Rechabites: Family Legacy Of Obedience

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday January 26th, 2020

Text: Jeremiah 35

### Intro

1. Jeremiah prophesied during the final years of the kingdom of Judah *(approx. 626-586 BC).*
   1. Judah was weakened by a series of attacks by Babylonians starting in 606 BC, another in 597 BC, and ending with the final attack when the remainder of the people were taken to Babylon as slaves in 586 BC and the temple was burned (Jer. 52).
   2. In the years leading up to that final attack, Jeremiah the prophet was inside the city of Jerusalem, preaching to the people, trying to get them to turn from sin & back to God.
   3. The people, including the final kings, were very stubborn and refused to listen.
2. In the days of King Jehoiakim (609-598 BC) God told Jeremiah to offer wine to a family who had maintained a commitment to abstain from alcohol for at least the past 220-240 years.
3. Jeremiah 35:1-19 (first 33 chapters chronological, 34-39 summarizes highlights)
   1. This is the account of Jeremiah’s challenge to a group of people known as the Rechabites to drink wine that he sets in front of them at the Temple.
   2. Notice: Various forms of the word “obey” are repeated four times in this chapter, and the concept of obedience is repeated even more than that in several different ways.
4. God knew they wouldn’t because of their promise to their physical father 220-240 yrs. earlier:
   1. Not to drink wine
   2. Not to build houses or live in them
   3. Not to farm (sow seed)
   4. Not to plant vineyards
5. Main Point: If a family of nomads can obey a physical father for hundreds of years, the nation of Israel was without excuse for disobeying the Heavenly Father! *(Who had blessed them!)*
6. What we see of the Rechabites is a family legacy of obedience! *(To a physical father)*

#### Amazing Family Legacy of Obedience

* 1. Who were the Rechabites?
     1. *I Chr. 2:55:* They were Kenites. *Who were the Kenites?*
     2. *Judges 4:11:* Descendants of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law.
     3. *I Sam. 15:6:* Though not Jews, Jethro and his family were loyal to the Jews, and for that loyalty they would be saved from God’s wrath on the Amalekites.
     4. *Judges 4:17-22; 5:24:* Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, slayed Sisera of Canaan.
     5. *II Kings 10:15-23:* Jonadab (Jer. 35:6) was of one mind with King Jehu against the idolatry of Ahab’s family and helped him stamp out Baal & Asherah worship in Israel.

1. King Jehu reigned 841-813 BC – King Jehoiakim reigned 609-598 BC.
2. Sometime before, during, or after the reign of King Jehu, perhaps after seeing the moral decay of the nation, Jonadab told his family not to drink wine, not to live in houses, not to farm, and not to plant vineyards.
3. This legacy continued 220-240 years to the time of Jeremiah!
   1. Where was your family 220-240 years ago?
      1. Imagine having an ancestor alive between 1780-1800 who told his family not to ride anything but horses, and due to the war with the British, always handwrite letters, and never use couriers to send mail, but always hand-deliver letters.
4. Time-Perspective: George Washington married Martha 1759, raised her children & grandchildren in the date-range of 1773-1793.
5. Time-Perspective: The Revolutionary War was raging still in 1780, then after the peace treaty in 1783, the founding documents and new nation!
6. That means here in 2020, the equivalent of the Rechabites’ obedience to Jonadab’s commands (240 years earlier), we couldn’t own automobiles or use the Postal Service, or [gasp] use email or internet services at all!
7. Try to imagine faithfully maintaining that pledge up until modern times!
8. Several landmark years of temptations: The automobile invention, typewriter, USPS, and the internet!
   * 1. Perhaps the closest equivalent we have today are the Amish, a religious sect started by a Swiss, Jacob Amman, in 1693 (327 years ago!).
        + 1. Imagine a group of Amish invited to the Pennsylvania Governor’s mansion and honored with getting to flick a special light switch on and off! ***(Would they?)***
   1. That is roughly what is taking place here in Jeremiah 35 on God’s instructions!
      1. Jeremiah takes the family into an inner chamber of the Temple! (Not even used to being in city—only here for protection from Babylon – Jer. 35:3-4, 11).
      2. He sets out pitchers of wine and cups and commands, “Drink wine!” (35:5-6)
      3. Despite the fact that this command was from Jeremiah, a prophet sent from God, the Rechabites refused because their ancestor 240 years ago said, “No!”
      4. In a time when people were putting their trust in riches and large fortified houses, and in a time when people were getting drunk all around them, the descendants of Jonadab, the Rechabites, stood alone.
   2. This is not about drinking wine *(Deut. 14:23,26),* it is not about planting crops, it is not about living in tents *(Jer. 29:4-5: Letter to exiles),* but God used the Rechabites as an example of obedience—a family legacy of obedience!

