

Jeremiah 52:31-34 Grace in The End Falls Church AM 10/8/2023

We have reached the end of the Book of Jeremiah.

Quiz: which book of the Bible has the same words as the end of Jeremiah?

Answer 2 Kings. Why? Because Jeremiah repeated the facts of what happened in history to a king named Jehoiachin, in order to give hope to the other exiles.

The Book of Jeremiah ends on a positive note. Since the king remains in exile, we cannot say it is a happy ending. But we must say it is a hopeful ending. It shows the promise of a sequel. Since God took care of this king, then God will take care of us.

Since grace was shown to their exiled King, then God had not abandoned His exiled people; later in Jesus (the new and better Jehoiachin) there is yet more grace to come.

1. The exiled king was brought out of prison. (v.31)

When we advance from verses 28-30, the list of the number of exiles, to now verse 31, in real time we have suddenly skipped ahead by decades. Jehoiachin had previously been taken into exile, and now 37 years later, when we pick up the story here in verse 31, Jehoiachin was still alive. Verse 31 was the time that King Nebuchadnezzar had died, and his son had become the new King of Babylon.

When there is a new king in Babylon, the exiles start wondering what will happen to our king Jehoiachin? He was considered a king not just by the exiles, but by Babylon. Verse 31 does NOT say ‘the former king of Judah, who was now reduced to a prisoner of war....’ No, instead, in reference to Jehoiachin, verse 31 says "*king of Judah.*"

So, when verse 31 says what year it was “*of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah*” we are getting two messages. One message is that he is still the king of Judah, but the other message is that he is something less than fully king. He was not on his throne in Jerusalem. He was still not a free man. For 37 years, he has not been at liberty to return home to Judah.

Next verse 31 tells the exiles what they want to know - the new king of Babylon graciously freed Jehoiachin and brought him out of prison. The Hebrew verb here is significant to us. The new Babylonian king *lifted up the head* of King Jehoiachin.

That phrase is designed to remind us another incident just like this one. The other incident was not in the foreign land of Babylon but over in the foreign land of Egypt. Back in the book of Genesis, Joseph was in prison in the foreign land of Egypt. The chief cupbearer and the chief baker were in the Egyptian prison with Joseph. Each had a dream that Joseph interpreted, and each dream came true. Each ended with the leader of Egypt lifting up the head of those other two men, but with two opposite meanings to the phrase “lifted up the head.” The leader of Egypt lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and restored him to his position serving in

the palace. In contrast, the leader of Egypt lifted up the head of his chief baker, but it means that he was hung and killed. The point is that the leader of Egypt had 4 options 1) kill him, 2) leave him in prison, 3) bring him into the palace, or 4) release him back to his own homeland. Verdict: he brought Joseph to the palace.

So, back to Jeremiah, where we are supposed to be reminded of that whole rich story in Genesis. Our guy is in prison in a foreign land, and the new king of Babylon had the same 4 options 1) kill Jehoiachin, 2) leave Jehoiachin in prison, 3) bring Jehoiachin to the palace, or 4) release him back to his own homeland. Verdict: he "...*graciously freed Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him out of prison.*" He lifted up his head!

That was risky for the new King of Babylon. A king from another country is always a risk for sparking a revolt. What was to prevent the Jewish exiles from rallying around King Jehoiachin to revolt? When the king was freed from prison to the palace, it was more risk that he could communicate with the other exiles for a revolt. But there was no revolt, as I'll explain in a minute.

2. The exiled king received kindness, while in exile. (v.32-33)

Within that time of exile, the king could have been left in prison and treated badly. Verse 32, the king of Babylon "...*spoke kindly to him...*" This was God's grace in exile!

There is more. Verse 32 also informs us that the King of Babylon "...*gave him a seat...*" Why should a prisoner of war get a seat in the palace? Grace! There is more! Where was the seat? "*a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon.*" Babylon was the military superpower at that time in the ancient world. They expressed their dominance by overtaking countries, and capturing their kings alive to be brought back to Babylon. The kings were seated there, to daily demonstrate the winner is Babylon and the loser is all the other kings from all these other nations.

Why did the king of so small a number of people, from so small a country have the extra honor of the higher seat among the detained kings? To show us two things: 1) the first thing the higher seat showed was the obedience and wisdom of the exiles from Jerusalem to live peaceful lives for those years in exile, and not attempt a revolt. In Jeremiah 29:7, God had instructed "...*seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*" 2) The second thing the seat showed was the gracious hand of God. The book ends with a picture of Jehoiachin on a higher seat, which fits with God's basic message throughout the Book of Jeremiah: look beyond the captivity to the time of restoration. One fine day - you are going home!

Verse 33a, there is more grace! This time the grace from God came in the form of the King of Judah being enabled to change out of his prison clothes.

In verse 33b, there is even more grace! In addition, the King of Judah dined at the table of the King of Babylon. That means 1) in the presence of the King of Babylon, seeing him eye to eye, but not in the context of fear and execution, rather in the context of sharing a meal 2) having plenty of food, and not suffering starvation in some ancient Babylonian prison 3) having royal food, and not just basics to survive 4) not just on sporadic occasions, but "*every day of his life.*"

A picture of God's grace! The King of Kings was giving grace to the King of Judah, through the King of Babylon, in the sight of the kings of the world.

