

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## LAND FOR SALE

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5TH OCTOBER 2020

One of the benefits of being a football fan and following my chosen team to lots of away games is that you get to visit towns and villages all over England. I like driving and as I travel around I get to see lots of interesting things from the motorways and A roads. As we were driving up to Scotland recently I noticed a sign that I have often seen in a number of other places, it said "Woodlands for Sale". This made me wonder, what is the point of buying a woodland? So, I looked it up on the internet. The website promotes ownership of a woodland as being good for your physical and mental health. It gives you a space to spend time with friends or family, to practice forest management techniques, camp out or just to enjoy the surroundings. There isn't much else you can do with the woodlands as they are mostly protected but you could gather and sell a small amount of wood. I noticed that Glebe Wood near Whitehaven is available for just £49,000 and I mention this because that is the nearest I could find to what I might describe as my ancestral homelands.

When I saw the "Woodlands for Sale" sign it reminded me of a story in the Bible which tells us about a time when the prophet Jeremiah bought a field. Lets read about this from the Book of Jeremiah and Chapter 32.

"Jerusalem was under siege from the Babylonian army, and Jeremiah was imprisoned in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace. King Zedekiah had put him there, asking why he kept giving this prophecy. "This is what the Lord says `I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will take it. King Zedekiah will be captured by the Babylonians and taken to meet the king of Babylon face to face. He will take Zedekiah to Babylon, and I will deal with him there` says the Lord `If you fight against the Babylonians you will never succeed`" At that time the Lord sent me a message. He said "Your cousin Hanamel, son of Shallum, will come and say to you `buy my field at Anathoth. By law you have the right to buy it before it is offered to anyone else`."

Then, just as the Lord had said he would, my cousin Hanamel came and visited me in the prison. He said "please buy my field at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. By law you have the right to buy it before it is offered to anyone else, so buy it for yourself" Then I knew that the message I had heard was from the Lord" "So I bought the field at Anathoth, paying Hanamel seventeen pieces of silver for it"

So we can see from what we have just read that the situation was not good. Not for Jeremiah, because he was in prison, not for the King, because he was going to be captured, and not for anybody else in or around Jerusalem because they were under siege, most likely short of food and under threat of being killed by the enemy and yet Jeremiah is buying property. Although God had directly told him to do this you could well understand that Jeremiah might have had some misgivings about this deal. Being in prison he probably had limited options to earn money, the field at Anathoth was only a short distance from Jerusalem and probably inside the area occupied by the Babylonian army, Jeremiah wasn't young at this point either so what chance would he have even to work the land. There were so many excuses that Jeremiah could have made to avoid buying the land and for us reading this today it is too easy to say "yes but God had told him to buy it" How often do we know what the right thing to do is and yet find an excuse? Will doing the right thing put us into some sort of risk of harm or danger, will it cost us money that we can't really spare? To put it into context seventeen pieces of silver is worth about £122 in today's money but in Jeremiah's time this would have represented between 2 and 3 months wages. Still, not as much as the £49,000 for Glebe Wood.

We know that Jeremiah had doubts about what he was doing. Yes he knew that it was God's instruction, because God had told him what was going to happen before his cousin arrived, but later, once the deal was signed he prayed. In his prayer he recognises God's sovereign authority and God's provision for him but he says this "And yet, O Sovereign Lord, you have told me to buy the field – paying good money for it before these witnesses – even though the city will still be handed over to the Babylonians"

Jeremiah knew that he would never even see the land he had bought let alone work it. So what was the point of buying the land? Well, as with most of the things Jeremiah did, it was so that God could reveal a little more of His plan. In the face of a terrible situation God was giving hope. Hope for the immediate future and for an eternal future.

As he closed the deal Jeremiah spoke the words of The Lord "Someday people will again own property here in this land and will buy and sell houses and vineyards and fields" In response to Jeremiah's Prayer God spoke to the people of Israel saying "Just as I have brought all these calamities on them, so I will do all the good I have promised them" "Someday I will restore prosperity to them. I, The Lord, have spoken!"

Jeremiah didn't get to see the fulfilment of this prophecy but we can. Just 70 years later the Israelites, who had been taken to Babylon as captives, were restored to the land. Again, in 1948, Israelites, who had been dispersed to all parts of the globe, were restored to their land. God's promise to restore the prosperity was fulfilled, and can be seen to be trustworthy and true right now in our own plain sight. There is, however, one more fulfilment of this prophecy that is yet to come. This is because in some way we are all under siege, right now. Whether that is persecution, illness, mental health issues, work circumstances or anything else that seeks to divert your attention away from God, He has promised to restore you to His land. And this last fulfilment will not be to the physical land of Israel but to the land which we call heaven.

Jesus said this in Chapter 14 of John's gospel "Don't let your hearts be troubled, Trust in God, and also in me. There is more than enough room in my father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am"

Jeremiah trusted God enough to put his money into a field that he would never get anything back from, there are times when we make an investment of time or money, in response to God, for which we, seemingly, don't see anything back from. You know we don't even have to pay 17 pieces of silver to buy the land, Jesus has already paid the price himself.

Jesus just said "Trust in me", will you just trust in Jesus so that one day you can occupy the land that He has promised you?



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