

## **Jeremiah 30:1-3 (NIV)**

### **Restoration of Israel**

<sup>1</sup> This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

<sup>2</sup> "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.

<sup>3</sup> The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their ancestors to possess,' says the LORD."

## **Jeremiah 30:18-22 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> "This is what the LORD says:

"I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's tents and have compassion on his dwellings; the city will be rebuilt on her ruins, and the palace will stand in its proper place.

<sup>19</sup> From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of rejoicing. I will add to their numbers, and they will not be decreased; I will bring them honor, and they will not be disdained.

<sup>20</sup> Their children will be as in days of old, and their community will be established before me; I will punish all who oppress them.

<sup>21</sup> Their leader will be one of their own; their ruler will arise from among them. I will bring him near and he will come close to me—for who is he who will devote himself to be close to me?' declares the LORD.

<sup>22</sup> "So you will be my people, and I will be your God."

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends! I greet you in the name of the One who made the heavens and the earth. I greet you in the name of the one who taught us to rest. I greet you in the name of the One who keeps on blessing. If you know who made the mountains and the trees; if you know who made the song for the robins to sing; if you know who sends the rain when the earth is dry then I invite you to stand on your feet and praise Him. Praise Him! For He is worthy of all praise.

Please accept my sincere thanks for a full week of vacation. I was disconnected from you but you were in my prayers and I pray that I was in yours.

This morning we begin a new study in a new Sunday School Commentary. If you do not have the 2014-2015 Commentary there are still a few copies in the church office. During the month of September we will be looking at the book of Jeremiah. If you cannot remember the last time you read Jeremiah you might wish to read the 30<sup>th</sup> - 33<sup>rd</sup> chapters. As you read remember that the events in Jeremiah are not reported in the order in which they occurred. Do not let that confuse you just ask God to show you what you are to learn as you read.

Over the next few weeks I will offer more information about the historical context of this book and its author but for this morning I wish to direct your thoughts to verse 22:

***22 "So you will be my people, and I will be your God."***

As I researched and pondered this scripture I was struck by the word "so". This is not the "so" we use when someone makes a point in an argument and we don't have a response. This is the "so" that stands to connect two ideas – it is another way of saying "for this reason" or "therefore". God tells Jeremiah to write these words down in order that the people will remember that there is a promise and covenant in place and it has two parts – if we are His people – He will be our God.

Give it some thought and you will realize that our life is a series of contracts and covenants. We sign a contract for our car and our home. We covenant with the utilities companies and phone companies. We covenant with our significant other and with our church family. In each instance we make a promise and that promise is based on expected behavior from each party in the agreement. If we pay our bills in a timely manner, we can expect the lights, gas and electricity to remain on. If we pay our car note

and mortgage on time we expect to be able to keep those things. And in our marriage ceremonies we promise to love, honor and cherish each other. The covenant offered by God functions in exactly the same way. God promises to be our God if we are His people.

When we get a new job we enter into a contract. We promise to do the work assigned and the employer promises to pay us the agreed upon amount. On a new job there is often a probation period, followed by six - month reviews and then annual reviews.

When we confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that Jesus is Lord we are saved. But when we join a church, get baptized and eat the Lord's Supper as a family we are entering into a covenant relationship. In other words, we have quit our old jobs and we have begun a new one.

***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,***

***the new creation has come:<sup>[a]</sup>***

***The old has gone, the new is here!*** (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Would you pray with me and for me as I raise this question for you and for me?

### **AM I READY FOR MY ANNUAL REVIEW?**

#### SHALL WE PRAY

Father God I wonder sometimes if we take your love, your grace and your mercy for granted. I wonder sometimes if we are living up to our end of the contract and if our lives could stand an annual review. Father, we thank you this morning that with each new day there comes a new opportunity to get it right. Allow us into your presence and send the Holy Spirit to move within us. Help us to see what it is that you require of us and then give us the strength to do it. Abba, I ask you to mold me, make me and fill me, as you would have me to be. In the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ we pray. AMEN and AMEN.

