

## OCTOBER 20

Reading The One Year Bible every year gives you perspective and helps you make connections. People often point their finger at the Old Testament and say that it is full of war and that God created a militant nation. Really? Eventually you notice that except for the seven years of conquering the land of Canaan, Israel never fought offensive wars. The taking of the land of Canaan had a long history. For over 400 years that we know of, God tried to redeem those people through witnesses like Melchizedek, Abraham and Isaac. Israel's war was a God-decreed judgment of a deeply perverse, children-killing culture. After the conquest was over, all of Israel's wars were defensive.

Abraham never took land, although he could have. Isaac could have taken land, because he had a greater force than Abimelech; but instead, he put up with Abimelech's men pushing him around. Jacob's sons destroyed Shechem, but Jacob and God both described it as murder. David and Solomon could have set up an empire, but neither conquered. David defended himself and Solomon was a builder. After those men, you have Israel engaged in a north-south civil war, defending itself from its neighbors, and then trying not to be overrun by Assyria and Babylon. Guided by God, Israel was very non-aggressive. Most of what we read in the Old Testament about war was largely the result of Israel's sin and God allowing them to be chastened by their enemies. Most of what we read is about Israel's failure to follow God. They lost their protection because that protection was based on their relationship with God. Their purpose in God's redemptive plan was to be small and blessed, and all nations would come to them because of God's obvious presence among them. Redemption was always the plan and it was very non-aggressive.

### **Jeremiah 35-36**

These two chapters are looking into the past, citing two very telling examples of why God would judge that generation of people in Israel. One example shows respect and faithfulness and the other shows an extreme lack of respect and faithfulness.

#### Jeremiah 35

Vs. 1-11 This is the story of how the Rechabites honored their great, great, great, great grandfather. Just to frame the story for you, here are some fun facts.

The Rechabites are a family going back to the early days of the Exodus, having a connection with Moses' father-in-law and also with the tribe of Judah. Apparently they became scribes during the 40 years in the wilderness and settled in the town of a godly man to ply their trade. The name of the town was Jabez. (1 Chron. 2:55)

We met Jonadab, the son (descendant) of Rechab, back when Jehu became king. Jehu destroyed the house of Ahab and asked Jonadab to help him kill the prophets of Baal. This was back in 2 Kings 10. Jonadab was apparently a godly man and one of the remnant of 7000 men who had not bowed the knee to Baal. That was about 240 years before this chapter in Jeremiah, about the same length of time between now and the founding of the United States.

Jonadab lived at a very crucial and devastating time in the northern kingdom and history of Israel. I believe he understood what would happen in the future and made these rules for his family to protect them and keep them from adopting the ungodliness of the culture. Both the abstinence from drinking wine and not living in houses meant they would be nomads, living away from cities. They had no houses and no vineyards. You could see this as the difference between Abraham and Lot. When Lot moved down to Sodom and fell into the "good life," he got infected. Abraham always lived in tents and had his own community.

What makes this more interesting is that Jeremiah, a true prophet of God, called them into the temple of God and offered them wine. How much worse can a temptation be? But for them it was no temptation.

The real issue here is that Israel and Judah had become like the people of Canaan whom God had sent Israel to judge and drive out of the land. Baal worship and the sacrificing of the children from that worship had become a cultural norm. The people were corrupt. Jonadab gave his descendants rules to keep them uninfected and they held to these rules. Israel had already been judged and taken into exile. Judah was in the process of judgment.

Vs. 12-17 God used this family as an example for the people. They had honored their father and taken his warning seriously. Judah, in spite of all they had seen and heard, did not honor their Father.

Vs. 18-19 I take this as an eternal promise given by God to this family. This means that somewhere on earth, at this moment, there is a descendant of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, who is a follower of Jesus.

### Jeremiah 36

This chapter shows a very key event. King Jehoiakim was a disgrace to his godly father and to God. Josiah, Jehoiakim's father, wept and followed and honored the Word of God when it was read to him.

Vs. 1-3 This event, early in the career of King Jehoiakim, was designed to give the people of Judah a chance.

