

The Field at Anathoth

Jeremiah 32

90 minutes • Win, Build, Send inductive format

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim. Participants discover what hope looks like when it acts: with Babylon's siege ramps against the walls and the prophet in custody, God tells Jeremiah to buy a field in occupied territory, and Jeremiah signs and seals the deed, has Baruch store it in a clay jar, and preaches one sentence over it: houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land. They learn to pray Jeremiah's prayer of obedient bewilderment, they take the eternal-security question head-on from 32:40, and they find the purchase price of their own redemption.

Catholic Touchstone. Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom and trust Christ's promises, relying not on our own strength but on the grace of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1817). The Church rightly hopes for the grace of final perseverance (CCC 2016): confidence in God without presumption about ourselves.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **The worst possible moment.** It is the tenth year of Zedekiah; Babylon's army is besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah is confined in the court of the guard for preaching that the city will fall (32:1-3). Real estate in Judah is at this moment the worst investment on earth. That is the moment God chooses.
- **The right of redemption.** Jeremiah's cousin Hanamel arrives with a legal claim: buy my field at Anathoth, "for the right of redemption by purchase is yours" (32:7-8). Under the Torah, land stayed in the family: a kinsman had the right and duty to redeem, to buy back, a relative's land (Leviticus 25:25), and later in the same chapter, a relative sold into servitude (Leviticus 25:47-55). The kinsman-redeemer, the *go'el*, is one of Scripture's richest figures: Boaz redeems Ruth by it, and Job cries "I know that my Redeemer lives." Keep the word redeem glowing; the New Testament will pick it up.
- **The transaction, in full legal detail.** Seventeen shekels of silver, weighed; the deed signed, sealed, and witnessed; a sealed copy and an open copy; both stored in an earthenware vessel "that they may last for a long time" (32:9-14). The tedium is the theology: hope files paperwork. Nobody notarizes a symbol.
- **Anathoth, of all places.** The field is in Jeremiah's hometown (Session 1), the town whose men plotted his death (11:21). God has him invest his savings in the soil of the place that rejected him, while the invader's army holds the countryside around besieged Jerusalem. And here is a reflection worth offering the group: there is something like forgiveness folded into this hope, money committed to a future shared with the town that plotted his death.

- **The honest prayer and the echo.** Jeremiah obeys first and then prays his confusion (32:16-25): You made heaven and earth, “nothing is too hard for thee” (32:17), and yet You told me to buy a field while the Chaldeans take the city (32:24-25). God’s answer opens by handing him his own words back: “Behold, I am the LORD... is anything too hard for me?” (32:27). Obedience may precede understanding; it never has to precede honesty.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Roots. The redemption law (Leviticus 25:25) and its most beautiful narrative, Ruth 4, where Boaz redeems land and gains a bride in one transaction at the town gate, with witnesses. Sign-acts that stake the prophet’s own life on the message run through the tradition: Isaiah’s years of walking stripped, Hosea’s marriage, Ezekiel’s brick. Jeremiah’s is the only one with a receipt.

Fulfillment. The vocabulary of this chapter becomes the vocabulary of the cross. St. Peter tells the Church exactly what its redemption cost, and in the currency of this chapter: “You know that you were ransomed... not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18-19). And St. Paul, who knew about treasures stored in clay, writes: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Corinthians 4:7). Your group will find both.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Cyprian of Carthage · *On Mortality*

Preaching while plague emptied Carthage, St. Cyprian in *On Mortality* urged Christians not to grieve as those who have no hope, for the dying depart to God’s promises. That is the vision this chapter enacts: the believer facing the same catastrophe as everyone else, steadied by what God has pledged beyond it. Buying a field during a siege is that faith with a deed attached.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas More · *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, written in the Tower*

Imprisoned in the Tower, St. Thomas More wrote a whole book on comfort in tribulation, teaching that suffering borne with trust in God becomes the soil of consolation, and that the man who trusts God need not be robbed of his cheer by prison. He wrote it, like Jeremiah’s deed, from custody: a work composed for a future he would not see in this life.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thérèse of Lisieux · *Her letters*

St. Thérèse wrote that it is confidence, and confidence alone, that should lead us to Love (Letter 197). Not confidence in our own strength, which fails on schedule, but audacious confidence in God’s. Seventeen shekels of silver, paid against all visible evidence, is confidence of exactly that kind.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

- **CCC 1817** · hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying on the grace of the Holy Spirit.
- **CCC 1821** · we can hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love Him and do His will; in every circumstance we should hope, with grace, to persevere to the end.
- **CCC 2016** · the faithful rightly hope for the grace of final perseverance. Hope, not presumption: central to the steelman chain; keep in the leader guide.
- **CCC 162** · faith is a free gift that can be lost; to persevere in it we must nourish it. Steelman support; leader guide.

