Jeremiah

**Introduction**

Jeremiah, often called the “weeping prophet” because of his sorrow over the persistent message of God’s judgment, prophesied to the nation of Judah from the reign of King Josiah in 627 b.c. until sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586. He dictated his prophecies to a scribe named Baruch (36:4, 32). Jeremiah’s task as a prophet was to declare the coming judgment of God. However, throughout the book we also see God’s concern for repentance and righteousness in individuals as well as nations. This dual focus is seen in God’s instructions to Jeremiah: he was “to pluck up and to break down” but also “to build and to plant” (1:10). Jeremiah sees a future day when God will write his law on human hearts, and “they shall all know me,” and “I will remember their sin no more” (31:33–34).

**A. Personal Circumstances**

Besides the author of this prophetic book, seven other men in the Bible wear the name Jeremiah. The name means *Yahweh appoints* or *establishes*. Verse 1 of the book gives the basic personal information about this prophet.

Jeremiah was a priest before he was a prophet. His father, Hilkiah, may have been the famous high priest who played such a significant role in the reformation of 621 b.c. (cf. 2 Chr 34:9).

As a boy, no doubt Jeremiah would have accompanied his father to the Temple from time to time. He would have learned by observation the vocation which he anticipated entering when he reached the age of thirty.

Jeremiah grew up in the priestly village of Anathoth, about three miles north of Jerusalem. This village was part of the tribal area of Benjamin. Perhaps a childhood in this rural area accounts for the numerous agricultural metaphors which Jeremiah used during his ministry.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Table

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**B. Political Backdrop**

Three kings are named in the first verse of the book during whose reigns Jeremiah ministered. Two other kings, who reigned but a year between them, are omitted.

*1. Reign of Josiah (640–609 b.c.)*. Jeremiah was called to the prophetic ministry in the thirteenth year of King Josiah, i.e., 627 b.c. Josiah was a godly man from his youth. Some conjecture that he was tutored by the prophet Zephaniah during his boyhood. He certainly did not learn godliness from his father Amon who did evil in the eyes of the Lord (2 Chr 33:22). When Josiah began to rule, Judah was a vassal state within the great Assyrian Empire. This vassalage required the Jews to venerate Assyrian deities. So idolatry was prevalent in Judah during this period.

In his eighth year of reign, when he was but sixteen years old, Josiah began to seek the God of his father David (2 Chr 34:3). In his twelfth year at the age of twenty the king began to purge Jerusalem of all the paraphernalia of idolatry. His campaign extended to the territory once occupied by the ten northern tribes, territory which had been incorporated into the Assyrian Empire. This was a direct challenge to Assyrian hegemony in the region. Since the Assyrian Empire was at this time weak, Josiah was never compelled to defend his actions on the battlefield.

In the thirteenth year of Josiah, Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet to the nations. The autobiographical account of that call is recorded in the first chapter of the book. Jeremiah was reluctant to accept the challenge extended to him because he was but a youth. He surely could not have been more than a teenager at the time.

The first milestone in the ministry of the prophet was the major reformation in the eighteenth year of Josiah. A scroll of the Law of God was found by the high priest Hilkiah buried beneath debris in the Temple. After confirming that the threats and curses contained in this scroll were still valid, Josiah intensified his campaign to cleanse his land of idolatry. Jeremiah must have been an active participant in this effort. Much of the sermonic material in chapters 2–7 of the book grew out of the context of this great reformation.

For eighteen years of his ministry, until the end of Josiah’s life, Jeremiah had the support of the crown in his preaching efforts. Josiah died when he engaged Pharaoh Neco in battle at the pass of Megiddo in 609 b.c. Neco was moving north to reinforce the remnants of the Assyrian army on the Euphrates river. He had no quarrel with Josiah. Yet Josiah felt compelled to confront him. The Judean king was mortally wounded in that battle. Jeremiah was deeply affected by the senseless death of this godly king. He wrote several lamentations which Judean singers employed for years to commemorate Josiah’s death (2 Chr 35:25).[[2]](#footnote-2)

*2. Reign of Jehoahaz (609 b.c.)*. The people of the land anointed Shallum as king in place of his father. Shallum took the throne name Jehoahaz. This king ruled but three months. He was then summoned to Riblah by Pharaoh Neco. There he was put in chains and deported to Egypt. Apparently many people regarded Jehoahaz as rightful king even after his deportation. They expected him to return to claim his throne. Jeremiah, however, announced that Shallum would die in the place where they had carried him captive (Jer 22:11f.).

*3. Reign of Jehoiakim (609–598 b.c.)*. Pharaoh Neco selected a brother of Shallum, Eliakim, to be the new king. Neco gave the name Jehoiakim to Eliakim. The new king was placed under an enormous annual tribute obligation to Egypt. In 605 b.c. when Neco was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar in the battle of Carchemish, Jehoiakim switched allegiance to Babylon. This crafty king was able to maintain himself on the throne of Judah for eleven years. Those were miserable years for Jeremiah. The prophet’s life was in constant jeopardy. Jehoiakim was the target of some of Jeremiah’s most harsh criticism and prediction.[[3]](#footnote-3)

*4. Reign of Jehoiachin (597 b.c.)*. Jehoiakim died a natural death, apparently, in December 598 b.c. He was succeeded by his son Coniah who took the throne name Jehoiachin. After a reign of just over three months, this young king was forced to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar in March of 597 b.c. At that time he was deported to Babylon with ten thousand of his subjects. Jeremiah predicted that no descendant of Jehoiachin would successfully sit upon the throne of David in Judah (Jer 22:30).

*5. Reign of Zedekiah (597–586 b.c.)*. Nebuchadnezzar installed Mattaniah, another son of King Josiah, as his vassal king in Jerusalem. Mattaniah took the throne name Zedekiah. This last Old Testament king ruled eleven years. He was under constant pressure from his advisors to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. On the other hand, Jeremiah consistently urged Zedekiah to surrender to Babylon. The king could not resist the pressure to seek an alliance with Egypt against Nebuchadnezzar. This political maneuvering led to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 b.c.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**C. Public Ministry: Dimensions**

Jeremiah’s ministry extended from his call in 627 b.c. to well beyond the fall of Jerusalem in 586 b.c., a period of over four decades. Jeremiah’s ministry was multi-dimensional.

*1. Preaching*. He was first and foremost a preacher. Though not as eloquent as Isaiah nor as colorful as Ezekiel, Jeremiah nonetheless was a powerful messenger. His sermons throb with emotion. His metaphors paint vivid pictures of sin and apostasy. (converting to another religion)

*2. Drama*. Jeremiah was an actor as well as a preacher. He dramatized his message from time to time in order to attract an audience and to underscore the truths he was preaching. Jeremiah’s action parables were not so bizarre as those of Ezekiel, but they were nonetheless strange. Among his “props” were a dirty girdle, a pottery jar, a cup of wine, and an ox yoke. To drive home his point he offered wine to a group of teetotalers, buried a stone beneath the pavement before a government building, and purchased a plot of ground in the midst of the siege of Jerusalem.

*3. Writing*. Jeremiah was a writer. He wrote, as noted above, a lament over the death of Josiah. He wrote a letter to Babylon (Jer 29). He wrote the book that bears his name and probably the Biblical books of Lamentations and Kings. Through his writings this prophet has inspired believers for twenty-five hundred years.

*4. Prayer*. Prayer was yet another dimension of Jeremiah’s ministry. He was persistent in intercession in spite of repeated indications of the hopelessness of his efforts (chap. 14; 18:20). This prophet has recorded for posterity his prayers of complaint (4:10), perception (5:3), praise (10:6f.), and clarification (32:16–23). Perhaps more teaching on prayer is found in the Book of Jeremiah than in any other book of the Bible.

*5. Statesmanship*. Jeremiah was a statesman. He supported the national reformation efforts of King Josiah. After the battle of Carchemish, he urged his nation to recognize Babylon as world ruler. He battled the majority in the royal court who thought that Egypt would provide relief from Babylonian oppression. Jeremiah saw clearly that Babylon would rule the world for seventy years. Although he consistently urged submission to Babylon, Jeremiah was no traitor. After Jerusalem’s fall he was given the option of spending the rest of his days under royal patronage in Babylon. He chose to remain with the tattered remnant of his people in the devastated land of Judah.

*6. Counseling*. Jeremiah ministered privately to individuals as well as to the masses. He was a counselor. He was equipped for this ministry by his personal victory over depression in a mid-ministry crisis. Five times Jeremiah cried out to God from the black depths of doubt and discouragement. God answered the prophet’s “confessions” in such a way that Jeremiah was was able to “get back on track” in his ministry. Using the insights which grew out of these dialogues with God, Jeremiah advised Baruch, his secretary, during one of his periods of discouragement. King Zedekiah sought Jeremiah out on numerous occasions to ask for his advice in dealing with national crises.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**D. Public Ministry: Agony**

Not without reason has Jeremiah been called the weeping prophet. This man suffered as no other Biblical character save the Son of God himself. Three distinct aspects of his personal suffering can be identified in the book.

*1. Ministerial aspect*. Jeremiah experienced the agony of his message of judgment. He saw clearly in vision the total destruction of the land he loved. He saw the suffering of men, women and children. Emotionally he was drained each time he shared those dire visions with his audience (9:1; 13:17).

If his message was painful to deliver, the reception which that message received was even more painful. The people he loved—the people he knew were standing on the brink of national destruction—refused to listen. The men of his own hometown plotted his demise (11:19, 21). He could not even trust members of his own family (12:6). For his assertion that Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed Jeremiah was branded a heretic and threatened with death (26:7–9). When his predictions failed to materialize immediately, they branded him a false prophet and scoffed at his doomsday threats (17:15). To his contemporaries Jeremiah was a joke—a sad, pathetic, anachronistic (placed in the wrong time) joke (20:7b). The crowds cheered when a representative of the more “enlightened” clergy publicly humiliated Jeremiah in the temple courts (chap. 28).

*2. Psychological aspect*. Jeremiah’s personal loneliness intensified his agony. If ever a man needed a sympathetic spouse, this prophet surely did. Yet God ordered him not to marry (16:2). The preacher’s lifestyle must match his proclamation. For this preacher to marry and father children would be inconsistent with his announcement that shortly Jerusalem would be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. For the same reason God prohibited Jeremiah from attending social gatherings, whether feasts or funerals (16:5–9). This prophet was to be a “loner” and through his loneliness he would preach a sermon. This was no time for parties, for there was nothing to celebrate. On the other hand, funerals would soon be impossible. So many people would die in the imminent judgment that conducting individual memorial services would be impractical. Thus Jeremiah preached as much by what he refused to do as by what he did or said. He was a sermon in shoes!

*3. Physical aspect*. Jeremiah’s agony had physical as well as psychological dimensions. The chief officer of the Temple had him seized, flogged and put in the public stocks overnight (20:1ff.). During the last days of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was arrested on the charge of treason. Again he was beaten, then was thrown into a subterranean dungeon. He nearly died in that foul place (37:11ff.). Shortly after that ordeal he again was charged with treason for urging Jerusalem’s defenders to desert to the Babylonian armies. The king permitted ruthless princes to have their way with this man of God. They cast him into an empty cistern and left him there to starve to death (38:6). A humble black servant of the king risked his life to rescue the prophet from certain death (38:11ff.).[[6]](#footnote-6)

**A. Composition of the Book**

Jeremiah had been preaching for twenty-three years before he was instructed to record his sermons on a scroll. The prophet dictated his messages to the scribe Baruch. This first edition of the Book of Jeremiah was destroyed in 604 b.c. by the tyrant King Jehoiakim. God, however, commissioned Jeremiah to produce another scroll. This second edition of the book contained all the words of the first scroll and “many similar words” as well (36:32).

A third edition of the book must have been produced by Baruch in Egypt after the death of Jeremiah. This Egyptian edition must have been considerably larger than the second edition. It would have contained the record of the last twenty years of the prophet’s ministry. The third edition of Jeremiah was produced about 560 b.c. A hasty copy of this edition of the book was made before Baruch emigrated to Babylon. There he produced the fourth edition of the book. Certain additional oracles of the prophet were added and all the material was reorganized. This Babylonian edition became the prototype for the standard Hebrew form of the book which has been translated into English.

Who, then, is actually responsible for the writing of this book? Baruch certainly performed the mechanical work of a stenographer. Did he do more? The last verse of chapter 51 clearly indicates that Jeremiah was not responsible for the authorship of chapter 52. Baruch most likely added that chapter in order to document the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s most dramatic and controversial prediction, viz., the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the people of God. At some point Baruch may have functioned more like a modern editor. To what degree was he responsible for arranging the material in the book? The data available does not permit a definitive answer to this question.

The above reconstruction of the composition of the Book of Jeremiah may help to explain why the Greek translation—the so-called Septuagint—is so different from the standard Hebrew edition of the book. This version was translated about 250 b.c. in Alexandria, Egypt. It is about one eighth shorter than the Hebrew form of the book. The major sections of the book are arranged in a different manner, and even within the various sections the material is in a different order.5 Some blocks of material found in the Hebrew are absent in the Greek version. Much of the repetition found in the Hebrew version is absent in the Septuagint. These facts lead to the conclusion that the Alexandrian translators had before them a very different Hebrew manuscript. Perhaps they based their translation on the Egyptian edition of the book which was hastily copied by the Jews in Egypt before Baruch emigrated to Babylon. This hypothesis would account for the rather substantial differences in the the two forms of the text.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**B. The Plan of the Book**

The arrangement of materials in the Book of Jeremiah has been called the most confused in the Old Testament. Large blocks of the material are in chronological order. Here and there, however, chapters are inserted which jump forward or backward in time. Jeremiah or his editor Baruch must have grouped material at times according to a topical rather than a chronological principle.

**C. Predictions in the Book**

According to Barton Payne, the Book of Jeremiah contains ninety different specific predictions. This total ranks second only to Isaiah. Some 812 verses, sixty per cent of the total, are predictive. The majority of these predictive verses (222) focus on the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. Among the more outstanding political prophecies of the book are the following: (1) the seventy years of service to Babylon (25:11f.); (2) Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of Egypt (43:8–13); (3) the capture of Babylon by Cyrus (25:12–14); and (4) the defeat of Pharaoh Neco at Carchemish (46:5f.).

The Book of Jeremiah does not contain nearly as much Messianic prophecy as does Isaiah. Yet prophecies pointing to Christ and his kingdom are not lacking. Perhaps the most important of those is the famous new covenant prophecy of 31:31. Two prophecies are noteworthy in the personal Messianic category. A future leader, the Righteous Shoot, will rule over the united tribes (23:5). This ruler will enjoy priestly as well as royal privileges (30:21).[[8]](#footnote-8)

**Chapter 1**

**Background of the Unit**

Jeremiah was called to prophetic ministry in the thirteenth year of King Josiah, 627 b.c. (Jer 1:2). As early as his eighth year, when he was but sixteen years of age, Josiah began “to seek the God of his father David.” In his twelfth year Josiah launched a religious reformation. He removed the Baal altars and chopped down the sacred poles (Asherim) beside them. He began to purge Judah and Jerusalem. He even carried his crusade into the territories formerly occupied by the tribes of the Northern Kingdom (2 Chr 34:1–7). The reform efforts—and especially the campaign outside his borders—were a direct challenge to the authority of the Assyrians who had dominated Judah for over half a century.

Jeremiah was called to ministry to aid this last heroic effort to change the direction of Judah. While the king was attacking the external and public aspects of idolatry, the preacher would attempt to root out idolatry from the hearts of the people. Five years after the call of Jeremiah, in 621 b.c., the reformation efforts were intensified after the discovery in the Temple archives of a copy of the ancient scriptures penned by Moses (2 Chr 34:8–33).

The material in the first unit of the Book of Jeremiah comes from the earliest period of the prophet’s ministry. Josiah must have applauded, if not actively encouraged, the work of the young preacher. The sermon excerpts recorded in chapters 2–10 should be assigned to the years 627–609 b.c. Precise dating for smaller units in this section is not possible.[[9]](#footnote-9)

***The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, 2to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.***

The call of Jeremiah was not as elaborate as those of Isaiah and Ezekiel. He simply affirms that “the word of the Lord came unto me” without bothering to explain the mechanics of that process. This autobiographical narrative describes how God (1) summoned him to service, (2) assured him of support, (3) confirmed him in ministry, and (4) exhorted him to action.[[10]](#footnote-10)

God called these two giants – both Josiah and Jeremiah – to serve Him and His people at the same time. Each supported the other, and though they did not leave behind an enduring transformed Judah, they served God faithfully and removed every excuse Judah might offer for the judgment that eventually came through Babylon.

In this line of succession of the Kings of Judah, some are left out (Jehoahaz in [2 Chronicles 36:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Chronicles+36.1-2&t=NKJV) and Jehoiachin in [2 Chronicles 36:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Chronicles+36.8-9&t=NKJV)).

**The Call of Jeremiah**

***4Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying,***

Jeremiah had a personal encounter with the LORD. He was apparently raised in a godly, priestly home – yet he had to have a personal encounter with God and His word.

i. Because many of his prophecies have echoes and hints of previous prophets of Israel, it seems that Jeremiah grew up knowing God’s word. “His future life and thought were moulded to a large extent by an early acquaintance with the utterances of the eight-century BC prophets such as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, and probably also by the lives and sayings of Elijah and Elisha. ” (Harrison)

***5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,***

***and before you were born I consecrated you;***

Jeremiah was already a young man, but God wanted him to know that his call went back even further than his youth. Jeremiah existed in the mind and plan of God before he ever existed in his mother’s womb. God told Jeremiah this so that he could walk in God’s pre-ordained plan by his own will.

***I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”***

Ancient Jewish legends say that Jeremiah was so called that he was born circumcised and that he came out of the womb prophesying. In fact, as the legend goes, in his out-of-the-womb prophecy he complained of the faithlessness of his mother. When she protested, he had to explain that he meant “mother” as a symbol for Jerusalem.

***6Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.”***

Jeremiah was probably anywhere from 17 to 20 years old at this time. Apparently, he felt that his youth prevented him from being a good or authoritative messenger of God’s word.

**A. Summons to Service (1:4–6)**

The first revelation which came to Jeremiah concerned him personally. God had “formed” him in his mother’s womb, i.e., he was a unique person, endowed with attributes to accomplish what no other man could accomplish. God “knew” him, i.e., recognized his strengths and weaknesses, yet chose him anyway. God “consecrated” him, i.e., set him apart from all others to fulfill a specific mission. This series of divine affirmations impressed upon Jeremiah’s mind the fact that he and he alone could do the job which God had in mind for him (1:5a).

Jeremiah had been appointed “a prophet,” i.e., an official ambassador of God who spoke in his name and by his authority. Though other prophets spoke to and about foreign nations, Jeremiah is the only one to receive the title “a prophet to the nations.” The fate of tiny Judah was so inextricably intertwined with the superpowers that anything he would say to or about his country would of necessity involve the nations of the world (1:5b).

Jeremiah understood immediately the basic involvements of this appointment and he was intimidated by them. In an emotional outburst (“Alas Lord God!”) he expressed his keen sense of unworthiness. His age was against him (“I am a youth”). Culture dictated that young people listen but not speak in public affairs. He also did not “know how to speak,” i.e., he lacked natural abilities (1:6).[[11]](#footnote-11)

***7But the Lord said to me,***

***“Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’;***

Though Jeremiah’s protest was true, it was irrelevant – and God did not want to hear it, nor did He want Jeremiah to say it. God insists on His right to call young people and to use them if they will listen to His call and answer it.

because God used David when he was a young man. As a young man David served his father faithfully in the shepherd’s field, killed a lion and a bear protecting the flock, killed Goliath, served King Saul and was a commander in the Israeli army.

because God filled John the Baptist with the Holy Spirit in the womb ([Luke 1:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+1.15&t=NKJV)). You aren’t too young to be filled mightily with the Spirit of God.

because God used Timothy as a young man, and through the Apostle Paul told him, Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ([1 Timothy 4:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+4.12&t=NKJV))

because God used Hudson Taylor as a young man. Maybe one of the greatest missionaries since the Apostle Paul. When he was 17 years old he dared to seek God, and totally surrendered himself to God’s will. Almost immediately he felt a distinct impression that God wanted him to be a missionary to China, and he began to prepare for the mission field by living the kind of life by faith he wanted to live on the mission field and living it right there in England. By the time he was 22, he first arrived in Shanghai.

because God used J. Edwin Orr as a young man. Born and raised in Belfast Ireland, at 21 years of age he left a good paying job in the middle of the Great Depression to tour around Great Britain on his bicycle and tell any who would listen about revival. He trusted God to provide for both him and his widowed mother, and God came through gloriously – it was 10,000 miles of miracle through Great Britain. He wrote a popular book about his adventures in faith – so popular that some youth groups banned the book – they were afraid that their youth might take off on their own bikes without really being called by God.

Give God the young years of your life and you will never regret it. I regret that I did not give God my young years but I don’t regret being used in middle age of 30.

***for to all to whom I send you, you shall go,***

***and whatever I command you, you shall speak.***

God spoke with both encouragement and persuasion to Jeremiah. He protested that he couldn’t go because of his youth but God simply said, “**you shall go**.”

i. Later, Jeremiah remembered his initial reluctance: Nor have I desired the woeful day; You know what came out of my lips; it was right there before You. ([Jeremiah 17:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+17.16&t=NKJV))

ii. Though reluctant, Jeremiah couldn’t hold back: Then I said, “I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.” But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not. ([Jeremiah 20:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+20.9&t=NKJV))

***8 Do not be afraid of them,***

***for I am with you to deliver you,***

***declares the Lord.”***

Jeremiah had two reasons to be afraid. First, he was young. Second, his message was hard to hear. But the presence of God with him was greater than those two reasons.

***9Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me,***

In his vision, Jeremiah saw the LORD touch him in this personal way. As God touched the mouth of Isaiah at his call to the office of prophet, He also touched the mouth of Jeremiah (though in a different way).

***“Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.***

***10 See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms,***

***to pluck up and to break down,***

***to destroy and to overthrow,***

***to build and to plant.”***

As a young man, Jeremiah was an unlikely candidate for such a ministry; yet God knew that Jeremiah had the personality and character to fulfill this call as the years went on. Actually 40 years. First part of ministry, freedom from King Josiah. Then Jeremiah read a scroll to Johoakim and he threw the scroll in the fire and he was arrested and whipped. And then Zedekiah where Jeremiah said to get ready for the Babylonian captivity. It will be better to cooperate.

Jeremiah was definitely called, but he did not fulfill his call in his first year – or his first ten years. His 40-year ministry had several different phases, and taken together, they fulfilled God’s call.

i. The first period of Jeremiah’s ministry took place under the protection of the godly king Josiah, who took advantage of turmoil in the surrounding superpowers (such as Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon) to reform the nation and turn it back to the Lord. During this time, Jeremiah went on a preaching tour through the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem ([Jeremiah 11:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+11.6&t=NKJV)). Yet during this time the hearts of the people did not seem changed. He preached for 23 years but no one seemed to listen ([Jeremiah 25:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+25.3&t=NKJV)). He even faced many threats against his life ([Jeremiah 11:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+11.19&t=NKJV) and [12:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+12.6&t=NKJV)).

ii. After King Josiah died, things got worse. Jeremiah read a scroll of his collected prophecies to the new king Jehoiakim – and the king took the scroll, cut it in pieces, and threw it in the fire ([Jeremiah 36:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+36.22-23&t=NKJV)). In this general period Jeremiah was chained and flogged ([Jeremiah 20:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+20.2&t=NKJV)), and survived a close brush with death ([Jeremiah 26:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+26.10-11&t=NKJV)).

iii. His most difficult season was under another king, Zedekiah, who was set on the throne by the Babylonians, but didn’t continue to obey them. Jeremiah brought a message from God that must have seemed like madness to his generation. The message was that judgment through the Babylonians was inevitable; and they must prepare for it and submit to it. He wrote to those already exiled in Babylon and told them to prepare for a 70-year exile and to have a peaceable attitude towards Babylon ([Jeremiah 29:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+29.7&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+29.10&t=NKJV)). He was regarded as a traitor and imprisoned ([Jeremiah 37:11-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+37.11-16&t=NKJV)).

**B. The Assurance of Support (1:7–10)**

To ease the apprehension of this reluctant servant, God reassured him in four areas. First, the Lord gave to his prophet assurance of direction. Jeremiah was instructed not to focus his attention on his own weaknesses, but on God’s strength. God would direct both the where of his ministry and the what. He would go where God directed him. He would speak what God revealed to him (1:7).

Second, Jeremiah received assurance of deliverance. God looked beneath the surface excuses of Jeremiah and saw the fear in his heart. That fear was not unfounded. At times Jeremiah would need to be rescued from the machinations of those who hated the truth. God, however, promised to be with him, to deliver him, not *from* any difficult circumstances, but *through* those circumstances (1:8).

Third, God gave to the young man assurance of power. Whether in the visional or physical realm, the young man felt his lips touched by God’s hand. The touch of Isaiah’s lips was for cleansing; that of Jeremiah’s was for empowerment. From this day forward he could preach boldly because God declares: “I have put my words in your mouth” (1:9).

Finally, God gave assurance of authority to prophesy. Jeremiah’s appointment involved the authority to verbally “pluck up, break down, destroy and overthrow” the nations of his day. This he would do by preaching God’s word of judgment against them. Once the old order had been removed, Jeremiah’s preaching would become more optimistic. He would “build and plant” the basic principles of a new era, the age of Messiah (1:10).[[12]](#footnote-12)

***11****And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see an almond branch.”* ***12****Then the Lord said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.”*

The significance of the **branch of an almond tree** was important in two ways. First, the almond was well known as the first tree to bud in the spring. This indicated that God was ready to quickly fulfill His word, just as the almond tree seems ready to bud.

iv. Secondly, the Hebrew word for **almond tree** is close to and derived from the Hebrew word for watchful, and this word is used in God’s response to Jeremiah. “These verses contain a play on words that is lost in English but is vital for the force of the vision. The ‘almond tree’ is saqed and God is ‘watching’ (soqed) over his word to fulfill it.” (Feinberg)

***13****The word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north.”* ***14****Then the Lord said to me, “Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land.* ***15****For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the Lord, and they shall come, and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah.* ***16****And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands.*

The idea is of a boiling cauldron that will tip over with its opening facing south. This is a vivid picture of destruction and judgment pouring out upon Judah from the north (**out of the north calamity shall break forth on all the inhabitants of the land**).

 The main reason for the coming judgment was Judah’s chronic idolatry.

**C. Confirmation in Ministry (1:11–16)**

On two occasions subsequent to the initial summons Jeremiah’s call was confirmed by visions. In the first vision his attention was directed to an object which he correctly identified as an almond (*shaqed*) rod. Since the almond was the first tree to “wake up” in the spring, it was sometimes known as the “wakeful tree.” Employing a play on words, God declared that he was watching (*shoqed*) over his word to perform it. The prophet could speak the divine word with the assurance that God was alert and awake, that his word would not fail (1:11f.).

In the second vision Jeremiah’s attention was directed to a boiling pot in the process of tipping over. It was “facing away from the north,” i.e., its contents were about to be spilled southward. This symbol meant that “out of the north the evil,” i.e., calamity, “would break forth” on all the inhabitants of Judah. The boiling pot symbolized the political turmoil which would arise north of Judah when the Assyrian empire fell and the Babylonian empire arose on the scene of history. God would employ “the kingdoms of the north” to conquer the cities of Judah. Through those foreign agents God would pronounce his judgments on the Jews because of their unfaithfulness (1:13–16).[[13]](#footnote-13)

***17****But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them.* ***18****And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land.* ***19****They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you.”*

This promise of God proved true, but so did the other aspect to the promise. The enemies of Jeremiah did **not prevail against** him, and he served God with distinction through great trials for 40 years.

i. “To this thin-skinned young man, his description of terms of battlements and heavy metal might have seemed a wild exaggeration, but in fact it proved an understatement. He would hold out against all comers for over forty years, outdoing any fortress under siege.” (Kidner)

**D. Challenge to Action (1:17–19)**

The call narrative concludes with a series of exhortations designed to challenge Jeremiah to begin his ministry. “Gird up your loins,” i.e., tuck your long robe into your belt so as to be prepared for strenuous activity. “Arise,” so as to be heard, and “speak to them all which I command you.” He must not only gird up, stand up, and speak up, he must also bear up. “Do not be terrified by them” (NIV). His audience would try to intimidate him, and if they sensed that they were succeeding, God would permit them to crush his ministry through fear (1:17).

God would prepare the prophet for his confrontation with a hostile audience. They would find this man to have a God-given fortitude and determined purpose. Before his adversaries he would appear to be as invincible as a fortified city, as indestructible as an iron pillar, and as impregnable as a bronze wall. Kings, princes, priests and prominent people of the land would fight against him by every means. They would not be able to overcome Jeremiah. The Lord would be with him every step of the way to deliver him out of any danger. Thus the last implied exhortation of the call narrative was to look up to God as the source of strength (1:18f.).[[14]](#footnote-14)

**Israel Forsakes the Lord**

**2 The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2“Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the Lord,**

God often refers to Judah and Jerusalem as Israel in Jeremiah, though the northern kingdom of Israel (representing the ten northern tribes) fell to the Assyrians some 100 years before Jeremiah’s work as a prophet. God refers to Judah and Jerusalem as representing all of Israel because it did.

**“I remember the devotion of your youth,** Through Jeremiah, God made a heartfelt appeal to Jerusalem, drawing upon the memory of their past relationship. To say, “I remember how wonderful our relationship once was” is a powerful appeal.

**your love as a bride,**

**how you followed me in the wilderness,** They were not perfect in their relationship with God then, but they had a love for God and a trust in the Lord that was sorely lacking in Jeremiah’s days.

**in a land not sown.**

**3 Israel was holy to the Lord,**

**the firstfruits of his harvest.**

**All who ate of it incurred guilt;**

**disaster came upon them,** In this season of special relationship with God, the LORD took special care of Israel. If anyone attempted to **devour** Israel, then **disaster** would **come upon them**. This was a great contrast to the judgment at the hand of Israel’s enemies that would eventually come upon an unfaithful Jerusalem.

**declares the Lord.”**

**4Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel. 5Thus says the Lord:**

**“What wrong did your fathers find in me** God called the house of Israel to account for their rejection of Him and their pursuit of idols. He asked to know what fault there was in Him that caused their idolatry.

**that they went far from me,**

**and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?**

**6 They did not say, ‘Where is the Lord**

**who brought us up from the land of Egypt,**

**who led us in the wilderness,**

**in a land of deserts and pits,**

**in a land of drought and deep darkness,**

**in a land that none passes through,**

**where no man dwells?’**

**7 And I brought you into a plentiful land**

**to enjoy its fruits and its good things.** God reminded Israel of how good and kind He had been to them, giving them the **bountiful country** of Canaan.

1. The events of the Exodus had happened some 800 years before Jeremiah’s time. It’s understandable (though not good) that Israel would come to take the blessing of the land for granted after some 800 years. There is less explanation for why we take the good works of God for granted sometimes only weeks later. Why do I forget God’s blessing so quickly

**But when you came in, you defiled my land**

**and made my heritage an abomination.**

**8 The priests did not say, ‘Where is the Lord?’**

**Those who handle the law did not know me;** wow!

**the shepherds transgressed against me;**

**the prophets prophesied by Baal**

**and went after things that do not profit.** Civic and religious leaders did more harm than good for the people of God and towards the LORD Himself.

**9 “Therefore I still contend with you,**

**declares the Lord,**

**and with your children’s children I will contend.** God would not allow this great sin on behalf of the leaders and people of Israel to go unaddressed. In formal fashion, God brought a legal complaint against Israel for their sin.

**10 For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see,**

**or send to Kedar and examine with care;**

**see if there has been such a thing.**

**11 Has a nation changed its gods,**

**even though they are no gods?** Since Israel liked to look to surrounding nations in imitation of their idolatry, God asked His rebellious people to look to even distant places (**beyond the coasts of Cyprus** or **Kedar**) (west to east) and to ask: Do they forsake their gods? Strangely, the heathen around Israel were more faithful to their pagan gods than Israel was to the Living God.

**But my people have changed their glory**

**for that which does not profit.** The heathen nations were faithful to their gods, even though their gods did nothing for them. Yet Israel had the God of all **Glory** who had blessed them in innumerable ways and they turned from Him. People continue in their addictions. Lusts, sins.

**12 Be appalled, O heavens, at this;**

**be shocked, be utterly desolate,**

**declares the Lord,** First this is an astonishment, that men can be so foolish, disloyal, and ungrateful. Then it is something to fear, because a righteous God must answer such outrageous rebellion. Finally, it is a desolation, because the result of judgment upon such rebellious people will leave little behind.

**13 for my people have committed two evils:**

**they have forsaken me,**

**the fountain of living waters,** This was the first of the evils of God’s people – to forsake God. This is evil, not only for disloyalty and ingratitude, but also because it is foolish; God is the **fountain of living waters**, the never-ending supply of the good, pure, essential supplies of life.

**and hewed out cisterns for themselves,**

**broken cisterns that can hold no water.** Having forsaken God’s **fountain of living waters**, His people then worked hard (**hewn themselves**) for a greatly inferior supply (**cisterns**). Despite their hard work, all they ended up with were **broken cisterns that can hold no water**.

**Tuesday** (before, what did I do?)

**Romans 1: God’s Wrath on Unrighteousness**

***18****For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.* ***19****For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.* ***20****For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.* ***21****For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* ***22****Claiming to be wise, they became fools,* ***23****and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

***24****Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,* ***25****because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

***26****For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;* ***27****and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

***28****And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.* ***29****They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips,* ***30****slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,* ***31****foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.* ***32****Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. [[15]](#footnote-15)*

**14 “Is Israel a slave? Is he a homeborn servant?** Earlier in the chapter ([Jeremiah 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+2.3&t=NKJV)), God promised that He would defend an obedient Israel. Now through Jeremiah, God asked His people to consider the case of **Israel** in the sense of the conquered northern kingdom, to remember why they were now slaves.

**Why then has he become a prey?**

**15 The lions have roared against him;** (Assyria)

**they have roared loudly.**

**They have made his land a waste;**

**his cities are in ruins, without inhabitant.**

**16 Moreover, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes**

**have shaved the crown of your head.** God here warned Judah not to trust in Egypt, which would (or perhaps had by that time) have **broken the crown of your head** by defeating and killing the good king Josiah in battle ([2 Kings 23:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Kings+23.29&t=NKJV)). Jeremiah next spoke of Judah’s future. Humiliation would be inflicted on the *head* of Judah by the men of “Memphis and Tahpanhes,” i.e., the Egyptians. The reference may be to the humiliating defeat of Josiah by Pharaoh Neco at the battle of Megiddo in 609 b.c. and the subsequent deportation of King Jehoahaz to Egypt (2 Kgs 23:29–34). Because of the certainty of prophetic vision, Jeremiah could describe the fate of Judah as a *fait accompli* (2:16).[[16]](#footnote-16)

**17 Have you not brought this upon yourself**

**by forsaking the Lord your God,** The reason was plain; Israel was captive, her people slaves, her cities burned because they forsook the LORD.

**when he led you in the way?**

**18 And now what do you gain by going to Egypt**

**to drink the waters of the Nile?**

**Or what do you gain by going to Assyria**

**to drink the waters of the Euphrates?**

God cautioned Jerusalem from looking to either Egypt (**the waters of Sihor**, the Nile) or Assyria (**the waters of the River**, the Euphrates) for help. The water of their rivers was nothing compared to the fountains of living water found in the LORD.

**19 Your evil will chastise you,**

**and your apostasy will reprove you.** If Jerusalem did continue on their destructive course, there would be more than enough correction and rebuke found in the consequences of their actions. They would certainly know therefore and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing that you have forsaken the LORD your God.

**Know and see that it is evil and bitter**

**for you to forsake the Lord your God;**

**the fear of me is not in you,**

**declares the Lord God of hosts.**

Jerusalem feared attack from the Babylonians and therefore contemplated alliances with Egypt and Assyria. Yet the real problem was they did not **fear** the LORD, and **the Lord GOD of hosts** – that is, of heavenly armies. God was more than able to protect them if they repented and trusted in Him.

**20 “For long ago I broke your yoke**

**and burst your bonds;**

**but you said, ‘I will not serve.’**

**Yes, on every high hill**

**and under every green tree**

**you bowed down like a whore.** God symbolically spoke of the idolatry of the conquered northern kingdom as prostitution. In going after idols, Israel was like a wife so unfaithful to her husband that she was a **harlot**, consorting with idols.

This is allegorically speaking, but an allegory connected with reality. Many of the pagan and Canaanite idols honored by the Israelites were essentially sex cults, honored with ritual prostitution. Their idolatry was often connected with sexual immorality with the use of male and female prostitutes.

**21 Yet I planted you a choice vine,**

**wholly of pure seed.**

**How then have you turned degenerate**

**and become a wild vine**? Symbolic pictures of Judah’s sins, harlots, God planted a beautiful vine but you have made it a weed., can’t be clean?

**22 Though you wash yourself with lye**

**and use much soap,**

**the stain of your guilt is still before me,**

**declares the Lord God.**

**23 How can you say, ‘I am not unclean,**

**I have not gone after the Baals’?**

**Look at your way in the valley;** Valley of Hinnon, idolatry to Baal, Asheroth, Molech including child sacrifice.

**know what you have done—**

**a restless young camel running here and there,**

**24 a wild donkey used to the wilderness,**

**in her heat sniffing the wind!** A female donkey in heat? Wild, uncontrollable. Chasing down any male donkey it can smell.

**Who can restrain her lust?**

**None who seek her need weary themselves;**

**in her month they will find her.**

**25 Keep your feet from going unshod**

**and your throat from thirst.**

**But you said, ‘It is hopeless,**

**for I have loved foreigners,**

**and after them I will go.’** The idols did not pursue you, you went after them.

Thursday

**26 “As a thief is shamed when caught,**

**so the house of Israel shall be shamed:** The **thief** is only ashamed when he is found out. He regrets getting caught and penalized, not the crime itself. In the same way, Israel under exile was really only sorry they had been caught and had suffered for their sin.

**they, their kings, their officials,**

**their priests, and their prophets,**

**27 who say to a tree, ‘You are my father,’** this is backwards, how confused you are.

**and to a stone, ‘You gave me birth.’** Jeremiah described their foolish idolatry, worshipping things of wood and **stone**. The **tree** was a wooden idol representing Asherah, the leading female Canaanite deity. The **stone** represented Baal, the leading male Canaanite deity.

