

# JEREMIAH

## THE CALL OF THE PROPHET

The prophets of Israel were launched upon their prophetic career by a definite call.

Amos, the herdsman from Tekoa, declared that God took him from following the flock and inducted him into the prophetic ministry. He felt a divine compulsion to preach.

Isaiah, the aristocrat, saw a vision of divine glory and heard the voice of his God calling for a messenger. Isaiah knew that the call was meant for him and so he volunteered: "Here am I! Send me!"

Ezekiel saw the dazzling and mysterious throne-chariot of God and from this experience he came to realize that he was to preach the word of God.

It is therefore most appropriate that the account of the call of Jeremiah stands first in the book.

## CHAPTER 1

### Verses 1-3

A great deal of information is packed into the brief preface with which the Book of Jeremiah opens.

As a priest, the prospect before him was that of a quiet and probably uneventful life teaching the Torah of God in his home town and serving periodically at the temple in Jerusalem. But God had other plans for this timid young priest. Jeremiah had received divine revelation.

### Verse 4 The Call Extended

Jeremiah was not privileged to see the grandeur of the heavenly throne room and hear the majestic praises of celestial beings as was Isaiah. Nor was he

granted a vision of the throne-chariot of God with its flashing and intriguing wheels within wheels as was Ezekiel.

The call of Jeremiah seems to have occurred on an ordinary day and in an ordinary place.

### Verse 5

Jeremiah needed to know at the outset the identity of the One who was commissioning him. In the four verbs of verse 5—formed, knew, set-apart, appointed—God identified himself as the rightful sovereign of Jeremiah’s life.

1. Creation: “I formed you.”

The birth of Jeremiah was no accident. God takes credit for forming him in the belly of his mother. The fact that God formed Jeremiah in the womb of his mother does not mean that his birth was supernatural like that of Jesus. Rather the thought is that God needed a prophet and so providentially planned that one should be born who could fulfill such a ministry.

2. Election: “I knew you.”

The verb “to know” involves intellectual knowledge. In the case of Jeremiah this would be foreknowledge.

3. Consecration: “I set you apart.”

God had separated, sanctified or set apart Jeremiah for holy service before he was born.

4. Installation: “I have appointed you.”

The word translated “appointed” literally means “to give, to put or place.”

Jeremiah is called a prophet. The Hebrew word translated “prophet” occurs some three hundred times in the Old Testament.

As the term is used in the Old Testament it means one who is “qualified, called, and commissioned to speak God’s truth to men.”

Jeremiah is the only prophet to be designated as “a prophet to the nations.” His ministry was to embrace in a special way, nations other than Judah.

## **Verses 7-10 The Divine Assurance**

When called of God Moses brought forth excuse after excuse; but Jeremiah only needed encouragement and reassurance. The assurance in these verses is fourfold: assurance of direction, deliverance, power, and authority.

### **Verse 7 Assurance of divine direction**

Often men try to set feeble excuses against the plain will of God. They imagine that they are being modest. They plead a lack of qualifications or strength or ability when in fact they may be doubting and mistrusting the power of God to provide for His own work.

Jeremiah's focus needed to be lifted from self to God.

Jeremiah is to preach what God commands.

### **Verse 8 Assurance of divine deliverance**

The LORD saw within the heart of Jeremiah a fear of those to whom he was sent.

Jeremiah had not said he was afraid but the LORD saw the fear in his heart. Sinful men never had welcomed a message of judgment and condemnation. God promises to "deliver" Jeremiah. The promise is not that Jeremiah will be free from danger but that God will be his Deliverer. He will not be delivered from trial but will be enabled to pass through trial.

### **Verse 9 Assurance of divine power**

But why did God touch the lips of the prophet? In Isaiah the touching of the lips was for purification; here for communication. The hand is the symbol of making and doing. The act symbolized the fact that God was taking over his mouth, remaking it. Jeremiah would speak with the tongue (authority) of God.

### **Verse 10 Assurance of divine authority**

The divine summons closes with assurance that Jeremiah will have divine authority. God declares "I have made you an overseer over the nations and kingdoms," that is, the officer who puts God's plan into operation. This ministry will have both a negative and a positive emphasis.

Four verbs describe the negative work that the prophet must perform.

1. To uproot like a noxious weed.
2. To tear down.
3. To destroy.
4. To raze or overthrow.

The prophet himself would not have the power to do these things; but it would be his mission to announce what God was about to do.

Jeremiah fulfills this part of his commission by preaching divine judgment upon the nations of his day.

Old sinful Judah must be destroyed.

The foreign nations which have proudly lifted up themselves against their Creator, be uprooted.

Jeremiah is not merely a prophet of destruction; he is also a prophet of construction. The positive aspect of his ministry was: (1) to build, and (2) to plant.

The ultimate purpose of this prophet is to pave the way for that new day, that new beginning. The old must be swept away in order that the new can be inaugurated.

“Jeremiah was to pluck up dead ritual and plant living worship, pluck up vile ways and plant straight paths, pluck up degenerate hearts and plant new hearts of a new covenant.”

### **Verses 11-19 The Call Confirmed**

The call of Jeremiah is confirmed and amplified through two visions and further words of exhortation and encouragement.

The two visions are of particular interest. The first one expresses a general principle of prophecy; the second deals with a particular concrete application.

God made known His will and purpose through two kinds of visions in the Old Testament. In the first type of vision the prophet saw with his mind (or perhaps with his eyes) an object or scene which had no external reality.

In the second type of vision the prophet happened to notice or was directed to notice an object or scene. He meditated upon what he saw and as he did God revealed to him the prophetic significance of it.

It is difficult to decide whether God showed the almond rod and the boiling pot in mental visions or whether Jeremiah happened to see the external objects and then learned their symbolic significance through divine revelation.

### **Verses 11-12 The Vision of the Almond Rod**

As Jeremiah held in his hand an almond walking stick or rod God caused the prophet to come to a tremendous realization. The almond tree which blossoms in January was poetically named by the Hebrews the wakeful tree because it was the first to awake from winter sleep.

God is using a rod of “wake-tree” wood to show Jeremiah that He is wakeful. The vision speaks of God’s concern. Since the days of wicked Manasseh, no judgment had befallen the nation of Judah.

Amid the moral and spiritual deadness round about, God was awake. He was aware of and concerned about the corrupt condition of the nation. At times things seemed to go unchecked, evil seems to triumph and men assume that God is dead or unconcerned. But the winter of moral desolation cannot last forever; the Lord is wakeful.

The almond rod also suggests the chastisement of the nation. As Aaron’s almond rod that budded in the wilderness was a token of God’s wrath against the rebellious so now the almond rod which Jeremiah observes presages the outpouring of God’s judgment upon the apostate people of another time.

Also, the focus of the almond rod vision is that of certainty of prophetic revelation. God is watching with persistent care to see that His word is performed. He sees to it that His word does not return to Him void, but rather accomplishes His good pleasure. Whether it is judgment or salvation, threat or

promise, His word will come to pass. Jeremiah need have no fear that he will ever be embarrassed or proven to be wrong if he preaches the word of God. Such confidence would enable Jeremiah to preach with boldness, power, and assurance.

### **Verse 13 The Seething Caldron**

Jeremiah experienced another vision. He observed a large cooking or wash pot over an open fire. He describes the pot as seething or boiling.

Nothing could be more appropriate in describing the political conditions in the days of Jeremiah than a seething caldron. The whole Fertile Crescent was seething with plans for revolt after the death of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in 627 B.C.

### **Verse 14**

The key word in verse 14 is the word “north.” Jerusalem could be attacked successfully only from the north, as the west, south, and east sides of the city were rendered practically impregnable by deep valleys.

### **Verse 15**

The significance of the boiling caldron pouring forth its contents toward Judah is explained.

God will summon against Judah all the families of the kingdoms of the north. The army of King Nebuchadnezzar was made up of mercenaries of the various kingdoms which he had conquered. The vast throng would attack Jerusalem and the cities of Judah.

### **Verse 16**

The coming conquerors are but instruments of God who is sending His divine judgment upon an apostate people. The judgment falls upon Judah because of all their wickedness. Three specific examples of this wickedness are cited.

1. They had deserted the true God and were thus guilty of infidelity.
2. They had burned incense to false gods.
3. They had worshiped graven images.

## Verse 17 Exhortation and Encouragement

Three positive commands are followed by one prohibition.

The *first* command, “gird up your loins,” implies preparation. “Gird up the loins” then implies (1) readiness for action and (2) energy in action.

The *second* command, “stand up,” implies action! He is to begin his prophetic ministry immediately.

The *third* command, “speak,” points to the primary task of the prophet, the communication of the word of God.

The *fourth* command, a negative one, is accompanied by a word of warning. God knew that during his ministry Jeremiah would on numerous occasions face hostile crowds, angry shouts, mocking, taunting, jeering, and insolent opponents.

The message of divine judgment always stirs such reactions among godless sinners.

True preachers of the word must constantly battle the temptation to be intimidated by their audience and to compromise their message. He must not permit himself to break down before his audience nor show any signs of fear nor let his fear cause him to alter the message. If Jeremiah shows the least bit of fear for his enemies they will be able to get the best of him.

## Verse 18

When God gives the prophet a message to deliver He also gives him the courage to deliver it and the strength to withstand the reaction it provokes.

Three metaphors are used to portray the protection which Jeremiah would experience.

1. He would be invincible as a fortified city which might withstand enemy bombardment for years.
2. He would be as indestructible as an iron gate which could withstand the heaviest attack.

3. He would be as impregnable as a wall of bronze, the toughest metal known to the ancients.

### **Verse 19**

Jeremiah would be famous but he would not be popular. All the powerful figures of the nation will fight against him but they will not prevail. God will come to his rescue. Jeremiah is not promised deliverance from persecution and suffering but from being defeated by persecution and suffering. Jeremiah would be hated and attacked by men but love and protected by his God.

## **Chapters 2:1—6:30 SERMONS FROM THE REIGN OF JOSIAH**

These chapters contain several discourses uttered at different times in the early years of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry.

### **Chapter 2 THE INAUGURAL SERMON**

Jeremiah's inaugural sermon might well be entitled "God's Indictment of His People." The language is tough and hard-hitting. The logic is impeccable and the conclusion is inevitable. Judah is deserving of divine judgment.

#### **Verse 1**

Jeremiah did not have to wait long to receive the first message from the Lord which he was to deliver to his people. He proceeds to paint a beautiful picture of the tender relationship which had in past years existed between God and His people. He points out Israel's loving care for God and God's loving care for Israel.

#### **Verse 2**

God still remembered the loving care which Israel had demonstrated toward Him in the days of national youth. It is in the period of the Exodus and wilderness wandering that the tribes of Israel became a nation. During those formative years Israel had shown tender and affectionate "kindness" to the Lord



their God. This “bridal love” as Jeremiah calls it, had caused Israel to follow the Lord from Egypt, a land of comparative plenty into the wilderness.

For Jeremiah, the wilderness wandering was the honeymoon period of Israel’s history. In the wilderness Israel was completely dependent on God. He had no rivals for their affections. Israel was completely devoted to Him.

### **Verse 3**

God reciprocated the loving care of Israel. He regarded Israel as His holy portion. According to Isaiah, God was the Holy One of Israel; according to Jeremiah, Israel was the holy one of God. Israel belonged to God just as did the first-fruits of the harvest. This being the case, Israel was under divine protection of the Lord.

### **Verse 4**

Jeremiah calls upon all families of the house of Israel to hear His message. In pointing out the present apostasy of the people Jeremiah makes three points: the apostasy is unjustified, ungrateful, and universal.

### **Verse 5**

There is no reason or fault on God’s part which can account for the infidelity of the nations. Yet they have forsaken Him and gone after idols, “vain things” (lit., a breath, a vapor).

Following after these vain deities, the men of Israel became vain. A man is no better than the god that he worships.

### **Verses 6-7**

Once the great apostasy set in, Israel seemed to forget about God who had led them through the barren desert wastes. It was a land of drought, deserts, and darkness. But God had brought Israel through that hostile land of pits, holes, rents, and fissures in the soil to a beautiful land.

The Hebrews uses the word “Carmel” to describe the land. A Carmel-land is a land planted with vines and other choice plants. Yet the Israelites were still

unappreciative. They took that holy land that God consecrated to His own purposes and defiled it by their idolatry.

### **Verse 8**

The apostasy extended even to the political and spiritual leaders of the nation. Even the priests and those who handle the law were guilty. Many prophets began to walk after idol gods and prophecy by Baal.

### **Verse 9**

The “you” of verse 9 probably refers to the past generation of apostates about whom the prophet had been speaking in verses 4-8. Repeated acts of rebellion through the years have called forth repeated reproach and punishment on the part of God.

### **Verse 10**

The prophet argues that the apostasy of Judah is unprecedented in all the history of the world. He challenges his hearers to go westward to Kittim and eastward to Kedar to see if they could uncover another example of a nation which had changed deities.

### **Verse 11**

Kittim refers to the isles of the Mediterranean and perhaps also to the coastlands of Italy and Greece.

Kedar was the name of one of the sons of Ishmael and is here used of Arabia in general.

Israel has changed their Glory (God) for the useless one (Baal). When a nation ceases to trust in God that nation has lost its true glory.

### **Verse 12**

The prophet calls upon the heavens to be appalled, to bristle and be exceedingly amazed over the sin of Judah.

### **Verse 13**

Two specific charges are leveled against the people of God. They have forsaken the Lord, a fountain of living water, in order to hew out for themselves cisterns.

A cistern in antiquity had three fundamental deficiencies.

1. The best cisterns in Palestine, even those cut in solid rock, were prone to crack thus causing the precious water to be lost.
2. Even if by constant care the cistern was made to hold, yet the water collected from clay roofs has the color of weak soap suds, tastes like the earth and is full of worms.
3. A cistern at its best is limited in the amount of water it can hold. In the hour of greatest need, during the long dry spells; it fails to supply the life-giving water.

Who in their right mind would prefer this unwholesome and inadequate water supply to the sweet and wholesome water of a bubbling fountain?

Why do men prefer man-made systems of salvation to the over-flowing, ever fresh and invigorating fountain of divine grace?

### **Verses 14-15**

In making the transition from considering the condition of apostasy to pointing out the consequences of apostasy, Jeremiah points to the example of the northern kingdom of Israel. Israel has been dragged away into slavery by the Assyrians.

Israel's enemies like lions have roared against God's people and have made the land a desolation and laid waste the cities.

### **Verse 16**

From Israel in the north Jeremiah turns his attention to Judah. The prophecy then is that Judah will receive a mortal blow at the hands of Egypt.

Unable to learn from the fate of the northern kingdoms, Judah was doomed to repeat that fate. Now why had Israel suffered? Why was Judah the next one to suffer? “You have brought it upon yourself,” says the prophet.

### **Verse 17**

From the time of the wilderness wanderings to the present they had refused to follow the leading of the Lord.

### **Verse 18**

Having turned from the Fountain of Living Water, Judah was drinking desperately from the waters of the Nile and from the River, that is, the Euphrates in Assyria.

### **Verse 19**

Israel’s vacillation between Egypt and Assyria proved disastrous. Since they had forsaken the Lord and no longer feared Him they were doomed to chastisement and punishment at the hands of their enemies.

In a series of brilliant metaphors Jeremiah sharpens his accusation against Judah. The nation is compared to an ox that breaks his yoke, a vine that bears strange fruit, a stain that will wash off, a roving donkey, a wild donkey in heat, a persistent paramour, (lover) and a thief caught in the act.

### **Verse 20**

Like a stubborn ox Israel refused to submit to the yoke of divine restraint and the bands of ethical obligation. Israel categorically declared, “I will not serve.” Having demanded freedom from the Lord, Israel became the slave to the passion and lust of idolatrous worship. On the bare treeless heights Israel offered sacrifices to the Baalim.

The groves and leafy trees provided the necessary privacy for the lewd rites of Asherah and Ashtoreth. Sacred prostitution was part of the rites of those fertility cults and thus Jeremiah likens the national apostasy to harlotry and adultery.

### **Verse 21**

During the years of the Patriarchal journeys, the Egyptian bondage and the wilderness wanderings God had patiently and lovingly watched over the tender young plant.

When the people reached Canaan, they refused to yield the fruit of service and obedience to the Lord but on the contrary rendered their allegiance to other gods.

### **Verse 22**

The iniquity of Israel is clearly visible to the Holy One of Israel. It is an indelible stain which cannot be removed through human effort.

### **Verse 23**

The people who were secretly worshiping Baal apparently did not regard this as apostasy as long as they went through the formal acts of worshiping the Lord.

The young camel is the perfect illustration for all that is “skittery” and unreliable. It is ungainly in the extreme and runs off in any direction at the slightest provocation, much to the fury of the camel-driver.

### **Verse 24**

The prophet compares the apostasy of Israel to the dramatic and vulgar actions of a female donkey in mating season. In the month of making, sires need not weary themselves in seeking out the female donkey; on the contrary she will eagerly seek them out. Israel turns to the lewd acts of Baalism.

### **Verse 25**

The divine Husband pleads with his adulterous wife, Israel, to cease her wild pursuit of illicit lovers. “It is no use,” she cries, “I love the strange gods and I will continue to go after them.”

### **Verse 26**

A thief caught in the act is embarrassed and ashamed. In addition to the shame of public exposure he would then experience the shame of disappointment in having his anticipated gain result in a substantial loss.

All segments of the Israelite population would experience the shame of embarrassment and the shame of disappointment when the folly of their ways became manifest.

### **Verse 27**

But in the hour of national and personal calamity when their idols of wood and stone proved utterly worthless, they would cry out to the living God in their desperation.

### **Verse 28**

With Elijah-like sarcasm Jeremiah taunts the idolaters: “Your gods are as numerous as the cities of your land!”

In the closing verses of the inaugural sermon Jeremiah drives home his final arguments against apostasy of the people. He points out that their complaints against God are unjustified. Their rebellion indicates ingratitude. Their protestations of innocence are useless, and their alliances with foreign powers are utterly unprofitable.

### **Verse 29**

The brazen-faced apostates actually attempted to justify themselves before God. “Justify” means to go to court with, to present a legal case against. All of the people of Israel had transgressed against God!

### **Verse 30**

As a concerned Father He had attempted to discipline His wayward children. He had smitten them with sword, drought, famine, and pestilence. But these disciplinary disasters had not brought the nation to its senses.

God raised up mighty men to preach His word and call His people to repentance. Instead of heeding the message of God the people destroyed the messengers.

### **Verse 31**

Jeremiah wants his hearers to get a mental picture of the ingratitude of their rebellion against God. “Has God been barren?” “Has God failed to provide for His people?”

God has not been a wilderness to His people nor a land of thick darkness. The thick darkness is symbolic of misery and uncertainty. God is asking His people, “How can you say such terrible things?” “How can I be deserving of such treatment?”

### **Verse 32**

A maiden will not forget the ornaments or jewels which are part of her dowry, nor will a bride forget the girdle or sash which is a token of her married state. The ornaments and girdle would be objects in which any woman would take pride.

God is the source of Israel’s glory. Yet Israel has forgotten Him.

### **Verse 33**

Israel is so skillful, so brazen, so experienced in the ways of the licentious and immoral “love” to the Baal cult that she became a teacher to the prostitute of the street. Those who were most skillful in pursuing “love” were at the same time belligerent towards, and intolerant of those who tried to remain faithful to the laws of God.

### **Verse 34**

The populace to a large degree must have supported their king in his attacks upon the faithful and the humble. Had these folks been caught red-handed attempting to break through (dig through) the mud brick sides of a house then perhaps homicide might have been justified.

But this was not the case. Those who had been slain were innocent of wrong doing. They were executed “because of all those things,” that is, the apostasy and zeal for the false gods.

### **Verse 35**

“If we were sinners God would have punished us; God has not punished us; therefore, we must not be sinners.” The fatal flaw in this reasoning is that God sometimes delays the punishment for sin in order to give the sinners ample time to repent.

“It will not be long now,” says the prophet, “and God will enter into judgment with you.” In that hour Israel would come to realize how utterly corrupt and sinful she had been.

### **Verses 36-37**

Political alliances with Egypt and Assyria would not be able to deliver Jerusalem from destruction. They will not prosper because of their political schemes for God had rejected the nations in whom Israel trusted.

## **CHAPTER 3**

After the blistering indictment of his inaugural sermon, Jeremiah takes up the subject of repentance.

### **Verse 1**

According to the Law of Moses a woman who had been divorced and who had married another could not be reclaimed by the original husband. In the light of this law is it legally possible for the Lord to take Judah back again? The answer is No! Judah’s case is much worse than that envisaged in the divorce law. In the Law of Moses, the woman who has been legally married to a second husband could not be reclaimed, but Judah has cavorted around with many lovers; that is false gods, and therefore no longer had any legal claim on the Lord.

But grace triumphs over law. In spite of the legal impossibility of repentance and reconciliation God calls upon Judah to return to Him.



### **Verse 2**

Israel has embraced every form of idolatry which has come along. This iniquitous spiritual harlotry has polluted the land.

### **Verse 3**

As a prostitute remains brazen and shameless when confronted with her deeds, so Israel gave no evidence of shame even when suffering the consequences of her sin.

### **Verse 4**

The past can be forgotten and forgiven if Israel will acknowledge the Lord as God. Will you not acknowledge Me, as the Husband of your youth?

### **Verse 5**

Judah had spoken the things which God had requested in the previous verse. At the same time, however, they had continued to do evil things thus indicating that their words were insincere and hypocritical.

So far, they had gotten by with this hypocrisy but God will not keep His anger forever. Shortly they will face the God of judgment.

### **Verse 6**

Throughout her history Israel had recklessly pursued the false gods upon every prominent hilltop where they would feel closer to the deities and under every green tree which would furnish welcome shade for the practice of their lustful desires, and you commit harlotry there.

### **Verse 7**

Two hundred years God waited patiently for His fool-hardy people to tire of roving from Him. God is not willing that any should perish. He is hopeful, even anxious, that wayward Israel would return to Him.

Judah saw what transpired in the north and yet refused to profit from that experience.

### **Verse 8**

Even when God divorced His adulterous wife, Israel, by sending her into Assyrian captivity Judah did not fear but continued in her own harlotry.

### **Verse 9**

Judah forsook her Bridegroom and committed adultery with gods of wood and stone.

### **Verse 10**

Judah deceitfully pledged herself to the Lord. Jeremiah is giving an assessment of the reformation of Josiah, that it was not sincere but hypocritical.

### **Verse 11**

The sins of Israel though considerable were less than those of Judah. Why does God regard Judah more-guilty? More light brings greater responsibility in the light of God. God still yearns for Israel's repentance even after a hundred years of punishment in exile.

### **Verse 12**

The word "return" in the Old Testament carries the idea of going back to the original point of departure. If Israel repents they will find that God is kind and anxious to receive them. He will not frown upon them and continue to be angry with them if they will repent.

### **Verse 13**

They had scattered their ways in the sense of wandering in every direction seeking gods whose service was deemed more enjoyable and beneficial than their service to the Lord.

### **Verse 14**

The Lord, first as a Father and then as a Husband, pleads with backsliding Israel to return. The marriage relationship to the nation Israel may have been severed but God is still the husband of every individual Israelite.

The “you” in this verse is plural in the Hebrew referring to individuals. Not many will accept the gracious invitation to repent. God knew that most of those exiled Israelites would not return to Him. He will bring back to Zion everyone who turns to Him in sincere repentance.

God is concerned with individuals and that only a few from the northern tribes would actually return to Palestine.

Note: Zion in prophecy frequently represents the Messianic kingdom. Zion is not a geographical location but a spiritual condition. The passage then speaks of the conversion of sinners and the incorporation of the redeemed into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Verse 15**

If individuals of the ten northern tribes truly repent and are brought by God into spiritual Zion they will experience many wonderful blessings.

The first blessing is that they will be blessed with a new leadership.

The second blessing is that of prosperity and growth. The rapid increase of the spiritual Israel of God is one of the characteristics traits of Messianic prophesy.

### **Verse 16**

In the Messianic age a new covenant will replace the cherished Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was vital to the religious life in Old Testament times.

It must have been a shock to even devout Jews to hear for the first time the announcement that the Ark would not play any role whatsoever in the New Israel. After all, the God-ordained worship of the Old Testament centered around the Sanctuary and around the Ark.

### **Verse 17**

Worship of the New Israel would be internalized and spiritual. A symbol of God’s presence would no longer be needed when God Himself in the person of His Son would dwell in the midst of His people.

The once-for-all time sacrifice on Calvary would make unnecessary and superfluous the “mercy seat” upon which blood was sprinkled annually for the sins of the people. “The ark will disappear,” says the prophet. So, it did. When the Jews returned to Babylon to rebuild their Temple, they had no Ark to place in the Holy of Holies.

In years to come a new city would replace earthly Jerusalem. The throne of God will no longer be the Ark of the Covenant but rather the holy city, the New Jerusalem.

The “New Covenant Jerusalem” is none other than the “The New Testament Church”.

### **Verse 18**

In the Messianic age Jerusalem will be blessed with a new attractiveness. Jerusalem shall become the spiritual center of the world and all nations shall gather there. The gathering of Gentiles into the church of Christ is another frequent theme in Messianic prophecy.

But what is it that attracts these Gentiles to the New Covenant Jerusalem, the church? The verse seems to suggest that it is “the Name of the Lord” which attracts them. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to reveal to men the character and nature of God.

### **Verse 19**

God asks, in effect, “How shall I give you this wonderful heritage of which I have been speaking in view of the fact that you have rejected Me?”

God then answers His own question, “I can thus bless you if you will call Me ‘my Father’ and not turn away from Me.”

The most wonderful inheritance that can befall a man is to be part of the kingdom of heaven. “That,” says Jeremiah, “is the most beautiful inheritance of the nations.” One is only entitled to that inheritance when he is able by virtue of the New Birth to call God “my Father.”

## **Verse 20**

The prophet returns now to a realistic view of the present.

As God looks upon the nation all He presently sees in the whole house of Israel, that is, the whole nation is full of unfaithfulness and apostasy. Just as a faithless wife departs from her husband so has the covenant nation departed from the divine Husband.

The sad description of the present state of affairs ends abruptly and the prophet moves on to a graphic description of the repentance for which God yearns.

Like a father listening for the faintest cry of a lost child, so God listens for some sign that the long apostasy has ended.

## **Verse 21**

Finally, He hears it! On the high places where once their boisterous idolatrous festivities were conducted now comes forth lamentation and mourning and prayers pleading for forgiveness for having perverted their ways and having forsaken the Lord.

## **Verse 22a**

Lest they feel that their sin is too grievous and their repentance futile the Lord immediately offers them words of encouragement. He addresses them as “sons” and calls upon them to return to Him.

He, the Great Physician, will heal them of their spiritual maladies and restore them to spiritual health if they will come unto Him.

## **Verses 22b-25**

The prophet intended these verses to be an ideal prayer of repentance, the kind of prayer God expected and demanded of those who would truly return to Him.

## **Verse 22b**

The last part of verse 22 depicts the eager response of the people to the gracious invitation which the Lord has just offered in the first half of the verse.

### **Verse 23**

The people confess that the pagan worship conducted on the hill has proved to be vain. They admit that they had been spiritually swindled by the tumult of the mountains, that is, the wild orgies which accompanied idolatry.

### **Verse 24**

The Hebrew word translated “shame” is the word *bosbeth* which often serves in the Old Testament as a euphemism for Baal. Their flocks and herds and even their sons and daughters had been offered as sacrifices to the pagan deities.

### **Verse 25**

The repentant sinners are so ashamed that they resolve to prostrate themselves, an expression of the deepest sorrow. In bitter tears of shame and remorse they cry out, “We have sinned against the Lord our God!” This is the godly sorrow that leads to repentance. When one realizes the true nature of sin and the true nature of the God against who he has sinned, he cannot help but feel the agonizing shame depicted so vividly in this verse.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Verse 1**

If Israel was to reap the rewards of repentance she must make sure that she turns unto the Lord. Israel had turned to other gods and to other nations.

She was constantly turning in one direction or the other. Now she must make sure she returns to “Me.” A genuine return to the Lord will involve three distinct actions on the part of the nation.

1. They must remove all their abominations, that is, their idols and the rites conducted in their worship, from before the face of the Lord.
2. From that point on they must never waver, that is, run to and from other gods, but rather remain steadfastly faithful to the Lord.

3. They must swear by the life of the Lord. “As the Lord lives” was the common form of the Jewish oath.

### **Verse 2**

To swear by the Lord means to call Him to witness to the truth of a statement. Lest one take this matter of swearing lightly three qualifications are placed upon the act.

The oath must be made (1) in truth, that is, in sincerity; (2) in justice, that is, in keeping with that which is right, and (3) in righteousness, that is, in accordance with the commandments of the law of God.

The Lord adds a beautiful promise. If Israel truly repents then the Lord will make them a blessing to the whole world and the promise will be fulfilled.

### **Verse 3**

From the explicit promise of reward in verse 2 the prophet develops two metaphors which contain implicit promises to penitent sinners.

1. The heart of the men of Judah is like a field which has never been cleared of dense brush and plowed for planting.

It is no easy task to clear that land of thorn and thistle and plow the virgin soil. Superficial plowing will not do for the roots of weeds can only be destroyed as the ground is worked again and again.

But no harvest of any consequence can be reaped from a field which has not thoroughly been prepared. The seed of the word of God does not stand a chance in a heart which harbors the roots of sin.

### **Verse 4**

2. The metaphor changes as Jeremiah calls upon the men of Judah to circumcise themselves to the Lord.

Here the prophet is taking a slap at the mere formal, ritualistic notions of circumcision. All Jews were circumcised; but not all were “circumcised to the Lord.”

Jeremiah is demanding that circumcision be carried out in the right spirit. Israel must not only circumcise the foreskin of their flesh but also of their hearts. The outward act was of no consequence if the heart was unchanged. If these men fail to live up to the circumcision, then the consuming fire of God's wrath will break forth against them and no one will be able to extinguish that fire.

### **Verses 5-18**

Following his treatment of repentance Jeremiah takes up the subject of divine judgment which he builds around three figures. He compares the armies which will destroy Judah to a lion who ravishes the countryside, verses 5-10, to a tempest which swirls through the land, verses 11-13, and to "watchers" who station themselves outside the fortifications of Jerusalem and guard against any escape on the part of the inhabitants of the city, verses 14-18.

### **Verse 5**

Jeremiah urges the people to sound the alarm throughout the land by means of trumpet and word of mouth. He urges them to cry out as loudly as they possibly can in order that the scattered population might rush to safety in the fortified cities of the land.

### **Verse 6**

The Babylonian forces in the north are sweeping southward to bring calamity and destruction to Judah.

### **Verse 7**

Jeremiah compares Nebuchadnezzar to a lion which has gone up from its thicket. The lion, being the symbol of irresistible might and royalty, is a fitting figure for the invincible Chaldean conqueror.

His purpose, declares the prophet, is to make the whole land of Judah desolate.



### **Verse 8**

In view of this impending disaster Jeremiah urges the people to gird on sackcloth as a sign of extreme distress. They should mourn and howl as in lamentation over the dead. The destruction of the land is inevitable because the fierce anger of the Lord has not turned away from Judah.

### **Verse 9**

The civil rulers who should be a tower of strength in the national emergency will lose their reason and their courage.

The spiritual leaders who had so confidently been predicting that God could not and would not destroy Jerusalem will be utterly dumbfounded at the extent of the calamity.

### **Verse 10**

Jeremiah reacts to the vivid description of the future judgment which he has just faithfully related to the people.

Shocking as it may seem, Jeremiah accuses God of deceiving or beguiling the nation, promising them peace while the sword of divine retribution was about to reach to the very soul of life of the nation.

### **Verse 11**

When the judgment falls upon Judah, people will use the figure of a blasting wind (a tempest) to describe what has befallen the land. The foe sweeping down upon Jerusalem will not be like a gentle wind which separates the grain from the chaff but will be like the fierce sirocco which blasts in annually from the Arabian desert.

### **Verse 12**

God had spoken in times past through His prophets. Now God will speak to His people in the only language which they will understand, the language of judgment and punishment.

### **Verse 13**

The hosts of God's warriors will come up like the clouds which accompany a violent-whirlwind. The horses of the enemy are swifter than eagles.

As the inhabitants of Judah see that vast horde descending upon them the wail of lamentation shall be taken up in the land.

### **Verse 14**

The third figure opens with an appeal to the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse themselves from evil in order that they might be saved.

Jeremiah was perplexed by the obstinacy of his countrymen. In view of the impending disaster Jeremiah asks rhetorically, "How long will you harbor, (cause to lodge), in your midst (within you) wicked thoughts.

### **Verse 15**

Repentance is so urgent for Jeremiah can see in prophetic vision the rapid advance from Dan, the northern border of Palestine.

Almost as quickly as the first messenger reaches Jerusalem a second runner from the hills of Ephraim ten miles from Jerusalem arrives with equally bad tidings. The enemy is rapidly advancing toward Jerusalem.

### **Verse 16**

Watchers, that is, the besieging army, station themselves around the cities of Judah. They lift up their voices against the besieged cities in ridicule, in taunts and demands for total surrender.

### **Verse 17**

The enemy watches the city lest any within make good their escape. All this has come upon Judah because she has rebelled against the Lord.

### **Verse 18**

The sin of Judah is bitter indeed. It has reached to the very heart of the nation dealing a death blow to her.

## **Verses 19-31 Description of Coming Judgment**

Jeremiah describes the coming judgment. He emphasizes that this judgment will be terrifying, devastating, and inevitable.

### **Verse 19**

Let no one think that Jeremiah enjoyed preaching his message of judgment. He is emotionally shaken. His heart pounds; his bowels, considered by the ancients to be the seat of emotion, are in agony. He cannot remain silent. He must give vent to his intense feelings.

### **Verse 20**

When he hears the war trumpet, the battle cry and sees in his mind's eye wave after wave of destruction sweeping across his land he is completely overwhelmed.

Suddenly, in a moment it seems that land and all its "tents" and "curtains" fall into the hands of the enemy. Jeremiah is using tents and curtains as a metaphor for the habitations of the citizens of Jerusalem.

### **Verse 21**

The agony of the prophet reaches a climax as he cries out, "How long shall I see a standard, hear the noise of a trumpet."

### **Verse 22**

All he has received thus far in his ministry are revelations of death and destruction. He asks the question, "How long?" He really means; "Why"? God answers that question by giving a three-fold justification for the impending destruction of the nation.

1. The Judeans are foolish and no longer truly know God in their hearts.
2. When it comes to spiritual things, God's people are stupid and senseless sons.
3. These people are brilliant in planning further evil but do not know the first thing about how to do what is right.

Jeremiah wanted to know how long he would be receiving revelations of destruction. These revelations will continue as long as the people are foolish and disobedient.

### **Verse 23**

What Jeremiah saw was not a pretty picture. He saw “waste and void.” He sees darkness prevailing over the land as the heavens refuse to give forth light.

### **Verse 24**

The mountains and hills, despite their massive weight, are “shaking” that is to be light or move lightly, swaying, tossing, and heaving.

### **Verse 25**

Not a man could he see! Not even a bird remained in the land.

### **Verse 26**

Carmel, the “fruitful field,” had become a wilderness. All the cities of the land are in ruins. All had been laid waste and destroyed by the wrath of the God of judgment.

### **Verse 27**

However severe the punishment of Judah may be God will not make a full end of it. A remnant will escape and become the seed for a holier nation.

### **Verse 28**

Yet God has proposed and decreed the destruction of the nation as a political entity. For this reason, both earth and heaven is pictured as entering into mourning.

### **Verse 29**

The figure of the earth mourning may mean that the soil will not produce its fruit. The inhabitants of the city will flee for safety to the thickets and rocks, the limestone caverns which abound in Palestine. Every city is forsaken, deathly silence.