### **AM I READY FOR MY ANNUAL REVIEW?**

Each first Sunday our Moderator or his designee leads us in the reading of the church covenant. It is our monthly review of our promised relationship with each other as members of this church. During this time of reading responsively I wonder if we consider the words and the promises we make. Let me just mention a few:

**We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love;**

**We also engage to maintain family and private devotions;**

**to educate religiously our children**

**to affirm and demonstrate by our every action and deed only that which represents Christian life at its best.**

Each first Sunday we stand and read these words and then we leave this place. How would God rate us on our **Christian love**? If God were to use the language of an annual review would God say we "exceed expectations"; "meet expectations" or "need improvement".

If God were to look into our homes would He find us in **private devotions**? Would He find us carving out time from our work, our entertainment, and our stuff for time as a family with Him? Would God rate us "exceed expectations"; "meet expectations" "need improvement" or "n/e" for no evidence?

Should God walk over and check out our bookcases and CD/DVD storage cases and the hard drive of our laptop would there be materials designed to help us **educate our children religiously**? Would God find materials our kids use for their devotion time? How would rate God us in this area: "exceed expectations"; "meet expectations" "need improvement" "n/e" for no evidence?

And if God met us in the mall, the gas station, at work or at our favorite entertainment spot would God find our **every action and every deed representative of Christian life**?

**That section of our Annual Review would be called "The Church Covenant".**

As you have a copy of the church covenant in front of you take a moment and rate yourself. Are you exceeding expectations; are you meeting expectations; is there need for improvement or is there no evidence of these things in your life. **Remember you can tell yourself whatever yourself wants to believe but God knows your heart and the truth.**

**The next section of our Annual Review would probably be the Great Commission.**

- Therefore go
- Make disciples of all nations,
- Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son
  - and of the Holy Spirit,
- Teaching them to obey everything I have
  - commanded you

Can you hear God asking you **where have you gone** – to the prisons, the hospitals, the nursing home, the shelters? Because God is aware that you maybe unable to go God might ask have you helped anyone else to go?

How would you respond to “have you helped anyone to become a **disciple**”? What would you say when asked “have you help anyone, taught anyone, lead anyone to **baptism**”?

Who could you name that **learned** about the Lord from you?

The Great Commission is printed on the front cover of the church covenant. Take a moment and grade yourself. Remember you can make excuses for yourself or you can tell yourself that you are meeting and exceeding expectations but God knows the truth.

Now if you are tracking with this sermon you probably are expecting me to go the Ten Commandments for the last section of the Annual Review but I want to suggest that the 10 Commandments were covered in the 30 day and six month review. Instead I want to take you to the sins of the Children of Israel and see how we stand up when compared to them.

For 250 years God had sent prophets to tell them what He expected of them. They were to keep the commandments and laws given to them by Moses; they were to avoid the bad habits of those around them; they were to take care of the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow; and they were to worship no other gods. Each prophet before Jeremiah reminded them that if they obeyed God would be their God and they would be God’s people. There are at least 27 references to this covenant promise in scripture, yet the Children of Israel still did what they wanted to do.

Jeremiah repeats this to them in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter ***the terms I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, out of the iron-smelting furnace.’ I said, ‘Obey me and do everything I command you, and you will be my people, and I will be your God.***

But the people were hard hearted and hard headed. By the time Jeremiah began his prophecy the Northern Kingdom had been destroyed for over 100 years and Jeremiah was sounding the last warning for the Southern Kingdom.

In the final section of our Annual Review God asks:

- have you avoid the bad habits of those around you
- can anyone tell by your walk and your talk that you work for me
- have you taken care of the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow

If this were any other job some of us might be retained, but many of us would be returned to our probation period and some of us might be escorted off the property.

But this is not just another job and this is just not another employer this is God the Father who loved us so much and wanted to be in relationship with us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us so that we could have eternal life with Him

Because this is not just any other job each workday, each time we wake we have a chance to begin again. When we seek forgiveness God removes our sins from us – as far as the east is from the west.

***For I will forgive their wickedness  
and will remember their sins no more.”(Hebrews 8:12)***

You have provided your word to help us:

## **2 Chronicles**

***<sup>14</sup> if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.***

Jeremiah suffered to bring the word of God to the people. He was not allowed to marry and have a family. Plots were formed to take his life and often he found himself complaining to God about his situation. But through all of this Jeremiah remained faithful to the job.

If we are going to pass our Annual Review we need to have the Word of God to help us make it.

***I challenge you this week to pray over the church covenant and the great commission. As you pray ask God what He would have you to do.***

**ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR ANNUAL REVIEW?**