and telling one of the prisoners to buy my land. I'm sure the other prisoners were watching out of curiosity if nothing else. I also suspect the guards watched Jeremiah knowing that he preached against the Israelites in the ongoing war. Even the fact that Jeremiah agreed to the deal had to be a sign to those guards that Jeremiah believed they would return there one day.

- b) For those of you that have done real estate deals, some of these rituals must "ring a bell". More than one copy was signed. There were witnesses to the transaction. (The notaries of that day!) The money was weighed out for accuracy. One copy of the deed was sealed for safekeeping and the other was kept open for people to examine if needed.
  - c) A quick side note. When the Israelites from Jerusalem were taken into captivity they were allowed to bring the "family records" with them. That's how for example around the time of Jesus, He could still trace his lineage back to King David and even further than that!
  - d) Anyway, the real estate deal was done. I'm sure Jeremiah's cousin was thinking whatever Jeremiah is paying, I'm getting a great deal as the land's now in Babylonian control. If you care the amount is about 7 ounces of silver. I googled it, and that's about \$100. It probably wasn't a lot for a farmable field, but given that the Babylonians controlled it, I'm guessing that his cousin was happy with whatever he got for it.
  - e) Anyway the deal is done, the documents are signed. There were witnesses and now we've got Jeremiah owning a field in his hometown that he can't even inspect as he's in prison in Jerusalem. So what does Jeremiah do now? Verse 13:
10. Verse 13: "In their presence I gave Baruch these instructions: <sup>14</sup> 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Take these documents, both the sealed and unsealed copies of the deed of purchase, and put them in a clay jar so they will last a long time. <sup>15</sup> For this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.'
- a) Jeremiah tells his cousin, take the official documents and keep them safe for a long time.
  - b) For those of you familiar with the Dead Sea scrolls, these were bible scrolls (partial as well as complete) and other writings that date back to about the time of Jesus. My point is that if scrolls were placed in earthen jars in dry climate, they could last for millenniums!
  - c) Remember that the Babylonians are "knocking on the door" to destroy what's left of Israel in that land. Yet Jeremiah is saying Israelite real estate deals will happen one day again in the land, "bank on it". It's amazing to consider when the Persians, who conquered Babylon allowed the Israelites to return to their homeland, they even allowed local ownership of it at that return. My guess is they simply required paying of taxes. Original ownership was allowed after that return just as Jeremiah predicted. I assume all those records must have gone with them so they knew who owned what they returned!
  - d) So now that the deal is done, its prayer time. After all God forbade Jeremiah from having a wife. God told Jeremiah it'll be 70 years for the return. What about the real estate deal, with all of that? That's why it's prayer time!
11. Verse 16: "After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD: <sup>17</sup> 'Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. <sup>18</sup> You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the fathers' sins into the laps of their children after them. O great and powerful God, whose name is the LORD Almighty, <sup>19</sup> great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve. <sup>20</sup> You performed miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt and have continued them to this day, both in Israel and among all mankind, and have gained the renown that is still yours. <sup>21</sup> You brought your people Israel out of Egypt with signs and wonders, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror. <sup>22</sup> You gave them this land you had sworn to give their forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>23</sup> They came in and took possession of it, but they did not obey you or follow your law; they did not do what you commanded them to do. So you brought all this disaster upon them.
- a) Here Jeremiah pours it on thick. He reminds God of some of the history of Israel. Why? I would argue that Jeremiah's naming past miracles, as he's going to need one if the land he bought is ever going to be in the hands of his descendants. Did Jeremiah doubt God? No, I just think he wanted to know how God was going to pull this one off. The language here implies that Jeremiah knew God knows all things and knows the affairs of mankind.

- b) Keep in mind that God doesn't have to answer Jeremiah. God does what He wants when He wants, so he's not obligated to answer Jeremiah here. The fact that He does is meant as a lesson to us about how God works.
