

Dr. Allan MacRae: Jeremiah: Lecture 12

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Jeremiah 31-39

Prospectus [0:0]

We'll try to cover the 52 chapters of Jeremiah, and I was rather hoping we could at least glance at the fifth chapter of Lamentations since it is also by Jeremiah. And we have only gotten as far as the 31st chapter, though we have had some assignments in later chapters; so we have laid the foundation for some of the material in them and, in addition to that, some of the material later is not quite as interesting as the first twenty chapters. And, therefore, we can go over it much more rapidly, yet I really wish we had at least three or four more hours rather than just two. I didn't get time last week to go into fully the new covenant as I would like, and we really don't have time to look at it this morning.

Not a Class on Eschatology [1:00]

Now mind you, this is not a class on eschatology, we do not have time today to go into the details of things that are future to us. We simply note those things that refer to something that has not yet been fulfilled today. I personally am very much convinced that we, all of us, are tempted with approaching a passage of Scripture with a preconceived notion, or simply to try to fit it into our preconceived system. We try to explain away any verses that don't seem to fit with our preconceived notion. And I believe that God has much truth in the Scripture for us that perhaps no one has yet seen, that may not have been able to be seen, maybe didn't seem to have much relevance to

past times, but perhaps has great relevance to our times. I feel that it is particularly important that we go to the Scripture and study each passage by itself and try to see exactly what it says, and what lessons or important things we can get from it that will have a real effect on our own personal life and our own personal witness for Christ. I think that if we go looking for proof that we are right rather than looking at passages to see exactly what a particular passage means, that we run a risk of losing an important lesson in the passage that perhaps God has a special reason for us to get. Well, I hope we can look at least at some aspect of this next time, but I think that we will look at today's lesson paper, and enlarging on it a little will give you things to think about.

Jer 31:35-37 God's Faithfulness and Favor to Israel [2:34]

Now, the last passage which we looked at the end of the hour was Jeremiah chapter 31: 1-34. And it is interesting to notice that the passage is immediately followed by a declaration from verses 35-37 that is very, very strong about God's continuing favor to the people of Israel despite their sin, despite their failures, despite their falling so far short of His will for them, despite many of the people turning violently against Him and doubtless heading toward eternal perdition. As for the nation, he says that God who has ordained all things in nature and controls them--he says in verse 35--that this God is in control over nature completely. He says the sons of Israel will cease to be a nation before Him. And in verse 37 says only, "'If the heavens above can be measured and then the foundations of the earth be searched out, then will I cast off all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done,' declares the Lord."

I have known people who have said that: "God called Israel as his instrument to

bring a Messiah into the world. When Christ came into the world, Israel had done its part. Israel rejected its Messiah, God rejected Israel, God is through with them." And I don't see how anybody can read these verses, which use such very strong language to say that as long as heaven and earth exist, God will continue to have blessings for the descendants of Israel, and take an attitude like that towards Israel. I feel that we certainly can lay down a definite point here on which we can stand. He says only if this happens, then will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all that they have done.

On the other hand, I have known Christians who seem to exalt people simply because they are descendants of Israel, and certainly all men, no matter what their background, are saved or lost, and always have been, according to their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ as our judge. Before Jesus' coming people looked forward as they performed the sacrifices and as they were penitent for their sins. And as they saw that God would make a wonderful provision, the details of which they did not fully understand, they looked forward and by faith they were saved. And no one was ever saved because he lived the perfect life; nobody ever has lived a perfect life. And that is true of all individuals, whether in Israel or outside of Israel, all through the ages.

And the Old Testament shows us, point after point, that there have been individuals who have been saved who have known nothing about the law of Sinai. There have been individuals who have truly belonged to God, and Abraham even gave tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. So we know that as Peter said, when he went to the house of Cornelius, he said, "I see that those who are true to the Lord in every land are truly accepted of Him." (Acts 10:34, 35) And so God had his own, all through

the ages, though I fear they were very, very few before the time when the gospel began to go out and the word of God was carried to the nations.

Jer 31:38-40: Enlargement of Jerusalem [5:55]

Now, after that you have chapter 31, verses 38-40, in which it predicts an enlargement of the city of Jerusalem. And it says never again will the city be uprooted or demolished. Well, of course, this cannot refer to the immediate return from the Babylonian exile because we know that the Romans came and made a terrible devastation of Jerusalem that was just as bad as King Nebuchadnezzar, possibly even worse. So this, verses 38-40, must look forward to something beyond the dispersion by the Romans in 70 AD. But this looks to a time, God says, when the city will be rebuilt, and then he describes a certain area that will be included in it. And this area, at least, puts particular stress on parts which are considered unclean, where the dead bodies and ashes were thrown. The first area mentioned will be holy to the Lord, showing that God predicts a spot when Jerusalem will be a great center of God's blessing and mercy. Such a time is surely, literally, and very specifically predicted here: a time when Israel will have a holiness beyond anything that it has ever had, as yet. Now, we cannot say that that has been fulfilled yet.

Jews Back in Jerusalem and God's Promise [7:10]

Fifty years ago, and certainly a hundred years ago, people would say it could not possibly be fulfilled; it is absolutely impossible that it would ever be fulfilled, they would say. And yet, the Jews have come back to Jerusalem and there has been established a new state of Israel, but the bulk of the Jews there are living in utter unbelief; a great many

of them complete atheists, or at least thorough going humanists. And among them there is a small and very considerable group of Orthodox Jews who are like the Jews who opposed Jesus, in that they are ready to fight over particular matters of legal attitudes. For instance, they will throw themselves on the streets on the Sabbath so that the cars can't drive, and they bitterly oppose any Christian missions in the land. And while we respect their zeal more than we do the perilous attitude of those Jews, to whom the Bible is simply an interesting historical record of their ancestors, yet we cannot consider them in any way of being a fulfillment of God's promise. And so we must say that there's going to be a great revival in the land of Israel, a great turning to God. There's either going to be that, or this present state of Israel might disappear and a new return could come at some future time. We cannot lay down specific rules as to the future. God has said, and Jesus has said over and over, "such a time as you think not, the Son of Man will come." So if we're all convinced that the Lord is going to come within the next ten years, I say that's pretty good evidence that He's not going to come.

Christ's Coming & World War II [8:48]

Now, I believe the Lord might come very, very soon, but I do not think anyone can say that it might not be postponed another thousand years. I'm sure that if anybody had told Augustine that there would be another fifteen-hundred more years before the Lord would come back, he would have been absolutely disgusted at such a fool idea that another fifteen-hundred years would pass before the Lord came. And compared to the two thousand years that have passed, another thousand would not seem strange; but if there is such, I think there will be another dark age, such as there was after the Roman

Empire. I would make a guess that Jesus coming earlier and a great hope that it might be very soon, but I do not think we should ever be dogmatic about it.

I remember so keenly back in 1939 when Hitler made an arrangement with Stalin and then Hitler attacked Poland and the Russians came in too. They divided Poland between the two of them, and I heard person after person say just look how history is being fulfilled. Here the Germans are with the Russians. The line of the old Roman Empire is reestablished, and we can know the Lord is coming very soon. Well, I said, we cannot be that certain about fulfillment of prophecy in political details. We can see tendencies perhaps, but we cannot be that certain. But I heard unbelievers say what a marvelous evidence of Christianity, the agreement of Hitler with Stalin. I am not implying Hitler and Stalin were Christians. I'm only looking at the supposed reconstitution of the Old Roman Empire. Well, a few months later Hitler attacked Stalin; the whole thing proved to be absolutely a very brief thing, and I fear there were many who had been drawn towards Christianity by this claim that we saw prophecy fulfilled who were now pushed further away from faith than they had ever been before. So I think we have to look forward with great joy for the coming of the Lord, pray "O Lord Jesus, come quickly," but know that while it might be very soon, it might be a long time off.

Jer 32 Predictions [11:09]

Now chapter 32: I already asked you to go through to look at the predictions, and while you were doing that I am sure you saw that the great things that were done in this chapter. God predicted to Jeremiah that his uncle would come and want to sell him some land that was in the territory that the Babylonians already held in their hands. And with

this tremendous Babylonian army around them, threatening to conquer and destroy Jerusalem, for anybody to spend money for other than to keep from starving during the remainder of the siege seemed foolish. To spend that money and buy some land that was in the hands of the Babylonians was even more foolish. Yet, you know that, in fact, God had revealed to Jeremiah that most of the people of any standing in the land would be carried off into exile sometime in the next year or two when there was a siege. For him to buy that land under those conditions was like buying land on the moon or on some distant planet. It seemed humanly like an utterly ridiculous thing to do, but God ordered him to do it because He told him the time has come that there will be business carried on again in this land and people will be buying and selling property here again.

Dan 9:25 and Daniel's 70 Weeks [12:23]

Now that was certainly a word from God about the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It was a definite word that came to Jeremiah. I believe that it is very unfortunate, therefore, that in Daniel 9 verse 25, the prophecy of the "seventy weeks," it has been translated by so many that "From the going forth of the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem to the Messiah is seven weeks." This is forty-nine years, if each day stands for a year in these "seven weeks." But forty-nine years after the conquest of Jerusalem wouldn't get you anywhere. So most of our Christian interpreters take the next clause that is going to tell what happens after the seventy weeks and the next sixty-two weeks and add them together. They take the clause, "And in sixty-two weeks the city will be rebuilt but in troublous times," and they put the two together. And they say there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks--pause--and then say the city will be rebuilt after 69 "weeks." Most

of our translations say that. I don't know who ever would say "sixty-two weeks and seven weeks." You might say nine weeks and sixty weeks, but to say seven weeks and sixty-two weeks is utterly ridiculous. Yet most of our Christian interpreters confuse those verses.

And one thing that leads to their confusion is their saying that we have a *command* to rebuild Jerusalem. But the Hebrew literally states "From the *word* to rebuild Jerusalem." And of course, I could give you "word" to go and get something for me; I could do that, but that's not an ordinary way of using the word "word"; that is, as a command. And right in that same chapter of Daniel, that same word translated "command" is translated "word" or "message" on two earlier occasions where it refers to a message from God. And so I believe it is in Daniel 9:25 a definite reference to chapter 32 of Jeremiah, to the word that God sent to him that the city would be rebuilt.

[Student question:] I don't see where Jeremiah says that the city will be rebuilt...

MacRae's response: You mean in this chapter 32 of Jeremiah? No, it says business will be carried out. Well, how would business be carried on if you did not again have peaceful conditions, where the Jews would be back there?

[Student:] Yes, it doesn't sound like a rebuilt Jerusalem, but I'm looking for those exact words.

MacRae's response: Well, those specific words are not used and so I cannot be dogmatic about this interpretation, but I'm simply pointing to the need of seeing exactly what it says. I'm not trying to twist it to fit our particular feelings.

Jer 33 – Promise of Restoration [15:41]

Well now, chapter 33 continues the promise of restoration. Verse 4 again repeats the prediction of the destruction--the terrible destruction--that had already begun because the Jews themselves, we find in verse 4, had torn down some of the big buildings in order to get materials to throw at the Babylonians who were building siege ramps around the city. And so the destruction had already begun within by the people's getting material to defend themselves, and outside were the people who were carrying on the siege. God predicts under those terrible conditions that there would be the rebuilding. Now this certainly is a prediction of rebuilding, and this comes after what I had just spoken of, so I think that they could be considered as being in the same general passage, at least.

So I think it must have been the same year chapter 33 was given, although one can't be dogmatic about the precise time. It's part of the same message of God's blessing in chapters 30-33, and it's chapter 33 here. And he says in verse 10, in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted and inhabited by neither men nor animals, there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness, the voice of the bride and bridegroom. And so it continues giving promises of a reestablishment of the land and a rebuilding of what is destroyed.

And then in verse 14 and following he gives the promise of the righteous branch of David's line who will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Jerusalem will live in safety, this is the name by which it will be called, "the Lord our Righteousness." And these particular verses we already had in chapter 23, verses 5-6. So here he repeats this prophecy of the coming king of the line of David.

Well, chapter 33 ends a major section of the book, a small section, chapters 30-33, but one that is quite different than any whole section of the book, though there are small sections that are similar to it.

Jer 34-39 – Fall of Jerusalem Described [17:57]

And then the next major division of the book is chapters 34-39. If you are going to make a precise division the end is found in the middle of chapter 39. It is the description of Jeremiah's experiences of the fall of Jerusalem. And all of this material, I believe, except one chapter in 34-39, because 39 tells about the actual fall, all that material tells about Jeremiah's experiences in connection with Zedekiah. One chapter in that section goes back to an earlier period, but the rest of it is all connected with Zedekiah and those chapters are fairly easy to understand. There is a real blessing for going through them in detail if we have time, but we won't have time to do that now, so we'll just rapidly glance at them. Chapter 34:1-7 we have Nebuchadnezzar besieging Jerusalem, and God told Jeremiah to take a message to Zedekiah and to tell Zedekiah that the Babylonians were going to conquer the city and Zedekiah himself would be carried off into bondage.

Jer 34:8ff – Zedekiah Freeing Slaves, Not [19:05]

There really should be a chapter division at the end of verse 7 because chapter 34, verses 8 to the end of the chapter, form a separate section with an entirely different emphasis.

Verse 8 through the rest of the chapter tells about an act of Zedekiah and his associates. I don't see how Zedekiah could escape responsibility for it, in which

Zedekiah made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to proclaim freedom for the slaves. Everyone was to free his Hebrew slaves, both male and female. No one was to hold a fellow Jew in bondage. So all the officials and the people who entered into the covenant agreed they would free their male and female slaves and no longer hold them in bondage. They agreed and set them free, but afterwards they changed their minds and took back the slaves they had freed and enslaved them again.

And then the rest of the chapter describes the message that God gave to Jeremiah about this violation of their promises, this failure to carry out what they had promised to do. God was going to severely punish them for it. He says in chapter 34, verse 21, "I will hand Zedekiah, king of Judah, and his officials over to their enemies who seek their lives, to the army of the king of Babylon, which had withdrawn from you." Babylon had briefly given up the siege, and some were hoping they would go forever. But Jeremiah says, they're coming back; He says, "'I am going to give the order,' declares the Lord, 'I will bring them back to this city; they will fight against it, take it, and burn it down, and I will lay waste the towns of Judah so no one can live there.'" This is a very strong rebuke against those who are unfaithful to their promises and to their word.

On Taking Oaths and Keeping Promises [20:58]

And I believe even in this age, when a minister counsels people who are going through a very distressful marriage, God is holding people to the oath that they take. When a person promises to be true to someone in sickness or in health, in good times or in bad, to be promised to them as long as they both shall live, then considers that promise lightly and lays it aside, that is not pleasing to God. So many people today do all kinds of

promises thinking they can ask God to forgive them easily for it. And of course, that is the general attitude of our civilization today. A promise is nothing. You can take a job as an air-controller where the law says you cannot strike; in addition, you sign an oath you will not strike, and yet in spite of that, you strike. And well it's terrible when even the government ignores the law. It's a widespread attitude, but if we cannot trust people to stand by their word, then we are in a very disagreeable situation.

And the number of divorces is increasing constantly, not only among the ungodly people, but among the people who declare themselves to be evangelical Christians. And I believe that God will severely punish the failure to stand by promises we have given, but I do think a good part of the blame for it--and we cannot avoid this--must be laid on those ministers who lightly marry people without making sure they really understand what kind of promise they have taken.

I was in a trial out in Seattle, Washington, where a man out there brought a suit against the State University of Washington because they were giving a course in Bible in which they taught the so-called "higher criticism." And the Professor who taught it was an elder in a Presbyterian Church. And someone asked him if he had taken an oath that was before the new change in the creeds of the church and all that. They asked him if had he taken an oath when he became an elder, that he believed in the Scripture as the entirety of God's word. He said, "Oh, I remember there was some sort of a statement made at the ceremony, but I don't remember the details of it." And just very lightly you can say "yes" to almost anything.

I had a tooth pulled not long ago, and they gave me a paper to sign which said I have had fully explained to me all the things that might go wrong, and it named fifteen different things that might go wrong. The last was there might come a twitching of the lips, possibly permanent. And I said, "How can I sign a thing like that?" "Oh, it's just a form; everybody does that; it's just a tooth pull." "Well," I said, "take an hour and half to explain all those things to me, what the dangers are. How can I say I have had fully explained to me all these things." "Oh well," they said, "that's only if you have a serious thing that you have to have a general anesthetic; just sign your name here and we'll go ahead." So I couldn't possibly sign; it would be a lie. It's just a matter of form today to sign any matter without bothering about what it is.

I saw on the TV the other day about how they were complaining in California about how people were losing their homes because they had had repairs and improvements made in the homes and they had signed a contract saying that if they didn't make their payments their house could be taken away from them. And they had stopped making payments and now their houses were being taken away. How terrible. Why didn't they read the thing before they signed it?

But I believe that this chapter has an importance that is not generally realized, that God expects people to stand by their promises. And for many of you who are going to counsel people, those of you who are going to be marrying people, I think that it is important that we make clear to you to explain the obligation those marrying take on themselves and that God expects people to hold to their own promises and will not be guiltless if they do not.

Jer 35 Rechabites and Keeping Promises [25:11]

It is quite natural that the topic in chapter 34 is immediately followed by the topic in chapter 35. It might not be obvious to us at first sight, but it is quite natural that here it goes back to the time of Jehoiakim, and it goes back because logically it is dealing with the same thing. Jeremiah called the Rechabites and gave them a dinner and he put bowls of wine in front of them and said, "Drink some wine." And they said, "We cannot drink wine because our forefather Jonadab gave this command not to ever drink wine." And Jeremiah could not get them to go back on the promise they had made. Then, the Lord God Almighty says, "I'm going to bring on Judah and everyone living in Jerusalem every disaster I pronounce against them," but he said to the family of the Rechabites, "This is what the Lord Almighty, God of Israel says, 'You have obeyed the command of your forefather Jonadab and have followed all his instructions and have done all he ordered.' Therefore, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says, 'Jonadab, son of Rechab, will never fail to have a man to serve me'" (Jer. 35:19). And so we have here a great stress in chapter 35 following up with that on 34 on carrying out our commitment, on carrying out our obligations.

I don't think, by the way, this is a passage that can really be used for abstaining from alcohol. Jeremiah does not say this is a command from God. It is a command from this family which they had promised to obey. But I do think that in these days that we can bring up our children to stay away from alcohol completely. We will save some of them from being alcoholics and may save others from being killed in auto accidents that

come about from there being alcohol. It's hard to realize in a group like this there would be that danger, but there is in all aspects of our society.

My wife and I were at the Grand Canyon right after we participated in the rescue of some flyers who were in the war. And we had about fifty army men who had come up there to watch us rescue these flyers, and there in the evening they were celebrating the fact that the rescue had been carried out. And one after another came up to us and wanted us to drink. And they kept trying to persuade us to drink an alcoholic drink. And there was a young doctor who was there and he said to me, "I don't like to try the stuff," but he said, "When they come after me, I just drink one and then they don't bother me anymore." Well neither of us would drink one. I told them that my wife would not permit me and she told them her husband would not permit her. But for about an hour, one after another would come, and these days the temptations to just do a little something can lead you far from anything you've committed to. And these two chapters here encourage our standing by what we promised, and avoiding that which is evil or that which can lead to evil.

Jer 36 Jehoiakim's Destroying of Jeremiah's First Scroll [28:31]

Now, chapter 36 we looked at a long time ago because it is so important in the history of how the book of Jeremiah came into existence. It is the story of Jehoiakim's destruction of Jeremiah's first scroll and then a new scroll written with many new words added. And, of course, they might have been words added at the end of the scroll, but from the way the book is put together, we know that much is included in different places. It is very interesting to see that sort of haphazard arrangement, you might say, although I

think in many cases it's not haphazard. The arrangement of the book of Jeremiah is so different from Ezekiel and Daniel; they go right straight along year by year. So different, and yet we realize the terrible tension that Jeremiah went through in these difficult days when the whole country considered him a traitor, one who was disloyal to his people because he was giving the word of God to them.

The terrible situation that he went through may have caused the haphazard arrangement of the book. That was not typical of Jeremiah, however, because after the destruction, perhaps after he went to Egypt, when Jeremiah had leisure, and did not have these tensions around him, we find that he wrote the book of Lamentations, in which he gives his lamentation over the destruction of Jerusalem. And you have this book of Lamentations in which most of the chapters are acrostics with poetry. Each verse successively starts with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And the in-between chapter, chapter three, has three verses beginning with successive Hebrew letters. And it is a finely formed, carefully worked out book of beautiful poetry, showing the heart of Jeremiah as he expressed it in these days when he had more leisure and peace of mind. And, of course, one reason God preserved that book may have been to show us that we should not get a wrong idea of Jeremiah from the effect on him of the terrible situations he endured in the course of which his prophetic book was written.

Jer 37-38 – Jeremiah Accused of Treason, Zedekiah's Trickery [30:42]

Now, in chapters 37-38 we find Jeremiah accused of treason; we find him cast into prison. We looked at these chapters before and saw something of the character of Zedekiah. We also saw how precarious Jeremiah's life was during that time. Zedekiah

was wanting not to injure this servant of God, yet afraid of his officers. In chapter 38, verses 24-27, Jeremiah told Zedekiah, if you will obey the Lord by going out and surrendering to the Babylonians, your life will be delivered and you will not have this suffering you otherwise will have.

But Zedekiah was afraid of the people, of what might happen to him if he were to do such a thing, and so probably much worse happened to him than it doubtless would have if he had obeyed God. But then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah in chapter 38, verse 24, "Do not let anyone know of this conversation or you may die. If the officials hear that I talked to you and they come to you and say, 'Tell us what you said to the king and what the king said to you, Do not hide it from us or we will kill you,' then tell them, 'I was pleading with the king not to send me back to Jonathan's house to die there.'" And all the officials came to Jeremiah and questioned him, and he told them everything the king had ordered him to say. So they said no more to him, for no one had heard his conversation with the King. And he didn't tell any lie, I believe, for in the course of his conversation he did say that if Zedekiah could spare him from prison, if he could help Jeremiah, the latter would be grateful to him, for the full impact of what he said would have caused Zedekiah serious difficulty, so he sidestepped the question. He didn't say it hadn't happened; he told them something that had happened, but he didn't tell them all that had happened.

I believe that it is very important that we speak the truth, that we do not speak what is false. I do not think we should sign our name to something that is not true, but I do think that not everybody has a right to demand that we tell them everything. We have

a right to evade questions people give which we do not have a responsibility to tell them. At least that is what Jeremiah did here, rather than cause difficulty for Zedekiah.

Jer 39 – Downfall of Jerusalem and Babylonian Name List (39:3) [33:07]

Now chapter 39, the first part of 39, up to verse 10, is the description of the downfall of Jerusalem. During the conquest, the Babylonians broke in through the gate. Zedekiah made his way out and tried to escape, but he was seized and his sons were slaughtered before his eyes, and then they put out his eyes and carried him off a prisoner to Babylon. But in verse 4 we have a verse which is quite interesting for another reason. In chapter 39, verse 3, we read in the King James Version, "And all the princes and king of Babylon came and sat in the middle gate: Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer, Rabmag, with all the rest of the princes and king of Babylon." And to the copiers of the Hebrew manuscripts through the years those names meant nothing. They were simply foreign names they didn't understand; they simply copied them and copied them, and it is a marvel that they were so accurately copied. There are one or two tiny differences from the names we have found on the cuneiform tablets from that time of the officials of Nebuchadnezzar.

Now at first, even at a glance, it should be obvious that it doesn't mean exactly what it says in the King James because the first of the names is Nergal-sharezer and then next to the last name is Nergal-sharezer. And then if a person knew a little about Babylonian, the second name Samgar-nebo would seem very strange because "nebo" would be the beginning of the name, not the end of a name. And so after you knew a little about the Babylonian language you would see that this is rather strange as it is.

Now the NIV has translated it in the light of our present knowledge, "Then all the officials and the King of Babylon came and took seats in the middle gate, Nergal-Sharezer of Samgar, Nebo-Sarsekim, etc." Now you see it says Samgar-nebo in the King James, but it's Nergal-Sharezer of Samgar. And so the hyphen between "Samgar" and "nebo" is an error that has come in context, but it is a very small thing.

Alexander the Great, when he made his great conquest in Asia, had a man named Callisthenes with him to make an account of the trip, and there is an account of his experiences which is generally called the Pseudo-Callisthenes because it is not generally believed that Callisthenes wrote it, but Callisthenes' name is on it. But Pseudo-Callisthenes' account of Alexander the Great's conquest into Asia has been preserved in Greek, and the Syriac translation has been preserved, as well. And in the course of the conquest he mentions twelve companions of Alexander on one particular occasion. And that list of twelve names, in the course of copying the Greek and copying the Syriac, enough changes have come in that no name on the Greek list of twelve can be equated with certainty with any name on the Syriac list. It is very hard to preserve proper names accurately, and particularly hard when they are in another language that you don't know. And yet here, in Jeremiah 39:3, except for the insertion of a hyphen in the wrong place, we have these names preserved correctly. We have found in Babylonian inscriptions that Nergal-Sharezer of Shamgar was one of Nebuchadnezzar's leading officers and became king after Nebuchadnezzar died. Nebuchadnezzar's son only reigned three months and was killed, and then this general took over. So concerning Nergal-Sharezer here we have his name preserved more accurately than the Greek records preserved

names of Alexander's officers. And where it says at the end Nergal-Sharezer again, Nergal-Sharezer and Rab-mag, it's Nergal-Sharezer was the Rab-mag, which was a name for an official in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. So this verse is very interesting evidence of the remarkable accuracy with which the Old Testament has been preserved. Far beyond any other ancient writing is the accuracy in which the Bible, and in particular the Old Testament, has been preserved. I think that this is one of the most striking evidences out there.

Jer 39 – What Happened to Jeremiah after the Babylonians Took Jerusalem [38:08]

Now, chapter 39 tells then about the downfall of the city and how it was destroyed. It tells us what happened to Zedekiah, and tells us how the people, the bulk of them, were carried off into exile. Verse 10 says, "But Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, left behind in the land of Judah some of the poor people who owned nothing, and at that time he gave them vineyards and fields. Now Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had given these orders about Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard: 'Take him and look after him. Don't harm him, but do for him whatever he asks.' So Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, all the other officers of the King of Babylon, sent and had Jeremiah taken out of the courtyard of the guard."

It gives us even more details about this in chapter 40, where Nebuzaradan said in verse 4: "Today I'm freeing you from the chains on your wrists. Come with me to Babylon if you like, and I will look after you; but if you do not want to, then don't come. Look, the whole country lies before you; go wherever you please." And he added, "Go back to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, whom the King of Babylon has appointed over the

towns of Judah and live with him among the people, or go anywhere else you please."

And the commander gave him provisions and a present and let him go.

How did Nebuchadnezzar know so much about Jeremiah, and how did Nebuchadnezzar, when he was destroying the city, killing so many of the people and taking the others prisoners, give this word that Jeremiah should be well treated this way? It's a very interesting matter here and is not explained how. Some think this refers to an earlier trip of Jeremiah. Because at an earlier place in the book (chapter 13) it tells how God said to bury his linen belt at the Euphrates, and that might be halfway to Babylon. So there are some who think he had made a trip many years before.

Now even if he did then, that he would have met Nebuchadnezzar seems rather unlikely to me, but it might have been; and it might be that there'd have been some connection, or that Nebuchadnezzar had heard something about him; but in any case, Nebuchadnezzar considered him as one who had been helpful to him in the situation. Of course, Jeremiah had said that Nebuchadnezzar was to get control of all the countries in that area and that they would be subject to him. And then he said that God would bring the people back and that God would destroy the power of Babylon after the seventy years.

Jeremiah Considered a Traitor [41:03]

Now in any rate, the people of the time must have considered Jeremiah as a traitor, at least those who were not Jeremiah's followers and associates. And even though Nebuchadnezzar showed this favor to him, yet the Jews came to recognize that Jeremiah was a true prophet of God and preserved his book as part of their sacred writings. I don't

know of any other country in the world where that would happen. In most countrys, if a man took a stand like Jeremiah did, he would be reviled. In fact, the Jews do refer to the name of Josephus in this way. The greatest apologetic of the Jews is that by Josephus, and it was written in the time of the first century AD by Josephus, but the Jews through the ages have scorned Josephus and have considered him as a traitor because he went over to the Romans after they conquered Jerusalem. He was even with Titus when they conquered Jerusalem. So we see God's hand in preserving the book of Jeremiah, for despite the attitude the patriotic Jews must have had toward Jeremiah, yet God caused the book to be preserved as part of the Word of God. This is another indication of God's control over the ways of men and that we can safely trust in the future. We don't know whether it will be the way we would like it to be, or whether things will be the way we would hate to have it be, but we know it will be for the purpose of our good and for the good of all those who believe in Him.

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