THREAD WATCH

THREAD WATCH · LEADER ONLY · NEVER APPEARS IN PARTICIPANT MATERIALS

Thread 1 · Build and Plant (resolved, still bearing fruit). Tonight the resolved thread keeps paying: God extends the new covenant into an “everlasting covenant” (32:40) and says “I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul” (32:41). God planting with His whole heart: point it out with joy; the secrecy is over.

Thread 2 · The Prophet Like Jeremiah. A breadcrumb of vocabulary tonight: the kinsman-redeemer pays a price to buy back what belongs to the family. Q8 will land 1 Peter 1:18-19 openly; let the redemption language do its work without naming the thread. Resolution is next session. Build anticipation at the close: tell them next week we finally answer a question that has been hiding in this study since night one.

Thread 3 · The Watched Word. Quiet setup for Session 10: the deed is written, doubled, sealed, and stored in earthenware “that they may last for a long time” (32:14). A written word, preserved against catastrophe, guaranteeing the future. Next session, a king tries the opposite experiment on another document.

SESSION GOALS

1. Participants can retell the purchase and explain why its legal tedium is the point: hope files paperwork.
2. Participants discover the shape of Jeremiah's prayer: obedience first, honesty immediately after, and God's answer from his own words.
3. Participants hear the eternal-security case from 32:40 at full strength and can distinguish assurance in God's fidelity from presumption about our own.
4. Participants find the purchase price of their own redemption in 1 Peter 1:18-19.
5. Participants identify one “field” God is asking them to buy: one concrete investment in a future only faith can see.

TIME NOTE (90 MINUTES)

Opening prayer and Win: 15 minutes. Build: 55 minutes. Send and Live It This Week: 15 minutes. Closing prayer and memory verse: 5 minutes.

If you are running long: compress Question 2 (the legal details) into the answer summary, and cut Question 9 (the earthen vessel) to its final sentence. Never cut the steelman or the 1 Peter discovery.

The Field at Anathoth

Jeremiah 32

OPENING PRAYER

"Ah Lord GOD! It is You who made the heavens and the earth by Your great power, and nothing is too hard for You. Teach us tonight to hope the way Your prophet hoped: with our hands, our signatures, and our savings, and not only with our feelings. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

(Opening Prayer)

WIN • OPENING QUESTIONS (15 MIN)

W1. What is the biggest thing you ever committed to before you could see how it would work out: a move, a marriage, a career change, a vocation? What did it cost you to sign?

W2. What is the difference between optimism and hope? Can you have one without the other?

BUILD • INDUCTIVE STUDY (55 MIN)

READ JEREMIAH 32:1-8 ALOUD.

1. Set the scene from verses 1-3: where is the Babylonian army, and where is Jeremiah, and why? Now verse 8: what deal does cousin Hanamel propose, and what does Jeremiah say convinced him it was from God?

ANSWER • SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The siege ramps are against Jerusalem's walls, and Jeremiah is locked in the court of the guard for preaching the city's fall (32:1-3). Hanamel offers him the family field at Anathoth under the redemption law (32:7-8), and Jeremiah says: "Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD", because God had told him in advance the cousin was coming. Notice the absurdity God is orchestrating: the worst real estate market in the history of Judah, a buyer in custody, a field behind enemy lines. Whatever this purchase is, it is not a financial strategy.

2. (Compress if short on time.) Walk through 32:9-14 and count the legal formalities: the weighing, the signatures, the witnesses, the copies, the storage jar. Why does the text bother? What is the difference between a gesture of hope and this?

ANSWER • SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Seventeen shekels weighed out; deed signed and sealed; witnesses; a sealed copy and an open copy; both archived in an earthenware jar “that they may last for a long time” (32:9-14). Nobody notarizes a symbol. The paperwork means the purchase is real: enforceable, inheritable, waiting. Hope in Scripture is not a mood; it is a recorded transaction against the future. The jar is the tell: you only preserve documents for a future you actually expect.