### **Verse 30**

Judah is using every device to gain the favor of the powers of the world. Judah puts on scarlet robes and beautiful ornaments of gold. She applies cosmetics to her eyelids in order to make her eyes seem larger. But all the primping is in vain.

Judah's political lovers actually despise her and are seeking to destroy her.

### **Verse 31**

Zion will experience akin to that experienced by a woman giving birth to her first child. She gasps for breath and spreads forth her hands in desperate appeal, crying out in anguish, "Woe is me!" At last she realizes that her lovers are really her murderers.

## **Chapter 5**

Jeremiah will discuss the various reasons why God must judge His people. The nation has been guilty of at least six terrible sins: moral corruption v. 1-6, sexual impurity v. 7-9, treacherous unbelief v. 10-18, religious apostasy v. 19-24, social injustice v. 25-29, and international deception v. 30-31.

### **Verse 1**

The Lord instructs Jeremiah to walk to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and make a personal observation of the moral condition of the city. Jeremiah was to search for a man who does what is just and right and who seeks truth or faithfulness. The prophet is looking for a man who was true to God, true to man and true to himself. If Jeremiah can find one just man in the city who seeks truth or faith he will forgive Jerusalem and withhold the execution of His wrath.

### **Verse 2**

Jeremiah searched for a real man in the streets of Jerusalem. He found many who used the name of the Lord in their oaths but only to swear to that which was untrue.

### **Verse 3**

The judgments of God are sometimes rehabilitative and sometimes retributive. Here the former class of judgments is intended. God had smitten them but they felt no pain; God had almost completely destroyed them but they refused to accept the correction. With stoic determination they endured the discipline of God hardening their faces and refusing to repent.

### **Verse 4**

Jeremiah could not believe what he saw among the common people on the streets of Jerusalem and so he began to make excuses for them. These people are poor; they are uneducated in the way of the Lord; they know nothing of judgment, that is, the religious law of their God. It is their lack of education which causes them to foolishly sin, and the hardship of their poverty has caused them to harden their hearts in unbelief.

### **Verse 5**

Jeremiah was confident that he would not find a real man among the down and out; but he was not ready to relinquish his search. He decided to check on the "great ones" the wealthy and cultured of the nation. Among the elite he found nothing but lawlessness and license. They had altogether broken the yoke of divine restraint.

### **Verse 6**

These men wanted to be free from the law of God and from any divine control. They wanted to do their own thing. Thus, in the entire nation Jeremiah could not find one man who by God's standards was a real man.

Because of the all-pervasive apostasy, God will bring judgment upon Judah: a lion from the forest, a wolf from the desert, and a leopard or panther watching over their cities.

Lions were common in the hills and valleys of Palestine. A few leopards are still found in the hills of Galilee. The singular words: lion, wolf, leopard, are probably to be regarded as collective singulars. These animals may be symbols of

the calamity which would befall Judah. Numerous prophecies make it clear that the land would be overrun by wild creatures after the Jews had been deported.

### **Verse 7**

Persistent unbelief makes divine forgiveness of Judah impossible.

God had fed them and granted them prosperity. But instead of gratitude, there is depravity.

They had committed the sin of adultery. The men of Judah flocked, that is, assembled in troops, to the house of the harlot.

### **Verse 8**

They were utterly unashamed of their actions and made no attempt to hide their immoral acts. The men of Judah roam about like well-fed stallions, each one neighing to the wife of his neighbor.

### **Verse 9**

The morals of a nation have sunk to rock bottom when sexual desire becomes merely an animal appetite to be satisfied in any manner, with anyone. Can God do anything other than bring punishment and divine vengeance upon such a nation? Divine vengeance in Scripture is just retribution for sins which are an affront to God.

### **Verse 10**

In this verse Judah is compared to a vineyard or perhaps an olive orchard. The enemy is instructed to go up against the rows of vines and begin a ruthless pruning operation. The degenerate and dead shoots, the apostate people who no longer render allegiance to the Lord, are to be removed. But the enemy is not to completely destroy the vine. Through the process of their pruning the degenerate members of the nation will be removed and the believing kernel of the nation will be left.

### **Verse 11**

Judgment against Judah takes place. The house of Israel and the house of Judah, both kingdoms, have been “treacherous” with the Lord.

### **Verse 12**

The word “treacherous” in the Old Testament carries the idea of violating the most sacred relationships as, for example, marriage vows (Malachi 2:11). They were saying, “No calamity of any kind shall befall us for He is not.” The people were saying, “God will not turn against us, He will not bring calamity upon us.”

### **Verse 13**

Not only were the people lying against God, they were ridiculing the prophets of God. They regarded the prophets who claimed to be men of the Spirit as nothing but windbags. The word of God is not in them. “Let these prophecies of doom fall upon those who utter them,” sneered the people.

### **Verse 14**

But God will not let the slanderous words of the people go unchallenged. He acknowledges Jeremiah as His spokesman and affirms that He, the Almighty, has placed those words upon the lips of the prophet. The judgment words spoken by Jeremiah will eventually consume the people as fire consumes dead timber.

The title “Lord God of Hosts” appears here for the first time in the book. The identity of “the hosts” is uncertain. Is He Lord of the hosts of angels, the hosts (armies) of Israel or the hosts of the nations? God is Lord of all hosts; He is sovereign over all men and angels.

### **Verse 15**

God is about to bring a powerful and ancient nation against the house of Israel (Judah). The attacking nation is “powerful.” The enemies have inexhaustible resources and therefore do not fail in the purpose which they undertake. The nation is ancient, dating back to the very dawn of history. They speak a language which the men of Judah cannot comprehend.

### **Verse 16**

Every man in the enemy army is a mighty man of valor. The arrows of their archers are deadly.



### **Verse 17**

The armies of the enemy sweep over the land and over the crops and the cattle. The phrase, “They shall eat up your sons and your daughters,” means they shall eat the food which the children would normally eat. This would mean that the children would then die of starvation.

With the sword, that is, with their weapons of war, they will batter down the walls of the cities in which the men of Judah placed their confidence.

### **Verse 18**

Yet as terrible as this judgment is the nation will not be utterly destroyed. A remnant will survive.

### **Verse 19**

Once the divine calamity begins to fall upon Judah men will inquire of the prophet as to why their nation is suffering so. His answer is to be honest and uncompromising. “You willingly forsook God and served strange gods in your own land. As your punishment you must serve strange people in a foreign land.”

### **Verse 20**

The divine punishment corresponds to the crime which the people have committed against God. On at least four occasions, probably more, Nebuchadnezzar led away captives from Jerusalem in 605, 597, 587, and 582 B.C.

Jeremiah is commissioned to deliver another oracle to “the house of Jacob,” that is, Judah.

### **Verse 21**

The people of Judah are foolish, without understanding. They have eyes and ears but they do not see and hear.

### **Verse 22**

As but one example of His handiwork Jeremiah mentions how the Creator has placed the sand as an impassable barrier to the sea. This is an eternal statute or perpetual decree, a law of nature.

### **Verse 23**

But while inanimate nature is submissive to the divine will, Israel has a rebellious heart or will. They have actually defied and opposed their God and gone away from His will.

### **Verse 24**

They were utterly blind to their dependence upon God for their sustenance. Year in and year out God kept the weeks of the harvest for the benefit of His people.

This expression may simply mean that God granted them rain when they needed it and restrained the rain when it would have been harmful to them. Yet in blind ingratitude they never thought of rendering to God the fear and reverence due to Him.

### **Verse 25**

The iniquities of the people of Judah have deprived them of continued divine blessing.

### **Verse 26**

These judgments are necessary because there are wicked men among the people of God, men who will stop at nothing to enrich themselves. Like the fowler they crouch and wait until an innocent and helpless victim is ensnared in their trap. By wicked and diabolical schemes, they are attempting to catch men.

### **Verse 27**

As the home of the successful fowler is full of caged birds, so the homes of these wicked schemers give evidence of their prowess. Their homes are full of deceit, that is, objects attained through deceit, ill-gotten gain.

### **Verse 28**

These wicked men grow fat and sleek as their riches increase. No crime is out of the question if it serves to enhance their wealth and power. They were totally inconsiderate of the rights of helpless minorities, the poor and the fatherless.

Never would one of these powerful men intervene to help the less fortunate get justice in the courts.

### **Verse 29**

The Lord asks, “Shall I not take vengeance on such a nation as this?” Acts of injustice are offences against God and He must avenge them.

### **Verse 30**

That which is commonplace among men often is shocking in the eyes of God. As the Lord evaluated the religious situation in Judah, He regarded what was taking place as astonishing and horrible. Not only the political rulers but the spiritual rulers as well were corrupt.

### **Verse 31**

The prophets were prophesying falsehoods, promising the people that God was on their side and no ill would befall their nations. They peddled a false security based on empty forms and rituals. It was a superficial religion, a religion which did not get in the way of one’s everyday life.

The priests “rule at their side,” that is, at the beck and call of the prophets. But the people were as guilty as their religious leaders for they encouraged and supported them.

But what will all of these men do at the end when they ultimately face the God of judgment and truth? The word “end” might refer to the death of the individual apostates or to the end of the national existence when Judah would as a nation stand face to face with God.

## **Chapter 6**

This chapter contains a dramatic description of the advance of the foe against Jerusalem and the subsequent siege of that city. The enemy will be completely successful in destroying the city.

At this point in the chapter Jeremiah offers to the people a prescription of deliverance from impending judgment. Then he reverts to a description of the

coming conqueror. The chapter concludes with an indication of the hopeless task of the prophet of God.

## **Chapter 6 THE ADVANCE OF THE FOE**

Projecting himself mentally into the future Jeremiah describes the scene as the foe from the north sweeps toward Jerusalem. In chapter 4 verse 6 the people of the countryside are exhorted to flee to Jerusalem. But the capital now no longer appears to be safe and the prophet can see refugees streaming southward from her gates. Being himself a Benjaminite, Jeremiah calls for his fellow tribesmen to get out of the midst of Jerusalem.

### **Verse 1**

In Tekoa, twelve miles south of Jerusalem, a trumpet is sounded to assemble the people in their flight to the wilderness of southwestern Judah. This flight is wise and necessary because the ugly monster of calamity is peering down, that is, bending forward, from the north.

### **Verse 2**

By means of the ruthless armies of Nebuchadnezzar God will cut off or destroy the beautiful and dainty daughter of Zion, that is, the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

### **Verse 3**

No longer will the delicate lady, the bride of God and daughter of Jerusalem, receive the loving and tender treatment of the past. Instead, foreign commanders with their armies will come up against Jerusalem like shepherds with their flocks.

As sheep graze a pasture land until nothing but bare soil remains so will these “shepherds” and their “flocks” utterly de-pasture and devastate the land of Judah.

#### **Verse 4**

This verse is an exhortation addressed to the invading force. “Sanctify against her war!” War in antiquity was a sacred undertaking. Sacrifices were frequently offered before battle. Following the exhortation which he addresses to the enemy, Jeremiah takes his audience into the enemies' camp. The enemy is planning a surprise attack at noontime, a time when usually both sides in a conflict rest.

As the shadows of evening lengthen the enemy forces lament the fact that they have not been able to complete their work of destruction.

#### **Verse 5**

Rather than retire to the camp for rest and refreshment the enemy commanders urge their men forward in a daring and decisive night attack designed to bring them within the walls of Jerusalem. They will not wait till morning for the final assault.

#### **Verse 6**

The God of Israel is the Lord of the enemy hosts. He issues the commands; they are merely instruments in His hands. “Cut her trees! Pour out against Jerusalem a mound!” The Assyrian kings boast of how they cut down the trees of the enemy.

Baskets of earth are poured out to form high mounds from which missiles could be easily hurled against the walls or into the besieged city.

#### **Verse 7**

Diseases produced by deprivation, want and mounds resulting from violent deeds cause the people to cry out to God about their plight.

#### **Verse 8**

Jeremiah earnestly appeals to Jerusalem to accept divine chastisement, to mend her ways, to repent. If they fail to heed this appeal God will completely, finally, and totally remove, that is pull out, tear away Himself from their midst.

### **Verse 9**

Only a remnant of once powerful Israel remained after the ten northern tribes were ravished and deported by the Assyrians.

Judah is to undergo a severe sifting process. The enemy will thoroughly spoil sinful Judah as a grape gatherer who leaves nothing but leaves behind. The hand of the grape gatherer moves incessantly back and forth from the vine to the basket until the final grapes are picked.

### **Verse 10**

In this verse Jeremiah's prophetic discouragement comes out. No one will listen to him as he sounds the warning of impending judgment.

The ear of the people seems to be uncircumcised, covered as it were with a foreskin which prevents the prophetic word from penetrating their mind.

Discouraged though he is, Jeremiah cannot refrain from preaching the word of Judgment. He is filled with the message of divine wrath; it burns within him. He tries very hard to hold it back but only succeeds in making himself weary.

### **Verse 11**

In this verse a problem arises as to who is speaking and to whom. The best view seems to be that Jeremiah is talking to himself. These are words of self-exhortation. He calls upon himself to announce the terrible day of God's wrath. Whether or not the people listen he must sound the alarm. Everyone will ultimately be involved in the outpouring of divine judgment.

### **Verse 12**

Their houses and fields and wives will be turned over to the invading soldiers; for the hand of the Lord, once stretched out against the enemies of Israel is now stretched out against them.

### **Verse 13**

The judgment just described is appropriate to the root sin of the men of Judah—covetousness. Everyone in the nation, from the least to the greatest, was greedy for illicit gain.

Even the prophets and priests practice deception and fraud to curry favor with the populace and thereby secure their good will and their gifts.

### **Verse 14**

For the love of filthy lucre they would offer flattering pictures of the future prospects of the nation. “All is well,” they would say. “Peace! Peace!” These soft-soaping, self-seeking clergymen completely failed to come to grips with the serious ailment of the nation.

### **Verse 15**

These leaders feel no shame at present, they have no conscience, nor do they know how to blush. But the leaders will eventually share the fate of those they had misguided. They shall fall among those who are slain in battle; they shall disrespectfully be thrown to the ground by the ruthless conqueror.

### **Verse 16**

The nation was at a crossroad. Jeremiah calls upon the people to stand, that is, halt their headlong rush to destruction. Jeremiah urges them to select the old path of fidelity to God and adherence to His holy law and then to walk in that path. The old paths are those which previous generations have trodden to find salvation and divine blessing.

The person who walks the old path will find spiritual rest for his soul. Their defiant response to the appeal is, “We will not walk in it!”

### **Verse 17**

God appeals to them to harken to the alarm sounded by the prophetic watchmen whom He placed over the nation.

At the first appearance of danger these faithful watchmen would sound the alarm by blowing the trumpet of God’s warning word throughout the land.

God's second appeal is also rejected. The hardened people declare that they will not harken to the alarm of the watchmen.

### **Verse 18**

The congregation of nations should note the sin and ingratitude which dwells in the heart of God's chosen people. God is about to teach a lesson to all the nations of the world by punishing His own people for their national sins. If the nations really know what is going on in Judah they will be able to apply the lesson to themselves.

### **Verse 19**

The whole earth hears the horrible sentence of judgment: "I am about to bring calamity unto this people." This punishment is the ripe fruit, the direct result of their wicked and rebellious thought. They have not paid any attention to the word of God spoken through the prophets and furthermore they had rejected his written law.

### **Verse 20**

Everywhere the Jews were scattered among the nations they became witnesses to their own guilt and the righteousness of the divine retribution against them.

Someone has said, "The less religion a man has in his heart the more he puts into his buildings and ceremonies." Whether or not that statement is universally true, the men of Judah certainly had an elaborate external religion completely divorced from personal holiness and morality. They went to much trouble and considerate expense to import the ingredients for the incense and anointing oil. Sheba was 1500 miles south of Jerusalem in southwestern Arabia.

Sweet cane or calamus, an ingredient of the holy anointing oil, was imported from a "distant land" perhaps India. There was nothing wrong, of course, with the zeal of these people in obtaining these rare materials. Yet their burnt offerings and sacrifices were completely unacceptable to God. Jeremiah was not opposed to sacrifice.



But Jeremiah as all prophets before him, regarded sacrifices without obedience as worthless. The men of Judah thought they were keeping God happy and on their side by going through the outward motions of worship, which ultimately resulted in the destruction and ruin of the nation.

#### **Verse 21**

In a very short period of time God would place before them a stumbling-block, Nebuchadnezzar, which they would not be able to sidestep. The whole nation would stumble over that obstacle and fall to their ruin.

#### **Verse 22**

In order to impress once again upon the minds of the people what the nation of Judah is up against, Jeremiah describes in terrifying detail the foe from the north. They come “from the uttermost part of the earth.”

#### **Verse 23**

The enemy soldiers carry both bow and spear. The cruelty of the Mesopotamian armies in antiquity is well documented in the monuments. They were feared throughout the ancient Near East. The noise of their countless horsemen and chariots resembled the roar of the sea. The vast and invincible army will shortly come to make war against the daughter of Zion (the inhabitants of Jerusalem).

#### **Verse 24**

The prophet again projects himself into the future to describe the reaction of the populace of Jerusalem as this vast host assumes. He identifies himself with his people and expresses the general feeling of anxiety and pain which will prevail in the city at that time.

The Jewish soldiers lose their courage; they are too scared to resist. Throughout Jerusalem there is panic and pain which can only be compared to that which a woman experiences in childbirth.

### **Verse 25**

No one is safe; the enemy is everywhere. No one should venture outside the walls of Jerusalem. Terror surrounds the city.

### **Verse 26**

In view of the spoiler's rapid descent on Jerusalem, Jeremiah calls his countrymen to bitter lamentation.

The bereavement for the loss of an only son was the most severe a Hebrew could suffer. They refused to shed the tears of repentance; they will now be forced to shed the tears of lamentation.

### **Verse 27**

God now addresses Jeremiah. God has made His prophet as strong as a tower, a fortified city; the people will not be successful in attacking him.

Jeremiah can now fearlessly test and try the way of the people by his preaching.

### **Verse 28**

The men of Judah are unfaithful to God for they are in open rebellion against Him. They are unfaithful to their fellowmen because they engage in malicious slander.

These wicked men are as hard as brass and iron. Their way of life is corruption; all of them are rotten to the core.

### **Verse 29**

The fire is so hot that the bellows are scorched. The lead which served as a flux to carry away the impurities melts. There were no righteous ones from whom the wicked could be separated.

### **Verse 30**

Once Israel had been as precious to God as silver. Now that silver had become "refuse silver" that is, worthless silver, good for nothing dross.

## Chapter 7:1

After a brief introductory note the prophet speaks of presumptuous worship, pagan worship, priorities in worship, and polluted worship.

### Verses 1-2

Acting upon definite instructions from the Lord, Jeremiah went to one of the eight gates of the Temple to deliver a blistering sermon on worship. He is to proclaim the word to all Judah who are entering these gates to worship the Lord.

This Temple sermon has four points of similarity with the sermon in chapter 26.

1. Both sermons were preached at the same place, one of the gates of the Temple.
2. Both seem to have been preached during some festival.
3. Both sermons present the demands for national repentance.
4. Both sermons allude to the destruction of Shiloh.

Jeremiah as well as others chose the Temple gates and courts as the location for public discourse. This is the best time to reach the masses.

Note: It is quite likely that chapter 26 represents a later sermon preached during the days of Jehoiakim while chapter 7 represents an earlier sermon during the days of Josiah.

### Verse 3

Jeremiah's sermon opens with a call for repentance. Only if such a fundamental change took place would God continue to allow them to inhabit the land of Judah.

### Verse 4

Jeremiah begs his hearers for their own sake not to give credence to the superstition that the presence of the Temple of the Lord was a guarantee for the safety of the city. What a dramatic moment it must have been when Jeremiah

three times repeated the phrase for emphasis gesturing as he did so to the courts and buildings that were part of the Temple complex.

### **Verses 5-7**

Five conditions for national survival are laid down.

1. Repeating the basis demand of verse 3, they must thoroughly amend their ways and their deeds.
2. They must make sure that justice is executed in the courts.
3. They must not oppress the stranger, the orphan, and the widow.

Note: The Old Testament enjoined Israel to show respect for peoples of other nationalities and races simply because they were fellow human beings.

Many Christians have not yet caught up with this passage.)

4. Innocent blood must no longer be shed in the land through violence and miscarriage of justice.
5. They must cease to follow after other gods to their own hurt. Idolatry would lead deeper and deeper into sin and have dire repercussions both on the national and personal level.

If they fulfilled these fundamental requirements God would cause them to continue to dwell in the land. God had given that land to their forefather “forever and ever.” (That is, from the most remote antiquity to the most distant future.)

But that divine promise was conditional. If the present generation was to continue to enjoy the land gift of God they must meet the conditions which God specifies here.

### **Verse 8**

God cannot continue to allow His people to dwell in the Promised Land so long as they continue to trust in deceitful words.

### **Verse 9**

The people were engaging in every conceivable sinful activity: stealing, murder, adultery, false swearing, and worship of false gods.

### **Verse 10**

Yet they would come and stand before God in His house and think that because they had expressed this outward concern for the Lord they were completely safe from all harm. The regular visits to the Temple made no difference in the lives of those hypocrites. They went to the services to keep God on their side. As long as He was on their side they could practice their abominations with immunity. What a distortion of religion! What a fallacious assumption!

### **Verse 11**

With amazement the Lord asks, “Has this house which is called by My name become a den of robbers in your eyes?” The Temple had become to the people of Judah no more than a refuge into which they would flee after committing their criminal acts.

But God has seen all. He knows their hearts. He is aware of their evil intentions and sinful attitudes.

### **Verse 12**

Jeremiah attacks the popular false confidence in the temple by pointing to another sacred sanctuary which had been destroyed.

When the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan under Joshua they erected the Tabernacle at Shiloh north of Bethel. Shiloh remained the center of worship for over three hundred years. The old tent which had been transported through the wilderness wanderings was eventually replaced.

Or perhaps it was encased in some type of permanent structure which is call a “house” or “temple.”

### **Verse 13**

In spite of the fact that God earnestly and persistently called the people to repentance, they had not responded to the appeal.

## Verse 14

In view of this rebuff and rejection God will destroy the Temple in Jerusalem just as He had destroyed Shiloh.

## Verse 15

Jeremiah does not deny that the Temple is God's house; nor does he deny that the Temple has been given to the people of God as a place of worship.

Just as God had cast forth into exile the seed of Ephraim, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom, so now He will cast forth the inhabitants of Judah.

## Verses 16-20 PAGAN WORSHIP

The worship in Jerusalem was so corrupt that God instructs Jeremiah to cease interceding for the apostates. The depravity of the nation is further described and again the prophet announces that judgment will be poured out on the nation.

## Verse 16

A prophet not only represented God to the people, he also represented the people before God through intercessory prayer.

Four words for prayer are used in verse 16.

1. The Hebrew word, translated "pray," means to intercede on behalf of someone.
2. The second Hebrew word carries the idea of entreaty or supplication. It is sometimes used of a ringing cry of praise to the Lord,
3. The third word, translated "supplication," is often used synonymously with the preceding.
4. The fourth word, translated "plead," literally means "to meet, or encounter with request or entreaty."

## Verse 17-19

These verses indicate the reason why intercessory prayer on the part of the prophet would be useless.

### **Verse 17**

In view of the open and flagrant practice of idolatry in the cities of Judah the prohibition of intercession is justified.

### **Verse 18**

The entire population is engaged in the service of the false gods. The children gather wood for the cooking fires; the men kindle the fire and the women bake some kind of sacrificial cakes.

The queen of heaven in whose honor all this frenzied activity takes place is probably to be identified with the pagan goddess Astarte or Ashtoreth. The goddess was the Canaanite version of the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar, the planet Venus.

Jeremiah viewed such open idolatry as deliberate provocation of the Lord. To him it was inconceivable that men could really believe that an object of wood or stone was a god.

The only plausible explanation of idolatry was that the people were attempting in some way to hurt God, to provoke Him.

### **Verse 19**

Though they knew that their idolatry would eventually call forth the wrath of God, they continued to engage in the practice. Like a youngster who engages in all manner of lawlessness in order to show hostility towards his parents, they were really hurting no one but themselves.

### **Verse 20**

God's burning wrath is about to be poured forth upon Judah and no one will be able to extinguish it. The cattle, trees and crops will be consumed as well as the wicked apostates of Jerusalem.

Scripture emphasizes over and over again that all creation suffers because of the sin of mankind.

## **Verses 21-28 PRIORITIES IN WORSHIP**

### **Verse 21**

By means of a sarcastic imperative Jeremiah urges the men of Judah to increase their already numerous sacrificial offerings. In view of that attitude and actions of the worshipers of Judah their burnt offerings were merely meat and nothing more.

The offerings certainly had no religious value.

### **Verse 22**

This verse has played an important role in the debate which has raged over the origin of the sacrificial system in ancient Israel. Jeremiah is not repudiating the Mosaic origin of the sacrificial system; rather he is simply denying that sacrifice is the essence of the Old Testament religion.

The fundamental requirement of the Sinai covenant was that of obedience. The people of Israel had to harken to the divine voice and walk in the divine way if they were to maintain their special relationship to the living God. They must yield to the demands of the Almighty if they would receive His blessing. The phrase "that it might be well with you" is characteristic of Jeremiah. The obedience which God demands is for the ultimate benefit of man.

### **Verse 24**

The people of Israel had a record of obstinacy. They had no desire to listen to the commandments of God. They followed instead the inclinations of their own evil hearts. In relationship to God they had gone backward and not forward.

### **Verse 25**

From the days of the Exodus from Egypt God had continually and earnestly communicated with His people through prophets.

### **Verse 26**

But the people paid no heed to these servants of the Lord. Rather than inclining their ears in the direction of these messengers of God they made their



necks hard. Each generation seemed to become more sinful than the preceding one.

### **Verse 27**

The people will not listen to Jeremiah any more than they listened to his predecessors in the prophetic ministry.

### **Verse 28**

All he can do is publicly accuse them of obstinacy: "This is the nation which will not harken to the voice of the Lord their God nor accept correction."

No other nation had been so blessed, so honored, so trained and guided. Yet this is the nation which refuses to heed the word of God.

Faith or truth has vanished from their prayers and from their praise.

### **Verse 29**

Jeremiah urges the daughter of Jerusalem to shave off her long hair as a sign of mourning and take up a lamentation.

The present generation has been rejected and forsaken by God. For her innumerable acts of spiritual adultery, the daughter of Zion has been divorced by God. She should realize her plight and lament it. This is the generation which will experience the wrath of the living God.

### **Verse 30**

Denial of apostasy was impossible for it was open and flagrant. The abominations of heathendom, the cult objects used in pagan cults, had been set up in the Temple of the Lord.

The temple of the Lord was defiled by the presence of these pagan images and cult objects.

### **Verse 31**

Furthermore, they had built special high places in the valley of the son of Hinnom where human sacrifice was openly practiced. Such human sacrifices were to the god Moloch who sometimes generically is called Baal.

God never commanded the wretched practice of offering children as burnt offerings and never did He condone it.

### **Verse 32**

The polluted worship of the people of Judah will be punished in a most decisive way. A disaster will befall Judah in which so many people will be slain or die that even the pagan shrines will be converted to cemeteries.

The valley of the son of Hinnom will be renamed the valley of slaughter because of the vast numbers that will be buried there.

### **Verse 33**

The very spot where they had tried to court the favor of a pagan deity by offering their own children as burnt offerings will become a permanent monument to the folly of idolatry.

But even this huge valley will not provide enough room for burial places for all the slain. Many corpses will be left unburied.

The birds and beasts of prey will come and feast upon the decaying flesh and no one will be left to drive them away.

In antiquity the lack of proper burial was the worst indignity which could befall a man.

### **Verse 34**

All the normal sounds of joy and mirth will be removed. The entire land will become a desolation. The word “desolation” is used only of places which, having once been inhabited, have fallen into ruin.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Verse 1**

Not only will the enemies of Judah leave the dead unburied they will also violate the graves of those who had been interred. In search of valuables the Babylonians will ransack the graves of the leading citizens of Jerusalem.

## **Verse 2**

They will scatter their bones across the face of the ground. All the hosts of the heavens which the men of Judah had worshiped in life will helplessly look upon this act of desecration.

## **Verse 3**

For those who escape the destruction of Jerusalem and go into exile life will be so miserable that they will wish they were dead. The deportation to Babylon was for them a tremendous religious shock.

They were forced to rethink their whole theology. As the exiles changed their mind and their heart in respect to God their lot improved.

## **Verse 4**

A man who has fallen will not remain quietly on the ground without attempting to arise. A man who accidentally wanders from the pathway will not persist in traveling in the wrong direction.

## **Verse 5**

As far as Jeremiah was concerned, idols were outright frauds. The men of Judah embraced the unreal and repudiated the one true and living God. And even after this folly is pointed out to them they refuse to return.

To Jeremiah this was unreasonable behavior. The prophet listened attentively for some word, some slight indication that the people intended to repent. No such word was forthcoming.

## **Verse 6**

There is no sorrow for sin, no acknowledgment of wrong doing, no request for forgiveness. They rush to their idolatry like a horse charges into battle.

## **Verse 7**

The unreasonableness of the apostasy of Judah is further emphasized by citing the example of the birds of the heavens. Migratory birds like the dove, the swallow, the crane, and the stork obey their instincts without fail.

God's highest creation ignores the fundamental laws of God and the principles of behavior which He has ordained.

Men stifle the instinct to worship their Creator and instead produce gods of their own making, gods they can manipulate and control, gods made in man's image.

### **Verse 8**

The wise men of Judah felt they had no need for the preaching of Jeremiah. They had the Torah, the written precepts of the Law, so what use did they have for this agitator from Anathoth.

The scribes in Old Testament times were men who could write. The scribes in Jeremiah's day were corrupt like the priests and the prophets. Somehow through their writings the scribes were attempting to nullify the written word of God.

### **Verse 9**

How utterly humiliated these wise men of Judah will be when calamities one after another fall upon the nation.

### **Verse 10**

Because of their greed the prophets and priests had deliberately deceived the people.

### **Verse 11**

Instead of dealing with the spiritual maladies of the nation these religious leaders were merely concealing the impending disaster by assuring the people of peace.

### **Verse 12**

In misleading the people these men had committed abomination; yet they show no shame whatsoever. But when the judgment falls on Judah these proud and confident men will stumble and fall before the sword of the enemy.

### **Verse 13**

Judah is compared to a vine with bad grapes. In the present figure no fruit at all can be found on the vine or on the fig tree. The leaves are even withered. The plant is dying; it is worthless; it must be destroyed.

God had already appointed the destroyer. An army shall sweep through that worthless garden like a raging stream overflowing its banks.

### **Verse 14**

The inhabitants of the countryside in gloomy despair urge one another to move into the fortified cities. They feel they are under the curse of God, that shortly they will perish, that is, “be put to silence.”

They know that God was making them drink of the poisonous water of divine judgment. They admit now that it is too late. They have sinned against the Lord.

### **Verses 15-16**

They had listened to their false prophets and consequently they had expected peace and national healing. But good times did not come; only the terrors of ruthless war.

Jeremiah must have been a spellbinding preacher. He makes his audience almost hear the snorting and neighing of the enemy horses as the Chaldean Calvary bears down upon Dan, the northern most city of Palestine.

The known world trembles at the news that the mighty northern enemy is sweeping southward. The land and its produce, the cities and their inhabitants will be consumed by this mighty army.

### **Verse 17**

Like venomous serpents the enemy will sink their death-dealing fangs into the inhabitants of Judah. No one will be able to charm those snakes; no one will be able to control them. The doom is unavoidable.

### **Verse 18**

As Jeremiah sees the apostasy of his people and their impending destruction his heart is sick. He casts himself upon God his Comforter. The word comforter means literally the one to cause me to smile, to be cheerful or be bright.

### **Verse 19**

The former inhabitants of Judah lift up a cry for help: “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?” They cannot comprehend how Zion, the Temple mount, can be so humiliated and degraded if God is really still on His throne. To the astonished cry God makes answer: “Why do they provoke Me with their images?”

### **Verse 20**

Whatever has befallen Zion has come about because of the idolatry of the people there. Ignoring the explanation of God, the exiles of the future continue with their complaint by citing a popular proverb: “The harvest is past, the summer has ended and we have not been saved.”

Once the summer harvest was over a farmer looked forward to a period of deliverance from arduous toil.

But in the case of the Jewish exiles the hot summer of toil is only followed by the cold winter of despondency.

### **Verse 21**

The unbelief and despair of the people causes even deeper despair in the heart of the prophet. “Because of the hurt, that is, the shattering, of the daughter of my people I have been hurt.”

He loves his people as a father might love a daughter.

Though Jeremiah sternly rebuked the people of Judah throughout his ministry yet all the while his heart was broken because of them. He did not want to see his people destroyed.

## **Verse 22**

“Is there no balm (or medicine) in Gilead?” the prophet asks. Gilead located east of the Jordan River was famous in Old Testament times for its balm.

It is not certain just what this balm was but the suggestion has been made that it was the juice of the turpentine tree. The material was exported and was very costly. The balm of Gilead was prized for its medicinal properties. There was no healing ointment which could be applied to the spiritual wound of Judah. There were no physicians who might be able to deal with the difficulty.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Verse 1**

Jeremiah wishes that his head could produce an inexhaustible supply of tears that he might lament the inevitable doom of his people. In spite of their sin, in spite of the way they had rejected God’s message, the inhabitants of Judah were still “my people” as far as Jeremiah was concerned.

### **Verse 2**

It is always nauseating for righteous men to continue in daily contact with filthy and corrupt company. Jeremiah longs to leave the city with all its vices and take up residence in one of the desolate and dreary wayside shelters which dotted the major highways of antiquity.

All the people of Judah participate in spiritual and literal adultery at the Canaanite shrines. Even when gathered in their religious assemblies these men are treacherous, hypocritical and untrustworthy.

### **Verse 3**

Jeremiah’s description of the corruption of Judah is truly remarkable. The tongue of the men of Judah is a bow which hurls falsehood and deceit. These mighty warriors do not contend for truth but for its opposite--lawlessness and injustice.

This deplorable situation has developed because they do not know or have regard for the living God.

#### **Verse 4**

No one could be trusted, not even the members of one's own immediate family. Every brother was "very crooked." Everyone was out to defraud and cheat his brother. Friends went about carrying slanderous tales about friends.

#### **Verse 5**

Self-protection demanded that everyone be viewed with suspicion. These people had "learned, that is they had accustomed themselves, to speaking lies and falsehood. They actually weary themselves in sinning.

#### **Verse 6**

God now addresses Jeremiah. He tells the prophet what he already knows, that he should trust no one since he is surrounded by deceit. Hypocritical men have no desire to really know God and so they deliberately, purposely shut the Lord out of their lives.

#### **Verse 7**

Only the knowledge of God will cure them of their hypocrisy; yet they refuse to know God because of their hypocrisy. The only alternative is a judgment which will serve to purify and refine the nation. God is about to purify His people in the fires of judgment even as silver is purified from dross by smelting. He will then test them to see if all the impurities have indeed been removed.

God could not leave His people in their sin for they were intended to be a holy people. On the other hand, because they are His people He cannot utterly destroy them. The only solution is to purge them through tribulation.

#### **Verse 8**

Such people who use their tongue as an arrow to smite their neighbors, who speak peace but plot treachery, that is, to set an ambush are the dross which must be removed through the judgment process.



### **Verse 9**

In view of the terribly corrupt conditions which prevail in Judah, God is perfectly justified in taking vengeance upon that land.

### **Verse 10**

Jeremiah knows what will befall his beloved land. He knows that when the judgment falls he will be weeping and lamenting the desolation which will befall that once proud little country.

The pasture lands of the wilderness, that is, the uninhabited region, which once were covered with flocks and herds will become so utterly waste that even the birds will depart for lack of food.