#### God’s Application

* 1. The main point of this whole illustration (according to God) is this:
     + 1. Here is this family demonstrating loyal obedience to their ancestor who has been dead for hundreds of years, and yet the nation of Israel refused to listen to God who continually sent them His servants and His prophets.
       2. Jer. 35:13: Notice God’s message to the people, “Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words?”
       3. In other words, God is using the obedience of the Rechabites to their long‐dead ancestor to shame the nation.
  2. Jonadab was a great man – Scriptures tell us that he was zealous, and that he worked to rid the nation of idolatry way back in the days of King Jehu *(II Kings 10).*
     1. He came up with a plan for preventing his family and his descendants from being sucked in by the evils of the world. *(Jer. 35:6-11)*
        1. He was a great man, he was a great leader, but Jonadab was just a man, those restrictions were not inspired!
        2. So here were the Rechabites being faithful to Jonadab (without prophets), but the people of Israel had rejected the Lord, who sent them prophets and who was so much more than Jonadab. *(Israelites were to pass God’s laws down through the generations!)*
        3. God says, “Shame on you!”
  3. What was God’s message? What did He want them to do?
     + 1. Jer. 35:15-16: “Turn now every man from his evil way and amend your deeds.”
       2. That is what God wants: Just as the Rechabites obeyed the promise made to Jonadab, God wants His people to obey His word (35:16-17).
       3. The Israelites made a promise to God and to Joshua to keep His word! (Joshua 24:15-28: “We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice” – 24:24) – ***But they failed that promise time and time again!***
       4. ***That is a message people still need to hear today: Hear God and Obey Him! (James 1:21-25; John 14:15; Luke 8:21)***
  4. I don’t know of any Rechabites today (if any of you are, please let me know!):
     + 1. There are many people around us who through their dedication to various secular pursuits can put many of God’s people to shame.
       2. We see people who are more slaves to fashion than some saints are to God.
       3. We see people all around us who are amazingly dedicated to a hobby, or sport, or maybe some kind of team. (Painting body team-colors, wait in freezing cold)
       4. Not that those things are wrong, but if they can do that, then what is holding God’s people back from following the word of God today?
  5. If the Rechabites can be faithful to Jonadab, then the rest of us can be faithful to God Who is so much more than a mere man!

#### Rechabites Rewarded for Obedience

* 1. For their obedience to their physical father (ancestor) God says they will be rewarded!
     1. Jer. 35:18-19: The focus is on their obedience to the command of their father, and the reward was that they would never lack a man to stand before the Lord.
     2. In other words, someone from that family would always be faithful to God.
  2. This was shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem (586 BC):
     1. Things were about to get worse for the inhabitants of Judah!
     2. However, there is an interesting passage concerning what happens many years later when the Israelites finally come back to Jerusalem and start rebuilding the wall.
     3. *Neh. 3:14:* “Malchijah the son of Rechab, the official of the district of Beth-haccherem repaired the Refuse Gate. He built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars.” *Very interesting!*
     4. Just as God promised, many years later the descendants of Rechab were still around, they were still active, and they were still obedient to God!
  3. In a symbolic way, it seems faithful Christians today are the true descendants of Rechab!
  4. We do not know for sure, but we do know from the Scriptures that God’s people will always be blessed when they obey the Lord.
     1. Jn. 14:23: Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”
     2. Heb. 5:9: Speaking of Jesus (5:5), “And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.”
  5. If the Rechabites received a reward for being faithful to their ancestor *(who promised NO reward!),* imagine the reward waiting for the faithful child of God! *(Rev. 2:10; 21:3-7)*

## Conclusion

1. In looking at the Rechabites, we have been reminded that God wants our obedience.
2. More importantly, we have also been reminded of the value of an obedient example!
3. Earlier, we talked about the days of George Washington who lived 1732-1799, was married in 1759 and raised children and grandchildren during the period of 1773-1793.
   1. From then to today, that’s about the length of time that the Rechabites held firmly to the example set by Jonadab!
4. Let’s flip that around a little bit!
   1. Where will your descendants be 240 years from now in the year of 2260?
   2. Will your descendants be able to look back in history at your example of obedience to the gospel?
   3. Will they be inspired by what they see?
5. Let us NOT do as Israel did: If the Rechabites can faithfully obey an ancestor, then we can faithfully obey God all our lives!
6. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent of your sins and be baptized!
7. If a Christian in error, Repent and be the example you need to be!
8. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!