  - c) Speaking of that, let me discuss asking God for miracles. First I'm positive that we can ask anything we want of God. He has the right to say no or not now. God never promises us a long and healthy life. He wants us to use our lives as a witness for Him. The time length is His business, not ours. Can we expect the miraculous? No I'm not talking about the fact we're saved, but just things that can't be explained by the course of nature. In my life, I've seen some people unexplainably cured of cancer for no particular reason and I've seen the slow death of devout Christians for the same disease. I can't explain all things. There's no magic prayer that gets God to do a certain miracle. The idea of prayer is lining up our will with His. Because we don't know His will, it's ok to ask. However, we must accept the no answer or the not now answer as much as we expect the yes answer.
  - d) With that lecture about miracles out of my system, Jeremiah finishes his prayer below:
12. Verse 24: "See how the siege ramps are built up to take the city. Because of the sword, famine and plague, the city will be handed over to the Babylonians who are attacking it. What you said has happened, as you now see.<sup>25</sup> And though the city will be handed over to the Babylonians, you, O Sovereign LORD, say to me, 'Buy the field with silver and have the transaction witnessed.' "
- a) Let's be honest, Jeremiah is confused here. He doesn't even know if he's going to live after Jerusalem is destroyed. He states here how the Babylonian army has surrounded the city where he's being held prisoner. He knows who'll win this war for the simple reason that God already told him the results. Yet with all that doubt about how he's going to live or wondering if the Babylonians or whoever else will allow Israelites to buy and sell there in some future day, he was confused. Keep in mind no nation in history has been conquered then scattered then came back, let alone allowed to own land again!
  - b) At this point I think God's heard enough. I don't think God responded to get Jeremiah off His back! I'd argue that God simply has more things he wants to say to Jeremiah. Keep in mind this response we're about to read is going to run until the end of the chapter. Ok, let us begin with God's response:
13. Verse 26: Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:<sup>27</sup> "I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?<sup>28</sup> Therefore, this is what the LORD says: I am about to hand this city over to the Babylonians and to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who will capture it.<sup>29</sup> The Babylonians who are attacking this city will come in and set it on fire; they will burn it down, along with the houses where the people provoked me to anger by burning incense on the roofs to Baal and by pouring out drink offerings to other gods.
- a) You have to love the phrase, "Is anything too hard for me (God)?" I've never had an issue with what God can do. I'm amazed by what He does do and what He allows. The issue is not that God only works on grand-scales for Israel. The issue is God controls the affairs of mankind for His glory. He wanted this captivity to occur essentially because the Israelites had turned from him to worship other gods. To make it worse, they even burned incense to Baal (the popular false god in that area at that time) as well as other gods.
  - b) Wait a second John, I thought God allowed free will. Can't we worship whoever we want in life? Sure, that's not the issue. The issue's about those He's called to be His witnesses to the world. It's about those of us who've already dedicated our lives to serving Him. If we have done that, sure we can ignore God, but there are consequences for doing that. Yes I'd say those consequences are severe. At the least we're a bad witness for Jesus. Besides that, He has every right to "end us", especially if we're known as His witnesses! That's the issue here. The Israelites were known as worshippers of God. Because they turned from that, it is necessary for God to say, "Time to be put in the penalty box" so to speak. Lots of people had to die just to prove the point that God's not to be messed with.

- c) Speaking of God, He's did real damage to Jerusalem when the Babylonians destroyed that city about a year after Jeremiah wrote this. Stop and consider why this punishment? God could have had a plague wipe out that city or a meteor hit it. Why this cruel method? It's to show God's wrath for turning against Him. The Israelites there turned to other gods in that city even though they knew their history of being God's people.
- i) This is God saying, "What's the punishment for turning your back on me? Death. Just like punishment today for turning our backs on God? Remember that hell is a place for people who don't want to be with God for eternity. It's giving people the desire they want for eternity, separation from God. That's why God chose to have this horrid punishment against His own people, to show us what's the price paid if we waste the most valuable thing God gives us, our time.
  - ii) Speaking of God being ticked off, let's continue with the verses.