### **Verse 11**

The cities of Judah will not escape the desolation. Their ruins will become the habitation of wild creatures. The “I” in this verse is no longer Jeremiah, but God.

### **Verse 12**

Jeremiah challenges the wise men of the land and those who claimed to have received divine revelation to explain why the land has become desolate.

### **Verse 13**

God had placed His law before this people at Sinai. Yet the people forsook the law of God, refused to hearken to His instruction or walk in His way.

### **Verse 14**

The apostasy and idolatry they had learned from their fathers.

### **Verse 15**

The sons must now eat the wormwood and drink the water of gall.

Wormwood and gall, two bitter and noxious substances, were symbols in the Old Testament for bitter affliction.

### **Verse 16**

Judah will become desolate because she will be depopulated. God will scatter the Jews among the far-distant nations. Even in captivity the sword of divine retribution will pursue them until they are consumed.

### **Verse 17**

In view of the impending national disaster, Jeremiah calls for professional mourning women to come and bewail the death of the nation. Such women were “wise” or skillful in the ways of leading public lamentation.

### **Verse 18**

By helping others to weep and thus give vent to their emotions, these women rendered a public service.

One can find some measure of relief from anguish and sorrow only as he openly and outwardly expresses it.

### **Verse 19**

Jeremiah can seem to hear the wailing coming forth from Zion of Jerusalem. The people have been despoiled and humiliated. They have been forced to forsake the land of their birth. Their homes have been cast down by the enemy. They are confounded and confused.

### **Verse 20**

Jeremiah calls upon the women who had been so zealous in the worship of false gods to give heed to the word of God. The day is soon approaching when the women of the nation would have to teach their daughters how to lament.

So great will be the national tragedy that there will not be sufficient professional mourners. All the women have to become involved.

### **Verse 21**

Death will reign supreme in the land of that day. Death creeps through the windows of homes and palaces. The Grim Reaper stalks the streets and the market places of the city. Innocent children are cut down and the young men in the

flower of their youth are cut down. The figure of death entering through the windows was a common one in the ancient Near East.

### **Verse 22**

The picture of death throughout the land reaches its climax. The first phrase, "Speak thus!" is abrupt and forceful and serves to arrest the attention of the hearer and draw his attention to this last dramatic announcement.

The carcasses of the men of Judah who fall in battle will be left unburied. The dead bodies will be scattered over the surface of the ground like fertilizer spread by a farmer.

A reaper in his haste to glean the harvest leaves many handfuls of grain in the field to rot. Would it be with the bodies of the dead.

Those who survive the battles will be too few in number and too fearful to venture forth from the walled cities to give the fallen a decent burial.

### **Verse 23**

Men throughout history have been tempted to magnify the importance of wisdom, strength, and wealth and fall down in adoration before this trinity in unholy worship. Destruction and death await the nation or the individual who places undue confidence in the arm of flesh.

### **Verse 24**

True glory belongs not to the wealthy, the strong, and the wise but to those who understand and know the Lord. To understand God means to have the correct insight into His divine nature; to know Him means to walk in intimate fellowship with Him day by day. Those who understand and know the Lord practice daily those things which are pleasing to Him. They demonstrate loving-kindness to those who are of the household of faith.

They strive for justice for the underprivileged and weak. They walk in the paths of righteousness, that is, the right conduct. These are the qualities which make the relationship between God and man and these are the qualities which must characterize the relationship between the man of God and his fellowman.

## **Verse 25**

Circumcision was given by divine command to Abraham and his descendants as a sign of the covenant between God and that people. The men of Jeremiah's day while outwardly bearing the sign of the covenant had drifted far from God. Spiritually they were uncircumcised. Their hearts were closed to the word of God.

Shortly, warns Jeremiah, God will bring His punishment upon all those who though outwardly circumcised were really uncircumcised.

## **Verse 26**

Other nations of antiquity practiced circumcision as well as did the Jews, the Egyptians, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites and "those who cut the corners of the hair." This later phrase refers to the Arabian tribes who shaved the temples at puberty and consecrated them to their deities.

The circumcision practiced by these heathen nations was not done in obedience to the command of God. God's judgment would fall upon them. But God's judgment would also fall upon the men of Judah. They were physically circumcised but not spiritually so. Just as the men of Israel were not living up to their circumcision, many today are not living up to their baptism. Many had their bodies immersed in water but their minds, hearts and will remain unbaptized.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Verse 1**

Through His prophet God exhorts His people not to learn, that is, become accustomed to, the idolatrous ways of the heathen.

### **Verse 2**

The people of God need not become upset by the signs of the heavens—eclipses, meteors, and the like—which other nations regard as portents of evil.

### **Verse 3**

Modern astrology had its birth in the pagan temples of Mesopotamia. Those who worship God who created the heavens need have no superstitious fears regarding the position of the sun, moon and stars. The religious customs, practices and rituals of the heathen are utterly empty and with content.

Idols are in reality nothing more than a tree which has been cut out of the forest by the ax of a woodsman.

### **Verse 4**

Though beautifully adorned with gold and silver overlay that idol is still nothing more than lifeless wood. An idol cannot even stand on its own feet. It must be fastened down with hammer and nails in order to prevent it from tottering.

### **Verse 5**

The idol is harmless as a post erected in a cucumber patch for the purpose of scaring away the birds. They cannot speak nor can they move about without being carried by someone. They cannot harm anyone, nor for that matter, can they bring blessing upon anyone. For this reason, there is no particular advantage in serving an idol and no harm in failing to do so.

### **Verse 6**

None of the idols can compare to the Lord in greatness and in power.

### **Verse 7**

No wise man of the earth can equal in majesty and power.

### **Verse 8**

On the other hand, the idols are nothing but lifeless lumber. They are stupid and foolish and are utterly unable to render intelligent counsel. From an idol of wood, one can only obtain "wooden," lifeless, worthless guidance.

### **Verse 9**

Men go to no little trouble in producing idols. The wooden image is covered by the finest silver and gold sheets. Silver is secured from Tarshish, generally thought to be located on the southern coast of Spain. Gold is imported from Uphaz, the location of which is unknown. Once the beautiful metal had been shaped and molded to fit the wooden base the image was clothed in blue and purple, the most expensive cloth of antiquity.

Embellished with precious metals and adorned with costly garments an image was in reality a work of art produced by cunning and skillful men. It was no wiser and more powerful than the craftsmen who produced it.

### **Verse 10**

What a contrast exists between the God of Israel and the idols of the nations! They are false gods, but He is the true God; they are lifeless but He is living; they are temporal, but He is eternal; they are provincial, but He is sovereign over all the earth. All nations tremble before His indignation.

### **Verse 11**

The basic idea of the verse is clear. All the gods of the nation which were in reality false gods will eventually perish.

### **Verses 12-13**

Every man who engages in idolatry is stupid! Only when men accept the self-revelation of God through His word do they have any insight into the true meaning of life.

### **Verse 14**

Those who make the idols will be utterly ashamed in the day of judgment as they will be forced to admit that their images are powerless. In spite of the elaborate ceremonies in which the spirit of the god came to make its abode in the images, Jeremiah declares "there is no breath in them."

### **Verse 15**

They, along with their worshipers, shall experience the visitation of judgment of the true God. In that time the images shall perish, unable to save themselves, let alone those who held them in esteem.

### **Verse 16**

None of the gods so popular in the days of Jeremiah remain on the scene today. They have indeed perished.

The Lord of Hosts is not like the idols. He who is the Creator of everything is the “Portion of Jacob” and Israel is “the Tribe of His Inheritance.” Though He is God of all nations, yet He belongs to Israel in a special way and Israel belongs to Him in a special way.

### **Verse 17**

Jeremiah sadly addresses his people and urges them to gather together their possessions and prepare to go into captivity when the siege of the land has ended.

### **Verse 18**

The inhabitants of Judah are about to be violently expelled from their land, hurled forth as a rock is hurled from a sling. Because of their idolatry God Himself becomes their antagonist. He will bring them into this distress.

Only when Judah has been purged of wickedness through the ordeal of captivity will God be able to find or accept His people once again.

### **Verse 19**

The knowledge of what will befall his people is compared to a hurt, a wound, a grief or sickness for which there is no cure. Jeremiah must simply live with his mental suffering.

### **Verses 20-22**

The prophet compares Judah to a tent which has collapsed because the cords have been snapped or cut. Those who once occupied that tent have been taken into exile or else they are dead. No one remains to help raise up the na-

tional tent once again. This calamity has come about because the shepherds, the political and religious leaders, have not sought the Lord. The word “seek” here is a technical word meaning to inquire of, to seek an oracle from the Lord.

Spurning divine revelation these leaders were making decisions which were most unwise. Jeremiah is probably alluding to the scheming, plotting and outright revolt against Babylon the superpower.

Even as he points this finger of accusation at the national leadership Jeremiah dramatically pauses and puts his hand to his ears. “Hark!” he cries. “A report!” The earth itself seems to rumble to the cadence of marching feet. The Chaldeans are on the march. Jerusalem and indeed all the cities of Judah would shortly be in desolation, inhabited by wild creatures.

### **Verse 23**

The solemn description of the impending desolation of Judah sent the prophet of prayer to his knees in intercession for his people. “A man’s way is not his own;” a man belongs to God. He is under the obligation to walk in the path which God has marked out for him in the word. One who walks the path of life is not able to give moral and spiritual guidance to his steps. He will inevitably stray from the straight and narrow. He therefore requires divine discipline and correction.

### **Verses 24-25**

Jeremiah feels himself to be one with his people. The prophet knows that God must chastise or discipline His people; he only prays that God will be merciful. Let God punish His people, but not in the wrath they deserve lest the nation “become small” and dwindle into insignificance.

Israel deserves punishment and Jeremiah admits it. But the nations by whom and through whom God would bring judgment upon Judah also deserve judgment.

God intended for these nations to punish Israel; instead they aimed at destroying the people of God. Jeremiah calls upon God to pour out His wrath upon them as well as Israel.



## Chapter 11

Jeremiah was no innovator; he was a restorer. He wanted to see the ancient Sinai Covenant restored to its rightful place in the life of the people of Judah. He exhorted his people to fulfill their covenant obligations. Yet even as he gave forth this exhortation he came to realize that the men of Judah were conspiring to violate that covenant.

### Verse 1

Six times in verses 1-8 Jeremiah calls upon the people of Judah to “hear” that is, obey the words of the covenant.

### Verse 2

The word “speak” is plural. Jeremiah is exhorting the people to submit to the words of the covenant and then go out and convince others to do the same. The prophet is attempting to organize an evangelistic campaign to spread the word of the Lord to every inhabitant of the land.

Only when preachers learn to enlist others in the task of proclamation will the Gospel make the impact which God would have it make upon the generation.

### Verse 3

Jeremiah pronounces a curse upon anyone who refuses to hear (obey) the words of the covenant. The covenant is that ancient covenant which God had made with the Israelites.

### Verse 4

When He brought them forth from the land of Egypt, that trying and bitter experience of bondage in Egypt called the “furnace of iron” that is, a furnace used for smelting iron.

Two kinds of treaties or covenants were known in the ancient Near East. Party treaties were drawn up between two parties who were equals.

Vassal treaties were issued by a superior king to an inferior. Man's part in the treaty of the Great King is, in essence, obedience. Men do not bargain with God, they submit to Him. God commands and men obey.

Israel's unique relationship to God would continue only so long as the nation was obedient.

### **Verse 5**

The land promises made to the Patriarchs were also conditional. They would continue to dwell in that land flowing with milk and honey only if they continued to be faithful to the covenant.

Since God has just pronounced a curse upon those who disobey the covenant Jeremiah responds in the prescribed manner, "Amen, O Lord." So be it! "Amen" indicates that the statement just made is true, faithful and trustworthy.

### **Verse 6**

Jeremiah is to travel the length and breadth of the land in preaching his message of obedience to the covenant. He is to call, cry, proclaim or perhaps read aloud these words of God in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. His object is to influence the people to obey the recently discovered law of God.

### **Verse 7**

The message is nothing new. Over and over again, ever since the day He brought them out of Egypt, God had exhorted the children of Israel through the prophets to obey the divine voice.

### **Verse 8**

The phrase "rising early and testifying," is a favorite expression of Jeremiah, and it means to earnestly and incessantly undertake a task. God had been zealous in urging His people to be obedient. But the people of God did not harken to His messengers. They continued in their own stubborn ways each man doing whatever he set his heart to do. As a result, all of the penalties for covenant breaking stipulated in the Law of Moses had come upon the people.

### **Verse 9**

The men of Judah were encouraging one another to engage in apostasy and idolatry and this in the eyes of God constituted a conspiracy.

### **Verse 10**

They have returned to the sins of their “first fathers,” the Israelites of the wilderness period and the period of the Judges. Like their forefathers the present generation has walked after other gods to serve them. The house of Judah as well as the house of Israel had violated the terms of the ancient covenant made at Sinai.

### **Verse 11**

Rebellion against the crown brings inevitable punishment. In that hour of calamity, the men of Judah will desperately try to call upon God but He will not be inclined to answer their prayers.

### **Verse 12**

They shall turn in that time of crisis to the gods they have continued to worship; but these man-made gods shall be powerless to save.

### **Verse 13**

Every city had its tutelary deity. Altars to Shame, that is Baal, could be found on every street of Jerusalem.

### **Verse 14**

Because of the apostate condition of the men of Judah it is useless for Jeremiah to continue to pray on their behalf. God will not hear no matter how hard or long the people cry unto Him.

### **Verse 15**

Because of their adulterous apostasy God’s “beloved,” the nation of Judah, no longer has any business in the House of God. As long as the nation continues in this treachery no amount of sacrifices will be able to remove their sin.

Sacrifice without repentance and contrition is valueless. Far from feeling any remorse or shame because of their evil the people of Judah actually rejoiced in wrong doing.

### **Verse 16**

In earlier days God had regarded Israel as beautiful green olive trees because the nation had produced the finest fruit. That tree is now worthless. The branches are dead and unfruitful.

When the tumult of battle is heard in the land the enemy soldiers will break off the branches of that tree and use them for firewood.

### **Verse 17**

The Lord of Hosts, who had planted that olive tree, has the power to also uproot it and that is just what He plans do. The house of Israel and the house of Judah, the two branches of the olive tree, engaged in evil practices to their own hurt.

They had provoked God by offering sacrifices to Baal. The Lord has therefore pronounced evil or calamity against His people.

One branch, Israel, had already been destroyed by the Assyrian empire. The second branch Judah is about to experience the same fate at the hands of the Chaldeans.

### **Verses 18-23**

Jeremiah was to suffer much during his ministry. At times his enemies almost got the best of him. But God was faithful to His promise to deliver Jeremiah from his enemies. In the present paragraph Jeremiah experiences his first personal crisis.

### **Verse 18**

Jeremiah learned that the men of his home town were plotting against him. God caused Jeremiah to correctly analyze and interpret the deceitful deeds of these cunning adversaries.

### **Verse 19**

Jeremiah had never suspected that they were plotting against him. He was as unsuspecting and trusting as a lamb being led to the slaughter. As Jeremiah had been comparing Judah to a tree which God would destroy so the men of Anathoth contemptuously refer to Jeremiah as a tree that must be destroyed. They wish to rid themselves of that tree and “its fruit.”

Since Jeremiah had no children, the “fruit’ of the tree probably refers to his life work, his prophetic ministry. If they could slay Jeremiah there would be no descendant to perpetuate his name. They schemed and plotted in an effort to find an opportunity to assassinate Jeremiah or have him publicly executed.

### **Verse 20**

Upon learning of the plot against him, Jeremiah turns immediately in prayer to God. As a petitioner before a court of law the prophet presents his case to the righteous Judge knowing that the Judge of all the earth will do right. God alone can test or try the “kidneys and heart,” the innermost feelings and thoughts of a man. The Lord knows that Jeremiah has been utterly sincere in his ministry. There has been no guile or bitterness in his heart. On the other hand, God knows the hypocrisy and the evil intent of the men of Anathoth.

Jeremiah is confident of the verdict which the righteous Judge will render in his behalf. Divine vengeance will be poured out upon the evil schemers and thus the cause of God and His prophet will be vindicated. Jeremiah has only to “reveal” his case to God and the just verdict will be rendered.

### **Verse 21**

God, of course, was aware of the plight of the prophet; Jeremiah is not telling God something which He did not already know. To “reveal” one’s case is to publicly, formally plead one’s case before the bar of justice. When the conspiracy against Jeremiah was exposed the men of Anathoth openly and outwardly began to threaten the life of the prophet. Only if he ceased to prophesy in the name of the Lord would his life be spared.

The threats made by the men of Anathoth were not idle. These men meant business. From this day forward Jeremiah would be putting his life on the line every time he uttered an oracle in the name of the Lord.

### **Verse 22**

The Righteous Judge was quick to render His verdict in favor of the plaintiff. Punishment is about to fall upon the inhabitants of Anathoth. The young men of military age would die by the sword of the enemy.

Younger children would die in the famine which would result because of the prolonged siege.

### **Verse 23**

The year of their visitation or punishment is upon them. They shall not be able to escape the ruthless armies of Nebuchadnezzar.

## **Chapter 12**

Jeremiah has committed his case confidently to God. The verdict had been rendered in favor of the prophet but the sentence had been delayed. The enemies of the prophet continue to prosper and live a life of ease while the circumstances of the prophet become ever more difficult.

Jeremiah reopens his case in the heavenly courtroom. He admits that God is just and righteous yet he is perplexed and wishes to inquire concerning His judgments, that is, His dealings with the sons of men.

### **Verse 1**

The prophet asks: "Why do wicked men like those in Anathoth prosper? Why do men who commit treacherous deeds that is, the treacherous committing of treachery, live in peace?"

### **Verse 2**

Jeremiah can only conclude that they prosper because God blesses them. God has planted them and they have taken root; they continue to grow ever expanding into new areas of influence. They have produced fruit, that is, their

plans and schemes seem to be successful. While it is true that these men are outwardly pious, God is far distant from their hearts.

### **Verse 3**

Jeremiah not only disparages his foes as he stands before the bar of divine justice, he also defends himself. God knows his prophet; He observes him continuously. God knows that Jeremiah is not hypocritical when he speaks for and about God. How then can God allow his faithful servant to continue to be harassed by his adversaries? There is no doubt in the mind of the prophet what he would do if he were the judge: “Drag them away as sheep to slaughter!” he cries.

Jeremiah is simply asking that the sentence be executed speedily.

### **Verse 4**

Nature itself—the land, the vegetation, the cattle and the birds—suffer because of the wicked inhabitants of the land. But if the land suffers so do the few righteous ones who still live in it. As Jeremiah views the matter, this is unjust. The opposition has been taunting God’s messenger by saying, “He shall not see our end.” They are confident that they will outlive Jeremiah. Since Jeremiah was but a mouthpiece for God these ungodly men were in reality mocking the message of the Lord.

### **Verse 5**

God replies to His prophet but not in the way Jeremiah anticipated. God does not explain the delay in the execution of the sentence against the ungodly nor does He promise any cessation of hostilities against His servant. The divine reply is designed to correct the impatience of the prophet. “If you have become weary running with foot racers how will you be able to compete against horses?”

God does not deny that Jeremiah has been having a time of it. Things have been bad; but they are going to get worse. Jeremiah is currently passing through a “land of peace” that is, a land in which one is safe and secure; but shortly he will be forced to fight his way through the tangled brush of the “pride of Jordan.” The “pride of Jordan” is that ribbon of lush vegetation which grows on either

side of the twisting, winding Jordan River. This area was infested with vicious wild animals and dangerous outlaws.

If Jeremiah is counting on, hoping for, confidently expecting to traverse a peaceful and safe land what would he do when faced with the dangers of the pride of Jordan?

### **Verse 6**

As one example of what lay ahead for the prophet, God reveals to him that even the members of his own family cannot be trusted. These relatives have plotted against him.

They have cried aloud after Jeremiah as one cries after a criminal who is being hunted down. Even though they speak kind words to the prophet he should not be deceived.

### **Verse 7**

Beginning in this verse one can feel the pain of God as He speaks of the ruination of “My house,” “My inheritance,” “My pleasant portion,” and “the beloved of My soul.”

Jeremiah, wallowing in self-pity because his family and friends were opposing him, needed to learn how much God suffers when His beloved people rise up in open rebellion against Him. Jeremiah who had called for the heavy execution of divine judgment upon his enemies, needed to realize how much it grieves God to pour out His wrath. Only with great reluctance did God give His beloved nation over into the hands of their enemies.

### **Verse 8**

As the lion in the woods challenges those who come near, so Judah raised up her voice in open defiance against God. God therefore “hates” Judah, that is, He treats Judah as though she were an object of His hatred.

### **Verse 9**

“I hate her” is the strongest possible way of saying that God withdrew His love for Judah when He gave her into the power of her enemies. In astonish-



ment God asks if Judah has become in respect to Him a many-colored bird of prey. Other birds of prey would gather about such a queer looking bird and pluck it to pieces.

All the scavenger beasts of the field are bidden to come and join in devouring the strange looking bird.

### **Verse 10**

God continues to describe what has and will befall the nation of Judah. Human shepherds, political rulers both foreign and native, have destroyed the vineyard of the Lord, Israel and Judah. By their actions they have made the pleasant portion of God, the land of Judah, a desolate wilderness.

### **Verse 11**

Because he, that is, the enemy, has made the land a desolation, the land mourns, unable to produce fruit. The land mourns “before Me,” literally, upon me. God is grieved over the condition of this land.

Yet none of the leaders of the nations are concerned about the impending disaster for “there were none who took it to heart.”

### **Verse 12**

Even in the most remote areas of the land the sword of divine judgment wielded by the enemy will do its deadly work. No one is safe from the spoiler.

### **Verse 13**

Why will all of this tragedy befall Judah? By use of a common proverb Jeremiah gives the answer: “They have sown wheat, but they have reaped thorns.”

The leaders of Judah have plotted, schemed, planned, worked and invested in formulating what they believed to be an adequate national policy. Unfortunately, they had planted their “wheat” without divine direction and consequently their harvest would be one of thorns, that is, humiliation, ruin, destruction and death. Of such a harvest they would be ashamed for it clearly indicates that they are under the wrath of God.

## **Verses 14-17**

To Jeremiah God was no respecter of persons. He would bring destruction on Judah as well as on the foreign nations. He would show compassion to the foreign nations as well as Judah.

The main thrust of these verses is that one day in the future foreign peoples will have the opportunity of being incorporated into the Covenant people.

The prophet had called for God's wrath to be poured out on the wicked. God had revealed that He would punish the wicked, but only with much personal sadness and suffering.

Jeremiah was greatly concerned about justice and judgment. God wants Jeremiah to realize that judgment is not an end in itself but a means to an end. The judgment will cleanse the nation of Judah.

They will again be the people of God.

Jeremiah wants the wicked destroyed immediately, permanently; God wants them cleansed, restored, redeemed.

## **Verse 14**

God's neighbors who border on the land of Judah will not escape divine judgment. Judah's land belongs to God and therefore Judah's neighbors are God's neighbors. Judah too shall experience this deportation at the hands of the Babylonian armies.

## **Verse 15**

God's purpose in bringing this judgment upon Judah and the nations is that they might experience His salvation.

When Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. it was his policy to allow all the captive peoples to return to their native lands. The Jews were just one of the beneficiaries of his generosity.

Not only does the Lord promise restoration, but He also holds out to them the prospects of conversion. They will dwell "in the midst of My people" for by their conversions they actually become part of the people of God.

### **Verse 16**

To use the name of a deity in an oath implied recognition of the claims of that deity. These heathen, must be as zealous for the claims of the Lord as they once were for their god Baal.

### **Verse 17**

On the other hand, if these nations refuse to hear, that is, obey the Lord then God will uproot and continually bring destruction upon them.

## **Chapter 13**

Arrogant, willful, stubborn pride was at the root of all Judah's sins. Jeremiah now issues five stern warnings concerning pride and its consequences. Pride results in deterioration, drunkenness, darkness, dishonor, and disgrace.

### **Verse 1**

The word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah and instructs him to purchase a girdle or loin-cloth. The loin-cloth was a strip of cloth, sometimes leather, wound several times around the waist with its ends hanging down over the thigh. The loin-cloth served the purpose of holding up the loose upper garment when walking or working. The prophet is specifically instructed not to put his new loin-cloth in water.

### **Verse 2**

Jeremiah was puzzled by this instruction to purchase and wear a new loin-cloth. But he obeyed the Lord in full confidence that further revelation would be forthcoming.

### **Verse 3**

After wearing the garment about for some time Jeremiah received additional instruction from the Lord.

#### **Verse 4**

He is to take his new loin-cloth and hide it at the Euphrates River or perhaps the town of Parah in the crevice of a rock.

#### **Verse 5**

Once again Jeremiah complied with the commandment of the Lord even though he must have thought it very strange.

#### **Verse 6**

After many days Jeremiah received still further instruction from the Lord. He is to retrieve his loin-cloth.

#### **Verse 7**

Jeremiah returned to the spot where he had hidden his garment, dug away the earth with which he had covered the crevice in the rock, and removed the loin-cloth. Naturally the garment was moldy, rotted, filthy and utterly worthless.

#### **Verse 8**

When Jeremiah returned from the Euphrates he carried or perhaps even attempted to wear his tattered loin-cloth through the streets of Jerusalem.

Naturally people would ask about the filthy piece of cloth and then Jeremiah would relate the story.

#### **Verse 9**

The application of the story was that Judah and Jerusalem were guilty of sinful pride and self-exhalation. But their pride is about to be marred, tattered, and torn, like the loin-cloth.

#### **Verse 10**

God will rend Judah to pieces as easily as a rotten piece of cloth is torn. Perhaps as Jeremiah uttered these words he actually tore the old loin-cloth to illustrate his point. He then describes the pride of Judah in more detail. That pride manifested itself in refusal to hear, that is, obey the word of God.

They wanted no part of the old stern God of Sinai with His prohibitions and restrictions. That God was tolerable as long as they wandered in the wilderness. But now they had settled down to become farmers. They wanted new gods who would guarantee them fertility of the soil and at the same time condone their sensuality.

For this reason, the children of Israel began to follow after, bow down to and serve the gods of Canaan. The corrupting influence of idolatry had already eaten away at the strength of the nation until finally the nation, like Jeremiah's loin-cloth had become utterly worthless, fit for nothing but destruction.

### **Verse 11**

In this action parable Jeremiah represents God and the lovely new linen loin-cloth represents the Covenant people, both Judah and Israel. The prophet wishes to emphasize the intimate and beautiful relationship which had once existed between God and His chosen people.

Israel was His people, the means by which God's name would be made known throughout the world. They were a source of praise and glory to God. But as time went on Israel would not obey the word of God. They continued to deteriorate spiritually and morally until they were of no more value to God.

### **Verse 12**

It may be that Jeremiah is addressing those who were assembled at some festival.

The presence of some empty earthen jars or wine skins might have provided the occasion for the parable which he offered. Jeremiah solemnly pronounced the formula, "Thus says the Lord."

The crowd of merrymakers became hushed and listened with rapt attention. They no doubt expect a colorful sermon filled with biting sarcasm, pungent metaphors and daring attacks upon the unpopular King Jehoiakim. Instead they heard the commonplace and obvious truth: "Every bottle shall be filled with wine." They began to heckle the prophet: What marvelous wisdom! But tell us

something we do not already know Jeremiah! Have you nothing more profound to say in the name of the Lord than this childish ditty?"

### **Verse 13**

Jeremiah did have something more to say and when the crowd finished its laughter he drove home his point. Empty bottles are meant to be filled and that is just what God is about to do with the population of Judah. They are empty bottles and they will be filled with the wine of God's wrath. They will be filled with drunkenness, that is, irrationality and helplessness. When men depart from the Lord they blunder, stagger, and fall like a Skid Row drunk. Men who are mentally and spiritually intoxicated are oblivious to danger, insensitive to warning, devoid of moral scruples, inconsiderate of and offensive to others. The drunk is dazed, confused, befuddled. What a perfect picture of the man who has rejected God.

### **Verse 14**

Feeling helpless as drunken sots, the inebriated inhabitants of Judah, will crash into one another. They will all fall; they will all perish. But God will have no pity upon these fallen sots and He will not intervene to prevent them from being destroyed. The grace period has ended. Those who have through the years rejected the infinite mercy of God will now face His fierce wrath.

### **Verse 15**

After predicting the eventual outpouring of the wine of God's wrath, Jeremiah earnestly appeals to his audience to hear, that is, obey, the word of the Lord. He points out that it is stubborn and inexcusable pride that prevents these leaders from really hearing God's word.

### **Verse 16**

Every Christian who opens a Bible should be uttering the prayer of Samuel: "Speak for your servant hears." Jeremiah urges his hearers to give glory to God. Men give glory to God when they acknowledge His claims and submit to His will.

Even when the sun is brightly shining the way is tricky and dangerous unless the Lord is leading the way. But when the day of grace ends and the sunshine of God's benevolent protection sinks over the horizon then those dangerous mountain paths become even more difficult to find and follow.

Finally, impenetrable darkness envelopes the traveler and he is caught in the Stygian darkness with no guide. "While the day of grace remains," Jeremiah pleads, "give God the glory, before the midnight hour of divine judgment, humble yourselves, listen to His word."

### **Verse 17**

Behind his stern and uncompromising message was a broken heart. "My soul will weep," that is, I will weep because of the pride which prevents these men from hearing the word of God. He will weep because he knows that stubborn pride will lead inevitably to captivity. So certain of this truth, he can speak of the captivity as though it had already taken place.

### **Verse 18**

This verse is a sarcastic imperative. The meaning then would be that the king and queen-mother would be dethroned and dishonored, reduced to the status of commoners. They had refused to humble themselves before God. Therefore, God would debase and dishonor them in the sight of all men. The royal crown and headdress of which they were so proud would topple from their brow.

### **Verse 19**

It is impossible to determine whether the two statements are descriptive or predictive. If the former, then Jeremiah was speaking at a time when the northern enemy had overrun the entire land even so far as the remote southern cities.

These cities are spoken of as "shut up" that is under siege. All of Judah, that is, the outlying regions of the land, had fallen to the enemy. This would fit quite well the situation that existed just prior to the surrender of Jehoiachin in

597 B.C. If verse 19 is predictive it could be dated to almost any year between 609 and 587 B.C.

### **Verse 20**

Jerusalem is urged to take note of the invading armies from the north. Then in a series of rhetorical questions the prophet tries to make Jerusalem see the folly of her past pride. Five such questions are asked.

1. here is the glorious flock that was given to you?

Jerusalem, the capital, is regarded as the shepherd of the rest of the cities of the nation. God has placed His flock under the care of the rulers of Jerusalem.

2. What will you say when He, God, shall appoint as your head those you have cultivated as friends?

The word translated “head” can also mean “poison.” Those you thought to be your friends and allies, those whose friendship you labored so hard to secure, will become your head, master, or perhaps, your poison.

### **Verse 21**

3. At that time will you not experience the terror, pain, and agony of a woman in childbirth?

What a terrible and frightening thing it must be to see friends turn away or turn against one in an hour of need?

### **Verse 22**

4. The fourth rhetorical question is placed in the mouth of the astonished daughter of Zion. As she begins to taste the bitter hemlock of Divine judgment she shall cry out, “Why has all this happened to me?”

Jerusalem must suffer disgrace and humiliation because of her enormous iniquity. The skirts being uncovered is a figure taken from the public shaming of a woman caught in the act of harlotry. Before being executed an adulteress seems to have been stripped of her garments in order to shame her. Even the



sandals of the daughter of Zion will be removed and she will be forced to walk barefoot into captivity.

#### **Verses 23-24**

The fifth rhetorical question is intended to offer further reason for the impending humiliation of Jerusalem. Can an Ethiopian change his skin and a leopard his spots? Obviously not! Just so it is impossible for the people of Judah to do good, to obey the commands of God.

Men who are unwilling to humble themselves and submit to God can do nothing good. Because Judah will not submit to God so that they might be enabled to do that which is good, God must bring judgment upon His people. They would be scattered as the chaff or stubble blown by the wind. Broken straw had to be separated from the wheat after the grain had been trampled out by oxen. The wind was used to blow away the worthless particles of chaff.

#### **Verse 25**

Because they had forgotten God and trusted in falsehood, that is, false gods, therefore, God had measured out the appropriate amount of judgment to be poured out upon Judah.

#### **Verse 26**

Jerusalem's punishment is that of the adulteress caught in the act. She is stripped that her shame might be exposed to all. This judgment is the doing of God and that is emphasized by the emphatic position of the first pronoun. God knows of Jerusalem's adulteries.

#### **Verse 27**

The lewdness of the pagan rites practiced on the hills of the land He has observed. In view of all this sin and corruption Jeremiah can only pronounce a "woe" on Jerusalem.

God for years had been offering the scarlet daughter of Zion cleansing and pardon if she would but turn to Him in sincere repentance. But even after all this time Jerusalem still prefers her filthy ways over the purity which God offers.

## **Chapter 14**

Sometime during the ministry of Jeremiah, a terrible drought or series of droughts struck Palestine. In the Book of Deuteronomy the Lord threatens to use drought as one of the disciplinary disasters which He will bring upon His people if they are unfaithful to Him. Growing out of this crisis is a personal crisis—the second—in the ministry of Jeremiah.

### **Verse 1**

During the time of the terrible drought Jeremiah prayed three times for his countrymen. Three times God rejected the petition of his prophet, the third time emphatically so. Jeremiah was to learn through this frustrating effort that intercessory prayer without prior repentance on the part of the sinners is futile and useless.

### **Verse 2**

Jeremiah pictures the whole nation engaged in lamentation. Even the gates of cities are said to be participating, perhaps bemoaning the absence of those who formerly had assembled there to transact business. By heaping dust upon themselves both the people and their garments became black. This blackening of oneself was one of the customary signs of mourning in antiquity.

### **Verse 3**

The nobles would send their inferiors, that is, their little ones to the cisterns for water but they would return with empty vessels. Ashamed, dejected these servants would return to their master with heads covered as a sign of deepest mourning.

### **Verse 4**

The farmers are as confused as the nobles. The ground can no longer fulfill its function of producing fruit because of the absence of rain.

### **Verse 5**

Even the wild animals are suffering in the drought. The tender doe is starving. Her natural affection for her young is forgotten as she desperately seeks food for herself.

### **Verse 6**

The rough wild donkey, accustomed to the harsh realities of desert life, desperately sniffs the air in an attempt to pick up the scent of water. Finally, with no water and no food the animal languishes and dies.

### **Verse 7**

Jeremiah makes no excuses. He openly confesses the sin and guilt of his people. Yet he calls upon God to intervene on behalf of the drought-stricken nation “for the sake of Your Name.” He is asking God to act in His own self-interest. Should God allow His people to be done in by the drought the heathen would boast.

### **Verse 8**

The prophet still trusts in God in spite of the terrible drought. He addresses the Lord as “the hope of Israel,” and as “his,” that is Israel’s, Savior in the time of distress. God in the past has proved Himself to be a Savior to Israel and Jeremiah is confident that God can and will so reveal Himself again in the present crisis.

### **Verse 9**

Two questions are directed to God both of which are in reality appeals for divine aid.

1. “Why have You Lord become to us like a stranger or wayfaring man?”  
(Verse 8)
2. Why have You become like a mighty warrior who is dumbfounded?”  
(Verse 9)

The point is that God has not acted on behalf of His people and Jeremiah cannot understand it. He knows that God is still in the midst of the nation. He

knows that Israel still wears the name of God as His national bride. Therefore, he calls upon God, “Do not let us down.”

