

Jer. 17:19-27, The Sabbath Test
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Overview

Covenant jdgmnt	14:1-15:14	16:1-17:4
Jer. & the Lord	15:15-21	17:5-18
Final test	17:19-27	

We can spell this out verbally. The whole section recaps what we saw in Solomon's prayer in 2 Chr. 6 and the Lord's answer in 2 Chr. 7. It is not enough to pray; one must also obey.

In particular, God now invites the people to show their repentance by observing the command that was at once the least obviously moral and the most important of the Ten, the Sabbath, for this was the Sign of the Sinaitic Covenant (Exod. 31:13).

This section has

- an elaborate setting, emphasizing the importance of the message;
- a command to the people concerning the Sabbath day;
- a motive for this command, showing that obedience may yet lead to deliverance.

A. 19-21a, The Setting

1. Structure: deeply nested quotations.

"19 God said to me,
 '20 Go say to the people,
 "21 Thus says the Lord: ... " ' "

- a) Other exx: 2:1-5; 7:1-3; 11:1-3; 17:19-21; 19:1-3; 22:1-3; 26:1-4; 29:30-31; 34:1-4; 35:12-13; 37:6-9; 39:15-16; 43:8-10
- b) Emphasizes the role of the prophet as an intermediary. Jer. not only speaks the word of the Lord, but he knows that he speaks the word of the Lord. The outermost statement shows that the command to Jer. is from God; the innermost one reminds the people that the word he brings them is from the Lord. Cf. 1 Thes. 2:13; Hab. 2:1.

2. Content

- a) "Go." There are those who serve God only passively, waiting for opportunities to come to them. Jer. is an example of one who is open to being sent, actively. Cf. Matt. 28:19,20: "Go ye." But this means that we must know the Lord's voice well enough so that when he speaks, we will recognize it and obey.

Application: Are we sendable? Do we know the Lord's voice, and will we respond to it? What action have you ever taken in your life to which circumstances alone would not have impelled you?

God's first command is "come"; if you have not received Christ, you are not even saved. But once you have come, he has a second word for you: "go" and tell others. Will you go as readily as you came?

- b) Place: The gate of the children of the people, and all the gates of Jerusalem. The first is probably a temple gate: note order, "go in and go out." Perhaps the south gate of the temple, that connects it with the King's palace. This message must be heard by the king, and Jer. must deliver it where the king and his court can hear it. Then he is to carry it to all the gates of the city, so that everyone can hear his injunction.
- c) Word of introduction, v.20. Identifies what he is about to say as the Word of the Lord. Note "kings of Judah": there was not more than one at a time, but Jer's tenure extended over the reign of five kings, and this message is intended for all of them. The kings changed rapidly toward the end as Egypt and Babylon vied for control of Judah and each in turn set up its puppet. Jer. wants each new king who comes to the throne to recognize that the option of true repentance is still open.

B. **21b-23, The Command**

Jer begins with a summary command: "Take heed, at the cost of your life." (Recall from Num. 15:32-36 that violations of the Sabbath were punishable by death.) Then he amplifies it with a contrast, first a prohibition on the Sabbath, then a positive statement.

- 1. Prohibition: Don't carry any burden or do any work on the Sabbath day. Note the repeated emphasis, both here and in vv. 24,27 on bearing a burden through the gates of the city. These were the seat of commerce, where market stalls were set up. Folk had taken to setting up their "7-11's" even on the Sabbath. Bearing a burden at all would be wrong; the notion of bringing it into the city is emphasized because people had put commerce before devotion to God, and the city itself will be destroyed as a result of their breach of covenant.
- 2. Injunction: Hallow, sanctify, set apart the Sabbath day. Make it special. "Remember the Sabbath day, to make it holy." He further expands this by reminding them of their fathers' response to this same command. Note how he unfolds their sin; at first they might seem merely careless, but by the time he is done, every excuse is stripped away and their wilful rebellion is seen in all its wickedness.
 - a) They did not obey. The verb is literally, "hear." But perhaps God failed to catch their attention. Maybe they are really good-hearted folk, who just didn't catch the message.
 - b) They did not incline their ears. They didn't make any effort to catch his message. They have no desire to hear what God says.

- c) In fact, they hardened their neck so that they would not hear!
They have a positive desire to ignore God.