**For they have turned their back to me,**

**and not their face.**

**But in the time of their trouble they say,**

**‘Arise and save us!’**

**28 But where are your gods**

**that you made for yourself?**

**Let them arise, if they can save you,**

**in your time of trouble;**

**for as many as your cities**

**are your gods, O Judah.**

**29 “Why do you contend with me?**

**You have all transgressed against me,**

**declares the Lord.** In the previous lines God spoke of how His people would turn to Him in the time of their trouble, yet not out of true repentance; instead out of a mere desire to escape present consequences. Here, God tests the repentance of Israel to see if they will return to Him through difficulty.

**30 In vain have I struck your children;**

**they took no correction;**

**your own sword devoured your prophets**

**like a ravening lion.** God’s people were guilty of rejecting and murdering the prophets.

**31 And you, O generation, behold the word of the Lord.**

**Have I been a wilderness to Israel,**

**or a land of thick darkness?**

**Why then do my people say, ‘We are free,**

**we will come no more to you’?** God’s people were guilty of pride, believing they didn’t need to come and humble themselves before the living God.

**32 Can a virgin forget her ornaments,**

**or a bride her attire?**

**Yet my people have forgotten me**

**days without number.** Israel’s rejection of God was unnatural. It is only natural for a young woman to treasure her **ornaments**, or for a **bride** to value her clothing. When God’s people forget their God – who has done so much for them – it is an offense against all that is good and right. Israel’s rejection of God was unnatural.

**33 “How well you direct your course**

**to seek love!** Israel felt that the pursuit of love was self-justifying and any pursuit of love could be considered beautiful. In their thinking, the love of idols was just as good as the love of Yahweh, their covenant God. The love expressed in what Yahweh called sexual immorality was just as good as love expressed in what Yahweh called sexual morality. God did not accept their attempt to **beautify**their **way to seek love**.

**So that even to wicked women**

**you have taught your ways.** For Israel in Jeremiah’s day, it wasn’t enough for them to call their sinful pursuit of love beautiful; they also had to teach it to others.

**34 Also on your skirts is found**

**the lifeblood of the guiltless poor;** The love is not beautiful, there is much hurt, unwanted babies, poverty, abuse, sacrifices of these babies. Single parents due to sin.

**you did not find them breaking in.**

**Yet in spite of all these things**

**35 you say, ‘I am innocent;**

**surely his anger has turned from me.’** Despite the plain nature of their sin, Israel could still claim innocence. They felt entitled to Divine mercy.

**Behold, I will bring you to judgment**

**for saying, ‘I have not sinned.’** Their claim of innocence did not impress God. He would still bring a **case against** them; their claim to innocence made them more guilty, not less.

**36 How much you go about,**

**changing your way!** The New Living Translation has this, First here, then there – you flit from one ally to another asking for help. There was no reason for them to **gad about** – they should have gone straight away to trusting the LORD.

**You shall be put to shame by Egypt**

**as you were put to shame by Assyria.**

**37 From it too you will come away**

**with your hands on your head,** God promised to bring their trust in Egypt to nothing, and (without national repentance) they would go forth from Judah as captive slaves, with **your hands on your head**. God would not honor their alliances with Egypt or any other foreign power.

**for the Lord has rejected those in whom you trust,**

**and you will not prosper by them.**

**3 “If a man divorces his wife**

**and she goes from him**

**and becomes another man’s wife,**

**will he return to her?**

**Would not that land be greatly polluted?**

**You have played the whore with many lovers;**

**and would you return to me?**

**declares the Lord.**

Under the Law of Moses a woman who had been divorced and married to a second husband could not be reclaimed by the first husband under any circumstances (Deut 24:1–4). Such an action would pollute the land. Judah, however, acted worse than the situation envisioned in the Law. She had not been divorced (Isa 50:1), but she had played the harlot with many lovers. Yet God was willing to take her back! What amazing grace! (3:1).[[17]](#footnote-17)

· NASB: But you are a harlot with many lovers; yet you turn to Me

· ESV: And would you return to Me?

· NLT: But you have prostituted yourself with many lovers, says the LORD. Yet I am still calling you to come back to me. God’s invitation to come back to Him.

**2 Lift up your eyes to the bare heights, and see!**

**Where have you not been ravished?** Idea of raped, as you were looking for a good time they abused you.

**By the waysides you have sat awaiting lovers**

**like an Arab in the wilderness.**

**You have polluted the land**

**with your vile whoredom.** You solicited them, they didn’t even have to work at it.

Everywhere, even out in the open (“bare heights”), evidence of Judah’s idolatrous harlotry abounded. As desert Arabs rush forward to greet strangers, so Judah threw herself into the arms of other deities. God had disciplined Judah by withholding the showers which supposedly the storm god Baal controlled. Yet Judah was unashamed of her conduct. She had the brazen face of a prostitute who could engage in the most disgusting perversion and yet show no shame[[18]](#footnote-18)

**3 Therefore the showers have been withheld,**

**and the spring rain has not come;**

**yet you have the forehead of a whore;**

**you refuse to be ashamed.**

**4 Have you not just now called to me,**

**‘My father, you are the friend of my youth—**

God called upon Judah to acknowledge him as Father and Husband right now. They had, as a matter of fact, used these titles for God, but at the same time they had done evil things. They had gotten by with this hypocrisy so far, but God would not restrain his anger for ever[[19]](#footnote-19)

**5 will he be angry forever,**

**will he be indignant to the end?’**

**Behold, you have spoken,**

**but you have done all the evil that you could.”** When was the last time you saw someone repent before being found out?

**Faithless Israel Called to Repentance** learn from the sins of others

**6The Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah: “Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? 7And I thought, ‘After she has done all this she will return to me,’ but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. 9Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. 10Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the Lord.”** “Faithless Israel” (the Northern Kingdom) had given herself totally over to the fertility cult. She had practiced her harlotry throughout the land. God had waited in vain for her to return to him. Eventually God had divorced faithless Israel, i.e., sent her off into captivity. Judah observed all this, but failed to learn from it. She took the matter of fidelity to Yahweh lightly and committed adultery with gods of wood and stone. Attempts at reform in Judah were at best half-hearted, at worst hypocritical.[[20]](#footnote-20)

**11And the Lord said to me, “Faithless** (backsliding) **Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.** Under the principle that the greater the light, the greater the guilt, “faithless Israel” was considered more righteous in God’s eyes than “treacherous Judah.” To dramatize this fact, Jeremiah was commanded to “proclaim these words toward the north.” He was to invite the scattered tribes of the north to return to the Lord. He promised that he would not look upon them any longer in anger[[21]](#footnote-21)**12Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say,**

**“ ‘Return, faithless**(backsliding) **Israel,**

**declares the Lord.**

**I will not look on you in anger,**

**for I am merciful,**

**declares the Lord;**

**I will not be angry forever.**

**13 Only acknowledge your guilt,**

**that you rebelled against the Lord your God (**Judah lacked honesty before God.) example like David when confronted by Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.

**and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree,**

**and that you have not obeyed my voice,**

**declares the Lord.**

**14 Return, O faithless children,**

**declares the Lord;**

**for I am your master;** married to you, vs 8 divorce. The Lord is perusing his wayward people.

**I will take you, one from a city and two from a family,**

**and I will bring you to Zion.**

To avail themselves of God’s grace, they needed to acknowledge and to renounce their previous apostasy. They were still his sons, though woefully disobedient. He would gather the few who recognized him as *Master* and he would bring them to Zion (3:13f.). Some individuals from the scattered northern tribes returned to Jerusalem during the Persian period. The reference, however, appears to be to the messianic Zion (Heb 12:22ff.). ***22****But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gatherin*g,[[22]](#footnote-22)The purpose of this call to the northern tribes is to underscore this truth: for individuals there is hope on the other side of national judgment. God would still have a people even after the destruction of physical Jerusalem.[[23]](#footnote-23)

**15“ ‘And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.**

The individuals who responded to God’s call for repentance would experience wonderful blessings. The down payment on these promises was made in the postexilic period of Old Testament history (c. 538–445 b.c.). Only in the age of Messiah, however, would the full scope of these blessings be realized. First, God would provide a new leadership (“shepherds”) for his people. These leaders would be thoroughly committed to God (“men after my own heart”). Under their leadership the people would be able to grow in knowledge and understanding (3:15). The godly leadership of men like Ezra and Nehemiah was the down payment on this promise. Full realization was found in Messiah, the chief shepherd, and the apostles he appointed to be the teachers of the Church.[[24]](#footnote-24)

**16And when you have multiplied and been fruitful in the land, in those days, declares the Lord, they shall no more say, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again.** Second, once having returned to Canaan, God’s people would experience wonderful growth in population “in the land.” This was true during the postexilic period. Canaan, however, was but a symbol of the realm over which Messiah would rule (3:16a). Third, a far better worship system would be introduced. The ark, the centerpiece of Mosaic worship, would be absent, but it would not be missed. The Second Temple, which was built during the postexilic period, did not contain the ark. That which the ark symbolized, viz., God’s presence among his people, would be realized in the person of Jesus Christ (3:16b).[[25]](#footnote-25)

**17At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.** Fourth, the new age would be characterized by a new revelation (3:17a). The New Jerusalem would be known as “the throne of Yahweh” for there would be his “name,” i.e., his revelation of himself. “All nations,” i.e., Gentiles, would be attracted to that place. Fifth, a new humility would mark those who inhabited the new Jerusalem. They would no longer walk “after the stubbornness of their evil heart” [[26]](#footnote-26)

**18In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage.** Sixth, a new unity would be in evidence among Zion’s citizens. Representatives of the house of Israel and the house of Judah would jointly return from the land of the north to their ancestral land (3:18). Again, Canaan here is a symbol of that spiritual realm ruled by Messiah. Citizens in his kingdom are all one in the Lord (Gal 3:28).[[27]](#footnote-27)

THURSDAY

**19 “ ‘I said,**

**How I would set you among my sons,**

**and give you a pleasant land,**

**a heritage most beautiful of all nations.**

**And I thought you would call me, My Father,**

**and would not turn from following me.** Repentance!

The question now raised and answered by God himself is this: How can an apostate people be restored to sonship and inheritance? A good start would be to recognize Yahweh as “Father.” Then they must continue from that day forward to walk with the Lord daily. The entire house of Israel had “dealt treacherously” with her husband, and only a radical change on her part could restore the relationship (3:19f.).[[28]](#footnote-28)

**20 Surely, as a treacherous wife leaves her husband,**

**so have you been treacherous to me, O house of Israel,**

**declares the Lord.’ ”**

**21 A voice on the bare heights is heard,**

**the weeping and pleading of Israel’s sons**

**because they have perverted their way;**

**they have forgotten the Lord their God.**

**22 “Return, O faithless sons;**

**I will heal your faithlessness.”**

**“Behold, we come to you,**

**for you are the Lord our God.**

Some would respond to God’s call for repentance. Jeremiah could hear, as it were, those penitent ones making earnest supplication on the mountain heights. He mentioned that here in order to suggest that “weeping and supplications” are part of genuine repentance. He encouraged those “faithless sons” who were distraught over their spiritual condition to “return.” God promised to heal the disease of apostasy if they would heed his call (3:21–22a).[[29]](#footnote-29)

**23 Truly the hills are a delusion,**

**the orgies on the mountains.**

**Truly in the Lord our God**

**is the salvation of Israel.**

**24“But from our youth the shameful thing has devoured all for which our fathers labored, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. 25Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us. For we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.”**

Jeremiah provided for the penitent a model prayer by which they might present appropriately their petition before the Lord. First, they needed to accept Yahweh as their God. This involved a repudiation of the loud Baal-cult festivals as “a deception,” i.e., a “rip off.” They needed to acknowledge that Yahweh is the only “salvation of Israel.” They must confess frankly the depths to which they had been involved in the Baal cult. From the very beginning of their nation they had lavished gifts upon Baal. They had even offered to him as sacrifices their own sons and daughters. They frankly must state how ashamed they were of their long-standing disobedience (3:22b–25).[[30]](#footnote-30)

**4 “If you return, O Israel,**

**declares the Lord,**

**to me you should return.**

**If you remove your detestable things from my presence,**

**and do not waver,**

Repentance for Judah involved four specific acts: (1) returning to God; (2) removing abominations; (3) being faithful; and (4) making true oaths. If Judah complied with these requirements, then the nation would be blessed. As a result Gentiles would turn to the God of Judah as a source of blessing (4:1f.).[[31]](#footnote-31)

**2** **and if you swear, ‘As the Lord lives,’**

**in truth, in justice, and in righteousness,**

**then nations shall bless themselves in him,**

**and in him shall they glory.”**

**3For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem:**

**“Break up your fallow ground,**

**and sow not among thorns.**

**4 Circumcise yourselves to the Lord;**

**remove the foreskin of your hearts,**

**O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem;**

**lest my wrath go forth like fire,**

**and burn with none to quench it,**

**because of the evil of your deeds.”**

This long section closes with three dramatic figures for repentance: (1) breaking up the hardened soil of the heart; (2) weeding the heart so that the seed of the word might fall on good ground; and (3) circumcising the heart. The external mark upon their physical body had no significance unless accompanied by internal change (4:3–4a). Jeremiah concluded with a warning: The alternative to repentance was the unquenchable fire of God’s wrath (4:4b).[[32]](#footnote-32)

**Background of the Unit**

Excerpts from the preaching of Jeremiah continue in the second unit of the book. No compelling reason has been given for dating any of this material to the period after the death of Josiah. Most likely then these materials represent the substance of Jeremiah’s preaching during the years 627–609 b.c. During this period the power of the crown was on the side of religious reform. No hint of any overt opposition to Jeremiah is found here.[[33]](#footnote-33)

**Outline of the Unit**

A. Preaching Regarding Judgment (4:5–6:26).

B. Preaching Regarding Worship (7:1–8:3).

C. Preaching Regarding Knowledge (8:4–17).[[34]](#footnote-34)

Jeremiah grouped his sermon excerpts in a logical progression. In the previous unit he (1) described the desperate sin problem in Judah; and urged the people to repent in order that God might be able to bless them nationally and individually. In this unit he described in detail the alternative to repentance, viz., judgment.[[35]](#footnote-35)

**A. Announcement of Coming Judgment (4:5–18)**

Jeremiah used three dramatic figures to announce that the judgment of God was coming against Judah.[[36]](#footnote-36)

*1. The lion (4:5–10)*

**Disaster from the North**

**5Declare in Judah, and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say,**

**“Blow the trumpet through the land;**

**cry aloud and say,**

**‘Assemble, and let us go**

**into the fortified cities!’**

**6 Raise a standard toward Zion,**

**flee for safety, stay not,**

**for I bring disaster from the north,**

**and great destruction.**

**7 A lion has gone up from his thicket,**

**a destroyer of nations has set out;**

**he has gone out from his place**

**to make your land a waste;**

**your cities will be ruins**

**without inhabitant.**

Jeremiah began by describing in second person action verbs the frenzied flight to fortified cities. An unidentified enemy was approaching. As the fortresses of Judah were threatened, people would take final refuge in Jerusalem. This was “the evil from the north” about which Jeremiah was instructed at his call (1:14). The enemy would approach Jerusalem like a lion which leaves its jungle abode to harass men. This “destroyer of nations” would wreak havoc on the cities and countryside as well (4:5–7).[[37]](#footnote-37)

**8 For this put on sackcloth,**

**lament and wail,**

**for the fierce anger of the Lord**

**has not turned back from us.”**

Lamentation would be appropriate in that day as the people come to realize that they are experiencing the unrelenting “fierce anger of the Lord.” Kings and princes would be immobilized with fear; prophets and priests dumbfounded, unable to explain the national calamity (4:8f.).[[38]](#footnote-38)

**9“In that day, declares the Lord, courage shall fail both king and officials. The priests shall be appalled and the prophets astounded.” 10Then I said, “Ah, Lord God, surely you have utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, ‘It shall be well with you,’ whereas the sword has reached their very life.”**

In response to this first distinct revelation of judgment, Jeremiah utters a prayer of complaint. He felt that God had “greatly deceived” the nation. God had given his people reason to believe that the nation would have “peace,” i.e., prosperity, security. Jeremiah must be referring either (1) to his own optimistic forecast in 3:14–18; or (2) to the false prophets which God permitted to preach a message of peace (cf. 4:10; 6:14; 8:11). In either case, the charge was ridiculous, and God did not even bother to answer it (4:10).[[39]](#footnote-39)

*2. The tempest (4:11–13)*

**11At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, “A hot wind from the bare heights in the desert toward the daughter of my people, not to winnow or cleanse, 12a wind too full for this comes for me. Now it is I who speak in judgment upon them.”**

**13 Behold, he comes up like clouds;**

**his chariots like the whirlwind;**

**his horses are swifter than eagles—**

**woe to us, for we are ruined!**

The hosts of enemy soldiers are envisioned approaching Jerusalem like a blasting whirlwind from the desert. This strong wind would be sent by God, and through it he would pronounce judgments against his people. Jeremiah imagined what the desperate cry of the people would be in that terrible day: “Woe to us, for we are ruined!”[[40]](#footnote-40)

*3. The keepers (4:14–18)*.

**14 O Jerusalem, wash your heart from evil,**

**that you may be saved.**

**How long shall your wicked thoughts**

**lodge within you?**

Inserted into the midst of this dark judgment passage is another appeal for repentance: “Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem.” The city personified continued to harbor wicked thoughts in her mind. If she was to be spared, she would need to rid herself of these thoughts (4:14).[[41]](#footnote-41)

**15 For a voice declares from Dan**

**and proclaims trouble from Mount Ephraim.**

**16 Warn the nations that he is coming;**

**announce to Jerusalem,**

**“Besiegers come from a distant land;**

**they shout against the cities of Judah.**

**17 Like keepers of a field are they against her all around,**

**because she has rebelled against me,**

**declares the Lord.**

**18 Your ways and your deeds**

**have brought this upon you.**

**This is your doom, and it is bitter;**

**it has reached your very heart.”**

Without repentance Jerusalem faced a terrible fate. Jeremiah painted a word picture of that day when the news would be relayed toward Jerusalem from the north (Dan; Mount Ephraim) that the enemy was rapidly approaching. The attackers would besiege Jerusalem, sitting like prison keepers around the perimeter of the capital. No one would be allowed to leave Jerusalem. When this bitter day arrived, Jerusalem would have no one to blame but herself. Her heart, which could not be moved to repentance, in that day would be touched with sorrow (4:15–18).[[42]](#footnote-42)

**Thursday 2/22**

**Anguish over Judah’s Desolation.** In describing the judgment which Jerusalem must face, Jeremiah emphasized three points.[[43]](#footnote-43)

*1. Terrifying judgment (4:19–22)*.[[44]](#footnote-44)

**19 My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain!**

**Oh the walls of my heart!**

**My heart is beating wildly;**

**I cannot keep silent,**

**for I hear the sound of the trumpet,**

**the alarm of war.**

Through his prophetic gifts Jeremiah could mentally experience the terrors of that judgment day. His heart pounded within him as he heard the sounds of war. One piece of bad news would follow another. The land would suddenly fall to the enemy, as suddenly and completely as a collapsing tent (4:19f.).[[45]](#footnote-45)

**20 Crash follows hard on crash;**

**the whole land is laid waste.**

**Suddenly my tents are laid waste,**

**my curtains in a moment.**

**21 How long must I see the standard**

**and hear the sound of the trumpet?**

Jeremiah protested these terrifying visions of judgment. “How long” must I see them, he asked. Though the complaint is not addressed to God, it is the Lord who answered the question. Visions of judgment must continue because God’s people were “foolish.” They were “stupid children” who had no walk with God (“know me not”) nor spiritual “understanding.” They were utterly brilliant when it came to plotting wrong doing; but they did not know the first thing about doing what was right (4:21f.).[[46]](#footnote-46)

**22** **“For my people are foolish;**

**they know me not;**

**they are stupid children;**

**they have no understanding.**

**They are ‘wise’—in doing evil!** Are prisons were full of these people.

**But how to do good they know not.”**

*2. Devastating judgment (4:23–26)*. [[47]](#footnote-47)Jeremiah saw in vision the desolate condition of Judah during the exile to Babylon (586–538 b.c.). He described what he saw with two words taken from the creation vocabulary of Genesis 1, “formless and void.” The idea is that the land of Judah would be unorganized and uninhabited as a result of the execution of the fierce anger of Yahweh.[[48]](#footnote-48)

**23 I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void;**

**and to the heavens, and they had no light.**

**24 I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking,**

**and all the hills moved to and fro.**

**25 I looked, and behold, there was no man,**

**and all the birds of the air had fled.**

**26 I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert,**

**and all its cities were laid in ruins**

**before the Lord, before his fierce anger.**

*3. Inevitable judgment (4:27–31)*.[[49]](#footnote-49)

**27For thus says the Lord, “The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end.**

The poetic description of the devastation of the judgment was not to be taken literally. God would not execute “a complete destruction,” but it would be bad enough. Heavens and earth would mourn over the sight. Of this God plainly had spoken, and he would not relent (4:27f.). Judah as a political entity would cease to exist.[[50]](#footnote-50)

**28 “For this the earth shall mourn,**

**and the heavens above be dark;**

**for I have spoken; I have purposed;**

**I have not relented, nor will I turn back.”**

**29 At the noise of horseman and archer**

**every city takes to flight;**

**they enter thickets; they climb among rocks;**

**all the cities are forsaken,**

**and no man dwells in them.**

**30 And you, O desolate one,**

**what do you mean that you dress in scarlet,**

**that you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold,**

**that you enlarge your eyes with paint?**

**In vain you beautify yourself.**

**Your lovers despise you;**

**they seek your life.**

**31 For I heard a cry as of a woman in labor,**

**anguish as of one giving birth to her first child,**

**the cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath,**

**stretching out her hands,**

**“Woe is me! I am fainting before murderers.”**

Again Jeremiah alluded to the panic of that day. People would hear the approach of cavalry and flee to safety wherever they might find it. In these dark days Judah, like a harlot attempting to woo lovers, would try to seduce foreign nations to come to her aid. Her “lovers” (allies), however, would turn against her and seek her death. Instead of an attractive harlot, Judah would be more like a woman travailing in delivering her first child. Her desperate cries for relief would go unanswered. She would in the end realize that she was at the mercy of ruthless murderers (4:29–31).[[51]](#footnote-51)

**Jerusalem Refused to Repent**

**5:1–13** Jeremiah depicts a scene where he desperately tries to find one righteous person whose presence might persuade Yahweh to postpone punishment. The scene resembles Abraham’s attempt to save Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of 10 righteous people (Gen 18:22–33). As is the case with Abraham, Jeremiah is unable to find the required number of righteous people. Ezekiel later overturns this concept, arguing that the righteousness of a few would not save the many, who must be punished for their own sins (Ezek 14:12–14).[[52]](#footnote-52)

In chapter five the focus is on six reasons why the terrible judgment was necessary.[[53]](#footnote-53)

*1. Moral corruption (5:1–6)*. [[54]](#footnote-54)

**5 Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,**

**look and take note!**

**Search her squares to see**

**if you can find a man,**

**one who does justice**

**and seeks truth,**

**that I may pardon her.**

**2 Though they say, “As the Lord lives,”**

**yet they swear falsely.**

**3 O Lord, do not your eyes look for truth?**

**You have struck them down,**

**but they felt no anguish;**

**you have consumed them,**

**but they refused to take correction.**

**They have made their faces harder than rock;**

**they have refused to repent.**

God wanted Jeremiah to see the necessity for the judgment. He instructed him to make a personal investigation. If he could find one righteous man God would spare the city. The prophet’s search turned up men who used the name of God in oaths, but only to swear to that which was not true. He knew that God was looking for *justice* in men’s dealings with their fellows, and *truth* or faithfulness in their dealings with God. For the lack of these two essential qualities Judah required and received divine discipline. They, however, had refused correction. No matter how severe the disaster, they had hardened their face like a rock (5:1–3).[[55]](#footnote-55)

**4 Then I said, “These are only the poor;**

**they have no sense;**

**for they do not know the way of the Lord,**

**the justice of their God.**

**5 I will go to the great**

**and will speak to them,**

**for they know the way of the Lord,**

**the justice of their God.”**

**But they all alike had broken the yoke;**

**they had burst the bonds.**

**6 Therefore a lion from the forest shall strike them down;**

**a wolf from the desert shall devastate them.**

**A leopard is watching their cities;**

**everyone who goes out of them shall be torn in pieces,**

**because their transgressions are many,**

**their apostasies are great.**

Jeremiah was still not ready to concede that no righteous man could be found in the nation. He thought that among the wealthy he would find those who had the leisure time to study and know the way of God. He found, however, that they too had “broken the yoke,” i.e., they were lawless. Only one fate awaited an ox that broke loose from its yoke and headed for the forest. The wild beasts would rip it to pieces. Because of their many “transgressions” and “apostasies,” such would be the fate of Judah at the hands of the ferocious Babylonians (5:4–6).[[56]](#footnote-56)

*1. Moral corruption*

*2. Sexual impurity (5:7–9)*.[[57]](#footnote-57)

**7** **“How can I pardon you?**

**Your children have forsaken me**

**and have sworn by those who are no gods.**

**When I fed them to the full,**

**they committed adultery**

**and trooped to the houses of whores.**

**8 They were well-fed, lusty stallions,**

**each neighing for his neighbor’s wife.**

**9 Shall I not punish them for these things?**

**declares the Lord;**

**and shall I not avenge myself**

**on a nation such as this?**

Even though Yahweh provided all the material needs for his people, yet they flocked to the house of the temple harlot to participate in the fertility rites of Baal. Their “worship” practices had spilled over into everyday life. Sexual desire had become an uncontrollable animal appetite. Like mindless horses they neighed after the wives of their neighbors. Such a breakdown of sexual mores is an affront to God. He must punish any nation which permits this corruption to take place.[[58]](#footnote-58)

*1. Moral corruption*

*2. Sexual impurity*

*3. Treacherous unbelief (5:10–18)*. [[59]](#footnote-59)

**10 “Go up through her vine rows and destroy,**

**but make not a full end;**

**strip away her branches,**

**for they are not the Lord’s.**

God himself would direct the enemy into his vineyard (Judah) to begin a ruthless pruning process. Those who had been unfaithful to the Lord would be removed by death or exile. A restriction, however, was imposed upon the pruners. They were not to make “a complete destruction” (cf. 4:27) of Judah (5:10).[[60]](#footnote-60)

**11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah**

**have been utterly treacherous to me,**

**declares the Lord.**

**12 They have spoken falsely of the Lord**

**and have said, ‘He will do nothing;**

**no disaster will come upon us,**

**nor shall we see sword or famine.**

**13 The prophets will become wind;**

**the word is not in them.**

**Thus shall it be done to them!’ ”**

The entire covenant people (Israel and Judah) had “dealt very treacherously” with the Lord. The most sacred relationship—Israel’s marriage to Yahweh—had been violated, and that due to no fault of the Lord. These people did not believe that God could or would bring any calamity upon them. They regarded his spokesmen who prophesied such things as nothing but windbags. They threatened the messengers with the same judgment which had been pronounced on them (5:11–13).[[61]](#footnote-61)

**The Lord Proclaims Judgment**

**14 Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of hosts:**

**“Because you have spoken this word,**

**behold, I am making my words in your mouth a fire,**

**and this people wood, and the fire shall consume them.**

**15 Behold, I am bringing against you**

**a nation from afar, O house of Israel,**

**declares the Lord.**

**It is an enduring nation;**

**it is an ancient nation,**

**a nation whose language you do not know,**

**nor can you understand what they say.**

**16 Their quiver is like an open tomb;**

**they are all mighty warriors.**

**17 They shall eat up your harvest and your food;**

**they shall eat up your sons and your daughters;**

**they shall eat up your flocks and your herds;**

**they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees;**

**your fortified cities in which you trust**

**they shall beat down with the sword.”**

**18“But even in those days, declares the Lord, I will not make a full end of you.**

The threats of Jeremiah’s preaching were not idle. God assured him that his words would be a judgment fire to consume his skeptical audience. God would bring a mighty nation from afar against the house of Israel. They would overrun the land devouring everything in their path including the fortified cities in which the Jews had put their trust. Yet a remnant would survive; God would not make of them “a complete destruction” (5:14–18).[[62]](#footnote-62)

**19And when your people say, ‘Why has the Lord our God done all these things to us?’ you shall say to them, ‘As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.’ ”** punishment is just

Once the divine calamity began to fall, people would seek out the prophet to inquire as to the reason for it. His answer was to be along the following lines. The punishment would be appropriate to the crime. They had served foreign gods in Canaan; God would make them serve strangers in a foreign land (5:19).[[63]](#footnote-63)

*1. Moral corruption*

*2. Sexual impurity*

*3. Treacherous unbelief*

*4. Religious apostasy (5:19–24)*.[[64]](#footnote-64)

**20 Declare this in the house of Jacob;**

**proclaim it in Judah:**

**21 “Hear this, O foolish and senseless people,**

**who have eyes, but see not,**

**who have ears, but hear not.**

**22 Do you not fear me? declares the Lord.**

**Do you not tremble before me?**

**I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea,**

**a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass;**

**though the waves toss, they cannot prevail;**

**though they roar, they cannot pass over it.**

**23 But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart;**

**they have turned aside and gone away.**

**24 They do not say in their hearts,**

**‘Let us fear the Lord our God,**

**who gives the rain in its season,**

**the autumn rain and the spring rain,**

**and keeps for us**

**the weeks appointed for the harvest.’**

Jeremiah was preaching to a “foolish and senseless people.” They were totally insensitive to the creative handiwork of God. They had no reverence for the God who controls the movements of the sea and “gives the rain in its season.” While the mighty ocean obeys the will of God, Israel did not. This people had “a stubborn and rebellious heart;” they had departed from the boundaries established by the Law of Moses. They were totally dependent on God for the harvests, but they had no intention of reverencing him (5:20–24).[[65]](#footnote-65)

*1. Moral corruption*

*2. Sexual impurity*

*3. Treacherous unbelief*

*4. Religious apostasy*

*5. Social injustice (5:25–29)*.[[66]](#footnote-66)

**25 Your iniquities have turned these away,**

**and your sins have kept good from you.**

**26 For wicked men are found among my people;**

**they lurk like fowlers lying in wait.**

**They set a trap;**

**they catch men.**

**27 Like a cage full of birds,**

**their houses are full of deceit;**

**therefore they have become great and rich;**

**28 they have grown fat and sleek.**

**They know no bounds in deeds of evil;**

**they judge not with justice**

**the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper,**

**and they do not defend the rights of the needy.**

**29 Shall I not punish them for these things?**

**declares the Lord,**

**and shall I not avenge myself**

**on a nation such as this?”**

Judah’s sins had caused the rains to be withheld. By devious means the wealthy were taking advantage of the innocent. Their houses were full of their ill-gotten gain. They were totally inconsiderate of the rights of the helpless minorities. Acts of injustice are offenses against God and he must avenge them.[[67]](#footnote-67)

*1. Moral corruption*

*2. Sexual impurity*

*3. Treacherous unbelief*

*4. Religious apostasy*

*5. Social injustice*

*6. Corrupt leaders (5:30, 31)*.[[68]](#footnote-68)

**30 An appalling and horrible thing**

**has happened in the land:**

**31 the prophets prophesy falsely,**

**and the priests rule at their direction;**

**my people love to have it so,**

**but what will you do when the end comes? [[69]](#footnote-69)**

Jeremiah concludes his list of reasons for judgment with “an appalling and horrible thing.” Prophets prophesied falsely and the priests were at their beck and call. The people, however, were as guilty as their leaders for they encouraged the deliberate perversion of divine truth. In the end they all must face God.[[70]](#footnote-70)

**Impending Disaster for Jerusalem** Chapter 6 focuses on the enemy which would invade Judah and carry out the judgment decreed by God. Jeremiah developed this theme in six paragraphs.[[71]](#footnote-71)

*The advance of the foe (6:1–5)*. [[72]](#footnote-72)

**6 Flee for safety, O people of Benjamin,** (The tribe of Jeremiah)

**from the midst of Jerusalem!**

**Blow the trumpet in Tekoa,** The ram’s horn was often used as a trumpet to signal a warning[[73]](#footnote-73)

**and raise a signal on Beth-haccherem,**

**for disaster looms out of the north,**

**and great destruction.**

Like some merciless brute, evil looked down from the north on “the daughter of Zion,” i.e., the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This comely daughter was “dainty,” i.e., not accustomed to the deprivations to which she now would be exposed. Even Jerusalem no longer provided safety. In dramatic second person verbs Jeremiah called upon the the “sons of Benjamin” to leave the capital. Warning trumpets should be sounded in the villages south of Jerusalem (6:1f.). The point is that the northern enemy would not stop until he had reached the southern border of Judah.[[74]](#footnote-74)

**2** **The lovely and delicately bred I will destroy,**

**the daughter of Zion.**

**3 Shepherds with their flocks shall come against her;**

**they shall pitch their tents around her;**

**they shall pasture, each in his place.**

**4 “Prepare war against her;**

**arise, and let us attack at noon!**

**Woe to us, for the day declines,**

**for the shadows of evening lengthen!**

**5 Arise, and let us attack by night**

**and destroy her palaces!”** describing the weakness of Judah, they can be attacked at any time.

The invaders would be like “shepherds” who graze their flocks undisturbed in the portion of the city assigned to them. Jeremiah imagined the the attackers urging each other to undertake a surprise attack at noontime and at night when normally both sides would desist from battle. The point is that the attack would be relentless (6:3–5).[[75]](#footnote-75)

*The siege of Jerusalem (6:6–8)*.[[76]](#footnote-76)

6 **For thus says the Lord of hosts:**

**“Cut down her trees;**

**cast up a siege mound against Jerusalem.**

**This is the city that must be punished;**

**there is nothing but oppression within her.**

**7 As a well keeps its water fresh,**

**so she keeps fresh her evil;**

**violence and destruction are heard within her;**

**sickness and wounds are ever before me.**

**8 Be warned, O Jerusalem,**

**lest I turn from you in disgust,**

**lest I make you a desolation,**

an uninhabited land.”

