

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JEREMIAH 32-34

Whenever God desires a relationship with mankind, He structures a covenant, or terms for the relationship.

When God selected Abraham to father His people He made a covenant... When He brought the Hebrews out of Egypt, and wanted to make them His people, He established a covenant... When He chose David and his heirs to rule over Israel, God made a covenant...

And now Jeremiah is writing in the darkest days of the nation's history. Judgment is on the doorstep. The Jews had failed to live up to their end of their previous covenants, so God decided to make a New Covenant.

Chapter 32 begins, **“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.”** King Zedekiah ruled Jerusalem for 11 years. The last 18 months of his reign, the city was under siege. This chapter unfolds in the tenth year. The city is hunkered down behind its walls trying to survive.

Verse 2, **“For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house.”** The Babylonian army was camped outside the walls. Jeremiah was under house arrest.

“For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, “Why do you prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall

take it; and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape from the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face, and see him eye to eye; then he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall be until I visit him,” says the Lord; “though you fight with the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed”?” Zedekiah was pouting, *“why don’t you say something nice about me?”*

Jeremiah had refused to tell the king what he wanted to hear... Zedekiah was on the wrong side of this conflict. He needed to surrender to Babylon, not resist.

“And Jeremiah said, “The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you, saying, “Buy my field which is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is yours to buy it.””

Jeremiah will get a real estate offer from his cousin. He’s got some nice, Jerusalem investment property.

“Then Hanamel my uncle’s son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the Lord, and said to me, ‘Please buy my field that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption yours; buy it for yourself.’ Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.” Apparently, the first time God spoke to Jeremiah he wasn’t so sure it was the Lord he’d heard.

And that encourages me. Sometimes you don’t know for sure until it’s confirmed. We really do walk by faith.

Remember, in Israel no one owned land. In Leviticus 25:23

the Lord said, “The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine.” There was no Fee Simple ownership. All the land belonged to God.

But God divided it among His people. Each of the twelve tribes received an allocation. And it was God’s intention for the land to remain the possession of the family to whom it was originally given. This is why God set out *rules of redemption*. If an Israeli got into a financial bind and sold his property; then a near relative had the right to redeem or “buy back” the land.

Here Jeremiah’s cousin is appealing to him as a near relative to do his duty and keep the land in the family.

There was one problem... Anathoh was a northern suburb of Jerusalem. At that moment, the field that was on the market hosted a camp of Babylonian soldiers.

If Jeremiah bought the field, he had no hope of ever occupying it. *Why would he waste his money?*

But Jeremiah forks over the doe. He does the deal.

Verse 9, “So I bought the field from Hanamel, the son of my uncle who was in Anathoth, and weighed out to him the money - seventeen shekels of silver. And I signed the deed and sealed it, took witnesses, and weighed the money on the scales.” Made it all legal!

“So I took the purchase deed, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open; and I gave the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my uncle’s son, and in the presence of the witnesses who signed the

purchase deed, before all the Jews who sat in the court of the prison. Then I charged Baruch before them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Take these deeds, both this purchase deed which is sealed and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days."

The sealed deed was an official copy, while the open scroll set out the terms both parties agreed to meet.

They archive both deeds - put them in a clay jar for preservation... The famous Dead Sea Scrolls were kept in similar vessels and survived for 2000 years.

And here's the point God is making, "For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land."

God had commanded Jeremiah to make such a ridiculous investment to prove to His people that Israel would return to the land, and reclaim what was theirs.

Jeremiah kept the deed, and 70 years later his heirs returned and took possession of the parcel in Anathoh.

This story provides the backdrop for Revelation 5. There we see the title deed of the universe. And only Jesus Christ is worthy to open it and take possession.

Verse 16, "Now when I had delivered the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the Lord, saying:" 'Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You."

And this is a great way to begin any prayer. Make sure you

focus in on the God to Whom you're praying.

CS Lewis once said, "The prayer that should precede all other prayers, is this, "Lord let it be the real me who prays, and let it be the real You that I pray to."

Jeremiah continues in verse 18, "You show lovingkindness to thousands, and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them - the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts. You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for Your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings. You have set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, to this day, and in Israel and among other men; and You have made Yourself a name, as it is this day. You have brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with great terror; You have given them this land, of which You swore to their fathers to give them - "a land flowing with milk and honey." And they came in and took possession of it, but they have not obeyed Your voice or walked in Your law. They have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do; therefore You have caused all this calamity to come upon them."