3. The exiled king had his daily needs met, until the day of his death. (v.34)

Verse 34, there was more grace! God's grace also came in the form of an allowance. Supplies, food, medicine, washing his clothes, replacing worn out clothes, perhaps even money to make purchases of the products available in the city of Babylon. This was not once in a while, but verse 34 tells us, it supplied "*according to his daily needs.*" One need this king had was to provide for his sons. We now get comfort and amusement from knowing that God preserved the future line of the future kings of Judah, using government funds from the pagan empire of Babylon to do so! This allowance was granted to him "*by the King*" of Babylon! God could have provided through committed and clever exiles secretly sending hidden packages to their king, but rather God provided through officially authorized means, by the highest authority in Babylon. It was not just for a few initial months, but in verse 34, the very last words of the book tell us God's gracious allowance was supplied "*...until the day of his death, as long as he lived.*" After this new king of Babylon died, God saw to it that even the following Kings of Babylon continued the provision of this allowance, this higher seat, this royal food, the change of clothes, the daily needs.

Compare to another king – back in verse 11 - when King Zedekiah died. He lost his throne, he lost his freedom, he lost his sons who were killed while he watched, then he lost his sight. Whatever interest in God he may have once had, he had long ago lost that, too. Eventually, he lost his life when he died in prison in Babylon, which could be a warning to every unbeliever in every age over the whole world.

The exact same phrase from verse 11, '*day of his death*' is used a second time for a second king in verse 34, and this time it is reporting on King Zedekiah's nephew, King Jehoiachin. There are 4 ways that Jehoiachin's story was different: 1) Jehoiachin did not go through all the suffering. 2) Jehoiachin was freed from prison and honored in the palace. 3) Jehoiachin was still regarded as King, 37 years after he had been taken there. 4) Because Jehoiachin survived with sons, a king from the line of David would rule, to fulfill God's promise.

The message of both kings here is that God will destroy sin and rebuild with His grace. Jehoiachin's release from prison is a pledge of more grace to come. God was showing them tangible hope for the full restoration.

The good care of Jehoiachin was a signal that the kingdom of God would re-emerge one day in a different form. No longer a military kingship. There would be a king like David, but greater. There would be a prophet like Moses, only greater. There would be a priest like Seraiah killed, but not for his own sins. There would be a judge like Samuel, only greater. This person would be a later descendant from this exiled boy-king named Jehoiachin. The LORD continued to give pledges of His faithfulness during the return from exile, such as the rebuilding of Jerusalem in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, to restore the right worship of God. When God gave the first chapter of the New Testament, we read King Jehoiachin's name in its other form, Jechoniah, in Matthew 1:12, about halfway between David and Jesus. Jehoiachin became part of the prequel to the Christmas story!

Then God made good on those pledges when He sent His own Son in the fulness of time. Galatians 4:4, "...when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth His Son,..." Jesus is the new and better Jehoiachin. Jesus went into a new and bigger exile, which was Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus faced a new and bigger evil king, which was the devil himself. In the exile of Jesus, God shows us the beginnings of the future for all of us. Listen to it expressed so beautifully how Jesus became a man in order to become our king and deliver us from sin, slavery, and death in Hebrews 2:14-15, "*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*"

There is grace in the end because Jesus rose from the dead to bring our deliver us from slavery to sin, exile in death, to full restoration and our future in the New Jerusalem. Paul would later report how this was fulfilled in Romans 1:3-4, that the Greater Son of David would be '*descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.*' There is grace in the end because is the King appointed by God the Father. There is grace in the end because Jesus is the King of Kings. The Book of Jeremiah has shown us a lot of voices speaking intensely about what seemed to be a Babylon-dominated world. However, we also detected in our study of Jeremiah that while the Babylonian empire was uncommonly powerful, it was never ultimately powerful.

The future of Israel was not with those who were left behind in the old homeland to farm some fields. The future of Israel was not with those who were runaways to Egypt. The future of Israel was in the exiles in Babylon, under the care of God, eventually being given more grace from God to be brought out from

prison in the end. More grace in the end of the life of the king in exile gave hope that for the other exiles, they could expect that there would be more and more grace in the end.

Hebrews 12:28, “...*therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.*” God’s is the kingdom that is ultimately powerful. Let us be thankful that we for receiving God’s kingdom.

Conclusion:

Put your hope in God’s King, for with Him there is grace in the end.

God had grace from beginning to end. God gave grace by sending a prophet named Jeremiah in the first place. God gave grace to keep a faithful prophet Jeremiah announcing an unpopular message for 40 years. God gave grace to offer the invitation for those sinning people to repent. The grace of warnings. The grace of chastisement. The grace of exile. The grace of God’s provisions within exile. The grace of hope arising out of a consistently promised restoration. Our gracious God is who He said he was at the start – He is the God who destroys sin, and rebuilds. Our God, in His grace overthrows sin, and he graciously plants, and replants, and transplants, and plants some more.

Fast-forward to a vision of the day of final Judgment, which for us is grace in the end. The last day is also the time of God’s abundant unimagineable provision. “...*no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him...*” 1 Corinthians 2:9. The source of all of this is our Savior and King – as we read in Revelation 19:16, “*On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*” Consider the reversal of that scene here in Jeremiah 52, of the seated kings in Babylon, when we consider the scene of the Heavenly Jerusalem, Revelation 21:24, “*the kings of the earth will bring their glory into [the city]...*” Instead of the kings of the earth giving their glory to the earthly king of Babylon, all the kings of the earth will be giving their glory to the King of Heaven, the New Jerusalem.

Our great God gives us grace to live our daily lives right here today in this fallen world. Philippians 4:19, “...*my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus...*”

The apostle John agrees that the source of our supply of grace is not any of the prophets or apostles, but rather the source is God alone. John 1:14, “...*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (v.16) ...from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. (v.17) For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*”

For daily need there is daily grace; for sudden need, sudden grace; for overwhelming need, overwhelming grace.

The Christian life is a matter of GRACE from beginning to end. There's enough to last. Put your hope in God's King, for with him there is grace in the end.
James 4:6, "*God gives more grace.*"