God ordered the attacking force to build the high mounds from which they could shoot into the city. This order was justified on the grounds that oppression continuously bubbled forth like a fountain in Jerusalem. Throughout the city victims of mistreatment lay sick and wounded. Such a situation called for the righteous judgment of God. Jerusalem should be forewarned. The city was nearing the point of totally alienating God. If that were to happen, Jerusalem would become a desolation without inhabitant.[[77]](#footnote-77)

*The success of the foe (6:9–15)*.[[78]](#footnote-78)

**9** **Thus says the Lord of hosts:**

**“They shall glean thoroughly as a vine**

**the remnant of Israel;**

**like a grape gatherer pass your hand again**

**over its branches.”**

Only a remnant of the once proud nation survived in Judah. Now that remnant was about to be gleaned like grapes from a vine. God urged the grape gatherer to continue his work. The figure pressed home the idea that Judah would experience repeated calamities (6:9).[[79]](#footnote-79)

**10** **To whom shall I speak and give warning,**

**that they may hear?**

**Behold, their ears are uncircumcised,**

**they cannot listen;**

**behold, the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn;**

**they take no pleasure in it.**

Jeremiah knew that the people of Judah were paying no heed to his warnings. Their ears were “uncircumcised,” i.e., closed. They regarded the word of the Lord as a “reproach;” they had no delight in it. Jeremiah tried to hold back the message of doom, but he could not. He was filled with the message of divine wrath. In self-exhortation the prophet urged himself to “pour it out” on the entire population from the children in the street to the aged (6:10f.).[[80]](#footnote-80)

**11 Therefore I am full of the wrath of the Lord;**

**I am weary of holding it in.**

**“Pour it out upon the children in the street,**

**and upon the gatherings of young men, also;**

**both husband and wife shall be taken,**

**the elderly and the very aged.**

**12 Their houses shall be turned over to others,**

**their fields and wives together,**

**for I will stretch out my hand**

**against the inhabitants of the land,”**

**declares the Lord.**

**13 “For from the least to the greatest of them,**

**everyone is greedy for unjust gain;**

**and from prophet to priest,**

**everyone deals falsely.**

**14 They have healed the wound of my people lightly,**

**saying, ‘Peace, peace,’**

**when there is no peace.**

**15 Were they ashamed when they committed abomination?**

**No, they were not at all ashamed;**

**they did not know how to blush.**

**Therefore they shall fall among those who fall;**

**at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown,”**

**says the Lord.**

The hand of God was stretched out against Jerusalem and justifiably so. Everyone, even the spiritual leaders, was guilty of greed. The religious leaders tried to heal the serious wounds of the nation with assurances of peace. The leaders felt no shame over their conduct. They “did not even know how to blush.” When God punished them, however, they would share the humiliating fate of those they misguided (6:12–15).[[81]](#footnote-81)

*Prescription for deliverance (6:16–21)*[[82]](#footnote-82)

**16 Thus says the Lord:**

**“Stand by the roads, and look,**

**and ask for the ancient paths,**

**where the good way is; and walk in it,**

**and find rest for your souls.**

**But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’**

Could Jerusalem be delivered from the ravishing invasion? Yes indeed! The nation at this moment was at a crossroads. Only the old paths of fidelity to God would give them rest for their souls. The problem was that Judah adamantly refused to walk in those paths. God had set “watchmen,” i.e., prophets, over the people to warn them of impending invasion. They stubbornly refused to listen to the warning (6:16f.).[[83]](#footnote-83)

**17 I set watchmen over you, saying,**

**‘Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!’**

**But they said, ‘We will not pay attention.’**

**18 Therefore hear, O nations,**

**and know, O congregation, what will happen to them.**

In view of the intransigence of his people, God really had no alternative but to unleash judgment. The nations of the world were called upon to hear God’s pronouncement against Judah: “I am bringing disaster upon this people.” This judgment would demonstrate the folly of refusing to hear God’s spoken word through the prophets, and his written word in the Law (6:18f.).[[84]](#footnote-84)

**19 Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people,**

**the fruit of their devices,**

**because they have not paid attention to my words;**

**and as for my law, they have rejected it.**

**20 What use to me is frankincense that comes from Sheba,**

**or sweet cane from a distant land?**

**Your burnt offerings are not acceptable,**

**nor your sacrifices pleasing to me.**

Disobedient people can render no meaningful worship to the Lord. Judah orchestrated elaborate worship rituals. They sent to distant lands to secure Temple incense. Yet their burnt offerings and other sacrifices were not acceptable to the Lord. Because that was true, God was about to lay before them a stumbling block which they could not avoid (6:20f.). The stumbling block is the invasion in which many would perish.[[85]](#footnote-85)

**21 Therefore thus says the Lord:**

**‘Behold, I will lay before this people**

**stumbling blocks against which they shall stumble;**

**fathers and sons together,**

**neighbor and friend shall perish.’ ”**

*Tuesday*

*Description of the foe (6:22–26)*.[[86]](#footnote-86)

**22 Thus says the Lord:**

**“Behold, a people is coming from the north country,**

**a great nation is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth.**

Jeremiah described the unnamed enemy from the north in terrifying detail. He pictured them coming “from the remote parts of the earth.” The ruthless hordes would be armed to the teeth. Their approaching cavalry would sound like the roar of the ocean. This mighty invader would swoop down upon the defenseless “daughter of Zion,” i.e., the population of Jerusalem (6:22f.).[[87]](#footnote-87)

**23 They lay hold on bow and javelin;**

**they are cruel and have no mercy;**

**the sound of them is like the roaring sea;**

**they ride on horses,**

**set in array as a man for battle,**

**against you, O daughter of Zion!”**

**24 We have heard the report of it;**

**our hands fall helpless;**

**anguish has taken hold of us,**

**pain as of a woman in labor.**

**25 Go not out into the field,**

**nor walk on the road,**

**for the enemy has a sword;**

**terror is on every side.**

**26 O daughter of my people, put on sackcloth,**

**and roll in ashes;**

**make mourning as for an only son,**

**most bitter lamentation,**

**for suddenly the destroyer**

**will come upon us.**

At the approach of the invader the population of Jerusalem would be thrown into panic. In the dramatic first and second person, Jeremiah describes that panic. He likened it to the experience of a woman beginning the travail of childbirth. No one would be able leave the city for the enemy would control the countryside. In view of the sad fate awaiting Judah, Jeremiah called on his countrymen to lament (6:24–26).[[88]](#footnote-88)

*The hopeless task of the prophet (6:27–30)*. [[89]](#footnote-89)

**27 “I have made you a tester of metals among my people,**

**that you may know and test their ways.**

**28 They are all stubbornly rebellious,**

**going about with slanders;**

**they are bronze and iron;**

**all of them act corruptly.**

**29 The bellows blow fiercely;**

**the lead is consumed by the fire;**

**in vain the refining goes on,**

**for the wicked are not removed.**

**30 Rejected silver they are called,**

**for the Lord has rejected them.”**

In an aside to the prophet, God warned Jeremiah that his task would not be easy. He fearlessly could continue to test the way of the people by his preaching, for God had made him a “tower” and a “fortress” in their midst. He would find this people, however, were “stubbornly rebellious” and “corrupt.” They were as hard as iron in their sin, especially talebearing. Even a smelting fire heated to its hottest could not separate the dross (“wicked”) from the precious. Since the impurities could not be removed, this “silver” must be cast aside as worthless.[[90]](#footnote-90)

**Evil in the Land (1-29)**

**7 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2“Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house,** (high traffic area) **and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord. 3Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. 4Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.’** (maybe 3 due to three feasts, Passover, Pentecost and tabernacles.) Holy, holy, holy

Jeremiah was directed by God to stand at the main entrance to the Temple and to proclaim God’s word to the throngs. These smug worshipers believed that since the Temple was in Jerusalem, they were safe from destruction. Jeremiah shocked them by insisting that only if they “amend” their ways and deeds would they be allowed to remain in their land. Chanting “This is the temple of the Lord” in response to every call for repentance was deceptive. The mere presence of that sacred building could not spare Judah from judgment (7:1–4). Why was this so?[[91]](#footnote-91) The city’s deliverance from Assyria in 701 bc (see 2 Kgs 18:13–19:37) likely intensified this belief in Yahweh’s special concern for His temple and Jerusalem.[[92]](#footnote-92)

**5“For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, 6if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow,** the most vulnerable of society[[93]](#footnote-93) **or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, 7then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.** First, the presence of the Temple could not spare Judah because the land promise was conditional. Judah needed to start practicing “justice between a man and his neighbor.” Specifically, they were not to oppress the helpless (alien, orphan, widow). They were to cease shedding the blood of innocent children in sacrifice to Baal. They were not to walk after other gods. The land promise made to the Patriarchs was conditional. Only if Israel lived righteously would they be allowed to dwell in the land (7:5–7).[[94]](#footnote-94)

**8“Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. 9Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations? 11Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord.** Second, any theology which said Jerusalem was safe because of the Temple failed to take note of the hypocrisy practiced there. Those who came to the Temple had been guilty of stealing, murder, adultery, and false swearing. They had sacrificed to Baal and walked after other gods as well. Yet because they went through the motions of rendering homage to Yahweh, they thought they were safe. What was worse, they thought this hypocritical lifestyle could continue unabated. They had turned the Temple into a refuge for those who had committed criminal acts. That sacred place was nothing but “a den of robbers!” Their spiritual duplicity had not gone unnoticed by Yahweh (7:8–11).[[95]](#footnote-95)

**12Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel.** The religious center at Shiloh apparently was overrun after the Battle of Aphek (1 Sam 4:1–11), when the Philistines defeated Israel and captured the ark of the covenant. The disaster is portrayed as judgment against the priestly family of Eli for failing to properly carry out their responsibilities toward Yahweh (1 Sam 3:10–15).[[96]](#footnote-96)**13And now, because you have done all these things, declares the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, 14therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.** Third, history refuted their theology. Jeremiah cited two examples which should have refuted the notion that the presence of the Temple guaranteed national survival. First, he urged his auditors to consider the fate of the sacred town of Shiloh. For over three hundred years after Joshua had conquered the land, Shiloh had been the worship center of Israel. In the days of Eli and Samuel that sacred place had been destroyed by the Philistines “because of the wickedness of my people Israel.” Judah had done similar wickedness, and had spurned every effort of God to call them to repentance. God therefore would do to the Temple and to Jerusalem what he had done to Shiloh[[97]](#footnote-97)

**15And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim.** The second example from history concerned the fate of the Northern Kingdom (Ephraim). They too could trace their descent to Abraham. They too worshiped Yahweh, albeit in a corrupted form under the image of a calf (1 Kgs 12:28). Yet God “cast them out” of their land. The same would happen to Judah[[98]](#footnote-98)

**16“As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you. 17Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven.** The Hebrew word used here, *kawwanim*, is borrowed from the ancient Akkadian language; it refers to a cake used in the worship of the goddess Ishtar. The term is used only by Jeremiah here and in Jer 44:19.[[99]](#footnote-99)**And they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger.** Prayers of intercession on behalf of corrupt Judah were of no avail. No longer would judgment be postponed unless, of course, there was massive repentance. Why? Because the influence of paganism was obvious throughout the land. The entire population had engaged in the worship of false gods. Children gathered wood for sacrificial fires. Women made little sacramental cakes to honor the Queen of Heaven (the goddess Ashtoreth). Men poured out libations to other gods. Since idolatry was inherently ridiculous, they must have engaged in these activities for one purpose: “to provoke,” i.e., hurt, Yahweh[[100]](#footnote-100)

**19Is it I whom they provoke? declares the Lord. Is it not themselves, to their own shame?** In reality the sinners were hurting only themselves by participating in pagan worship. God would “pour out” his wrath on Judah, its inhabitants, its flora, and its fauna. The burning anger of God would not be quenched until the place had been destroyed[[101]](#footnote-101)

**20Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, upon man and beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched.”**

**21Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. 22For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. 23But this command I gave them: ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.’ 24But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward.** Thus far Jeremiah has attacked the spiritual overconfidence of Judah by arguing two points: neither the presence of the Temple nor the prayers of those who worshiped there could deliver Judah from judgment. But what about other acts of worship? Jeremiah argued that worship ritual in general was not as important as willing obedience to the word of God. Let them increase the number of sacrifices! That would accomplish nothing. Their sacrifices had lost all religious significance. At Sinai God had not spoken to their fathers “concerning,” i.e., out of concern for, sacrifices. Obedience in daily walk was the fundamental obligation of the Mosaic covenant. According to that covenant national well-being depended on their willingness to heed the voice of God. The fathers, however, paid no heed. They “went backward and not forward”[[102]](#footnote-102)

**25From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. 26Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.**

**27“So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. 28And you shall say to them, ‘This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips.**

Nothing had changed since the day God had brought the fathers out of Egypt. He had urgently dispatched “my servants the prophets” to proclaim the divine word. His people, however, did not listen. In fact, they were more evil than their fathers. The current generation would not listen to Jeremiah any more than their fathers had listened to earlier prophets. All Jeremiah could do was publicly to accuse them of obstinacy. Faith or truth had vanished from their prayers and praise[[103]](#footnote-103)

**29 “ ‘Cut off your hair and cast it away;**

**raise a lamentation on the bare heights,**

**for the Lord has rejected and forsaken**

**the generation of his wrath.’**

**Tuesday**

**The Valley of Slaughter**

**30“For the sons of Judah have done evil in my sight, declares the Lord. They have set their detestable things in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. 31And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind.**

The prospects of Judah called forth lamentation. Jeremiah urged his auditors to “cut off your hair and cast it away” as a sign of agony. Because their worship had been tainted by paganism, Yahweh had rejected “the generation of his wrath.” “Detestable things,” i.e., idols, had been set up in the Temple (cf. 2 Kgs 21:5–7). Special high places of *Topheth* (“fireplace”) had been built in the valley of Hinnom on the west side of Jerusalem. Here God’s people offered up their sons and daughters to the god Molech. Such a practice was totally contrary to everything for which Yahweh stood[[104]](#footnote-104)

Yahweh condemns the mixed worship going on in His temple as well as the Canaanite practice of child sacrifice, which Judah apparently adopted and conducted in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom just outside Jerusalem. The message of judgment pronounces a sentence of death on all of Judah (Jer 8:1).[[105]](#footnote-105)

Manasseh had placed Canaanite idols and altars in the temple (see 2 Kgs 21:2–7). Josiah destroyed all of them during his religious reforms (see 2 Kgs 23:4–20).[[106]](#footnote-106)

The Valley of Hinnom: This site of ritual child sacrifice also is mentioned in ch. 19 and 2 Kgs 23:10. Also called “Gehenna,” the valley curved along the south and west sides of Jerusalem (see Josh 15:8 and note). In literature from the Second Temple period, including the nt, this valley represents the site of the future, final eschatological judgment on the wicked.[[107]](#footnote-107)

The infamy of this valley as a place of child sacrifice allowed Jeremiah to simply allude to it as “the valley” in Jer 2:23. Isaiah likely is making the same allusion in Isa 57:5–6. Worship of the Canaanite deity Molech (also rendered “Molek”) is connected with child sacrifice in Lev 18:21. Archaeological evidence for the Canaanite practice has been found at the site of ancient Carthage, a Phoenician colony in north Africa.[[108]](#footnote-108)

**32Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when it will no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth, because there is no room elsewhere. 33And the dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the air, and for the beasts of the earth, and none will frighten them away. 34And I will silence in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, for the land shall become a waste.**

God’s wrath would be poured out on the perverted worship at Topheth. So many would die there that the valley of Hinnom would come to be called the valley of Slaughter. Burial places for all the corpses would be impossible to find. The unburied bodies would be ravished by beasts and birds. The entire land of Judah would become a ruin, a place of gloom and sadness[[109]](#footnote-109)

Food for the birds of the air: Part of the curse for breaking the covenant (see Deut 28:26).

Proper burial was important in the ancient Near East, based on beliefs of the ongoing relationship between the living and the dead. Exposure of corpses was a common practice for the Assyrians, who would exhume the corpses of leaders when the vassals violated the treaty. The act was believed to disrupt the rest of their spirits and deprive them of the offerings given to the cult of the dead.[[110]](#footnote-110)

**8 “At that time, declares the Lord, the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of its officials, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be brought out of their tombs.**

The enemy in search for treasure would violate the tombs of nobility. The bones of these people would be scattered across the face of the ground. The sun and moon, objects of their worship, would look down helplessly upon the gruesome scene[[111]](#footnote-111)

**2And they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and served, which they have gone after, and which they have sought and worshiped. And they shall not be gathered or buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground. 3Death shall be preferred to life by all the remnant that remains of this evil family in all the places where I have driven them, declares the Lord of hosts.**

Would any escape this judgment? Yes, but their lives would be hard. Those who fled to neighboring lands would be so persecuted that they would prefer death to life[[112]](#footnote-112)

Men may learn hard spiritual lessons by heeding the word of God. That is the easy way. Judah chose to reject God’s word and learn these truths the hard way, viz., through their national suffering. In 8:4–17 Jeremiah pointed out Judah’s willful ignorance of God’s word. He described the self-deception and public deception of the spiritual leaders. Finally, he depicted the harsh circumstances under which Judah would finally comprehend the enormity of her sin.[[113]](#footnote-113)

**Sin and Treachery**

**4 “You shall say to them, Thus says the Lord:**

**When men fall, do they not rise again?**

**If one turns away, does he not return?**

**5 Why then has this people turned away**

**in perpetual backsliding?**

**They hold fast to deceit;**

**they refuse to return.** Earlier they repent, sort of Judges

**6 I have paid attention and listened,**

**but they have not spoken rightly;**

**no man relents of his evil,**

**saying, ‘What have I done?’**

**Everyone turns to his own course,**

**like a horse plunging headlong into battle.**

**7 Even the stork in the heavens**

**knows her times,**

**and the turtledove, swallow, and crane**

**keep the time of their coming, but my people know not the rules of the Lord.**

The exact identification of these birds is unknown, but the significance of the metaphor is clear. Migratory birds obey their instinctual God-given guidance while people instinctively rebel and oppose God.[[114]](#footnote-114)

**A. A Willful Ignorance (8:4–7)**

Men who fall down normally attempt to get up. Men who get off the right path normally try to get back on track. Yet Judah persisted in apostasy. Jeremiah listened in vain for some sign of repentance. What he observed instead was each individual recklessly pursuing his own interests like a horse charging into battle. In their migratory instincts the birds routinely follow God’s will. Judah, however, did not know “the ordinance of the Lord.” To use a proverbial expression, they did not have the sense that God gave geese! (8:4–7).[[115]](#footnote-115)

**8 “How can you say, ‘We are wise,**

**and the law of the Lord is with us’?**

**But behold, the lying pen of the scribes**

**has made it into a lie.**

**9 The wise men shall be put to shame;**

**they shall be dismayed and taken;**

**behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord,**

**so what wisdom is in them?**

**10 Therefore I will give their wives to others**

**and their fields to conquerors,**

**because from the least to the greatest**

**everyone is greedy for unjust gain;**

**from prophet to priest,**

**everyone deals falsely.**

**B. An Arrogant Boast (8:8–10)**

The leaders of Judah boasted of their wisdom. They had the Law of God; they did not need a prophet like Jeremiah. Such a boast was inappropriate for two reasons. First, “the lying pen of the scribes” had attempted to alter, nullify or circumvent the written Law. Second, these men rejected the prophetic word of God. When “wise” men do that, “what kind of wisdom do they have?” Third, when these worldly-wise leaders fell into the hands of their adversaries they would be put to shame. In that day all would be lost, loved ones as well as possessions. Fourth, all the spiritual leaders were “greedy for gain.” They were not objective in the advice which they dispensed (8:8–10).[[116]](#footnote-116)

**11 They have healed the wound of my people lightly,**

**saying, ‘Peace, peace,’**

**when there is no peace.**

**12 Were they ashamed when they committed abomination?**

**No, they were not at all ashamed;**

**they did not know how to blush.**

**Therefore they shall fall among the fallen;**

**when I punish them, they shall be overthrown,**

**says the Lord.**

**C. A Deceptive Forecast (8:11–12)**

Jeremiah cited an example of the deceitful messages of the priests and prophets. The kingdom of Judah faced invasion, siege, exile, and political extinction. Jeremiah likened this fate to a disease which he called “the brokenness of the daughter of my people.” The spiritual leaders were attempting to “heal” this disease superficially. They promised *shalom* (peace, well-being) when in fact the future held in store the very opposite. For them to create in the minds of trusting souls a false sense of security was abomination. Yet these men had no shame for what they had done. They did not “know how to blush!” In the day of judgment they would fall along with those they had misled. They would be brought down. That was God’s revelation.[[117]](#footnote-117)

**13 When I would gather them, declares the Lord,**

**there are no grapes on the vine,**

**nor figs on the fig tree;**

**even the leaves are withered,**

**and what I gave them has passed away from them.”**

**D. A Painful Discovery (8:13–17)**

Having described the fate of the religious leaders, Jeremiah turned to the nation they had deceived. Judah was unproductive. God, therefore, would give them into the hands of an overpowering army. In that day the residents of the countryside would be forced to flee to the cities for safety. In gloomy fatalism, there they would expect to die by pestilence, i.e., plague. They would understand full well that this “poisoned water” was theirs to drink because they had sinned against Yahweh (8:13f.).[[118]](#footnote-118)

**14 Why do we sit still?**

**Gather together; let us go into the fortified cities**

**and perish there,**

**for the Lord our God has doomed us to perish**

**and has given us poisoned water to drink,**

**because we have sinned against the Lord.**

**15 We looked for peace, but no good came;**

**for a time of healing, but behold, terror.**

**16 “The snorting of their horses is heard from Dan;**

**at the sound of the neighing of their stallions**

**the whole land quakes.**

**They come and devour the land and all that fills it,**

**the city and those who dwell in it.**

**17 For behold, I am sending among you serpents,**

**adders that cannot be charmed,**

**and they shall bite you,”**

**declares the Lord.**

Judah listened to her false prophets and expected “peace” and national “healing.” Instead she faced “terror.” Jeremiah could hear, as it were, the thundering hooves of the enemy cavalry at Dan, the northernmost city of Canaan. This horde was coming to devour both the rural regions and the cities. Just as God had sent fiery serpents among his people in the days of Moses (Num 21:6), so these enemies would be like poisonous snakes throughout the land. None of the political leaders of Judah would be able to charm them into harmlessness (8:15–17).[[119]](#footnote-119)

Prophetic Agony and Prayer

Jeremiah 8:8–13:27

**Background of the Unit**

Dating the contents of Jeremiah 8–13 is extremely difficult. Most of the material seems to come from the early reign of Jehoiakim, prior to the battle of Carchemish. Chronologically that would place this unit between 609 and 605 b.c.

Good King Josiah died as a result of wounds received in the battle of Megiddo in 609 b.c. The “people of the land,” i.e., the landed aristocracy, then took Josiah’s son Jehoahaz and placed him on the throne. Pharaoh Neco, who was still campaigning in northern Syria, did not like this choice. He summoned the young king to Riblah, and then deported him to Egypt. Neco selected Eliakim, another son of Josiah, to install as his vassal on the throne. The Pharaoh gave Eliakim the throne name Jehoiakim. Judah was placed under heavy tribute obligations to Egypt (2 Kgs 23:28–35).

Jehoiakim was as evil as his father was righteous. Because he no longer had the backing of the throne, Jeremiah’s ministry became intolerably painful. The audience which had rebuffed him for eighteen years, now began to plot his demise.

**Outline of the Unit**

A. The Prophet’s Pain (8:18–9:22; 10:17–25).

B. The Prophet’s Preaching (9:23–10:16; 11:1–17).

C. The Prophet’s Problem (11:18–12:17).

D. The Prophet’s Parables (chap. 13).[[120]](#footnote-120)

**THE PROPHET’S PAIN**

**Jeremiah 8:18–9:22; 10:17–25**

The unbearable pain of Jeremiah rises to the surface in this section. His spiritual agony was triggered by the revelation of Judah’s impending destruction, national corruption, complete desolation, and ruthless deportation.[[121]](#footnote-121)

**Thursday**

**Jeremiah Grieves for His People**

**18 My joy is gone; grief is upon me;**

**my heart is sick within me.**

**19 Behold, the cry of the daughter of my people**

**from the length and breadth of the land:**

**“Is the Lord not in Zion?**

**Is her King not in her?”**

**“Why have they provoked me to anger with their carved images**

**and with their foreign idols?”**

**20 “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”**

**A. Impending Destruction (8:18–9:1)**

Jeremiah experienced a sorrow beyond healing because of the revelations of future judgment. He seemed to hear a dialogue between the future captives and God. The former questioned why God, if he really lived in Zion, would permit the city to fall. The Lord responded by pointing to the chief cause, viz., the idols by which they had “provoked” him to wrath. The future exiles responded with a complaint of unfairness. They felt that they were continuing to suffer even after the harvest of judgment was past (8:18–20).[[122]](#footnote-122)

**21 For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded;**

**I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me.**

**22 Is there no balm in Gilead?**

**Is there no physician there?**

**Why then has the health of the daughter of my people**

**not been restored?**

**9  Oh that my head were waters,**

**and my eyes a fountain of tears,**

**that I might weep day and night**

**for the slain of the daughter of my people!**

The despair of the people caused Jeremiah to despair. The wound of Zion was deep. No medicine (balm) or physician could heal her. Jeremiah wished that he could produce an inexhaustible supply of tears so that he might lament the inevitable doom of his people (8:21–9:1).[[123]](#footnote-123)

**2 Oh that I had in the desert**

**a travelers’ lodging place,**

**that I might leave my people**

**and go away from them!**

**For they are all adulterers, a company of treacherous men.**

**B. National Corruption (9:2–8)**

Jeremiah longed for a hermit’s life away from the corruption of society. In his opinion the men of Judah were all “adulterers,” i.e., they are idolaters. Even when gathered in their religious assemblies these men were “treacherous,” i.e., hypocritical and untrustworthy. The tongue of each man was a deadly bow hurling deceit and falsehood. They proceeded from one evil enterprise to the next without interruption. They did not “know” the Lord, i.e., have a daily walk with him (9:2f.).[[124]](#footnote-124)

**3 They bend their tongue like a bow;**

**falsehood and not truth has grown strong in the land;**

**for they proceed from evil to evil,**

**and they do not know me, declares the Lord.**

**4 Let everyone beware of his neighbor,**

**and put no trust in any brother,**

**for every brother is a deceiver,**

**and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer.**

Jeremiah thought that no one in Judah could be trusted. Brothers (kinsmen) and neighbors were involved in fraudulent schemes and slanderous attacks. No one spoke the truth; they had “taught their tongue to speak lies.” They worked so hard at committing iniquity that they had wearied themselves (9:4f.).[[125]](#footnote-125)

**5 Everyone deceives his neighbor,**

**and no one speaks the truth;**

**they have taught their tongue to speak lies;**

**they weary themselves committing iniquity.**

**6 Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit,**

**they refuse to know me, declares the Lord.**

**7 Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts:**

**“Behold, I will refine them and test them,**

**for what else can I do, because of my people?**

**8 Their tongue is a deadly arrow;**

**it speaks deceitfully;**

**with his mouth each speaks peace to his neighbor,**

**but in his heart he plans an ambush for him.**

**9 Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the Lord,**

**and shall I not avenge myself**

**on a nation such as this?**

The Lord concurred with Jeremiah’s negative assessment of his society. The prophet lived “in the midst of deceit.” This deceit had prevented this people from “knowing” God, i.e., having an experiential walk with the Lord (9:6).

A radical refining process was the only alternative for those who refused to know the Lord. Those who used their tongues as a deadly weapon were dross which must be purged away. God must bring punishment on a nation which had obliterated the distinction between truth and untruth (9:7–9).[[126]](#footnote-126)

**10 “I will take up weeping and wailing for the mountains,**

**and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness,**

**because they are laid waste so that no one passes through,**

**and the lowing of cattle is not heard;**

**both the birds of the air and the beasts**

**have fled and are gone.**

**C. Complete Desolation (9:9–22)**

Because of the impending disaster, a lamentation for the “mountains” and “pastures” of Judah was in order. These areas would be left so desolate by the vengeance of God that the sounds of birds and cattle would no longer be heard there. Jerusalem and the other cities of the land would be left in ruins inhabited only by wild animals (9:10f.). Shortly after 586 b.c. this prophecy was fulfilled.[[127]](#footnote-127)

**11 I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins,**

**a lair of jackals,**

**and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation,**

**without inhabitant.”**

**12Who is the man so wise that he can understand this? To whom has the mouth of the Lord spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, so that no one passes through? 13And the Lord says: “Because they have forsaken my law that I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice or walked in accord with it, 14but have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals, as their fathers taught them.**

Conventional wisdom could not explain the disaster which would befall Judah. Those who pretended to receive divine revelations had no word of explanation. Yahweh alone could answer the question “Why is the land ruined?” The people of Judah had forsaken God’s Law and had refused to obey his voice as he spoke through prophets. They chose rather to walk “after the stubbornness of their own heart,” i.e., after the god Baal. This behavior they had learned from their fathers (9:12–14).[[128]](#footnote-128)

**15Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will feed this people with bitter food, and give them poisonous water to drink.**

Because of their apostasy the Lord would feed this people with “wormwood” and give them “gall” to drink. These two poisonous substances were symbols in the Old Testament for bitter affliction. Judah would be carried away captive. Even in captivity, however, the sword of divine retribution would pursue them until every unrepentant sinner among them had been annihilated (9:15f.).[[129]](#footnote-129)

**16I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them.”**

**17 Thus says the Lord of hosts:**

**“Consider, and call for the mourning women to come;**

**send for the skillful women to come;**

**18 let them make haste and raise a wailing over us,**

**that our eyes may run down with tears**

**and our eyelids flow with water.**

**19 For a sound of wailing is heard from Zion:**

**‘How we are ruined!**

**We are utterly shamed,**

**because we have left the land,**

**because they have cast down our dwellings.’**

**”** Since judgment was inevitable, lamentation was appropriate. The professional mourning women should be summoned so that they might stimulate sorrow in this people who were impervious to prophetic announcements of doom. Though no one would weep now, Zion in that day would wail in her agony over her ruin, shame, and expulsion from the land (9:17–19).[[130]](#footnote-130)

**20 Hear, O women, the word of the Lord,**

**and let your ear receive the word of his mouth;**

**teach to your daughters a lament,**

**and each to her neighbor a dirge.**

**21 For death has come up into our windows;**

**it has entered our palaces,**

**cutting off the children from the streets**

**and the young men from the squares.**

Jeremiah exhorted the women of Judah to teach their daughters how to weep. They would need that skill in the day of judgment. What a day that would be! Pestilence would appear to come through the windows. Children and youth would be cut down by the plague in the streets. Outside the city the fields would be littered with the unburied corpses of soldiers fallen in battle (9:20–21).[[131]](#footnote-131)

**22 Speak: “Thus declares the Lord,**

**‘The dead bodies of men shall fall**

**like dung upon the open field,**

**like sheaves after the reaper,**

**and none shall gather them.’ ”**

**23Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.”**

**25“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh— 26Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.”**

**A. Sermonettes on Priorities (9:22–25)**

Two sermonettes set forth what for Jeremiah were the great priorities of life. The first emphasizes the importance of knowing God. The most important thing in life is not wisdom, strength or wealth. If one must boast about anything it should be that he understands and knows (by experience) the Lord. The God of the Bible exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth. To know him means to put into practice these fundamental principles in which he delights (9:22–23). This passage is cited by Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:17.[[132]](#footnote-132)

The second sermonette stresses the importance of hearing God. Even though they were circumcised physically, the men of Judah were uncircumcised spiritually, i.e., their hearts were closed to the word of God. Their circumcision meant no more to God than the circumcision of some of the Gentile nations of the day. God planned to punish all who were uncircumcised of heart whether or not they were circumcised of flesh (9:24–25).[[133]](#footnote-133)

**Idols and the Living God**

**B. Sermon on Idolatry (10:1–16)**[[134]](#footnote-134)

**10 Hear the word that the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel. 2Thus says the Lord:**

**“Learn not the way of the nations,**

**nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens**

**because the nations are dismayed at them,**

**3 for the customs of the peoples are vanity.**

**A tree from the forest is cut down**

**and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman.**

**4 They decorate it with silver and gold;**

**they fasten it with hammer and nails**

**so that it cannot move.** (Christmas Trees.)

**5 Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field,**

**and they cannot speak;**

**they have to be carried,**

**for they cannot walk.**

**Do not be afraid of them,**

**for they cannot do evil,**

**neither is it in them to do good.”**

God’s people are not to imitate pagan practices. They are not to be terrified by the “signs of the heavens” as are heathen people. Pagan customs are but superstition. Idols originate in the craftsman’s shop. They are ornate but impotent. They must still be fastened down so they will not totter. They are as mute and immobile as a “scarecrow in a cucumber field.” God’s people are not to fear them, for they cannot help or hurt anyone (10:1–5).[[135]](#footnote-135)

**6 There is none like you, O Lord;**

**you are great, and your name is great in might.**

**7 Who would not fear you, O King of the nations?**

**For this is your due;**

**for among all the wise ones of the nations**

**and in all their kingdoms**

**there is none like you.** Holy, holy, holy

As Jeremiah reflected upon the greatness of Israel’s God, he broke forth into a spontaneous prayer of praise. Yahweh has no equal among the gods of the nations. He is great. His name, i.e., the sum of his revealed attributes, is great in might. He is rightfully addressed as “King of the nations.” Fear or reverence is the appropriate response to such a God. No wise man or prince among all the nations can be compared to the Lord (10:6–7).[[136]](#footnote-136)

**8 They are both stupid and foolish;**

**the instruction of idols is but wood!**

**9 Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish,**

**and gold from Uphaz.**

**They are the work of the craftsman and of the hands of the goldsmith;**

**their clothing is violet and purple;**

**they are all the work of skilled men.**

**10 But the Lord is the true God;**

**he is the living God and the everlasting King.**

**At his wrath the earth quakes,**

**and the nations cannot endure his indignation.**

As the sermon resumed, Jeremiah amplified his previous remarks about the origin of idols. Wisemen and princes who worship lifeless lumber are stupid and foolish in the delusion of idolatry. True, the idols may be objects of beauty, decorated with the most expensive silver, gold and even clothing. They evidence the most exquisite craftsmanship. Idols are, however, only the creation of men. On the other hand, Yahweh is “the true God, the living God, the everlasting King.” His wrath sometimes is displayed in mighty earthquakes which the nations of the world cannot endure (10:8–10).[[137]](#footnote-137)

**11Thus shall you say to them: “The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.”**

**12 It is he who made the earth by his power,**

**who established the world by his wisdom,**

**and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.**

**13 When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens,**

**and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth.**

**He makes lightning for the rain,**

**and he brings forth the wind from his storehouses.**

Created gods will perish from the earth. Only Yahweh, who created the heavens and earth by his wisdom and power, is eternal. This Creator, not Baal, is responsible for the rain storms upon which Canaan was so dependent (10:11–13).[[138]](#footnote-138)

**14 Every man is stupid and without knowledge;**

**every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols,**

**for his images are false,**

**and there is no breath in them.**

**15 They are worthless, a work of delusion;**

**at the time of their punishment they shall perish.**

**16 Not like these is he who is the portion of Jacob,**

**for he is the one who formed all things,**

**and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance;**

**the Lord of hosts is his name.**

Every man who engages in idolatry is stupid. In the day of judgment even those who manufactured the idols would be ashamed. In that day the idols would prove themselves to be “worthless, a work of mockery” unable even to save themselves. That would not be the case with Yahweh. What is more, this one who created everything is “the Portion of Jacob.” He belonged to Israel in a special way (10:14–16).[[139]](#footnote-139)

**17 Gather up your bundle from the ground,**

**O you who dwell under siege!**

**18 For thus says the Lord:**

**“Behold, I am slinging out the inhabitants of the land**

**at this time,**

**and I will bring distress on them, that they may feel it.”**

**D. Ruthless Deportation (10:17–22)**

Those who would experience the future siege of Jerusalem should not hold out for deliverance. They should pack their meager belongings in a bundle, hobo style, and prepare to be deported from the land. The inhabitants of Judah were about to be violently expelled from their land. This deportation would cause God’s people much distress, but it would also have a positive result. Those who were truly the Lord’s would be *found*. Their experience would drive them back to the Lord (10:17–18).[[140]](#footnote-140)

**19 Woe is me because of my hurt!**

**My wound is grievous.**

**But I said, “Truly this is an affliction,**

**and I must bear it.”**

Jeremiah’s knowledge of what would befall his people was like a “wound” or “sickness” which he must bear. He pronounced a “woe” upon himself, i.e., he laments his own misery. He compared Judah to a tent which had collapsed because the cords had been cut. No one remained to help erect the national tent again (10:19f.).[[141]](#footnote-141)

**20 My tent is destroyed,**

**and all my cords are broken;**

**my children have gone from me,**

**and they are not;**

**there is no one to spread my tent again**

**and to set up my curtains.**

**21 For the shepherds are stupid**

**and do not inquire of the Lord;**

**therefore they have not prospered,**

**and all their flock is scattered.**

The “shepherds” (political leaders) were responsible for the threatened judgment. They had become “stupid.” They had not “sought the Lord,” i.e., sought his counsel. Acting on human wisdom alone, the shepherds had not been successful in steering an independent course. Therefore, the flock would be scattered far and wide. In his mind Jeremiah could hear the report from the north. The enemy which would make Judah a desolation was on its way (10:21f.).[[142]](#footnote-142)

**22 A voice, a rumor! Behold, it comes!—**

**a great commotion out of the north country**

**to make the cities of Judah a desolation,**

**a lair of jackals.**

**23 I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself,**

**that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.**

**24 Correct me, O Lord, but in justice;**

**not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing.**

**25 Pour out your wrath on the nations that know you not,**

**and on the peoples that call not on your name,**

**for they have devoured Jacob;**

**they have devoured him and consumed him, and have laid waste his habitation. [[143]](#footnote-143)**

**E. The Fairness Issue (10:23–25)**

Jeremiah was a great intercessor. In the prayer which concludes chapter 10 Jeremiah empathized with his people. He acknowledged man’s weakness and waywardness and urged this as a ground for God’s mercy. Man cannot guide himself in moral and religious matters; he needs divine direction which sometimes may come in the form of discipline. Jeremiah pled for a measured punishment of Judah, one which would not totally destroy the small nation. Judah may deserve discipline; but the Gentiles deserved God’s full wrath. Justice demanded destruction of those nations which had “devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation.”[[144]](#footnote-144)

**11:1–20:18** This section of the book contains prophetic pronouncements against Judah that reflect the themes of impending military defeat and subsequent devastation of the land of Judah. The theme of conflict unifies the oracles, manifesting in two ways: as the individual conflict of the prophet, reflected in his response to his role and message; and as the communal conflict of Israel, reflected in the focus on impending national doom.