C. **24-27, The Motive**

Now he outlines to them the considerable blessings that they will enjoy if they will observe the Sabbath (thus confirming their acceptance of the covenant), and the judgment that will follow if they reject it (the latter only in v.27, a very minor part of the section). Both statements are conditions, "If ... Then"

1. First Motive: Obedience will bring the preservation of the city and its institutions.
 - a) Condition: Diligent attention to this commandment, resulting in abstention from bearing burdens, and indeed from any labor, thus setting apart the Sabbath day.
 - b) Promise: The city will remain forever, and its two principal institutions, the throne and the temple, will continue. Note chiasmic arrangement.
 - 1) The last line of v.25 is the center, and the pinnacle:
"This city shall remain for ever."
 - 2) 25a promises the continuance of the Davidic line in this preserved city. "Horses and chariots" are military equipment, cf. 2 Sam. 8:4-7. From the notice that they shall come into the gates we may surmise that they are returning from conquest. The promise is that politically Jerusalem would be dominant, ruling over the nations of the world.
 - 3) Just as 25 promises the continuance of the throne, so v.26 assures them that the temple will continue. Cf. 33:13 for a striking parallel to this verse, with the order of the places just reversed; also 32:44. The verse details the places from which men will come, then the sacrifices that they will bring.
 - a> The geography: three proper place names, followed by three geographical descriptions.
 - 1> The proper place names are the two tribes that made up the southern kingdom (Judah and Benjamin), together with Jerusalem, which lay on the border between them.
 - 2> The geographical descriptions:
 - a: The middle term, "the mountains," describes the elevated regions where Jerusalem sits.
 - b: "plain," Shephelah, foothills to the west.
 - c: "south," the lower land around Beersheba.
 - b> The sacrifices, described both by technical detail and by purpose.

- 1> "Burnt offerings" were consumed entirely on the altar, symbolizing the complete devotion of the worshipper to God.
- 2> "Sacrifices" were eaten by the worshipper, and symbolize fellowship and communion with God. Both burnt offerings and sacrifices were animals.
- 3> "Meal offerings" (not "meat") are of grain, and usually accompanied the others.
- 4> "Incense" (frankincense), mingled with the meal offering.
- 5> "Sacrifices of praise," the purpose of all these: to worship. NB: no mention made of sin or guilt offerings. The point here is worship, not dealing with sin.

2. Second Motive: Disobedience will bring the destruction of the city.

- a) Condition: the same set of expressions as in 21 and 24. Note especially the repetition of the need to hallow the Sabbath, and the implication of the gates of Jerusalem.
- b) Promise: God will destroy the city, beginning at the very gates where the people had so flaunted their disobedience. "It [the fire] shall not be quenched," that is, the city will be completely destroyed. The expression here recalls 15:14 and 17:4, but the verb for "kindle" is different, and this fire is not eternal, but simply destroys the city.

3. Eschatological note: We know that the nation chose the second option, and the city was destroyed. This is a *conditional* promise of *preservation*, and it was rejected. We shall later see (in chapter 33) an *unconditional* promise of *restoration* of the nation and the same two institutions (throne and temple, king and priest) that are here destroyed.

D. Application: The Sabbath Today

1. The "strange" command, the only one of the Ten not repeated or enjoined in the NT on believers.
 - a) The Scriptures nowhere establish the first day of the week as a "Christian Sabbath."
 - b) The reason is clear. As the seal of Sinai (Exod. 31:13), it could not be. Cf. Col. 2:16,17; Gal. 4:9-11; Rom. 14:5-6.
2. But this does not make it irrelevant to us.
 - a) The NT repeatedly emphasizes that the first day of the week was set apart by believers for their meetings together. Calvin: "It is not by religion that we distinguish one day from another, but for the sake of the common polity, ... because it is needful for the church to meet together on a

certain day. Moreover it is important for there to be a set and appointed day that all things may be done according to order and without disturbance."

- b) Our Lord teaches that "Man was not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man," that is, the sabbath was a provision for man's need for rest. Deut. 5:14; Exod. 23:12. Now, we haven't changed in that regard from the Jews. We will need a time of rest and withdrawal from our daily activities. And I say this, not as a matter of practical observation, but as a lesson drawn from the Word of God.

- c) Therefore, we should set aside one day in the week as a day to retire from our regular duties. The Lord has greatly blessed our family in this. The Lord laid this on my heart in college, and through all of my academic work I never studied on the Lord's Day. Thus I could enjoy and be refreshed by the fellowship of God's people and the teaching of his word. Even now, I make it known at work that Sunday is the Lord's, and will not be interfered with except for the gravest emergency (an ox or an ass falling into the ditch). This is no duty that I would lay on you, but a blessing from the Lord that you reject to your own loss. Don't let studies, or work, intrude on this special day. Spend it with your family and with the people of God.

E. Conclusion

1. Contrast 24-26 (promise of blessing if they will keep the Sabbath) with 14:11,12; 15:1. Prayers and fasting cannot turn away God's wrath, but true repentance, marked by obedience, can.
2. v.19, "Go." Are we passive or active in our service to God? What have we done this week, not just through the press of circumstance, but in direct and conscious obedience to him? If nothing, perhaps we have only come to him, and not yet gone forth.
3. Beware the subtilty of rebellion in v.23. If we do not hear God, perhaps it is because we will not hear. Keep our ears open toward him.
4. Hallow the Sabbath day--no longer the seventh day, nor as the seal of a covenant, but remember your need of rest one day in seven, and keep the priority of public worship and doctrine.