14. Verse 30: "The people of Israel and Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth; indeed, the people of Israel have done nothing but provoke me with what their hands have made, declares the LORD. <sup>31</sup> From the day it was built until now, this city has so aroused my anger and wrath that I must remove it from my sight. <sup>32</sup> The people of Israel and Judah have provoked me by all the evil they have done--they, their kings and officials, their priests and prophets, the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem. <sup>33</sup> They turned their backs to me and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline. <sup>34</sup> They set up their abominable idols in the house that bears my Name and defiled it. <sup>35</sup> They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.
- a) At this point God continues His lecture through Jeremiah why He's so "ticked off". I'd say the key point is what I've been preaching all through Jeremiah, that God called the nation of Israel to be His witness to the world around us. To put it in our vocabulary, "God saved us for a purpose". That purpose is to glorify Him with our lives by being His witnesses to the world around us. We're called to obedience not to earn His love but strictly based on a sense of gratitude for what He's done for us.
  - b) OK, that's old news. In these verses, God singles out the peoples of both Israel kingdoms as if to say, "You've all blown it". Just as the North kingdom went into captivity over 100 years earlier, so it's the South turn, because even though they knew all of this, they blew it just as bad if not worse.
  - c) The "kicker" of all things is the fact that the Israelites in the Southern Kingdom offered up their children to Baal to show their loyalty to Him. In Verse 35 God says it's so detestable it "never even crossed His mind". Yes, I believe God knows all things. It's a colorful way of saying "I never thought they'd sink this low", even though again, He knows all things.
  - d) The bottom line here is "Hey all of you in Jerusalem, don't think you're "holier than thou". Don't think I'll spare this place because the temple is here". Don't think I'll spare you just because I promised the Messiah will rule from here one day". Bottom line, you are guilty as charged and now destruction is coming.
  - e) But let's assume everyone didn't do that practice, why should everyone suffer? To start, I would say because no one said anything to put a stop to it. When we Christians refuse to say "What you're doing is wrong", or "we won't participate in that", we fail to be a witness for God and that's when the hammer comes down hard.
  - f) OK John this is horrible, but it happened over 2,500 years ago. Besides we Christians are scattered all over the world. God can't punish us the same way. You're right He may not kick us out of our country, but there are countries that ban Christian missionaries today. I also know there are countries where distribution of the bible is forbidden. Resistance to any growth of Christianity is alive and well all over the world. So what do we do? Pray for it to spread. Be a good witness for Jesus and encourage those on the "front lines" as well!

15. Verse 36: "You are saying about this city, 'By the sword, famine and plague it will be handed over to the king of Babylon'; but this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: <sup>37</sup> I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. <sup>38</sup> They will be my people, and I will be their God. <sup>39</sup> I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. <sup>40</sup> I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. <sup>41</sup> I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.
- a) Enough of the bad news. The chapter is going to end with the good news. He's saying, "I know this is bad. I know the Babylonian Army is surrounding this city. I'm aware many of you will die. The only comfort I (God) can give is this is not "The end"." The language in effect is similar to the end of Chapter 31. It's eternal in nature as Jeremiah is describing life after Jesus returns. It says for example, "They'll never turn away from me (God)". As I've been preaching modern, Israel is mostly secular so this is future to us as well.
  - b) Think of it this way, when Jesus returns, it'd be logical for Israel to exist when He returns. That leads to the question, , "Why the big Revelation show" prior to all that? Why doesn't Jesus just return and the Jewish people say we blew it and that's that! I'd argue that if the world today is obsessed with Israel's destruction and a large percentage of the world acts that out, having a savior who despite all the odds conquers those nations, it'd be at then I could see Israel saying, "OK we blew it. Jesus is God". Anyway now you know why all of that frightening stuff that's described through most of Revelation realize these predictions here in Jeremiah tell well to the event where Jesus returns to run things!