At the most basic level, the conflict expresses the spiritual and social aspects of the broken relationship between Israel and Yahweh. Jeremiah also struggles to find his place within that relationship as a servant of Yahweh and member of the community under judgment. Despite the eclectic mix of material in these chapters—poetic laments, prose narrative, oracles of judgment, and oracles of salvation—the theme of lament and complaint dominates the section, which features laments from Jeremiah, Yahweh, and the people of Judah.[[145]](#footnote-145)

**11:1–23** This passage refers back to the exodus and Yahweh’s selection of Israel as a people. The concept of the covenant explains the nature of Israel’s broken relationship with Yahweh, since both sides had obligations to keep for the covenant to remain in force. The disaster that comes on the Israelites can be explained as the inevitable result of their failure to keep the covenant. If they would not uphold their end of the bargain to obey, Yahweh could not be expected to uphold His end to protect and bless.[[146]](#footnote-146)

Exodus 1400-1200 BC David 885BC. Jeremiah 600 BC. So 600+ years since the Exodus/10 commandments

**The Broken Covenant (1-17)**

**11 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2“Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 3You shall say to them, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant**

Jeremiah was to hear and then proclaim throughout Judah the “words of this covenant.” The reference most likely is to the law-book discovered in the Temple during the reformation of Josiah in 621 b.c. The one who did not “hear,” i.e., obey, this covenant was under the curse of God (11:1–3).[[147]](#footnote-147)

**4that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace,** Deut 4:20 **saying, Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God,**

The covenant which Jeremiah was to preach was ancient. It had been given by Yahweh to their forefathers in that day when he had brought them out of “the furnace of fire,” i.e., Egypt. Agreement to abide by this covenant was what made the Israelites God’s people. The land promises made to the Patriarchs were conditional. Only if Judah remained faithful to the covenant could the nation continue to dwell in the land flowing with milk and honey (cf. Deut 7:8ff; 8:18ff.). In the shortest prayer in the book, Jeremiah indicated his agreement with the terms of the covenant and his readiness to preach it: “Amen, O Lord!” (11:4f.).[[148]](#footnote-148)

**5that I may confirm the oath that I swore to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey,** An image of fertility and abundance applied to the land of Canaan, especially in connection with the exodus and conquest narratives (see Exod 3:8; 13:5; Deut 6:3).[[149]](#footnote-149)

**as at this day.” Then I answered, “So be it, Lord.”**

**6And the Lord said to me, “Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: Hear the words of this covenant and do them. 7For I solemnly warned your fathers when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, Obey my voice. 8Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of his evil heart. Therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.”**

Jeremiah was to deliver his message on the covenant throughout the land of Judah. He was to call upon his audience to “hear the words of this covenant and do them.” From the day God had brought their fathers out of Egypt until that day God had persistently and urgently admonished the Israelites to “listen to my voice.” They, however, did not obey and chose to walk in the “stubbornness of their evil heart.” Through the years God had brought upon his people all of the disasters which were stipulated in the covenant as the punishment for unfaithfulness (11:6–8).[[150]](#footnote-150)

**9Again the Lord said to me, “A conspiracy exists among the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant that I made with their fathers. 11Therefore, thus says the Lord, Behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape. Though they cry to me, I will not listen to them. 12Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they make offerings, but they cannot save them in the time of their trouble. 13For your gods have become as many as your cities, O Judah, and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to shame, altars to make offerings to Baal.**

Jeremiah’s generation had joined as it were the original generation and former northern kingdom in conspiracy (treason) against their King. Therefore, God would bring upon them an inescapable calamity. They may cry to him in that day, but he would not listen. Their new gods to whom they burned incense would not be able to save them in that day. Every city in Judah had its patron god. Every street in Jerusalem had an incense altar to Baal, “the shameful thing.” Neither individually nor collectively would these deities provide any aid in the day of Yahweh’s wrath (11:9–13).[[151]](#footnote-151)

**14“Therefore do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble. 15What right has my beloved in my house, when she has done many vile deeds? Can even sacrificial flesh avert your doom? Can you then exult? Lev.**

Jeremiah might as well cease making intercession for the impenitent people of Judah. Prayer could not hold back any longer the grinding wheels of justice. God’s beloved wife, i.e., Judah, no longer had any right to reside in God’s house, i.e., the Temple. All the sacrifices in the world were useless when the worshipers actually rejoiced over their evil ways (11:14–15).[[152]](#footnote-152)

**16The Lord once called you ‘a green olive tree, beautiful with good fruit.’ But with the roar of a great tempest he will set fire to it, and its branches will be consumed.**

At one time God had regarded Judah as “a green olive tree.” The form and fruit of this tree were a delight to easterners. The tree, however, was now worthless. The branches would to be broken off and burned. None other than the Lord, who planted that tree in the beginning, pronounced “evil,” i.e., calamity, against those who had committed *evil* against him. What evil had they done? They had offered sacrifices to Baal in order to “provoke” the Lord (11:16f.).[[153]](#footnote-153)

**17The Lord of hosts, who planted you, has decreed disaster against you, because of the evil that the house of Israel and the house of Judah have done, provoking me to anger by making offerings to Baal.”**

**THE PROPHET’S PROBLEM**

**Jeremiah 11:18–12:17**

During the reign of Jehoiakim the underlying animosity against Jeremiah bubbled forth in overt attacks. The first situation arose in the prophet’s hometown of Anathoth. Faced with this new development, Jeremiah (1) presented his case to God; (2) made a complaint to the Lord; and (3) finally received divine correction.[[154]](#footnote-154)

**18 The Lord made it known to me and I knew;**

**then you showed me their deeds.**

**19 But I was like a gentle lamb**

**led to the slaughter.**

**I did not know it was against me [[155]](#footnote-155) they devised schemes, saying,**

**“Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,**

**let us cut him off from the land of the living,**

**that his name be remembered no more.”**

**20 But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously,**

**who tests the heart and the mind,**

**let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.**

**A. The Case Presented (11:18–23)**

Yahweh made known to Jeremiah that a plot had been devised against him. The prophet was totally naive and unsuspecting, like a lamb being led to slaughter. The plot was to “destroy the tree” (Jeremiah) “and its fruit” (any who might be listening to the prophet). Their intention was to “cut him off from the land of the living,” i.e., kill him, “that his name be remembered no more.” Faced with this serious threat, Jeremiah turned to the Lord. He knew that God judges righteously because he alone can see the internal motive as well as the external act. In faith he asked for God’s “vengeance on them,” i.e., his righteous sentence. He was content to leave the entire matter in God’s hands, for he said, “to Thee have I committed my cause” (11:18–20).[[156]](#footnote-156)

**21Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth, who seek your life, and say, “Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, or you will die by our hand”— 22therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: “Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine, 23and none of them shall be left. For I will bring disaster upon the men of Anathoth, the year of their punishment.” [[157]](#footnote-157)**

Those who were plotting against Jeremiah were from his hometown at Anathoth. Once their intentions were revealed, they made their threats public. “Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, that you might not die at our hand!” Since the attack here was against his chosen messenger, Yahweh himself pronounced sentence against the conspirators. They would be punished. Their young men would die by the sword in battle. Other family members would die by famine holed up in fortified cities. Not even a remnant would be left to those evil men in that day when God brought upon Anathoth the time of its punishment (11:21–23).[[158]](#footnote-158)

**Jeremiah’s Complaint**

**12 Righteous are you, O Lord,**

**when I complain to you;**

**yet I would plead my case before you.**

**Why does the way of the wicked prosper?**

**Why do all who are treacherous thrive?**

**2 You plant them, and they take root; they grow and produce fruit;**

**B. The Complaint Registered (12:1–4)**

Some time must have elapsed, and the men of Anathoth continued to thrive, and presumably harass Jeremiah. Again the prophet brought his complaint to the Lord. He started by acknowledging that God is righteous in all that he does. Nonetheless, from Jeremiah’s perspective a grave injustice had been done. Jeremiah asked the age-old question, “Why has the way of the wicked prospered?” He charged that the Lord actually had “planted” these wicked men. That they had taken root, grown and produced fruit was therefore God’s fault (12:1–2a).[[159]](#footnote-159)

**you are near in their mouth**

**and far from their heart.**

**3 But you, O Lord, know me;**

**you see me, and test my heart toward you.**

**Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter,**

**and set them apart for the day of slaughter.**

Jeremiah was further perplexed by God’s leniency with his enemies when he compared himself to them. They were hypocrites who talked much about God, but did not have him in their hearts. On the other hand, God knew Jeremiah; his heart was an open book before the Lord. Therefore, God should punish the adversaries, should “drag them off like sheep to the slaughter.” Jeremiah was asking for the execution of the sentence which God already had pronounced in the concluding verse of chapter 11 (12:2b–3).[[160]](#footnote-160)

**4 How long will the land mourn**

**and the grass of every field wither?**

**For the evil of those who dwell in it**

**the beasts and the birds are swept away,**

**because they said, “He will not see our latter end.”**

Still another consideration argued for God’s immediate action against the plotters. The Anathoth enemies intended to kill Jeremiah so that “he will not see our latter ending,” i.e., they would kill him before any of prophetic threats against the land came to pass. Because of their attitude, God had sent a famine upon the land. The vegetation was withering; the animals were suffering. The innocent suffered because of the wickedness of these incorrigible cutthroats (12:4).[[161]](#footnote-161)

**The Lord Answers Jeremiah**

**5 “If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you,**

**how will you compete with horses?**

**And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?**

**C. The Correction Received (12:5–13)**

By means of two questions the Lord pointed out to Jeremiah that his present difficulties with the men of Anathoth (“run with footmen; land of peace”) were relatively minor compared to what he would experience in the future (“compete with horses; thicket of Jordan”). Even members of his own family would conspire against him. They may say nice things to him, but they would treacherously betray their own flesh and blood (12:5f.).[[162]](#footnote-162)

**6 For even your brothers and the house of your father,**

**even they have dealt treacherously with you;**

**they are in full cry after you;**

**do not believe them,**

**though they speak friendly words to you.” [[163]](#footnote-163)**

**7 “I have forsaken my house;**

**I have abandoned my heritage;**

**I have given the beloved of my soul**

**into the hands of her enemies.**

Jeremiah was full of self-pity because of the persecution which had been unleashed against him. God helped him put his own hurt in proper perspective by revealing to him the greater hurt which the Lord had experienced. He had forsaken his house, the Temple. He had abandoned his inheritance, the land of promise. He had given his beloved people into the hand of their enemies. Nothing which Jeremiah had experienced could approach this pain (12:7).[[164]](#footnote-164)

**8 My heritage has become to me**

**like a lion in the forest;**

**she has lifted up her voice against me;**

**therefore I hate her.**

**9 Is my heritage to me like a hyena’s lair?**

**Are the birds of prey against her all around?**

**Go, assemble all the wild beasts;**

**bring them to devour.**

**10 Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard;**

**they have trampled down my portion;**

**they have made my pleasant portion**

**a desolate wilderness.**

Three figures were used to depict the current status of God’s inheritance (his people). (1) They had become like a hostile lion encountered in the forest. They had defied God, and he had come to “hate” his people, i.e., treat them as an object of his hatred. (2) Judah was like an odd-colored bird which other birds of prey (nations) plucked to pieces and which scavenger beasts then devoured. (3) Judah was a vineyard or pleasant field which had been trampled down into a desolate wilderness (12:8–10).[[165]](#footnote-165)

**11 They have made it a desolation;**

**desolate, it mourns to me.**

**The whole land is made desolate,**

**but no man lays it to heart.** No one cares

**12 Upon all the bare heights in the desert**

**destroyers have come,**

**for the sword of the Lord devours**

**from one end of the land to the other;**

**no flesh has peace.**

**13 They have sown wheat and have reaped thorns;**

**they have tired themselves out but profit nothing.**

**They shall be ashamed of their harvests**

**because of the fierce anger of the Lord.” [[166]](#footnote-166)**

God was grieved over the condition of the land. None of the leaders of the nation, however, were concerned about the impending disaster. Even in the most remote areas of the land the sword of divine judgment wielded by the enemy would do its deadly work. No one was safe from the spoiler. But why such tragedy? With their political scheming the leaders thought they had sown “wheat,” i.e., something beneficial. Because of the fierce anger of the Lord they would in fact reap “thorns,” i.e., humiliation, ruin, destruction and death (12:11–13).[[167]](#footnote-167)

**14Thus says the Lord concerning all my evil neighbors who touch the heritage that I have given my people Israel to inherit: “Behold, I will pluck them up from their land, and I will pluck up the house of Judah from among them.**

God continued to correct the thinking of Jeremiah by revealing to him the ultimate objective of the forthcoming judgment. God would punish the wicked who laid hands on his inheritance by uprooting those nations from their lands. Of course Judah would be uprooted along with those Gentile nations. Judgment, however, would be followed by compassion. Each nation would be allowed to return to its own inheritance (12:14f.).[[168]](#footnote-168)

**15And after I have plucked them up, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land. 16And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, ‘As the Lord lives,’ even as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people. 17But if any nation will not listen, then I will utterly pluck it up and destroy it, declares the Lord.”**Nations which were converted to the worship of Yahweh would “be built up in the midst of my people.” As evidence of their conversion they would swear by the name Yahweh. To swear by the name of a deity implied recognition of the supremacy of that deity. Nations which refused to obey the Lord would face continual uprooting by God (12:16f.).[[169]](#footnote-169)

**THE PROPHET’S PARABLES**

**Jeremiah 13:1–27**

Five parables of Jeremiah are recorded in chapter 13. The first is an action parable; the others are verbal. The date of this material is hard to determine, but most likely it comes from the reign of King Jehoiakim (609–598 b.c.).[[170]](#footnote-170)

**The Ruined Loincloth 1-11**

**13 Thus says the Lord to me, “Go and buy a linen loincloth and put it around your waist, and do not dip it in water.”** Such a linen belt was a sign of dignity and nobility. Cumberbun? This was an object lesson meant to attract attention.

Jeremiah was told to purchase for himself a linen girdle, but not to put it in water. This colorful waistband was used to hold the loose upper garment in place. Why he was not to put the garment in water is unclear. Jeremiah carried out the instructions. For some time the prophet wore the girdle about his waist (13:1f.).[[171]](#footnote-171)

**2So I bought a loincloth according to the word of the Lord, and put it around my waist. 3And the word of the Lord came to me a second time, 4“Take the loincloth that you have bought, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a cleft of the rock.” 5So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me. 6And after many days the Lord said to me, “Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the loincloth that I commanded you to hide there.” 7Then I went to the Euphrates, and dug, and I took the loincloth from the place where I had hidden it. And behold, the loincloth was spoiled; it was good for nothing.**

A second word from the Lord directed Jeremiah to make a three hundred mile journey to the Euphrates river. There he was to bury his girdle “in a crevice of the rock.” Jeremiah carried out these instructions. “After many days” the Lord directed the prophet to retrieve his girdle from its hiding place at the Euphrates. He found the garment to be “ruined.” It was “totally worthless” (13:3–7).[[172]](#footnote-172)

**8Then the word of the Lord came to me: 9“Thus says the Lord: Even so will I spoil the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.** Once beautiful, useful is not useless**. 10This evil people, who refuse to hear my words, who stubbornly follow their own heart and have gone after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be like this loincloth, which is good for nothing. (**we are to be beautiful adornment of Yahweh) **11For as the loincloth clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, but they would not listen.** God had intended that the whole house of Israel “cling” to him, as a girdle clings to a man. They were to be God’s people, a source of “renown, praise and glory” to the Lord. Israel, however, would not listen. They stubbornly walked after other gods. Therefore, God would destroy the pride of Judah which made them as worthless as the rotten girdle of the prophet (13:8–11).[[173]](#footnote-173)

**The Jars Filled with Wine[[174]](#footnote-174)**

**12“You shall speak to them this word: ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “Every jar shall be filled with wine.” ’ And they will say to you, ‘Do we not indeed know that every jar will be filled with wine?’**(proverb that all is good) **13Then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord: Behold, I will fill with drunkenness all the inhabitants of this land** (they will be in a position of stupidity when the Babylonians come.) **the kings who sit on David’s throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 14And I will dash them one against another, fathers and sons together, declares the Lord.** (broken) **I will not pity or spare or have compassion, that I should not destroy them.’ ”**

A commonplace observation by Jeremiah provoked ridicule. He pointed out the obvious truth that empty wineskins were refilled with wine. The inhabitants of Judah were spiritually empty. They would be filled with the wine of God’s wrath. They would stagger over one another to their own destruction. This catastrophe faced Judah in spite of God’s compassion.[[175]](#footnote-175)

**Exile Threatened** C. Parable of the Path (13:15–17)

**15 Hear and give ear; be not proud,**

**for the Lord has spoken.**

**16 Give glory to the Lord your God**

**before he brings darkness,** there’s still time, but you’d better hurry.? Jeremiah was told already not to pray, it’s too late.

**before your feet stumble**

**on the twilight mountains,**

**and while you look for light**

**he turns it into gloom** ever turned off your lights while driving?

**and makes it deep darkness.**

**17 But if you will not listen,**

**my soul will weep in secret for your pride;** national pride? Spiritual pride? Contrast Jonah! Everyone was against Jeremiah, he’d been arrested, his hometown was against him. With all this rejection he should have been callous, but he was not. This is an example of Jesus going to the cross.

**my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the Lord’s flock has been taken captive.**

One who is walking a narrow mountain path hopes for more light as the sun begins to set. Pitch darkness in such a situation would mean sure disaster. Such was the precarious condition of the proud citizens of Judah. Jeremiah urged them to “give glory” to the Lord before the complete darkness of judgment fell upon them. The prophet knew that if his plea for repentance was not heeded the destruction of the nation was inevitable. All he could do was weep over their stubborn pride and the fate to which it would lead.[[176]](#footnote-176)

**Parable of the ruined loin cloth 1-11**

**Jars of wine 12-14**

**Parable of the path 15-17**

**Tuesday 4.4.2023**

D. Parable of the Royal Family (13:18–19)[[177]](#footnote-177)

**18 Say to the king and the queen mother:**

**“Take a lowly seat,**

**for your beautiful crown**

**has come down from your head.”**

This word applied to the young King Jehoiachin and his mother Nehushta ([2 Kings 24:8-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Kings+24.8-16&t=NKJV)). They were perhaps already in Babylonia by this time, yet could still benefit if they humbled themselves before Yahweh.

**19 The cities of the Negeb are shut up,**

**with none to open them;**

**all Judah is taken into exile,**

**wholly taken into exile. [[178]](#footnote-178)**

Jeremiah was commanded to address a message to “the king and the queen mother.” The anonymity of this address and the lack of specificity as to chronological setting give to these words a parabolic quality. With prophetic sarcasm Jeremiah urged the king and queen mother to get down from their throne. The point is that the royalty of Judah was about to be humbled. The land would be overrun. In the face of this invasion even the gates of cities in the Negev to the south would be locked. All Judah would be carried into exile. These predictions began to be fulfilled in March of 597 b.c. when King Jehoiachin surrendered Jerusalem to the Babylonians and marched into captivity with ten thousand of his countrymen.[[179]](#footnote-179)

E. Parable of the Delinquent Daughter (13:20–27)[[180]](#footnote-180)

**20 “Lift up your eyes and see**

**those who come from the north.**

**Where is the flock that was given you,**

**your beautiful flock?**

The daughter of Zion was commanded to lift up her eyes and see that vast horde approaching from the north. Jeremiah asked five questions which were designed to point out the plight of Jerusalem in this desperate time. First, Jerusalem would be like a shepherd who cannot account for his lost sheep. The cities for which Jerusalem was responsible would fall to the enemy. Second, Jerusalem would be embarrassed when her “companions” (allies) become her oppressors. Third, when faced with the predicted crisis, Jerusalem would be like a woman facing the travail of childbirth (13:20f.).[[181]](#footnote-181)

**21 What will you say when they set as head over you**

**those whom you yourself have taught to be friends to you?**

**Will not pangs take hold of you**

**like those of a woman in labor?**

**22 And if you say in your heart,**

**‘Why have these things come upon me?’** hummmmmm. I’m good enough without God.

**it is for the greatness of your iniquity**

**that your skirts are lifted up**

**and you suffer violence.**

Either a prostitute stripped in shame or what happens when a woman is raped.

Fourth, Jerusalem would be perplexed by all which befalls her. She would ask, “Why have these things happened to me?” The answer can be given in advance: “Because of the ingratitude of your iniquity.” The daughter of Zion would be treated as an adulteress. She would be stripped, even of her shoes, and forced to go into captivity naked. The fifth question pointed to the tenacious hold that sin had on the nation. Doing evil had become second nature. For them to do anything good seemed as impossible as for a leopard to change his spots or an Ethiopian the color of his skin (13:22f.).[[182]](#footnote-182)

**23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin**

**or the leopard his spots?**

**Then also you can do good**

**who are accustomed to do evil.** You can’t but God can. Evil is hard to stop on your own**.**

**24 I will scatter you like chaff**

**driven by the wind from the desert.**

**25 This is your lot,**

**the portion I have measured out to you, declares the Lord,**

**because you have forgotten me**

**and trusted in lies.**

**26 I myself will lift up your skirts over your face,**

**and your shame will be seen.**

**27 I have seen your abominations,**

**your adulteries and neighings, your lewd whorings,**

**on the hills in the field.**

**Woe to you, O Jerusalem!**

**How long will it be before you are made clean?” [[183]](#footnote-183)**

Jerusalem’s fate was to be scattered like chaff before the wind. This was “the portion” which God had measured to them because they preferred the falsehood of idolatry to the Lord. As an adulteress was shamed by having her garments removed prior to stoning, so God would expose the shame of Judah. Of Judah’s guilt there could be no doubt. God himself had seen her “adulteries” and “neighings,” i.e., passionate cravings for illegitimate objects of worship. God had seen her “abominations” on the hills throughout the land. As long as she remained unclean, Jerusalem was living under a divine “woe,” i.e., threat of judgment (13:24–27).[[184]](#footnote-184)

Problems and Prayer (29.25)

Jeremiah 14–20

**Background of the Unit**

Jeremiah 14–20 most likely should be dated to the reign of Jehoiakim between 605 and 597 b.c. Jehoiakim had been placed on the throne by Pharaoh Neco. When Neco was defeated by the Chaldeans (Babylonians) at the battle of Carchemish in 605 b.c., Jehoiakim shifted his allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar. This move was the better part of wisdom since Nebuchadnezzar controlled all of Syria-Palestine subsequent to Carchemish.

After serving Nebuchadnezzar for three years, Jehoiakim rebelled by withholding the annual tribute. He died or was assassinated late in the year 598 b.c. just before Nebuchadnezzar arrived to punish him for his rebellion. The accounts of the reign of Jehoiakim are found in 2 Kings 24:1–7 and 2 Chronicles 36:5–8.

**Outline of the Unit**

In this unit the discouragement of Jeremiah which began to appear in chapter 12 intensifies. The prophet was ready to quit on more than one occasion. He said things to and about God which no believer ought ever to utter. Yet God was patient with his man. Mingled here among the agonizing cries of discouragement are some very practical suggestions for dealing with ministerial depression.

A. The Rejected Intercessor (14:1–15:9).

B. The Lonely Herald (15:10–16:21).

C. The Scorned Preacher (17:1–18).

D. The Urgent Exhorter (17:19–18:17).

E. The Slandered Servant (18:18–23).

F. The Dramatic Prophet (chap. 19).

G. The Afflicted Martyr (chap. 20).

**THE REJECTED INTERCESSOR**

**Jeremiah 14:1–15:9**

Judah experienced a drought during the reign of Jehoiakim. The nation went into mourning over the increasingly severe conditions. Servants of the powerful nobles scoured the land in vain search of cisterns which still contained water. The farmers were confused because they could not produce a crop. Men covered their heads with dust as a sign of mourning. Lack of vegetation caused the wild animals to suffer. The tender doe forgot her young in search of food and water. The rough wild ass sniffed the air for the scent of water, then languished and died (14:1–6). Faced with this desperate situation Jeremiah petitioned God on behalf of his people.

**Famine, Sword, and Pestilence. 1-12vs**

**14 The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought:**

**2 “Judah mourns,**

**and her gates languish;**

**her people lament on the ground,**

**and the cry of Jerusalem goes up.**

**3 Her nobles send their servants for water;**

**they come to the cisterns;**

**they find no water;**

**they return with their vessels empty;** equalizer/faster seige

**they are ashamed and confounded**

**and cover their heads.**

**4 Because of the ground that is dismayed,**

**since there is no rain on the land,**

**the farmers are ashamed;**

**they cover their heads.**

**5 Even the doe in the field forsakes her newborn fawn**

**because there is no grass.**

**6 The wild donkeys stand on the bare heights;**

**they pant for air like jackals;**

**their eyes fail**

**because there is no vegetation.**

**7 “Though our iniquities testify against us,**

**act, O Lord, for your name’s sake;**

**for our backslidings are many;**

**we have sinned against you.**

**8 O you hope of Israel,**

**its savior in time of trouble,**

**why should you be like a stranger in the land,**

**like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night?**

**9 Why should you be like a man confused,**

**like a mighty warrior who cannot save?**

**Yet you, O Lord, are in the midst of us,**

**and we are called by your name; do not leave us.”**

**A. The First Petition (14:7–12)**

Jeremiah frankly confessed the sins of the nation; then he asked God to aid Judah “for Thy name’s sake,” i.e., for the sake of his reputation. The prophet firmly believed that God was the only hope of the nation; but he could not understand why God showed no more interest in the plight of his people than a stranger might show in a land he merely visits. He did not doubt that God was in the midst of Israel. Why then was God acting like a warrior who has become so terrified that he cannot function? Why was God doing nothing when the people who belonged to him (“called by Thy name”) were totally dependent on him? (14:7–9).[[185]](#footnote-185)

**10 Thus says the Lord concerning this people:**

**“They have loved to wander thus;**

**they have not restrained their feet;** traveling?

**therefore the Lord does not accept them;**

**now he will remember their iniquity**

**and punish their sins.”**

**11The Lord said to me: “Do not pray for the welfare of this people. 12Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.”**

God explained that he had abandoned his people because they had first abandoned him. They had not “kept their feet in check.” They loved to wander. Judgment had been decreed already. God would “call their sins to account.” For Jeremiah to continue to pray for Judah’s deliverance was futile. Fasting, prayer and sacrifice could not avail at this point. God had determined to “make an end of them” by means of “sword, famine and pestilence” (14:10–12).[[186]](#footnote-186)

**Lying Prophets**

**13Then I said: “Ah, Lord God, behold, the prophets say to them, ‘You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.’ ”** lies! Why doesnt he just kill them!

B. The Second Petition (14:13–18)

In his second drought prayer Jeremiah blamed the apathy of the people on the prophets who promised a rosy future. God totally disassociated himself from these prophets. He denied that he sent these men, commanded them or spoke to them in any way. Their message was totally wrong headed. They were prophesying “a false vision, divination, futility, and the deception of their own minds” (14:13f.).[[187]](#footnote-187)

**14And the Lord said to me: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. 15Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name although I did not send them, and who say, ‘Sword and famine shall not come upon this land’: By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed. 16And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword, with none to bury them—them, their wives, their sons, and their daughters. For I will pour out their evil upon them.**

**17 “You shall say to them this word:**

**‘Let my eyes run down with tears night and day,**

**and let them not cease,**

**for the virgin daughter of my people is shattered with a great wound,**

**with a very grievous blow.**

**18 If I go out into the field,**

**behold, those pierced by the sword!**

**And if I enter the city,**

**behold, the diseases of famine!**

**For both prophet and priest ply their trade through the land**

**and have no knowledge.’ ”**

The prophets kept saying that neither famine nor sword would come upon Judah. As a matter of fact, the prophets and those who listened to them would experience both. So many would die that there would not be enough people left to bury them. To drive home this point, God instructed Jeremiah to enter into a rhetorical lament. In this lament Jeremiah called upon himself to cry night and day for “the virgin daughter of my people.” They would receive a crushing blow which would result in “a sorely infected wound.” Outside the city the “sword,” i.e., war, would take its deadly toll. Inside the city people would starve to death. Both prophet and priest would have to “rove about” (lit., peddle their wares) in a foreign land (14:15–18).[[188]](#footnote-188)

**19 Have you utterly rejected Judah?**

**Does your soul loathe Zion?**

**Why have you struck us down**

**so that there is no healing for us?** It is still unthinkable to Jeremiah that Yahweh would reject His chosen people.[[189]](#footnote-189)

**We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror.**

C. The Third Petition (14:19–15:9)

In his third petition Jeremiah asked God three questions designed to move him to intervene during the drought. In the first he asked if God utterly had rejected Judah. In the second he asked if God loathed Zion. The third question inquired as to why God had stricken the nation beyond healing. Misled by the false prophets, the people were expecting national “healing.” The drought, however, continued unabated (14:19).[[190]](#footnote-190)

**20 We acknowledge our wickedness, O Lord,**

**and the iniquity of our fathers,**

**for we have sinned against you.**

**21 Do not spurn us, for your name’s sake;**

**do not dishonor your glorious throne;**

**remember and do not break your covenant with us.**

**22 Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain?**

**Or can the heavens give showers?**

**Are you not he, O Lord our God?**

**We set our hope on you,**

**for you do all these things.**

Again Jeremiah frankly acknowledged the sin of his people. They were indeed worthy of punishment. Then, however, he presented a fourfold appeal for leniency. (1) He prayed that God would not continue to despise his people “for Thine own name’s sake” (cf. 14:7). (2) He asked that God not disgrace “the throne of Thy glory,” i.e., Jerusalem. (3) He pled for God to “remember Thy covenant with us.” (4) He argued that God alone could send the rains. He, therefore, was the only hope of the nation (14:20–22).[[191]](#footnote-191)

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**The Lord Will Not Relent 1-9vs**

**15 Then the Lord said to me, “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go!**

God said that even if two of the giants of the Old Testament – Moses and Samuel – were to intercede for Judah, it would not change their fate. It’s not Jeremiah’s fault. If only I was a better…

**2And when they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord:**

**“ ‘Those who are for pestilence, to pestilence,**

**and those who are for the sword, to the sword;**

**those who are for famine, to famine,**

**and those who are for captivity, to captivity.’** 4 types of death to come

**3I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, declares the Lord: the sword to kill, the dogs to tear, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy.** And also bodies desecrated, worse than death? **4And I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, did in Jerusalem.**

Manasseh was the son of the righteous King Hezekiah and grandfather of King Josiah. He ruled Judah 697–642 bc. This 55-year reign was the longest of any Davidic king. The biblical history records Manasseh’s reign as one of unprecedented idolatry and apostasy (2 Kgs 21:16; 2 Chr 33:12-13 may have repented before his death But the damage had been done.). 2 Kgs 21:16Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the LORD. His father, Hezekiah, had destroyed the high places and attempted to wipe out idolatry (2 Kgs 18:4), but Manasseh rebuilt the high places, set up altars for the Canaanite deities (Baal, Asherah) engaged in child sacrifice and witchcraft, and set up an Asherah pole in the temple of Yahweh (2 Kgs 21:3–7). Manasseh’s evil was so great that even Josiah’s reforms (2 Kgs 23:4–25)—removing all those idols, and destroying altars and local shrines—were not enough to prevent Yahweh from bringing judgment on Judah (2 Kgs 23:26–27). Second Kings explicitly blames the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 bc on the sins of Manasseh (2 Kgs 24:3–4).[[192]](#footnote-192)

For the third time God categorically rejected any further intercession for mercy on Judah. The problem was not in Jeremiah’s prayer technique. Even the greatest intercessors of Israel’s history (“Moses and Samuel”) would not be able to move God to continue showing pity to that sinful generation. God’s decree was that these sinners should be sent away to their appointed destinies: death, sword, famine, and captivity. Those slain by the sword would be torn and eaten by bird and beast (15:1–3).[[193]](#footnote-193) As they witnessed what befell Judah, other nations would be horrified and fearful for their own safety. The sins introduced by Manasseh and perpetuated by all his successors (save Josiah), demanded such harsh treatment. No other nation in the world really would care when Judah fell (15:4f.).[[194]](#footnote-194)

**5 “Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem,** you are about to be crushed and no one cares.

**or who will grieve for you?**

**Who will turn aside**

**to ask about your welfare?**

**6 You have rejected me, declares the Lord;**

**you keep going backward,**

**so I have stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you—**

**I am weary of relenting.** God’s heart again…how long can God hold back his judgment?

Billy Graham, “If God doesn’t judge American, then he owes an apology to Sodom and Gomorah”

These people who had forsaken their God continued to go backwards. God would therefore stretch out his hand against them. He was weary with the business of making threats and then withholding the stroke at the last possible moment. A winnowing process would begin “at the gates of the land” where young men would be slain making a stand against the enemy. Parents would thus be separated from their children. God would destroy his people because they had not repented of their ways (15:6f.).[[195]](#footnote-195)

**7 I have winnowed them with a winnowing fork** separating the wheat from the chaff.

**in the gates of the land;**

**I have bereaved them; I have destroyed my people;**

**they did not turn from their ways.**

**8 I have made their widows more in number**

**than the sand of the seas;** how many widows?

**I have brought against the mothers of young men**

**a destroyer at noonday;**

**I have made anguish and terror**

**fall upon them suddenly.**

What a slaughter that would be! Widows would be more numerous than the sand of the sea. Jerusalem would be like a mother who suddenly experienced anguish and despair. At the most unexpected time (“high noon”) a destroyer would come against this mother. The woman who had given birth to “seven sons,” i.e., numerous sons, would develop labored breathing and slowly die. For her the sun would set while it was yet day, i.e., she died prematurely. Those who survive the demise of the mother city would be given over to the sword of their enemies (15:8f.).[[196]](#footnote-196)

**9 She who bore seven has grown feeble;** perfect family will be destroyed. A sign of divine blessing, since seven symbolizes completeness. Compare 1 Sam 2:5; Ruth 4:15.[[197]](#footnote-197)

**she has fainted away;**

**her sun went down while it was yet day;**

**she has been shamed and disgraced.**

**And the rest of them I will give to the sword**

**before their enemies,**

**declares the Lord.”**

No work is so lonely as the ministry. No prophet was so lonely in his work as Jeremiah. Throughout his ministry this servant experienced psychological stress. Of that fact the text now gives a prime example.[[198]](#footnote-198)

**Jeremiah’s Complaint**

**10Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.**

A life where everyone hates Jeremiah. Aren’t you glad that we have the message of hope to tell to people, not the message of judgment. Good News! Jeremiah wished he had never been born. The gentle prophet had become a controversial figure, a man of “strife” and “contention.” His message of doom had accomplished no more than arousing animosity against him. He was cursed as much as a ruthless lender or an irresponsible borrower (15:10).[[199]](#footnote-199)**11The Lord said, “Have I not set you free for their good? Have I not pleaded for you before the enemy in the time of trouble and in the time of distress? 12Can one break iron, iron from the north, and bronze?**

**13“Your wealth and your treasures I will give as spoil, without price, for all your sins, throughout all your territory. 14I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.”** God promised to release Jeremiah from the hostility which he had been experiencing in this phase of his ministry. His enemies would actually seek him out for aid in a time of distress. Furthermore, he need have no fear about the accuracy of the threats he had pronounced. The invincible foe from the north would be like iron or bronze which men could not smash. That enemy would roam throughout the land looting. Because of God’s burning anger the inhabitants of Judah would be carried away to a foreign land (15:11–14).[[200]](#footnote-200)

Now listen to Jeremiah battle with God.

**15 O Lord, you know;**

**remember me and visit me,**

***t*and take vengeance for me on my persecutors.** Vengeance is mine says the Lord. God, I forgive them but you take care of them.

**In your forbearance take me not away;**

**know that for your sake I bear reproach.**

Jeremiah began his second confession by acknowledging that God is omniscient. Yet he called upon the Lord to take note of his difficult situation. He asked for vengeance, i.e., execution of divine justice, upon his persecutors. If God continued to exercise patience with these evil men, Jeremiah would be killed. He pointed out that all of his suffering was because of his commitment to God (15:15).[[201]](#footnote-201)

**16 Your words were found, and I ate them,**

**and your words became to me a joy**

**and the delight of my heart,** the love and value that Jeremiah had for God’s Word. Seek find eat…illus. of tearing a page out and then stomping on the bible. Is daily reading a joy or a chore? Ask God to show you the joy of his Word.

**for I am called by your name,**

**O Lord, God of hosts.**

**17 I did not sit in the company of revelers,**

**nor did I rejoice;**

**I sat alone, because your hand (**power**) was upon me,**

**for you had filled me with indignation.**

**18 Why is my pain unceasing,**

**my wound incurable,**

**refusing to be healed?**

**Will you be to me like a deceitful brook,**

**like waters that fail?**

Jeremiah did all the right things, but still no progress, what’s up with that God?

In a narrative prayer Jeremiah described his situation to the Lord. Many years earlier he had eaten God’s word, i.e., he took it in and made it part of himself. At first he experienced real joy in knowing that word and sharing it with others. He found satisfaction in knowing that he belonged to God in a special way. God’s hand had touched him and set him apart. The message which God gave him to preach, however, was one of indignation against sin. This caused people to shun him. He was not welcome at their social gatherings. Now he felt totally alone. His mental suffering was perpetual. He felt that God had become to him “like a deceptive stream,” i.e., had failed him, had not lived up to his promises (15:16–18).[[202]](#footnote-202)

**19 Therefore thus says the Lord:**

**“If you return, I will restore you,**

**and you shall stand before me.**

**If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless,**

**you shall be as my mouth.**

When you are angry with God, get it out and then repent, God will be right there. He’s waiting for you. I you have a problem with God, it’s not his problem, it’s your problem and he knows it. Yahweh’s response to Jeremiah implies that he has wandered away from his prophetic responsibilities, perhaps siding too much with the people under judgment. Yahweh is calling him to repent or return—both possible meanings of the Hebrew word—so he can be reinstated as Yahweh’s spokesman.[[203]](#footnote-203)

**They shall turn to you,**

**but you shall not turn to them.**

**20 And I will make you to this people**

**a fortified wall of bronze;**

**they will fight against you,**

**but they shall not prevail over you,**

**for I am with you**

**to save you and deliver you,**

**declares the Lord.** Your strength will be the strength of the Lord.

**21 I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,**

**and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.”** In comparing God to a deceptive stream, Jeremiah had gone too far. He needed to repent if he wanted to continue to “stand” as a servant in God’s court, i.e., maintain his unique relationship to the Lord. He must separate the vile (doubt, mistrust) from the precious (faith, love, and trust). He must not allow the skeptical citizens to drag him down to their level. If Jeremiah made these adjustments, then the Lord would honor the promise he had made to him at his call. Jeremiah would be “a fortified wall of bronze.” No matter how much men might attack him, they would not prevail. God would always deliver him from the hand of the wicked (15:19–21).[[204]](#footnote-204)

**Famine, Sword, and Death. 1-13vs**

**16 The word of the Lord came to me: 2“You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place.**  In ancient Jewish culture (and among many observant Jews today) it was a shame and a dishonor to be single and childless. Marriage and childbearing were expected. Jeremiah’s obedience to God’s command would attract attention.

**3For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning the mothers who bore them and the fathers who fathered them in this land: 4They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by the sword and by famine, and their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth.**  This was God’s reason for the unusual command to Jeremiah. The present time was so filled with distress and coming crisis that it was wise for Jeremiah not to marry or have children.

Although Jeremiah had complained of his loneliness, God immediately gave him instructions which must have increased his sense of isolation. First, he was forbidden to marry. In the short run this command seems harsh. If any man ever needed a compassionate helpmate, this prophet did! In the long run, however, the prohibition was in the best interest of Jeremiah. In the coming judgment wives and children would suffer tremendously. Worries about the safety of family would only increase the burdens of the prophet (16:1–4).[[205]](#footnote-205)

**5“For thus says the Lord: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament or grieve for them, for I have taken away my peace from this people, my steadfast love and mercy, declares the Lord. 6Both great and small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried, and no one shall lament for them or cut himself or make himself bald for them.** “These are rites of self-mutilation, in which the mourners cut or gashed themselves and shaved the head and the beard. They seem to have been widely practiced in Israel (Jeremiah 41:45; [Jeremiah 47:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+47.5&t=NKJV); [Jeremiah 48:37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+48.37&t=NKJV); [Isaiah 15:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+15.2-3&t=NKJV); [22:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+22.12&t=NKJV); [Ezekiel 7:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+7.18&t=NKJV); [Micah 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Micah+1.16&t=NKJV), etc.) even though they were forbidden.” (Thompson)

**7No one shall break bread for the mourner, to comfort him for the dead, nor shall anyone give him the cup of consolation to drink for his father or his mother. 8You shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink.**

Just as Jeremiah was commanded to detach himself from normal family relationships and expressions of public mourning, so he was also to detach himself from public celebrations. All these were done as signs of the coming judgment.

Second, Jeremiah was forbidden to attend social gatherings. He was not to attend funerals. His non-attendance was to underscore one of the major thrusts of his warnings. In the coming judgment so many would die that normal funeral rites would not be possible. This included the funeral feast which was conducted in the home of the bereaved after the funeral (16:5–7). Jeremiah was also not to participate in festive occasions. Again his non-participation was to underscore the threats which he made in his predictions. In the day of judgment all sounds of celebration would be absent from the land (16:8f.).[[206]](#footnote-206)

**9For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will silence in this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.**

Don’t get Married.

Don’t go to funerals

Don’t go to parties.

Jeremiah is a living sign of when the judgment comes.

Question? In my walk with God, does God put any prohibitions on my life?

**10“And when you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, ‘Why has the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?’ 11then you shall say to them: ‘Because your fathers have forsaken me,** This coming conquest and exile of Judah was not due to the sin of only one generation. It was hardened rebellion over several generations that brought Judah to their soon-to-come judgment. **declares the Lord, and have gone after other gods and have served and worshiped them, and have forsaken me and have not kept my law, 12and because you have done worse than your fathers,** The sins of their fathers were enough to make them liable for judgment, but beyond that they added their own guilt. To the sins of their fathers (idolatry and rejection of the LORD’s ways), they also worshipped self in a significant way.

Adam’s sin, our sin…which is worse?

**for behold, every one of you follows his stubborn, evil will, refusing to listen to me. 13Therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.’** Third, Jeremiah was commanded to preach an unpopular message. If he were to be challenged about the justice of the coming calamity, the prophet was to have a ready answer. The fathers had been unfaithful, and the present generation stubbornly had persisted in apostasy. God would therefore hurl them out of their land. In exile in a strange land they could serve their idols to their hearts’ content (16:10–13).[[207]](#footnote-207)

**The Lord Will Restore Israel**

**14“Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, ‘As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ 15but ‘As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.’ For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers.** First Egypt and now out of Babylon. There is a valuable spiritual analogy here. The initial work of redemption in the life of a believer is great; but the restoring work of the believer – when God brings a chastened child of His out of a metaphorical exile and back into His favor and promise – this work may sometimes be regarded as even greater. This is the principle God revealed to Jeremiah.