#### **Verse 10**

God’s reply to the praying prophet is straight forward and blunt. He does not deny that He has in fact abandoned His people. But He has forsaken them because they first abandoned Him. They love to wander after other gods and neither the national leaders nor the people themselves have made any effort to curb the quest for idolatry. As a result, God cannot accept or countenance such a people.

The Lord reminds Jeremiah of the threat he had earlier spoken concerning Israel: “Now He will remember their iniquity that He may punish their sins.”

#### **Verse 11**

The fact that judgment has already been decreed it is useless for Jeremiah to continue to pray for his people.

#### **Verse 12**

The thrust here is that God knows the heart of a man and He will not accept outward forms in place of genuine repentance. Ritual will not work any longer. God is about to consume them with war and all of its accompanying calamities.

#### **Verse 13**

Jeremiah prays again on behalf of his people. The words of the prayer itself are in the form of a complaint. He calls God’s attention to the false prophets who are deceiving and misleading the people. These false religious leaders were saying that God will never bring the sword and famine upon Judah as predicted over and over again by Jeremiah. In their view Judah was under special protection of God.

#### **Verse 14**

But Jeremiah is not merely complaining to God; in reality he is again interceding. He is placing the responsibility for the condition of the nation squarely

on the shoulders of the false prophets. The false prophets are guilty of speaking falsehood to the nation in the name of the Lord. God did not send them, command them or speak to them. They are acting strictly on their own initiative. Their visions of peace and prosperity are spurious and utterly worthless.

### **Verse 15**

The Lord assures his perplexed prophet that the prophets will be punished for the role they have played in misleading the nation. They have said that sword and famine will not come upon the land. Therefore, they shall meet their death by sword and famine.

### **Verse 16**

But judgment will also fall upon the people of the land. Though they have been misled they are not excused from their iniquity and their sin. Those who die defending Jerusalem and those who die of the famine brought on by the siege of that city will simply be cast in the streets.

No one will have the courage, inclination or strength to bury their dead bodies.

The Divine Judge has rejected again the appeal of Jeremiah on behalf of the people of Judah. Their evil deeds demand the outpouring of Divine wrath.

### **Verse 17**

God instructs Jeremiah to go and speak a lamentation to them. The prophet is actually warning the people through this dirge. Jeremiah describes his uncontrollable weeping over the impending destruction of the “virgin daughter of my people.”

It is generally thought that Jerusalem is called a “virgin” because hitherto no enemy had completely conquered her. Shortly she would suffer a grievous wound, from which she would not recover.

### **Verse 18**

Projecting himself into the not too distant future Jeremiah describes the situation that will exist when the siege of Jerusalem begins. Outside the safety

of the city walls the sword of Babylon has already done its deadly work. Inside Jerusalem people are starving to death. The prophet and the priest and every other leader for that matter will be forced to rove about, that is peddle their wares, in a foreign land. “To rove about” in Aramaic means to go about like a beggar.”

### **Verse 19**

Jeremiah prays with increased fervency. He asks God how He can utterly reject Judah, how He can smite Judah and provide no Divine healing.

Misled by the false prophets the nation was confident of peace and a time of healing. But the drought continues. Nothing appeared on the horizon but the terror that accompanies any national calamity.

### **Verse 20**

Jeremiah readily admits the sin of the nation. They are worthy of chastisement. The iniquity of Judah stretches back over the centuries to the fathers, the early ancestors of the nation.

### **Verse 21**

Jeremiah makes a four-fold appeal for the intervention of God.

1. He asks God not to spurn the nation “for the sake of Your name.” When Israel suffers humiliation, the reputation of Israel’s God also suffers in the eyes of the nations.
2. Jeremiah then asks God not to demean, disgrace or dishonor His glorious throne, neither Jerusalem.
3. Jeremiah urges God to remember His covenant with Israel even though the people have broken their part of that covenant.

### **Verse 22**

4. Jeremiah’s final basis for appeal is simply that there is no one else to whom the people of Judah can turn.

None of the vanities, that is, idols, of the nation are capable of sending the much-needed rains. It is the Lord, the God of Israel Who created the heavenly bodies and Who alone controls the process of nature. Therefore, Jeremiah speaking for his sinful people, affirms, “we wait for You.”

## **Chapter 15**

### **Verse 1**

Jeremiah was to quit praying and go back to preaching the message of judgment which God had commissioned him to preach. In and through his preaching he is to “cast away” the inhabitants of Judah from the presence of the Lord that they might go out from before.

### **Verse 2**

If the people ask him to explain this cryptic statement “go out” the prophet is to have a ready answer. Every man will go out to the punishment which has been decreed for him. Some will suffer death by pestilence, others will die in battle, others will perish with hunger, still others will be taken into foreign captivity.

### **Verse 3**

All will suffer—none will escape. Four types, families or modes of punishment have been decreed for many inhabitants of Judah. They will be first slain by the sword of Babylon and then their unburied bodies will be ripped, torn and eaten by dogs, birds and beasts of the field.

### **Verse 4**

The nations of the world would witness the terrible things which happen to Israel and will fear for their own safety. All of this must befall Judah because of the sins of Manasseh, the most wicked king who ever sat on the throne of Judah.

### **Verse 5**

From speaking about the people God turns and speaks directly to the people. By means of three rhetorical questions He drives home the point that no one will show any sympathy or pity, no one will mourn, no one will even ask about the condition of the city.

### **Verse 6**

But in the past God had always withheld the threat and had taken His people back. Now it is too late. He cannot forgive them anymore.

### **Verse 7**

Judgment will be executed. As the winnowing process separates the chaff from the grain, so God will cause the parents of Judah to be departed from their children. This terrible judgment is necessary because the inhabitants of Judah have not turned from their sinful ways.

### **Verse 8**

Wives will be deprived of their husbands and hence the land will be left defenseless.

Against the mother of the young men, that is, Jerusalem, God will bring a destroyer at the most unexpected time—at high noon when normally military operations temporarily ceased. Distress and terror will fall upon the mother when she realizes the danger which she faces.

### **Verse 9**

The woman with numerous children, usually the most proud and joyous inhabitants of the city will be filled with consternation. With the loss of her children her sun has gone down while it is yet day. In the prime of life all has become dark and dreary for her. All of her hopes, dreams, aspirations are dashed to pieces when the enemy slays her sons. The shame of childlessness comes upon her in full force when the remnant of the nation is given over to the sword of the enemy.



### Verse 10

The rejection of his prophetic intercession on three successive occasions plunges Jeremiah to the depths of despair. This is the second personal crisis in the life and ministry of this great man of God. He begins to reflect upon the ministry and to think of the trouble that had come to him as he attempted to carry the message of God to his people. His preaching had produced no repentance. This tender and timid soul from Anathoth had become the center of controversy. He wishes he had never been born.

Dealings between money-lenders and debtors in antiquity were anything but cordial. This is the kind of relationship which now exists between Jeremiah and his countrymen.

### Verse 11

The introductory formula “the Lord said” is God in effect is taking an oath to perform His promise to the prophet. God promises to release Jeremiah from the hostility and animosity which he has been experiencing in this phase of his ministry.

They may question his prophetic credentials now but before long they will be forced by the fulfillment of his prophecies to recognize Jeremiah as a true prophet of God.

### Verse 12

Iron from the north, the region of the Black Sea, was of the strongest sort. Bronze, a mixture of copper and tin, was one of the strongest metals known to the ancients. Common iron cannot break iron from the north or bronze for that matter. But who is this unbreakable metal? Is it Jeremiah himself?

God has told him at his call that he would be an iron pillar and a bronze wall. Is God reminding Jeremiah of that promise? But it is more likely that verse 12 is a transition to the two verses which follow.

God would then be assuring Jeremiah that his prophecy of an invincible foe from the north would indeed be fulfilled, and the fulfillment of that prophecy would serve to vindicate Jeremiah as a spokesman for God.

### Verse 13

The enemy will roam throughout the land plundering and looting because of all of the sins which the inhabitants of the land had committed.

The phrase “without price” has been understood in more than one way. Perhaps it means that the enemy will not need to be paid for attacking Judah, or it may mean that God will give Judah to the enemy without receiving any compensation in return. The first interpretation is preferable. The inhabitants of Judah will be forced to serve their enemies in a foreign land.

### Verse 14

What consolation is it to the despondent Jeremiah to know that his land and his people will be destroyed? None unless it would be the thought that if he continues to preach this message of doom he certainly will not be discredited.

His message was controversial to be sure. But it was a true message and it had to be preached. The warning had to be sounded.

### Verse 15

The second of the so-called “confession” of Jeremiah begins. The prophet begins by affirming the omniscience of God, “You know, O Lord.” The fact that God knows what the prophet has been going through comforts Jeremiah.

His petition contains three positive requests and one negative one.

1. He wants God to remember him.
2. He needs to see some visible sign of God’s continued care; He wants God to visit him.
3. He asks God to avenge his persecutors.
4. Jeremiah asks that he not be taken away, that is, that he not be allowed to die an early premature death.

From petition Jeremiah moves in his prayer to narrative. Even though God knows all, still Jeremiah rehearses before his God the particular difficulties which he has recently been experiencing.

First, he asks God to take note of the reproach which he bears daily for His sake.

### **Verse 16**

When the Lord initially put His word in the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah “ate” them. To eat words means to make them one’s own, to digest them, to absorb them, to make them the constant food of one’s spiritual life. Jeremiah’s whole life revolved around the word of God. It was to him a source of great joy to learn that he had been called of God to be His prophet, His messenger.

### **Verse 17**

But as time went on Jeremiah found out that being God’s man had distinct disadvantages. His preaching made him unpopular. This man was filled with God’s indignation against sin. His message centered in the wrath and judgment of God.

He lived a lonely, solitary life because the touch of God’s hand had set him apart. “The hand of the Lord came upon,” is an idiomatic expression meaning that the irresistible power of God came upon the life of a man. Because he possessed the prophetic spirit Jeremiah was different. He suffered alone.

### **Verse 18**

Jeremiah asks the question that many other discouraged saints through the ages have asked, “Why?” Jeremiah was asking how God could finally forsake Israel. But now Jeremiah feels that God has forsaken His servant; so the question “Why” is renewed but this time with a personal application. Thus far his ministry had not been blessed with success. He had faithfully sown the word of God but had reaped only hatred and opposition.

His mental anguish is perpetual, like a wound which will not heal. He would love to preach salvation but instead he must preach damnation. In this moment of anguish and despair he cries out against God: “You have surely become to me as a deceptive stream, a brook that runs dry in summer.” He is accusing God of being unreliable, untrustworthy, and unfaithful. Jeremiah is

simply reached the breaking point. In this moment of weakness Satan has placed this blasphemous thought in the mind of Jeremiah.

### **Verse 19**

God does not bother to directly answer the blasphemous accusation of His prophet. Rather His reply consists of an invitation to re-enter the ministry, an exhortation to remain steadfast and a repetition of a wonderful promise.

But God does not chide or rebuke His prophet, not directly at least. He simply suggests that Jeremiah needed to do two things.

1. Return, that is, go back to the original point of departure.
2. Separate the precious from the vile and worthless within his own heart.

The refusal of doubt and mistrust had somehow gotten mingled with the precious gold of faith, love and trust within the heart of Jeremiah. If Jeremiah complies with these conditions God will take him back.

The reinstatement in the prophetic ministry is described in three expressions.

1. “I will cause you to return.” If Jeremiah returns to God, then God can return him to a right relationship to Himself so that he might continue to be God’s minister.
2. “Before Me you shall continue to stand.” The figure here is of a servant standing in the presence of his master waiting for commands. To be permitted to minister before the Great King would be the highest privilege accorded a man.
3. “You shall be as My mouth.” The prophet is not only the servant of God to carry out His commands he is also the mouthpiece of God to proclaim His word. Jeremiah can occupy this high and holy office once again if he will only repent.

God is saying do not join them, let them join you! Jeremiah is weakening, he is giving in. His enemies are getting to him. He must remain steadfast. Jeremiah has accused God of forsaking him. But that simply was not true. God had warned him at the time of his call that people would fight against him.

### **Verse 20**

But God had promised to make Jeremiah like a fortified brazen wall against which the persecutors would ultimately fail. God did not forget the promise and neither should Jeremiah.

### **Verse 21**

God rephrases that promise in more specific terms. The wicked and ruthless men who would attempt to suppress the message of God will not prevail over Jeremiah. God will deliver and redeem, that is, save Jeremiah from their power.

## **Chapter 16**

Jeremiah came through his personal crisis. He repented and God took him back. Now that the rebellious prophet was humble and contrite, God gives him further instructions concerning his personal conduct.

### **Verse 1**

A minister must live a life that is consistent with the message he brings else he will be charged with hypocrisy and insincerity. Jeremiah had for the most part been preaching a message of doom and judgment. In order to bring the life of Jeremiah into harmony with the message he was to deliver, God laid down three prohibitions for His prophet.

### **Verse 2**

In the first prohibition Jeremiah is commanded not to marry and father children. But it was necessary that he abstain from marriage in order to get across to his contemporaries the message of how terribly desperate the times were. To remain unmarried would cause the people to realize how serious the times really were.

### **Verse 3**

Shortly the time would come when there would be no more marriage. The nation was about to go through a period of brutal warfare. Children as well as

their parents would die “painful deaths: that is deaths of sickness, including starvation.”

#### **Verse 4**

Those who died of sword and famine would be left as dung upon the ground, their corpses being eaten by bird and beast alike.

#### **Verse 5**

This was no kind of world in which to rear a child. Jeremiah was spared the added agony of seeing wife and little ones destroyed. In the second prohibition Jeremiah is forbidden to attend funerals.

#### **Verse 6**

Jeremiah’s abstinence from the normal visitation to homes where there had been a death would provide an opportunity for him to describe the great slaughter which would shortly take place in Judah. So many would die in that day of famine, pestilence, and warfare that the few survivors would not be able nor inclined to conduct the normal funeral services. The pagan rites showing remorse by cutting oneself or shaving the head would not be performed.

#### **Verse 7**

The funeral feast normally conducted in the home of the bereaved after the burial will be dispensed with. This meal no doubt was accompanied by lamentation and prayers for comfort. These formalities would have to be abandoned. Death would be so common that men could not participate in such observances. All of this will befall Judah because God had withdrawn His peace, loving-kindness and compassion from the nation. Judah is forsaken by her God. She is helpless and hopeless.

#### **Verse 8**

A third prohibition forbade Jeremiah to attend joyous feasts and festivals as, for example, a wedding meal.

### **Verse 9**

The nation was crumbling to destruction. This was no time for feasting and rejoicing. In the very near future all joyous activities would cease. When faced with extermination men would no longer think of feasting and banqueting.

### **Verse 10**

Provoked by the strange anti-social behavior of the prophet the people became defiant. Two rhetorical questions are asked. "Why do you bring your message of doom? What sin have we committed?"

### **Verse 11**

Either these people were self-righteous and totally blind to their iniquity or else they were attempting to bluff the prophet into silence by this brazen challenge.

Jeremiah had a ready answer. The history of Israel had been one continuous record of apostasy.

### **Verse 12**

But the present generation is worse than their predecessors.

### **Verse 13**

The greater guilt of the present generation may lie in the fact that they had the advantage of greater revelation. They had been warned by countless prophets.

They had seen the wrath of God poured out upon their sister kingdom to the north. Still they persisted in apostasy. For this reason, God would hurl them from their land as a man hurls a javelin into the air. Sarcastically Jeremiah adds that there in that foreign land they can serve idols to their heart's content. God will not show favor to His people by delivering them from the hand of their enemies.

## **Verses 14-15**

These verses plainly predict that God will in days to come bring His people home from the Exile into which He is about to hurl them. These verses also serve a dual purpose.

First, these verses provide confirmation of the coming judgment. While these verses do speak of restoration at the same time they underscore the fact that a total deportation of the Jews was imminent. The deportation will be so complete that the only people who will live in the promised land in the future will be those who have been brought from Babylon by God.

These verses have a second and no less important function. They are intended to console the prophet who was heartbroken over the ruin and destruction of his people. The deportation to Babylon while sure and certain would not be the final curtain in the history of Israel. God's people would come home.

## **Verse 16**

The threat against Judah is continued. The Chaldeans are compared to fishermen and hunters who search every nook and cranny of the land to take captives.

## **Verse 17**

The ruthless fishing and hunting is punishment for the iniquity of the men of Judah of which God has been and is constantly aware.

## **Verse 18**

Before He can restore the Jews to their homeland He must first recompense their iniquity "double." God had on numerous occasions and by a variety of means punished His people in the past. They had experienced war, famine, pestilence, plague, and invasion before. But now to the horrors of war God will add the penalty of mass deportation to a foreign land. What else can God do with these people in view of the fact that they have profaned His land with their abominations and detestable things, that is, their idols? Their lifeless images like dead carcasses pollute and defile the land.



### **Verse 19**

Jeremiah indicates how completely he has changed. His whining, complaining accusations against God, has given way to triumphant faith. He realizes now that God is his strength, his fortress and his refuge. He comes to realize that the destruction of old Israel is but a prelude to the founding of new Israel.

Suddenly he remembers the wonderful promise which God had made concerning the conversion of the Gentiles. His mind leaps forward to that glorious day when chastened and redeemed Israel will be joined by peoples from distant lands who renounce forever their ancient attachment to idolatry.

These converted Gentiles realize that they have inherited nothing from their fathers religiously speaking but false and vain gods which are utterly worthless.

### **Verse 20**

These Gentiles are amazed that anyone could ever have thought that the work of their own hands was deity.

### **Verse 21**

God responds to the prophet's prayer of faith by revealing a little more of His grand purpose to him. The forefathers of Israel had learned the significance of the name Yahweh (Jehovah) when they were delivered from Egypt. In the deliverance from Babylon they would come again to learn the significance of that name. God's power and might in watching over, blessing and preserving His people in a foreign land would prove that He was universally sovereign and also a God of love.

## **Chapter 17**

The first eleven verses of this chapter contain three independent sayings. Jeremiah is concerned about (1) the guilt of the nation, (2) trusting the Lord, and (3) the nature of the human heart.

### **Verse 1**

A stylus of iron with diamond point was used by the artisans of Egypt and Babylon to chisel into solid rock the glorious records of their civilizations. Sin also leaves a record and Jeremiah points to three areas where the record of Judah's sin could be found.

1. Judah's sin was indelibly written upon the tablet of their hearts.
2. Judah's sin was also written upon the horns of their altars.

### **Verse 2**

Both the altar of incense and the huge altar of burnt offering had projections at the four corners upon which the blood of the sacrificial victims was smeared.

These "horns" were regarded as the most sacred part of the altar. How ironical it is that the very spot where one should have been able to find forgiveness of sins, the record of sin was obvious to any observer. Jeremiah no doubt here alludes to the hypocrisy and pagan practices which had perverted true worship.

3. Perhaps most important, the sin of Judah has been inscribed on the memory of the children of the land.

From their earliest days all that the children could remember was pagan worship. They remembered the Asherahs, a sacred pole erected beside pagan altars. They remembered the green shady spots on the hill tops where the licentious rites were conducted in honor of the fertility gods.

### **Verse 3**

Because of her record of sin and rebellion all the wealth of Jerusalem and all her high places will be given as spoil to an enemy. Jerusalem is here addressed as "my mountain in the field."

### **Verse 4**

The word "field" here is best understood as meaning an open place rather than a level place. Mt. Zion upon which Jerusalem is built rises abruptly, like a

mountain, out of the midst of the surrounding valleys. The inhabitants of Judah will lose their inheritance and be deported to a distant level. By their perpetual rebellion they have kindled the fire of Divine wrath. People who play with the fire of sin are bound to get scorched!

### **Verses 5-8**

In these verses Jeremiah draws a picture of contrast between the believer and the unbeliever.

#### **Verse 5**

In this verse Jeremiah mentions two characteristics of the unbeliever. The unbeliever constantly puts his trust in flesh, that is, he puts his trust in what is weak, sinful, mortal and temporal. While he may give lip service to the Almighty he has departed from the Lord in his own heart. It is interesting that two Hebrew words for man are used. The first word is *gever* which refers to man in his strength, man as he was intended to be. The second word is *adam* which signifies man in his creaturely weakness. Thus, cursed is the man (*gever*) who trusts in man (*adam*).

#### **Verse 6**

Jeremiah describes the conditions of such a man. He is like the tamarisk, a twisted, gnarled, dwarfed little tree which grows in the most barren and rocky parts of the desert. The roots of the tamarisk constantly grope for water but find precious little. That starved and stunted shrub just hangs on to a miserable existence.

So it is with the unbeliever. "He shall not see when good comes." He is always groping, searching for the good life, the more abundant life, but alas he never finds it. In spite of the riches he might possess he is not living, he is only existing. His life is a parched wilderness, "a land of salt," that is a land absolutely barren.

#### **Verse 7**

In contrast to the life of the unbeliever the one who puts his trust in God is blessed.

### **Verse 8**

Jeremiah describes the life of the believer. He is like a tree which puts its roots down alongside a perennial stream. That tree will flourish and be fruitful because the supply of water is never exhausted. The believer has put down his roots beside the inexhaustible stream of Divine grace. Even during the drought period of life, the times of severe testing and trial, he does not wilt, he does not fear. On the contrary he continues to flourish and bear fruit.

### **Verse 9**

The heart, according to Hebrew psychology, was the center of one's intellect, emotions and will. The heart is deceitful. Few have insight into their real motivations. The heart of man is incurable or desperately sick, or desperately wicked.

### **Verse 10**

There is within man a tendency, a natural inclination to do that which is wrong.

Only when one allows the Holy Spirit to dwell within the heart can he hope to walk in the paths of righteousness. God does search the hearts of men. He tries and tests the mind (literally the kidneys), a term which in Hebrew psychology indicated the emotional aspect of man. On the basis of His Divine knowledge of the inner thoughts and feelings of men, God is able to dispense justly both reward and punishment.

### **Verse 11**

Jeremiah offers an illustration of the kind of deceit which is referred to in verse 9.

Those who acquire wealth unjustly are like a partridge that broods but does not hatch her eggs. The partridge lays many eggs but also has many natural enemies who hunt her nest and destroy her eggs. So is the man with ill-gotten gain. He shall be deprived of his wealth as swiftly as the partridge which begins to sit upon her nest but is soon robbed of her eggs.

In the midst of his days the man who has made wealth his god shall leave it all behind. His attachment to the material and temporal will prove him to be a fool in his last desperate hours. A fool in the Old Testament is not necessarily one who is stupid but one who is lacking moral understanding, and in the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. One cannot read this passage without thinking of the foolish farmer spoken of in the parable of Jesus. (Luke 12:16-21)

### **Verse 12**

It is difficult to know in this verse whether “throne of glory” and “place of our sanctuary” refer to Jerusalem or to God Himself. If the reference is to Jerusalem it is difficult to see how the verse relates to the rest of the prayer. The verse fits well however as part of the address of the prayer. God is called “the throne exalted from the beginning” by metonymy. This title suggests that God from the beginning of time was the exalted ruler over all the earth. God is called “the place of our sanctuary” because true worship is grounded in Him.

### **Verse 13**

The Lord is called “the Hope of Israel” and “the Fountain of Living Waters.” It is interesting to note that the prophet who called God a deceitful stream in a recent prayer (15:18) now refers to Him as the fountain of living waters. Jeremiah is confident that anyone who turns from God will be put to shame. To depart from Jeremiah—to refuse to hear his message—is to turn away from the Lord. A name scratched in the dust of the ground is soon obliterated. So it is with the unbeliever.

### **Verse 14**

From invocation and declaration of faith in the Lord Jeremiah moves in his prayer to petition. He cries out for healing, but not the healing of the body; he yearns for the spiritual and mental healing. His heart is broken because the people he loves rejected the message. He cries out for deliverance from the sneers and jeers of the apostates. He knows that God can and will heal and deliver him and for this reason he makes God the object of his praise.

## Verse 15

Jeremiah moves on in his prayer to narrative. He describes to God his own situation. The people are mocking Jeremiah. They are demanding that his prophecies be fulfilled. So far none of Jeremiah's dire predictions concerning the fate of Jerusalem had come to pass. For years Jeremiah had been predicting a calamity which would befall Judah at the hands of the enemy from the north. So far nothing happened. Some no doubt, were charging Jeremiah with being a false prophet. Others may have even gone so far as to question whether the Lord had the power to carry out His threats. Instead of heeding the warnings issued by the prophet of God the inhabitants of Judah chuckled and said "Let it come!"

## Verses 16-17

In his prayer Jeremiah defends himself and calls attention to his loyalty to God. He makes three points.

1. Jeremiah had not hastened or hurried away from his responsibility of being God's shepherd to Israel. He did not quit when the going got tough.

He walked in the footsteps of his God and sought to lead the flock of God in those old; paths which the Lord had so clearly identified in His word.

2. Jeremiah did not desire the incurable day or woeful day. Here the day of Judah's punishment is metaphorically called "sick" or "incurable." He preached judgment because that message was laid upon him by the Lord. In spite of the fact that the message brought to me was personal and distasteful, Jeremiah kept preaching.
3. Jeremiah was utterly sincere in his ministry. God knew that. Every word which the prophet had uttered was known to the Lord. He had been a faithful messenger.

Jeremiah adds that many years earlier God had commanded him not to be dismayed or terrified before his enemies. But by delaying the punishment which the prophet had been threatening God was allowing Jeremiah to become the ob-

ject of ridicule and harassment. Jeremiah therefore prays that God will keep his word, that He will not be a terror to his prophet. Jeremiah knows that he personally has nothing to fear in the evil day, that is, the day of Divine punishment.

### **Verse 18**

In verse 16 Jeremiah said that he did not desire the evil day; here he calls on God to send the evil day. Jeremiah desired and prayed for the salvation of Judah as a nation. But within the nation are certain hard core, utterly perverse antagonists who are the enemies of God as well as the enemies of God's prophet. They deserve the punishment which Jeremiah has been threatening.

When the prophet asks God to pour out His wrath upon these hardened sinners there is no personal animosity or vindictiveness. Rather here as in similar prayers Jeremiah is jealous for the Lord his God. Verses 19-27 is a discourse urging the keeping of the Sabbath. Jeremiah regards the violation of the Sabbath as a serious offense. The sermon moves through three phases: exhortation, promise, and threat.

### **Verse 19**

Jeremiah is commissioned to preach this sermon in the gates of the city of Jerusalem. He is to start at that gate which was most frequently used by the kings. This gate, called "the gate of the children of the people," cannot be identified.

### **Verse 20**

He addresses his message to the kings of Judah, the population of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

### **Verse 21**

The question has been raised as to why Jeremiah uses the plural "kings." There is evidence in this period that the members of the royal family exercised considerable authority. Zedekiah, for example, seems to have been completely dominated by this group. The word "kings" is used loosely to refer to all the princes of the realm. Jeremiah's object in this message is to get the people to hallow the Sabbath day. Apparently, the Sabbath law was disregarded.

### **Verse 22**

Goods from far and near were being transported into the city and business was being conducted as usual on the seventh day. For this reason, Jeremiah calls upon the merchants to cease bringing goods into the city on the Sabbath and calls upon the people to cease bringing articles from their houses with which to barter for the produce of the merchants. He exhorts the inhabitants of Jerusalem to sanctify the Sabbath in the way in which God commanded their fathers to do.

### **Verse 23**

The fathers had rejected the commandment of God and as a result had suffered Divine correction. But even this Divine correction had not induced repentance on the part of the previous generation.

### **Verse 24**

The nation had continued on the path of disobedience until now. Judah was faced with the inevitable national destruction.

### **Verse 25**

If there was any manifestation of national repentance with regard to the Sabbath observance the city would be spared. Things would continue as usual with kings and the entourages passing through the gates of the city.

### **Verse 26**

From all parts of the territories of Judah and Benjamin men would continue to come to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice. The Shephelah, the Negev, and the hill country are the three geographical regions of Judah.

The Shephelah was the low land region which separated the coastal plains from the hill country.

The Negev was the region south of Beersheba. The different types of sacrifices of offerings enumerated prove conclusively that Jeremiah was opposed to sacrifice as such.

He mentions (1) burnt offerings, (2) sacrifices or peace offerings, (3) meal offerings, (4) incense, and (5) thanks offerings.



## **Verse 27**

If the people of Judah would only keep the Sabbath commandment business and worship would continue as usual. But if the exhortation to sanctify the Sabbath is ignored, then God will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem. Fire is symbolic of war.

God is always ready to receive the repentant sinner and forgive him. Jeremiah had been pleading with the people to put their trust in God alone. Now he urges them to show their faith by their works. By sanctifying the Sabbath day the inhabitants of Judah could demonstrate their faith in God.

If they really had faith in God they would not hesitate to sanctify the Sabbath. Of course, the generation of Jeremiah's day did not comply with the conditions stipulated in this sermon and consequently the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar.

## **Chapter 18**

Jeremiah learns an important theological truth through visiting the workshop of a potter.

### **Verses 1-2**

Jeremiah received instructions from the Lord to go down to the house of the potter where God would reveal to him something of vital significance for His people. The verb "go down" suggests that the potter's workshop was located in the lower part of the city.

### **Verse 3**

When Jeremiah arrived, the potter was at work on his wheel—two circular stones connected by a vertical axis. The lower disk was worked by the foot. This in turn set in motion the upper disk upon which the potter worked the clay.

### **Verse 4**

As Jeremiah observed the potter at work he noticed that the emerging vessel developed some imperfection which displeased the eye of that artisan. The

potter rolled the clay into a lump again and reshaped it into an object that met his approval.

The major lesson here is that the potter can do with the clay as he pleases. When the wet clay becomes marred he can finish that vessel in its imperfection, cast it aside or create a new vessel out of the clay.

### **Verses 5-6**

The nation of Israel is but clay in the hands of the Divine Potter. He can dispose of them as he wills. If the nation yields and submits to the working of the Divine hand, He will produce from it a beautiful and useful vessel. But if Israel refuses to allow the Potter to have his way then Israel will be discarded and God will start all over again with a new creation.

No one should attribute such errors of judgment to the Divine Potter. Clay is inanimate and material. The human heart possesses the power to willfully rebel against the Potter. Man can choose to be pliable in the hands of the Creator or to be as hard as sun baked clay. Every child of God should be praying: "Have thine own way Lord, Have thine own way. Thou are the Potter, I am the clay."

### **Verses 7-10**

A most important principle emerges in these verses. Simply stated the principle is this: Neither God's threat nor His enemies are unconditional. The attitude of God toward any people depends entirely upon their response to Him. He is not an arbitrary God ruled by whims or fancies. He is the God of unchanging justice and mercy. God may decree the destruction of a nation and give no hint that the nation can survive. Yet if that nation repents of its sin God will rescind the execution order.

One thinks immediately of Jonah's mission to Nineveh. "Yet in forty days and Nineveh shall be over thrown," he cried.

### **Verse 11**

Great theological truths are not to be jealously guarded but freely shared with all who will receive it. So it is that Jeremiah is told to proclaim the great truth that he has discovered at the potter's house.

The Lord is in the process of forming and planning the destruction of the nation. Great theological truths are not to be jealously guarded but freely shared with all who will receive them.

So it is that Jeremiah is told to proclaim the great truth that he has discovered at the potter's house. The Lord is in the process of forming and planning the destruction of the nation. Just as the potter crushed the marred vessel in his hand and began anew, so God is about to destroy Judah and start all over again.

In view of this impending disaster God pleads through his prophet for the people to repent.

### **Verse 12**

It is not too late if they will only turn to God. The men of Judah respond to this last-ditch effort to secure their repentance in the same language which they used in [chapter 2:25](#). "It is hopeless," they say.

The mood here is not one of despondency but one of defiance. The leaders are warning the prophet that it is useless for him to continue trying to convert them. They are saying, "We have chosen our path and we will continue to walk in it regardless of what you say the consequence will be."

### **Verse 13**

Jeremiah presses the point that the nation has a serious flaw of which the Divine Potter is acutely aware. Judah's horrible sin, unheard of among foreign nations, is that she has rejected her God. A virgin should keep herself undefiled for her future husband; but the virgin of Israel has defiled herself with the worship of heathen deities.

### **Verse 14**

That this national apostasy is unnatural is brought out by two questions.

1. "Does the snow of Lebanon depart from the rock of the field?"

The summit of Lebanon is snow-capped the year around. The snow does not leave the mountain even in the hottest weather.

2. "Shall the strange, cold flowing waters be dried up?"

The reference here is probably to the mountain streams which perpetually flow down the slopes of the Lebanon mountains. These waters are called strange or foreign because they are not Israel.

### **Verse 15**

The basic implication of the two questions is that nature pursues her course unchanged whereas Judah has unnaturally changed her course. They have offered incense to vanities or nothingness. The idols have been major stumbling blocks in the paths of the men of Judah. The people of God have forsaken the old paths to walk in by-paths. Instead of the ancient, well-marked paths of righteousness the people of God had chosen rather to walk in footpaths which were not clearly defined and led to no place. Such paths are unfit for any child of God to trod!

### **Verse 16**

The inevitable result of abandoning the God-ordained way is desolation and destruction. All who pass by will be amazed, shocked and astonished at what has befallen the once proud little nation of Judah. They will wag their heads in a scornful sneer at the wicked and stupid folly of the people who had forsaken their God.

### **Verse 17**

God will scatter the men of Judah before their enemies just as men scatter and seek refuge when the torrid east wind, the so-called sirocco, begins to sweep in from the desert. God will turn His back upon them in that day of calamity and He will not listen to their cries for help.

### **Verses 18-23**

Jeremiah experiences the third personal crisis of his ministry.

### **Verse 18**

Any man of God who preaches the word of God with boldness will inevitably make enemies. Their patience exhausted, the enemies of Jeremiah secretly began making plans to rid themselves of the prophetic pest. After all, they had

priests, the wise men and other prophets, so why should they tolerate a dangerous preacher like Jeremiah.

Thus, the enemies plan to “smite Jeremiah with the tongue” that is, to slander him and make lying accusations against him. By twisting his words, they hoped to turn the masses against him and perhaps lay the ground work which would result in legal action against the prophet.

There were three groups within ancient Israelite society from which one might receive divine instruction.

The priests of Jeremiah’s day had not been mindful of their high mission. The second class of religious instructors were the wise men, who in Jeremiah’s day had become worldly wise. They were strictly political counselors or statesmen who judged matters purely from the standpoint of logic and not faith.

The third class of religious teachers were the prophets. These men were to deliver to the people the word or oracle which was revealed to them by God from time to time.

Throughout his ministry Jeremiah seems to have been in constant conflict with the prophets. These men had not received a heavenly call to the prophetic office nor did they receive genuine revelations from God. They were professionals who maintained their positions by giving oracles which were pleasing to both the general populace and the ruling powers.

### **Verse 19**

Jeremiah became aware of the plot against him. But when he hears what his enemies have planned for him he cries out to God asking Him to take note of the threat against His messenger.

### **Verse 20**

Jeremiah cannot understand why he is the object of such a vicious plot. He has preached bluntly but always with the ultimate good of his people at heart. He had wept for his people, pled with them and interceded for them at the throne of grace. He was the only true friend that the nation really had.

When the people should be honoring him for what he was doing, they are instead plotting against him. Jeremiah is both perplexed and perturbed by this turn of events. Borrowing the terminology from the Psalmist he cries, “They are digging a pit for my soul!”

#### **Verse 21**

The prayer moves from narrative to petition. He prays that the sons of his enemies might experience famine and that they might be delivered over to, that is, poured out to, the power of the sword.

The meaning is that the young soldiers would be thrust upon the sword until their life-blood had been poured out. He prays that the wives of his enemies will become childless and widows.

#### **Verse 22**

He prays that the homes of his enemies might be plundered by a troop of enemy soldiers.

#### **Verse 23**

He asks God not to pardon these men and to deal with them in the time of divine anger.

Note: Several points need to be considered in interpreting this difficult prayer.