3. Verse 15 is the sermon over the deed, one sentence long. Read it aloud. Given everything burning outside the walls, what exactly is God promising, and what is He not promising?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

“Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land” (32:15). He is promising ordinary life will return: markets, deeds, harvests, the unglamorous machinery of a functioning future. He is not promising the city will be spared; the fall still comes. Hope in the biblical key is not the denial of the disaster but the purchase of what lies beyond it. And note where the field is: Anathoth, the hometown that plotted his death (11:21). Offer the group this reflection: a hope invested there carries something like forgiveness inside it.

READ JEREMIAH 32:16-17 AND 32:24-25 ALOUD.

4. Look at the order of events: Jeremiah signs first and prays second. And look at the content of the prayer: it opens in praise (32:17) and ends in bafflement (32:25). What does this prayer teach about the relationship between obedience, understanding, and honesty?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Obedience came before understanding: he bought the field, then told God he did not get it. And honesty came inside the praise: “nothing is too hard for thee... yet thou hast said to me, Buy the field, though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans” (32:17, 25). This is the mature form of Session 5’s lesson: you may obey without understanding, and you may say so out loud. God is not threatened by the gap between our compliance and our comprehension. He answers it: “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too hard for me?” (32:27), handing Jeremiah his own opening line back with a question mark.

READ JEREMIAH 32:37-41 ALOUD.

5. Verses 40-41 extend last week’s summit. What does God call the covenant now, what does He promise to put in their hearts, and, savor this one, with how much of Himself does God say He will do the planting?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

An “everlasting covenant”: the new covenant of 31:31, now with its duration named. He will put the fear of Him in their hearts “that they may not turn from me” (32:40): interior transformation again,

the law and now even reverence written inside. And then the most emotionally extravagant line in the book: “I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul” (32:41). The Shema commanded Israel to love God with all their heart and soul; here God vows His own whole heart and soul back. The planting verb from the first night, and God does it rejoicing.

Steelman: Does 32:40 Teach Once Saved, Always Saved?

BUILD THE CASE AT FULL STRENGTH: PRESENT THIS AS PERSUASIVELY AS A THOUGHTFUL REFORMED FRIEND WOULD

The case: “Read the verse again: ‘I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me’ (32:40). Both directions are guaranteed by God: He will not turn from them, and He will see to it that they do not turn from Him. Jesus says the same: ‘I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand’ (John 10:28). ‘He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion’ (Philippians 1:6). If God Himself guarantees my perseverance, then the believer’s salvation is eternally secure, and the Catholic fear of ‘losing your salvation’ is a denial of the covenant’s own terms. Once His, always His.” This position gives real comfort to real people; present it with its full pastoral force.

6. First press, and be fair: a careful Reformed friend will distinguish the visible covenant community, whose members can fall away, from the elect, whom God preserves, and will say the Bible’s warnings are the very means God uses to keep them. Test that refined account against Scripture’s own warnings. To whom are they addressed, and in what tone? Think of Paul on himself.

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Grant the distinction its due, and then watch it strain. The warnings are addressed to believers as believers, in the first person: Paul about Paul, “I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:27), and to the confident, “let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Hebrews warns people it describes in the richest covenant terms, enlightened, partakers of the Holy Spirit, sanctified by the blood of the covenant, against a falling away too concrete to be hypothetical (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29). Warnings can certainly be means of perseverance, Catholics agree, but a warning only works as a means if what it warns against is really possible for the one warned; a guardrail on a cliff no one could drive off would move no one. And on the visible-versus-elect distinction, notice its cost: it makes assurance unreachable in practice, since no one can verify from inside which group they are in. The entire book of Jeremiah, meanwhile, is covenant members, really God’s, really loved, walking away and reaping it.

7. Second press, and be generous: what does 32:40 really guarantee, and how close can a Catholic come to our friend’s comfort? Distinguish what God pledges about Himself from what He works in us, and name what the Church says we may confidently hope.