Seeing light at the end of a dark tunnel can lift the spirits of those in the throes of discouragement. God now revealed to Jeremiah some of what was on the other side of the national judgment on Judah. After the exile would come restoration to Canaan. The return of God’s people would eclipse in significance the Exodus under Moses. This regathering would involve, not just one land as in the case of Moses, but multiple lands, “the land of the north” and “all the countries where he had banished them” (16:14f.). The restoration of God’s people after the exile culminated in the work of the great liberator Jesus Christ.[[208]](#footnote-208)

**16“Behold, I am sending for many fishers, declares the Lord, and they shall catch them. And afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks. 17For my eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity concealed from my eyes. 18But first I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations.”**

Jeremiah compared the conquerors of Judah to fishers and hunters who seek out every sinner. The people could not hide their sin from God. To the penalties which Judah had already experienced, God would add the penalty of mass deportation. This double penalty was necessary because their lifeless idols, like dead carcasses, polluted the land (16:16–18).[[209]](#footnote-209)

**19 O Lord, my strength and my stronghold,**

**my refuge in the day of trouble,**

**to you shall the nations come**  Gentiles!

**from the ends of the earth and say:**

**“Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies,**

**worthless things in which there is no profit.**

Jeremiah conquered depression temporarily and burst forth into a triumphant prayer of faith. He confessed that Yahweh was his “strength, stronghold, and refuge in the day of distress.” He looked forward to the day when Gentiles would turn to God and totally renounce their idolatry as “falsehood” and “futility.” They would recognize that idols are utterly worthless, “things of no profit.” To think that a man could create gods for himself was ridiculous to Jeremiah (16:19f.).[[210]](#footnote-210)

**20 Can man make for himself gods?**

**Such are not gods!”** God responded to Jeremiah’s prayer of faith by assuring him that the Jews would also come to know his “power” and “might.” When he brought judgment on Jerusalem and subsequently restored the faithful to the land, they would come to know the real significance of God’s name Yahweh (16:20).[[211]](#footnote-211)

**21“Therefore, behold, I will make them know, this once I will make them know my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is the Lord.”** Jews or Gentiles???Resurrection Sunday!!!!!!

Chapter 17 contains excerpts from Jeremiah’s preaching during the middle period of his ministry. Three of these sermonettes are brief and unrelated. The chapter concludes with a longer sermon summary.[[212]](#footnote-212)

The sermonettes in chapter 17 deal with (1) the guilt of the nation, (2) the contrast between believers and unbelievers, and (3) the deceitful human heart.[[213]](#footnote-213)

**The Sin of Judah (1-13vs)**

**17 “The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with a point of diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars,** *1. National guilt (17:1–4)*. The record of Judah’s sin was written indelibly (“iron stylus with a diamond point”) on their stony hearts and on the most sacred parts (“horns”) of their altars. All the children could remember were the pagan altars with the sacred Asherahs beside them (17:1f.).[[214]](#footnote-214)

**2while their children remember their altars and their Asherim,** (passed on from generation to generation)**beside every green tree and on the high hills, 3on the mountains in the open country. Your wealth and all your treasures I will give for spoil as the price of your high places for sin throughout all your territory.** Because of her record of sin and rebellion, all the wealth of Jerusalem (“my mountain”) and all her high places (pagan worship centers) would be given as spoil to an enemy. The citizens of the place would be carried off to become servants of a foreign power. By their perpetual rebellion they had kindled the fire of God’s anger, and by it they would be scorched (17:3f.).[[215]](#footnote-215)

**4You shall loosen your hand from your heritage that I gave to you, and I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.”**

**5 Thus says the Lord:**

**“Cursed is the man who trusts in man** you will always be let down by man. No curse needed. Illus car with no breaks.

**and makes flesh his strength,**

**whose heart turns away from the Lord.**

**6 He is like a shrub in the desert,**

**and shall not see any good come.**

**He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness,**

**in an uninhabited salt land.** Even in the Christian community, celebrity pastors? Be careful. That man will disappoint you at some point. Me included.

**7 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,**

**whose trust is the Lord.**

**8 He is like a tree planted by water,**

**that sends out its roots by the stream**, Psalm 1

**and does not fear when heat comes,**

**for its leaves remain green,**

**and is not anxious in the year of drought,**

**for it does not cease to bear fruit.”**

*2. Believers vs. unbelievers (17:5–8)*. In what amounts to a psalm, Jeremiah set forth the contrast between believers and unbelievers. The man who trusts in flesh and departs from the Lord is cursed. Like a twisted desert shrub he does not live, he merely survives. On the other hand, the man who trusts in the Lord is blessed. He is like a flourishing tree with roots by a stream. That man continues to bear fruit even during the “heat,” i.e., the difficult times of life.[[216]](#footnote-216)

**9 The heart is deceitful above all things,**

**and desperately sick;**

**who can understand it?** Same as trust in man? I’m a human? Follow your hear?

**10 “I the Lord search the heart**

judge it against God’s Word. Vs. God wants me to be happy. Affairs Solomon, look at what he gave up for the love a women. Die to yourself, take up the cross…

Ezekiel 36:26 new heart new covenant

2 cor 5:17 new creations

Ephesians 4:24 new man patterned after Jesus Christ

**and test the mind,** (Kidneys, inner most being) I am a new man, with a new identity but I still have the impulse to sin inside of me. That is our struggle. But God knows it, we need to trust in Him.

**to give every man according to his ways,**

**according to the fruit of his deeds.”**

**11 Like the partridge that gathers a brood that she did not hatch,**

**so is he who gets riches but not by justice;**

**in the midst of his days they will leave him,**

**and at his end he will be a fool.**

*3. The human heart (17:9–11)*. The heart of man is deceitful and desperately sick. God alone understands the human heart. This is why he can be absolutely just in his judgment. Evil men will be deprived of ill-gotten gain as surely as the hapless partridge is deprived of her eggs by her natural enemies.[[217]](#footnote-217) Don’t trust in riches, you can’t take it with you.

**12 A glorious throne set on high from the beginning**

**is the place of our sanctuary.** Place of protection

At this time Jeremiah fought another bout with depression. His third confession began on a positive note. He praised God as “the glorious throne on high,” i.e., the ruler of the earth, “from the beginning.” The Lord is “the place of our sanctuary” because true worship is grounded in him. He is the “hope of Israel.” Those who forsake the Lord are ultimately put to shame. Those who turn away from the Lord would be “written in the dust” (NIV), i.e., quickly obliterated. The prophet who called God “a deceptive stream” in his previous confession (15:18) now called the Lord “the fountain of living water” (17:12f.).[[218]](#footnote-218)

**13 O Lord, the hope of Israel,**

**all who forsake you shall be put to shame;**

**those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth,**

**for they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water.**

**Jeremiah Prays for Deliverance 14-18vs**

**14 Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed;**

**save me, and I shall be saved,**

**for you are my praise.**

**15 Behold, they say to me,**

**“Where is the word of the Lord?**

**Let it come!”**

**16 I have not run away from being your shepherd,**

**nor have I desired the day of sickness.**

**You know what came out of my lips;**

**it was before your face.**

Since God was the object of his praise, again the discouraged prophet cried out for God to “heal” him of his mental torment, to save him from his adversaries. In narrative prayer he related the situation to his God. His adversaries keep mocking his predictions: “Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now!” In spite of this mockery Jeremiah had not forsaken his post as undershepherd to God. On the other hand, he took no malicious delight in announcing the doom which would befall Judah. He was utterly sincere in his ministry. God knew his every word (17:14–16).[[219]](#footnote-219)

**17 Be not a terror to me;**

**you are my refuge** (hope)  **in the day of disaster.**

Jeremiah desired and prayed for the salvation of Judah as a nation. At the same time, he prayed for the immediate demise of that group of hard core antagonists who were the enemies of both God and his prophet. He longed to see them “put to shame” and “dismayed.” He asked God to bring on them “a day of disaster, twofold destruction,” i.e., total or complete destruction. Jeremiah knew that he personally had nothing to fear in that day of judgment for God would be a “refuge” to him (17:17f.).[[220]](#footnote-220)

**18 Let those be put to shame who persecute me,**

**but let me not be put to shame;**

**let them be dismayed,**

**but let me not be dismayed;**

**bring upon them the day of disaster;**

**destroy them with double destruction!**

Tough prayer, but wait until the end of 18. Still praying for him not to be put to shame. I believe help me with my unbelief.

In the next two messages of the book exhortation is prominent. Jeremiah urgently was attempting to get his generation to manifest some sign of repentance so that God might then spare the city from the calamity which had been forecast.[[221]](#footnote-221)

**Keep the Sabbath Holy**

**19Thus said the Lord to me: “Go and stand in the People’s Gate, by which the kings of Judah enter and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem, 20and say: ‘Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. 21Thus says the Lord: Take care for the sake of your lives, and do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. 22And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers. 23Yet they did not listen or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck, that they might not hear and receive instruction.**

In the gates of Jerusalem Jeremiah was to preach a sermon on national survival. He was to address his message to the kings of Judah, to all Judah and especially to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The message emphasized three points. First, Jeremiah exhorted the people to start sanctifying the sabbath. This they could do by ceasing to carry loads in or out of the city or their homes. God had commanded their forefathers to “keep the sabbath day holy,” but they did not listen. They “stiffened their necks”; they would not “take correction” (17:21–23).[[222]](#footnote-222) God is testing in this one area.

**24“ ‘But if you listen to me, declares the Lord, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy and do no work on it, 25then there shall enter by the gates of this city kings and princes who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And this city shall be inhabited forever. 26And people shall come from the cities of Judah and the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the Shephelah, from the hill country, and from the Negeb, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and frankincense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the Lord.**

Second, Jeremiah promised his audience they could chart a new course if they only would. A manifestation of repentance regarding sabbath observance would cause God to spare Jerusalem. Business would continue as usual in terms of the activity of kings and princes, and the worship activities of the Temple. The city would be “inhabited forever” (17:24–26).[[223]](#footnote-223)**27**

**But if you do not listen to me, to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter by the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.’ ”** The sermon on survival concluded with a threat. If Judah showed no sign of repentance regarding sabbath observance, then the city would experience the fires of judgment. That fire would not be quenched until it devoured “the palaces of Jerusalem” (17:27).[[224]](#footnote-224)

God is boiling it right down to one thing. Easy to do. In the Garden, one easy thing. And see if I won’t bless you! This shows the weakeness of man and rebellion of Yahweh.

**The Potter and the Clay (1-10)**

**18 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2“Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words.” 3So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. 4And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.**

Jeremiah on a field trip. The clay is useless, he doesn’t throw it out, he reuses it in another special way.

Jeremiah was commanded to go to the potter’s house where he would learn a very important principle relating to his own promises and threats. When the prophet arrived at the potter’s house he observed that the craftsman was making something on his wheel. He was impressed by the ease with which the potter would begin a new project if something went wrong with the clay he was working (18:1–4).[[225]](#footnote-225)

**5Then the word of the Lord came to me: 6“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. 7If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, 8and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. 9And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it,**

The house of Israel was clay in the hands of the divine Potter. He could do as he pleased with this clay. His decisions, however, were based on the conduct of the nation. If he threatened destruction of a nation, and they repented, then God would relent concerning the calamity which he had announced. On the other hand, if God announced a blessing upon a nation, and it turned from him, then the blessing would be canceled (18:5–9). The point is that all the threats and promises of God are conditional.[[226]](#footnote-226)

**10and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it.** America has been blessed by God in our history, but things have changed. God is the potter, if the clay becomes rebellious, He can shape it into something else.

(11-17)

**11Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘Thus says the Lord, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’** With this in mind, Jeremiah was told to announce that the divine Potter was “fashioning calamity” against Judah and Jerusalem. He earnestly pled with his people to “turn back” and “reform your ways and your deeds.” They, however, were defiant in their response: “It is hopeless!” Jeremiah should not waste his time trying to coax them into changing their lifestyle. They intended to follow their own plans and stubbornly to do whatever their heart might desire (18:11f.).[[227]](#footnote-227)

**12“But they say, ‘That is in vain** (hopeless**)! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’** Don’t forget about the false prophets. Jeremiah may have been the only prophet of God at this time. What message do you think the people want to hear?

**13 “Therefore thus says the Lord:**

**Ask among the nations,**

**Who has heard the like of this?** God offers them a easy way to repent, but they won’t do it.

**The virgin Israel**

**has done a very horrible thing.**

**14 Does the snow of Lebanon leave**

**the crags of Sirion?**

**Do the mountain waters run dry,**

**the cold flowing streams?**

**15 But my people have forgotten me;**

**they make offerings to false gods;**

**they made them stumble in their ways,**

**in the ancient roads,**

**and to walk into side roads,**

**not the highway,**

Judah’s horrible sin, unheard of among the nations, was that she had rejected her God. The Lebanon mountains are snow-capped the year around and swift-flowing streams constantly flow down those slopes. Nature is constant; but God’s people were not. They had departed from the old paths of faithfulness to blaze new trails into idolatry where they stumbled in their ways (18:13–15).[[228]](#footnote-228)

**16 making their land a horror,**

**a thing to be hissed at forever.**

**Everyone who passes by it is horrified**

**and shakes his head.**

Judah would suffer the consequences of the decision to abandon the Lord. Their land would become a desolation, and as such it would become an object of derision. They would scatter before their enemies as leaves before wind. In the day of their calamity God would show them his back and not his face, i.e., he would turn his back upon them in that crisis (18:16f.).[[229]](#footnote-229)

**17 Like the east wind I will scatter them**

**before the enemy.**

**I will show them my back, not my face,**

**in the day of their calamity.”** Maybe the strongest statement of judgement in the bible. “may your face shine upon us. His favor with them.”

**18Then they said, “Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us strike him with the tongue, and let us not pay attention to any of his words.”** Everyone against Jeremiah…prophet/priest? All corrupt.

Active opposition to Jeremiah arose in Anathoth (cf. 11:21), but it spread throughout the nation. These enemies now conspired to make lying accusations against this man of God which might trigger governmental action against him. After all, they had their counselors and spiritual leaders: priests, prophets and wise men. They had no need for a troublemaker like Jeremiah (18:18).[[230]](#footnote-230)

**19 Hear me, O Lord,**

**and listen to the voice of my adversaries.**

This new threat caused Jeremiah to plunge for the fourth time into the depths of depression. He urged the Lord to hear him, and to listen to his opponents as well. He could not understand why some were so antagonistic toward him. He had done only good for them; but they had repaid him with evil. Indeed, they had dug a pit, i.e., set a trap, for him to ensnare him with the intent that he might be executed. Yet in his role as God’s servant, Jeremiah had only spoken good on behalf of the nation. He had interceded with God to “turn away His wrath” from Judah (18:19f.).[[231]](#footnote-231)

**20 Should good be repaid with evil?**

**Yet they have dug a pit for my life.**

**Remember how I stood before you**

**to speak good for them,**

**to turn away your wrath from them.** (heartbroken Jeremiah, I love them, I don’t want wrath on them)

**21 Therefore deliver up their children to famine;**

**give them over to the power of the sword;**

**let their wives become childless and widowed.**

**May their men meet death by pestilence,**

**their youths be struck down by the sword in battle.**

Speaking from the bitterness of his soul, Jeremiah asked God to unleash his wrath against the enemies who plotted his death. He called for the invasion which he had threatened so many times. In gruesome detail he described how that invasion would affect civilians (“children, wives”) as well as the men of war. They deserved whatever the raiders might do to them because they had tried to entrap a man of God (18:21f.).[[232]](#footnote-232) **22**

**May a cry be heard from their houses,**

**when you bring the plunderer suddenly upon them!**

**For they have dug a pit to take me**

**and laid snares for my feet.**

**23 Yet you, O Lord, know**

**all their plotting to kill me.**

**Forgive not their iniquity,**

**nor blot out their sin from your sight.**

**Let them be overthrown before you;**

**deal with them in the time of your anger.**

(most violent prayer in the Bible. Venting about people who were trying to mess up his ministry and God’s word. His venting to God is the most appropriate place. God you deal with them!

Vengence is mine says the Lord. Jeremiah knew this. We need to follow this pattern as well. Jesus says to pray for your enemies, maybe not like this but forgive and let God do his stuff.

Jeremiah was confident that God knew about all the deadly schemes which had been devised against him. He asked God not to forgive their iniquity, i.e., fail to punish it. These mockers must be “overthrown” because they had rebelled against the word of God, the messenger of God, and thus God himself. Jeremiah wanted God to deal with them “in the time of Thine anger” (18:23).[[233]](#footnote-233)

**The Broken Flask**

**19 Thus says the Lord, “Go, buy a potter’s earthenware flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests,** Jeremiah was told by the Lord to purchase “a potter’s earthenware jar.” He was to take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests with him to the Potsherd Gate which overlooked the valley of Ben-Hinnom. In this valley children were regularly sacrificed to Baal (19:1f.).[[234]](#footnote-234)

Centuries later the Apostle Paul wrote, But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us ([2 Corinthians 4:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+4.7&t=NKJV)). Paul’s point was that the treasure and glory of God is set inside common and ordinary receptacles – His redeemed people.

Jeremiah’s point is different. Having come from the potter’s house ([Jeremiah 18:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+18.1-11&t=NKJV)), God showed him how the potter could mold clay again into a new shape if it should seem resistant. Here, the clay is baked, hardened, and breakable. “If there is nothing so workable as a clay pot in the making, there is nothing so unalterable as the finished article. If it is wrong by then, that is that.” (Kidner)

**2and go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom** (3rd time, a garbage dump always on fire and child sacrifice) **at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you.** The Valley of **Hinnom** gives us the idea of Gehenna in the New Testament. Gehenna is a Greek word borrowed from the Hebrew language. In [Mark 9:43-44](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+9.43-44&t=NKJV), Jesus spoke of hell (gehenna) referring to this place outside Jerusalem’s walls desecrated by Molech worship and human sacrifice ([2 Chronicles 28:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Chronicles+28.1-3&t=NKJV); [Jeremiah 32:35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+32.35&t=NKJV)). It was also a garbage dump where rubbish and refuse were burned. The smoldering fires and festering worms of the Valley of Hinnom made it a graphic and effective picture of the fate of the damned. This place is also called the “lake of fire” in [Revelation 20:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.13-15&t=NKJV), prepared for the devil and his angels ([Matthew 25:41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.41&t=NKJV)).

**3You shall say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing such disaster upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle.**

**4Because the people have forsaken me and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, 5and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind—** A great calamity was about to befall Judah, one so terrible that the ears of those who heard about it would tingle. This judgment was appropriate because they had (1) forsaken God; (2) made Jerusalem alien; (3) burned sacrifices to other gods; and (4) filled this place with the blood of the innocent. They were actually burning their sons in the fire as “burnt offerings to Baal.” The very thought of child sacrifice was totally foreign to Yahweh (19:3–5).[[235]](#footnote-235)

What about Abraham? Abraham was probably familiar with child sacrifice. God said stop! He showed he was not like others.

**6therefore, behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. 7And in this place I will make void the plans of Judah and Jerusalem, and will cause their people to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of those who seek their life. I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth. 8And I will make this city a horror, a thing to be hissed at. Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its wounds. 9And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his neighbor in the siege and in the distress, with which their enemies and those who seek their life afflict them.’** Same thing happened to the Northern Tribes when attacked by Syria.

The day was coming when Topheth (“fireplace”) and the valley of Hinnom would become known as the valley of Slaughter. God would “make void” (lit., empty out) the political counsel of Judah. Those who advised resistance to Babylon would be proved wrong. They would fall by the sword before their enemies. Corpses of slain soldiers would lie about everywhere. Birds and beasts would feed upon them. Jerusalem would be such a desolation that it would cause astonishment among passersby. At that time some would be reduced to cannibalism (19:6–9).[[236]](#footnote-236)

God here repeated a promise first recorded in [Jeremiah 7:32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+7.32&t=NKJV) – that He would answer the idolatry of Judah and the outrageous practice of human sacrifice with devastating judgment. There would be a grotesque **slaughter** in that valley.

**10“Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you, 11and shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter’s vessel, so that it can never be mended. Men shall bury in Topheth because there will be no place else to bury. 12Thus will I do to this place, declares the Lord, and to its inhabitants, making this city like Topheth. 13The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah—all the houses on whose roofs offerings have been offered to all the host of heaven, and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods—shall be defiled like the place of Topheth.’ ”**

Jeremiah was told by the Lord to smash the vessel which he had purchased in the sight of the men who had accompanied him to the gate. This symbolic act dramatized the prediction that the people of Judah and Jerusalem would be smashed like an irreparable vessel. “Topheth” in the valley of Hinnom would become a graveyard and the whole city would be a “Topheth.” Dead bodies would desecrate the place where once on the flat-roof houses they burned incense to the astral deities and poured out libations to other gods (19:10–13).[[237]](#footnote-237)

**14Then Jeremiah came from Topheth, where the Lord had sent him to prophesy, and he stood in the court of the Lord’s house and said to all the people:** Jeremiah returned from Topheth perhaps encouraged by the response of the elders and senior priests to his dramatic message. He attempted to continue preaching this message of doom in the precincts of the Temple. In the name of the Lord he announced the calamity which God was about to bring upon Jerusalem because “they had stiffened their necks,” i.e., they had been stubborn, in refusing to heed his word (19:14f.).[[238]](#footnote-238)

**15“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I am bringing upon this city and upon all its towns all the disaster that I have pronounced against it, because they have stiffened their neck, refusing to hear my words.”** The greatest sin of Judah and Jerusalem was not their particular sins themselves, it was their rebellion and refusal to hear God and receive His word and correction.

**Jeremiah Persecuted by Pashhur**

**20:1–6** Jeremiah’s prophecy, which he delivered in the temple court (19:14–15), elicits a strong reaction from the priest, Pashhur, who was responsible for maintaining order in the temple. Jeremiah is beaten and put in stocks overnight, resulting in a strong denunciation of Pashhur the next morning. The incident provides an example of the persecution Jeremiah received and leads into his final two laments in vv. 7–18.[[239]](#footnote-239)

After the death of good King Josiah in 609 b.c. Jeremiah’s life was a living martyrdom. He had experienced threats against his life (11:21) and reputation (18:18). He had plumbed the depths of depression on four previous occasions (12:1–4; 15:15–18; 17:12–18; and 18:19–23). He knew the strain of mental anguish. Now for the first time he experienced a physical attack and bodily pain. Publicly he remained an iron pillar through this ordeal. Privately he was a broken man.[[240]](#footnote-240)

**20 Now Pashhur** Pashhur was a common name at this time. Jeremiah’s narrative mentions three individuals with this name. This individual is not the same as the Pashhur named in 21:1 or 38:1.[[241]](#footnote-241)

**the priest, the son of Immer, who was chief officer in the house of the Lord, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things.** The chief officer was probably charged with maintaining order in the temple area (compare 29:26). Jeremiah was disturbing the peace.[[242]](#footnote-242)

**2Then Pashhur beat Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper Benjamin Gate of the house of the Lord.** When Pashur, the chief officer of the Temple, heard this threatening message, he ordered Jeremiah arrested and beaten, i.e., scourged. Then the prophet was put in the “stocks” in a public place near the northern gate of the Temple precincts. Although the exact nature of these stocks is not known, they obviously were some sort of restraining device which at the same time twisted and thus tortured the body (20:1–2).[[243]](#footnote-243)

**3The next day, when Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, “The Lord does not call your name Pashhur,**(meaning peace) **but Terror on Every Side. 4For thus says the Lord: Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends. They shall fall by the sword of their enemies while you look on. And I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon. He shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall strike them down with the sword.** Though beaten physically, Jeremiah was not subdued by his priestly adversary. When Pashur released the prophet from the stocks the next morning, the prophet pronounced a symbolic name change over the priest. He would no longer be called Pashur, but “Magomassabib,” i.e., “terror on every side.” Pashur would live to see the invasion of Jerusalem and the Temple area which Jeremiah had been predicting. He would look on in terror as his close friends were cut down by the sword (20:3–4a).[[244]](#footnote-244)

**5Moreover, I will give all the wealth of the city, all its gains, all its prized belongings, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah into the hand of their enemies, who shall plunder them and seize them and carry them to Babylon. 6And you, Pashhur, and all who dwell in your house, shall go into captivity. To Babylon you shall go, and there you shall die, and there you shall be buried, you and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied falsely.”** For the first time Jerusalem’s conqueror was named. God would give all Judah into the hands of “the king of Babylon” who would slay some and deport others. All the wealth of Jerusalem would be plundered. Both Pashur and his family would be among those taken into Babylon. There this priest and all his friends to whom he had “falsely prophesied” would die and be buried (20:4b–6).[[245]](#footnote-245)

**7 O Lord, you have deceived me,**

**and I was deceived;**

**you are stronger than I,**

**and you have prevailed.**

**I have become a laughingstock all the day;**

**everyone mocks me.** Privately Jeremiah reached a low point in his ministry. He felt that God had deceived him about his ministry, had overpowered and forced him into his service. Everyone was mocking him because his predictions of violence and destruction had not materialized. Fidelity to the word of God had earned him “reproach and derision all day long” (20:7f.).[[246]](#footnote-246)

**8 For whenever I speak, I cry out,**

**I shout, “Violence and destruction!”**

**For the word of the Lord has become for me**

**a reproach and derision all day long.**

**9 If I say, “I will not mention him,**

**or speak any more in his name,”**

**there is in my heart as it were a burning fire**

**shut up in my bones,**

**and I am weary with holding it in,**

**and I cannot.** Jeremiah wanted to quit, to forget his heavenly call. The message, however, kept burning like fire in his heart and bones. He could not stand to hold it within himself. He had to preach it! He knew full well that people were plotting against him. From every direction he was under attack. He was routinely denounced as enemy and traitor. Even his closest “friends” were watching for one wrong step which would enable them to take revenge on him. He could trust no one (20:9f.).[[247]](#footnote-247)

**10 For I hear many whispering.**

**Terror is on every side!**

**“Denounce him! Let us denounce him!”**

**say all my close friends,**

**watching for my fall.**

**“Perhaps he will be deceived;**

**then we can overcome him**

**and take our revenge on him.”**

**11 But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior;**

**therefore my persecutors will stumble;**

**they will not overcome me.**

**They will be greatly shamed,**

**for they will not succeed.**

**Their eternal dishonor**

**will never be forgotten.** *2. His conviction (20:11–13)*. Suddenly the darkness of Jeremiah’s despair was broken by a light. God was after all on his side! As a “dread champion” the Lord would defend his servant. The plots of his enemies would fail. Ultimately they would be put to shame. Their disgrace in having opposed the messenger of God would endure forever (20:11).[[248]](#footnote-248)

**12 O Lord of hosts, who tests the righteous,**

**who sees the heart and the mind,**

**let me see your vengeance upon them,**

**for to you have I committed my cause.** Jeremiah regarded the Lord as the faithful Judge who looked on the heart. He was confident that he would live to see God’s “vengeance” on these tormentors. To this Judge Jeremiah had presented his case and he knew the Lord would do what was just. Therefore, he could sing praises to him for deliverance “from the hand of evildoers” (20:12f.).[[249]](#footnote-249)

**13 Sing to the Lord;**

**praise the Lord!**

**For he has delivered the life of the needy**

**from the hand of evildoers.**

**14 Cursed be the day**

**on which I was born!**

**The day when my mother bore me,**

**let it not be blessed!**

**15 Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father,**

**“A son is born to you,”**

**making him very glad.**

**16 Let that man be like the cities**

**that the Lord overthrew without pity;**

**let him hear a cry in the morning**

**and an alarm at noon,**

**17 because he did not kill me in the womb;**

**so my mother would have been my grave,**

**and her womb forever great.**

**18 Why did I come out from the womb**

**to see toil and sorrow,**

**and spend my days in shame?** *3. His curse (20:14–18)*. In but a moment Jeremiah plummeted from the lofty heights of praise to the lowest depths of depression. Why? Because he took his eye off of God. He focused anew on his own miserable situation. Therefore, he cursed the day of his birth, and the man who announced his birth. He wished he had died in the womb. For this martyr, life was nothing but trouble, sorrow and shame.[[250]](#footnote-250)

Humanity is designed to be dependent on God.

Corrupt Leadership

Jeremiah 21–25

**Background of the Unit**

Up to this point the material in the Book of Jeremiah has been arranged more or less in chronological order. Beginning with chapter 21 the prophet appears to have arranged his material topically. The oracles in chapters 21–25 are concerned mainly with political matters. They come from the reigns of three kings, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah.

Chapter 25 is dated to the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 b.c.), the year in which the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians at the Battle of Carchemish. Shortly thereafter Jehoiakim switched allegiance from the now defeated Pharaoh Neco to Nebuchadnezzar, the new master of the world. After the battle of Carchemish Jeremiah identified Babylon as the “enemy from the north” and forthcoming destroyer of Jerusalem.

One brief oracle (22:24–30) can be assigned to the reign of King Jehoiachin. In December of 598 b.c. just before Nebuchadnezzar came to punish him for rebellion, Jehoiakim either died a natural death or was assassinated. His eighteen-year-old son Coniah succeeded him under the throne name of Jehoiachin. Shortly after he assumed the throne the Babylonians arrived and began siege operations against Jerusalem. Jehoiachin held out until March 597 b.c. when he surrendered the city to the enemy. He, his family and ten thousand of his countrymen were deported to Babylon. There Jehoiachin lived the rest of his life as ward of the government.

Nebuchadnezzar placed as his vassal on the throne of Judah an uncle of Jehoiachin who took the throne name Zedekiah. This last king of Judah was under constant pressure to throw off the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar and to align himself with Egypt. After almost a decade of reluctant vassalage Zedekiah withheld tribute. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem for eighteen months after which he razed the city and deported the remaining leaders of the nation. The opening verses of chapter 21 belong to the reign of Zedekiah.

**Outline of the Unit**

A. God and the Rulers of Judah (chaps. 21:1–23:8).

B. God and the Prophets of Judah (23:9–40).

C. God and the Exiles of Judah (chap. 24).

D. God and the World Ruler (chap. 25).[[251]](#footnote-251)

**GOD AND THE RULERS OF JUDAH**

**Jeremiah 21:1–23:8**

The first subsection begins with an oracle addressed to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. Chapter 22 is chronologically prior to chapter 21. In this chapter 22 Jeremiah first spoke concerning the royal house in general, then concerning Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin. Finally he contrasted these worthless rulers with the coming of one who would faithfully fulfill the expectations of the royal office.[[252]](#footnote-252)

Chronologically chapter 21 is displaced and commentators have puzzled over its location here. The editor seems to have regarded this episode as an appendix to the previous unit. In the preceding chapter Jeremiah named Babylon as God’s agent to punish Judah. Chapter 21 documents the fulfillment of that prediction. In the “confessions” Jeremiah complained that people were laughing at his predictions regarding the enemy from the north. Chapter 21 documents that his predictions were now taken seriously. God had promised that if Jeremiah remained stalwart, someday his adversaries would turn to him (15:19). Chapter 21 illustrates how this came to be. At the end of chapter 20 Jeremiah cursed the day he was born. He was so discouraged he was ready to quit. Chapter 21 testifies that he stayed with his ministry and ultimately was vindicated.[[253]](#footnote-253)

**21:1–10** Zedekiah sends his officials to Jeremiah to inquire whether Yahweh will save them from Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians (Chaldeans). The historical situation must have been in 588 or 587 bc, after Nebuchadnezzar had begun his invasion. The tone of the inquiry shows that Zedekiah is holding out hope for a miraculous deliverance on par with Hezekiah’s escape from the Assyrian siege in 701 bc (see Isa 37:36 and note).[[254]](#footnote-254)

**Jerusalem Will Fall to Nebuchadnezzar** 42 yrs of Jeremiah prophecy. 588BC

2 invasions prior to Chapter 21. 588 BC. 605 BC Daniel Johiakim allowed. 10 yrs later took more treasure, more captives and set up Zedekiah. Now, last months or year of Zedekiah.

**21 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchiah and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, saying, 2“Inquire of the Lord for us, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is making war against us. Perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all his wonderful deeds and will make him withdraw from us.”**

**A. A Reply to King Zedekiah (21:1–10)**

During the final siege of Jerusalem King Zedekiah dispatched two messengers to Jeremiah. Nothing further is known of the first messenger, Pashur the son of Malchijah. The second was a priest named Zephaniah.2 The messengers requested that Jeremiah “inquire of the Lord,” i.e., make entreaty and ascertain God’s will. The situation in Jerusalem was desperate. Perhaps God would intervene with a miraculous overthrow of the Chaldeans as he had done in 701 b.c. when he destroyed the Assyrian invaders (21:1–2).[[255]](#footnote-255)

**21:1** **Zedekiah** Judah’s last Davidic ruler (597–586 bc). Jeremiah depicts Zedekiah as a weak ruler who is pushed around by his advisers (see Jer 38:16–27).

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| Zedekiah was the son of Josiah and brother of Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made him the vassal king of Judah in 597 bc following King Jehoiakim’s failed rebellion against Babylonian rule (see 2 Kgs 24:1–17). Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim’s son and successor, into exile and left Zedekiah to rule as a puppet king in his place. Unfortunately, most of the ruling class of Judah was carried into exile with Jehoiachin, leaving young Zedekiah with naïve and inexperienced advisers. Initially, Zedekiah was loyal to Nebuchadnezzar, but internal pressure from his advisers led him to rebel against Babylon and rely on Egypt for military assistance (see Jer 37:5 and note on Ezek 17:1–24). The Babylonians besieged Jerusalem beginning in the ninth year of Zedekiah’s reign (588 or 587 bc; 2 Kgs 25:1). The siege lasted about 18 months until the eleventh year of Zedekiah’s reign (586 bc; 2 Kgs 25:2). The Babylonians captured Zedekiah when he attempted to flee the city at night (2 Kgs 25:4–6). As punishment, he was forced to witness the execution of his sons; then his eyes were put out and he was taken into exile (2 Kgs 25:7). Jerusalem and the temple were burned (2 Kgs 25:9). |

**Pashhur, the son of Malchiah** A royal official also mentioned in Jer 38:1. This is not the Pashhur of 20:1. Malchiah (also rendered “Malkijah” or “Malchijah”) is called the king’s son in 38:6, but Pashhur’s relation to Zedekiah is unclear.

**Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah, the priest** A high-ranking priest and possible relative of Jeremiah (see 29:24–27; 32:7; 35:4). He was called second priest (52:24), the rank below chief priest. Zephaniah was executed by the Babylonians (see 2 Kgs 25:18–21).[[256]](#footnote-256)

**21:2** **Nebuchadnezzar** Nebuchadnezzar invaded Syria-Palestine three times when vassal states like Judah refused to pay tribute. The Hebrew text of Jer 21–52 mainly uses the proper Akkadian form of his name, Nebuchadrezzar. On the different meanings of his name, see note on Ezek 26:7.

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| **Nebuchadnezzar**  Nebuchadnezzar (or Nebuchadrezzar) was the second king of the Chaldean (Babylonian) dynasty, which ruled the ancient Near East from Babylon for almost a century. The Neo-Babylonian Empire was at its height during Nebuchadnezzar’s long rule (43 years, 605–562 bc). He was the son of Nabopolassar, a Chaldean who declared independence from Assyria in 626 bc and founded the dynasty. The strength of the Neo-Babylonian Empire was primarily Nebuchadnezzar’s creation, and the empire collapsed only a generation after his death.[[257]](#footnote-257) |

**3Then Jeremiah said to them: “Thus you shall say to Zedekiah, 4‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands and with which you are fighting against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the walls. And I will bring them together into the midst of this city. 5I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath.**

*1. A word for Zedekiah (21:3–7)*. Jeremiah sent the messengers back to Zedekiah with a response the King would not want to hear. God would thwart all efforts to defend Jerusalem. He actually would aid the Chaldeans to breach the walls and enter the very heart of the city. God declared that he himself would war against Jerusalem “with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm.” Through the Chaldean conquest he would display his “anger, wrath and indignation” against Jerusalem (21:3–5).[[258]](#footnote-258)

**6And I will strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. They shall die of a great pestilence.** God threatened to “strike down” the inhabitants of the city. Many would die of pestilence. Zedekiah and others who survived the sword, famine and pestilence would fall into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar who would execute still more by the sword. He would show no compassion upon them (21:6f.).[[259]](#footnote-259)

**7Afterward, declares the Lord, I will give Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people in this city who survive the pestilence, sword, and famine into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their lives. He shall strike them down with the edge of the sword. He shall not pity them or spare them or have compassion.’** Zedekiah reigned 11 years.

**8“And to this people you shall say: ‘Thus says the Lord: Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. 9He who stays in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, but he who goes out and surrenders to the Chaldeans who are besieging you shall live and shall have his life as a prize of war. 10For I have set my face against this city for harm and not for good, declares the Lord: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.’**

*2. A word for the people (21:8–10)*. The people of Jerusalem had only two options which Jeremiah characterized as “the way of life and the way of death.” Those who elected to remain in the city chose the way of death. The only hope of personal survival was surrender to the enemy. He who chose this option would lose all earthly possession; but “he would have his own life as booty.” To attempt to weather the storm behind the massive walls of Jerusalem was to commit suicide. God’s face had been set against the city and he would give the place into the hand of the king of Babylon.[[260]](#footnote-260)

Zedekiah reigned 11 years.

