

JUST

JEREMIAH 50:11-20, 33-34

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB materials.)

1. To whom do you consider yourself accountable? (God, spouse, children, employer, coworkers, friends, other Christians, society.)

Most adults understand accountability in business and home life, but many adults never even think about being accountable to God.

2. What factors would you cite as reasons a person is accountable to the Lord? (Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Protector, Sovereign, Savior, Etc.)

Being a Christian means being in a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus.

3. Can you have a relationship of any kind without accountability?

Our study today focuses on the fact that God holds all nations and every individual accountable for their actions. In chapters 46-51, Jeremiah delivered God's judgment messages against nine nations or people groups surrounding Israel. These judgments were because of their sinful ways and give evidence that God is Sovereign over all nations, not just His chosen people. The harshest and longest of these judgments was against Babylon whom God had used to bring judgment upon Israel. No nation or individual can escape God's judgment for their sin and rebellion.

Under King Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon became the largest city in the world, with about 200,000 residents. Its hanging gardens were one of the "7 Wonders of the World." An immense building, with all kinds of plants and trees hanging from it. It was the "New York" or "London" of the ancient world.

Nebuchadnezzar had just defeated and destroyed Judah, and Egypt, the other major world power as well. They were at the height of their power. Here we find "The rest of the Story."

INTRODUCTION! Read Jeremiah 50:8-10

1. What is God about to do to Babylon? (Utterly destroy it.)
2. What warning did He give to the people living there?
3. How difficult would it be for them to believe what Jeremiah said, since Babylon was the largest, most powerful nation on earth at the time?

Let's read what else God has to say about their judgment!

VENGEANCE EXACTED! Read Jeremiah 50:11-16

1. How do you feel when a villain gets what's coming to him in the movies or on television?
2. How do you think the Jews were feeling about Babylon after Jerusalem was destroyed?
3. Although they were in no condition to do so, don't you think the Jews wanted vengeance? What does God say about vengeance? (Deuteronomy 32:35— "Vengeance belongs to me, I will repay.")
4. How did Babylon act after they defeated the Jews? (Because God gave them victory over Judah, they were GLOATING; they were like "in your face," glad...jubilant...pillage... skip about...")

We are not to gloat when our enemy falls—Proverbs 24:17-18.

In 1865, when Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant, Grant wrote in his memoirs that "When news of the surrender first reached our lines our men commenced to salute of a hundred guns in honor of the victory. I at once sent word, however, to have it stopped. The Confederates were now our prisoners, and we did not want to exult over their downfall."

Grant was very gracious to his defeated foe. He would not allow his men to "gloat" over them; or celebrate "in their face."

Babylon was not so gracious to Israel. They were God's instrument of punishment against them, but they were not merciful to them. In fact, Palm 137 says they seized and smashed the little ones of Jerusalem against the rocks. They were brutal!

5. What does verse 15 call for Babylon's enemies to do? (Treat Babylon as they treated their defeated foes.)
6. What lessons do you see for us from this passage so far? (Be gracious to your enemies. That includes that one person you have a hard time getting along with—you mix like oil and water.)
7. What does it mean to be gracious? (It means to treat someone better than they deserve—as God has treated us.)

Another application: God holds nations accountable. This applies to our country.

8. What kinds of things might God hold OUR country accountable for? (60 million+ abortions on demand; allowing and promoting immorality/perversion in the form of "gay rights;" not caring for the poor; partiality in justice; just ignoring Him and His Word in general; worshiping other gods, materialism, self...)
9. What does verse 16 tell us about God's judgment on Babylon? (There will be no crops, the people will be starving.)

God promised that justice was coming because of Babylon's treatment of His people. But along with justice, God also promises forgiveness for His chosen people.

RETURN PROMISED! Read Jeremiah 50:17-20

The first to devour God's flock was the king of Assyria—722 BC, and this last one who has broken his bones is Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—586 BC. This second invasion was prophesied more than a century earlier by Isaiah.

1. What promise does God give His people in this passage? (Israel is going to come back to the Promised Land.)
- Right now, they were in captivity in Babylon, where they were taken as prisoners. But they were going to come back.
2. What is the significance of Carmel, Bashan, Ephraim, and Gilead for the Israelites? (These were the rich, fertile areas in the Promised Land! This is exciting news! Although in the future, it was a message of hope!)
 3. What does God say is going to happen to their sins? ("There will be none...they will not be found...I will pardon.")

This can refer to two things:

- First, after the punishment of being taken into Babylon, Israel would never again fall into the practice of idol worship. Sometimes God must use painful things to get our attention, and to purify our lives from sin.
 - But there's another meaning here too: when God says, "search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none" this can also mean that their sins will be forgiven by the sacrifice of the Messiah who would be coming -- Jesus. There is a hint of this in verse 20. "Pardon" here is the Hebrew word "salach," "forgive" or "pardon." Significantly, this word is never used of people forgiving each other; it is only used of the forgiveness of God towards us.
4. Where do you see hope at work in the world today? (God's Word. Changed lives! God's church.)
 5. Why is it important to always look for God's hand? (Because it will always be there. He is working even in the smallest circumstance to bring about His will in our lives.)
 6. What makes the promise of our sins being forgiven so sweet? (We have fellowship with God living in us through the Holy Spirit. Communion with God through prayer and His Word.)

The people had felt God's discipline for their disobedience. But they would also get to experience His sweet forgiveness.

REDEMPTION ASSURED! Read Jeremiah 50:33-34

1. Why might God's people need to be reminded of God's strength and character? (God knew that the promise of freedom and restoration seemed unimaginable to the exiles. Like the Egyptians in Moses' day, the Babylonians would never willingly release their captives. Yet, God was about to initiate a second exodus.)
2. In the Old Testament when God's people thought of a "redeemer" what usually came to their mind? (Originally there was a very specific meaning for the concept of "Redeemer." It was a "kinsman redeemer.")

Each family in Israel had a portion of land that was allotted to them as their inheritance. But if they fell into hard times, or had to sell it, a "near relative" had the first option to buy that land back. That was the "kinsman redeemer."

In the New Testament we see the plan unfold in a specific way, as Jesus came to be our "Redeemer" by dying on the cross to purchase our redemption and redeem us from our sins. Gal. 3:13— "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law."

3. In what areas do you need to experience God's freedom today?
4. What is holding you back from taking those concerns to Him?

CHALLENGE!

- We can face the future knowing that God will exact justice on behalf of His people.
- We can rejoice that God's justice includes forgiveness, not just discipline.
- We can be confident that God is capable of redeeming anyone who turns to Him in repentance.

God's people have an eternal hope in Christ Jesus. In our passage today there are two very different "Rest of the Stories." We see it at the end of verse 34. Israel was going to be redeemed, but then it ends with "But turmoil to the inhabitants of Babylon." The Babylonians were going to be judged for their sins; but God's people would be redeemed from theirs and serve and worship God again one day. The question for us is which of these will be our story?