  - c) I bring that up here, because these verses are here to give hope to people when things are at their worst. When one is facing certain death, one is concerned with the afterlife. That is why Jeremiah spends so much time preaching repentance. I suspect we'd also want to be assured that our death is not the "end" of our families. That's why Jeremiah's telling us as well as them about the eternal future is good. It's like a classic Christian joke that goes, "I read the last chapter, we win". It doesn't mean we should commit suicide. It just means God's going to win in the end, so accept it, despite how bad things might. So when things are at their worst, we can have assurance that not only will there be eternal life if we trust in Jesus, but also reassurance that no matter how bad things get in this world, God's going to win in the end with Jesus ruling over this world.
  - d) All of that leads me back to these verses. Verse 36 states for the "hundredth time" the fact that those living in Jerusalem will suffer death through a number of horrid ways. Then it says as surely as that occurs, God will one day restore Israel not only to "live there again" but also in the eternal sense of the Messiah ruling the world from there.
  - e) Let me give a "thirty second" discussion of why there is a 1,000-year "post-Christian-era" period of time. During that time Satan is locked up. It'll be a time where God shows that we sin despite Satan's influence! The other purpose of it is to show what happens when the world is forced to live by God's laws and under His rule. Yes we'll get eternity with Jesus, but there's a special future period where God rules the world from Israel. It's what is in focus in these verses. It's called "the millennium" as it literally lasts for 1,000 years.
  - f) With that said, remember what God desires, having all the people who love Him united in one place to worship Him. That'll be Israel in that day. So what do we do then? What I suspect is we work in effect as angels to enforce His rule around the world. I don't think travel will be an issue, so if we just want to be in Jerusalem with Jesus at that time, what I suspect is we can just be there, because we want to be! Could I be wrong about this? Yes, the millennium specifics is a debated topic among Christians. For what it's worth my view is essentially the view that's the most dominant among Evangelical Christians.
  - g) With that said God's got some "encore" comments to finish Chapter 32.



16. Verse 42: "This is what the LORD says: As I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will give them all the prosperity I have promised them. <sup>43</sup> Once more fields will be bought in this land of which you say, 'It is a desolate waste, without men or animals, for it has been handed over to the Babylonians.' <sup>44</sup> Fields will be bought for silver, and deeds will be signed, sealed and witnessed in the territory of Benjamin, in the villages around Jerusalem, in the towns of Judah and in the towns of the hill country, of the western foothills and of the Negev, because I will restore their fortunes, declares the LORD."
- a) I suspect these verses are as much for Jeremiah himself as much as to preach to those who are about to perish. Remember that Jeremiah is not married and living in Jerusalem that is doomed for destruction. I'm sure Jeremiah had doubts about the future of that real estate deal even with God's reassurance. Now think of God telling Jeremiah, "hey buddy, a day is coming where fields are bought and sold one again, kind of like what you just did!"
  - b) Is this message for all the Israelites there? Of course. They had to be scared for their lives. That's why Jeremiah's reassuring them, that one day Israelites will do "real estate deals" in the land once again. Good news for my profession as well!
  - c) OK John before we jump into the shorter Chapter 33, tell us why we should care about the fact that Israelites can buy and sell there again? Israel exists today and obviously that did come true. Again think about the fact no nation other than Israel has ever been conquered scattered and became a nation again. If we can see that come true, it reassures us that His promises to us as Christians will also come true. (By the way, if you need proof that all of the aspects of Jesus life were predicted before He came in the world, read Isaiah 53 as well as Psalm 22 as evidence that what Jesus went through was predicted before His birth!"
  - d) On that positive noted, Chapter 33 is much shorter and is a separate vision. Let's begin:
17. Chapter 33, Verse 1: While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD came to him a second time: <sup>2</sup> "This is what the LORD says, he who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it--the LORD is his name: <sup>3</sup> 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.' <sup>4</sup> For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says about the houses in this city and the royal palaces of Judah that have been torn down to be used against the siege ramps and the sword <sup>5</sup> in the fight with the Babylonians: 'They will be filled with the dead bodies of the men I will slay in my anger and wrath. I will hide my face from this city because of all its wickedness.
- a) The first thing to realize is Chapter 33 is a separate vision that God gave Jeremiah around the same time as the last one. Verse 1 states that this one came after the last one. To me it is like God's saying, "Now that everyone's digested what I had to say in Chapter 32, let me state a few more things here in Chapter 33. Yes I know there were no chapter breaks when this book was first organized, but obviously God wants us to know this one is "second".