**Message to the House of David**

**11“And to the house of the king of Judah say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, 12O house of David! Thus says the Lord:**

**“ ‘Execute justice in the morning,**

**and deliver from the hand of the oppressor**

**him who has been robbed,**

**lest my wrath go forth like fire,**

**and burn with none to quench it,**

**because of your evil deeds.’ ”**

**13 “Behold, I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley,**

**O rock of the plain,**

**declares the Lord;**

**you who say, ‘Who shall come down against us,**

**or who shall enter our habitations?’**

*1. A word to the royal family (21:11–14)*. Jeremiah offered a program which would mitigate the effects of the burning wrath of the Lord. The royal house must see to it that two things were done immediately. First, they must practice justice. For example, they must deliver those who had been robbed from the “the power of the oppressor” (21:11f.). Second, they must cease trusting in the inviolability of Jerusalem. The Almighty had declared his hostility against “the valley dweller,” the rock fortress, i.e., Jerusalem. Though they boast of safety within her walls, they should know that God would punish them according to their deeds. The houses in Jerusalem, like trees in a forest, would burn down to the ground (21:13f.).[[261]](#footnote-261)

**14 I will punish you according to the fruit of your deeds,**

**declares the Lord;**

**I will kindle a fire in her forest,**

**and it shall devour all that is around her.”**

**22 Thus says the Lord: “Go down to the house of the king of Judah and speak there this word, 2and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, who sits on the throne of David, you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates. 3Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.**

*2. A word for the government (22:1–9)*. Jeremiah was commanded to go down to the house of the king of Judah. There he was to deliver a message to the king, his servants, and his family. God required the government to do “justice and righteousness.” Specifically, God expected the king to deliver those who had been robbed from the power of the oppressor. Stranger, orphan, and widow were not to be mistreated in any way. The shedding of innocent blood in child sacrifice or by unjust execution must cease (22:1–3).[[262]](#footnote-262)

**4For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people. 5But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation.**

**6For thus says the Lord concerning the house of the king of Judah:**

**“ ‘You are like Gilead to me,**

**like the summit of Lebanon,**

**yet surely I will make you a desert,**

**an uninhabited city.**

**7 I will prepare destroyers against you,**

**each with his weapons,**

**and they shall cut down your choicest cedars**

**and cast them into the fire.**

If the house of David would implement these social reforms, God would permit the royal family to continue ruling in Jerusalem. If, on the other hand, they ignored these directions, God swore that he would make the palace “a desolation.” Because of its height and cedar-wood construction, that palace was figuratively called “Gilead, top of Lebanon.” Yet God would make that lofty forest a wilderness. Destroyers would cut down those cedar beams and pillars and cast them into the fire (22:4–7).[[263]](#footnote-263)

**8“ ‘And many nations will pass by this city, and every man will say to his neighbor, “Why has the Lord dealt thus with this great city?”**

Visitors to the area would inquire as to why Yahweh had allowed such a total destruction of this city. The answer would come back, Because they “forsook the covenant of the Lord their God and bowed down to other gods” (22:8f.).[[264]](#footnote-264)

**9And they will answer, “Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and worshiped other gods and served them.” ’ ”**

**C. Remarks Concerning Specific Kings (22:10–30)**

At various times during his ministry Jeremiah received divine revelation concerning Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin. These oracles were here collected in a sub-section of the book.[[265]](#footnote-265)

**10 Weep not for him who is dead,** Josiah

**nor grieve for him,**

**but weep bitterly for him who goes away,** Shallum/Jehoahaz

**for he shall return no more**

**to see his native land.**

**Thursday** Josiah, Jehoahaz 3 mos., Johoiakim 11 yrs, Jchin 3 months, Zedekiah

**Message to the Sons of Josiah**

**11For thus says the Lord concerning Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, and who went away from this place: “He shall return here no more, 12but in the place where they have carried him captive, there shall he die, and he shall never see this land again.”**

*1. Concerning Jehoahaz (22:10–12)*. Jehoahaz (Shallum) reigned but three months after the death of Josiah in 609 b.c. He was then summoned to Riblah, put in chains, and deported to Egypt by Pharaoh Neco (2 Kgs 23:30ff.). Apparently some believed that Jehoahaz shortly would return from Egypt to resume his reign. Not so. Jehoahaz would never see his native land again. He would die in Egypt.[[266]](#footnote-266)

**13 “Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,** Jehoiakim

**and his upper rooms by injustice,**

**who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing**

**and does not give him his wages,**

**14 who says, ‘I will build myself a great house** with all these problems, he builds a house?

**with spacious upper rooms,’**

**who cuts out windows for it,**

**paneling it with cedar**

**and painting it with vermilion.**

**15 Do you think you are a king**

**because you compete in cedar?**

**Did not your father eat and drink**

**and do justice and righteousness?**

**Then it was well with him.**

**16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy;**

**then it was well.**

**Is not this to know me?** Our love for God can be measured by our love for other people.

**declares the Lord.**

*2. Concerning Jehoiakim (22:13–19)*. Jeremiah pronounced a “woe” on Jehoiakim because he launched a renovation of the palace using unpaid labor. This king wanted a more spacious dwelling, one which was paneled, and painted red. Building luxurious palaces would not preserve the reign of this king. His father Josiah had enjoyed the trappings of kingship, but at the same time he had been concerned about establishing justice and righteousness. He “pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; then it was well.” That is the essence of “knowing” God (22:13–16). When this good king died the entire nation lamented his death (2 Chr 35:25).[[267]](#footnote-267)

1 John 3, love your bother vs 14 , and vs 17.

**17 But you have eyes and heart**

**only for your dishonest gain,**

**for shedding innocent blood,**

**and for practicing oppression and violence.”**

**18Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:**

**“They shall not lament for him, saying,**

**‘Ah, my brother!’ or ‘Ah, sister!’**

**They shall not lament for him, saying,**

**‘Ah, lord!’ or ‘Ah, his majesty!’**

**19 With the burial of a donkey he shall be buried,**

**dragged and dumped beyond the gates of Jerusalem.”** Suspicious that a king dies in a siege, assassinated and thrown over the wall, in waving the white flag.

By way of contrast, Jehoiakim was concerned only about oppression and violence. He had his heart set on dishonest gain, shedding innocent blood and on practicing oppression and extortion. Therefore, when Jehoiakim died no one would be moved to sorrow. He would receive “a donkey’s burial,” i.e., he would not be buried at all. Rather he would be dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem (22:17–19).[[268]](#footnote-268)

**20 “Go up to Lebanon, and cry out,**

**and lift up your voice in Bashan;**

**cry out from Abarim,**

**for all your lovers are destroyed.**

*3. Concerning the nation (22:20–23)*. Jeremiah compared Judah to a woman who is called upon to ascend the heights and bewail the fate of the nation. The Chaldean army would shortly pass through Lebanon, Bashan and Abarim (southeast of the Dead Sea). Allied nations (lovers) would desert Judah in this situation (22:20).[[269]](#footnote-269)

**21 I spoke to you in your prosperity,**

**but you said, ‘I will not listen.’**

**This has been your way from your youth,**

**that you have not obeyed my voice.**

**22 The wind shall shepherd all your shepherds,**

**and your lovers shall go into captivity;**

**then you will be ashamed and confounded**

**because of all your evil.**

**23 O inhabitant of Lebanon,**

**nested among the cedars,**

**how you will be pitied when pangs come upon you,**

**pain as of a woman in labor!”**

In times of national prosperity God had spoken to Judah, but they had refused to hearken. The shepherds (leaders) would be swept by the wind (Chaldeans) into exile. Then the people would be ashamed of their previous conduct. Jeremiah compared the residents of Jerusalem to the birds which make their nests in the tops of the cedars of Lebanon. This proud city was about to suffer a terrible ordeal (22:21–23).[[270]](#footnote-270)

**24“As I live, declares the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off 25and give you into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans. 26I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country, where you were not born, and there you shall die. 27But to the land to which they will long to return, there they shall not return.”**

*4. Concerning Jehoiachin (22:24–30)*. Coniah (Jehoiachin) briefly followed his father Jehoiakim on the throne early in 597 b.c. Even if Jehoiachin were a signet on his right hand, i.e., extremely precious, he would be handed over to the Chaldeans. God would “hurl” this young king and the queen mother into a foreign land where they would die (22:24–27).[[271]](#footnote-271)

**28 Is this man Coniah a despised, broken pot,**

**a vessel no one cares for?**

**Why are he and his children hurled and cast**

**into a land that they do not know?**

**29 O land, land, land,**

**hear the word of the Lord!**

**30 Thus says the Lord:**

**“Write this man down as childless,** He had children, 1 Chronicles says, consider that he had none

**a man who shall not succeed in his days,**

**for none of his offspring shall succeed**

**in sitting on the throne of David**

**and ruling again in Judah.”**

Contradicts from the royal line of David the Messiah would come. That line is now cursed and stopped. And Satan danced! But according to the Gospels one legal one blood. Matthew legal line through Joseph.

Blood Line of Mary goes through a different son, not Solomon but Nathan. This line was not cursed by God as the legal line was. Zedekiah was Coniah’s Uncle.

Jeremiah expressed his astonishment over this tragedy with a series of questions. “Is Coniah a despised, shattered jar” that one might throw on a trash heap? “Why have he and his descendants been hurled out,” i.e., deported? Jeremiah solemnly called upon the *land* to hear the word of the Lord on this matter. As far as the throne is concerned, Coniah would be written down in the public records as “childless,” i.e., he would have no heir to inherit the throne from him. This man would not “prosper in his days,” for he would not be able to hand his throne over to a son. No man of his descendants would “prosper” sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah (22:28–30).[[272]](#footnote-272)

**The Righteous Branch**

**23 “Woe to the shepherds** (King or political ruler, spiritual leader, Pastor) **who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the Lord.**

The current leaders of Judah were under the divine “woe” because they were “destroying and scattering” God’s sheep. Though the shepherds had not attended to the needs of the sheep, God would shortly attend to the shepherds because of the evil of their deeds (23:1f.).[[273]](#footnote-273)people were scattered as they were sold off

**2Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord. 3Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.**

God himself would gather the flock from all the countries where he had scattered them. They would return to their “pasture,” i.e., Canaan, where they would “be fruitful and multiply.” God would raise up new shepherds who would devote themselves to the welfare of the flock. The sheep would no longer have cause to be afraid, nor would any of the sheep be found missing (23:3f.). The reference is to the great leaders of the postexilic period, men like Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah.[[274]](#footnote-274)

The purpose of the shepherd is to feed the sheep, protect. John 21: Peter feed my sheep. Tend my lambs.

Israel 1948? New Covenant, Jeremiah 32 , ez 11, 36, 37 God will gather the Jewish people back into the promised land. Presently Israel is in unbelief.

**4I will set shepherds** (Has this happened since Israel in 1948) **over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.** The modern-day miracle of Israel becoming an independent nation once again, after some 2500 years, is an initial fulfillment of these great promises. We say *initial*, because Israel is definitely gathered back to the land, but presently in unbelief.

**5“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’** (Zedekiah play on words?).Righteousness is not what we do, it’s our standing before God.Ancient Jewish leaders believed this was the Messiah. Messiah is Yahweh. Yahweh is Righteousness. Yahweh is GOD.

*Yahweh Tsidkenu* “is probably a play on the name of Zedekiah [which means], *My righteousness is Yahweh*.” (Thompson) “Jeremiah switched Zedekiah’s name around to make his pun. Zedekiah was called ‘Righteousness is the Lord,’ but the Messiah would be called ‘the LORD our Righteousness.’” (Ryken)

“Paul may have had this promise in mind when he spoke of ‘Christ Jesus….our righteousness…’ ([1 Corinthians 1:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+1.30&t=NKJV), **30***And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God*, *righteousness and sanctification and redemption,* ***31****so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”* [[275]](#footnote-275)

*cf*. [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.21&t=NKJV)).” ***21****For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* [[276]](#footnote-276) (Kidner)

An ideal king of the house of David would rule over the remnant after the return from exile. He is called “righteous” because of his character and purpose. He is called “branch” (lit., sprout) because, like a tender plant, his origins would be humble and fragile. As a king he would always “act wisely,” i.e., act in such a way as to guarantee the success of his mission. His reign would be characterized by “justice and righteousness.” He would be Judah’s savior, Israel’s protector. Under his leadership the fractured people of God would be reunited. His subjects would recognize that in this king God had provided for sinful man a righteousness which no man can earn or deserve. Therefore, this ideal ruler would be called “the Lord Our Righteousness” (23:4–6).[[277]](#footnote-277)

**7“Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when they shall no longer say, ‘As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ 8but ‘As the Lord lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.’ Then they shall dwell in their own land.”**

For two reasons the return from Babylon would come to exceed in significance the Mosaic Exodus. First, the Exodus involved one country, Egypt, while the gathering predicted here involved “all the countries where I had driven them.” Second, the return from exile in Babylon would be a necessary stage anticipating the appearance of Messiah (23:7f.).[[278]](#footnote-278)

**GOD AND THE PROPHETS OF JUDAH**

**Jeremiah 23:9–40**

In general the prophets supported the political decision to resist the Babylonian hegemony. They countered Jeremiah’s threats of invasion and destruction with theological reasons why God could never permit Jerusalem to be overthrown. Jeremiah now turned his attention to these charlatans who professed to have received revelation.[[279]](#footnote-279)

The Kings of Judah were a big problem, but not only them but the prophets too.

**Lying Prophets**

**9Concerning the prophets:**

**My heart is broken within me;** because of the damage they did to the honor of God and the people of God; not for sure but maybe the only true prophet of the day. Jeremiah’s message is repent, false prophets is relax.

**all my bones shake;**

**I am like a drunken man,**

**like a man overcome by wine,**

**because of the Lord and because of his holy words.**

**A. The Menace of the Prophets (23:9–15)**

Jeremiah expressed great distress over what he observed around him as well as what had been revealed to him by God. He felt a mixture of sympathy (“my heart is broken within me”) and trepidation (“all my bones tremble”). He lost self-control, and in that respect was like an intoxicated man. He was disheartened by the sinfulness of the masses for “the land was full of adulterers.” Because of the presence of these sinners, the land itself was suffering from drought. The nation was headed in the wrong direction. They used their might for that which is not right (23:9f.).[[280]](#footnote-280)

**10 For the land is full of adulterers;**

**because of the curse the land mourns,**

**and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up.**

**Their course is evil,**

**and their might is not right.**

**11 “Both prophet and priest are ungodly;**

**even in my house I have found their evil,** (ra)

**declares the Lord.**

Even their priests and prophets were “polluted.” They practiced their wickedness in the Temple precincts. God would make the way of the spiritual leaders slippery and dangerous as they plunged forward into the darkness of sin. God would bring “calamity” upon them in the “year of their punishment” (23:11f.).[[281]](#footnote-281)

**12 Therefore their way shall be to them**

**like slippery paths in the darkness,**

**into which they shall be driven and fall,**

**for I will bring disaster upon them**

**in the year of their punishment,**

**declares the Lord.**

**13 In the prophets of Samaria** (Northern kingdom)

**I saw an unsavory thing:**

**they prophesied by Baal**

**and led my people Israel astray.**

**14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem**

**I have seen a horrible thing:**

**they commit adultery and walk in lies;**

**they strengthen the hands of evildoers,**

**so that no one turns from his evil;**

**all of them have become like Sodom to me,**

**and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.”**

**15 Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets:**

**“Behold, I will feed them with bitter food**

**and give them poisoned water to drink,**

**for from the prophets of Jerusalem**

**ungodliness has gone out into all the land.”**

In the eyes of God the prophets of Judah were more wicked than the prophets of Samaria. Those Northern Kingdom prophets had prophesied by the god Baal and thus had led “my people Israel astray.” On the other hand, the Judean prophets professed to be spokesmen for God. Their lifestyle, however, betrayed their profession. They were immoral (“the committing of adultery”) and unscrupulous (“walking in falsehood”). By their false prophecies they “strengthened the hands” of those who engaged in evil practices. Without the moral restraint imposed by faithful preaching of God’s word, Jerusalem had become a virtual Sodom. “Pollution” had spread from the prophets into all the land of Judah. Therefore, because they had failed as spiritual leaders, God would make these prophets eat “wormwood” and drink “poisonous water,” i.e., they would be forced to partake of the divine judgment (23:13–15).[[282]](#footnote-282)

**B. The Message of the Prophets (23:16–22)**

Jeremiah urged his audience not to listen to the popular prophets. These men were leading the nation into “futility.” They spoke a “vision of their own imagination,” not a revelation from the “mouth of the Lord.” They kept assuring those in rebellion against God that “the Lord has said, You will have peace.” The person whose life followed a path of stubborn self-will was assured by spiritual leaders that “calamity will not come upon you” (23:16f.).[[283]](#footnote-283)

**16Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.** Not true prophets.

**17They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’ ”** (relax)

Our modern culture thinks *follow your heart* is supreme wisdom for living. The Bible says, *there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death* ([Proverbs 14:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+14.12&t=NKJV) – repeated for emphasis in [Proverbs 16:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+16.25&t=NKJV)).

**18 For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord**

**to see and to hear his word,**

**or who has paid attention to his word and listened?**

**19 Behold, the storm of the Lord!**

**Wrath has gone forth,**

**a whirling tempest;**

**it will burst upon the head of the wicked.**

**20 The anger of the Lord will not turn back**

**until he has executed and accomplished**

**the intents of his heart.**

**In the latter days you will understand it clearly.**

Jeremiah raised a question which must have been on the minds of those who were hearing conflicting prophetic messages. “Who has stood in the council of the Lord,” i.e., who has been made privy to inside information direct from the throne room of heaven? Who actually has been granted visions of future events and has heard the divine word? “Behold,” he cried. This word introduces the shocking revelation which Jeremiah had been granted. He saw a terrible storm brewing which would eventually “swirl down on the head of the wicked.” God’s anger would not “turn back” until his purpose of judgment had been accomplished. To his contemporaries this seemed inconceivable. Popular theology argued that God would not and could not abandon his people to their enemies. In the latter days (the messianic age), however, men would have a better comprehension of the plan of God (23:18–20).[[284]](#footnote-284)

**21 “I did not send the prophets,**

**yet they ran;**

**I did not speak to them,**

**yet they prophesied.**

**22 But if they had stood in my council,**

**then they would have proclaimed my words to my people,**

**and they would have turned them from their evil way,**

**and from the evil of their deeds.**

So what about the many prophets who promised peace? God declared, “I did not send them, I did not speak to them.” Yet they were zealous (“they ran”) in their mission and bold (“they prophesied”) in their proclamation. If they had truly received revelation from God as they claimed they would be preaching the same message as Jeremiah. The supreme proof that God had not sent these “prophets” was that they made no effort to get people to repent (23:21–22).[[285]](#footnote-285)

**23“Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? 24Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord. 25I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’**

**C. The Methods of the Prophets (23:23–32)**

God is fully aware of what the prophets have done in his name. After all, he is transcendent, omniscient and omnipresent. He had heard the lying claims of the prophets to have had a dream revelation (23:23–25).[[286]](#footnote-286)

**26How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart,** With disgust Jeremiah asked rhetorically how much longer these “prophets” would continue their deception and falsehood. Was it their purpose to make God’s people turn their backs on the Lord? Whether or not that was their intention, their “dreams” were as dangerous as Baalism had been in an earlier generation (23:26f.).[[287]](#footnote-287)

In a New Testament context, God commands that any supposed prophetic word be judged in the congregation.

· *Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge*. ([1 Corinthians 14:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+14.29&t=NKJV))

· *Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.*([1 Thessalonians 5:20-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.20-21&t=NKJV))

· *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*([1 John 4:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+4.1&t=NKJV))

Today it’s almost a sin to question the prophecy. If they don’t come true, then…

Did God tell you or lay it on your heart?

**27who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? 28Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw (chaff) in common with wheat? declares the Lord.**

Spokesmen for God need to make a clear-cut distinction between their own opinions and the word of the Lord. So Jeremiah taught. Prophets may share their own dreams so long as they label them as personal wishful thinking. The wheat of God’s word must be separated from the chaff of human speculation. Faithfully proclaimed, the word of the Lord is as powerful as “fire” and as a “hammer” (23:28f.). It burns away falsehood; it smashes delusion.[[288]](#footnote-288)

**29Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?**

**30Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who steal my words from one another. 31Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who use their tongues and declare, ‘declares the Lord.’ 32Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the Lord, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the Lord.**

Three times God declared his hostility toward the false prophets. These men caused the simple people to err because (1) they stole parts of their message from prophets like Jeremiah; and (2) they formulated their messages in the technical language of prophecy. They used the phrase “the Lord declares” (lit., oracle of Yahweh), which was the most solemn assertion that the message came directly from God. They spoke, not oracles from Yahweh, but “false dreams.” Their “reckless boasting” and falsehoods led God’s people astray. They certainly had not been sent by God. Their presence was of no value to the people (23:30–32).[[289]](#footnote-289)

**33“When one of this people, or a prophet or a priest asks you, ‘What is the burden of the Lord?’ you shall say to them, ‘You are the burden, and I will cast you off, declares the Lord.’**

**D. The Mockery of the Prophets (23:33–40)**

Prophet, priest and people mocked Jeremiah’s message. They constantly asked him what new “oracle” (lit. *burden*, i.e., weighty saying) he might have for them. He was instructed to reply, “You are the burden!” This was one burden the Lord would be glad to shed (23:33).[[290]](#footnote-290)

**34And as for the prophet, priest, or one of the people who says, ‘The burden of the Lord,’ I will punish that man and his household. 35Thus shall you say, every one to his neighbor and every one to his brother, ‘What has the Lord answered?’ or ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ 36But ‘the burden of the Lord’ you shall mention no more, for the burden is every man’s own word, and you pervert the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God.**

Those who continued mockingly to use the word “burden” would be punished along with their households. On the other hand, those who sincerely sought God’s revelation from the prophet should employ new terminology. They should ask, “What has the Lord answered?” or “What has the Lord spoken?” Those who persisted in using the term “burden” would find their own words to be a burden which would crush them to the ground. Such punishment was deserved. These men had not only mocked the messenger of God, they had “perverted the words of the Living God” (23:34–36).[[291]](#footnote-291)

**37Thus you shall say to the prophet, ‘What has the Lord answered you?’ or ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ 38But if you say, ‘The burden of the Lord,’ thus says the Lord, ‘Because you have said these words, “The burden of the Lord,” when I sent to you, saying, “You shall not say, ‘The burden of the Lord,’ ” 39therefore, behold, I will surely lift you up and cast you away from my presence, you and the city that I gave to you and your fathers. 40And I will bring upon you everlasting reproach and perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.’ ”**

Jeremiah was to challenge the false prophets to see if they would dare to use the word “burden.” He was to inquire as to what the Lord had said to them. If in their answer they employed the word “burden,” he was to announce to them that both they and their city would be cast away from God’s presence. When that judgment was poured out, these “prophets” would be shown to be deceivers. Thus they would become an object of “reproach” and “humiliation” forever (23:37–40).[[292]](#footnote-292)

**The Good Figs and the Bad Figs** Shortly before the final conquest of Babylon and Judah, Zedekiah set up as puppet king.

**24 After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, together with the officials of Judah, the craftsmen, and the metal workers, and had brought them to Babylon,** Daniel at the first one, then other group and now almost the last one. **the Lord showed me this vision: behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the Lord.**

**2One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad** (KJV Naughty) **figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. 3And the Lord said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” I said, “Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten.”**

In March 597 b.c. Nebuchadnezzar deported ten thousand Jewish captives to Babylon. Among these captives was “Jeconiah” (Jehoiachin), his officials and most of the skilled working class. Jeremiah learned a lesson about those captives when he observed near the entrance to the Temple two baskets of figs. One basket contained choice figs; the other rotten figs. God directed Jeremiah to note the difference between the contents of the two baskets. This alerted Jeremiah that a revelation of importance based on those baskets would be forthcoming immediately (24:1–3).[[293]](#footnote-293)

**4Then the word of the Lord came to me: 5“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. 6I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up.** Ezra and Nehemiah

**7I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.** Beginning to sound like a new covenant that is later in this book.

The conventional wisdom of the self-righteous citizens of Jerusalem was that those who had been carried off by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 b.c. were terrible sinners. They got just what they deserved. God, however, declared just the opposite. The good figs represented the captives who had been carried away to the land of the Chaldeans. God regarded those people as “good.” He would set his eye on them for good, i.e., he had positive plans for them. Eventually those exiles would return to their land. God would “build them up, and not overthrow them;” he would “plant them and not pluck them up.” God would “give them a heart” so that they might “know” him. He would use them to begin the process of rebuilding the nation because they would “know” God, i.e., they would repent and have their relationship to God restored (24:4–7).[[294]](#footnote-294)

**8“But thus says the Lord: Like the bad figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten, so will I treat Zedekiah the king of Judah, his officials, the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt.**

**9I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a reproach, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them.**

**10And I will send sword, famine, and pestilence upon them, until they shall be utterly destroyed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers.” [[295]](#footnote-295)**

The bad figs represented Zedekiah, those who remained in Jerusalem, and those who had fled to Egypt. God would abandon the bad figs. They were due to be destroyed by famine, sword and plague. So pitiful would be their lot that Gentiles would use them as a proverb or curse (24:8–10).[[296]](#footnote-296)

BTW - Soon after, the Babylonians captured Jerusalem. [Nebuchadnezzar](https://www.gotquestions.org/Nebuchadnezzar.html) gave orders not to harm Jeremiah. The prophet was released and allowed to go to Mizpah. Our last glimpse of Jeremiah in Scripture is when he was forcibly taken by a band of Jewish rebels who left Judah to live in Egypt around 585—582 BC ([Jeremiah 43—45](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer%2043%E2%80%9445)).  
  
According to the early church father [Tertullian](https://www.gotquestions.org/Tertullian.html), the Jews stoned Jeremiah to death in Daphne (*Tahpanhes* in Hebrew), Egypt. Jeremiah’s “crime” was telling them truths they did not want to hear [*Scorpiace*, Chapter VIII]. The tradition of Jeremiah’s martyrdom is backed by other first-century, extrabiblical writings (*Lives of the Prophets*), and invoked in the works of Jerome, Isidore of Seville’s *De Ortu Et Obitu Patrum*, and Peter Comestor’s twelfth-century *Historia Scholastica*. However, one Jewish tradition claims that, when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt around 569 BC, he took Jeremiah from Egypt to Babylon, where Jeremiah died.

**GOD AND THE WORLD RULER**

**Jeremiah 25:1–38[[297]](#footnote-297)**

**Seventy Years of Captivity**

**25 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon),** Chapter 25 is dated to the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the year 605 b.c. 7 years before Zedekiah. This was the year of the battle of Carchemish when Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians and became ruler of the world. Shortly after the battle he succeeded his father as king of Babylon (25:1f.). The chapter speaks of God’s judgment against Judah, Babylon, surrounding nations and the entire world.[[298]](#footnote-298)

**2which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 3“For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, to this day, the word of the Lord has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened. 4You have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear, although the Lord persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets,**

**A. Judgment against Judah (25:3–11)**

Jeremiah now had been preaching for twenty-three years. He had again and again spoken (lit., rising early and speaking) to his countrymen “the word of the Lord” which had come to him. Other prophets had been sent as well. The people of Judah, however, refused to listen to any of God’s servants (25:3–4).[[299]](#footnote-299)

**5saying, ‘Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds, and dwell upon the land that the Lord has given to you and your fathers from of old and forever. 6Do not go after other gods to serve and worship them, or provoke me to anger with the work of your hands. Then I will do you no harm.’ 7Yet you have not listened to me, declares the Lord, that you might provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm.**

The message of the true prophets consisted of appeals to “turn from your evil way and the evil of your deeds.” Only then could these people continue to dwell in the land which God had sworn to give to their forefathers forever. Specifically, they were to quit following after other gods. The making of idols did nothing but provoke the Lord to anger against them. God would do them no harm if they turned away from idolatry. The people, however, refused to listen. They continued to do that which provoked God to anger (25:5–7).[[300]](#footnote-300)

**8“Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts:** Heavenly Angelic Armies. **Because you have not obeyed my words, 9behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the Lord, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. 10Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.** Serious consequences awaited Judah for failing to obey the words of God. God was about to bring against Judah and surrounding nations a multi-national force led by “Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my servant.” The Babylonian would crush all in his path. The lands which he invaded would be left as “everlasting desolation,” as a object of horror and astonishment. Silence would reign supreme in these lands. The nations of Syria-Palestine would serve the king of Babylon seventy years (25:8–11). This period probably is to be measured from 605 to 538 b.c.[[301]](#footnote-301)

**12Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste. 13I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. 14For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.” [[302]](#footnote-302)**

**B. Judgment against Babylon (25:12–14)**

After seventy years the Chaldeans would pay for their iniquity. The land of the Chaldeans also would become “an everlasting desolation.” All that God had spoken about Babylon’s judgment would be fulfilled. Babylon would be enslaved by “many nations.” Among those who conquered Babylon were Medes and Persians, then the Greeks, and still later the Parthians.[[303]](#footnote-303)

**Thursday** so Jeremiah prophecied 70 years of captivity but that God would also judge the nations. Good figs, bad figs. Naughty figs. Overconfidence in Salvation.

**The Cup of the Lord’s Wrath**

**15Thus the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. 16They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them.”** the cup functions as a metaphor for an individual's fate. Usually means God’s mind is made up. There’s no returning now. They no longer have a choice.

Is this us in the U.S.A.? we should know better.

**17So I took the cup from the Lord’s hand, and made all the nations to whom the Lord sent me drink it:**

**C. Judgment on Surrounding Nations (25:15–29)**

Jeremiah was commanded to take from God’s hand “the cup of the wine of wrath.” He was to pass this cup among the nations designated by God. The nations which drank from that cup would “stagger and go mad.” Such would be the utter chaos which would result from “the sword,” i.e., invading army, which God would send into their midst. Jeremiah records that he took the cup from the Lord’s hand and made all the nations to which God sent him to drink of it. Did he visit capitals? Probably not. Did he carry out these instructions in a vision? Possibly. He may also have taken a wine cup to the foreign ambassadors of the various nations who resided in Jerusalem (25:15–17).[[304]](#footnote-304)

**18Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a desolation and a waste, a hissing and a curse, as at this day; 19Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his officials, all his people, 20and all the mixed tribes among them; all the kings of the land of Uz and all the kings of the land of the Philistines (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod); 21Edom, Moab, and the sons of Ammon; 22all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the coastland across the sea; 23Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who cut the corners of their hair; 24all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed tribes who dwell in the desert; 25all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of Media; 26all the kings of the north, far and near, one after another, and all the kingdoms of the world that are on the face of the earth. And after them the king of Babylon shall drink.**

The list of nations which must drink the cup extends as far south as Egypt and as far east as Elam and Media. Seventeen are mentioned specifically. The thought was thus conveyed that all nations in the known world must drink the cup. The last to drink it would be the king of “Sheshach,” a cryptic name for Babylon (25:18–26).[[305]](#footnote-305)

**27“Then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink, be drunk and vomit, fall and rise no more, because of the sword that I am sending among you.’**

**28“And if they refuse to accept the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: You must drink! 29For behold, I begin to work disaster at the city that is called by my name, and shall you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, declares the Lord of hosts.’ [[306]](#footnote-306)**

The nations had no option but to drink the cup, for God’s sword was coming into their midst. If God was about to destroy the city which belonged to him in a special way (i.e., Jerusalem), he could not allow heathen kingdoms to go unpunished (25:27–29).[[307]](#footnote-307)

**30“You, therefore, shall prophesy against them all these words, and say to them:**

**“ ‘The Lord will roar from on high,**

**and from his holy habitation utter his voice;**

**he will roar mightily against his fold,**

**and shout, like those who tread grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.**

**D. Judgment on the World (25:30–38)**

Jeremiah painted four pictures of the Lord executing judgment on the wicked. He compared God to (1) a roaring lion about to pounce upon a sheepfold; (2) a victorious conqueror who has crushed his enemies like grapes beneath his feet; (3) a prosecutor reading his indictment against the guilty; and (4) a righteous judge pronouncing sentence against the guilty (25:30f.).[[308]](#footnote-308)

**31 The clamor will resound to the ends of the earth,**

**for the Lord has an indictment against the nations;**

**he is entering into judgment with all flesh,**

**and the wicked he will put to the sword,**

**declares the Lord.’**

**32 “Thus says the Lord of hosts:**

**Behold, disaster is going forth**

**from nation to nation,**

**and a great tempest is stirring**

**from the farthest parts of the earth!**

An “evil” or calamity was going forth from nation to nation. Like a whirlwind the divine wrath would sweep across the world until it finally reached “the uttermost part of the earth.” Everywhere unburied and unlamented corpses would lie about on the ground (25:32f.).[[309]](#footnote-309)

**33“And those pierced by the Lord on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground.** Like the battle of Armageddon in Revelation.

**34 “Wail, you shepherds, and cry out,**

**and roll in ashes, you lords of the flock,**

**for the days of your slaughter and dispersion have come,**

**and you shall fall like a choice vessel.**

**35 No refuge will remain for the shepherds,**

**nor escape for the lords of the flock.**

**36 A voice—the cry of the shepherds,**

**and the wail of the lords of the flock!**

**For the Lord is laying waste their pasture,**

**37 and the peaceful folds are devastated**

**because of the fierce anger of the Lord. [[310]](#footnote-310)**

**38 Like a lion he has left his lair,**

**for their land has become a waste**

**because of the sword of the oppressor,**

**and because of his fierce anger.”**

Shepherds (leaders) as well as sheep suffer in the judgment. They would fall and be shattered like a choice vessel. No escape would be possible for these shepherds. They would wail in grief as they saw their “pasture,” i.e., the land they governed, invaded and destroyed. All would be silent in the “folds” where once the sheep thrived. The Lord, like a lion, would give vent to his fierce anger. The resulting devastation would be a cause of astonishment (25:34–38).[[311]](#footnote-311)

chapter seventeen

Mounting Opposition

Jeremiah 26–29

**Background of the Unit**

Having digressed in chapters 21–25 to treat topically Jeremiah’s political pronouncements, the editor in this unit reverts to chronological arrangement. Thus chapter 26 would appear to come from the same period as did chapter 20, i.e., “the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim” (26:1). The date could be any year between 609 and 605 b.c. Prior to the battle of Carchemish (605 b.c.), King Jehoiakim was a vassal of Pharaoh Neco. The “confessions” of chapters 12–20 point to the fact that Jeremiah was facing increasing opposition during this period of his ministry.

A gap of about fifteen years exists between chapters 26 and 27. In the “fourth year of Zedekiah” (28:1) Jeremiah publicly challenged the policy of the government. Ambassadors from neighboring states had come to Jerusalem to plan a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. How Zedekiah responded to these overtures from the foreign ambassadors is not known. Zedekiah did make a trip to Babylon in that same year to present personally the tribute money and renew his oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar (51:59). Did he do so because he had been moved by Jeremiah’s preaching to distance himself from the rebels? Was he summoned by Nebuchadnezzar because the Great King had heard rumors of revolt? These questions cannot be answered. In any case, strong sentiment existed in the royal court of Judah throughout the reign of Zedekiah to revolt against Nebuchadnezzar as soon as was practicable. Jeremiah adamantly was opposed to this sentiment.

**Outline of the Unit**

A. Addressing a Theological Issue (chap. 26).

B. Addressing a Political Issue (chaps. 27–28).

C. Addressing a Practical Issue (chap. 29).

**ADDRESSING A THEOLOG[[312]](#footnote-312)**

**Jeremiah Threatened with Death**

**26 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord:**

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah was dispatched by the Lord to the Temple precincts. This must have been the time of some festival for “all the cities of Judah” had come to the Temple to worship. Jeremiah was warned that he was not to “omit a word” (26:1f.). This warning was appropriate in view of the change in government religious policy. Josiah had been a fervent supporter of revival; Jehoiakim viewed religion as a tool for supporting state policy. He intended to silence any voice which created religious controversy or challenged state policy.[[313]](#footnote-313) 4 years before the first exiles were taken. Like Daniel. This seems like Jeremiah 7 sermon. 7 is details, 26 is effects of the sermon

**2“Thus says the Lord: Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the Lord all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word. 3It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds.**

The desired outcome of this public proclamation was worth the personal risk to the prophet. “Perhaps they will listen.” At least they would not be able to plead ignorance. God desired that everyone “turn from his evil way.” Should that happen, God could then relent concerning “the calamity which I am planning to do to them” (26:3). The God of the Bible does not delight in judgment. He looks for reasons not to pour out his wrath.[[314]](#footnote-314)

**4You shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, 5and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, 6then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.’ ”**

The message which Jeremiah delivered in the Temple courts was essentially the same sermon he had preached there a decade or so earlier (cf. 7:1–8:3). The Temple would be completely destroyed. Jerusalem would become ruins like Shiloh, the original Israelite center of worship in the land of Canaan. To avoid that calamity they must walk after the written law and hearken to the voice of God’s contemporary spokesmen. The threatened destruction would be so great that the name Jerusalem would be used in curse formulas (26:4–6).[[315]](#footnote-315)

**7The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. 8And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, “You shall die! 9Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘This house shall be like Shiloh,** (first capital before Saul was kIng, tabernacle destroyed, Philistines carried away the Ark.) **and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant’?” And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. [[316]](#footnote-316)**

In his audience on this occasion Jeremiah had priests and prophets as well as the people who had come as worshipers. When he had finished speaking, this crowd seized him saying, “you must die!” They could not fathom the audacity of anyone standing in the Temple precincts to announce the destruction of the sacred house and city. “All the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the Lord” (26:7–9). Their intent was to stone him on the spot, or perhaps to force him to leave the Temple area where they could execute him with better conscience.[[317]](#footnote-317)

The “701 theology” held that God would never permit the Temple to be destroyed. At the last minute he would always intervene to rescue the place just as he had done in the days of good King Hezekiah in 701 b.c. The “701 theology” had a tenacious grip on the minds of Jeremiah’s generation. To contradict this basic belief was to be labeled “traitor” and “blasphemer.” This explains why the mob was about ready to kill Jeremiah in the Temple courts. When he last attempted to preach in the Temple area, he was arrested, beaten and placed in the public stocks (19:14–20:2). He no doubt had been threatened at that time with death should he ever again attempt to preach in God’s house. This may have been his first appearance there since that episode.[[318]](#footnote-318)

**10When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the Lord and took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the Lord. 11Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, “This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.”**

Some fair-minded officials heard the commotion in the Temple and rushed in to rescue Jeremiah from certain death. They organized a formal trial for the prophet in which accusations were presented, and the prophet was given an opportunity to defend himself. As far as the prophets and priests were concerned the only appropriate sentence for Jeremiah was “death.” He had dared to prophesy against Jerusalem! (26:10–11). According to popular theology anyone who spoke against the holy city was guilty, not only of treason, but of blasphemy.[[319]](#footnote-319)

**12Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, “The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. 13Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you.** (Boldness but also humble as we will see.) **14But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. 15Only know for** **certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the Lord sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.” [[320]](#footnote-320)**

*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard* ([Acts 4:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.19-20&t=NKJV)). Peter says…

How far away are we that we might have to stand before a judge in boldness and humility for a hate crime. But I will not stop speaking the Word of the Lord.

Speaking in his own defense Jeremiah made five points. First, he affirmed that he had spoken against the Temple and city because God had sent him to do so. Second, he pointed out that the fate of their city was in their own hands. If they would “amend” their ways and deeds, and obey the voice of the Lord, God would relent concerning the misfortune which he had announced. Third, Jeremiah was willing to die for what he had to say. He would not physically nor legally attempt to resist what they desired to do. Fourth, he assured them that if they carried out their intentions to kill him, they would be bringing the guilt of innocent blood upon the whole city. Fifth, he concluded his defense by reiterating his claim that his message came from God (26:12–15).[[321]](#footnote-321)

**Jeremiah Spared from Death**

**16Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, “This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.”** (maybe his humility caused them to reconsider, or was it the innocent blood statement.) **17And certain of the elders of the land arose and spoke to all the assembled people, saying, 18“Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts,**

**“ ‘Zion shall be plowed as a field;**

**Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,**

**and the mountain of the house a wooded height.’** Micah 3:12

Jeremiah’s defense swayed the princes and the people. They were not willing to execute a man for speaking in the name of the Lord. The elders cited a legal precedent for this stance. In the days of King Hezekiah, Micah of Moresheth too had threatened Jerusalem in the name of the Lord. The elders actually were able to quote the words of Micah: “Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem will become ruins” (Mic 3:12). Hezekiah was moved to “fear the Lord and entreat” his favor. The Lord then relented concerning the misfortune which he had pronounced against them. Thus they underscored one of the points which Jeremiah had made in his own defense (26:16–18).[[322]](#footnote-322)

**19Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and entreat the favor of the Lord, and did not the Lord relent of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves.”** Notice no one came to Jesus’ defense.