V. 2 Notice that this is really God's command to write the book of Jeremiah. I wonder if Jeremiah had already written out notes. This book would be almost everything we've read: chapters 1-12, 14-20, 22:1-19, 26 & 35.

Vs. 4-8 This apparently is the first time Jeremiah used Baruch. Notice again in v. 7 that the intent was to see if there were open hearts. Baruch was apparently known, godly and brave. Since this was early in the reign of Jehoiakim, there was still the afterglow of the godliness that had been a part of Josiah's revival. There would be some people who might respond positively.

Vs. 9-19 These men knew they were in trouble because of the Word of the Lord, and because they would have to take this message before their donkey (referring of course to his burial) of a king.

V. 11 This man is Michaiah, the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan. Shaphan was one of the men who discovered the last copy of the OT and brought it to Josiah. These men still honored their father.

Notice that they advised Jeremiah and Baruch to hide.

Vs. 20-26 Compare this with how Jehoiakim's father, Josiah, responded upon hearing the Word of the Lord.

*2 Kings 22:18-19 But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, <sup>19</sup>because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD.*

Vs. 27-32 God didn't think this was funny. The scroll was renewed; the judgment was official; Jehoiakim and his descendants were excluded from serving as kings. His son Jehoiachin was king for only three months and spent the rest of his life in Babylon.

Among other things, this chapter shows us why Jehoiakim was given the burial of a donkey. *With the burial of an ass he shall be buried, dragged and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.* (Jeremiah 22:19)

In seeing God work through Jeremiah, you see that God was both fair and realistic. He offered the chance for people to be helped, but understood that most would not come to Him. We see this realism in how the Lord taught His disciples and what He says to us. *Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.* (John 15:20)

Our work in the harvest brings blessing because we do find people who will come to Christ, receive forgiveness and become disciples, who make disciples. We understand that many will not come to Christ, but we work on for the sake of those who will, and because we know the best is yet to come. And besides, following in the harvest is where we find and grow in the Lord.

## **1 Timothy 5**

I'm sure at this point, Timothy was somewhat weighted with these instructions, and the weight would just increase. Looking at the instructions Paul gave him, it looks like Timothy was either the pastor, or he was invested with apostolic authority. While Timothy was responsible to be an example and model, it looks like Paul was assuming Timothy had the authority and right to declare and make these decisions. Poor guy. It gives me the sense that there had been some disaster or split and that Timothy was rebuilding.

Vs. 1-2 In doing what Timothy was told to do, Paul was advising him how to relate to the groups in the church. Timothy had to win confidence as he led; and remember, Paul just told him to be a model to all.

Vs. 3-8 There was no social security or social services in those days. Thirty years earlier in Acts 6, widows in the church had been an issue. It could also be that church widows were on the rise because of Nero.

Vs. 9-10 The issue here was not whether or not to help them out financially on occasion. This seems to be an official position in the church given to widows. If you look at all of the other things mentioned, the enrolled widows would be serving the church. Apparently the younger widows had abused this service of visitation and service by gadding about, becoming gossips and busybodies. Look at Titus 2:3-5 to get a positive perspective on this service.

V. 9 Literally, she had to have been a one-man woman. Again, I think with all the other rules here, it is saying she was a faithful and focused wife, not that she couldn't have been married to two men, both of whom died, for example.

V. 10 She had to be comfortable in serving others and had to have a reputation for doing it.

Vs. 11-15 Reading this about the younger widows gives you the impression this office of widows was an official church position; and that, in the case of the older widows, it was assumed they would focus on serving the church and not focus on marriage. Apparently Paul had some experience with this problem, where the younger widows were guilty of abusing the position, "gadding about," checking out the available guys and getting themselves in trouble.

V. 16 It was a pretty narrow category of woman who could be enrolled, but apparently they had a lot of widows.

Just taking a think pause here, imagine: Timothy was the one who was supposed to enforce this, being responsible for telling one widow "yes" and another, "no." Imagine what it would have been like trying to explain why a widow didn't qualify based on character or experience. How would you like that? Also, Timothy got to tell the younger widows that the church would not

enroll them and that Paul (actually God) said they should go out, get married and have kids. Poor Timothy.

