

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary Jeremiah 32:1–15 • Jeremiah Buys a Field

Prepared by the Rev. Lee Woofenden

Jeremiah 32:1–15 Jeremiah buys a field
Psalm 91 God rescues and comforts us

Overview

Jeremiah is not all gloom and doom. Sprinkled here and there are messages of hope—such as today’s story of buying a field when the nation is about to be conquered. Our themes today are selfishness leading to spiritual captivity vs. our conscience and being restored to a good and happy life by the Lord.

Key Points

- When we live selfishly, we set ourselves up for pain, sadness, and spiritual captivity.
- The Lord is patient with us, and will bring us back to a good and thoughtful life when we are ready.
- We can “buy” a good life by giving up our bad habits and our thoughtlessness.

Example for Teaching Children

Today we are going to learn more about Jeremiah, and about Babylon. Do you remember from last week what Jeremiah was trying to say to his people? (*Pause for responses.*) He was telling them to stop doing bad things and start doing good things. What are some of the good things *you* can do? (*Pause*) And what are some of the *bad* things you can do? (*Pause*)

When you are about to do something bad, do you ever have a little voice inside your head that shouts, “DON’T DO IT! IT’S WRONG!”? (*Pause*) That voice is called our “conscience.” It is just like a little Jeremiah inside of us, telling us we shouldn’t hurt people or do other things that we know are wrong.

Do you always listen to the Jeremiah inside of you? Or do you sometimes go ahead and do something even when you know it’s wrong? (*Pause*) What happens when you go ahead and do it? (*Pause*) The person you did it to may get mad at you and start hitting you; you may get in trouble with your parents or your teachers; or maybe you don’t get in trouble, but you become a meaner person and you feel bad inside.

The people of Judah—the ones Jeremiah was prophesying to—didn’t listen to him. And they got into *a lot* of trouble. They were conquered, and many of them were taken captive to Babylon. The same kind of thing happens to us when we keep saying and doing selfish, hurtful things: sooner or later we end out getting into trouble. But even worse than that,

when we are selfish we are never really happy—and we make the people around us unhappy, too.

Did God give up on the people because they were being selfish? Did Jeremiah give up? No! In today’s story he bought a field. It’s a silly thing to do when your country is about to be conquered, because your enemy will probably just take the field away. But Jeremiah knew that eventually God would help his people return to their land, and then he would be able to grow things in the field he had bought.

It is the same for us. If we are doing bad things and getting into trouble, and then we realize we have made a big mistake, the Lord is ready to help us change and live in a better way. Then good things can grow in us, just like the crops in Jeremiah’s field.

Basic Correspondences

Babylon = living from selfishness

Benjamin = living from goodness and truth

buy = receive into ourselves

field = goodness and truth growing in us

Thoughts from Swedenborg

“Babel” [or Babylon] refers to worship that is inwardly selfish, and therefore is entirely filthy and sacrilegious. Selfish love is simply our ego. . . . From it comes all kinds of evil, such as hatred, revenge, cruelty, adultery, deceit, hypocrisy, and impiety. So when ego and selfishness are within our worship, these evils are also in it. *Arcana Coelestia* #1326

“Benjamin” . . . refers to living the truth from goodness, since he was born last and was called by his father Jacob “the son of my right hand” (Gen. 35:18)—which means truth from goodness. His tribe lived in the area around Jerusalem (where the tribe of Judah was) because Jerusalem stands for the church’s teachings, and its vicinity for things that come from the church’s teachings. *Apocalypse Revealed* #361

In the spiritual sense, “buying” means getting something for ourselves, and “selling” means pushing it away. This is why the Lord compares the kingdom of heaven to someone who buys and sells things. . . . “The kingdom of heaven” is the goodness and truth in us—meaning it is heaven in us—and “a field” stands for goodness. *Arcana Coelestia* #5886.4