**20There was another man who prophesied in the name of the Lord, Uriah the son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied against this city and against this land in words like those of Jeremiah. 21And when King Jehoiakim, with all his warriors and all the officials, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death. But when Uriah heard of it, he was afraid and fled and escaped to Egypt. 22Then King Jehoiakim sent to Egypt certain men, Elnathan the son of Achbor and others with him, 23and they took Uriah from Egypt and brought him to King Jehoiakim, who struck him down with the sword and dumped his dead body into the burial place of the common people.** Why is this here? Baruk added to show us how serious this was. Or, Elders giving Jeremiah a hint to scare him into keeping quiet.

The prosecutors were not yet ready to give up on their intent to execute Jeremiah. They cited more recent legal precedent. Under King Jehoiakim prophets like Jeremiah had not fared very well. Uriah was forced to flee to Egypt for refuge from the king. Jehoiakim had him extradited and executed. His body was cast into the burial place of the common people (26:19–23). That Jeremiah had escaped a similar fate might be due to his family connections or to the fact that he had spent considerable time out of the country carrying out instructions of the Lord (cf. 13:1–7).[[323]](#footnote-323)

**24But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah so that he was not given over to the people to be put to death. [[324]](#footnote-324)**

The counterprecedent swayed the crowd again, this time in the direction of execution. Jeremiah’s life, however, was a series of rescues from unexpected sources. In the Temple court crisis the deliverer was Ahikam the son of Shaphan. His “hand,” i.e., power, “was with Jeremiah, so that he was not given into the hands of the people to put him to death” (26:24). Ahikam was a faithful official who had been carried over from the administration of King Josiah (cf. 2 Kgs 22:14). His prestige and authority were such that the enemies could not execute Jeremiah.[[325]](#footnote-325) Again, Jesus had no Ahikam. Jesus is my Ahikam. And yours.

**The Yoke of Nebuchadnezzar ADDRESSING A POLITICAL ISSUE**

**Jeremiah 27:1–28:17**

After 605 b.c. the burning political issue in Syria-Palestine was this: What will be the relationship with the new world power Babylon? For some reason the royal counselors in the various kingdoms of the area thought that Babylonian hegemony was soft and temporary. The rulers were being advised to resist Babylon. Religious functionaries assured their kings of success if the path of resistance was chosen. Jeremiah had a different view regarding Babylon. In this unit he attempts to impress that view on the neighboring nations and on the people of Judah.[[326]](#footnote-326)

**27 In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah** (Jehoiakim, KJV but it’s an error) **the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord. 2Thus the Lord said to me: “Make yourself straps and yoke-bars, and put them on your neck.** God wanted Jeremiah to use visual aids in his prophetic work. He was to make **bonds** – leather straps used to secure **yokes**. A yoke was wood that went under and above the neck of a large animal so the beast could pull a plow.

**3Send word to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the sons of Ammon, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon by the hand of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah.** Jeremiah in the next chapter will walk in with this yoke set up. They came to meet with King Zedekiah of Judah to plot a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar’s rule over them. Jeremiah probably spoke before them wearing the bonds and yokes, giving them a vivid message to take back to their kings.

**A. Instructions to the Kingdoms (27:1–11)**

In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah Jeremiah was directed by the Lord to make for himself and then wear an ox yoke. He was to send “them,” i.e., replicas of the yoke which he wore, to the kings of five neighboring kingdoms by means of their ambassadors. These foreign dignitaries had come to Jerusalem to encourage Zedekiah to participate in an anti-Babylon coalition (27:1–3).[[327]](#footnote-327)

**4Give them this charge for their masters: ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: This is what you shall say to your masters: 5“It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. 6Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. 7All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.** If you rebel against Nebuchadnezzar, you will lose.

**8“ ‘ “But if any nation or kingdom will not serve this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, declares the Lord, until I have consumed it by his hand.**

The ambassadors were told to declare to their masters that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was sovereign over the whole world. He had created all which is upon the face of the earth “by my great power and by my outstretched hand.” He therefore had the right to “give” the earth to whomever he chose. God had determined to give all lands, along with the wild animals which dwell there, into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar “my servant.” All nations were required to serve him and his sons until such time comes as Babylon became servant to another nation. Nations which refused to put their necks in the yoke of Babylon would be destroyed by sword, famine and pestilence (27:4–8).[[328]](#footnote-328)

**9So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your fortune-tellers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon.’ 10For it is a lie that they are prophesying to you, with the result that you will be removed far from your land, and I will drive you out, and you will perish. 11But any nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on its own land, to work it and dwell there, declares the Lord.” ’ ”**

God promised that if they did respond to the message of the bonds and the yokes, God would allow them to escape the forced exile that the Babylonians often imposed.

**B. Warnings against False Optimism (27:9–22)**

At the same time Jeremiah performed his action parable with the yoke, he issued warnings concerning those who were pushing their agenda of rebellion against Babylon. First, he warned Judah’s neighbors. Each kingdom represented in Jerusalem had its own brand of prognosticators and political advisors. Apparently throughout Syria-Palestine the unanimous advice to the kings was that “you shall not serve the king of Babylon.” This advice, Jeremiah insisted, was wrong. It was a lie which would result in the deportation of any people which resisted Nebuchadnezzar. Only the nations which submitted to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar would survive (27:9–11).[[329]](#footnote-329)

**12To Zedekiah king of Judah I spoke in like manner: “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people and live. 13Why will you and your people die by the sword, by famine, and by** **pestilence, as the Lord has spoken concerning any nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? 14Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon,’ for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you. 15I have not sent them, declares the Lord, but they are prophesying falsely in my name, with the result that I will drive you out and you will perish, you and the prophets who are prophesying to you.” [[330]](#footnote-330)**

Second, Jeremiah issued a warning to Zedekiah. The Judean king, like his counterparts in surrounding kingdoms, must also bring his neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon. For Zedekiah to allow his people to perish by sword, famine and plague was absolutely senseless. Yet that was exactly what would happen to every nation which refused to serve the king of Babylon. Zedekiah was listening to the wrong advice. The prophets who were advocating rebellion against Babylon were lying. God had not sent them. They were prophesying falsely in the name of God. The result would be that the royal family along with the prophets who prophesied falsely would be driven from the land (27:12–15).[[331]](#footnote-331)

**16Then I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, “Thus says the Lord: Do not listen to the words of your prophets who are prophesying to you, saying, ‘Behold, the vessels of the Lord’s house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon,’ for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you. 17Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon and live. Why should this city become a desolation?**

Finally, Jeremiah warned the priests and people. Again Jeremiah pled with his audience not to listen to the lying prophets. These prophets confidently were asserting that the Temple vessels which had been carried away to Babylon in 597 b.c. shortly would be returned to Jerusalem. Jeremiah urged these citizens to serve the king of Babylon so that they might live. Why would they be so stupid as to rebel and bring ruin to Jerusalem? True prophets would be praying that no further looting of the Temple and city would take place (27:16–18).[[332]](#footnote-332)

**18If they are prophets, and if the word of the Lord is with them, then let them intercede with the Lord of hosts, that the vessels that are left in the house of the Lord, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem may not go to Babylon. 19For thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the pillars, the sea, the stands, and the rest of the vessels that are left in this city, 20which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take away, when he took into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem— 21thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of the Lord, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem: 22They shall be carried to Babylon and remain there until the day when I visit them, declares the Lord. Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.”**

Jeremiah now made a shocking announcement. Nebuchadnezzar would return to finish the job of dismantling the Temple which he had started in 597 b.c. when King “Jeconiah” (Jehoiachin) surrendered the city to him. This included (1) the huge bronze Temple pillars; the molten “sea,” a huge stationary laver in the courtyard;5 and the bronze “bases” which supported the ten portable lavers. God declared that all of the valuable objects from palace and Temple would remain in Babylon “until the day I visit them,” i.e., until God brought judgment on Babylon. Then the vessels would be returned to Jerusalem (27:19–22).[[333]](#footnote-333)

Notice the Ark of the Covenant is not mentioned here. Why?

Hidden until Indiana Jones found it and now in a Gov’t warehouse.

Jewish legend that Jeremiah hid the Ark before Jerusalem is conquered. In the caverns and tunnels under the Temple mount.

Taken away by Neb. And melted down.

John sees it in heaven, maybe raptured.

Jeremiah 3:16 “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again.[[334]](#footnote-334)

Ezra says that this was fulfilled. The sacred temple vessels were returned

God keeps his promises, judgement but also of mercy and grace.

God knows when and how to restore to usefulness.

**Hananiah the False Prophet**

**28:1–17** This story illustrates a realistic picture of the conflict between two prophets. The narrative provides a specific incident that exemplifies the kind of opposition Jeremiah faced from other prophets—who also were claiming to represent Yahweh. The story also reflects the potential for confusion among prophets, priests, and royal officials, who were unsure which side represented the true will of Yahweh. The truth became clear only in retrospect, after the prophet’s message had come to pass (or not).[[335]](#footnote-335)

This is between the 2nd and 3rd invasion by Nebuchadnezzar.

**28 In that same year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah,** Zedekiah was the puppet king put on the throne of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. In this season, Nebuchadnezzar was distracted by problems in other parts of his empire. Judah and some of the surrounding nations thought it was a smart time to rebel against what seemed to be a weakened king of Babylon. In [Jeremiah 27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+27&t=NKJV), the prophet spoke to a gathering of representatives of those kingdoms, who came to Zedekiah to plot their strategy.

**in the fifth month of the fourth year, Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet from Gibeon,** This false prophet and son of a prophet didn’t like Jeremiah’s gloomy message to the gathered kings ([Jeremiah 27:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+27.1-11&t=NKJV)). Jeremiah came to them wearing the yoke an animal would use, to show that they would remain subjected to Nebuchadnezzar and their dreams of successful revolt would be unfulfilled.

i. “Hananiah’s name means ‘Yahweh has been gracious.’ It was an appropriate name for a prophet who believed strongly, if mistakenly, that Judah’s fortunes would soon be restored.” (Thompson)

**spoke to me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying, 2“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3Within two years I** (the Lord) **will bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord’s house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. 4I will also bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon, declares the Lord, for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.” [[336]](#footnote-336)**

**C. Confrontation with a False Prophet (28:1–17)**

In the fourth year of Zedekiah a dramatic confrontation took place in the Temple area between Jeremiah and one of the prophets he had been denouncing. Hananiah addressed Jeremiah in front of a large audience of priests and people. With a “Thus says the Lord of hosts,” this brazen liar contradicted everything which Jeremiah had been preaching. According to Hananiah, (1) God had “broken the yoke of the king of Babylon;” (2) the Temple vessels would be returned within two years; and (3) King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) and the ten thousand captives soon would be returning. Hananiah repeated for emphasis his prediction that God would shatter the yoke of the king of Babylon (28:1–4).[[337]](#footnote-337) What is truth?

**5Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord, 6and the prophet Jeremiah said, “Amen! May the Lord do so;** (sarcastic? Or he really did wish Hananiah was right but he knew he wasn’t. Like when Rob Bell wrote that Love wins, great wishful thinking but no so.) **may the Lord make the words that you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles. 7Yet hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. 8The prophets who preceded you** (Micah Amos Isaiah) **and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. 9As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet.”**

Jeremiah responded to Hananiah by uttering a hearty “Amen!” He sincerely wished that the prophecy of Hananiah would come to pass. Such optimistic forecasts of the immediate future, however, did not comport to the general trend in the prophetic movement. Prophets from ancient times had “prophesied against many lands and great kingdoms of war and of calamity and of pestilence.” A prophet like Jeremiah stood in the mainstream of the prophetic movement. A prophet like Hananiah who “prophesied of peace” could only be confirmed as a true man of God by the fulfillment of his forecasts. Thus Jeremiah was giving the audience a simple test to apply when trying to determine who really did speak the word of the Lord (28:5–9).[[338]](#footnote-338)

**10Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke-bars from the neck of Jeremiah the prophet and broke them.** Catch that? Jeremiah was still wearing the yoke. 2 months time. **11And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, “Thus says the Lord: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations within two years.” But Jeremiah the prophet went his way.**

Hananiah dramatically reinforced his prediction of the imminent return from Babylon. He seized the symbolic yoke from the neck of Jeremiah and broke it over his knee. Again Hananiah played to his audience. “Thus says the Lord,” he declared. “Even so will I break within two full years, the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations.” Since Hananiah had swayed the audience with his antics, Jeremiah simply walked away. This was not the time nor the place for a response (28:10–11).[[339]](#footnote-339) Seems as though Hananiah really believe this. And it seems that the bystanders felt Hananiah won the prophet contest. Jeremiah walked away.

Again, it’s like when I said, people say to me, God said this… they don’t say God told me to tell you…why doesn’t God just tell me.

**12Sometime after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke-bars from off the neck of Jeremiah the prophet, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: 13“Go, tell Hananiah, ‘Thus says the Lord: You have broken wooden bars, but you have made in their place bars of iron.** (maybe more resolve on God’s part?)

**14For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: I have put upon the neck of all these nations an iron yoke to serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they shall serve him, for I have given to him even the beasts of the field.’ ”**

After the incident in the Temple, Jeremiah received directions from the Lord to carry a divine word to Hananiah. The gist of the message was that Hananiah had “broken yokes of wood,” but he had made instead of them “yokes of iron.” Optimistic forecasts of Babylon’s imminent demise only encouraged rebellion which in turn provoked the Babylonians into more harsh hegemony. The yoke which was on the neck of the nations was put there by Yahweh. Like it or not, these nations will serve the king of Babylon (28:12–14).[[340]](#footnote-340)

Just think about how much suffering would have been alleviated if they had just surrendered like God told them to. By resisting, Babylon just got more determined. How about us in spiritual decline? Sinful habits. Is there suffering around us? ([Matthew 11:28-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+11.28-30&t=NKJV)). ***28****Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* ***29****Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ***30****For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* [[341]](#footnote-341)

When you reject God, are you more free or less free? Ask someone who is lost in their addiction.

**15And Jeremiah the prophet said to the prophet Hananiah, “Listen, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie.** **16Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will remove you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the Lord.’ ”**

**17In that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died. [[342]](#footnote-342)**

Jeremiah made two charges against Hananiah: (1) Yahweh had not sent him; and (2) he had made the people “trust in a lie.” Without the crowds to support him, the bombastic Hananiah was docile as Jeremiah delivered his stinging personal rebuke. The announcement of his personal fate was both ominous and specific. Because he had counseled rebellion against the will of Yahweh, the Lord declared, “I am about to remove you from the face of the earth.” Hananiah would die within the year. A note appended to chapter 28 documents that Hananiah did in fact die two months later (28:15–17).[[343]](#footnote-343)

Hananiah said 2 years for the prophecy to come true, God says nope, 2 months for you!

**Jeremiah’s Letter to the Exiles** Communication between the ten thousand captives in Babylon and the residents of Judah was fairly routine. Chapter 29 contains a summary of a letter sent by Jeremiah to the captives. It alludes to two other letters which were provoked by the initial correspondence.[[344]](#footnote-344)

**29 These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 2This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the eunuchs, the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the metal workers had departed from Jerusalem. 3The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.**

**A. A Letter to Babylon (29:1–23)**

Nebuchadnezzar had deported ten thousand Jews to Babylon in 597 b.c. When a official delegation was sent to Babylon by King Zedekiah, Jeremiah used the occasion to address a communication to “the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people” who had been carried to Babylon. The letter was secretly carried to Babylon by Elasah and Gemariah, two of Jeremiah’s few supporters (29:1–3).[[345]](#footnote-345)

**It said: 4“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.**

The message to the exiles was very practical. First they should realize that God had sent them into captivity. That being the case, they should make the best of their situation. The normal activities of life should be resumed. Specifically he mentioned building houses, planting gardens, and marrying their children. Jeremiah directed them to pray for the welfare of Babylon, because as Babylon prospered, so also would the captives who were there (29:4–7).[[346]](#footnote-346) 70 years. Settle in make the best of what you have. Just as increase in Egypt, do it here too. Don’t try to overthrow Neb. Pray to the Lord on their behalf. Wow!

**8For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, 9for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the Lord.** False prophets in Jerusalem and in Babylon.

**10“For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.** Among the captives, as in Judah, nationalistic prophets kept stirring up hope of a quick overthrow of Babylon. They urged the captives to maintain a posture of non-cooperation with the Babylonians. Jeremiah warned that the prophets and diviners were prophesying falsely. Only when seventy years had been completed for Babylon would God fulfill his promise to bring them back to the homeland (29:8–10).[[347]](#footnote-347)

**11For I know the plans** (thoughts) **I have for you, declares the Lord,** (settle in on that phrase, don’t you wish God would tell you the plans he has for us.) **plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.** God has not given up on them, he is thinking about their future. Khesed, God’s unchanging heart for his people.

Yes, this is for the Jews in exile but I believe God has the same grace and goodness for us. Even in our suffering. God has a future and hope for you even if you feel you are being punished.

**12Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. 14I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.**

God’s plans for the captives were positive but not immediate. He was planning for their “welfare, future and hope.” The experience in Babylon would lead these Jews to genuine conversion. They would “call upon” the Lord and he would listen to them. When they sought God with all their heart, he would be found. God does not play hide-and-seek with penitent people! Once they were spiritually attuned to their God, he would restore their fortunes. That would begin when God gathered them up wherever they have been scattered and brought them back to their land (29:11–14).[[348]](#footnote-348) Daniel remembered this 70 years and Daniel prayed to remind God.

**15“Because you have said, ‘The Lord has raised up prophets for us in Babylon,’ 16thus says the Lord concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your kinsmen who did not go out with you into exile: 17‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, behold, I am sending on them sword, famine, and pestilence, and I will make them like vile figs that are so rotten they cannot be eaten.** Jeremiah anticipated that some would reject his advice and argue that God had raised up prophets for the captives in Babylon. Thoroughly grounded in the “701 theology,” these prophets kept assuring the captives that God would never allow Jerusalem to fall to Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah assured the readers of his letter that those who remained in Jerusalem were not favored by God. They would experience untold suffering because they were like rotten figs, good for nothing but destruction (29:15–17).[[349]](#footnote-349)

**18I will pursue them with sword, famine, and pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, a terror, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, 19because they did not pay attention to my words, declares the Lord, that I persistently sent to you by my servants the prophets, but you would not listen, declares the Lord.’ 20Hear the word of the Lord, all you exiles whom I sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon:** The inhabitants of Jerusalem were destined for a terrible fate. God would “pursue them” into foreign lands with “the sword, with famine and with pestilence.” Their national condition would strike fear into surrounding nations. When people wished to curse or humiliate someone, they would compare them to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Such punishment would be theirs because they consistently had refused to listen to the voice of prophecy with which God repeatedly and urgently tried to communicate with them. Jeremiah pled for the captives in Babylon to chart a new course, to begin to listen to what God said through his true prophets (29:18–20).[[350]](#footnote-350)

Some say this is another letter.

**21‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying a lie to you in my name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall strike them down before your eyes.** One specific and short-range prediction should verify for the captives that Jeremiah was a true prophet. Ahab and Zedekiah, two of the lying Babylonian prophets, would be delivered into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. They would be executed by being thrown into a fiery furnace and “roasted in the fire” in full view of the captives (cf. Dan 3). Their gruesome death would come to be used in curses by the captives when they desired to wish upon someone a terrible fate (29:21f.).[[351]](#footnote-351)

**22Because of them this curse shall be used by all the exiles from Judah in Babylon: “The Lord make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire,” 23because they have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them. I am the one who knows, and I am witness, declares the Lord.’ ” [[352]](#footnote-352)**

Ahab and Zedekiah would be remembered as those who “acted foolishly in Israel.” Even though they had “committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives,” with some they still had credibility as God’s spokesmen. God, however, knew the facts in the case. He bears witness against the two. They were speaking falsely in God’s name things which he had not commanded them to speak (29:23).[[353]](#footnote-353)

**Shemaiah’s False Prophecy**

**24To Shemaiah of Nehelam you shall say: 25“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: You have sent letters in your name to all the people who are in Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying, 26‘The Lord has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, to have charge in the house of the Lord over every madman who prophesies, to put him in the stocks and neck irons. 27Now why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who is prophesying to you? 28For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, “Your exile will be long; build houses and live in them, and plant gardens and eat their produce.” ’ ”**

**B. A Letter from Babylon (29:24–32)**

Jeremiah’s letter to Babylon must have created quite a stir. Shemaiah fired letters back to Jerusalem addressed to influential people, and especially Zephaniah the overseer of the Temple. In his letter to the Temple official Shemaiah argued that Zephaniah had the responsibility to punish any madman who attempted to prophesy in the Temple precincts. Such a one should be placed “in the stocks and in the iron collar.” Yet Zephaniah had not even so much as rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth. Perhaps the subtle jab here is that Zephaniah the priest had been derelict in his duty when it came to punishing the prophet who came from the priestly town of Anathoth (29:24–28).[[354]](#footnote-354)

**29Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the hearing of Jeremiah the prophet. 30Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: 31“Send to all the exiles, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord concerning Shemaiah of Nehelam: Because Shemaiah had prophesied to you when I did not send him, and has made you trust in a lie, 32therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah of Nehelam and his descendants. He shall not have anyone living among this people, and he shall not see the good that I will do to my people, declares the Lord, for he has spoken rebellion against the Lord.’ ” [[355]](#footnote-355)**

The priest Zephaniah must have respected Jeremiah, for he merely read the letter to him without implementing its suggestions. Jeremiah fired back another letter to the captives. Shemaiah had prophesied falsely in the name of the Lord. He had “preached rebellion against the Lord.” He therefore would be punished in two ways. (1) He would have no male offspring; and (2) he would not live to see the restoration of the people (29:29–32).[[356]](#footnote-356)

Visions of a New Age

Jeremiah 30–33

**Background of the Unit**

The material in chapters 30–33 is largely optimistic regarding the future of God’s people after the destruction of Jerusalem. The unit can to be dated to the tenth year of Zedekiah. Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem was under way. Jeremiah has been imprisoned in the court of the guard along with others whose loyalty to the crown was suspect (32:1–2).

Jeremiah was commanded to “write all the words which I have spoken unto you in a book” (30:2). This suggests that the material in chapters 30–33 was never part of public discourse. In written form these chapters must have been an encouragement to the captives during the long years of exile in Babylon. Originally this material may have circulated as an independent document. Its placement at this point in the Book of Jeremiah, however, is altogether appropriate. Even while Jerusalem was suffering through her death throes, Jeremiah was revealing the next thrilling chapters in God’s dealings with his people.

Chapters 30–33 have been entitled The Book of Consolation. In this section Jeremiah began to build and to plant (cf. 1:10). The grand themes which are developed in this section are set forth concisely at the very outset. “Behold, days are coming” in which God would (1) reverse the fortunes of his people; (2) reunite Judah and Israel; and (3) bring them back to the land which he had given to their fathers (30:1–3).

**Outline of the Unit**

A. The Need for Divine Intervention (30:4–31:1).

B. The Blessings of Restoration (31:2–40).

C. The Certainty of Restoration (chap. 32).

D. Promises Reiterated (chap. 33).[[357]](#footnote-357)

**THE NEED FOR DIVINE INTERVENTION**

**Jeremiah 30:4–31:1**

The first chapter of the Book of Consolation underscores the need for God’s intervention on behalf of his people. They are enslaved and in desperate straits. Yet God has a glorious future in store for them.[[358]](#footnote-358)

**Restoration for Israel and Judah.** Should enjoy the next 4 chapters better. During the days of Zedekiah at the last moment of their freedom. This is their darkest moment. But God’s hope shines the brightest.

**30 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. 3For behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah,** notice it says all Jewish people. **says the Lord, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it.”**

**4These are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah:**

**5 “Thus says the Lord:**

**We have heard a cry of panic,**

**of terror, and no peace.**

**6 Ask now, and see,**

**can a man bear a child?** Men in fetal position in pain.

**Why then do I see every man**

**with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor?**

**Why has every face turned pale?**

**7 Alas! That day is so great**

**there is none like it;**

**it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it.**

Matthew 24:21*For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.*

*Luke 21:26*

*Rev. 3:10*

**A. The Promise to Enslaved Israel (30:4–11)**

Mentally Jeremiah could hear the approach of an enemy host. He visualized the mighty men of Judah as terrified as a woman in travail. Jeremiah uttered a mournful “Alas!” over that terrible “day,” i.e., period of Israel’s history. “This is the time of Jacob’s distress.” That gloomy period, however, would not last forever. “Jacob [i.e., the nation] shall be saved from it” (30:4–7). [[359]](#footnote-359)

The text does not indicate the beginning nor end of this period and commentators are not agreed about it. Probably Jeremiah referred to that long period when God’s people began to be dominated by ruthless powers. The first Israelites were deported in 733 b.c. That is most likely the *terminus a quo* of the “time of Jacob’s distress.” The *terminus ad quem* is perhaps the final emancipation of God’s people from the fear of death by the Lord Jesus Christ.[[360]](#footnote-360)

**8“And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds, and foreigners shall no more make a servant of him. 9But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.**

The period of Jacob’s trouble would end when the yoke of the oppressor was smashed. No more would God’s people be enslaved by foreigners. They would serve “the Lord their God, and David their king” whom God would raise up for them (30:8f.). The thrust here is that a delivered people will demonstrate genuine conversion by serving God and a scion of the house of David. That New Testament salvation is in view here can hardly be questioned. Saved from the power of sin, Satan and death, God’s people focus their service on none save their God and his Son—David’s son—Jesus of Nazareth.[[361]](#footnote-361)

This promise seems impossible, yet is repeated several times in the prophets of the Old Testament ([Isaiah 55:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+55.3-4&t=NKJV), [Ezekiel 34:23-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+34.23-24&t=NKJV), [37:24-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+37.24-25&t=NKJV), [Hosea 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+3.5&t=NKJV)). This speaks of the reign of the resurrected David, the Son of Jesse, over Israel in the Millennial earth.

**10 “Then fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the Lord,**

**nor be dismayed, O Israel;**

**for behold, I will save you from far away,**

**and your offspring from the land of their captivity.**

**Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease,**

**and none shall make him afraid.**

In view of the ultimate deliverance here announced, “Jacob, my servant,” i.e., God’s people, need not be terrified at the horrors of their present circumstances. Though they be scattered to distant lands, yet God promised, “I will save you from afar.” Jacob would return to his own land there to dwell in safety. This deliverance would be possible because (1) God is with them to deliver them; and (2) God would destroy completely the nations which had taken Israel captive. God’s purpose was to chasten his people with measured punishment. They would survive the exile. On the other hand, those nations to which God had scattered them he would destroy completely (30:10f.).[[362]](#footnote-362)

**11 For I am with you to save you,**

**declares the Lord;**

**I will make a full end of all the nations [[363]](#footnote-363)**

**among whom I scattered you,**

**but of you I will not make a full end.**

**I will discipline you in just measure,**

**and I will by no means leave you unpunished.**

**12 “For thus says the Lord:**

**Your hurt is incurable,**

**and your wound is grievous.**

**13 There is none to uphold your cause,**

**no medicine for your wound,**

**no healing for you.**

**14 All your lovers have forgotten you;**

**they care nothing for you;** Those nations earlier in Judah wanting to take on Babylon. False trust.

**for I have dealt you the blow of an enemy,**

**the punishment of a merciless foe,**

**because your guilt is great,**

**because your sins are flagrant.**

**15 Why do you cry out over your hurt?**

**Your pain is incurable.**

**Because your guilt is great,**

**because your sins are flagrant, I have done these things to you.**

**B. The Plight of Apostate Israel (30:12–17)**

That God could not leave Judah unpunished should have been evident to the impartial observer. Israel had received an “incurable wound.” No one could plead her cause, i.e., speak up on her behalf. Her “lovers,” i.e., allies, had abandoned her because her situation was hopeless. God had inflicted upon Israel a wound such as an enemy might inflict. His punishment was like that which a cruel person might administer. This treatment, however, had been necessary because of the enormity of their sin problem. Further cries for help and healing were useless. Their pain would not quickly go away (30:12–15).[[364]](#footnote-364)

**16 Therefore all who devour you shall be devoured,**

**and all your foes, every one of them, shall go into captivity;**

**those who plunder you shall be plundered,**

**and all who prey on you I will make a prey.**

Israel could not heal herself, nor could her allies cure her deadly wound. Therefore, God himself, the great physician, would intervene on their behalf. The adversaries who with such cruelty had “devoured” and “plundered” Israel would themselves be devoured. They would experience the captivity which they inflicted on Israel. Because the enemies had ridiculed Zion’s abandonment and helplessness, God would restore Zion to health and wholeness (30:16f.).[[365]](#footnote-365)

**17 For I will restore health to you,**

**and your wounds I will heal,**

**declares the Lord, [[366]](#footnote-366)**

**because they have called you an outcast:**

**‘It is Zion, for whom no one cares!’**

**18 “Thus says the Lord:**

**Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob**

**and have compassion on his dwellings;**

**the city shall be rebuilt on its mound,**

**and the palace shall stand where it used to be.**

**19 Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving,**

**and the voices of those who celebrate.**

**I will multiply them, and they shall not be few;**

**I will make them honored, and they shall not be small.**

**20 Their children shall be as they were of old,**

**and their congregation shall be established before me,**

**and I will punish all who oppress them.**

**C. The Picture of Regenerate Israel (30:18–22)**

God would “restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob,” i.e., the dwelling places of his people. Cities would be rebuilt on their original sites. Those cities would be inhabited by a joyful and grateful people. Their numbers would continue to increase. God would honor them in the sight of surrounding peoples. As a people they would have the stature and security which they had enjoyed in “days of old” (NIV), i.e., the glorious days of David and Solomon. All of their oppressors would be punished by the Lord (30:18–20).[[367]](#footnote-367)

**21 Their prince shall be one of themselves;**

**their ruler shall come out from their midst;**

**I will make him draw near, and he shall approach me,**

**for who would dare of himself to approach me?**

**declares the Lord.**

**22 And you shall be my people,**

**and I will be your God.” [[368]](#footnote-368)**

Isa. 52, Psalm 22, Gen 3. A ruler who is a mediator and priest and will approach God. “draw near” is wording that seems priestly. Jesus Christ. Is there anyone who loved God more than anyone? Is there anyone who loved humanity more than Jesus? Jesus.

The restoration would reach its climax with the rise of a wonderful ruler, a native son who would be able to “approach” God. This is the language of priesthood. The future ruler would be priest as well as king. Under the Old Testament Law a prince who tried to serve as a priest would have been risking his life (cf. 2 Chr 26:18ff.; Zech 6:13). Not so this future prince. Under his priestly leadership God’s people would enter into a new relationship with God (30:21–22). That this is a personal messianic prophecy can scarcely be challenged.[[369]](#footnote-369)

**23 Behold the storm of the Lord!**

**Wrath has gone forth,**

**a whirling tempest;**

**it will burst upon the head of the wicked.**

**24 The fierce anger of the Lord will not turn back**

**until he has executed and accomplished**

**the intentions of his mind.**

**In the latter days you will understand this.** Yes! Yes! Yes!

Listening to David Guizek, he says three years ago, things cannot get any worse in the United States than it is right then. I say, it can get much worse.

**The Lord Will Turn Mourning to Joy**

**THE BLESSINGS OF RESTORATION**

**Jeremiah 31:2–40**

In chapter 31 Jeremiah continues to expand upon the theme of restoration. He depicts seven blessings which would follow the return of the people of God to their homeland.[[370]](#footnote-370)

**31 “At that time,** (in the latter days) **declares the Lord, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people.”** Romans 11:26, all Jews will be saved? Those who trust in Jesus as their Messiah, “the vast majority” DG **26**And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

“The Deliverer will come from Zion,

he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;

**27** “and this will be my covenant with them

when I take away their sins.” [[371]](#footnote-371)

**34** “For who has known the mind of the Lord,

or who has been his counselor?”

**35** “Or who has given a gift to him

that he might be repaid?”

**36**For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. [[372]](#footnote-372)

**D. The Plan for Israel (30:23–31:1)**

The judgment against Judah would continue like a whirlwind until God had accomplished his purposes. Only in the “latter days,” i.e., the New Testament age, would men really be able to comprehend the significance of the Babylonian exile. All that befell Israel and Judah was designed to make possible a unification of God’s people and a restoration to the proper relationship to God.[[373]](#footnote-373)

**2 Thus says the Lord:**

**“The people who survived the sword**

**found grace in the wilderness;**

**when Israel sought for rest,**

**3 the Lord appeared to him from far away.** Long ago

**I have loved you with an everlasting love;**

**therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.** Hesed, loyal love

**4 Again I will build you, and you shall be built,**

**O virgin Israel!**

**Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines**

**and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.**

**A. New Concord (31:2–6)**

In the “wilderness” of exile the remnant would experience heaven’s grace. God would give rest in Canaan to those who repent while in captivity. In distant Babylon the captives would discover anew the love of God. They would feel God wooing them with his words: “I have loved you with an everlasting love!” He would draw them to himself by his loving kindness. He would build up his people. He would address his adulterous wife as though she were a chaste virgin. This language suggests a new relationship between God and his people. The virgin of Israel would respond to these undeserved favors with music and dance (31:2–4).[[374]](#footnote-374)

**5 Again you shall plant vineyards**

**on the mountains of Samaria;**

**the planters shall plant**

**and shall enjoy the fruit.**

**6 For there shall be a day when watchmen will call**

**in the hill country of Ephraim: [[375]](#footnote-375)**

**‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion,**

**to the Lord our God.’ ”**

The new concord between God and his people would be matched by harmony within the covenant people themselves. The region of Samaria would be reinhabited. The hills of the area would be covered with vineyards as in the days prior to the captivity. The men of Ephraim, i.e., the old Northern Kingdom, would anxiously await the opportunities to go up to Zion to worship Yahweh (31:4–6). During the intertestamental period the region of Ephraim was full of Jews who took every opportunity to travel to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. In Old Testament prophecy, however, to “go up to Zion” embraces the New Testament church which is called by the Apostle “Zion” in Hebrews 12:22. ***22****But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering*, ***23****and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,* ***24****and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

Jew, Gentile and Samaritan found their ultimate spiritual kinship in the body of Christ.[[376]](#footnote-376)

**7 For thus says the Lord:**

**“Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,**

**and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;**

**proclaim, give praise, and say,**

**‘O Lord, save your people,**

**the remnant of Israel.’**

**B. New Consolation (31:7–20)**

The prophet foresaw a day when salvation would be accomplished and a new joy would fill the hearts of God’s people. Jacob, i.e., Israel, is “the greatest of the nations” (NIV) because God had chosen them from among all nations for special privileges and obligations. Thus Jeremiah called for shouts of joy and praise among all those who loved the Lord. Part of that praise was the petition that God would save his people, the remnant of Israel (31:7). The verses that follow offer consolation to four groups of people.[[377]](#footnote-377)

**8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country**

**and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,**

**among them the blind and the lame,**

**the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together;**

**a great company, they shall return here.**

First, Jeremiah offered consolation for the distressed. From remote parts of the earth the Lord would bring his people to Zion. In that great gathering the distressed of the earth would not be overlooked. The “blind, the lame, the woman with child” would be included. With tears of repentance and supplication those who had been called together by the Lord would follow his leading. He would “make them walk by streams of water,” i.e., provide for their needs in the way. He would provide for them a “straight path,” one in which “they shall not stumble.” The reason for God’s concern for the distressed was that a Father-son relationship existed between the Lord and his people (31:8f.).[[378]](#footnote-378)

**9 With weeping they shall come,**

**and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back,**

**I will make them walk by brooks of water,**

**in a straight path in which they shall not stumble,**

**for I am a father to Israel,**

**and Ephraim is my firstborn.**

**10 “Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,**

**and declare it in the coastlands far away;**

**say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him,**

**and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.’**

**11 For the Lord has ransomed Jacob**

**and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.**

**12 They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,**

**and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,**

**over the grain, the wine, and the oil,**

**and over the young of the flock and the herd; [[379]](#footnote-379)**

**their life shall be like a watered garden,**

**and they shall languish no more.**

**13 Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,**

**and the young men and the old shall be merry.**

**I will turn their mourning into joy;**

**I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.**

**14 I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance,** Priest have more than enough.

**and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness,**

**declares the Lord.”**

Second, the passage gives consolation to the disheartened. The prophet alerted the nations of the world that he who scattered Israel would also gather them. He would keep his people as a shepherd keeps his flock. The gathering would be possible because Yahweh had “ransomed Jacob,” had “redeemed” him from the grip of those who were stronger than he. To state the matter another way, first would come the defeat of the captors, then liberation, then the gathering of God’s people. The goodness of God would then attract a steady stream of former captives. They would not lack for any good thing. Mourning would be turned to joy. Abundant sacrifices at the Temple would mean adequate provision for the priests. God’s people would be satisfied with his goodness in that day (31:10–14).[[380]](#footnote-380)

**15 Thus says the Lord:**

**“A voice is heard in Ramah,** her tomb location

**lamentation and bitter weeping.**

**Rachel is weeping for her children;**

**she refuses to be comforted for her children,**

**because they are no more.”** Mother of Benjamin and Joseph, exiled/dispersed

**16 Thus says the Lord:**

**“Keep your voice from weeping,**

**and your eyes from tears,**

**for there is a reward for your work,**

**declares the Lord,**

**and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.**

Third, Jeremiah had consolation for the disconsolate. Rachel, the tribal mother of Benjamin, lived on in her descendants. She would weep bitterly over her dead children. The weeping would be heard all the way to Ramah, north of Jerusalem (31:15). Matthew (2:17f.) furnishes the key to the interpretation of this obscure prophecy. He saw here a reference to the lamentation of the mothers of Bethlehem over the slaughter of their infants by Herod. The Bethlehem mothers were the first to suffer great loss for the sake of Christ. Their labor in bearing children, however, would not be in vain. They could have hope for the future. In the resurrection those children would return from the land of the enemy (death) to inherit their own territory (31:15–17). The inheritance here is no doubt the New Heavens and New Earth of which Old Testament Canaan was a pledge and guarantee (Heb 11:14–16).[[381]](#footnote-381)

**Herod Kills the Children**

**Matthew 2:16***Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.* ***17****Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:*

***18*** *“A voice was heard in Ramah,*

*weeping and loud lamentation,*

*Rachel weeping for her children;*

*she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.” [[382]](#footnote-382)*

**Hebrews 11:14***For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.* ***15****If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.* ***16****But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.* [[383]](#footnote-383)

**17 There is hope for your future,**

**declares the Lord,**

**and your children shall come back to their own country.**

**18 I have heard Ephraim grieving,**

**‘You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined,**

**like an untrained calf;** needs to broken. God is best bull rider ever. Give up now!

**bring me back that I may be restored,**

**for you are the Lord my God. [[384]](#footnote-384)**

**19 For after I had turned away, I relented,**

**and after I was instructed, I struck my thigh;**

**I was ashamed, and I was confounded,**

**because I bore the disgrace of my youth.’**

Finally, Jeremiah offered consolation for the despondent. God had heard Ephraim’s inhabitants lamenting their waywardness. They knew they had been chastened like a rebellious animal for their stubbornness. Ephraim prayed for divine aid in the process of repentance. That prayer was answered. Through the discipline of exile Ephraim came to recognize his miserable condition. He smote his thighs in consternation and contrition. He became desperately ashamed of his spiritual condition (31:18–19).[[385]](#footnote-385)

**20 Is Ephraim my dear son?**

**Is he my darling child?**

**For as often as I speak against him,**

**I do remember him still.**

**Therefore my heart yearns for him;** hesed, my gut churns for him.

**I will surely have mercy on him,**

**declares the Lord.**  Father of the prodigal son? How does he respond to take back his son?

God responded to Ephraim’s desperate spiritual agony. First, he acknowledged that Ephraim had not been the kind of child in whom a Father could delight. Yet as often as God spoke of Ephraim he remembered the close relationship which in the past had existed between them. He yearned for association with Ephraim. Repentance would open the door for God’s compassion on his wayward people (31:20).[[386]](#footnote-386)

**21 “Set up road markers for yourself;**

**make yourself guideposts;**

**consider well the highway,**

**the road by which you went.**

**Return, O virgin Israel,**

**return to these your cities.**

**22 How long will you waver,**

**O faithless daughter?**

**For the Lord has created a new thing on the earth:**

**a woman encircles a man.”** Nobody knows what this means.

There is such peace that the women can stand guard and be successful.