The Jews exited Egypt, and entered the Land, but they failed to abide there and take total possession.

And what was true of Israel is true of Christians. We give our lives to Christ and escape the lusts of this world, but we don't abide in Christ and take advantage of all His blessings. We too, bring calamity on ourself.

Jeremiah intensifies his prayer in verse 24, “Look, the siege mounds! They have come to the city to take it; and the city has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans who fight against it, because of the sword and famine and pestilence. What You have spoken has happened; there You see it!” Siege mounds were inclines built by an invading army to scale a city wall.

Jeremiah could see the army building these mounds against Jerusalem’s walls. They’d soon storm the city.

Verse 25, “And You have said to me, O Lord God, “Buy the field for money, and take witnesses”! - yet the city has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans.”

Jeremiah was confused by God’s instructions. He’d been obedient, but purchasing the field was illogical.

Why had God asked him to buy a worthless parcel?

Perhaps the toughest test of faith is to trust God even when His ways seem irrational or contradictory...

Imagine, Abraham... Isaac was the promised son he’d waited on for 25 years. God told Abraham he’d have many descendants, yet now he’s suppose to kill the seed from which that family will grow? How do you build a family by killing off the seed? It seemed nuts.

And what God is telling Jeremiah here is just as illogical. Why waste resources? This is so inefficient.

And this is the mistake we sometimes make.

We judge the value of things based on efficiency and results. We get involved only when it seems to be worth our

time - *only when we can see the merit.*

But what's your response when the rate of return on what God asks is meager? Jeremiah spent his hard-earned cash on something that was merely symbolic.

We learn here, our job is not to obey God only when it seems efficient. We need to obey Him regardless.

Verse 26, "Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?"

Note, God responds to Jeremiah by repeating what he'd prayed earlier. In verse 17 Jeremiah prayed, "*There is nothing too hard for You.*" Now God asks him if he really believes that, "*Is there anything too hard for Me?*" It's one thing to say I believe, but do I really?

When the money is coming out of my wallet... when what you've asked me seems crazy... will I believe?

There comes a time in all our lives when God calls our bluff. *Are we believing, or are we just bluffing?*

In verse 29 the Lord explains Himself, "Therefore thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it.

And the Chaldeans who fight against this city shall come and set fire to this city and burn it, with the houses on whose roofs they have offered incense to Baal and poured out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke Me to anger..." In Deuteronomy 13:16 the Law commanded that when a city falls into idolatry you are to set fire to that city, and burn it to

the ground.

Here God is enforcing His own Law on Jerusalem.

“Because the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done only evil before Me from their youth.

For the children of Israel have provoked Me only to anger with the work of their hands,’ says the Lord.

‘For this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My fury from the day that they built it, even to this day; so I will remove it from before My face because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me to anger - they, their kings, their princes, their priests, their prophets, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they have turned to Me the back, and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not listened to receive instruction. But they set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to defile it.”

The Jews gave no thought to offending God. They erected idols in the Temple courts... in God’s house!

We revel in God’s patience and kindness, but God is a person. He has feelings too. Betray Him constantly, hurt Him deeply, and you provoke Him to anger.

Author Lois Cheney writes, “They say that God has infinite patience, and that is a great comfort. They say God is always there, and that is a deep satisfaction.

They say that God will always take you back, and I get lazy in that certitude. They say that God never gives up, and I count on that. They say you can go away for years and years,

and He'll be there, waiting, when you come back. They say you can make mistake after mistake, and God will always forgive and forget.

They say lots of things, these people who never read the Old Testament. There comes a time, a definite for sure time, when God turns around. I don't believe God shed His skin when Christ brought in the New Testament; Christ showed us a new side of God, and it is truly wonderful. But he didn't change God. God remains forever and ever and that **God is no fool.**"

In verse 35 God continues with what has offended Him, "And they built the high places of Baal which are in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.' Child sacrifices had been conducted in the valley just west of Jerusalem. It was abhorrent.

This should tell you how God feels about abortion.

"Now therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, 'It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence'..." And yet, despite it all, God is not through with His people...

"Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely." God isn't angry forever. "Weeping may endure for a

night, but joy comes in the morning.” He’ll retrieve His people from “*all countries.*”

This isn’t just the Jews return from Babylon, but the final migration of Jews to Israel at the return of Christ.

