

## THE OBEDIENCE OF THE RECHABITES

**TEXT: JEREMIAH 35:1-19**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Jeremiah 35 shows a contrast between the obedience and loyalty of the Rechabites and the disobedience and disloyalty of the Israelites.
2. The Rechabites were not originally of the stock of Israel. The Rechabites were Kenites, a tribe of nomads.
3. They are first mentioned in Genesis 15:19. "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites" (Gen. 15:18-21).
4. In Judges 1:16, Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, is referred to as a Kenite. Since Jethro is also referred to as "the priest of Midian" in Exodus 3:1 and 18:1, apparently there was a close relationship between the Kenites and the Midianites.
5. Judges 4:11 refers to Heber the Kenite. Judges 4:17 says that Sisera, the captain of the Canaanite army, sought refuge in the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite.
6. Judges 4:21 says, "Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died."
7. The Kenites were on friendly terms with the Israelites. In I Samuel 15:5 and 6 we read, "And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites."
8. In his conversation with Achish, the king of Gath, David referred to the Kenites as people living in the southern part of Judah (I Samuel 27:10).
9. In I Chronicles 2:55 we see that the Rechabites were numbered with the children of Judah. First Chronicles 2:55 also says that Hemath the Kenite is the father of the Rechabites.
10. These nomadic Rechabites continued to live in tents (Jer. 35:7-10).

11. However, in Jeremiah 35:11 we see that the Rechabites came to Jerusalem to get away from the Chaldean and Syrian armies which had invaded Judah at that time.
12. Referring to the Rechabites, H.A. Ironside said, "It is through their valiant representative Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, that they first acquired special prominence. It was he who went out to meet Jehu after he had been anointed king of Israel by the nameless prophet sent by Elisha to Ramoth-Gilead. Having destroyed the vile house of Ahab, and likewise many of the house of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehu was riding towards Samaria when he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is' (II Kings 10:15). Dramatically Jehu cried, 'If it be, give me thy hand.' Upon his doing so, he took him up with him into the chariot, saying, 'Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord'" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
13. Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, went with Jehu into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, "Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only."
14. Jehu and his soldiers then proceeded to kill all the worshipers of Baal (II Kings 10:23-28). Jehonadab (aka Jonadab), the son of Rechab, is not mentioned again until we come to Jeremiah chapter 35.

## **I. THE OBEDIENCE OF THE RECHABITES**

1. In accordance with the word of the LORD, Jeremiah took Jaazaniah, the son of another man named Jeremiah, and his brethren, and the whole house of the Rechabites, and brought them into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, a man of God, in the temple. Here he set before them pots full of wine, and said, "Drink ye wine" (35:1-5).
2. This was a test, and the Rechabites passed the test before the many witnesses assembled in the temple (35:6).
3. They refused his invitation, giving as their reason the fact that Jehonadab (referred to in verse 6 as "Jonadab the son of Rechab") had, nearly three hundred years before, commanded them neither to drink wine, nor to build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant nor own vineyards, but to continue to dwell in tents, that they might live many days in the land where they were strangers (35:6-10).

4. The Rechabites had literally obeyed this command from the days of Jonadab up until the time Judah was invaded by King Nebuchadnezzar and his army (35:11).
5. For three hundred years they had been obedient to their father's commandment!
6. The presence of Nebuchadnezzar's troops had made it impossible for the Rechabites to live peaceably in their former unguarded manner; so, to save their lives, they had moved into Jerusalem (35:11).
7. But although they were forced by circumstances to move into the city, they would still not violate the commandment not to drink wine (35:6-11).
8. H.A. Ironside said, "Their reverence for and obedience to their great ancestor is all the more striking when the dissolute state of Israel and Judah is taken into consideration. They were a living sermon on subjection to the law, for any who would take cognizance of them. Hence Jeremiah is bidden to 'Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to My words? saith the Lord' (verses 12, 13)" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
9. Wine, in Scripture, is the symbol of joy. Psalm 104:15 says, "And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart."
10. Spurgeon said, "The Scriptural emblem of wine, which is intended to be the symbol of the richest earthly joy, has become desecrated in process of time by the sin of man. I suppose, in the earlier ages when the Word of God was written, it would hardly have been conceivable that there could have existed on the face of the earth such a mass of drunken men and women as now pollute and defile it by their very presence. For man, nowadays, is not content with the wine that God makes, but he manufactures some for himself of which he cannot partake, at least in any abundance, without becoming drunken" (*Better than Wine*).
11. The sons of Rechab were similar to the Nazarites, who also refrained from wine. Like the Nazarites, they were strangers and pilgrims who avoided the corrupting and degenerating influences of city life.
12. Ironside said, "They speak, in type, of those who seek a higher, deeper, more lasting joy than this world can ever offer. Having here no continuing city, dwelling in the pilgrim's tent, sinking no foundations in this terrestrial scene, they reach out for that which is to come. What a contrast to the timeserving trucklers to the present age,

as well as to the faithless people and princes of the times of Jeremiah!" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).

## **II. THE DISOBEDIENCE OF THE ISRAELITES**

1. The LORD pointed out that while the Rechabites had been obedient, the Israelites had been disobedient (35:12-16).
2. H.A. Ironside said, "They had turned away their ears from His law, and refused to walk in the way of His commandments. Has not this awful indictment a solemn message for Christians? How widespread is the same willful spirit even among those who are 'bought with a price,' even the precious blood of Christ!...It is to be feared there is very little moral difference between the state of Judah in the days of her downfall and the house of God today. Let us see to it that we learn the lesson of these faithful Rechabites" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
3. The LORD said that the words of Jonadab were performed by his descendants in all faithfulness (35:14a). But the children of Israel had not hearkened to the Word of God (35:14b).
4. Prophets, one after another, had been sent, warning them to refrain from their evil ways and amend their doings, and to stop worshiping other gods (35:15).
5. The LORD said that if they would thus obey His voice, they would be permitted to remain in their land. But they refused to repent. They inclined not the ear, nor hearkened to His entreaties (35:15).
6. Therefore, Jeremiah had to once again declare the LORD'S judgment. All the evil that the LORD had pronounced against them would shortly fall upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because, when He spake, they listened not; when He called, they answered not (35:16, 17).

## **III. THE LORD'S PROMISE TO THE RECHABITES (35:18, 19).**

1. In contrast to the disobedient and disloyal Israelites, the LORD placed His blessing upon the house of the Rechabites.
2. It was declared to them, that because of their faithful adherence to the commandments of Jonadab their father, he should not want a man to stand before the LORD forever (35:18, 19).
3. The LORD promised to reward the Rechabites, not because of their asceticism but because of their faithful obedience to their father's commandments.
4. Their obedience and loyalty stood in sharp contrast to the disobedience and disloyalty of the Israelites.

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. The last mention of the Rechabites is found here in Jeremiah chapter 35.
2. Referring to Jonadab and his descendants, H.A. Ironside said, "The family of this devoted man has long since been lost to history, both sacred and profane, but we gather from this promise that somewhere in this world his descendants still exist; and, doubtless, in the Millennium, when all the prophecies regarding Israel and Judah are fulfilled, the house of Rechab will once more appear upon the scene, a testimony to the faithfulness of Him who is 'not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?' (Numbers 23:19)" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).