**C. A New Creation (31:21–22)**

The virgin of Israel (the population) was urged to mark clearly the road they would walk into captivity. Someday they would want to retrace their steps. The Lord urged them to return to their cities. Only a faithless daughter would dillydally when the opportunity for return presented itself. As an incentive to encourage them to return the Lord declared his intention to “create” something new in the earth: “a woman shall encompass a man.” The people would miss out on the opportunity to participate in the wondrous event if they remained in Babylon. This may be an allusion to the virgin birth of Messiah which Isaiah had predicted over a century earlier.[[387]](#footnote-387)

**23Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Once more they shall use these words in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I restore their fortunes:**

**“ ‘The Lord bless you, O habitation of righteousness,**

**O holy hill!’ [[388]](#footnote-388)**

**24And Judah and all its cities shall dwell there together, and the farmers and those who wander with their flocks. 25For I will satisfy the weary soul, and every languishing soul I will replenish.”**

**26At this I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me.**

**D. New Conditions (31:23–30)**

Judah would be restored as well as Ephraim. Once again inhabitants would pronounce blessings upon Zion, the holy hill. Peace and harmony would exist between farmers and nomads who frequently were at odds in the ancient world. The weary would find rest and the sorrowful, comfort. Jeremiah foresaw this glorious future in revelatory dreams. At this point the prophet awoke, and found his sleep to be pleasant (31:23–26).[[389]](#footnote-389)

**27“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast.**

As the dream continued, Jeremiah foresaw a time of great fruitfulness. People and cattle would multiply rapidly. It would seem as though they sprang up from seed. The reunification of Israel and Judah would make this growth possible. God had “watched over” his people to bring judgment (“pluck up, break down, overthrow, destroy”); so he would “watch over them” to “build and to plant” (cf. 1:10). The fact that he fulfilled his word of judgment guaranteed that he would also fulfill his word of promise (31:27f.).[[390]](#footnote-390)

**28And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the Lord. 29In those days they shall no longer say:**

**“ ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes,**

**and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’** Ez 18 quotes as well. Children are punished for the father’s sins.

**30But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.** Many in Judah thought that they were being punished for the sins of their fathers. They capsulized this misunderstanding in a proverb: “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” In the messianic age no one would have occasion to think such a thing. Each individual would be responsible before God for his own sin (31:29–30). The teaching of the New Testament would make this principle abundantly clear.[[391]](#footnote-391)

Review: Captivity, but God will bring back ALL of Jews, but God will not judge the nation but the person after this point because…following…

**The New Covenant**

**31“Behold, the days are coming,** declaring the future **declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. 33For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.** Inner transformation, born again, regenerated. Again Matthew 5-7 the why behind the law. **And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.** A close personal relationship with everyone who calls on me. **34And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,** the veil is torn, we do not need the High Priest, Jesus is our High Priest final. **declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”**

Complete cleansing of sin - sacrifices covered - at the cross, Jesus cleansed for all past present and future.

New Covenant Christians do not live as OT. God does not bless when we are good and curse when we are bad.

First 11 chapters, the story of mans fall

Chapter 12 covenant Abram, a Babylonian idol worshiper. A land, A nation, a blessing. (Jesus)

Sinai covenant, blessings and cursings

Davidic covenant, everlasting dynasty, a perfect ruler over Israel, a messiah from the line of David

New Covenant, God’s plan of redemption completed in Jesus Christ in New Covenant.

Also Ezekiel, other places of Jeremiah.

3 aspects, regathered Israel, cleansing of God’s people, glorious reign of the Messiah.

Passover cups - this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Now instituted, fulfilled these prophecies.

**E. A New Covenant (31:31–34)**

Even though the Lord had been a faithful husband to Israel, yet she had broken the Sinai marriage covenant. Therefore the united people of God would live under a new covenant in the days to come. The Law would be written upon their hearts, not on tables of stone like the Ten Commandments. Men would respond to the divine will from inward rather than outward compulsion. Those with God’s Law upon their hearts would enter into a new relationship with him. Everyone under the new covenant would know the Lord personally as savior for they would have their sins forgiven by him. This basic knowledge of God would not need to be taught to those under the covenant, because such knowledge would be essential to gaining admission to the New Covenant Israel.[[392]](#footnote-392)

**35 Thus says the Lord,**

**who gives the sun for light by day**

**and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night,**

**who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—**

**the Lord of hosts is his name:**

**36 “If this fixed order departs**

**from before me, declares the Lord,**

**then shall the offspring of Israel cease**

**from being a nation before me forever.”**

**37 Thus says the Lord:**

**“If the heavens above can be measured,**

**and the foundations of the earth below can be explored,**

**then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel**

**for all that they have done,**

**declares the Lord.”**

**F. A New Commitment (31:35–37)**

The God who makes promises about the future is the God who established the laws of nature. The pattern of night following day, the changing ocean tides are part of a fixed order. Jeremiah declared that the seed of Israel was eternal, as eternal as the laws of nature. God could no more cast off the “offspring of Israel” than a man could measure the heavens or search out the earth’s foundations. The outward form of Israel may change, but the nation continues. Because they rejected their Messiah, God took the kingdom from the Jews ((Matt 21:43)

(1 Pet 2:9) **9***But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*,

the church of Jesus which is the new Israel of God

(Gal 6:16). ***16****And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God*.

*Matthew 21:43 “Have you never read in the Scriptures:*

*“ ‘The stone that the builders rejected*

*has become the cornerstone;*

*this was the Lord’s doing,*

*and it is marvelous in our eyes’?*

***43****Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.*

**38“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the city shall be rebuilt for the Lord from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. 39And the measuring line shall go out farther, straight to the hill Gareb, and shall then turn to Goah. 40The whole valley of the dead bodies and the ashes, and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be sacred to the Lord. It shall not be plucked up or overthrown anymore forever.”**

**G. A New City (31:38–40)**

Jeremiah sketched the borders of the Jerusalem of that future age. He spoke in concrete terms of the borders of the city in order to make the following points:

The new Jerusalem would

(1) be larger than the old city;

(2) include certain areas around old Jerusalem which were considered unclean; and

(3) be holy to the Lord. That the prophet is speaking symbolically of the New Testament Jerusalem (Heb 12:22), is indicated by the prediction that “it shall not be plucked up, or overthrown any more forever” (cf. Zech 2:1–5; 8:3–6).[[393]](#footnote-393)

***Hebrews 12:22****But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,* ***23****and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,* ***24****and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

**Zechariah 2:1-5 A Vision of a Man with a Measuring Line**

**2** *And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand!* ***2****Then I said, “Where are you going?” And he said to me, “To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length.”* ***3****And behold, the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him* ***4****and said to him, “Run, say to that young man, ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and livestock in it.* ***5****And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the Lord, and I will be the glory in her midst.’ ”*

**Zechariah 8:3-6***Thus says the Lord: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain.* ***4****Thus says the Lord of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age.* ***5****And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.* ***6****Thus says the Lord of hosts: If it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvelous in my sight, declares the Lord of hosts?*

**Jeremiah Buys a Field During the Siege**

**32 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.** 10th year was seize and 11th year all was destroyed. **2At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah. 3For Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him, saying, “Why do you prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord: Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall capture it; 4Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye.** Ezekiel 12:13. **5And he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall remain until I visit him, declares the Lord. Though you fight against the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed’?”** Jeremiah was in prison for speaking against Zedekiah. Zedekiah saw this as treason. Remember Zedekiah was placed on the throne by Neb. But he rebelled because Zed heard that Neb was having issues at home and with other kings, planned a rebellion. He did not succeed.

**THE CERTAINTY OF RESTORATION**

**Jeremiah 32:1–44**

The circumstances out of which the Book of Consolation (chaps. 30–33) arose are set forth in detail at the beginning of chapter 32. The tenth year of King Zedekiah (the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar) equates to 587 b.c. The Babylonian armies were besieging Jerusalem. Jeremiah was under detention in the “court of the guard” which was located near the “house of the king of Judah.” The prophet had been “shut up” because he had continued to preach that God would give both the city and its king “into the hand of the king of Babylon.” King Zedekiah would be forced to confront “face to face” the one against whom he had rebelled. He would be taken to Babylon. There he would remain until God visited him, i.e., set him free (32:1–5).[[394]](#footnote-394)

**6Jeremiah said, “The word of the Lord came to me: 7Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you and say, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.’ 8Then Hanamel my cousin came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the Lord, and said to me, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.’ Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.** Kinsman redeemer.Anathoth was already Babylonian property. This deal is crazy but he did it because of the Word of the Lord.

**A. The Purchase of a Field (32:6–15)**

By revelation Jeremiah learned that his cousin Hanamel would offer for sale to him a piece of property in Anathoth. Jeremiah had “the right of redemption,” i.e., purchase option, over this property. That Hanamel would want to convert inaccessible real estate to cash is not hard to understand. The family hometown of Anathoth was at this time behind enemy lines! The prophet was instructed to purchase the field. The arrival and offer of Hanamel confirmed in Jeremiah’s mind that he had indeed received the word of the Lord in this matter (32:6–8).[[395]](#footnote-395)

**9“And I bought the field at Anathoth from Hanamel my cousin, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. 10I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. 11Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions and the open copy. 12And I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my cousin, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard. 13I charged Baruch in their presence, saying, 14‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time. 15For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.’**

All the legal requirements for transfer of property were followed. Payment of seventeen shekels of silver was publicly weighed out. Jeremiah signed and sealed the deed. He called in witnesses before whom he again weighed the shekels. Duplicate copies of the deed were made and given to Baruch who was instructed to place the documents in “an earthenware jar, that they may last a long time.” The significance of this legal transaction is made clear to the prophet: “houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land” (32:9–15).[[396]](#footnote-396)

Jeremiah probably needed the money for food later on.

**Jeremiah Prays for Understanding**

**16“After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the Lord, saying:**

**B. The Prayer of Jeremiah (32:16–25)**

Jeremiah was a man of prayer. He was not reluctant to confess his perplexities to the Lord. After purchasing the field and announcing the significance of his action, Jeremiah prayed for further light (v. 16). His prayer began with an exclamation of utter confusion (“Ah Lord God!”). It then moved through praise to confession and narration.[[397]](#footnote-397)

**17‘Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. 18You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts, 19great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds. 20You have shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day. 21You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror. 22And you gave them this land, which you swore to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey.**

1. *Praise (32:17–22)*. First, Jeremiah praised God for his “power” as revealed in the creation of “the heavens and the earth.” He rightly concluded that “nothing is too difficult” for the God of creation. Second, the Lord is the God of justice. He dispenses grace to the thousands who turn to him, and punishment to those who follow the path of iniquity, both fathers and their children. He gives to every one “according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.” Third, he is the God of wisdom, “great in counsel and mighty in deed,” i.e., he has the power to execute his counsel. Fourth, he is omniscient for “his eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men.” Fifth, he is the God of all the earth whose wonders had been performed in Egypt as well as Israel and whose fame is universal and lasting. Sixth, he is the God of history who brought forth his people from bondage in Egypt “with signs and with wonders and with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terror.” Seventh, he is the God who honors his word for he kept the oath he had made to the forefathers by bringing Israel into a land flowing with milk and honey.[[398]](#footnote-398)

**23And they entered and took possession of it. But they did not obey your voice or walk in your law. They did nothing of all you commanded them to do. Therefore you have made all this disaster come upon them.**

1. *Confession (32:23)*. After entering and possessing the land of Canaan, the Israelites had not obeyed God. They ignored his law. They virtually did nothing which he commanded them to do. Therefore, the calamity at hand rightly would befall them.[[399]](#footnote-399)

**24Behold, the siege mounds have come up to the city to take it, and because of sword and famine and pestilence the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. What you spoke has come to pass, and behold, you see it. 25Yet you, O Lord God, have said to me, “Buy the field for money and get witnesses”—though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.’ ”**

1. *Narration (32:24–25)*. In the prayer context Jeremiah described the desperate situation of Jerusalem. His purpose was not to tell God something he did not already know. Rather, the narration constitutes an implied petition that God would explain the action parable which had just been carried out in the court of the guard. How could houses and land be bought and sold again in Judah when the capital itself was about to fall? The siege mounds of the Babylonians had already reached the city. Earlier predictions of the desperate conditions produced by siege were being fulfilled. The city had been weakened by sword, famine and plague; it would fall to the Chaldeans shortly. Yet God had commanded the prophet to purchase a field! Why?[[400]](#footnote-400)

**26The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: 27“Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?**

**C. The Plan of God (32:26–44)**

Jeremiah had commenced his prayer with the affirmation that nothing is too hard for God (32:17). The Lord began his reply by asking the prophet if he really believed that proposition. Mouthing the right words is easy; developing the depth of conviction which those words suggest is not (32:26–27).[[401]](#footnote-401)

**28Therefore, thus says the Lord: Behold, I am giving this city into the hands of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall capture it. 29The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city shall come and set this city on fire and burn it, with the houses on whose roofs offerings have been made to Baal and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods, to provoke me to anger.**

The Lord next made clear that Jeremiah’s action parable did not imply that God would rescue Jerusalem from impending destruction. God was about to give the city into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. The Chaldeans would enter Jerusalem, and then destroy the place. All of the places where pagan rites had been conducted would be burned to the ground (32:28–29).[[402]](#footnote-402)

**30For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth. The children of Israel have done nothing but provoke me to anger by the work of their hands, declares the Lord. 31This city has aroused my anger and wrath, from the day it was built to this day, so that I will remove it from my sight 32because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah that they did to provoke me to anger—their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33They have turned to me their back and not their face. And though I have taught them persistently, they have not listened to receive instruction. 34They set up their abominations in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. 35They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.**

The justice of the catastrophe was next addressed. From “their youth,” i.e., the earliest days of the nation, the sons of Israel and Judah had “provoked” God to anger by “the work of their hands,” i.e., their idols. Because of “all the evil” of its citizens, Jerusalem had been a perpetual provocation which challenged divine holiness from the time it was founded as a city. These people had turned their back on God; they had refused to accept correction. They had defiled the Temple with “detestable things,” i.e., idols, and built “high places,” i.e., pagan shrines, about the city. In the valley of Ben-Hinnom they “caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fires” to the god Molech. The practice of child sacrifice was an “abomination” to the Lord (32:30–35).[[403]](#footnote-403)

**They Shall Be My People; I Will Be Their God**

**36“Now therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence’: 37Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. 38And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 39I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. 40I 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. 41I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.** Jesus, could God give us more?

While the present prospects were bleak, the distant future would be bright for God’s people. God would gather his people from the lands to which they had been scattered. He would restore them to their land. In that day they would experience a new relationship with the Lord. The allegiance of the people would no longer be divided for they would have “one heart” (inward disposition) and “one way” (outward manifestation). God would enter into a new and “everlasting covenant” with his people, one in which he committed himself never to turn away from them. This act of God’s grace would produce in the hearts of his people reverence and fidelity. The new Israel would be a joy to the heart of God. He would manifest that joy by gladly doing good for them. He would “plant them in this land” (32:36–41).[[404]](#footnote-404)

**42“For thus says the Lord: Just as I have brought all this great disaster upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I promise them. 43Fields shall be bought in this land of which you are saying, ‘It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.’ 44Fields shall be bought for money, and deeds shall be signed and sealed and witnessed, in the land of Benjamin, in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb; for I will restore their fortunes, declares the Lord.”** One day business will be normal.

The same degree of certainty which attends the threats of divine judgment also attends the promises of divine favor (cf. 31:28). Though the city was now about to become “a desolation,” though the Chaldeans were about to capture the place, yet God would reverse the fortunes of his people. The buying and selling of properties and other business transactions would once again be common in Judah (32:42–44).[[405]](#footnote-405)

**6.20**

**The Lord Promises Peace** Jeremiah received a second revelation while he was detained in the court of the guard (33:1). In this revelation the themes of the previous three chapters are reiterated.[[406]](#footnote-406)

**33 The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the guard: 2“Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it—the Lord is his name: 3Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.** Yahweh created the future. He certainly would be able to fulfill his promises. His very name means “he who is.” It is a pledge that he would keep his word. This God encouraged perplexed souls to inquire of him. He alone could declare the great and unsearchable things to come (33:2–3).[[407]](#footnote-407)

**4For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah that were torn down to make a defense against the siege mounds and against the sword: 5They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans and to fill them with the dead bodies of men whom I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil. 6Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.**

**7I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. 8I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. 9And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.**  Has this happened?

At the moment Jerusalem’s situation was grim. Buildings were being dismantled to secure materials to strengthen the walls. An heroic effort was being made to defend those walls, but the net result was only an increase in corpses. These painful events gave evidence of God’s “anger and wrath.” The Lord had hidden his face from them because of their wickedness. God promised, however, to heal the grievous wound inflicted by the Chaldeans. He would “restore the fortunes” of both Israel and Judah. He would rebuild them as they were at the first, i.e., when they first came out of Egypt. He would cleanse, pardon, and bless his people. The restored Jerusalem would have a reputation for joy, praise, and glory. Nations which heard of what God had done at Jerusalem would come to fear, i.e., reverence, him (33:4–9).[[408]](#footnote-408)

**10“Thus says the Lord: In this place of which you say, ‘It is a waste without man or beast,’ in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man or inhabitant or beast, there shall be heard again 11the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord:**

**“ ‘Give thanks to the Lord of hosts,**

**for the Lord is good,**

**for his steadfast love endures forever!’** hesed

**For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the Lord.**

**12“Thus says the Lord of hosts: In this place that is waste, without man or beast, and in all of its cities, there shall again be habitations of shepherds resting their flocks. 13In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin, the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the Lord.** The entire land of Judah would be blessed in that day. The curse pronounced against Jerusalem (7:34; 16:9; 25:10f.) would be removed. The streets of the cities would once again echo with the sounds of mirth, marriage and worship. Rural areas would likewise prosper. Sheep would again find pasture there; shepherds would again count their flock. God promised to restore the “fortunes of the land as they were at the first” (33:10–13).[[409]](#footnote-409) Jesus the great shepherd

**The Lord’s Eternal Covenant with David**

**14“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.** A happy future awaited Israel and Judah. The words “Behold, days are coming” are something of a messianic pointer in this book. God had spoken a “good word” concerning his people, and he would fulfill that word (33:14). Three paragraphs amplify this good word which God had for his people. Redundancy is found here for the sake of emphasis, but new aspects of the promise emerge in each paragraph. Clearly the focus is on the promises made to David.[[410]](#footnote-410)

**15In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch** (Messiah) **to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.**

*1. Two offices (33:15–18)*. The glorious future which God promised to his people was wrapped up in the appearance of a scion from the house of David. God repeated the promise of 23:5 that he would “cause a righteous branch of David to spring up.” The term “righteous” points to the character of the coming Ruler; the term “branch” (lit., sprout) to his humble origins. This one would “execute justice and righteousness on the earth,” i.e., he would be the ideal Ruler. He would be a savior to his people. The city, saved by his power and grace, would wear a name which would bear testimony to her trust in God: “Yahweh is Our Righteousness.” That which would make possible the salvation and protection of the people was not their own righteousness but that of God himself (33:15f.).[[411]](#footnote-411)

**16In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’**

**17“For thus says the Lord: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, 18and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever.”** Because of the appearance of the Righteous Branch, “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel.” Several truths are suggested by this brief assertion. First, the Davidic line would continue beyond the exile as an identifiable family at least until the appearance of the Righteous Branch. Second, the royal office would be part of the new order. Third, he who would occupy the throne in the new order would be from David’s family (33:17). The fulfillment of this promise is not difficult to find. Jesus of Nazareth was of the house of David. At his ascension he occupied God’s throne ruling the New Testament Israel of God.

The new order would have a priesthood as well as a royal family. The Levitical priests as a distinct body survived the exile. Once the Temple had been rebuilt they officiated in the sacrificial ritual. This of itself, however, does not fulfill the prediction that “the Levitical priests shall never lack a man to stand before me” in sacrificial service. The old Levitical priesthood was removed from the scene when Jerusalem finally fell to the Romans in a.d. 70. The ministerial function of that priesthood, however, had already been assumed by “a man” who lives forever, even Jesus Christ (Heb 7:11; 10:19–22). He epitomizes what the Old Testament priesthood only approximated. He offers better sacrifices, in a better sanctuary and with better results.

Hebrews 7:11 ***11****Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?*

Hebrews 10:19-22 ***19****Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,* ***20****by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,* ***21****and since we have a great priest over the house of God,* ***22****let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

Since the Righteous Branch is priest as well as king, those who belong to him belong to a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:5). This priesthood would offer “burnt offerings” and “grain offerings” to the Lord (33:18). In the Old Testament system these offerings symbolized commitment and thanksgiving. The Christian priesthood continues the work of the Levitical priesthood by offering more excellent sacrifices (Rom 12:1; Phil 4:18) in a more excellent Temple (Eph 2:21). A Christian is a true son of Levi in the same spiritual sense in which he is a true son of Abraham (Gal 3:7).[[412]](#footnote-412)

1 Peter 2:5 ***5****you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*

Romans 12:1*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

Philippians 4:18**18***I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.*

Ephesians 2:21***20****built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,* ***21****in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.* ***22****In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

Galatians 3:7. ***6****just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?*

***7****Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.* ***8****And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”* ***9****So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

Romans 11: **The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation**

***25****Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.* ***26****And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,*

*“The Deliverer will come from Zion,*

*he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;*

***27*** *“and this will be my covenant with them*

*when I take away their sins.”*

***28****As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.* ***29****For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* ***30****For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,* ***31****so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.* ***32****For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.*

***33****Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

***34*** *“For who has known the mind of the Lord,*

*or who has been his counselor?”*

***35*** *“Or who has given a gift to him*

*that he might be repaid?”*

***36****For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

**19The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: 20“Thus says the Lord: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, 21then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. 22As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me.”**

*2. Two covenants (33:19–22)*. As Jeremiah wrote, the representative of the Davidic dynasty, Zedekiah, was facing defeat and exile. Had God revoked his ancient covenant with David (2 Sam 7:12–16)? Not at all. The covenant with David was as irrevocable as the God-ordained succession of day and night. David was God’s servant. He would always have a son to sit on his throne. David’s throne was God’s throne (1 Chr 28:5; 29:23), the seat of authority over the people of God. Thus when Christ ascended to sit on God’s throne, he was in effect sitting on David’s throne, i.e., the throne once occupied by David.

The same permanence attached to the covenant made with the Levitical priests. That these words must be understood spiritually is indicated by the categorical affirmation in the New Testament that the Levitical priesthood has passed away (Heb 7:11). Jeremiah went on to say that both the Davidic and Levitical families would be as numerous as the host of the heavens and the sand of the sea. Christians are members of a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9) and as such are the spiritual descendants of both David and Levi.[[413]](#footnote-413)

1 Peter 2:9 ***5****you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* ***6****For it stands in Scripture:*

*“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,*

*a cornerstone chosen and precious,*

*and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”*

***7****So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,*

*“The stone that the builders rejected*

*has become the cornerstone,”*

***8****and*

*“A stone of stumbling,*

*and a rock of offense.”*

*They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*

***9****But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* ***10****Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

**23The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: 24“Have you not observed that these people are saying, ‘The Lord has rejected the two clans that he chose’? Thus they have despised my people so that they are no longer a nation in their sight. 25Thus says the Lord: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, 26then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.”**

*3. Two families (33:23–26)*. The Lord directed Jeremiah to take note of what the people were saying. They were discouraged, thinking that “the two families which the Lord chose,” i.e., Israel and Judah, had been completely rejected by God. For this reason Gentiles despised God’s people. They no longer regard Israel as a nation. In response to this despondency the prophet renewed his assurance of the permanence of God’s relationship with his people. The Lord would no more reject the descendants of Jacob and David than he would revoke the day-night sequence or annul the “fixed patterns of heaven and earth.” In the future the “seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” would be ruled by “the seed of David.” This restoration of Davidic rule was regarded as part of God’s plan to “restore their fortunes.” At the same time, it was a manifestation of God’s mercy upon them.[[414]](#footnote-414)

The Destruction of Jerusalem

Jeremiah 34–39

**Background of the Unit**

Chronologically the material in chapters 34–39 is disjointed; logically it fits together brilliantly. Chapter 34 begins with a brief announcement to King Zedekiah in the earliest days of the siege of Jerusalem in 587 b.c. The final blow had begun to fall. Then in reverse chronological order Jeremiah cited examples of the stubbornness and disobedience of the people and kings of Judah which have as their purpose the justification of the final blow.

The first example (34:8–22) comes from the period of the siege of Jerusalem, in the summer of 587 b.c. The second piece of evidence (chap. 35) comes from the reign of King Jehoiakim about a decade earlier, 598 b.c. The last illustration (chap. 36) is precisely dated to the fourth year of Jehoiakim, 605 b.c., the same year in which Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish.

After he cited his evidence justifying the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah described his ministry during the terrible siege (chaps. 37–38). To this he appended a concise narrative describing the actual capture of the city (chap. 39).[[415]](#footnote-415)

**Zedekiah to Die in Babylon**

**34 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army and all the kingdoms of the earth under his dominion and all the peoples were fighting against Jerusalem and all of its cities: 2“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.** *He burned the house of the LORD and the king’s house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire* ([2 Kings 25:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Kings+25.9&t=NKJV)). Zedekiah will face the King who made him king. How humiliating. Just like us to God one day. How about people who say when they meet God they are going to tell him a thing or two.

**3You shall not escape from his hand but shall surely be captured and delivered into his hand. You shall see the king of Babylon eye to eye and speak with him face to face. And you shall go to Babylon.’ 4Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah king of Judah! Thus says the Lord concerning you: ‘You shall not die by the sword. 5You shall die in peace. And as spices were burned for your fathers, the former kings who were before you, so people shall burn spices for you and lament for you, saying, “Alas, lord!” ’ For I have spoken the word, declares the Lord.”**

Zedekiah had a terrible fate in front of him, but he did not **die by the sword**. Soon after this prophecy, the Babylonians captured **Zedekiah**. *Then they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon*([2 Kings 25:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Kings+25.7&t=NKJV)).

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DISASTER**

**Jeremiah 34:1–7**

The long-standing predictions that an enemy from the north would invade Judah came to pass when Nebuchadnezzar and his multi-national army began “fighting against Jerusalem and against all its cities.” Early in 587 b.c., before his confinement in the court of the guard (32:1–3), Jeremiah took the initiative and went to King Zedekiah with a message. God declared that Jerusalem would fall to the invaders and be burned. After a face to face confrontation with Nebuchadnezzar, King Zedekiah would be carried away to Babylon. There he would die a natural death. Fellow captives would burn incense for him and bewail his death with traditional laments (34:1–5).[[416]](#footnote-416)

**6Then Jeremiah the prophet spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah, in Jerusalem, 7when the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the cities of Judah that were left, Lachish and Azekah, for these were the only fortified cities of Judah that remained.**

The city of **Lachish** was some thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem. Because of the Egyptian threat, Nebuchadnezzar had to secure the strategic points to the south before the complete conquest of Jerusalem.

i. Archaeologists have discovered a pit in Lachish with the remains of about 1,500 casualties of Nebuchadnezzar’s attack. The *Lachish Letters* were discovered, urgent writings on bits of pottery, all regarding the Babylonian attack and conquest of cities like **Lachish and Azekah** (which are specifically mentioned in the Lachish Letters).

iii. “At Lachish, twenty-one ostraca (i.e. broken pieces of pottery used for writing lists, letters, etc.) have been discovered dating from the time of the Babylonian invasion. One of them (Ostracon iv) reads, ‘… we are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications which my lord hath given, for we cannot see Azekah.’ This is usually taken as an allusion that Azekah had just fallen to the Babylonians, and that the smoke-signal or beacon, indicating that the city was still holding out, was no longer made.” (Cundall)

The message to Zedekiah is dated to the early part of the Babylonian invasion. Already the Babylonians controlled the countryside. Only two Judean fortified outposts beyond Jerusalem remained unconquered (34:6–7).[[417]](#footnote-417)

**JUSTIFICATION FOR THE DISASTER**

**Jeremiah 34:8–36:32**

Before he described the terrible ordeal of Jerusalem’s fall, Jeremiah cited three incidents from recent history which demonstrated why Jerusalem had to be destroyed.[[418]](#footnote-418)

**8The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to make a proclamation of liberty to them, 9that everyone should set free his Hebrew slaves, male and female, so that no one should enslave a Jew, his brother. 10And they obeyed, all the officials and all the people who had entered into the covenant that everyone would set free his slave, male or female, so that they would not be enslaved again. They obeyed and set them free. 11But afterward they turned around and took back the male and female slaves they had set free, and brought them into subjection as slaves.**

**The Hypocritical Princes (34:8–22)**

During the first weeks of the siege of Jerusalem the king and princes “got religion.” Zedekiah entered into a solemn and sacred covenant with the inhabitants of Jerusalem “to proclaim release.” Each man was to set free his Hebrew servants who were being held illegally. All who entered into this covenant obeyed and released the servants.

When the siege was lifted temporarily in the summer of 587 b.c. these princes went back on their solemn commitment and forced these men and women back into slavery (34:8–11).[[419]](#footnote-419)

**12The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 13“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I myself made a covenant with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, saying, 14‘At the end of seven years each of you must set free the fellow Hebrew who has been sold to you and has served you six years; you must set him free from your service.’ But your fathers did not listen to me or incline their ears to me. 15You recently repented and did what was right in my eyes by proclaiming liberty, each to his neighbor, and you made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my name, 16but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took back his male and female slaves, whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your slaves.**

God’s covenant with Israel stipulated that Hebrew servants were to be released after six years of service, or “every seventh year” (NIV). This law had been ignored by their forefathers. That the princes had recently, albeit belatedly, released their slaves, pleased the Lord. They had entered into a sacred covenant before the Lord in the Temple. When those same princes reneged on their sacred oath they *profaned* God’s name by which they had taken their oath (34:12–16).[[420]](#footnote-420)

**17“Therefore, thus says the Lord: You have not obeyed me by proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and to his neighbor; behold, I proclaim to you liberty to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine, declares the Lord. I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 18And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts—** Abraham in [Genesis 15:9-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+15.9-21&t=NKJV) **19the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf.**  “As in the Assyrian inscriptions, the intention was that, as they passed through the pieces of the divided sacrifice, they invoked on themselves a curse that, if they broke the covenant, they would be cut in pieces like the sacrificial calf.” (Feinberg) **20And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth.** Since the princes had failed to proclaim release to their servants, God would proclaim a release to these covenant breakers. They would be released from divine protection and handed over to the sword, plague and famine. Judah would experience all the horrors of war and become a terrifying object lesson to surrounding nations. The princes who participated in the covenant ceremony of marching through the severed carcasses of animals would be slain and their bodies left exposed to the bird and beast (34:17–20).[[421]](#footnote-421)

**21And Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials I will give into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives, into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon which has withdrawn from you. 22Behold, I will command, declares the Lord, and will bring them back to this city. And they will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire. I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.” [[422]](#footnote-422)**

The Babylonian invaders who had departed from their siege would return. They would capture Jerusalem and destroy it. The other cities of Judah would become “a desolation without inhabitant.” Zedekiah and his officials would fall into the hands of their enemies (34:21–22).[[423]](#footnote-423)

**The Obedience of the Rechabites.** 30 minutes

**35 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: 2“Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak with them and bring them to the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers; then offer them wine to drink.” The Disobedient Sons (35:1–19)**

Chapter 35 antedates the previous chapter by some ten years. The episode can probably be assigned to 599 or 598 b.c. Jeremiah was told to go the “house of the Rechabites.” This was an ascetic group which normally refused to live in houses, plant vineyards or drink wine. Jeremiah was to take this group to one of the large chambers of the Temple and publicly offer them a large bowl of wine to drink (35:1–2). The prophet was not placing a temptation before this stalwart band. He knew what their reaction would be. Jeremiah wanted to use these devout souls as an illustration.[[424]](#footnote-424)

**3So I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah and his brothers and all his sons and the whole house of the Rechabites. 4I brought them to the house of the Lord into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, keeper of the threshold. 5Then I set before the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups, and I said to them, “Drink wine.” 6But they answered, “We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, ‘You shall not drink wine, neither you nor your sons forever. 7You shall not build a house; you shall not sow seed; you shall not plant or have a vineyard;** **but you shall live in tents all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn.’ 8We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, to drink no wine all our days, ourselves, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, 9and not to build houses to dwell in. We have no vineyard or field or seed, 10but we have lived in tents and have obeyed and done all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, ‘Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans and the army of the Syrians.’ So we are living in Jerusalem.”** The prophet carried out his instructions. He took the Rechabites to “the chamber of the sons of Hanan” in the Temple. There he set before them “pitchers full of wine and cups” and invited them to drink. The Rechabites refused to touch the wine. They explained that their ancestor Jonadab had commanded them not to drink wine forever. Through all the years the Rechabites faithfully had followed the instructions of their ancestor. Only when roving bands of Chaldeans and mercenaries made the countryside unsafe did these noble nomads leave their tents to take refuge in the capital (35:3–11).[[425]](#footnote-425)

**12Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: 13“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Go and say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction and listen to my words? declares the Lord. 14The command that Jonadab the son of Rechab gave to his sons, to drink no wine, has been kept, and they drink none to this day, for they have obeyed their father’s command. I have spoken to you persistently, but you have not listened to me. 15I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, ‘Turn now every one of you from his evil way, and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers.’ But you did not incline your ear or listen to me. 16The sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have kept the command that their father gave them, but this people has not obeyed me. 17Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them and they have not listened, I have called to them and they have not answered.”** Jeremiah was told to take a message to the “men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” The Lord asked this question: “Will you not receive instruction by listening to my words?” Jonadab had spoken once and his descendants obeyed him for two hundred years. By contrast the Lord had spoken repeatedly and earnestly, but the men of Judah paid him no heed. God’s servants the prophets consistently had urged each citizen to “turn from his evil way, amend your deeds, do not go after other gods.” Only national repentance would guarantee their right to continue to dwell in Canaan. Because Judah had refused to listen to God’s call to repentance, the land would experience all the calamities which his messengers and his Law had threatened (35:12–17).[[426]](#footnote-426)

**18But to the house of the Rechabites Jeremiah said, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father and kept all his precepts and done all that he commanded you, 19therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me.”** The Rechabites were models of parental respect and obedience. Because these people had obeyed the command of their distant ancestor Jonadab, God had a word of promise for them: “Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before me always.” To *stand before* God means to be active in his service (35:18–19). Through the centuries those who respect the instructions of their godly parents are spiritual descendants of Jonadab.[[427]](#footnote-427)

1. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je&off=36), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 177–178. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je&off=1229), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 179–180. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je&off=4417&ctx=eath+(2+Chr+35:25).%0a~2.+Reign+of+Jehoahaz), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je&off=5554&ctx=ism+and+prediction.%0a~4.+Reign+of+Jehoiach), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 180–181. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je&off=6043), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 181–182. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je&off=9478), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 182–183. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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8. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je&off=18634), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 187. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je1.1-4.4&off=15), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 191–192. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je1.4-19&off=43&ctx=HET%0aJeremiah+1:4%E2%80%9319%0a~The+call+of+Jeremiah), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je1.4-6), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 192–193. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je1.7-10), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 193–194. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je1.11-16), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je1.17-19), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 194–195. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Ro1.18&off=0&ctx=l+live+by+faith.%E2%80%9D6+%0a~God%E2%80%99s+Wrath+on+Unrig) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 1:18–32. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je2.14-19&off=497&ctx=st+of+her+citizens.%0a~Jeremiah+next+spoke+), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je3.1-5&off=41&ctx=+Repentance+(3:1%E2%80%935)%0a~Under+the+Law+of+Mos), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je3.1-5&off=469&ctx=azing+grace!+(3:1).%0a~Everywhere%2c+even+out), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
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20. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je3.6-10&off=36&ctx=Repentance+(3:6%E2%80%9310)%0a~%E2%80%9CFaithless+Israel%E2%80%9D+(), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 199–200. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je3.11-14&off=37&ctx=epentance+(3:11%E2%80%9314)%0a~Under+the+principle+), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Heb12.22&off=0&ctx=tremble+with+fear.%E2%80%9D+~22%C2%A0But+you+have+come) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 12:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je3.11-14&off=437&ctx=+in+anger+(3:11f.).%0a~To+avail+themselves+), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je3.15-18&off=41&ctx=epentance+(3:15%E2%80%9318)%0a~The+individuals+who+), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
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26. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je3.15-18&off=1407&ctx=sus+Christ+(3:16b).%0a~Fourth%2c+the+new+age+), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je3.15-18&off=1819&ctx=vil+heart%E2%80%9D+(3:17b).+~Sixth%2c+a+new+unity+w), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je3.19-25&off=36&ctx=epentance+(3:19%E2%80%9325)%0a~The+question+now+rai), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. James E. Smith, [*The Major Prophets*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-mjpr?ref=Bible.Je3.19-25&off=444&ctx=ationship+(3:19f.).%0a~Some+would+respond+t), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
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