Psalm 118. "This is the day that the Lord has made," referring to the day of the LJC's resurrection.

Analysis

17:19-27 YHWH -> Jer: quote p: Don't profane the Sabbath.

A. quote f: 19 K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH)"L/AY

B. quote: hortatory sequence p

1. HFLOK:

2. comment p:

a) text: W:/(FMAD:T.F B.:/\$A(AR B.:N"Y-*HF/(FM **HF/(FM

b) comment:

1)):A\$ER YFBO)W. B/OW MAL:K"Y Y:HW.DFH

2) WA/):A\$ER Y"C:)W. B/OW W./B:/KOL \$A(:AR"Y Y:RW.\$FLFIM

3. quote p

a) quote f: 20 W:/)FMAR:T.F):AL"Y/HEM

b) quote: quote p

1) quote f

a> \$IM:(W. D:BAR-Y:HWFH MAL:K"Y Y:HW.DFH W:/KFL-Y:HW.DFH
W:/KOL YO\$:B"Y Y:RW.\$FLFIM HA/B.F)IYM B.A/\$.: (FRIYM
HF/)"L.EH S

b> 21 K.OH)FMAR Y:HWFH

2) quote: motive p

a> command: focusing contrast p: Hallow, don't profane,
the Sabbath.

1> text: HI\$.FM:RW. B.:/NAP:\$OWT"Y/KEM

2> contrast 1: prohibition

a: W:/)AL-

1: T.I&:)W. MA&.F) B.:/YOWM HA/\$.AB.FT

2: WA/H:AB")T/EM B.:/\$A(:AR"Y Y:RW.\$FLFIM

b: 22 W:/LO)-TOWCIY)W. MA&.F) MI/B.FT."Y/KEM B.:/YOWM
HA/\$.AB.FT

c: W:/KFL-M:LF)KFH LO) TA(:A&W.

3> contrast 2: manner p

a: text: W:/QID.A\$:T.EM)ET-YOWM HA/\$.AB.FT

b: manner: comment p

1: text: K.A/):A\$ER CIW.IYTIY)ET-):ABOWT"Y/KEM

2: comment:

A. 23 W:/LO) \$FM:(W.

B. W:/LO) HI+.W.)ET-)FZ:N/FM

C. purpose p

1. text: WA/Y.AQ:\$W.)ET-(FR:P./FM

2. purpose:

a) L:/BIL:T.IY *\$OWM"(A **\$:MOW(A

b) W./L:/BIL:T.IY QAXAT MW.SFR

b> motive: contrast p: blessings for obedience, curse if
not

1> condition p: blessing

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a: if: purpose p
1: text: 24 W:/HFYFH )IM-$FMO(A T.I$ :M:(W.N )"L/AY
   N:)UM-Y:HWFH
2: purpose:
   A. L:/BIL:T.IY HFBIY) MA&.F) B.:/$A(:AR"Y
      HF/(IYR HA/Z.O)T B.:/YOWM HA/$.AB.FT
   B. W./L:/QAD."$ )ET-YOWM HA/$.AB.FT
   C. L:/BIL:T.IY (:A&OWT-*B./OH **B./OW
      K.FL-M:L:F)KFH

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b: then: predictive seq. p
1: 25 W./BF)W. B:/$A(:AR"Y HF/(IYR HA/Z.O)T
   M:LFKIYM W:/&FRIYM YO$:BIYM (AL-K.IS.") DFWID
   ROK:BIYM B.F/REKEB W./BA/S.W.SIYM H"M.FH
   W:/&FR"Y/HEM )IY$ Y:HW.DFH W:/YO$:B"Y
   Y:RW.$FLFIM
2: W:/YF$:BFH HF/(IYR-HA/Z.O)T L:/(OWLFM
3: comment p
   A. text: 26 W./BF)W. M"/(FR"Y-Y:HW.DFH
      W./MI/S.:BIYBOWT Y:RW.$FLAIM W./M"/)EREC
      B.IN:YFMIN W./MIN-HA/$.:P"LFH W./MIN-HF/HFR
      W./MIN-HA/N.EGEB
   B. comment:
      1. M:BI)IYM (OWLFH W:/ZEBAX W./MIN:XFH
         W./L:BOWNFH
      2. W./M:BI)"Y TOWDFH B."YT Y:HWFH

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2> condition p: curse

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a: if: purpose p
1: text: 27 W:/)IM- LO) TI$ :M:(W. )"L/AY
2: purpose:
   A. L:/QAD."$ )ET-YOWM HA/$.AB.FT
   B. W./L:/BIL:T.IY &:) "T MA&.F) W./BO)
      B.:/$A(:AR"Y Y:RW.$FLAIM B.:/YOWM
      HA/$.AB.FT

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b: then:
1: W:/HIC.AT.IY )" $ B.I/$:(FREY/HF
2: W:/)FK:LFH )AR:M:NOWT Y:RW.$FLAIM
3: W:/LO) TIK:B.EH P

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