Verse 38, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.’

And notice what God considers the key to consistent loyalty? *A healthy fear of God.* He’ll put it in their heart.

“For thus says the Lord: ‘Just as I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them. And fields will be bought in this land of which you say, “It is desolate, without man or beast; it has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans.” Men will buy fields for money, sign deeds and seal them, and take witnesses, in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the lowland, and in the cities of the South; for I will cause their captives to return,’ says the Lord.” God is assuring Jeremiah that one day his field will be prime real estate. He needs to believe.

Chapter 33, “Moreover the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still shut up in the court

of the prison, saying, “Thus says the Lord who made it, the Lord who formed it to establish it (the Lord is His name): ‘Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.’ Jeremiah had asked God, *why buy the land? What was God doing?* God is about to show him...

And I love God’s promise to us all, “*Call to Me, and I will show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.*” Next time you open your Bible expect God to show you things. He’s a God who loves to reveal.

God is a teacher at heart, and we’re His students.

Verse 4, “For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah, which have been pulled down to fortify against the siege mounds and the sword: ‘They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but only to fill their places with the dead bodies of men whom I will slay in My anger and My fury, all for whose wickedness I have hidden My face from this city. Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first.

I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me. Then it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all nations of the earth, who shall hear all the good that I do to them; they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that I provide for it.’

Verse 10, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Again there shall be heard in this place - of which you say, “It is desolate, without man and without beast” - in the cities of Judah, in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without beast, the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: “Praise the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for His mercy endures forever” - and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord. For I will cause the captives of the land to return as at the first,’ says the Lord.” This will all occur when Jesus returns to rule over Jerusalem. A city that was abandoned and desolate will come to life.

The world trembled at God’s judgment on Jerusalem, now they’ll tremble again at His blessings on the same city. The nations will *“tremble for all God’s goodness.”*

And notice, sacrifices will return to Jerusalem - *but the emphasis is not on blood sacrifices.* When Jesus returns Ezekiel 40 indicates there may be some symbolic animal sacrifices, but sacrifice for atonement ended 2000 years ago at the cross. When Jesus returns a rebuilt Temple will be filled with sacrifices of praise. God will pardon Israel, and they’ll be thankful.

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In this place which is desolate, without man and without beast, and in all its cities, there shall again be a dwelling place of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down.

In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the lowland, in

the cities of the South, in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, the flocks shall again pass under the hands of him who counts them,' says the Lord.

'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**'" The return and the blessing that Jeremiah has predicted will be initiated by *a son of David* - a descendent from David's family tree.

Here, He's called, "**Branch of righteousness.**" This Son of David was identified as the Messiah. It's Jesus who will one day solve the world's political problems.

Look at what He does in this passage... He judges the earth, brings salvation to Judah, creates safety for Jerusalem. *How's that for a day at the office?*

That's what Jesus will do when He returns to Earth. And you have to love this name, "**The LORD our righteousness**" or in the Hebrew, "**Jehovah Tsidkenu.**"

In Matthew 22 Jesus told the parable of a king who hosted a marriage for his son. But when the king saw a man in attendance who wasn't wearing the customary wedding garment, he told his servants, "**Bind him hand and foot, take**

him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

It was a sad end to a happy event. What’s not apparent from the story is that wedding garments were provided by the host. To not wear one was an insult.

The point Jesus was making is that righteousness in His kingdom isn’t earned. It’s provided by the host. It’s a gift God gives to those who trust in Jesus. Everyone in heaven must put on *His* righteousness not their own.

This is the second time this special name appears in Jeremiah. In 23:6 Messiah is called “The Lord our righteousness,” but notice in verse 16 it’s a “*she*” not a “*He*” that’s called by this name. The bride takes the name of the groom - the Church... the name of Christ.

In Christ, we share not only His name, but ALL He has and has accomplished. He is our righteousness. And Jeremiah predicts that one day, Israel too will be called by this name. Judah will be saved by His grace!

Verse 17, “For thus says the Lord: ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel...’”

If that’s true, where is he? Where is the man sitting on David’s throne? This is the mystery of God’s kingdom. Right not, the Messiah is sitting on a throne.

But His throne is in heaven. Jesus is at God’s right hand preparing to return and rule over planet Earth.

