

Jeremiah 24

Chapter 24, Jeremiah is given a vision by God (visions are "awake dreams") - "*The utterance of him who hears the words of God, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Who falls down, with eyes wide open,*" Numbers 24:4 NKJV. The first three verses reveal the vision. The rest of the chapter explains the meaning of the vision. As is the case with the some of the writings of Jeremiah we find a transition from addressing the nation at his time to the future Tribulation period or re-gathering of the Jews back to the land at the end times.

In biblical times God, at times, used visions, cf. Daniel 2:19, 7:1, Acts 10:3 (or dreams, cf. Daniel 2:2, 7:1) to communicate to His prophets. Let us not forget the admonition of chapter 23:8 - "*The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?*" says the LORD."

1 The Lord gave me a vision, and I saw two baskets full of figs put in front of the Temple of the Lord, after Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had taken prisoner Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the chiefs of Judah, and the expert workmen and metal-workers from Jerusalem, and had taken them to Babylon.

The date of Jeremiah's vision was in 597 B.C., after King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin), and his skilled workers, were deported to Babylon.

2 Kings 24;

- 11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it.
- 12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.
- 13 And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.
- 14 And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.
- 15 And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.
- 16 And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

2 One basket had very good figs, like the figs which first come to growth: and the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they were of no use for food.

In the vision, there are two baskets of figs - one basket had good figs and the other basket bad figs.

According to Manners and Customs in Bible Lands by F.H. Wright, fig trees in Israel produce fruit 3 times a year, with the first fruits being especially juicy. This was the figs in the first basket.

3 Then the Lord said to me, What do you see, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs are very good, and the bad very bad, and of no use for food, they are so bad.

In response to God's asking Jeremiah what he sees, he replies good and bad figs.

**4 And the word of the Lord came to me, saying,
5 This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, has said: Like these good figs, so in my eyes will be the prisoners of Judah, whom I have sent from this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.**

The word of God came to Jeremiah and Jeremiah tells what he has been told.

The good figs are the Jewish people who went into Babylonian captivity.

6 For I will keep my eyes on them for good, and I will take them back again to this land, building them up and not pulling them down, planting them and not uprooting them.

The reason those who are in captivity are the good figs is that God will eventually bring them back into the land to populate Israel once again. This is a generalization. The focus is not on any individual but the people as a group.

The return of the Jewish people from Babylon to Israel would take place in stages, over a period of 92 years.

1. 536 B.C. The first return is known as Zerubbabel's return, led by Ezra, Ezra 2 - 42,360 returned (vs. 64) plus 7,539 servants and singers (vs. 65) - 50,000 Jews returned
2. 459 B.C. The second return was led by Ezra the scribe - Ezra 7-8 - around 6,000 - 7,000 Jews returned (the number recorded is 1,754 males)
3. 445 B.C. The third return was led by Nehemiah - Nehemiah 2 - no figures given in the Bible.

As the return from Babylon took place in stages, so the return from world-wide captivity will be in stages and will take many years (73 years and counting presently), climaxing in the final re-gathering at the end of the Tribulation. Generally speaking:

1. The return to the land of Israel in unbelief -

Ezekiel 37:1-8, 11

- 1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,
- 2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.
- 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.
- 4 Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.
- 5 Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:
- 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.
- 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.
- 8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.
- 11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.."

Zephaniah 2:1-2

- 1 Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;
- 2 Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you."

2. The return to the land of Israel in belief

Deuteronomy 30:1-6

- 1 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,
- 2 And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;
- 3 That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.
- 4 If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:
- 5 And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.
- 6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Jeremiah 32: 36-41

- 36 And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence;
- 37 Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:
- 38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:
- 39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:
- 40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.
- 41 Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

Matthew 23:38-39

- 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.
- 39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

7 And I will give them a heart to have knowledge of me, that I am the Lord: and they will be my people, and I will be their God: for they will come back to me with all their heart.

This didn't happen upon the return from Babylon. It is not uncommon in Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 16:14; 32:36-41) for the text to be speaking about judgment upon the present nation and the return from Babylon, then switch to the return from world-wide captivity.

Isaiah 11:10-12

- 10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.
- 11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.
- 12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

The people of Israel will have a new heart at the 2nd coming - Deuteronomy 30:6.

Ezekiel 36:26-28

- 26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.
- 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.
- 28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

"they will be my people, and I will be their God" is an eschatological phrase (speaking of the 2nd coming)

Zechariah 13:8-9

- 8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.
- 9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

8 And like the bad figs which are so bad that they are of no use for food, so I will give up Zedekiah, king of Judah, and his chiefs and the rest of Jerusalem who are still in this land, and those who are in the land of Egypt:

Zedekiah was the puppet king placed in power by Nebuchadnezzar after the first dispersion to Babylon. He was an evil king who foolishly rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and was taken into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. with the rest of the nation.

2 Kings 24:17-19

- 17 And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.
- 18 Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.
- 19 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.
- 20 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

2 Kings 25:6-7

- 6 So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him.
- 7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

- 9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.
- 10 And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.
- 11 Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away.

9 I will give them up to be a cause of fear and of trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth; to be a name of shame and common talk and a cutting word and a curse in all the places wherever I will send them wandering.

10 And I will send the sword, and need of food, and disease, among them till they are all cut off from the land which I gave to them and to their fathers.

God's judgment on Israel would be so a fear and troubling would take place among all the kingdoms of the world when they rebel against God.

The Jewish people scattered among the nations of the world is a testimony that no kingdom can defy God without eventually being judged by that God.

Why don't the nations of the world pay attention to this warning?

Why doesn't the United States, which has a godly heritage, pay attention to this warning?

The answer is found in Psalm 2.

- 1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,
- 3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.