  - b) The next thing to notice is God's most holy name is used four times in the first two verses. It's Jeremiah's way of saying, "This is God speaking, trust it!"
  - c) Before I go any further, a lot of Sunday school children learn that Jeremiah 33:3 tells us to call on God and He will answer us. Since we're adults, let me explain that one better. It is not saying that no matter what we ask, God's now required to answer us. It doesn't mean we're entitled to know what's going to happen in our immediate future or how long we'll live. So if that's what it doesn't mean, what does it mean? It's the idea that if we study the bible we can learn God's eternal plan for mankind. For what it's worth I've been studying this book for 20 years and I'm still learning things. I've heard people who've studied it for a much longer period and they are still learning things. Let me put it this way, if you are interested in your eternal future, as well as God's desire of us, that alone is motivation to seek Him as these verses imply.
  - d) With all that "general" stuff out of my system, time for specifics. Time for the bad news: It starts with the fact the Israelites tore down some of their homes for materials in their fight against the Babylonians. In short it's another "you're wasting your time" lecture!

- e) OK, so why is Jeremiah going "on and on" about all the negative stuff. Obviously he had to be aware by now Jerusalem will fall, so why give this lecture? Because there may be a person or more in the crowd who turns to God in their hearts based on this. Think of it as a plea by God to turn to Him not to save their lives on earth, but to preserve their lives for all of eternity. As the saying goes, it's the job of the pastor "to comfort the afflicted as well as the afflict the comfortable!". Anyway, Jeremiah's saying things are going to be really bad, so they're wasting their time as well as their housing materials defending that city!
18. Verse 6: "Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security. <sup>7</sup> I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity and will rebuild them as they were before. <sup>8</sup> I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me. <sup>9</sup> Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it."
- a) Once again, we get the "good news in the very long run message" here. Yes, there's more to this one, and we'll get to that in a moment. I think the reason God's repeating all of this is for assurance during a real tough time. OK, so where's my reassurance when I deal with my own tough time? It's reading passages like this to remind us that God's guiding us just as He's guiding Israel. As I love to state, God never promises us long lives or that our life will always go well. He promises that if we seek Him, He will provide us comfort during such time periods.
- b) With that said, onto the specifics. Again, we get the fact that God will bring back people from both the North and South Kingdom. So what's the deal with forgiveness as stated in Verse 8? I'd argue it has to be "millennial" when God forgives Israel "for His sake". What I suspect is in that day, Jewish people will simply all have a heart for God and yes I would argue they accept Jesus as the Messiah. Since I'm using a bunch of classic jokes, one is the fact the Israelites will ask in that day to the Messiah, "So is this your first or second visit?"
- c) Anyway, we get another "happy ending" in this section.
19. Verse 10: "This is what the LORD says: `You say about this place, "It is a desolate waste, without men or animals." Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither men nor animals, there will be heard once more <sup>11</sup> the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, "Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever." For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before,' says the LORD."
- a) By the way, since you've already made it this far, I'd like to encourage you to finish this as we'll get some interesting revelations in the last part of this lesson. Until then, Jeremiah is still encouraging the Israelites who are facing certain doom, that it won't always be like it is at that moment. It's a good reminder when we go through our own tough times. One of my favorite cliché's is "This too shall pass". In effect, that's what Jeremiah is saying here to the Israelites. Yes they're about to die. Yes it'll be horrible, but "this too shall pass" and in spite of all of that, God still has great plans for them as a nation!
- b) In fact the phrase "Give thanks to the LORD Almighty" is used in Psalm 136.
- c) The point is when things look grim, a great way to deal with it is to start listing things we are grateful for. It's about giving praise to God in the worst of times because we know we "win in the end". Yes that applies to us Christians as well.