David shall not lack a man to sit on the throne... “nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings

before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.” *And what else is Jesus doing?*

According to Hebrews 7, Jesus is interceding before God on behalf of all the saints. In God’s Kingdom, Jesus serves the dual role - He is both king and priest.

Verse 19, “And the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, “Thus says the Lord: ‘If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.” Here the Lord anticipates that there’ll be those who teach He is finished with the Jews. They blew their chance, and now the blessings intended for Israel are transferred to the Church.

These verses prove this so-called “*Replacement Theology*” is false. The day and the night will cease their schedule, before God turns His back on Israel.

Verse 23, “Moreover the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, “Have you not considered what these people have spoken, saying, ‘The two families which the Lord has chosen, He has also cast them off’? Thus they have despised My people, as if they should no more be a nation before them. “Thus says the Lord: ‘If My covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and

earth, then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will cause their captives to return, and will have mercy on them.”

And what's true of God's promises to Israel, is true of His promises to us! The sun won't rise, before God fails to deliver on a single promise to His people.

Once a little girl told her friend she had 12 pennies.

But when her friend looked into her hand she noticed only six. “I thought you said you had twelve pennies?”

The girl responded, *“I do! I have six and my father told me he would give me six more. So I have twelve.”*

Obviously, the little girl believed her Father's word was as good as done. Our Father God deserves the same confidence from us. His promises never fail!

Chapter 34, *The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, all the kingdoms of the earth under his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem and all its cities, saying...* Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians on the fateful date of July 18, 586 BC. It occurred at the end of a brutal 18 month long siege.

“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and tell him, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

And you shall not escape from his hand, but shall surely be taken and delivered into his hand; your eyes shall see the eyes of the king of Babylon, he shall speak with you face to face, and you shall go to Babylon.”” Jeremiah was a patriot. There’d been a time when they could’ve repented and been saved. But not now. They’re past that point. Zedekiah needs to cut his losses - minimize the loss of life. It’s time to surrender.

If you’re driving 80 mph, and a policeman pulls in behind you, you have a choice. You can step on it, and try to outrun him. Or you can stop - accept the citation.

Obviously, you’re better off stopping. Run and you’re just putting off the inevitable. You’re creating worse consequences. And this is what Zedekiah is doing by resisting the Babylonians. Jeremiah tells him “enough.”

Notice too, a big deal is made of Zedekiah having to meet Nebuchadnezzar face to face - eye to eye.

In 597 the Babylonians took the king at the time, Jeconiah, to Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar installed Zedekiah in his place. His appointment was a personal favor from Nebuchadnezzar - yet now that he rebels, he shouldn't expect Nebuchadnezzar to take it kindly.

This was the tyrant who stoked the fiery furnace for anyone who refused to bow down and worship his image. Imagine, what he’ll do to a traitor like Zedekiah.

Verse 4, “Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah king of Judah! Thus says the Lord concerning you: ‘You shall not die

by the sword. You shall die in peace; as in the ceremonies of your fathers, the former kings who were before you, so they shall burn incense for you and lament for you, saying, "Alas, lord!" For I have pronounced the word, says the Lord." Zedekiah won't die in battle. He'll die of old age - *even have a funeral.*

What Jeremiah doesn't tell him is that he'll die blind.

2 Kings 25 tells us Nebuchadnezzar murders Zedekiah's sons, then pokes out his eyes, so that the last site the man sees is the slaughterer of his sons.

Verse 6, "Then Jeremiah the prophet spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem, when the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish and Azekah; for only these fortified cities remained of the cities of Judah." Nebuchadnezzar's army had swept through Judah. Only two outposts remained outside the city walls - **Lachish** was about 35 miles southwest of Jerusalem - **Azekah** was 15 miles.

It's interesting, in 1935 several dozen letters, written on clay tablets, were discovered in the excavations of ancient Lachish. They were written by Hebrews at the time, and about the Babylonian invasion of Judah.

Today the Lachish Letters are on exhibit in the London Museum and in Jerusalem - and are another of many confirmations of the Bible's historical reliability.

Verse 8, "This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people who were at Jerusalem to proclaim liberty to them:

that every man should set free his male and female slave - a Hebrew man or woman - that no one should keep a Jewish brother in bondage.

Now when all the princes and all the people, who had entered into the covenant, heard that everyone should set free his male and female slaves, that no one should keep them in bondage anymore, they obeyed and let them go.” The Bible is criticized for its tolerance of slavery, but in OT times it was a benevolence.