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

What God pledges absolutely is His side: “I will not turn away from doing good to them.” No sin of yours can make God quit you; the covenant never lapses from His end, and no one can snatch you from His hand (John 10:28), which is precisely why the one danger left is not theft but walking. What He works in us, the fear of Him in the heart, is a real interior grace that makes perseverance possible and expected, not coerced; and how this corporate promise applies to each individual believer is exactly where the Church bids us hedge, because Scripture also shows hearts that resist (the flask of Session 4). So the Catholic keeps nearly all the comfort, on the Church’s own authority rather than this text alone: we “rightly hope for the grace of final perseverance” (CCC 2016), we live in confident assurance of God’s unbreakable fidelity, and we refuse only the presumption that our freedom has been retired, for the Church teaches that grace never coerces, and that a person remains able, tragically, to reject it (CCC 162, 1861). Assurance about God: total. Presumption about ourselves: the one thing hope declines. The field is bought; we are still asked to live on it.

8. Live discovery. Jeremiah redeemed the family field for seventeen shekels of silver. The New Testament tells us what our redemption cost, and it names the currencies it did not cost. It is in 1 Peter 1, verses 18-19. Find it and read it aloud.

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

“You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). The kinsman-redeemer law reaches its destination: we had a Kinsman with the right of redemption, He exercised it, and the price was not weighed out in silver. Jeremiah bought a field under the shadow of the invader as an act of hope; Christ bought us in enemy-held territory as an act of love. Keep the lamb of that verse in your pocket; it will matter enormously next week.

9. *(Cut to the final sentence if short on time.)* The deed went into an earthenware jar to survive the catastrophe (32:14). St. Paul uses the same image for something else stored in clay. Find 2 Corinthians 4:7. What is the treasure, what is the jar, and why does God prefer that packaging?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). The treasure is the Gospel, the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Christ; the jars are us: fragile, ordinary, chipped. God’s habit is consistent from Anathoth to Corinth: He stores His guarantees of the future in clay, so that when they survive the catastrophe, everyone knows whose power did the preserving.

SEND · CLOSING QUESTIONS (15 MIN)

S1. What is your field at Anathoth: the concrete investment of money, time, commitment, or forgiveness that God is asking you to make in a future only faith can currently see?

S2. Jeremiah obeyed first and brought God his confusion second. Where are you currently waiting to understand before you obey, and what would signing first look like?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Name your field, then take one irreversible step toward buying it this week: the application submitted, the account opened, the apology delivered, the commitment made in front of witnesses. Hope files paperwork.
- Pray Jeremiah's prayer pattern once: begin with "Nothing is too hard for You," then tell God plainly the thing you have obeyed without understanding. Let 32:27 be His side of the conversation.
- Write "not with silver or gold" on a card and put it where you keep your money, as a one-week reminder of what you cost and what you are worth.

CLOSING PRAYER

"Father, nothing is too hard for You. You bought a future for Your people when every visible sign said the story was over, and in the fullness of time You paid for us in a currency beyond silver. Give us deeds-and-witnesses hope: hope that signs, seals, and invests. And where we obey without understanding, receive our honesty as prayer. Through Christ our Redeemer. Amen."

(Closing Prayer)

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Ah Lord GOD! It is thou who hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and by thy outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for thee." (Jeremiah 32:17, RSV2CE)

Every Passage in This Session

Jeremiah 32

Primary Text

- Jeremiah 32:1-8 · siege, custody, Hanamel's offer (Q1)
- Jeremiah 32:9-14 · the transaction and the jar (Q2, compressible)
- Jeremiah 32:15 · the one-sentence sermon (Q3)
- Jeremiah 32:16-27 · the prayer of obedient bewilderment; God's echo (Q4)
- Jeremiah 32:37-41 · everlasting covenant; planting with all His heart (Q5, steelman)

Old Testament Roots

- Leviticus 25:25 · the kinsman-redeemer law
- Ruth 4:1-12 · redemption at the gate, with witnesses (leader background)
- Jeremiah 11:21 · Anathoth's plot (Q3 callback)

New Testament Fulfillment

- 1 Peter 1:18-19 · ransomed, not with silver or gold (live discovery, Q8)
- 2 Corinthians 4:7 · treasure in earthen vessels (Q9, cuttable)
- John 10:28; Philippians 1:6 · steelman texts
- 1 Corinthians 9:27; 10:12; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29 · the warning texts (steelman Q6)

Catechism

- CCC 1817, 1821 · the virtue of hope
- CCC 2016 · rightly hoping for final perseverance (steelman)
- CCC 162 · faith can be lost; nourish it (steelman, leader only)