20. Verse 12: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: `In this place, desolate and without men or animals--in all its towns there will again be pastures for shepherds to rest their flocks. <sup>13</sup> In the towns of the hill country, of the western foothills and of the Negev, in the territory of Benjamin, in the villages around Jerusalem and in the towns of Judah, flocks will again pass under the hand of the one who counts them,' says the LORD."
- a) Short version, even though this city will soon be desolate, I'll restore it one day.

- b) For those who know about ancient geography, usually when a city is destroyed it remains destroyed through history. It's pretty rare for a city to be leveled to the ground and then it come back to life again. Yes this happened to Jerusalem not only here but also again when the Romans destroyed it completely as well. Yet God is describing its resurrection here.
  - c) Not only Jerusalem but all of Israel as well. If you think hated of a Jewish state is anything new, you can tell it's been an issue all through history. Why? Because of that state doesn't exist, Jesus can't return to rule there! That's why I'm convinced hatred of the Jewish state is demonic based. Anyway, Jeremiah's preaching long term good news to a people scared for their lives and rightly so.
21. Verse 14: "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup> "In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land.
- a) I assume everyone has noticed the general pattern by now: It's the prediction that all of the land of Israel will be uninhabited and destroyed. Then 70 years later God is going to resurrect that nation. Obviously it's to prove He's God to do all of this. So why kill all of those people? Why not just "skywrite" I'm God and deal with it? The answer is He wants us to come to Him by faith and not out of fear. He allows all sorts of "insane things" to be evidence for people to study that He's God so, again we must deal with it.
  - b) With all that said, we're pretty much done with the "you're all going to die and then Israel will be resurrected sometime in the future message. Here in Verse 14 we're back to telling about the "eternal future". So why does God "jump" that way? It's the idea of saying while I'm discussing the future let me discuss the ultimate future and give the readers as well as those here in Jerusalem hope about the eternal future. In that sense, this last part of what we call Chapter 33, focuses on Israel's eternal future. OK, enough intro, time for details.
  - c) Jeremiah's saying a "branch" which is a "code word" for descendant of King David, be the ultimate ruler in Israel. Yes those of us who believe in Jesus already believe He's ruling in our hearts, but that's different from a literal Jesus ruling in Israel. Jesus told us He would return one day and that's a literal return. Again this is describing the 1,000-year millennial period where Jesus will force the world to live under His rule. Understand that Jesus isn't going to change the world's hearts to love Him out of force. It's more like the idea that the world will be forced to accept Him as God and live as God desires. I suspect that the way we get involved is we help enforce that rule. Anyway, that's what these verses imply.
22. Verse 16: In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.'
- a) For those of you who've had the privilege to go to modern Israel, you'd know that in spite of the fact it's mostly a Jewish population, it's mostly people who don't take God seriously or honor Him as such. The religious population is a minority. As I've been stating, I think it's going to take the "Revelation Show" to get Israel to realize how bad they've blown it as far as seeing Jesus as God. That's why these verses are millennial.
  - b) Next think about the idea of the City of Jerusalem in safety. Let's face it people argue over Jerusalem for millenniums. It's amazing considering that city has no significant resources. Yet Jeremiah tells us when the Messiah rules that city will be in safety for the first time!
  - c) We also learn that Jerusalem will be known as the home of Jesus or which is why that city is going to be called "The LORD Our Righteousness". Now comes the interesting part:
23. Verse 17: For this is what the LORD says: "David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, <sup>18</sup> nor will the priests, who are Levites, ever fail to have a man to stand before me continually to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to present sacrifices." "
- a) OK as Christians I assume all of us get the idea that Jesus the descendant of David who'll be the king over Israel let alone the world. For those who don't know, when the Romans destroyed Israel, they also killed the family records. No one can legitimately claim to be a descendant of David, except Jesus who will return as dramatically as He left!

- b) That leads to two quick questions: How can we tell if an imposter tries it? Easy it has to happen after all the "Revelation Stuff" which includes natural disasters and lots of people dying. Even if Satan tries to impersonate Jesus at that point, I suspect the real deal will be showing up to say in effect, "Nice try!"