Vs. 17-18 Again, Timothy had the responsibility to make these decisions and see that this was done. I can't imagine that saying "yes" to one man didn't offend another man. O Weh!

Now it gets worse.

Vs. 19-20 Apparently there had been cases of elders being accused of sin, and some of them had been stubborn and didn't repent. Notice that "sin" itself didn't disqualify an elder, but to persist in sin did disqualify an elder. In the case of a repeat or stubborn offender, Timothy was commanded to put them under discipline **publicly** for the express purpose of instilling fear/respect in the other elders and in the congregation. O Weh!

V. 21 This is a very strong charge to Timothy and you can see why.

V. 22 Practical matters: Go slow in putting men or women forward. In time of need this is not easy. O Weh!

V. 23 I always laugh here because no one knows what this verse is doing here. This is just me, but I don't think Timothy's stomach was the problem. I think it was his head. Look at everything Paul has just told Timothy to do. Think of all the stress and all of the potential conflict and yelling. I think Timothy couldn't get calm. I don't think it was the bacteria in the drinking water that was causing him distress. I think Timothy's stress in his mind and soul gave him a bad stomach. I think the wine was for the stress, and therefore, for the stomach.

Vs. 24-25 This is some calming advice from Paul. Sometimes you just don't know if you've put the right person in a position. You do your best and they can still turn out to be a fraud and a fake. You have to know you tried to do the right thing, face the music and take them out of that position. O Weh! On the other hand, if you take the time to slowly look at a person's life, you'll also see, eventually, if they are bearing fruit for Christ.

Poor Timothy. O Weh! We get to do this in the harvest. O Weh!

### **Psalm 89:14-37**

We'll be in Psalm 89 one more day and there are lots of things to observe and underline.

Vs. 14-18 You notice in v. 14 that *steadfast love and faithfulness* are mentioned, and then in v. 18 an earthly king is mentioned. That king would be David and David learned and taught the people God's *steadfast love and faithfulness*.

Vs. 19-37 This is like one long run-on sentence of God declaring His sure, unconditional steadfast love and promise to David. Underline where God says, *I*. Notice how often God's love is mentioned. Notice too, how God makes sure we understand that this covenant cannot fail. These are amazing verses.

One thing that stood out to me in this reading was v. 17, *for you are the glory of their strength*. I would say in all the things that we face in following Christ, it is all worth it if in and through it we learn that our glory is in Christ and He is our strength.

### **Proverbs 25:25-27**

V. 25 This brings peace.

V. 26 This doesn't bring peace; you only think it does.

V. 27 This never brings peace. Just like the action of v. 26, this comes back to haunt you.

News from the far country takes time and waiting. The other two are immediate; they consume us and eventually they destroy peace personally and in a group.

Just for fun, let me share a rare translation of v. 27. The Hebrew is very hard to understand and there are various translations. Most of the translations suggest that the second half of v. 27 is negative because the first half is negative. Martin Luther did something completely different with his translation of verse 27. He made a contrast between the first and second halves of the verse. The second half of verse 27 is actually only three words, "seeks, glory and glory" (glory also can mean weight or honor). In English, Luther's translation would read, "but he who searches out weighty things, to him it brings honor, or shows that he is honorable, a person of weight and worth." The idea is that eating honey is easy. It suggests giving in to comfort. In contrast, setting one's heart to understand important things shows that a person is honorable and diligent. I won't go into a lot of detail here, because Luther is the only one I found who translates it this way, but there is good evidence for this translation. For example, Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9 was this kind of "weighty" man.

For me, I think that for everyone on this planet, including believers, it is easy to go the easy way. To enjoy the sweetness and to forget or merely dabble in the weight of this life is what most people choose. But if a disciple is a person of "weight" (honor), they search and consider this life and their place in God's plan, following the Lord, reaching out to the lost and making disciples, who make disciples.