Under the Law of Moses if you got into debt and couldn't satisfy your creditors, you could sell your freedom and work off your debts. *And there were stipulations...* It only lasted six years. On the seventh year all slaves were set free and with a liberal stipend.

Deuteronomy 15:13 states, “When you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the Lord has blessed you with, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you...” The Law of Moses even made stipulations for the slave who so enjoyed living in his master's house that he wanted to stay. *That doesn't sound like a cruel and inhumane institution to me.*

Today, slavery is associated with hatred, and racism, and abuse, and rightly so, but not so in ancient Israel.

The system was *governed by **mercy not meanness.***

Yet just like everything else mankind touches, the OT institution of slavery was abused. This is what had happened

in Jeremiah's day. They weren't observing the seventh year liberation. They kept their slaves against their will. Meanness had taken over.

But now that they're in trouble, Zedekiah orders the release of the slaves, and everyone complies. It's an example of **panic-piety**. People live as they please until they get into trouble - then suddenly they obey God.

It's also called **jailhouse religion**. A guy lives his own way until he gets locked up, and now he turns to God.

Of course, the question becomes, *is he sincere, or just trying to get out of a jam?* There's nothing wrong with **panic-piety** if it's truly genuine - if it grows into **permanent-piety**. But if it's just an effort to manipulate circumstances for your own sake, God sees through it.

Verse 11, **"But afterward they changed their minds and made the male and female slaves return, whom they had set free, and brought them into subjection as male and female slaves."** There you have it! That's how sincere they were. On second thought, let's disobey.

What we're not told here, but we discover in Chapter 37 is that the Babylonians packed up and briefly aborted the siege of the city. The Egyptian Pharaoh had moved his army nearby, and the Babylonians left Jerusalem to confront the Egyptians. When Egypt retreated, Nebuchadnezzar return to defeat Jerusalem.

And it was in the brief moment that the threat was lifted from the Jews, that their insincerity was revealed.

I hope your commitment to Christ isn't just seasonal or convenient. Let's be *all-weather Christians*. Devoted, not just some of the time, but all of the time.

Verse 12, "Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: 'I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, "At the end of seven years let every man set free his Hebrew brother, who has been sold to him; and when he has served you six years, you shall let him go free from you." But your fathers did not obey Me nor incline their ear.

Then you recently turned and did what was right in My sight - every man proclaiming liberty to his neighbor; and you made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name. Then you turned around and profaned My name, and every one of you brought back his male and female slaves, whom you had set at liberty, at their pleasure, and brought them back into subjection, to be your male and female slaves.' "Therefore thus says the Lord: 'You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and every one to his neighbor.

Behold, I proclaim liberty to you,' says the Lord - 'to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine! And I will deliver you to trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth. And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it - the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who

passed between the parts of the calf - I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth.” Apparently, in the midst of this crisis the people of Jerusalem had cut a deal with God. Freeing the slaves must’ve have been one aspect of the covenant.

Here we learn where we get the phrase “cut a deal” - it’s from the Oriental practice that took place here.

If you think signing a house contract is an ordeal, it’s nothing compared to how ancient Israelis entered into agreements. They cut a calf crossways - from head to tail - laid the pieces side-by-side just a few feet apart.

The two parties entering the agreement locked arms and walked between the animal pieces as a symbol of their unity and their commitment to the covenant.

Here the Jews commit to obey God.

This reminds us of the covenant God made with Abraham. He was to slay a number of animals, and arrange them in a corridor. Because of his faith God declared him righteous, and now Abe expects God to appear and walk with him through the animal halves.

Abraham prepared the corridor and spent all day shooing off vultures. Finally, as he was dozing off, God appeared as a burning torch and smoking furnace - fire and cloud - and walked by Himself through the halves.

It wasn’t God and Abraham confirming the covenant. It was God alone. God taught Abraham and us, that salvation is not

a 50-50 proposition. The work is God's alone. All He asks of us, is to look on and believe. This was all confirmed in the cross of Christ and our faith.

Well, back to Jeremiah. Verse 21, "And I will give Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army which has gone back from you." The army's retreat, was not a deliverance. It was just a brief reprieve.

For "Behold, I will command," says the Lord, 'and cause them to return to this city. They will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.'"