- i) The other logical question is why 2,000 years? How do we know it will still occur? For starters, the Israelites are back in the land after 2,000 years. That's a clue we're still working on God's timetable. Another clue is its been roughly 2,000 years from the time of Abraham (first Jew) to Jesus, so we can argue the Jewish nation had the same amount of time roughly as the Christians did. Another clue is the 7-letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2-3). The order they're in lay out church history in the order they're laid out. (E.g., the early letters lay out the persecuted church. The last one talks about the "indifferent" church.) Do I know when Jesus will return? I do not claim to know the date. I'm just saying clues are there to explain why it has been 2,000 years and why it still can happen at any time now!
- c) Believe it or not, all of that leads back to the second part of this verse. It not only says that a descendant of David will rule forever, but also the Levites will still be priests in then! So how will that happen? Either a day will come where the Israelites will once again be able to figure out what tribe their from (based on DNA evidence) or simply by the fact that we have Jewish last names that most likely come from priest. (Cohen is a prime example) In summary I don't know how God's going to do it, but when Jesus returns there will also be descendants of Levi who'll work as priests.
- d) That leads to one final question: If Jesus paid the complete price for our sins? Why will we need Levites to do animal sacrifices in the future? They'll be done to remember what Jesus did. Yes, the millennium will have such sacrifices (See last 8-9 chapters of Ezekiel) but it will be for the remembrance of what Jesus did for us.
- e) OK that's enough weirdness for one lesson. Let's finish the chapter.
24. Verse 19: The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: <sup>20</sup> "This is what the LORD says: `If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, <sup>21</sup> then my covenant with David my servant--and my covenant with the Levites who are priests ministering before me--can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne. <sup>22</sup> I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore.' "
- a) My loose translation: As soon as the sun will rise tomorrow and the stars shine in the sky, all that I (God) say will come true. That includes all the future Jesus stuff, let alone Israel coming back as a nation. Obviously we have "history on our side" where we've now seen Israel back in that land after about 2000 years. My point is if we can trust God to keep the promises about the nation of Israel, then why do we still have doubts about all the bible is telling us about the return of Jesus? Anyway, these verses say in sense all these things we read Jeremiah predicting are as sure as what we see in the sky continuing!
25. Verse 23: The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: <sup>24</sup> "Have you not noticed that these people are saying, `The LORD has rejected the two kingdoms he chose'? So they despise my people and no longer regard them as a nation. <sup>25</sup> This is what the LORD says: `If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth, <sup>26</sup> then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them.' "
- a) These verses continue the same thoughts. The key point is God's been doing resurrection action all through history. Yes Jesus was and yes we will if we believe in Him. Anyway, what God wants us to get out of all these predictions is that they're a "done deal". If God created time, He knows all things about time. Therefore have faith in His promises.

26. I'm the first to admit, these chapters are tough stuff with a lot of strange predictions. We know by history a lot of what He told Jeremiah literally came true about the nation of Israel. That means I and hopefully you can trust God with what will literally happen in the future as well.
- a) OK John, you're preaching to the choir. We believe the history of Israel as told in the bible and we believe Jesus will return. Yes we may have learned some details in this lesson that we didn't know but we already accept the general principals taught here. So what?
  - b) The "so what" is the question of what are we doing with this information. I assume we all believe in our resurrection because we believe in the literal aspects of Jesus resurrection. I would argue the "so what" is the question of what are we doing about it? The mistake that the Israelites made was they failed to act on that information. We too could waste the time God has given us or use it to make a difference for Him. I'm not saying we can't have any down time. I'm saying God saved us for a purpose. That's to use our lives to glorify Him.
  - c) Now that I've made us all feel guilty for the week, time for the closing prayer!
27. Heavenly Father, thank You that You've separated us for Your glory just as You've separated the Israelites back then. Help us to read our bible and not repeat the same mistakes. Help us to learn from what we read and use our lives to make a difference for You. Since You've stated in advance how to recognize Jesus return and how to know it's Him, help us not to stand around and watch as much as we use the time we've given us for Your glory. Make it obvious us You want us to use the time You've given us. Help us to rely upon Your Spirit for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen