

## **RUIN, REBELLION, AND RESTORATION**

Studies in the Book of Jeremiah

JEREMIAH 35:1-19

### **“ARE YOU WORSHIPPING YOUR TRADITIONS OR THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?”**

**INTRODUCTION:** Every culture has practices that have become acceptable actions by the persons who embrace the values of the group. Some of those actions are exemplary, while others need to be abandoned as soon as possible. Do you ever stop to consider why you practice the behaviors that are a part of your cultural group? Are any of them contrary to the commands Christ has placed upon His people? Are any practices acceptable to the Lord our God?

**BACKGROUND:** The setting of Jeremiah 35 takes us back 10-20 years before the events we just studied in Jeremiah 34, during the reign of Jehoiakim. (609-598 B.C.) A group of people known as the Rechabites and their lifestyles form the basis for the lesson God wants to teach His people. They were descendants of Recab and later Jonadab, Kenites whose family roots trace back to the father in law of Moses. (Judges 1:16) They joined the Israelites during the Exodus, and for centuries obeyed the commands of Jonadab, who aligned himself with Jehu to overthrow the ungodly house of Ahab. (2nd Kings 10:15-23)

#### **I. MANY PEOPLE UNDERESTIMATE HOW THEIR WORDS AND ACTIONS MIGHT IMPACT THE GENERATIONS THAT FOLLOW THEM. BEGIN NOW TO CHANGE THE FUTURE! (Jeremiah 35:1-5)**

- A. Jehoiakim reigned before Zedekiah, during the early attacks by Babylon against Judah. Jeremiah was still free to carry God’s message, and the Rechabites had already left their tents and nomadic lifestyles to enter relative safety in Jerusalem. Their practices were reminiscent of pilgrims and sojourners in a strange land. We are reminded that we are “strangers in a foreign land” while here on earth, and should not overly invest in what is temporary. (Jeremiah 35:1-2) (Hebrews 11:3)
- B. Jeremiah was not tempting the Rechabites to violate their customs or commit sin by getting drunk. The invitation to drink was a test, one that God knew they would pass, and He used it to prove a point to the people of Judah. The Lord never tempts anyone to sin, but He will often test us so we can discover what He already knows about our spiritual condition. (Jeremiah 35:2-5) (Genesis 22) (James 1:13-14)

#### **II. TRADITIONS CAN BE HELPFUL OR HARMFUL, AND WE OFTEN FIND MORE ALLEGIANCE TO TRADITION THAN SCRIPTURE. HAVE YOU EXAMINED WHY YOU MAINTAIN YOUR RITUAL PRACTICES? (Jeremiah 35: 6-11)**

- A. For roughly 300 years, the Rechabites had been dedicated to total abstinence and a nomadic lifestyle, while surrounded by people who drank excessively and amassed worldly goods as evidence of life as it “should be.” While drinking wine never was or is a sin (drunkenness clearly is) their other choices to not own homes or invest in farms to support themselves was radical. Even for those under a Nazarite vow, this commitment was extreme. (Numbers 6:1-21 )
- B. The amazing reality of the lifestyle of the Rechabites was that it originated from the commitment of one man many generations before them, and now an entire people group had been loyal for over 300 years. Do you ever focus on impacting the generations after you?
- C. Tradition has always been the friend of religion and non-biblical traditions have been the longtime enemy of the cause of Christ. Take note of how often Jesus had to confront the religious traditions of the Jews, and how they worshipped their traditions more than the LORD Himself. Can you justify your traditional practices with Scriptural support? (Matthew 15:9-18) (Colossians 2:8) (1st Peter 1:18)

**III. OBEYING GOD'S COMMANDS ARE DESIGNED TO ALLOW US TO ENJOY LIFE AS HE INTENDED FOR US. DO YOU HAVE THE WRONG PERSPECTIVE ON THE RIGHT THINGS? (Jeremiah 35:12-19)**

- A. The Lord asked the people of Judah the same question He asks of us today? Why do we choose to disobey the commands of the Lord? Listening and obedience are linked together (Deuteronomy 6:4) which proves that most people are not good listeners! (Jeremiah 35:12-14)
- B. God in His grace and mercy will often give us many more chances to respond to Him, even though we do not deserve any of them. Since you do not know when your final warning may come, why not choose to respond today? (Jeremiah 35: 15) (Psalm 95:7-8) (Hebrews 3:15)
- C. The Rechabites were promised a generational blessing of having their descendants always serve the Lord. Nehemiah mentioned a descendant of Recab 150 years after Jeremiah's writings. The example of their faithfulness to a family covenant should have shamed the people of Judah for disobeying their covenant with the Lord. Sadly, they continued to refuse to listen and obey. (Jeremiah 35: 16-19)

**CONCLUSION**

**TRADITIONS OFTEN BIND US MORE THAN THEY HELP US. THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE. (MARK 7:5-13) WE DO NOT NEED MORE RULES OR COMMANDMENTS. WE NEED A NEW AFFECTION FOR CHRIST AND A WILLINGNESS TO OBEY HIM IN EVERY SITUATION.**

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