1. The imprecation is not hurled at the nation as a whole but at those enemies who plotted his death.
2. “The prophets were neither vegetables nor machines but men of like passions with ourselves.
3. This outburst does not represent Jeremiah at his best and is uttered in a moment of exasperation.
4. The anger of the prophet is aroused not so much because he personally is being attacked as because God was being rejected in the person of His prophet. To blaspheme the Lord’s messenger is to blaspheme the Lord Himself.

5. The particular blasphemy which the enemies hurled at Jeremiah was that his prophecies had not been fulfilled and that consequently he was a false prophet. Jeremiah now is calling upon God to execute those threats which he has so boldly proclaimed.
6. The prophet does not pray for these hardened people because the Lord has already indicated His unwillingness to forgive.
7. Precedents for such prayers of imprecation can be found in Psalms. Jeremiah may have been borrowing the language of the Psalms in formulating this prayer.

## **Chapter 19**

### **Verse 1**

Jeremiah needed to make certain preparations before he preached his next message.

1. He is told to purchase the clay vessel of a potter, that is, a vessel fashioned by a potter.
2. Then he is told to gather the elders of the people and the elders of the priests to hear his message.

### **Verse 2**

The exact location of this message is specified by the Lord. Jeremiah is to take his audience to the edge of the valley of Hinnom in front of the gate Harsith or gate of the potter.

### **Verse 3**

The valley of Hinnom where human sacrifices had been practiced must surely have been a source of embarrassment to these leaders of the people. The gate at which the sermon was delivered got its name no doubt from the scraps of pottery which were thrown there.

The strange procession—Jeremiah and his bottle leading the ruling priests and civil authorities—must have attracted a curious crowd of onlookers as it made its way through the streets of Jerusalem toward the gate of the potter.

Jeremiah delivered a message of doom to that group of dignitaries. A calamity is about to fall upon the land so severe that when people hear of it their ears will tingle.

#### **Verse 4**

Jeremiah accuses his audience of making the city and land a heathen place by introducing foreign cults and practices and filling the land with the blood of innocents.

#### **Verse 5**

The “blood of innocents” may refer to the murder of those who opposed the wicked idolatry or it may refer to the children who were offered as sacrifices to the pagan gods. Such sacrifices were absolutely contrary to the will and purpose of the Lord. The term Baal is used loosely here for the god Molech, the pagan god who demanded child sacrifice.

#### **Verse 6**

Jeremiah announces the judgment which is about to fall on Judah in language which he had used on previous occasions. Pointing in the direction of that abominable valley Jeremiah declares that no longer will the place be called Topheth, that is, fireplace; nor will it be known by the name of its former owner, “Valley of Hinnom”. Because of the great slaughter which will fall upon the land that valley will be used as a burial place for the dead and henceforth will be designated, “Valley of Slaughter”.

#### **Verse 7**

God will empty out the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem. The verb translated “empty out” is derived from the same Hebrew root as the word for “bottle” and may have been chosen by the prophet for this reason. Perhaps Jeremiah slowly poured out the contents of the bottle as he referred to the emptying out of the counsel of Jerusalem. The word “counsel” points to worldly wisdom;



counsel, which is grounded in political expediency rather than in commitment to God.

No doubt the counselors in the royal court of Judah thought there was more benefit to be derived from treaties with foreign powers than from complete reliance on the power of God. But their counsel will fail. Many will fall by the sword of the enemy making burial impossible. The bodies of the fallen men of Judah will lie exposed to the birds and beasts of the land.

### **Verse 8**

The city of Jerusalem will become such a desolation that all who pass by its ruins will hiss or whistle in astonishment at the extent of the devastation.

### **Verse 9**

In the desperate hour of siege, the last vestige of parental love shall disappear. People would resort to cannibalism. (Deuteronomy 28:53) God had warned His people in the Law of Moses that they might be brought into such straits if they were unfaithful to Him.

### **Verse 10**

The smashing of the bottle here reminds one of the practice current in Egypt where the names of enemy nations were written on pots or jars which were then smashed. The smashing of the bottle was magically transferred to the nations whose names were written on the jar. The prophet wished to dramatically make his point that the nation would be smashed as easily as the brittle Palestinian pottery is smashed when it falls to the ground.

### **Verse 11**

When the nation is broken the dead will be so numerous that even the unclean site of Topheth in the valley of Hinnom would have to be used for a burial site.

### **Verse 12**

The entire city would become as Topheth, unclean by virtue of the bones of human sacrifices and by virtue of the official desecration of King Josiah.

### **Verse 13**

The houses of Jerusalem upon which incense was offered and libations poured out to pagan gods would be desecrated by the dead bodies which would fall in the city. The roofs of buildings were flat and could be used for various purposes including religious exercises. Several passages make mention of the fact that idolatry was practiced upon the roofs of the houses.

Tablets have been found at Ras Shamra in Syria containing a ritual to be followed in making offerings to the heavenly bodies upon the housetops.

### **Verse 14**

The prophet had pronounced his message of doom so courageously and boldly that no one dared interrupt him or raise a hand against him. So he leaves the Valley of Hinnom and returns to the Temple area to preach to the throngs there.

### **Verse 15**

The message preached in the Temple court was one of judgment.

## **Chapter 20**

### **Verse 1**

Pashur the priest who was chief overseer in the house of the Lord heard that sermon. Pashur was second in authority to the high priest. His duty was to see that no unauthorized person entered the Temple area and that no disturbance was committed within the courts.

### **Verse 2**

Pashur “smote Jeremiah” which probably means the prophet was scourged with forty stripes. He then ordered that Jeremiah be put in stocks, a device which distorts or twists the body, or forces it into a cramped posture. In the case of Jeremiah, the stocks were in public, “in the upper Benjamin gate which was in the house of the Lord.”

### **Verse 3**

The tribe of Benjamin lay north of Jerusalem. This gate was probably on the north side of the Temple. The phrase “which was in the house of the Lord” serves to distinguish this gate from the city gate of the same name.

When Jeremiah was released from the stocks the next morning he had a special message for Pashur. “The Lord has not called your name Pashur but Magor-missabib.

### **Verse 4**

Pashur’s new name means “terror round about.” This symbolic name signifies one who is surrounded by horror on all sides and who becomes an object of horror and fear to himself and to others. Pashur would live to see his friends slain by the sword and the rest of the men of Judah either slain or taken captive to Babylon.

### **Verse 5**

All the wealth of the nation will be given by the Lord to the enemies of Judah and the national treasures will be taken to Babylon along with the captives.

### **Verse 6**

Pashur himself and the members of his household would be taken to Babylon where they would all die and be buried. For a misguided patriot like Pashur the worst fate imaginable would be to die and be buried in a foreign land.

It is not the personal mistreatment of Jeremiah that brought about this extreme prophecy of personal doom to Pashur. Rather it is the fact that he had prophesied lies.

Some have conjectured that Pashur was the leader of the pro-Egyptian party in Judah. Perhaps this would account for his fierce opposition to Jeremiah.

### **Verses 7-18**

In his public confrontation with Pashur Jeremiah had remained as firm as a rock. Now in his private moments with God he breaks down completely. He looks upon his ministry not as a high privilege but as an intolerable burden. He

is discouraged with his task; he is disgruntled with his God. This is the fourth personal crisis in the ministry of Jeremiah.

### **Verse 7**

In this bitter moment Jeremiah accuses God of deceiving him. Of course this accusation against God is absolutely false. God has not deceived His prophet in the least about his mission. He had pointedly warned His prospective prophet that his mission was fraught with danger and disappointment.

The accusation continues: “You completely overpowered me,” literally, you took hold of me and you prevailed. Jeremiah seems to be complaining that he was compelled against his own will to preach the word of God. Now because of the nature of his ministry Jeremiah has become the object of ridicule and mockery.

### **Verse 8**

Jeremiah could face physical torture without flinching but he seems to cringe before the barbs of ridicule. He blames his plight upon the nature of his message. He must be a prophet of doom. He must constantly cry, “Violence! Destruction!” This message had brought him nothing but reproach and derision.

### **Verse 9**

A tremendous battle rages in the heart and mind of this sensitive man of God. On the one hand he wanted to resign his ministry and retreat to the peaceful and quiet life at Anathoth. He could not bear to face the prospect of continued ridicule and opposition. He wanted to forget all about his recent unpleasant experience and never preach another sermon again. On the other hand his heart was burdened with a sense of prophetic obligation and divine mission.

The fire of God’s wrath against sin burns fiercely within him. He tries to hold it back but cannot. He becomes utterly exhausted from trying to fight his compulsion to preach.

### **Verse 10**

Jeremiah knows the dangers attendant upon his resumption of the prophetic ministry. He knows his enemies are plotting against him. They hope that he will take one false step so that they may take advantage of it. Perhaps, they think, the prophet can be enticed or seduced into making some mistakes or saying something on which a charge of treason can be based.

These enemies will stop at nothing. They are out for revenge against the meddling prophet who had dared contradict the pro-Egypt policy and pronounce the doom of their nation.

### **Verse 11**

The light seems to suddenly shine through Jeremiah's personal gloom and the prophet bursts forth in expressions of joyous trust in God. He suddenly seems to realize that God is on his side after all. Perhaps he recalls the words of promise given to him at the time of his call: "They shall not overcome! For I am with you to deliver you!"

The Lord, a fearsome warrior, will fight the battles of His prophet. Those enemies who are plotting, whispering, and watching would not succeed. On the contrary they will stumble and fall and experience eternal shame.

### **Verse 12**

Jeremiah simply resolves to lay his case at the feet of the Judge of all the earth knowing that He will do right. He alone is qualified to test and judge the righteous, for He alone can observe the inward thoughts and motives. Jeremiah is confident that he will be vindicated at the judgment bar of God and that his enemies will experience the vengeance of the living God who is a consuming fire.

### **Verse 13**

So confident is Jeremiah of deliverance from his foes that he bursts forth in a song of praise to his Divine Deliverer. Faith has been victorious over doubt.

### **Verse 14**

From the mountain top of victorious faith Jeremiah plunges suddenly, unexpectedly, unexplainably into the abyss of despair and self-pity. His sights have suddenly dropped from the Righteous Judge who reigns above to the wicked men who plot against him here below.

His song of praise has turned to bitter lament. Like Job before him, he curses the day of his birth.

### **Verse 15**

When news came that a son had been born, Jeremiah's father rejoiced exceedingly. How ironic! The father rejoices over the birth of one who would live a life of tragedy. Cursed be the man who brought that "good news" to my father, cries the prophet.

### **Verse 16**

He wishes that this messenger would experience the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. He hopes that this messenger will hear the cry of the terrified inhabitants of the city when the enemy comes smashing through the walls in the morning hours of the day.

He hopes that at noontime this man will hear the bloodthirsty battle cry of the invaders as they plunder the city.

### **Verse 17**

Why such a curse on this anonymous messenger? Because he should have slain me when I was born or else simply left me in my mother's womb.

### **Verse 18**

Jeremiah simply could not understand why God would allow him to be born only to suffer such heartache, pain, distress, and disgrace. Sinful, weak and frail as Jeremiah proved to be God could forgive him and still use him. The Lord does not reject His servant because of this momentary outburst.

## **Chapters 21-24**

This section begins with a reply to King Zedekiah which is followed by general remarks directed to the royal house. Next are three oracles directed to Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin.

Chapter 23 begins with a promise of an ideal ruler who is to come and continues with a lengthy condemnation of the false prophets. The section closes with a vision and the interpretation of it.

## **Chapter 21**

### **Verses 1-14**

A new Pharaoh had taken the throne, Pharaoh Hophra who was hoping to re-establish Egypt as a world power. He at once challenged the Babylonian supremacy.

City after city in Judah was falling to the Chaldeans. Having no one to whom to turn to except the man of God, Zedekiah sent a delegation to Jeremiah. This chapter contains the appeal of the king, the answer of the prophet, advice to the people, and the alternatives for the royal house.

### **Verse 1**

Zedekiah selected two men to form his delegation to the prophet. Representing the civil authority was Pashur the son of Malchiah. This is not the same Pashur who appeared in chapter 20 as a high-ranking priest and false prophet.

Representing the ecclesiastical authority was Zephaniah. He was second in rank to the high priest. Since Jeremiah had been for so long public enemy number one to the leaders in Jerusalem, it must have been very embarrassing for them to now seek him out for counsel and guidance.

### **Verse 2**

The delegation was in no position to make demands. Rather they humbly petition the prophet to inquire of the Lord for them. They seem to be expecting some positive response on the part of God. No doubt they fully expected Him to

intervene on behalf of Jerusalem in the present crisis even as He had done many years before when Sennacherib the Assyrian had besieged the city.

Zedekiah and his counselors and court theologians could not believe that God had abandoned them. They seem to have forgotten all that Jeremiah had been saying throughout his ministry.

#### **Verses 3-4**

Jeremiah was not impressed or flattered by the coming of this royal delegation. He does not hesitate a moment to fire back an oracle to the king. These soldiers who are attempting to defend the walls of Jerusalem will not be successful.

God Himself will “turn back” that is, render ineffective or inoperative, the defensive weapons of the armies of Judah. God will actually gather the Chaldean soldiers into the walls of Jerusalem.

#### **Verse 5**

He is still the God of might and miracle but He is now using that power in His wrath against His apostate people.

#### **Verse 6**

Not only is God directing the Chaldean attack against Jerusalem, He is about to unleash from His arsenal the weapons of plague and pestilence against His people.

#### **Verse 7**

Those who survive the terrible siege with its bloody assaults, its plague and famine the Lord will give into the ruthless hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Chaldeans will have no mercy or compassion upon those who fall into his hands.

#### **Verse 8**

To the gloomy message for King Zedekiah, Jeremiah adds an oracle addressed to the people in general. God places before His people the alternatives of life and death.



### **Verse 9**

The word “life” means escape from death. The way of death is to remain in the besieged city of Jerusalem; the way of life is surrender to the enemy.

### **Verse 10**

It would appear that not a few Jews followed this advice. Those who surrender, that is, fall away, to the enemy will be rewarded only by the preservation of their lives.

Resistance is useless for God has set His face against the city of Jerusalem for evil, that is, to destroy it, rather than for good, that is, to deliver the place. By continuing the struggle, the fanatical defenders of the city are in reality fighting against God. He will deliver Jerusalem into the hand of the king of Babylon. The torch will be put to the holy city. While there may be hope for individuals if they surrender, the doom of the city as whole is sealed.

### **Verse 11**

The third brief oracle which comes as a response to the inquiry of Zedekiah is a last-ditch appeal to the royal house.

### **Verse 12**

They can still save their city if they are willing to make a radical change in the national policy.

Two things are required:

1. First, they might be able to escape the unquenchable fire of divine wrath if they will immediately— “in the morning”—begin to practice and encourage social justice.

The king and his administration must judge with justice and deliver the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor.

### **Verse 13**

The word “oppressed” comes from a root which means to take by force, tear away, seize. The “oppressed” then are those who have had their rights or properties taken away by force, that is, by crooked justice.

2. The second thing that the royal house must do if disaster is to be averted is to cease their insane and irrational confidence in the inviolability of Jerusalem.

God declares that He is against Jerusalem, “the valley and rock of the plain.” Jerusalem and Mount Zion rise abruptly out of the surrounding valleys. The city is like an impregnable rock which juts up from a plain.

Because of the superior defenses of the city the Jewish defenders were confident of their ability to withstand the invader. “Who shall come into our habitation?” they boasted.

#### **Verse 14**

The confidence manifested by the Jerusalem leadership was ill-founded in view of the fact that God was punishing His people. “According to the fruit of your deeds” points to the fact that the punishment would correspond to the sins committed against God and man. Because of all of her crimes God will kindle a fire in the forest of Jerusalem, that is, in the houses of the city, and that fire will consume everything.

### **Chapter 22**

#### **Verse 1**

At some point during the reign of Jehoiakim God sent Jeremiah to the house of the king with an oracle directed to the royal family.

In this oracle Jeremiah stresses the obligations of the royal house and promises that if these obligations are met then the dynasty of David would continue. But if the words of God are ignored then the nation is doomed to destruction.

#### **Verse 2**

The king and princes who passed through the gates of the palace each day may have been the lineal descendants of David but they certainly were not his spiritual descendants.

They were not men after God's own heart nor were they amenable to the rebuke of a prophet.

### **Verse 3**

The laws of the state were the laws of God. The king was responsible for enforcing the laws and establishing social justice in the land. Specifically, the king was to be the defender of the poor and helpless. But under the tyrant Jehoiakim, the Solomon of the last days of Judah, the people were being ruthlessly oppressed through government taxation in order that the king might undertake lavish building projects.

Jeremiah cries out the necessity for the king to cease oppressing the helpless ones of society—the strangers, orphans, and widows. Jeremiah also demands in the name of God that Jehoiakim cease his violence and the shedding of innocent blood. Jeremiah was putting his life on the line when he preached this sermon at the gates of the royal palace.

### **Verse 4**

To his list of royal obligations Jeremiah adds a promise which he has previously made. If the monarch will only heed the message of the prophet the Davidic line will continue to reign in Jerusalem.

### **Verse 5**

If the royal family chooses to reject their obligations then the most disastrous punishments will befall Jerusalem.

Because He could swear by no greater, God swears by Himself that the royal dwelling of the king of Judah would become desolate.

### **Verse 6**

Because of the height of this building and because it was constructed from cedar-wood the prophet called it figuratively "Gilead, the top of Lebanon."

God would bring destruction upon the kingdom of Judah, making that land a virtual wilderness.

### **Verse 7**

The divinely appointed destroyers will take their weapons and cut down the choice cedars of the land, that is, the princes and leaders of the nation.

### **Verse 8**

Foreigners who pass by the ruins of Jerusalem will ask one another why the Lord has dealt with the once proud city in this manner.

### **Verse 9**

They will rightly conclude that the destruction has come upon the land because the people of the Lord forsook their covenant with Him and worshiped other gods.

### **Verse 10**

The death of Josiah was bitterly lamented. Even Jeremiah himself joined in the lamentation for this righteous man. By his premature death Josiah would be delivered from the horrors of those final years of Judah's history. But Jehoahaz would live out his life as a captive in a foreign land.

### **Verses 11-12**

Though some people apparently believed that Jehoahaz would shortly return from Egypt to reclaim his throne, Jeremiah knows this will not be the case. "He shall not return," cries the prophet. "He will never see this land again."

Note: The Shallum here is identical with the name Jehoahaz of 2 Kings. Shallum was his given name; Jehoahaz was his throne name.

### **Verse 13**

Jehoakim was placed on the throne of Judah by Pharaoh Necho when Jehoahaz was deported to Egypt in 609 B.C. The stupidity of this monarch was only equaled by his pride, cruelty and covetousness. Jehoiakim was not satisfied to occupy the palace which his father Josiah had occupied before him. He wanted a bigger and more luxurious home like the rulers of Egypt or Babylon.

With Solomon-like zeal this puny prince set about to build a magnificent palace. He forced his countrymen to labor on this ill-conceived project without remuneration.

Not even a king could demand unpaid services from his subjects! Thus Jehoiakim was building his house with “unrighteousness” and “injustice.”

#### **Verse 14**

And what a house that was to be—a roomy house with upper chambers and windows, the interior paneled with cedar and painted red.

#### **Verse 15**

Jeremiah drives home the point that there is more to being a king than surrounding oneself with luxury. By way of contrast to the pompous plans of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah points to the way that good king Josiah had conducted the affairs of the kingdom. Josiah ate and drank, that is, he enjoyed the comforts of his regal status. But at the same time, he established justice and righteousness in the land. As a result, Josiah prospered and was blessed of God because he put first things first.

#### **Verse 16**

A man who really knows the Lord will see and seek to alleviate human suffering.

#### **Verse 17**

Jehoiakim was the exact opposite of his godly father. Any “little people” who stood in his way were ruthlessly eliminated. His covetous eye and wicked heart were fixed on ill-gotten gain.

He would stop at nothing, even murder, to enlarge his holdings. Because of his flagrant wickedness Jehoiakim would meet with an exceedingly shameful end. It was customary in Judah as in all other countries of the ancient Near East for kings and nobles to be interred with regal pomp and to have special dirges recited over their graves.

Because he was universally loved, the whole nation lamented the death of godly King Josiah.

But no one will shed a tear when Jehoiakim passes from the scene. The word “Ah” is part of the vocabulary of lamentation and signifies extreme distress and sorrow.

No mourners will assemble at the tomb of Jehoiakim to express sympathy for one another upon the loss of a great king. Still less would any lamentation be heard at his death that mentioned the lordship of Jehoiakim or his glory.

### **Verse 19**

On the contrary Jehoiakim who loved to live in pomp and splendor would be buried with the burial of a donkey. The burial of a donkey would be no burial. The carcass of the animal would simply be left to rot in the open field. No specific passage states that the prophecy was fulfilled.

Divine punishment awaits the nation as well as the king. Under the figure of a woman, Israel is called upon to ascend the heights and bewail the fate of the country. The places named—Lebanon, Bashan, Abarim—were locations through which the Chaldeans would shortly pass on their sweep southward toward Judah.

### **Verses 20-21**

Everywhere the cry of lamentation is taken up as the enemy moves toward Jerusalem. No help arises from any quarter for all the “lovers” have been destroyed.

### **Verse 22**

Judah’s shepherds, her political and religious leaders, will be driven by the wind as they are swept away into exile. The political lovers, allied nations in whom Israel trusted, will also go into captivity. The men of Judah will be ashamed and perplexed as they come to realize the terrible evil which they have committed against their God.

### **Verse 23**

Hitherto Jerusalem had enjoyed security like a bird nestled among the cedars in the high mountains of the Lebanon range. For this reason, Jeremiah addresses the residents of Jerusalem as “inhabitants of Lebanon.” The use of the figure Lebanon for Jerusalem is also appropriate in view of the fact that so many of the palaces and official buildings of that city were built of cedar wood from the Lebanon mountains. Jeremiah has nothing but pity for the proud city as he contemplates the terrible agony which she must shortly endure, an agony comparable only to that suffered by a woman in travail.

### **Verse 24**

Jeremiah now adds an oracle dealing with the fate of Coniah whose name was Jehoiachin. God declares that even if Coniah were a signet upon his finger He would pull him off and cast him away. Because of its importance the signet ring in antiquity was highly valued and guarded against any possible loss. That ring impressed into a bit of warm wax on a document made the document legally binding. God swears with an oath formula (“as I live”) that Jehoiachin will be removed from this royal dignity.

### **Verse 25**

Not only will God remove Jehoiachin from the throne of Judah, but He will see to it that the king is delivered into the hands of the ruthless Nebuchadnezzar.

### **Verse 26**

He along with the queen-mother, the influential Nehushta, will be taken into the distant land of Babylon where they will die.

### **Verse 27**

To die in a foreign land was considered one of the worst fates which could befall a man. The prophecy was fulfilled in 597 B.C. when Jehoiachin and the royal family were deported in chains to Babylon.

He was released after thirty-seven years of captivity by the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach. (Jehoiachin must have died in Babylon before the restoration of the Jews in 537 B.C. or else he surely would have been made the leader of the returnees at that time.)

The prophet describes what he knows the attitude of the captives will be. They will long to return to Palestine but will not be permitted to do so.

### **Verse 28**

Jeremiah asks, "Is Coniah no better than a cracked piece of pottery which one might cast on the top of a trash pile?" Jeremiah seems to be reflecting a great deal of sympathy toward the young king who was destined to reign only three months on the throne of Judah.

Though Jehoiachin was but eighteen years old when taken captive he had wives and apparently "seed," that is, children.

### **Verse 29**

Jeremiah calls the entire land to listen to the announcements of the tragic fate of this king. "O land, land, land! Hear the word of the Lord!"

### **Verse 30**

The three-fold repetition of "land" anticipates the solemnity of the message which follows. "Write this man childless." The word "childless" is not to be taken here in the absolute sense since verse 28 already has mentioned the "seed" or children of Jehoiachin. Rather the meaning is that as far as the throne is concerned Jehoiachin would be childless. The rest of the verse makes this perfectly clear. No son of Jehoiachin would ever rule over Judah.

## **Chapter 23**

### **Verses 1-2**

The shepherds, the national leaders, are responsible for the impending destruction of the flock which God has committed into their care. Under the leadership of these unscrupulous men the people of the land had strayed from the



paths of fidelity to God. Not only did these leaders set the wrong example for the people, they also condoned and encouraged the violence and corruption which was rampant in the land. These leaders had not “visited” the flock of God. Therefore, God is about to visit these corrupt leaders.

### **Verse 3**

One can “visit” for the purpose of aiding or helping, or one can “visit” for the purpose of judging or punishing. The spiritual leaders of Judah did not “visit” the flock, that is, they did not care for or aid them or pay attention to them. Therefore, God will “visit” on them their evil deeds, that is, God will punish them for their wickedness.

The people are guilty for having tolerated and followed their wicked leaders. The corrupt shepherds who governed Judah were responsible for the impending national deportation and dispersing. But sometime in the future the Good Shepherd would again assemble His flock. Only a remnant, a small portion, of those who were carried away into captivity would ever return.

Upon returning to their homeland the remnant of Judah will be made fruitful and they will multiply.

### **Verse 4**

The wicked shepherds took care of themselves and not the flock; but the new shepherds will have the interest of the people at heart. The old shepherds had left the flock of God exposed to the ravishing of wild beasts; under the new shepherds the flock will continuously graze without fear. Not one of them will be lacking or missing due to any neglect on the part of the new shepherds.

### **Verses 5-6**

Who are the new shepherds of whom Jeremiah speaks? Some contend that he is referring to leaders like Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah whom God raised up to care for the remnant of Judah following the return from Babylon. Others think the prediction is Messianic and points to those leaders who serve under the Glorious Ruler who appears in these verses. The word “behold” indicates that a noteworthy announcement is about to be made.

After the days of humiliation at the hands of Babylon, God will raise up an ideal King to rule over the land. This ruler is of course none other than the long-awaited Messiah.

The following information can be gleaned from these verses concerning the coming Messiah.

1. The promised Messiah is to be the descendant of David.
2. The Messiah is called in the Standard English version a “branch.” The idea here is of a “sprout” or “shoot” which grows directly out of the ground. The title “shoot” is here applied unmistakably to the Messiah for the first time. In Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12 “shoot” becomes a proper name for the Messiah.
3. The Messianic Shoot is raised up by direct action of God.
4. The Messiah will be a righteous Shoot. All other descendants of David had to confess their sins and ask divine forgiveness.
5. The Messiah shall reign as king.
6. He shall deal wisely. The Messiah will have the insight and the intelligence to bring God’s plan of salvation to a successful completion.
7. The Messiah will execute justice and righteousness.
8. Israel and Judah will be united under the rule of the Messiah. The salvation and deliverance spoken of in verse 6 are spiritual blessings.
9. The Messiah shall bear the name “The Lord our Righteousness.” The phraseology used here is unique in the entire Old Testament: “And this is His name which one shall call Him.”

Note: The name given the Messiah here is not a mere label or tag. Rather it designates the very nature or essence of the Messiah. He IS righteousness!)

### **Verses 7-8**

In these verses the prophet moves back from the distant Messianic future to the more immediate future. Jeremiah speaks once again of the return from

Babylonian captivity. He never wavered on this proposition: God would bring a remnant of His people home from Babylon.

The promise is introduced by the word “therefore.” Whenever one sees in Scripture a “therefore” he ought to try to discover what it is there for. The suggestion here is that God lets His people return to their homeland as a preparation for the coming of the great Messianic Savior.

Since the Exodus from Egypt was foundational to the establishment of the old covenant and to all the theology of the Old Testament, it is no small matter for Jeremiah to state that the New Exodus from Babylon will supersede that earlier event in importance. Only when the Exodus from Babylon is seen as foundational to the establishment of the New Covenant is such a comparison justified.

### **Verses 9-40**

The question is, what prophets are addressed in this oracle? Jeremiah is not referring to the prophets of Baal, nor is he referring to the so called “sons of the prophets” who are described as true prophets of the Lord. The prophets against whom Jeremiah speaks out are men who were purporting to speak in the name of the Lord when they had received no revelation from Him.

The pseudo prophets apparently enjoyed a large measure of popular support in the days of Jeremiah probably because they tickled the ears of the people with the kind of preaching which they craved. In these verses Jeremiah points out the menace of false prophets and analyzes their message and their methods.

Finally, he blasts them for the way they caused the people to mock the true messenger of God.

### **Verse 9**

Jeremiah did not fit the stereotype of the hell-fire and damnation preacher. As he contemplated the guilt of his people and their impending destruction his heart is broken, his bones shake in terror.

### **Verse 10**

Four reasons for the grief and distress of the prophet are given.

1. Jeremiah is upset because of the Lord and His word.

### **Verse 10**

2. Jeremiah is grief-stricken because of the sinfulness of the masses. The land is full of adultery.

Both literal and spiritual adultery is doubtlessly meant. The course of the people, their way of life, that which they pursue is only evil.

3. The condition of the land brings the prophet much distress. The curse here is that with which God punishes the wicked. The earth mourns because it is unable to bring forth its produce. The pastures are dried up.

### **Verse 11**

4. But the greatest burden to the heart of Jeremiah was the condition of the spiritual leaders of the land.

Both the priests and the prophets were profane, unholy, and disobedient to the commands of God. In the very Temple of God evidence of their wickedness could be found.

### **Verse 12**

Up to this point the false prophets had pursued their evil course with assurance; but now God will make their way slippery and dangerous as they plunge forward into the darkness of sin. This year of visitation, that is, the time of their punishment, will overtake them.

### **Verse 13**

In the eyes of God, the prophets of Judah were more wicked, than the prophets of Samaria. Those Baal prophets of the north had been found to be unseemly, that is unsalted, tasteless. They had caused God's people in the north to err.

### **Verse 14**

But the prophets of Judah were far worse. They themselves were immoral and unscrupulous and furthermore; through their false prophecies they strengthened the hands of those who engaged in evil practices. They did not preach repentance or judgment and consequently no man turned away from his evil deeds.

### **Verse 15**

From the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness had spread throughout the land. Good prophets may not have much of an impact upon society. But let reports of evil conduct on the part of clergymen spread throughout the land and every sinner will use it as an excuse to commit even greater evils. These prophets who preached such a disastrous message and set such a terrible example will be forced to partake of the wormwood and the gall. Gall is a bitter poisonous plant which here symbolizes divine judgment.

The preachers are depicted here as suffering the same fate as the people to whom they preached. There is no exemption for the clergy when it comes to divine judgment.

### **Verse 16**

The prophets of Judah are bolstering the false hopes of the people with false prophecies. Jeremiah calls for the people to repudiate these deceivers. Their prophecies did not come from the mouth of the Lord but from the vain imaginations of their own hearts. Giving heed to such empty prophecies would only cause the people to act in a vain and foolhardy way.

### **Verse 17**

To the hardened and rebellious sinners of Judah these men were giving assurance that all would be well. "The Lord has said, "You shall have peace. No calamity will befall you!"

### **Verse 18**

By means of two rhetorical questions Jeremiah denies the authority of the false prophets and at the same time implicitly affirms his own inspiration.

1. “Who has stood in the council of the Lord that he might see and hear His word?”

The answer is obvious. Corrupt men like the false prophets could never have stood in the presence of God.

The picture here is of the heavenly council chambers. True prophets are privy to the decisions of God relating to the children of men.

The second rhetorical question points to another way in which man can ascertain the will of God.

2. “Who has paid attention to His word and heard it?” When one gives heed to the word of God as revealed in Scripture, he too can learn the will of God.

### **Verse 19**

The message which Jeremiah brought in the name of God was quite different from that which the false prophets brought. God’s judgment is already approaching like a whirlwind. The hurricane of divine wrath is upon them.

### **Verse 20**

Nothing will turn back God’s wrath. Attempting to thwart the plans of God by human means is as foolish as trying to take a tornado at the height of its fury.

### **Verse 21**

The term “end of days” has been explained in three ways.

1. Some think that the “end of days” refers to the consummation of the world.

The idea would then be that at the end of the age, possibly after the second coming of Christ, men will be able to understand clearly all of God’s dealings with men.

2. Others think that “end of days” refers to the Messianic age. (48:47; 49:39; Isaiah 2:2; Hosea 3:5)

The idea would then be that God's dealings with Israel would be placed in proper perspective when the Messiah comes.

3. A third view is that the term "end of days" simply means "in future days."

It is my view that "end of days" refers to the New Testament age.

God had not sent these prophets, yet they eagerly ran to assume their prophetic office. God had not spoken to them, yet they had the audacity to prophesy in His name.

#### **Verse 22**

As further proof that these men were deceivers Jeremiah points out that their preaching was not designed to effect any moral change. Their message had no rebuke for sin and no appeal for reformation. Therefore, these men cannot be true prophets of the Lord! If they truly had stood in the secret council of God they would be diligently laboring to turn people from their evil ways.

#### **Verse 23**

Jeremiah presents three rhetorical questions presenting deep theological truth.

1. "Am I a God near at hand and not a God far off?"

#### **Verse 24**

Unlike the pagan gods the Lord is not restricted to one place at a time. He was not restricted to a temple or a shrine. He dwells afar off where no man can approach Him, let alone manipulate Him.

2. "Can a man hide himself in secret places that I cannot see him?"

This second question brings out the thought of God's omniscience. God's vision and knowledge embrace all things happening on the earth. The remote past and the distant future are equally known to Him.

3. "Do not I fill the heavens and the earth?"

## **Verse 25**

This question points to the fact that God is omnipresent. He is everywhere at once. This transcendent, omniscient, omnipresent God is the Lord, God, the great I Am who is unlimited by space and time.

The false prophets have not escaped the notice of God. He has heard the lies which they have been prophesying in His name. These prophets boasted of their dreams as though the mere claim to having received revelation was sufficient to prove that they were prophets of God.

## **Verses 26-27**

The question here is whether or not dreams in the Old Testament were a legitimate mode of divine communication. Often prophets received communications from God in the night but these are called visions and not dreams. The present passage seems to discredit the false prophets on the grounds that they claimed to receive divine revelation through dreams.

Two questions are asked in these verses. The first question is quite general: How much longer will these men continue their deception and falsehood. The second question is more penetrating, probing the possible motives of the false prophets. False doctrine is as dangerous as idolatry. Jeremiah's generation was in as much danger of being deceived by a false theology as their fathers who had been deceived by Baal worship.

## **Verse 28**

There is nothing wrong with these men relating their dreams. They should make it very clear that they are relating only a dream and nothing more. They should not pretend that these dreams are divine revelation.

Chaff and wheat, the word of God and the dreams of men, must be kept separate. That which is worthless should never be allowed to contaminate in the least that which is pure.

Those who preach the word of God must speak it faithfully, honestly, and forthrightly.



## Verse 29

When this is done, the word of God has dynamic power to accomplish the purpose of God. The word of God is like fire: It burns the conscience, purifies the life, illuminates the mind, energizes the will, warms the heart, fuses the fellowship, and consumes the ungodly.

God's message for Jeremiah's day was a message of judgment, crushing like a hammer.

## Verses 30-32

Three times in these verses God declares that God is against the false prophets.

His opposition to them is three-fold.

1. They have stolen the words of God from their neighbors, that is, another prophet who had received a genuine revelation from God. What elements of truth may have been in the message of the false prophet were stolen.
2. They used the official prophetic formulas to give their utterances the aura of truth.

They used the word "oracle," a technical term used by a prophet whenever God put words in his mouth.

3. God opposes these prophets because they are causing the people to err.

The major trouble with false teachers is that they always gain a following. The people of Judah believed the lying dreams related to them by the false prophets. How presumptuous, how arrogant, how boastful of these men to claim to speak the word of God when in fact they had nothing more to share with their countrymen than their own wishful thinking.

Such men are of no value at all to a nation.

### **Verse 33**

The people of Judah and their religious leaders constantly mocked Jeremiah by asking him, “What is the burden (oracle) of the Lord?” The word “burden” in Hebrew can mean a heavy object or it can mean a weighty utterance. Whenever they would meet Jeremiah they would with a sneer ask the man of God, “What new BURDEN (ORACLE) do you have for us, you prophet of doom?” The next time that question is put to him Jeremiah is instructed to say, “You are the burden!”

### **Verse 34**

Whoever continues to mockingly use the term “burden” will be punished by God.

### **Verse 35**

If a person in the future wished to inquire concerning the word of the Lord he should adopt new terminology. He should ask, “What is the answer” or “What is the word of the Lord?”

### **Verse 36**

Those who persist in using the term “burden” (oracle) will find that their own words will be a burden which will crush them to the ground.

By peddling their sugar-coated lies as being a “burden” (oracle) from the Lord these prophets were not only guilty of mockery they were also guilty of perverting the word of God.

### **Verse 37**

After issuing his warning concerning the use of the term “burden” Jeremiah turns to the false prophets and challenges them with a question: “What message do you have from the Lord?”

### **Verses 38-39**

If in their reply these deceivers use the forbidden term “burden” Jeremiah is to pronounce sentence over them. God will utterly forget them and remove them from His presence, that is, cause them to go into captivity.

## **Verse 40**

The scoffers and deceivers who made a reproach out of the word of God would themselves become an object of shame and reproach.

## **Chapter 24**

The terminology “the Lord showed me” or “caused me to see” introduces a prophetic vision. There are two types of prophetic visions in the Old Testament, the subjective and the objective. In the subjective vision, only the prophet sees the object in question. In the objective vision the object is visible to the physical eyesight. The vision of the two fig baskets falls into the category of objective vision. The Lord explains to Jeremiah the meaning of the basket of good figs and the basket of bad figs.

### **Verse 1**

Jeremiah seems to have been outside the Temple at the time of the vision. God directed his attention to two baskets of figs which had been left for some unexplained reason near the entrance of the Temple.

### **Verse 2**

Jeremiah noticed that the first basket contained good figs which were a delight to the eye, small figs which appear along with the first leaves of spring after ripening are called “first-ripe figs.” The first-ripe figs are considered a delicacy.

The prophet noticed that the other basket contained bad figs, so bad that they could not possibly be eaten.

### **Verse 3**

As is frequent in prophetic visions the Lord asked Jeremiah to relate what he had observed. The prophet quickly does so anticipating the interpretation of these symbols which follows.

### **Verses 4-5**

The good figs represent those who had been taken captive in 597 B.C. God is smiling upon those who have been carried away to Babylon.

But God saw in those captives who were in Babylon the nucleus of the New Israel. Perhaps the trip to far off Babylon had brought a change in the attitude of those Jews. While those who remained behind were still belligerent and rebellious the exiles were beginning to show signs of repentance.

### **Verse 6**

Though far from home and loved ones, from the Holy Land and the Temple, yet they were not beyond the tender and loving watchful care of their God. As long as they were in captivity God's eye would be upon them.

### **Verse 7**

This restoration will be possible because they shall get acquainted with God all over again. When they return to God with all their heart they shall be reinstated as the people of God and the Lord will give them a heart and mind to truly know Him.

Repentance precedes restoration. Only those who come to the Lord through faith, repentance and obedience are part of the people of God. Salvation is by grace, not race.

### **Verse 8**

The basket of bad figs is symbolic of those who had not been taken into captivity in 597 B.C., those to whom Jeremiah was to proclaim the word of God. God would "make" Jerusalem like the basket of bad figs. This probably means that in His permissive will God would allow these hardened sinners to continue in their course of obstinacy and rebellion until they finally were fit for nothing but destruction.

The phrase "who dwell in the land of Egypt" refers to those who were taken captive by Pharaoh Necho in 609 B.C. when king Jehoahaz was deported and sent to Egypt in chains.

### **Verse 9**

The future of those rotten figs, those who remained in Judah, was far from bright. God will give them over to all kingdoms of the earth, that is, they will be

scattered far and near. These fugitives would be ridiculed and mistreated by foreigners.

### **Verse 10**

Those who were not able to flee the doomed land would die by the sword of the enemy and by the famine and plague which were the direct results of enemy invasions. Thus, by one means or another the nation of Judah would be utterly consumed from upon the land which God had given to their fathers.

## **Chapter 25**

This chapter is one of the most important chapters in the entire book of Jeremiah. After a brief introduction Jeremiah speaks of God's judgment on Judah, Babylon, surrounding nations, and finally the whole world.

Chronologically chapter 25 precedes the last four chapters.

### **Verse 1**

Jeremiah was aware of the tremendous importance of the year 605 B.C., the fourth year of Jehoiakim and the first year of Nebuchadnezzar.

### **Verse 2**

The battle of Carchemish was certainly one of the most important battles in ancient history and perhaps in all history. Control of the world was at stake. Jeremiah had been speaking in somewhat vague terms about the approach of an enemy from the north. He now sees his prophecies fulfilled.

This was the year in which the first of four recorded deportations to Babylonia took place.

Just before the armies of Nebuchadnezzar arrived, Jeremiah is bidden to make one last appeal to his country-men for repentance.

### **Verse 3**

For some twenty-three years Jeremiah had been preaching the word of God to the people of Judah but they had not hearkened. His ministry had begun in

the thirteenth year of Josiah. Throughout this period Jeremiah had been receiving divine revelations and had been communicating them to the people. But in spite of the earnestness of Jeremiah throughout his ministry the people had not been receptive.

#### **Verse 4**

God had sent other prophets besides Jeremiah to plead with the people of Judah. The people of Judah had more than one opportunity to hear the message of the Lord. It was not merely a dislike for the personality of Jeremiah which had caused the people to reject his message, for they had rejected others before him.

#### **Verse 5**

One by one those prophets had come before the nation to urge the people to abandon their evil practices in order that they might continue to dwell in the land which God had given to their fathers.

#### **Verse 6**

God's gift of the promised land to the descendants of Abraham was conditional and the prophets of God set forth the conditions upon which the promised land could be retained. One of the foremost conditions was that the people cease to worship and serve other gods (idols, the work of their hands). If they would but cease this deliberate provocation of God, He would not harm them.

#### **Verse 7**

But the people would not harken to the earnest appeals of God's messengers. They continued to provoke God with idolatry to their own hurt.

#### **Verse 8**

When one disobeys God, he courts disaster! All of God's commandments are for the benefit and well-being of man. The people of Judah had not listened to and obeyed the word of God.

### **Verse 9**

Jeremiah makes mention of the powerful enemy from the north which was about to descend upon Judah. Nebuchadnezzar is about to sweep down upon Judah and her neighbors and utterly destroy them all. The tiny nations of Syria-Palestine would be so completely destroyed that travelers would hiss and whistle in astonishment at the desolate conditions of the lands. These desolations are not of brief duration but are perpetual, that is, they would last for a very long time.

### **Verse 10**

Silence will reign supreme in these lands. All joyous sounds as, for example, the voice of bridegroom and bride will cease. Even the sound of the millstones will cease because no one will be left to grind the grain.

The routine business of everyday life will cease. No light from oil lamps will illuminate the darkness of the night. There is absolutely no sign of life throughout the lands.

### **Verse 11**

The land of Judah will become so desolated that men will be astonished at what has taken place there. For seventy years Judah and the neighboring nations of Syria-Palestine will serve the king of Babylon.

### **Verse 12**

The Ruler of all nations will not allow Babylon to go unpunished for her crime against humanity. Babylon is merely a tool used by God for a time and then discarded.

Jeremiah makes a specific prediction that after seventy years of Babylonian world rule that nation too would be visited by the God of judgment.

To visit someone's sins upon them is to punish them for their wrong doings. The land of the Chaldeans would become a perpetual desolation.

### **Verse 13**

Every word which God had spoken and which Jeremiah had preached and written about Babylon would be fulfilled.

### **Verse 14**

God would recompense the Chaldeans for their wicked works. Many kings and great nations would again and again enslave the Chaldeans. Babylon fell first to the Medes and Persians, and then to the Greeks and Parthians.

### **Verse 15**

Jeremiah is here commanded to take the cup of wrath from the hand of God and cause the nations of the world to drink of it.

### **Verse 16**

The nations after drinking of that brew will become as intoxicated men, like raving lunatics. Their incoherence and utter confusion is brought about by news of the approach of the sword of the Lord, the armies which He will use to execute His judgment.

### **Verse 17**

Jeremiah relates that he complied with the commandment of the Lord and caused the nations of the world to drink of God's deadly cup.

Note: God told Jeremiah to pass a wine cup among the nations (verse 15) and he carried out the command (verse 17). The nations to whom he carried the cup apparently could reject it (verse 28). In verses 18-26 Jeremiah enumerates the nations to whom he carried the cup of God's wrath.

### **Verse 18**

First, of course, stands Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. The kings (Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah) and princes of Judah shall drink of the cup of judgment and their land will become desolate, a horrible and shocking sight "as at this day."



## Verses 19-26

This episode of the wine cup of wrath must have occurred not long after the invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C.

The foreign nations which were required to drink the cup of God's judgment are fourteen in number.

1. Egypt is the southernmost country named.
2. The location of the land of Uz is uncertain. It seems to have been in close proximity to Edom. Job was a citizen of this land.
3. Philistia to the southwest of Judah would next taste the cup. Four of the major Philistine cities, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod are named specifically. Of Ashdod, only a remnant remained after the siege and capture by Pharaoh Psammetichus I (663-609 B.C.)
- 4, 5, 6. The Transjordan kingdoms of Edom, Moab, and Ammon are next named.
7. Phoenicia with her two major cities of Tyre and Sidon and her overseas colonies would also drink from the cup.
- 8, 9, 10. Three tribes of northern Arabia, Dedan, Tema, and Buz are next named.
11. The kings of Arabia and the mingled people who are associated with them will also taste of the judgment of God.
12. Zimri as the name of a people is not found elsewhere. Some relate this people to the desert tribes just mentioned while others associate them with the two kingdoms named along with Zimri in verse 25.
13. Elam, east of Babylon, had already begun to fade as an independent people and was shortly to be absorbed by the Medes and later by Persia.
14. The Medes were one of the most powerful nations of Jeremiah's day. They were located east of Assyria and north of Elam. They had been instrumental in the overthrow of Nineveh in 612 B.C. Media did

merge with Persia under the leadership of Cyrus the Great. The Medo-Persian empire fell before the armies of Alexander the Great.

The Lord indicates that many other nations must also drink of the cup of destruction. Kings of the north, some near and some distant, indeed all kingdoms of the civilized world drink of that deadly cup.

But last of all the king of Sheshach would drink of that deadly cup. Sheshach is a cipher, a cryptic way of writing the name Babylon.

### **Verse 27**

As Jeremiah hands his symbolic cup to each nation he is to instruct them to drink its contents. They will, he predicts, begin to act as intoxicated men, staggering, vomiting, and falling. But that is one stupor from which they would never awake.

Thus, does Jeremiah picture in figurative language the irrational, incoherent and helpless behavior as Nebuchadnezzar marches against the land.

### **Verse 28**

If the representatives to whom he offers the symbolic cup refuse to receive it from his hand, Jeremiah is to assure them that they must indeed drink the cup of divine destruction whether or not they cooperate sipping from the symbolic cup.

### **Verse 29**

The rationale for the impending destruction of the nations is very simple. God had already begun to bring judgmental calamity upon the beloved city of Jerusalem, the city where His Temple stood, the city where some of His faithful worshipers lived.

Jerusalem is called by the name of God, that is, it belonged to Him, it was His special city. If Jerusalem must taste of divine wrath, do the nations think they shall escape scot-free? They too will suffer at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, the divinely appointed sword.

**Verses 30-38**, contain a poetic description of the worldwide judgment of the Lord.

### **Verse 30**

In this verse the prophet presents two of the four pictures of the Lord in the act of executing judgment upon the wicked.

1. Like a lion about to pounce upon the prey the God of holiness roars from His heavenly habitation against His pasture or sheepfold. The tender shepherd of Israel has turned into a Roaring Lion because of the wickedness of His people.
2. As those who tread the grapes shout while they press the grapes, so the Lord will raise the victorious shout as the wicked of the earth fall beneath His feet.

### **Verse 31**

In this verse the prophet presents two more pictures of the Lord in the act of executing judgment upon the wicked.

1. As a prosecutor reads his indictment against the accused, so the Lord enters into a controversy, that is, a court case, with the nations of the world.
2. He not only prosecutes the nations but He also announces judgment against them. It is as a righteous judge pronouncing sentence against the guilty that God decrees desolation and war for the whole earth.

The “noise” in this verse refers to the tumult of warfare.

### **Verse 32**

God will raise up against the nations of the world a tempest of whirlwind from the “uttermost parts of the earth” refers to the north country and therefore it is obvious that the prophet has in mind Babylon. This whirlwind of divine wrath will sweep from nation to nation.

### **Verse 33**

Those slain by this agent of God will fill the earth. So many will die that customary funeral rites will have to be abandoned. Unburied and unlamented corpses will lie upon the face of the earth.

### **Verse 34**

Neither shepherds (rulers) nor lords of the flock (rich and influential people) will escape. The days of slaughtering other nations, deporting and scattering captive peoples, are ended. The nations of the world in all their glory shall fall and be broken like a precious vessel which has fallen to the ground.

### **Verse 35**

Sometimes high-ranking officials, escape the fate of common people in times of warfare. But from the divine judgment coming upon the world there will be no escape for anyone.

### **Verse 36**

The proud and pompous world leaders will howl in agony and cry out in distress as they see their pasture, the land which they rule, devastated.

### **Verse 37**

The perfect pastoral regions (“peaceful folds”) will be reduced to silence because neither man nor flock will be there anymore.

### **Verse 38**

Their land has become an appalling waste because the Lion, the Lord of Hosts, has left His lair. God has become a Fierce Destroyer to the peoples of the earth.

## **Chapter 26**

The faithful proclamation of the word of God is dangerous business. It was the faithful proclamation of the word that got Steven stoned, John beheaded, and Peter imprisoned. The ministry is a hazardous vocation. It is no place for

those with weak knees and faint hearts. In this chapter Jeremiah is put on trial for his life because of his uncompromising and forthright presentation of the word of God.

### **Verse 1**

Four specific points relating to a divine directive which came to Jeremiah are brought out. First, there is a word as to the time of the directive. The word of the Lord came to the prophet “in the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim.”

### **Verse 2**

The divine directive contains a specific word as the place where Jeremiah is to preach. He is to go to the court of Solomon’s Temple and preach to the masses of people who assembled there from all the cities of Judah to worship the Lord.

The divine directive to Jeremiah also contains a specific obligation. The Lord commands Jeremiah not to diminish a single word from the message he had received from God.

### **Verse 3**

The divine directive also included a note as to the purpose for Jeremiah’s preaching on this occasion. Jeremiah’s message was harsh. It was a message on judgment.

But the object of all that he said was the salvation of the nation. “Perhaps” they will hearken! This verse reveals the eagerness of God to turn away from His announced purpose to destroy the nations. If they would only repent!

What fantastic possibilities can be set in motion through sincere repentance! If Judah would turn away from rebellion against God, He would “repent” or “relent” with regard to His intentions to destroy the land.

### **Verse 4**

Jeremiah’s sermon in the courtyard of the Temple must have been quite a bombshell! It stirred a hornet’s nest. Only a brief summary of the sermon

preached on this occasion has been preserved. Had the entire message been recorded it would probably have included a stinging indictment for justice, hypocrisy and rebellion against God. No doubt it included threats of the enemy from the north which would devastate the land.

First there is an oblique call for repentance. Jeremiah is here threatening the people that if they do not do certain things they will be punished. Jeremiah is calling upon them to harken to the Lord. This involves two distinct responses on the part of the people. They must listen to the voice of God as it was recorded in the ancient Law of Moses. Jeremiah never minimized the importance of obedience to the written law of God.

### **Verse 5**

Second, the people must listen to the contemporary spokesmen of God, the prophets. The people thus far had failed to give credence to the words of God's servants even though He had persistently sent them unto the nation.

### **Verse 6**

In no uncertain terms Jeremiah spells out the consequences of impenitence in this Temple sermon. Two distinct threats are contained in the summary of His message.

First, God threatens to make "this house," that is, the Temple, like Shiloh. The shrine at Shiloh had been destroyed centuries before, apparently by the Philistine invasion during the judgeship of Eli. A persistent delusion in the days of Jeremiah was that God would never allow His sanctuary to be destroyed by any foreign enemy.

No spot was so sacred to be decimated when God pours out His wrath upon a sinful people.

Second, God threatens the city of Jerusalem. God would make it a curse among the nations of the earth. That is to say, God would so destroy Jerusalem that when anyone wished to pronounce a curse on a city they would say, "May such and such a city become like Jerusalem!"

### **Verse 7**

Those who were assembled in the court of the Temple that day listened sullenly and indignantly as the mighty man of God delivered the word.

### **Verse 8**

At the conclusion of his sermon the people, led by their priests and prophets seized Jeremiah.

### **Verse 9**

“Death!” they cried. “You have spoken words worthy of death, Jeremiah!” Buffeted, battered and berated by the angry throng Jeremiah remembered the words God had spoken to him at his call: “they shall fight against you; but they will not prevail.”

### **Verse 10**

One wonders what the fate of the prophet might have been had not certain princes arrived from the royal palace. Apparently, they had heard the commotion in the Temple court and had hastened there to determine the cause of the tumult.

### **Verses 11-24**

The proceedings at the New Gate were similar to those of any court of law. Formal charges were lodged against Jeremiah and then the prophet was allowed to speak in his own defense.

A legal precedent was cited which seems to justify acquittal.

But then a counter-precedent which would demand the death of the prophet was submitted to the court. The account closes with an explanation of how Jeremiah escaped death at the hands of his adversaries.

### **Verse 11**

The false prophets and priests open the formal trial proceedings with their accusation against Jeremiah. They demand a judgment of death. They feel that Jeremiah has prophesied falsely in the name of the Lord and therefore was worthy of the death penalty. They could not conceive of such threatening prophecy

coming from the Lord. To declare that the Lord would destroy the Temple was blasphemy, a capital crime! It seemed an open and shut case. Everyone in the court had heard Jeremiah's sermon.

### **Verse 12**

It is to the credit of the princely tribunal that they gave Jeremiah an opportunity to defend himself. He does not retract any statement he has made nor does he make any apology. In his defense he makes four points.

### **Verse 13**

1. The Lord sent me with this message.

### **Verse 14**

2. If you repent of your sins no calamity will befall you.

### **Verse 15**

3. You may do with me as you please.

He seems to be saying here that he is willing to die for what he has done if the court deem that an appropriate punishment.

4. If I am executed you will be guilty of shedding innocent blood.

Jeremiah closes his defense as he had begun, by affirming in no uncertain terms the divine origin of his message. This may have been Jeremiah's finest hour. The court could not help but be impressed by the unshaken conviction of this man of God.

### **Verse 16**

It does not seem to have taken the princes long to reach a decision regarding the case. "This man is not worthy of death for he has spoken in the name of the Lord."

### **Verse 17**

The people seem to have concurred with their judicial officers in the decision. They too had been convinced by Jeremiah's defense.



### **Verse 18**

It was the testimony of the elders of the people which seemed to sway the court and lead to the verdict announced. Usually the term “elders” refers to those who held an official status in the community. These men because of their age and experience occupied a position of honor and respect among the people. Their testimony would bear considerable weight.

The elders cite the case of Micah who made pronouncements against Jerusalem very similar to those which Jeremiah made.

### **Verse 19**

The point that the elders are making is not merely that Micah, a recognized man of God from an earlier period, had prophesied negatively against Judah. There is more to their argument.

They point out that King Hezekiah had heeded the warning of Micah and had led the people in a great revival. As a result, God had relented with regard to the pronouncement of doom against Jerusalem.

The elders conclude their testimony by declaring “therefore we shall be procuring great evil against our souls” if we execute Jeremiah now.

### **Verses 20-23**

This episode concerning Uriah was cited by Jeremiah’s accusers as a counter-precedent during the trial. The incident of Uriah the prophet certainly demonstrates the grave danger that outspoken men of God faced during the reign of the ruthless Jehoiakim.

Nothing is known of Uriah apart from that which is recorded here. He prophesied against Judah and Jerusalem in the same manner as did Jeremiah. He fled to Egypt when his life was threatened by Jehoiakim and was extradited from Egypt. Jehoiakim slew him or had him slain with a sword and had him buried in the graveyard of the common people.

## **Verse 24**

Jeremiah had one very influential supporter during the trial. Ahikam son of Shaphan is credited with having influenced the court in favor of tolerance with respect to the prophet. Ahikam was a devoutly religious man as well as a man of quite some political influence. He courageously defends Jeremiah. His prestige is such that the enemies of the prophet could not carry out their scheme to get rid of Jeremiah.

## **Chapters 27-28**

In chapters 27 and 28 Jeremiah uses an ox yoke as an object lesson. He uses the yoke to drive home his point that Judah should submit to Babylon. It was Jeremiah's position that God had given all the nations of the Near East into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar for seventy years.

## **Verse 1**

These messages are to be dated in the reign of Zedekiah. Note: If your version of the Bible uses the name Jehoiakim instead of Zedekiah, scholars say it is a copyist error.

## **Verse 2**

Jeremiah is commanded by the Lord to "make bands (thongs) and bars" that is, an ox yoke consisting of wooden bars held together by leather bands. He is then to put this yoke upon his neck.

## **Verse 3**

Jeremiah seems to have appeared in the streets of Jerusalem for several days with his yoke-bar around his neck proclaiming his message of submission to Babylon. It would appear that Jeremiah made at least six other yoke-bars, perhaps miniature replicas, to be sent to various kings of the region.

Ambassadors from several neighboring states gathered in Jerusalem. The purpose of the meeting is not stated. It is evident from the warning of the prophet that revolt against Babylon was being contemplated.

#### **Verse 4**

Jeremiah, the ambassador of the King of the universe, urges the ambassadors of the neighboring lands to carry a message back to their respective kings. Basically, the message drives home the point that the God of Judah is not a local deity who controls only the territory in which His worshipers dwell. He is not a god; He is God!

#### **Verse 5**

Jeremiah points out the basis of God's sovereign decrees. God's right to direct the affairs of men is grounded in the fact that He is creator of the world and all that is in it. The God of creation is also the God of history. Because He is Creator, God may do with His creation whatsoever seems good to Him.

#### **Verse 6**

God has given all the lands of the Fertile Crescent into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Even the beasts of the field have been brought under his jurisdiction. All nations are to serve him.

#### **Verse 7**

The idea that the beasts of the field are to serve the king of Babylon is most likely an idiom expressing the all-embracing extent and unlimited power of Nebuchadnezzar's dominion.

As to temper somewhat the divine decree which He has just announced Jeremiah hastens to add that the supremacy of Babylon will not be permanent. "All nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land."

In other passages Jeremiah has indicated that the duration of the Babylonian world empire will be seventy years.

"The time of his own land" would refer to the time when Babylon would become subservient to another power. God Almighty has predetermined the duration of the Babylonian empire. Babylon is nothing more than a tool in His hands which is discarded when God no longer has need of it.

At the end of the appointed time “many nations and great kings shall enslave him.”

### **Verse 8**

God will severely punish the nations which refuse to submit to the yoke of Babylon. God will use Nebuchadnezzar as the agent of His wrath to bring the sword against those nations which were in rebellion against the will of the Almighty. Famine and pestilence usually accompanied war in antiquity.

### **Verse 9**

Another warning appears. The foreign ambassadors are warned not to listen to those other voices which were counseling revolt against Babylon. Five classes of prognosticators are singled out: prophets, diviners, dreamers, soothsayers and sorcerers.

### **Verse 10**

Those who were advocating rebellion against Babylon and pretending that such advice came from the deity were lying.

### **Verse 11**

The phrase “to remove you far from your land” does not indicate purpose and result. That is to say, it was not the purpose of these false prophets, diviners, and soothsayers to cause their people to go into captivity. Following the warning, there is a promise to those who submit to God’s sovereign decrees.

Those nations which humbly and obediently submitted their neck to the yoke of Babylon would be allowed by God to remain in their own land.

### **Verse 12**

Jeremiah moves from the general warning which embraces all the small nations of Syria-Palestine to a specific warning for King Zedekiah of Judah.

As a “prophet to the nations” Jeremiah was concerned about the course of action which these small states might follow.

### **Verse 13**

The short resume of this message to the king contains three elements.

1. First there is exhortation.

Jeremiah exhorts Zedekiah to submit to the yoke of Babylon. The use of “your necks” suggests that princes or advisers were present with the king at the time Jeremiah delivered this message. The word “love” while in the imperative mood actually has the force of a promise. The sense is, “if you submit to Babylon you will live.”

### **Verse 14**

2. Following exhortation there is argumentation and
3. Warning.

Jeremiah backs up his exhortation with an argument couched in the form of a question. Why will you allow your people to suffer such calamity as the Lord had predicted for every nation which refuses to serve Babylon? It is utter futility and national suicide to attempt to throw off the yoke of Babylon. It is stupid to bring upon yourself sword, famine, and pestilence when you might live in peace if you would only submit to Babylon.

Other prophetic vices were urging an independent course for Judah. They were promising success in the rebellion against Babylon. Jeremiah does not hesitate to brand these prophets as liars.

### **Verse 15**

God has not sent these prophets! To harken to their voice will bring disaster on the land. Jeremiah does not indicate the purpose of these prophets but the inevitable result of their lies.

### **Verse 16**

Lies are often more attractive than truth. Certain prophets in Jerusalem were optimistically predicting that the vessels of the house of God which had been carried away by Nebuchadnezzar on his two previous assaults against Jerusalem (605 B.C. and 597 B.C.) would shortly be brought back from Babylon.

Such a prophecy regarding the return of the Temple vessels would most likely have gained the support of the influential priests for the proposed revolt against Babylon. For the third time in this chapter alone Jeremiah calls such prophets liars.

### **Verse 17**

Jeremiah urges the priests and people not to hearken to these lies, to face reality. “Rebellion against Babylon will mean the desolation of this city! Do not support the proposed revolt and you will live.” In other words Jeremiah is saying, you should not be so concerned about getting those Temple vessels back but about preventing a policy which would destroy the entire city including the Temple.

### **Verse 18**

Jeremiah challenges the false prophets to prove that they are men called by God. If they are true spokesmen for God as they claim let them be praying as well as preaching. Let them pray that the vessels still remaining in Jerusalem be not carried away to Babylon.

Jeremiah in this verse seems to be saying, that not only are the prophets creating a delusion by insisting that the subservience to Babylon will shortly be ended. They are in reality powerless to prevent further humiliation at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. They can neither create good fortune by their preaching nor prevent disaster by their praying.

### **Verses 19-21**

Before concluding his message to the priests and people Jeremiah produces a double “thus saith the LORD” which directly contradicts all that the false prophets had been propagating.

Those vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had left behind in the temple when he took Jeconiah, that is, Jehoiachin, into captivity in 597 B.C. will shortly be carried away by the Great King. This of course implies that Nebuchadnezzar will successfully besiege and conquer Jerusalem. Among the items which had not yet been taken away are named the pillars, the sea, and the bases.

The pillars of brass were twenty-seven feet high and eighteen feet in circumference. One was called Jachin (“He shall establish”) and the other Boaz (“in its strength”). These enormous pillars were no doubt one of the most attractive and distinctive aspects of the temple of Solomon. Jachin and Boaz were broken up by the Chaldeans and carried to Babylon in 587 B.C.

The molten sea of Solomon’s Temple was forty-five feet in circumference and rested upon a beautiful base consisting of twelve oxen. The priests had to wash themselves at this enormous bowl before entering the Holy Place.

### **Verse 22**

The bases referred to by Jeremiah were ten in number. The bases supported the portable lavers. The vessels of the house of God would not remain forever in Babylon. In God’s own good time He would visit, that is, punish Babylon and then the vessels would be returned to Jerusalem.

## **Chapter 28**

This chapter describes the dramatic confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah, one of the false prophets. The account can be broken down into four paragraphs:

1. The prediction of Hananiah the false prophet,
2. The response of Jeremiah.
3. The reaction of Hananiah, and
4. Jeremiah’s final word to Hananiah.

### **Verse 1**

Later in the same year in which Jeremiah preached his famous yoke sermon the clash between the true and false prophets occurred. The two prophets involved in the clash are Jeremiah and Hananiah. Jeremiah has alluded several times thus far in the book to the false prophets.

Here for the first time he actually names one of them. The name Hananiah means “Yahweh has been gracious.” Hananiah chose well the place of his showdown with Jeremiah. The confrontation took place in the Temple in the presence of the priests and the people. Perhaps it was on some Sabbath or festival day when the courts of the Temple were crowded with people.

Jeremiah showed up with the yoke about his neck which symbolized submission to Babylon.

### **Verse 2**

Hananiah was not secretive about what he did. He boldly approached Jeremiah and in a loud voice no doubt, announced that he had an oracle from the Lord: “Thus says the LORD of host, the God of Israel.” It sounded authentic.

The oracle is brief, but Hananiah made three distinct points.

1. Hananiah announces that God had broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

### **Verse 3**

Of course, this is exactly the opposite of what Jeremiah had been preaching.

Hananiah’s second prediction concerned the temple vessels. Since Babylon was to shortly fall, nothing would prevent the return of the Temple vessels to Jerusalem.

2. “Within two full years,” Hananiah confidently predicted the Temple vessels would be returned to Jerusalem.

Jeremiah had been saying just the opposite, that is, that shortly the remaining sacred vessels would be carried away to Babylon.

### **Verse 4**

3. Hananiah’s third prediction concerned those who were in exile in Babylon.

When the yoke of Babylon was broken, Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) and all the other captives from both the 605 and 597 B.C. deportations would be permitted



to return. Jeremiah had been predicting an exile of long duration. He also predicted that Jehoiachin would never return to Judah and would never have descendants to follow him upon the throne.

### **Verses 5-6**

It is not hard to imagine the reaction of the crowd to the forthright and positive predictions of Hananiah. Thunderous applause and joyous shouts of agreement clearly indicated where the sentiments of the crowd lay.

Everyone strained forward to hear what Jeremiah would say in response to this direct attack from a fellow prophet. Jeremiah rises to the occasion. Like an iron pillar he courageously and calmly gave reply to his antagonist.

Jeremiah's initial response must have shocked the audience and temporarily disarmed his opponent. "Amen," he said. "May the LORD establish your words. May your prophecy be fulfilled." These words are not sarcastically spoken. Jeremiah truly desired in his own heart that the captivity would speedily come to an end. He dearly loved his people. He had prayed on behalf of his nation on more than one occasion. Nothing would please him more than to hear that Babylon had fallen and the exiles were coming home. But while in his heart he wishes Hananiah was right, in his mind he knew that Hananiah is dreaming the impossible dream.

### **Verse 7**

Jeremiah's personal response is followed by his official response. He calls upon his opponent to hear the true word of the Lord. He alludes first to the precedent of past prophecy. True prophets of God in the past prophesied against many countries and against great kingdoms of war and of evil and pestilence.

In other words, the terror of preceding prophecies has been judgmental.

### **Verse 8**

Jeremiah implies that Hananiah's unconditional peace prophecy has probabilities strongly against it. It is interesting that Jeremiah speaks of many countries and great kingdoms.

### **Verse 9**

Jeremiah indicates the criteria by which a prophecy can be judged true or false. If contrary to the analogy of previous prophecy a prophet speaks unconditionally of peace, then that prophecy can only be authenticated by the actual fulfillment.

In effect Jeremiah is suggesting that everybody simply wait and see if Hananiah's predictions will be fulfilled. God had made very clear in the Law of Moses that return from exile was conditional. Only after return to the LORD and heart-felt obedience to His word would God bring His people home.

### **Verse 10**

The air was tense already. Those assembled in the temple listened eagerly as the two prophets exchanged their verbal blows. Probably no one there including Jeremiah was quite prepared for the dramatic action which followed. Without any warning Hananiah tore the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah and shattered it before them all.

### **Verse 11**

As he smashes the yoke Hananiah dogmatically and dramatically declared that the yoke of Babylon would be broken within two full years "from off the neck of all nations." Jeremiah submitted to the indignity of the moment. He simply "went his way." No explosion of anger. No hastily spoken word of rebuttal. He simply "went his way."

### **Verse 12**

Hananiah did not have the final word in his confrontation with Jeremiah. Shortly after the incident in the Temple the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah with instructions to seek out Hananiah and deliver the divine reply to him. While Scripture does not reveal whether the second meeting of these two prophets was public or private, the likelihood is that the two men were alone on this occasion.

The oracle which Jeremiah pronounced to Hananiah is two-fold in thrust. He first replies to the public prophecies of Hananiah and then he has a prediction concerning Hananiah personally.

### **Verse 13**

It was easy enough for Hananiah to break the symbolic yoke which Jeremiah had been wearing about his neck; but by so doing he shall create a yoke of iron for the people.

### **Verse 14**

The act of Hananiah would serve to excite the Jews to resistance against Babylon and thereby cause their servitude to be the more-harsh. Perhaps Jeremiah is hinting here that the action of Hananiah in breaking the wooden yoke was not altogether inappropriate. "Jeremiah's wooden yoke was really an inadequate symbol; the prophet was too tender to his people.

Thus, God made the truth appear in still further brightness from the perverseness of its enemy." God has now placed a yoke of iron about the neck of the nations that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar.

### **Verse 15**

As regards Hananiah personally, Jeremiah had some harsh words to say. There is a stern word of indictment and a prediction of imminent death. As for the indictment, three charges are made:

1. Hananiah is an imposter. God has not sent him and therefore he is not entitled to call himself a prophet. He is called throughout the chapter "Hananiah the prophet" because that was his official title. But he was not a prophet by the will and call of God.
2. Hananiah has caused the people to trust in a lie. His optimistic but unfounded prophecy of their imminent fall of Babylon had created false expectations in the hearts of the people.
3. Hananiah has spoken rebellion against the Lord.

## **Verse 16**

To advocate revolt against God's appointed ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, was tantamount to advocating rebellion against God Himself. Because of these crimes against God and the nation Hananiah must be punished. The Law of Moses clearly states that if a prophet is guilty of speaking rebellion against the Lord he should be put to death.

To advocate rebellion against God was a capital crime. The Great Judge announces the verdict: "Behold, I am about to remove you from upon the face of the earth."

## **Verse 17**

God did not send Hananiah to the people of Judah but He now will send him away to die. "This year you shall die!" What an awesome thought. One can only wonder how Hananiah received this word from the Lord. Now he must have been trembling as the finger of Jeremiah pointed in his direction and those solemn words were uttered.

In the seventh month of that same year Hananiah died. This would have been about two months after the Temple episode. Not only did the death of Hananiah serve as a punishment for this teacher of lies, it also served to vindicate Jeremiah as a true prophet of God.

## **Chapter 29**

Judging from the contents of this chapter, the Jews in captivity in Babylon were free to correspond with their relatives and friends back in Palestine. This chapter contains letters which Jeremiah sent to Babylon and alludes to several letters which were sent from Jews in Babylon to those in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah, like other prophets, regarded the exile in Babylon as punishment for the sins of the nation. Yet once that exile had begun in 605 B.C. and still in greater measure in 597 B.C. Jeremiah deemed it his duty to offer encouragement to the exiles.

### **Verse 1**

Jeremiah's first letter to Babylon is addressed to "the residue of the elders of the captivity, the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried captive to Babylon."

### **Verse 2**

In the main these would be the leaders of the nation who had gone captive in 597 B.C. when Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) had surrendered to the great Babylonian monarch. This particular letter is intended for all segments of the population. It is an "open letter."

### **Verses 3-4**

For some unexplained reason King Zedekiah was sending an embassy to Babylon at this time. The embassy was led by two outstanding men. Elasah the son of Shaphan is named first. The family of Shaphan was among the most loyal friends which Jeremiah had. It was the brother of Elasah who protected Jeremiah when he was on trial for his life. Since Elasah was from a God-fearing family he was no doubt more than willing to carry the letter of Jeremiah along with him to Babylon.

The second member of the embassy was Gemariah the son of Hilkiah. Gemariah too was a loyal believer. Even though the Judean leadership was by and large corrupt still there were those who bore witness for Him in the inner councils of the nation.

The letter deals with the immediate situation of the captives. The prophet offers to the captives practical advice, warning, and a word of hope.

### **Verses 5-7**

No doubt the exiles were finding it hard to adjust to their new surroundings in Babylonia. They were in the midst of a people who spoke a different language, had strange customs, and worshiped different gods. False prophets arose who predicted a speedy return within two years. Jeremiah had some inspired counsel for the exiles. Basically, he encourages them to settle down for a long captivity.

He urges them:

1. To build permanent houses.
2. Plant gardens.
3. Take wives.
4. Beget sons and daughters.
5. Seek the peace of the city.
6. Pray for it.

They are to make Babylon their homeland for the next seventy years and be loyal subjects to the government. They are to live as nearly as possible normal peaceable lives.

### **Verses 8-9**

Jeremiah points to three agents likely to lead captives astray—prophets, diviners, and dreams.

False prophets promising a speedy deliverance had arisen in Babylon as well as in Jerusalem. Their object was to lead the people to dissatisfaction and revolt.

The diviners were echoing the same optimistic prognostications as the prophets. Diviners are those who use external objects to discover what the future holds.

Dreams of early emancipation were also dangerous to the captives. The unusual phrase “dreams which you caused to be dreamed” indicates that the supply was created by a demand for dreams of this nature. The people wished to be deceived; they preferred darkness to light. They caused or made the prophets to tell them encouraging dreams.

### **Verse 10**

Jeremiah agreed with the prophets and diviners that the Lord would eventually visit His people and deliver them from bondage. But in the view of Jeremiah this deliverance would come only after the seventy years which God had

prescribed for the duration of the Babylonian world empire. Jeremiah insists that a full seventy years must run its course before God intervenes on behalf of the people.

### **Verse 11**

Since the explicit declaration that the exile is to last seventy years probably would have caused discouragement and doubt in the hearts of the captives, Jeremiah quickly adds a note of hope. God assures them that His thoughts toward them are for their peace and well-being and not their destruction.

God knows His plan and purpose even when men are unable to comprehend and fathom the circumstances of life. The exiles needed to hear this. They needed to realize that their captivity was not an accident but was part of God's plan for them as a people.

God assures the people through His prophet He will give to them "a latter end and hope."

### **Verses 12-14**

Genuine conversion of the people will be both a result of the seventy years of captivity and a prerequisite for deliverance from captivity. The old rebellious generation would die and a new generation would arise which would turn to God. Return to the homeland would only be possible when they seek the Lord with all of their heart.

The captivity gave the Jewish people an opportunity to learn trust and reliance upon God. God often brings His people into difficult places so that they might learn to cast themselves upon Him.

### **Verse 15**

Jeremiah's correspondence with the captives was not appreciated. "God has raised up for us prophets here in Babylon," they protested. "We have no need to hear from would-be prophets in Jerusalem."

### **Verse 16**

The captives much preferred the messages they were getting from their own prophets in Babylon.

These deceivers continued to generate false hope by assuring the Jews that they would shortly be returning to their homeland.

It was imperative that Jeremiah shatter this delusion. If the captives only could realize the agony which the inhabitants of Jerusalem were shortly to endure at the hands of the Babylonians they would not want to return home immediately.

### **Verse 17**

Sword, famine and pestilence would come upon the land in the not-too-distant future. Jeremiah likens the inhabitants of Jerusalem to rotten figs which are good for nothing but to cast out.

### **Verse 18**

Instead of promising a speedy return of the Jews already in Babylon, Jeremiah declares that there would be further deportations of Jews from the homeland.

### **Verse 19**

Jeremiah relates to the captives in Babylon what he had been preaching in the streets of Jerusalem. The inhabitants of Judah must be punished because they had refused to hearken to the words of the Lord spoken by the prophets.

### **Verse 20**

Jeremiah then pleads with the captives to hear the genuine word of the Lord. "Those in Judah have refused to hear; then you in Babylon give heed to the word of God."

### **Verse 21**

Two of the leading prophets in Babylon, Ahab and Zedekiah, are singled out for special attention by Jeremiah.



Jeremiah makes two serious accusations against them. First, he accuses them of prophesying lies in the name of the Lord. The he accuses them of committing adultery.

### **Verse 22**

Loose theology often is accompanied by loose morality. Jeremiah indicates that these two scoundrels would be delivered into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar who would “roast” them in a fiery furnace. Ahab and Zedekiah would be remembered, but not as prophets. Their names would become part of a gruesome formula of imprecation which angry men would hurl at one another.

### **Verse 23**

God Himself has taken note of the sins of these two hypocrites and He will see to it that they receive their just due.

### **Verses 24-26**

The letter of Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon stirred up a great deal of hostility. One of the false prophets there, Shemaiah by name, sent letters to Jerusalem in an attempt to have Jeremiah silenced. He even suggested that Jeremiah, the mad man when he prophesies, needed to be placed in stocks and the collar.

### **Verse 27**

Shemaiah feels that action should be taken against the frenzied, “mad” prophets who were roving around the Temple area.

### **Verse 28**

Jeremiah is regarded as a madman simply because he held a minority opinion with regard to the duration of the captivity.

### **Verse 29**

It is to the credit of Zephaniah that he did not yield to the pressure which Shemaiah tried to bring against him. He seems to have been sympathetic towards Jeremiah and actually show him the letter.

## **Verses 30-31**

Jeremiah received an oracle from the Lord concerning Shemaiah and proceeded to send a second letter to the captives. In it he affirms that the Lord will punish Shemaiah for perpetuating the delusion of a short captivity and encouraging the Jews there to rebel against Babylon.

## **Verse 32**

The punishment is two-fold.

1. Shemaiah would be deprived of descendants to carry on his name.
2. He would not live to see the restoration of the people to their own land at the end of the seventy years of captivity.

## **Chapters 30-33**

These four chapters are called the “Book of Consolation,” and is the only consistently hopeful section of the Book of Jeremiah.

These were dark days for Judah and Jeremiah. The Chaldean army was at the gates of Jerusalem. The city was experiencing the famine, pestilence and misery connected with siege operations. Jeremiah himself had been imprisoned in “the court of the guard” as a suspected traitor. They expected that he was collaborating with the enemy.

This section of the book is unique in that here the focus is upon hope and salvation. Here the prophet treats the great themes of the destruction of Babylon; the return of God’s people; the reunification of Israel and Judah; the coming Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom.

## **Verses 1-2**

Jeremiah is commanded by the Lord to record in a book the words which God had spoken to him concerning the future of the nation. This is suggested by the words “write for yourself.”

The Hebrew word sepher (book) can refer to any size document from a single page to an extensive treatise.

### **Verse 3**

This verse sets the tone of the whole section. The reason Jeremiah is to compile another book is because there are glorious things for the covenant people.

“Behold! Days are coming” is an expression which points to a certain, but indefinite, time in the future. Three wonderful things are stipulated as part of those future days.

1. God will turn again the captivity, that is, reverse the fortunes of His people.
2. Israel and Judah will once again be reunited.
3. God’s people will return to the land which He had given to their fathers.

### **Verse 4**

Jeremiah begins the prophecy which is to contain the promise of deliverance in a manner that will intensify the contrast that is coming. He describes in graphic terms the distress that Jacob, the entire covenant nation, is to experience.

### **Verse 5**

He hears the people saying, “We have heard a voice (or sound) of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.”

### **Verse 6**

The people must submit themselves to the uncertainties and horrors of war and siege; they are scared. Convulsive pain grips the men of the nation so they clutch their loins like a woman in travail.

### **Verse 7**

The day of trouble which ushers in deliverance for the people of God will be great in suffering and distress. The period of fearful tumult and upheaval is called “the time of Jacobs’s trouble.” Jacob’s trouble began with the first deportation of Israelites to foreign soil in 733 B.C. This deportation certainly launched a day of distress for the covenant people.

First, they were oppressed by the Assyrians and then by the Babylonians. The calamity predicted by all the prophets had begun. With the final crushing blow in 587 B.C. the nation ceased to exist.

Israel was a people without a land. The time of Jacob’s trouble extended to 539 B.C. when Babylon fell to the Persians and the exiles were allowed by the benevolent Cyrus to return to their homeland.

This was the act that saved Israel in the day of distress.

### **Verse 8**

In stark contrast to the time of Jacob’s trouble is the glorious day of his deliverance. The yoke of the oppressor will be shattered and the bonds of captivity will be loosed. Foreigners would not subject Israel to bondage anymore.

### **Verse 9**

This verse does not imply that David will literally reappear to rule over Israel as some modern cults have alleged. Rather it is the Messiah about whom the prophet speaks. Elsewhere the Messiah is spoken of under the name “David” as well. (Ezekiel 34:23, 24; 37:24)

### **Verse 10**

In view of the fact that God has promised a grand deliverance of His people they need not be terrified at the horrors of the present day. God will deliver them from the land of exile no matter how distant it may be.

### **Verse 11**

This deliverance will be possible for two reasons

1. The Lord is with them to deliver them.

2. God will utterly destroy the nations which had taken Israel captive.

Israel must be punished; but that punishment had a positive purpose. Through exile and suffering Israel would experience a national regeneration. The nation would be purged and purified from idolatry in preparation for the coming Messiah.

### **Verse 12**

After soaring ahead in time to the grand day of Israel's deliverance, the prophet now returns to the present plight of the nation. Jeremiah paints a picture of the present wretched condition of Israel. The nation has an incurable wound.

### **Verse 13**

There is no healing medicine for this incurable wound. No one pleads for the nation at the judgment bar of God where their own iniquities condemn them. The nation has been forgotten by her lovers, that is, her allies who had encouraged her to revolt.

### **Verses 14-15**

The Lord Himself has treated Israel like an enemy. He has smitten them so severely that it would appear He was their implacable foe. Attacked!

Devoured! Carried away! How did Israel come to be in such desperate straits? Twice the prophet indicates the reason for the present plight: "because of the multitude of your iniquities, and because your sins are great." The chastisement of Israel was well deserved because of the enormous guilt piled up by their innumerable sins.

### **Verse 16**

The word "therefore" at the beginning of this verse is most significant. Because of the extremity of your need, therefore I will intervene on your behalf. Because you are unable to aid yourself, therefore I will act on your behalf. Because I have afflicted you so severely for your sins, therefore, I will now mete out to your tormentors their rightly-deserved punishment.

The end of the present plight will come when God brings punishment upon all the adversaries of Israel.

### **Verse 17**

Humanly speaking the case of Israel was hopeless. But God, the great and glorious Physician, then turns His attention to the wounds of Israel. Zion's health is restored despite all the ridicule of her enemies. The sneering enemies had called Zion an "outcast" for whom no one was concerned. Yet the day will come when God in an act of pure grace will restore the nation.

### **Verses 18-22**

Having alluded to the destruction of Israel's enemies and the restoration to Palestine, the prophet now paints a picture of the regenerate commonwealth of Israel. It is a picture of a happy prosperous people enjoying freedom and security in their own land. There are a number of promises contained in this paragraph.

1. The Jews who were taken captive will dwell again in their land as aforetime.
2. The city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt upon its own hill or mound, that is on its original site.
3. The palace will be restored and shall be occupied in its usual fashion.
4. Thanksgiving and happiness shall characterize the inhabitants of the land.
5. The population of the restored community will be greatly increased.
6. As aforetime in the golden age of David and Solomon, God will protect them from their adversaries.
7. A glorious Prince shall rule over them.
8. They shall enter into a new relationship with God.

Two significant points about this glorious Ruler are brought out in the passage.

1. He shall be Jewish as opposed to a foreign Prince.
2. The Prince shall draw near to God without a go-between.

This implies that He will be Priest as well as King. The last clause of verse 21 is somewhat difficult to understand. A good translation would be: “who is he that has staked his life (or risked his life) to approach me?”

Under the Old Testament law only priests were permitted to enter the presence of the Lord. The Holy of Holies was open once a year and then to the high priest alone.

The glorious Ruler whose coming is predicted in this verse would be Priest as well as King. Zechariah a few years later would make it crystal clear that the Messiah would be “priest upon his throne.” (Zechariah 5:13)

### **Verses 23-24**

These verses are almost identical with the threat made against the false prophets in chapter 23:19f. Here the words apply to the Gentile enemies of Israel and particularly wicked Babylon.

The wrath of God like a whirlwind goes forth to execute the intents of His heart. He will not relent until evil has been punished and the families or clans of Israel acknowledge His lordship.

## **Chapter 31**

### **Verse 1**

Only in the latter days after the judgment against Babylon has been accomplished, will the people of God fully comprehend the sovereign purposes of God. The “latter days” as envisioned by the Old Testament seers commenced with the coming of Jesus Christ.

The focus is now upon the blessings which those who return from exile will enjoy. Israel, the northern kingdom, and Judah are addressed. Both kingdoms will return to Palestine and jointly share the blessings of God.

## Verses 2-6

In these verses the prophet paints a picture of the concord and harmony which characterize the relationship between God and His people in that glorious day of restoration. In making his point Jeremiah uses four figures: the divine lover, v.2-3, the joyous virgin, v.4, the satisfied farmer, v.5, and the anxious watchman, v.6.

### Verse 2

Those who had escaped the sword of the Babylonians have found favor in the eyes of God in the wilderness of exile. God will give the true Israel—those who repented in captivity—rest in the land of Canaan.

### Verse 3

In captivity, the people discover anew the everlasting love of God. By His grace He has once again drawn His people to Himself.

### Verse 4

The virgin who had committed such horrible sins against her Divine Husband by idolatrous flirtation is still the precious object of God's love. He treats her as a pure and chaste virgin. She has been completely forgiven. God will build her up again and make her to prosper. She shall go forth joyously dancing to the accompaniment of her tambourines.

### Verse 5

Farmers will plant new vineyards in the hills surrounding Samaria. After waiting the prescribed length of time these farmers would enjoy the fruit of their labors.

The fruit produced by a tree for the first three years was not to be gathered and that of the fourth year was to be consecrated to God. Only in the fifth year could the owner eat of that fruit.

### Verse 6

On the hills men would anxiously be watching for the crescent of the moon which would be a signal for the celebration of the new moon. The schism



between the north and the south is over. The people of Ephraim are anxious to join in the worship of God in Jerusalem.

“Come,” they say, “Let us go up to Zion, unto the Lord our God.” What a beautiful picture of the new relationship which will exist between God and His people.

To go to Zion in the Old Testament prophecy is to join the church of Christ.

There are many examples in the New Testament of inhabitants of Ephraim or Samaria who were converted to the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 4:1-42; Acts 1:8; 8:5-17; 10:1ff)

### **Verse 7**

The prophet foresees the day when salvation will be accomplished and a new joy will fill the hearts of God’s people. Jeremiah calls for shouts of joy and praise. Jeremiah is probably calling upon all those who love the Lord whether Jew or Gentile to burst forth into joyous strains. Israel is here called “the chief of the nations” because God had chosen them from among all the nations for special privileges and obligations.

### **Verse 8**

The journey home from exile would be particularly difficult for certain segments of the population. Nonetheless, those in distress—the blind, the lame, the woman travailing with child—will return with tears of joy and contrition upon their cheeks, and with supplications upon their lips. God will hear their prayers and will lead them in a straight way where there will be no danger of stumbling. He will lead them beside streams of water where they can find refreshment.

How careful were the prophets to always include the distressed of humanity in God’s program of salvation and deliverance.

### **Verse 9**

The reason for God's concern for the distressed is clearly stated: "For I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born." The heavenly Father will not allow His son, the spiritual remnant of the nation, to remain in captivity.

### **Verse 10**

Israel was the flock of God, but during the exile a scattered and miserable flock. The day will shortly come, says the prophet, when the God Shepherd shall seek His own.

The Gentiles, the nations, are called upon to "hear the word of the Lord" that is, to accept His word with a believing heart. Then they in turn are to become proclaimers of the Good News to Israel.

### **Verse 11**

The Lord will redeem Jacob, the true Israel of God, from the hand of his captor.

### **Verse 12**

The proclamation of the Gentiles will not be in vain. Together Jews and Gentiles will flow like a mighty stream to Zion. Then they will both enjoy the blessings of the Lord—grain, wine, oil, the young of the flock and herd.

God's people will be like a well-watered garden in the midst of a barren waste in that day. What an exquisite picture of the peace, contentment and prosperity of the people of God! Zion shall echo with glad songs of praise. God's people will sorrow no more.

### **Verse 13**

Their mourning shall be turned into joy. Old and young men and women rejoice together in the joyous deliverance which they have experienced.

### **Verse 14**

So many sacrifices will be brought to the Temple that the priests, to whom portions of the sacrificial animals belonged will have more than enough to fill their own needs.

The paragraph closes with a declaration which only the child of God who has come to spiritual Zion can appreciate: “My people shall be satisfied with My goodness!”

### **Verse 15**

Jeremiah represents Rachel in her grave near Bethlehem lifting up her voice in bitter lamentations over the recent fate of her children. Rachel, who had pined for children all her life, died with sorrow in giving birth to Benjamin. The meaning of the name Rachel (“ewe”) adds force to the prophet’s description. He hears the cry of the ewe in Ramah (literally, on the hill-top) bleating for her lambs.

Ephraim was the leading tribe of the north. It is likely that Rachel was regarded as the “mother” of Israel, the ideal representative of the northern kingdom. Rachel is disconsolate because her children are being slain and snatched away. No one can comfort her in this moment of sorrow because her children are not, that is, they are dead.

### **Verses 16-17**

God wipes away the tears from the cheek of the disconsolate Rachel. Using the language of the prophet Azariah, Jeremiah assures the mother of Israel that there will be a reward for her work. The “work” refers to the parental weeping for her children. Rachel is not weeping in vain. Her children will one day return to their homeland. Though the present prospects are exceedingly dismal, there is hope for the future of Israel.

### **Verse 18**

Not only does the prophet hear Rachel weeping for her children he also hears despondent Ephraim lamenting his waywardness. Like a calf which would not submit to the yoke, Ephraim went his own rebellious way and thus incurred the chastisement of the Lord. Finally, the prodigal son came to himself and cried out unto God to help him repent: “Turn me that I may return!”

### **Verse 19**

That prayer was answered. Through the discipline of the exile Ephraim came to recognize his miserable condition. He was confused and confounded, utterly ashamed of the reproach of his youth, the sins committed in the earlier history of the nation. He smote his thigh in consternation and contrition.

### **Verse 20**

This sets the stage for one of the most beautiful verses in the book of Jeremiah. God asks the question; “Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child?” Literally, a child of delights, that is, one in whom a parent takes intense pleasure. Ephraim had certainly been unworthy of the love of the heavenly Father. He had not been the kind of child in whom a parent delights. But as often as God speaks of Ephraim He remembers the close relationship which in the past existed between them.

### **Verse 21**

The certainty of restoration is indicted as Jeremiah urges those going into captivity to mark the road they travel into exile so that they might know the return route. They are to erect, as it were, waymarks (stone pillars) and high heaps or signposts to mark the way home. They are to turn their attention to that highway in order that they might be able to retrace their steps. Jeremiah calls upon the “virgin of Israel,” the nation, to return to Palestine.

### **Verse 22**

“How long,” asks the prophet, “will you hesitate to return to your land?” The backsliding daughter is admonished to put away her rebellious reluctance.

The Lord has created a new thing in the earth (or land). These words introduce a miracle which completely reverses ordinary human experience. It is something entirely new, something that had never happened before. “A woman shall compass (or surround) a man.”

In order to set forth the marvelous prophecy of this verse three questions need to be asked.

1. Who is the woman who is the subject of the prophecy? Most commentators assume that the woman is Israel.

Many years before the time of Jeremiah, Isaiah prophesied of a virgin who would miraculously give birth to a child who would be Immanuel (God with us). Is it possible that Jeremiah is referring to that same woman? Certainly, a virgin giving birth to a child would fulfill the requirements of this passage which states that the Lord would create a new thing.

2. Who is the man who is the object of the sentence?

The Hebrew word used here (*gever*) is not the ordinary word for a man as a frail being of clay. Rather it is the word for man par excellence, strong, virile, and powerful. Commentators commonly reason that if Israel is the woman then the man must be the Divine Husband or the Lord. It is the view of the present writer that the Man here is none other than the Messiah.

3. What is involved in the verb that is used here?

The Hebrew verb translated “compass” literally means “to surround.” The verb could well describe the fact that a man-child is enfolded in the womb of the woman.

But if the woman mentioned here is the virgin and if the man is that holy thing which was born of her who was to be called the Son of God then certainly this could be a “new thing” created by the Lord Himself.

### **Verse 23**

When God’s people return from exile completely new conditions will exist throughout the land. Pure religion will be restored. The people will again pronounce blessings upon the sacred sanctuary and the holy city. Throughout the cities of Judah, the people will say, “May the Lord, the Habitation of Justice, bless you, O mountain of holiness.”

### **Verse 24**

In both the title for God and the designation of the holy city the people who return from exile seem to realize the important place of justice and holiness for the first time. Not only will idyllic conditions exist in the realm of religion

but also among the various elements of society. Peace and harmony shall exist between farmers and nomads.

### **Verse 25**

The weary world shall find rest and the sorrowful will find abundant comforts.

### **Verse 26**

Jeremiah declares that he awoke from a sleep. Since the prophecies just enunciated were hopeful and comforting it is quite understandable why the prophet describes his sleep as sweet.

### **Verse 27**

There is a promise of fruitfulness. God will make the people and their cattle multiply so fast that it will seem as though they spring up like seed among fertile soil.

### **Verse 28**

There is a promise of faithfulness. Just as God has been “watchful” over the fulfillment of the prophecies of judgment and destruction, so will He now be equally zealous in fulfilling his promises of restoration.

### **Verse 29**

There is a promise of fairness. Apparently, the people of Jerusalem and the exiles already in Babylon had complained that it was unfair for them to have to suffer for the sins of their fathers. “The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the teeth of the children are set on edge.” Such a proverb could only be uttered by a generation blind to their own sin and disobedience and utterly deluded in thinking that they were innocent of all wrong-doing.

### **Verse 30**

There are certain implications and involvements in Jeremiah’s prediction that the sour grapes proverb will no longer be used in the Messianic age.

1. The prophet may be suggesting that individuals in the Messiah’s kingdom will be more sensitive to the sin in their own lives.

2. The thought may be that in the Messianic age the absolute justice of God will come to be fully recognized by all members of the covenant people.
3. In the Messianic Age the emphasis will be more upon the individual than upon the community. Individual responsibility will be the mark of the new age. Heretofore the basic unit of responsibility before God was the nation; in the future it would be the individual.
4. Another possible implication of Jeremiah's prediction would be the holiness of Messianic Israel.

The prophet may be saying that the moral level in the Messianic Age will be so high that collective or corporate guilt will no longer be possible. Only individual transgression will occur as isolated exceptions from the rule. God will not allow the sins of individuals to permeate the whole. Each individual sinner will suffer the consequences of his own sin.

#### **Verses 31-34**

These verses are the four most important verses in the book of Jeremiah. Here Jeremiah envisions a time when the covenant between God and Israel instigated at Mount Sinai will be replaced by a new and better covenant. After giving the promise of the new covenant (verses 31-32) he then outlines some of the provisions of that covenant (verses 33-34).

#### **Verse 31**

The new covenant will be made with reunited Judah and Israel.

In Old Testament prophecy the unification of Judah and Israel points to that day when there would be neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female but all the redeemed would be one in Christ Jesus.

Those who regard the covenant promised by Jeremiah to be something yet future—a covenant between God and national Israel—are proved to be dead wrong by such passages as Hebrews 8:8-12 which quotes at length from Jeremiah 31 and applies it to the Christian dispensation. Paul again and again takes up the

matter of the new covenant and emphasizes the distinction between it and the old Sinai covenant (2 Corinthians 3:14-16).

Jesus alluded to this covenant when He instituted the Lord's Supper saying, "This is My blood of the New Testament (covenant) which is shed for many (Matthew 26:28).

### Verse 32

This verse compares the old covenant to a marriage in which God was the "lord" or husband and Israel was the bride. God being the perfect husband never gave His bride any cause for desiring the dissolution of the matrimonial connection. But Israel had again and again been unfaithful to the marriage vows, that is, she had been disobedient to the covenant. A new arrangement or agreement between God and His people was therefore necessary.

### Verse 33

It was not given Jeremiah to see all that the new covenant would involve. All that the Holy Spirit was concerned to do at this point in time was to reveal in broad outline the basic character of that future covenant.

Four statements are made with regard to the promised covenant.

1. I will place My law within them and write it on their heart."

Here is a new spiritual dimension. Heretofore the laws of God had been written on tablets of stone; now they are to be written on the heart. Under the new covenant men will respond to the divine will from inward motivation rather than outward compulsion. Every individual born in Israel was automatically under the law of God; he had no choice in the matter. But one can enter into the new covenant Israel, the church of Christ, only by willingly submitting himself to the commandments of God.

2. "I will be their God and they shall be My people."

Those who enter into the new covenant Israel through faith and obedience will come into a special relationship with God (1 Peter 2:9). Only such as have today the law of God written upon their hearts have this unique relationship to God.



### Verse 34

3. “All will know Me from the least to the greatest.” Infants and small children were members of the old covenant Israel; but this would no longer be true under the new covenant. Every member of the new covenant Israel will know God. The word “know” in Hebrew has the connotation of knowledge derived from personal experience. It is not knowledge about it—it is knowledge of.

To know the Lord is saving faith, that basic and indispensable prerequisite to membership in the new covenant Israel. The point of this statement is not that there shall be no longer any need of instruction in religion, but that there will be a directness of access to God for both Jew and Gentile, which did not exist under the old covenant.

4. “I will forgive their sin and their iniquity will I remember no more.” It is not by self-acquired holiness or meritorious works that a man enters the new covenant Israel. It is through the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb without spot and blemish. The basic inadequacy of the old covenant was its failure to provide a perfect sacrifice for sin.

### Verse 35

The old covenant was broken by Israel and therefore the nation was rejected by the Lord. This will no more take place under the new covenant. God’s faithfulness in keeping His ordinances in the realm of nature are here offered as a pledge that He will similarly keep His covenant commitments.

The sun, moon, and stars daily perform their assigned tasks of governing the day and the night. The waves of the sea never cease their constant ebb and flow, roaring, crashing against the beach.

### Verse 36

As certainly as the laws of nature are inviolable, so certainly shall Israel everlastingly continue as a nation of the Lord.

### Verse 37

To the end of this world God will always have a special people and that people is Israel. The Israel Jeremiah envisions would be a pure theocracy ruled from heaven itself. It would be an invisible kingdom, a kingdom not of this world, a kingdom unlike anything this world has ever known.

The heavens above are immeasurable and the earth beneath is unsearchable. On the day that man is able to measure the heavens and search out the foundations of the earth—on that day and not before—God will cast off the new covenant Israel. This is equivalent to saying that God will never cast off His people.

### Verse 38

Jeremiah looks forward to the building of a new city, the city of the Lord. When the new city of Jerusalem is rebuilt it will be somewhat enlarged.

### Verse 39

It would seem that the circumference of the city is extended only so far as to include certain spots which were at present regarded as unclean.

### Verse 40

This is the real point of the passage. Those unclean areas—places once reserved for outcasts, burial grounds, garbage dumps—will be brought within the city limits of the new Jerusalem. Those unclean areas will be transformed, sanctified, cleansed and the entire city will be “holy to the Lord.” Of what Jerusalem is the prophet speaking in this passage? Those commentators who think he speaks here of the spiritual Jerusalem, the church of Christ, are certainly correct. The church of Christ is called in the New Testament “Mt.

Zion,” “the city of the living God,” “the heavenly Jerusalem.” (Hebrews 12:22)

The idea in this verse is that once this city has been built, “It will not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more forever.” The city of which Jeremiah speaks will be safe from destruction for all eternity. This could only be fulfilled by that kingdom which cannot be moved. (Hebrews 12:28)

## Chapter 32

In this chapter God directs Jeremiah to demonstrate to his contemporaries in a most tangible way that the nation did have a future. Even though the Babylonian enemy was at the gates of Jerusalem, God commanded Jeremiah to purchase a field. Jeremiah quite perplexed, inquired as to the significance of this act. Why would God have him purchase a field when for years the word of the Lord had been Judah would be overthrown? God explained to His prophet that there would be a national restoration to the land.

Then as if to settle the matter once and for all, God gave to Jeremiah a lengthy promise concerning the glorious future of Israel.

### Verse 1

Late in the ninth year of the reign of King Zedekiah, (January 588 B.C.) the Babylonian army began the siege of Jerusalem. In the summer of 588 B.C. the Babylonians were forced temporarily to lift the siege of Jerusalem. An Egyptian army was attacking from the south and Nebuchadnezzar felt that he must deal with that threat before effecting the capture of Jerusalem, shortly the Babylonian army returned just as Jeremiah had said it would.

### Verses 2-5

At the time Jeremiah was commanded to purchase the field of his cousin he was confined in the court of the guard. Chapter 37 tells how Jeremiah was arrested and eventually put in the court of the guard for trying to leave Jerusalem during the lull in the siege.

In this chapter Jeremiah is arrested because of his preaching not because of alleged treason as in chapter 37. This would suggest that Jeremiah was imprisoned more than once in the court of the guard during the siege of Jerusalem. The present chapter records one of the most remarkable examples of personal faith found in the Bible.

### Verses 6-7

In those dark days when the national catastrophe was taking shape, the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah. God revealed to him that a relative,

Hanamel, would come to visit him in the court of the guard requesting that he exercise his right and duty as near kinsman to purchase a field in Anathoth.

### **Verses 8-9**

That Hanamel was a cousin to Jeremiah is made clear in these verses. The law of land-tenure in ancient Israel provided that an estate remains within a family. If a piece of property had to be sold, the nearest of kin had the duty and right to purchase it.

### **Verse 10**

Hanamel made his appearance at the court of the guard just as God had revealed. Jeremiah being the nearest kinsman had first opportunity to purchase the property. A business transaction was conducted there in the court of the guard. With careful attention to all legal details, the sale was concluded and the deed executed in the customary manner. The purchase price was mutually agreed upon and the pieces of silver—seventeen shekels—were carefully weighed.

### **Verses 11-14**

The Babylonians would encase their legal contracts in a clay envelope upon which a copy of the document was recorded. The outer clay envelope was open for examination at any time; the inner clay tablet was consulted if any disagreement arose and it was suspected that the contract had been tampered with. The two copies of the contract were given to Baruch to be put into an earthen jar which served as sort of a filing cabinet.

### **Verse 15**

The purpose of the whole elaborate transaction is indicated in this verse. By his purchase of the field in Anathoth the prophet was dramatically demonstrating his faith in God's word that "houses and fields and vineyards shall yet again be bought in this land."

### **Verse 16**

Even though Jeremiah had faithfully executed the command of God to purchase the field in Anathoth, even though he had publicly indicated the symbolic

import of the transaction, he still was unable to comprehend the implications of what he had done.

In times past Jeremiah had agonized in prayer over the incomprehensible judgments of God; now it is the gracious promise of God which he cannot fathom.

### **Verses 17-25**

In the first part of the prayer the prophet dwells on the God of the people (17-22) and in the second part, on the people of God (23-25).

### **Verse 17**

Jeremiah is pouring out his heart before God indicated by the words of the prayer, "Ah Lord God!" The Hebrew particle "ah" expressed the most intense emotions; it is usually a cry of anguish. The prophet passes immediately to the praise of his God. In this part of his prayer Jeremiah depicts God as:

1. The God of creation. As such He is omnipotent; nothing is too difficult for Him.

### **Verse 18**

2. He is the God of justice, dispensing grace to thousands who turn to Him and punishment to those who follow after iniquity.

### **Verse 19**

3. He is the God of wisdom. As such He is omniscient.

### **Verse 20**

Unlike human counselors, God has the power to execute the plans of His counsel.

4. He is God of the earth, as well as of Israel and whose fame is universal.

### **Verse 21**

5. He is the God of history, who brought forth His people from the bondage of Egypt and gave to them the Land of Promise.

### **Verses 22-23**

This ascription of praise to God is instructive for the prayer life of the Christian. One should remember in prayer to praise God for His work in creation and salvation, for His grace, His counsel, His signs, and wonders, and His great acts of deliverance.

### **Verse 24**

Jeremiah's prayer moves from praise to confession. The prophet admits the gross ingratitude of the fathers who, having been blessed with the possession of Canaan, refused to hearken to the Law of God. He acknowledges the justice of the present situation in which Jerusalem finds itself. He then describes that situation: siege mounds have been erected which will shortly enable the enemy to ascend the walls and enter the city. Sword, famine, and pestilence have combined to smite the beleaguered defenders.

"Thou sees it." Jeremiah is not telling God something that He does not already know. Why then the narration? It is as though Jeremiah is presenting his case before a judge. All pertinent facts in the case must "go into the record" so to speak. Furthermore, the narration element in prayer often helps one to think through more carefully, to analyze it and crystallize his thinking about it.

Prayer-narration may help one sharpen his focus and present a petition which is more apropos for the circumstances and more in harmony with the will of God.

### **Verse 25**

The narrative portion of the prayer continues. "In spite of the fact that this city is about to be taken by the Chaldeans You, O Lord, have told me to purchase a field." The problem is apparent inconsistency between the impending fall of the city which is taking place by divine decree and the command to purchase a field. The implied petition is, "Lord, how do I reconcile these two seemingly discordant facts: Will you enlighten my mind: will you solve the problem?"

## Verse 26

Jeremiah not only prayed; he also listened. Prayer is dialogue. Too often a Christian prays but does not tarry in meditation to listen to the still, small voice speaking to the heart and mind. Jeremiah requested; God answered.

## Verse 27

The reply to the prayer of Jeremiah fittingly begins with a declaration. The Lord declares Himself God, Elohim, the strong, the mighty, the God of creation and therefore the Ruler over all flesh. The contrast here between God and flesh is obvious—the exalted and powerful over against the lowly and weak.

The purpose and plans of God can be thwarted neither by the most bitter attacks of His enemies nor the unbelief, misgivings or misunderstandings of His friends. He will not allow His actions to be circumscribed by the limits of human comprehension. He is God. Jeremiah needed to be reminded of that fact and so does every perplexed child of God today. The declaration that the Lord is God is followed by a question: “Is there anything too hard for Me?”

At the beginning of Jeremiah’s prayer, he had affirmed that nothing was too hard for God. But Jeremiah did not fully understand the implications of his own conviction. Had he fully comprehended the omnipotence of God he would not have seen any difficulty in the promise that God would resurrect Judah and Jerusalem from the graves of desolation.

How easy it is to utter great truths without fully understanding their importance. God asks Jeremiah a question in order to make him think. It is as if God were saying, “Jeremiah, you have the right convictions; but why have you not made the right deductions. If, as you say, nothing is too hard for Me, then trust Me that I can and will do all that I have promised to do.”

## Verses 28-41

In these verses God makes two announcements regarding the immediate and ultimate fate of Judah and Jerusalem. Both announcements are introduced by “therefore” (let me tell you why) which connects them to verse 27.

Since nothing is impossible for the Lord, therefore He destroys Jerusalem and restores it. Because He is God—Almighty and Sovereign—both destruction and restoration are within His power.

### **Verse 28**

Throughout his ministry Jeremiah had been preaching that the enemy from the north, the Chaldeans, would destroy Jerusalem. God now assures Jeremiah that these threats have not been negated by the promise of a new day for Judah. God would indeed give Jerusalem into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans would put the torch to the city.

### **Verse 29**

The blinded Jews thought it impossible that the chosen place of the sanctuary could be destroyed. They did not stop to think that with the Lord nothing was impossible.

But it is not the might of the enemy which will gain the victory; God would deliver the city into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

### **Verse 30**

Following the reaffirmation of His intent to destroy Jerusalem, God discusses the reasons for His decision. The basic cause of the calamity was idolatry. From the very beginning of the nation, the people had provoked God with their idolatry.

### **Verse 31**

Because of its sin, Jerusalem must be removed out of the sight of God.

### **Verse 32**

Idolatry permeated every strata of society, including the professional priests and prophets.



### **Verse 33**

Time and again God tried to teach them, instruct them, discipline them but to no avail.

### **Verse 34**

The last vestige of allegiance to God disappeared when they erected abominable images in the Temple.

### **Verse 35**

Yahweh thereby became just another god and His Temple just one among many shrines. The climax of the apostasy came with the erection of the rites of child sacrifice. Could such sin be ignored? Surely Jerusalem must fall!

While the present prospects of Jerusalem and Judah were quite grim and dark, the future was filled with bright hope. God's plan for the nation as announced here has two basic features, restoration (verse 36-37) and reconciliation (verse 38-41).

### **Verse 36-37**

"Therefore" (let me tell you why) introduces the second deduction from the proposition that nothing is too hard for God. As destruction which was thought to be utterly impossible was about to take place, restoration which appeared to be equally impossible would take place in the future.

In the present passage the emphasis is upon the changed spiritual conditions which will characterize the remnant after and presumably before the restoration.

The new Israel of God will be markedly superior to the old Israel. The spiritual changes that would take place among the people of God can perhaps best be described by the word "reconciliation."

### **Verse 38**

A new relationship will exist between God and His people; "They shall be My people and I will be their God."

### **Verse 39**

The people will manifest a new commitment to the Lord. They will have “one heart” (inward disposition) and one way” (outward manifestation). No longer would their heart be divided between the Lord and idols. There will be a unity of purpose and a unity of practice.

### **Verse 40**

God will enter into a new covenant with His people. The covenant will be an everlasting covenant. God will never desist from showering blessings upon them; the people shall never turn aside from God.

By His marvelous deeds and by the workings of His Holy Spirit God will continue to generate in the hearts of His people that fear, that loving, trusting awe that is essential if those people are to remain faithful to the terms of the covenant.

### **Verse 41**

God will evidence his new joy by kindly doing good for his people. Rebellious Israel had been such a burden to His heart, such a source of grief and anger. But once the nation has been reconciled to Him; God will rejoice over the faith, devotion, and loyalty of Israel.

The people will enjoy new security in the land. They shall be planted securely in their land by the Lord. While God is reluctant to execute His wrath against the godless, He rejoices to bless the godly.

### **Verse 42**

The argument now takes a new direction. Here God argues that the same degree of certainty which attends the threats of divine judgment also attends the promises of divine favor.

### **Verse 43**

In view of the certainty of God’s promises of restoration the action of Jeremiah in purchasing the field in Anathoth was altogether fitting and proper. Normal business transactions would indeed again take place in the land.

## Verse 44

God would reverse the fortunes of His people. He would bring them out of shame and degradation of captivity and lead them home. This was the oracle of God!

## CHAPTER 33

Shortly after he had received the comforting revelation of the preceding chapter, Jeremiah received yet another word from the Lord. At that time, Jeremiah was still imprisoned in the court of the guard. This chapter contains promises which apply first to the people and kingdom in general, (verses 4-13) and then to the royal and priestly offices in particular, (verses 14-26).

### Verse 1

The God who speaks to Jeremiah in the court of the guard declares Himself to be the Lord, Yahweh. The name seems to have the meaning, “He Who Is” and consequently denotes God as the Eternal, Self-Existent One. The name Yahweh is also the covenant name of God and as such denotes God as the keeper of covenant promises, as the merciful benefactor of His people. Being eternal, God can look beyond the present difficulty and darkness to the bright and hopeful future when He in His mercy will restore Israel to Canaan.

### Verse 2

What does God create, form, establish, or accomplish? Whether “it” here refers to the universe or to the plan about to be revealed, the basic idea is the same: God has the power to fulfill His promises. Whatever God determines to do, He is able to bring it to a successful conclusion. God’s very name, Yahweh, is a pledge that He will keep His word to His people.

### Verse 3

God invites His prophet or perhaps the nation as a whole, to “call unto Me.” What a wonderful invitation! Jeremiah had prayed, inquiring as to the

meaning of an act which God had required him to perform, (32:16-25). God places His stamp of approval on that prayer and encourages His prophet to approach the Lord more frequently with such requests.

God undergirds His invitation with a gracious promise: "I will answer you!" Prayer is more effective than perhaps any one realizes. Prayer is the key that opens the door to a new understanding of the power and purpose of God. The earnest petitioner will find his mind enlightened regarding the great and hidden things of life.

### **Verses 4-13**

The general promises contained in the verses now under consideration are in reality but a continuation and expansion of concepts in the preceding prophecy. God promises here to restore the people to the land and to restore prosperity to the land.

### **Verse 4**

When Jeremiah received this message of hope from the Lord the situation within Jerusalem was very grim. The houses of the city including the royal palaces had been torn down in order to strengthen Jerusalem against the mounds and weapons of the Chaldeans.

### **Verse 5**

Part of the timber and stone taken from the houses would be used to strengthen the walls, and part would serve to plug the breaches made by the enemy battering rams.

The Judeans rushed to defend their walls in a heroic but futile attempt to defend the city but their resistance only added to the heaps of slain.

### **Verse 6**

After painting this rather gloomy picture of the present conditions of Jerusalem the Lord outlines the glorious future He has planned for His people. After the day of wrath has accomplished its purpose the people of God will receive healing, cleansing and blessing.

Destruction would be the gateway to restoration; death the gateway to life. Old Israel dies, a new Israel arises. Though the Judeans had suffered a grievous wound at the hands of the Chaldeans, God would apply to the city a bandage which would result in healing.

The word “peace” conveys the idea of physical and spiritual well-being; the word “truth,” the idea of God’s faithfulness to His promises.

### **Verse 7**

God will reverse the captivity of both Israel and Judah, that is, He will reverse the fortunes of the whole covenant nation. The wretchedness and misery of the moment will give way to permanent happiness and well-being.

God will build them up as a nation and they will again know the prosperity of the Golden Age of David and Solomon.

### **Verse 8**

The restoration of Israel to Palestine is never depicted in the Old Testament as a purely political event. The Spiritual dimension is always present. The glorious vision of a nation cleansed and purified.

### **Verse 9**

Among the surrounding nations there will be two reactions to the external and internal renovation of Israel.

The first reaction is one of joy. Jerusalem will develop into a city over which men will rejoice whenever her name is mentioned. The nations of the world will render praise and glory to the God of Israel for so blessing His people.

Second reaction among the nations is fear. They shall behold all the good that God does for Jerusalem and they shall come to have reverential awe that leads to conversion and salvation.

### **Verses 10-11**

These verses tend to amplify the picture of prosperity which was painted in the previous verses. Here the prophet becomes more specific, showing how the

joy and prosperity will affect the city and the country. Throughout this chapter prosperity follows purification. Spiritual health is the key to material well-being.

The day will come when that curse will be removed. The streets of Jerusalem will once again echo with the sound of mirth and marriage. The majestic strains of the temple liturgy will also be heard again and worshipers will bring their offering as expressions of their praise for the Lord.

### **Verse 12**

Passing from the joyous scenes within the cities, the Lord turns to the prosperity which will characterize the rural areas in the day of restoration. In those areas of the land which are presently so desolate sheep will once again find pasture.

### **Verse 13**

Once again, the populace would see the familiar sight of sheep passing under the hand each morning and evening as the shepherd numbered his flock.

### **Verses 14-16**

The description of the happy future of Israel continues. The opening words "Behold, the days come" point to a certain but indefinite future. These words as used by Jeremiah become something of a Messianic pointer. God declares that He will certainly fulfill the good word that He has spoken to the covenant people.

The "good word" probably refers back to the promise of a Righteous Sprout.

As to remind Jeremiah of that promise, the Lord repeats it in verse 15. A Sprout of Righteousness shall spring from the stock of David who will restore justice and righteousness in the land.

There can be scarcely any doubt that it is the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of David and Messiah of Israel who is depicted here.

In the days of Messiah, the people of God, symbolized by Judah and Jerusalem, will be delivered from their oppressors and enjoy peace and security.

Literal Israel and Judah never regained political independence following the restoration to Palestine. They were dominated successively by the Persians, the Greeks, the Idumean Herodians and the Romans.

Thus, Judah and Jerusalem must be understood here spiritually of the church of Christ and the deliverance and safety promised should be regarded as spiritual blessings.

In those glorious days of which the prophet is speaking, spiritual Jerusalem, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, will actually wear the name of her Messiah and Master. She shall be called "The Lord our Righteousness." It is altogether fitting and proper that the church being the bride of Christ should wear the same name of her divine husband. The holy city has taken on the character of her King.

#### **Verses 17-18**

The permanence of the kingly and priestly lines is affirmed. The expression "shall never lack a man" used twice in these verses is hardly meant to refer to a whole line of kings or priests. Rather this expression guarantees that the office of king and the office of priest is to be perpetual. The new Israel will have a throne and the one who will occupy that throne will be a descendant of David. The prophet reproduces almost verbatim the ancient promise made to David and repeated by David in his parting words to Solomon.

When the promise was first given the line of David was in all the freshness of its strength. But in the present circumstances the line of David seemed to be one on the verge of total extinction. The prophet however, sees beyond the present tragedy. He is certain that the royal line will survive the destruction of Jerusalem and that the true king of Israel will always come from the house of David.

When the new Israel of God came into being on Pentecost the Sovereign Ruler was a son of David, a legitimate King.

The priestly office as well as the royal office will survive the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple.

The Levitical priests point to the fact that under the old covenant the priestly functions were the exclusive right of the descendants of Levi. The New Testament affirms that the Levitical priesthood has passed away. Hebrews 7:11

That priesthood was replaced by a new and better one inaugurated by Christ who was made a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Furthermore, the New Testament affirms that those who have been baptized into Christ have become part of a holy priesthood. Hebrews 10:19-22

Christians do not offer before God burnt-offerings and meal-offerings for the perfect sacrifice for sins was made upon the cross of Calvary.

Rather the Christian priesthood offers the sacrifices of praise (1 Peter 2:5) and the sacrifice of the body (Romans 12:1). Jeremiah himself hints at this dramatic change in the nature of the priesthood when he declares that the Ark of the Covenant will no longer be remembered in the Messianic age. 3:16

#### **Verses 19-21**

In these verses the promise concerning David and the Levites is reproduced with even greater solemnity. These promises are placed on the same level of permanence as the God-ordained succession of day and night. As long as day follows night, God will be faithful to His commitment to guarantee the survival of the royal and priestly lines.

#### **Verses 22-23**

This verse affirms that the descendants of David and Levi will be innumerable. According to the prophecy of Isaiah all members of the Messianic Israel; would be priests and ministers of the Lord. No longer would the priesthood be restricted to descendants of Levi, but any and every member of the nation—even Gentile converts—would be able to serve in the priestly capacities. Just as Messiah is both Priest and King, so are His subjects.

These Old Testament prophecies find their fulfillment in the New Testament concept of the royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9).

Christians offer the sacrifices of praise before the throne of grace continually (Romans 12:1).



Furthermore, Christians are said to reign with Christ (Revelations 5:10). Just as Christians are spiritually the seed of Abraham so also are they envisioned in this prophecy as descendants of David and of Levi.

#### **Verse 24**

Apparently, some found it hard to accept at face value these glorious promises regarding the future of the royal and priestly orders. God calls the attention of the prophet to the anguished cries of despair. God, it seemed, had altogether cast off His people. Gentiles looking upon the pitiful conditions of Israel could only despise the people of God.

#### **Verse 25**

In response to the despondency of Israel and the disdain of Gentiles the prophet renews his assurance of the permanence of the kingly and priestly line and in fact strengthens that assurance in three ways.

1. First, he mentions the names of the three great patriarchs of the race with whom God had already demonstrated His faithfulness in covenant keeping.
2. Second, He connects his promises concerning David with a promise of a return from captivity.

#### **Verse 26**

When that return came, it would be the pledge of the yet greater blessings which were involved in the new and everlasting covenant.

3. Third He repeats the analogy between His covenant with nature and His covenant with Jacob and David.

As surely as God is responsible for the orderly process of nature so surely has He ordained a glorious future for Jacob in general and David in particular. Note: The prophets often used Mosaic terminology to describe the spiritual realities of the New Covenant. So long as interpreters miss this point the prophetic books will remain an enigma and Messianic prophecies but utopian dreams.

In painting his picture of the future, the prophet of God utilized the forms, the terminology and concepts of his own day. That prophetic pictures of the Christian dispensation should be clothed in Jewish dress is not strange since this is the only form in which they could present any meaning to those to whom they were delivered.

Those in the New Testament who were privileged to catch a glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem exhausted the vocabulary of human language in describing the wonders they beheld.

The Old Testament prophets found it necessary to utilize the language of the old covenant worship to describe that of the new covenant. It is no doubt to such passages as Jeremiah 33, that Peter refers when he speaks of the prophets as “inquiring and searching diligently...what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:10-11).

### **Chapters 34-36**

In these three chapters Jeremiah relates three incidents which vividly illustrate the disobedience of the people of God in general and their leaders in particular. The episodes as they stand in the book are in reverse chronological order. Chapter 36 relates to event which occurred in the year 605-604 B.C.

**Chapter 35** can be assigned to almost any year between 602 and 598 B.C.

**Chapter 34** transpired during the final siege of Jerusalem 589-588 B.C.

### **Chapter 34**

This chapter contains two messages delivered during the final siege of Jerusalem. The first message is directed to King Zedekiah. The second message is directed to the people in general and the nobles in particular.

### **Verse 1**

During the last days of Jerusalem, Jeremiah had several conversations with King Zedekiah. The message consists of two parts, condemnation and consolation.

### **Verse 2**

The condemnatory word is first spoken concerning the city and then concerning the king. Again, Jeremiah emphasizes that Jerusalem shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon but then he adds a new element. For the first time the king is told that Jerusalem would be burned with fire.

### **Verse 3**

Zedekiah himself would be captured by the enemy. He would have to meet face to face with mighty Nebuchadnezzar against whom he had committed such a dreadful act of treachery in violating his solemn oath of allegiance. He would spend his last days as a captive in Babylon.

### **Verse 4**

To his word of condemnation Jeremiah now appends a word of consolation to the hapless Zedekiah.

The king would not die by the sword. He would die in captivity.

### **Verse 5**

He shall receive a royal funeral including the burning of spices and appropriate lamentation. Zedekiah did spend his last years peacefully in Babylon and there is no reason to assume that he did not receive a royal burial in that land.

### **Verses 6-7**

Jeremiah spoke all these words to Zedekiah when the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah.

### **Verses 8-11**

These verses contain one of the most disgusting acts of hypocrisy ever

recorded in the Bible. Israel, like other nations of the ancient Near East, had laws which permitted an impoverished man to sell himself into slavery.

Numerous invasions, enormous taxation and natural disaster would have reduced many Israelites—former landowners—to abject poverty. No doubt many Israelites found slavery an attractive alternative to starvation. The Law of Moses had strict regulations governing the servitude of fellow Hebrews. Such bond-slaves were to be released after six years of service unless they preferred to remain in this state.

The slave owners of Jerusalem had been guilty of violating these regulations, refusing to release their slaves at the end of the legally stipulated period.

King Zedekiah took the initiative in securing release of these Hebrew bondsmen. First came the proclamation; each master proclaimed liberty, that is, emancipated his slaves. Then in the Temple in Jerusalem, the king and princes ratified the agreement by participating in ancient and solemn ceremonies. A calf was slaughtered and divided down the middle. One half was laid against the other with a passage between and the covenanters walked between the pieces.

The significance of this act was probably that of an implied curse: May the party who breaks this covenant be cut in two even as the calf is divided.

What motivated the slave owners to suddenly comply with the law and release their slaves? Their impulse was born while the Chaldeans were pounding on the gates of Jerusalem. Perhaps the thought was that by correcting this open and flagrant abuse of the law they might influence God to intervene on their behalf and spare the city. Their action might be likened to “death-bed repentance” or “fox-hole religion”—a sort of last ditch effort in the time of peril.

In the present crisis these men were willing to try anything, even the religion of Jeremiah.

When the Egyptian forces came to the relief of Jerusalem in the summer of 588 B.C. the siege of Jerusalem was temporarily lifted.

The foolish inhabitants of the city thought that the danger was over. The enemy would not return! God has delivered them! Thinking that normal conditions would soon be restored, the nobles issued a new proclamation: they revoked the freedom they had given, broke their solemn pledge, and brought the former slaves into servitude again.

The shameful repudiation of a sacred covenant made with God and man incensed Jeremiah and he delivered a stinging rebuke which follows.

#### **Verse 12**

God had something to say about the hypocritical actions of the Jerusalem nobles and Jeremiah was the instrument by which His word was spoken.

#### **Verses 13-14**

Jeremiah begins his condemnation of the act of treachery by reminding his hearers of the stipulations of the Sinai covenant with regard to servitude. A Hebrew who served six years was to be released in the seventh year. Apparently, this law had been generally ignored because Jeremiah says the fathers of his hearers refused to hearken to this commandment of God.

#### **Verse 15**

God had actually been pleased that finally the nobles, whatever their ulterior motives, had complied with His law and had released their slaves.

#### **Verse 16**

But the wrath of God was kindled when these nobles went back on their word. Since the nobles had pledged in the name of God and in the house of God to release their slaves, Jeremiah charges that they had profaned the name of God.

#### **Verse 17**

Since the nobles had failed to proclaim liberty to their slaves in accordance with both the ancient and the recent covenant, God will proclaim "liberty" to them. They will be free from those obligations which they regard as unbearable;

they will be free from the gracious protection of the Lord. God will deliver them over to that fourfold alliance of evils: sword, pestilence, famine, and captivity.

### **Verses 18-20**

They had piously passed between the halves of the calf they had cut in two and in so doing had pronounced upon themselves a self-malediction if they should be unfaithful to the terms of the covenant. Just as that calf had been slain, so they would be given over into the hands of the Chaldeans who would slay them. Like the carcasses of animals, their bodies would be left unburied, exposed to the ravaging appetite of scavenger birds and beasts.

### **Verse 21**

King Zedekiah would be handed over to the Chaldeans along with his princes.

### **Verse 22**

The Chaldeans will return; Jerusalem will fall. The city will be burned and left desolate. The word of God spoken by His prophet some forty years earlier will be fulfilled.

## **Chapter 35**

This chapter introduces an incident from an earlier period of the prophet's ministry to illustrate the disobedience of the people. The event here narrated dates back to the reign of Jehoiakim who ruled from 609 to 598 B.C. It was probably to this period of Jehoiakim's reign that the present episode is to be assigned.

This chapter is not connected with the previous [chapter 34](#) or the following chapter 36.

### **Verses 1-3**

The Rechabites were still living by the rule of their father. Normally a nomadic group, the Rechabites had recently sought refuge in Jerusalem from the

roving bands of Chaldeans and Syrians which were making repeated raids on the Jews living outside the walled cities.

The narrative begins with Jeremiah receiving instruction to seek out the members of the Rechabite community. In obedience to this command Jeremiah contacted Jaazaniah, the present leader of the sect, and invited him and the members of his clan to come to the Temple. Scripture does not state whether or not Jeremiah informed Jaazaniah as to the purpose of the Temple visit but the impression is left that what transpired there came as somewhat of a surprise to the Rechabites.

#### **Verse 4**

Jeremiah chose the chamber of the sons of Hanan “the man of God” as the spot for the demonstration.

No doubt this particular chamber was able to accommodate several persons. It certainly was located in a prominent place being next to the chamber of the princes and just above the chamber of Maaseiah, the keeper of the door.

#### **Verse 5**

After a crowd of witnesses, probably including Temple officials had assembled Jeremiah placed before the Rechabites large bowls of wine together with drinking cups and told them to drink.

#### **Verse 6**

This is no example of placing a temptation before a weaker brother. It was not Jeremiah’s intention to entice these ascetics into sin. He knew that the Rechabites had committed themselves to a rigorous rule of life that included the abstinence from all fruit of the vine. It was their loyalty and obedience to this way of life that Jeremiah wished to vividly portray before the national leaders. He offered them wine and as expected, the Rechabites vigorously declined the invitation to drink.

#### **Verses 7-11**

They offered a reason for their refusal. Jonadab, the ancestor of their clan, had commanded them not to drink wine, nor to build houses and not to engage

in agricultural pursuits. The descendants of Jonadab had complied with these commandments for over 200 years.

They wish it to be clearly understood that their presence in Jerusalem does not indicate unfaithfulness to principle. Only for the sake of self-preservation had they sought refuge in the city. Bands of Chaldeans and Syrians pillaging the countryside had forced these gentle people to temporarily take up residence behind protective walls of the capital.

The Rechabites were a people who desired the simple pastoral life. But there is more involved. By their practices they were protesting the corruption which they observed in the sedentary population about them. The excessive drinking and wild harvest-time orgies associated with Baal worship were repulsive to Jonadab.

By their austerity the Rechabites were a constant rebuke to those Israelites who succumbed to the tantalizing temptation to join in the sensual “worship” of Baal. Like the Nazarites, the Rechabites set an example of commitment to God.

Jeremiah commends the Rechabites for being faithful to their vow refusing to compromise their convictions. The main point here is that the faithful obedience of the Rechabites is pleasing to God. They were a living rebuke to a faithless and disobedient nation.

### **Verses 12-13**

The presence of an eccentric group like the Rechabites in the temple area must have created quite a sensation in Jerusalem. Jeremiah left the chamber where the demonstration had taken place and went out to address the people in the Temple court. He minces no words as he drives home the spiritual lesson. Pointedly God asks through His messenger, “Will you not receive instruction to hearken to My words? Will you not learn from the Rechabites the lesson of obedience to My word?”

### **Verse 14**

For over 200 years the Rechabite clan had obeyed the command of a dead ancestor even though his commandment was merely a matter of human judg-



ment. But time and again the living God had spoken to His people, yet they had ignored or deliberately disobeyed His commandments.

### **Verse 15**

Again and again God has sent unto them prophets who had pleaded with the rebellious people to repent and turn from idolatry and who promised them that they could continue to dwell in their land. They must harken to the voice of God. But the people had refused to hearken and on occasion actually had reviled and ridiculed the servants of God. They had persisted in their rebellion against the Lord.

### **Verses 16-17**

In view of the fact that Judah had ignored or spurned all efforts of God to turn them back from apostasy, God is compelled to execute judgment upon the nation. God declares: "I will bring upon Judah and Jerusalem all the evil (calamity) that I have pronounced against them." Yet Judah plunged even deeper into apostasy. There was no other alternative. Judah must be punished, her population deported and her land made desolate.

The contrast in verses 16 and 17 is great: a small obscure clan faithful to the word of their forefather on the one hand; an entire nation unfaithful to the word of their heavenly Father on the other. Surely the impending judgment was justified.

### **Verses 18-19**

The passage concludes with a word of commendation for the Rechabites. Because they had faithfully observed the commandments of their father Jonadab, "The son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever." To stand before anyone in Old Testament thought is to function as a servant to that person. The promise here is that throughout the ages there would always be obedient servants of the Lord among the descendants of Jonadab.

Throughout history there have been and will be spiritual descendants of the Rechabites who remain true to their convictions and separate themselves from the sinfulness of the world.

## Chapter 36

This chapter marks a turning point in the career of Jeremiah. While he was only a preacher, Jeremiah's influence was limited by and large to his native land. But when he committed his sermons to writing he was destined to influence the world for generations to come. This chapter relates how Jeremiah received a commandment from the Lord to commit his message to writing and how the prophet executed that command.

### Verses 1-2

Jeremiah was commanded by the Lord to "take a roll of a book." The writing substance here is no doubt papyrus. Several pieces were stitched together and attached to a roller of wood at one or both ends.

Jeremiah is commanded to record "all the words which he has spoken." The book was to contain excerpts from his twenty-three-year ministry.

### Verse 3

God's purpose for issuing the command to commit the divine word to writing is clearly outlined. Three goals are in view.

1. They will bear the word, not in a physical sense, but in a spiritual sense, that is, in the sense of observing, heeding, taking it to heart.
2. That by hearing the word they might thereby be converted.
3. That God might in view of their conversion, be able to forgive their iniquity and sin.

By ordering His preacher prophet to produce a copy of the inspired word, God was endeavoring once again to lead His people to repentance.

### Verse 4

Jeremiah complied with the commandment of the Lord by securing Baruch the son of Neriah to be his scribe. Just exactly how long it took to complete the writing of the scroll is not stated. It may have been a matter of days or weeks. The writing began in the fourth year of Jehoiakim; the scroll was publicly read in the fifth year and the ninth month.

### **Verse 5**

God's word is meant to be read, studied, heeded, and obeyed. Therefore, it is both significant and appropriate that Jeremiah not only published the word but saw to it that the word was proclaimed. If the word of God is to have an impact upon individuals it must be transferred from the written page to the hearts and minds of individuals. Sometime after he had completed dictating the scroll to Baruch, Jeremiah requested that his secretary go to the house of God and read that which he had written. For some unexplained reason Jeremiah himself was not able to go to the Temple to perform this task.

Jeremiah was probably prohibited by royal edict or by Temple authorities from appearing any longer in the Temple to preach a message of doom. He was literally "detained" or "restrained" from entering the Temple. The lesson to be learned from all this is that truth is more important than the speaker. What one hears is more important than whether he hears from the lips of an eloquent Jeremiah or a humble Baruch.

### **Verse 6**

Jeremiah instructs Baruch to read the scroll on a "fast" day. Baruch was to read the scroll in the Temple at a time when he would have the largest audience.

### **Verse 7**

Jeremiah was prayerfully hopeful that in that hallowed spot the people would make genuine supplication to the Lord and thus avert the outpouring of divine wrath.

### **Verse 8**

As Jeremiah faithfully executed the commands of God, Baruch faithfully carried out the instructions of his master in every detail.

### **Verse 9**

It was December (the ninth month according to the Jewish reckoning) when the Temple authorities proclaimed a fast and a large host of the inhabitants of Judah flocked to Jerusalem to the Temple.

**Verse 10**

Baruch selected the chamber of Gemariah the scribe as the spot from which to read the scroll. This office was located “in the higher court at the entry of the new gate of the Lord’s house.”

**Verse 11**

One person who heard Baruch read the scroll that day was particularly touched. His name was Michaiah and he was the son of Gemariah whose office Baruch was using to proclaim the word.

**Verse 12**

Michaiah went down to the chamber of the scribe where all the princes were sitting.

**Verse 13**

Michaiah declared to the princes the message which Baruch had been reading to the people in the temple court.

**Verse 14**

The princes were so impressed that they dispatched Jehudi to summon Baruch to appear before them with the scroll.

**Verse 15**

Baruch read the scroll in their presence.

**Verse 16**

When the princes heard the words of the scroll they looked at each other and trembled. Why were they afraid? Had the scroll made them aware of their own personal guilt? Did the bold, prophetic announcement of imminent destruction strike terror in their hearts? Were they afraid of the reaction of the king? Perhaps all of these factors mingled together to make these princes afraid. At any rate they were convinced that it was their responsibility as first officers of the realm to report the incident to the king.

### **Verse 17**

Before doing so they inquired more precisely about the scroll as to how it came into being and who was responsible for it.

### **Verse 18**

Baruch honestly answered the question: “Jeremiah clearly and distinctly pronounced with his mouth while I was writing them with ink upon the scroll.”

### **Verse 19**

Anticipating the reactions of the king to the scroll the friendly princes urged Baruch and Jeremiah to immediately hide and to reveal to no one their whereabouts.

### **Verse 20**

After depositing the scroll in the office of Elishama the scribe for safekeeping, the princes hastened immediately to the royal court to report the matter to King Jehoiakim.

### **Verse 21**

Why did the princes not take the scroll with them into the presence of the king? Perhaps they feared what the king might do to the scroll and wished to delay as long as possible that violent reaction. Perhaps they reasoned that if the king himself ordered the scroll brought into his presence that they would no longer be responsible for what he did with it. It may be too that they hoped the king would not wish to be bothered by the scroll and would not wish to waste his time having it brought to him and read. The king however was very interested and dispatched Jehudi, who is not further identified, to get the scroll. Then Jehudi is ordered to read the scroll in the presence of the king, the princes mentioned, and other princes of the realm.

### **Verse 22**

Since the temperature was chilly, the king was holding court that day in the winter house, the inner portion of the palace which was shielded from the winter winds.

In order to keep warm the king was sitting beside a brazier filled with live coals.

### **Verse 23**

Jehudi began to read the scroll. But before he could read three or four columns Jehoiakim jumped from his throne, tore the book from the hand of the reader, slashed it to pieces with his penknife, and threw the fragments into the fire.

### **Verse 24**

The king and his ministers were so calloused that they manifested neither sorrow nor fear that the word of God was being destroyed before their very eyes.

### **Verse 25**

In spite of the pleas of Elnathan, Delaiah and Gemariah, the king persisted in burning the scroll until not a shred remained.

### **Verse 26**

Having destroyed the written word Jehoiakim gave orders that Baruch and Jeremiah be arrested. But the Lord hid His faithful servants and thus frustrated the plans of Jehoiakim.

### **Verses 27-28**

Every effort in human history to destroy the word of God was doomed to failure before it began. Kings may burn Scripture and burn those who read Scripture. Men may die because of the grand old book. But the word of God shall stand forever! One can ignore it, disregard it, show disrespect for it. But the books of Holy Scripture will be there in that final day as a standard and basis for judgment (Revelation 20:12).

Jeremiah was commanded to rewrite the scroll which king Jehoiakim had destroyed.

### Verse 29

The new edition of the book was to contain a specific word concerning the king. Jehoiakim had been enraged about the threats at the hands of the Babylonians and had therefore destroyed the word of God.

### Verse 30

But the destruction of the scroll had not eliminated the divine threat against the king and his subjects.

Four distinct threats against Jehoiakim are contained in the closing verses of this chapter.

1. Jehoiakim would have no descendant upon the throne of David.

As a matter of fact, Jehoiakim was briefly succeeded by his son Jehoiachin. But the Hebrew word translated “sit” implies some degree of permanence.

Since Jehoiachin reigned but three months during all of which Jerusalem was surrounded by Chaldean troops, it could be said that he did not “sit” permanently on the throne of David.

2. Jeremiah predicts a violent and dishonorable death for Jehoiakim.

It was the last and worst indignity for one to be left unburied and apparently that is what Jeremiah is predicting.

3. The family and servants of the king as well as Jehoiakim himself would be punished by God.
4. God would bring upon the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem all the calamity which He, through His prophets had been threatening for so many years.

### Verse 32

The final verse of the chapter simply records that Jeremiah faithfully carried out the instructions of the Lord. The scroll was reproduced and “there was added besides unto them many like words.”

## Chapter 37

A period of some eighteen years separates the events of chapters 36 and 37. The focus in chapters 37 through 39 is upon the events during the last days of Jerusalem. The total destruction of the city foretold by Jeremiah throughout his ministry was hastening toward fulfillment. During this period of time Jeremiah suffered many indignities. His life was constantly in danger at the hands of his personal enemies. More than once he nearly died because of the deplorable prison conditions and the spiritual and mental anguish of seeing his beloved land going down to destruction.

### Verses 1-2

Here Zedekiah is introduced as though he had not appeared before. Zedekiah had been installed as the vassal of King Nebuchadnezzar in March of 597 B.C. when Jehoiachin (Coniah) his nephew was carried away to Babylon. While Zedekiah was not the ruthless tyrant that his brother Jehoiakim had been he still did not submit to the word of God as spoken through Jeremiah the prophet. Zedekiah was a weak-kneed monarch who suffered the pressures of a troubled conscience on the one hand and a group of radical and misguided young princes on the other.

### Verses 3-5

When the Chaldeans shifted their forces to counter the invasion of Pharaoh Hophra, new hope was kindled in the hearts of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. For nine months they had been shut up in the city watching the strangle-hold slowly do its deadly work. But now the enemy was gone!

Perhaps the Egyptian allies would be able to defeat the accursed Chaldeans! Seeking prophetic confirmation of the prevailing optimism, King Zedekiah sent a delegation to Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord. The two-man delegation consisted of Zephaniah the deputy high priest and a prince named Jehucal. Requesting prayer, they came and to ask Jeremiah to “pray unto the Lord for us.”



Perhaps they hoped that God would miraculously intervene and overthrow the invading Chaldeans even as He had done many years earlier in the time of the invasion of Sennacherib.

Jeremiah the prophet was still free, that is, he had not suffered arrest. Jeremiah might well have been in custody during the initial phase of the Chaldean siege and then have been released once the attacking armies withdrew. In this case the present verse would mean only that Jeremiah had not yet experienced the final arrest which was to keep him in custody until after the fall of the city. This arrest is recorded in verse 11ff.

### **Verses 6-7**

The king's request for prayer was in reality an inquiry as to the future course of events now that the Chaldeans had withdrawn. Jeremiah's response must have startled as well as angered the dignitaries who had approached him. In his response the prophet shattered all hope by emphasizing three thoughts.

#### **Verse 7**

1. Jeremiah emphasized the failure of Egyptian aid. The Egyptians would be defeated and return to their land.

#### **Verse 8**

2. He emphasized the fall of Jerusalem. The Chaldeans would shortly return and fight against Jerusalem, and capture it, and burn it.

#### **Verse 9**

3. Jeremiah emphasizes the futility of optimism. There is absolutely no ground whatsoever for hope that the enemy would abandon the siege of Jerusalem.

#### **Verse 10**

Even if the Jews could in some miraculous manner defeat the Chaldeans only a few and those severely wounded (literally pierced through) remained, yet they would be able to overwhelm Jerusalem.

### **Verses 11-12**

When the Chaldeans lifted the siege of Jerusalem in order to deal with the Egyptian threat to their flank, Jeremiah decided to visit his home in Anathoth a few miles north of Jerusalem.

### **Verse 13**

He never reached his destination; he was arrested and charged with deserting to the Chaldeans. Why was Jeremiah leaving the city? More than likely Jeremiah now regarded his ministry in Jerusalem as completed. It appears that Jeremiah did not leave the city secretly and alone but publicly and in company with many others, perhaps of those who believed in his prophetic utterances.

### **Verse 14**

Jeremiah protested his arrest; he denied the accusation that he was deserting to the Chaldeans. But Irijan, the chief officer of the guard, brought Jeremiah before the princes of the land for further action.

### **Verse 15**

Now was their chance to rid themselves of this annoying pest. They ordered the prophet to be beaten and cast into a dungeon in the house of Jonathan, a royal secretary.

### **Verse 16**

“Many days” Jeremiah remained in the prison of Jonathan’s house. During that interval the Babylonian troops returned to besiege Jerusalem.

### **Verse 17**

Zedekiah, hoping that there might be some positive word from the Lord, sent secretly for Jeremiah and had him brought to the royal palace. In desperation Zedekiah asked, “Is there any word from the Lord?” Maybe God had changed His mind. Maybe now that Jerusalem was so close to destruction God would intervene as He had done on other occasions. Is there any word from the Lord? Indeed, there was. But it was a message of doom and not deliverance as

far as Zedekiah was concerned. “You will be given into the hands of the king of Babylon.”

### **Verse 18**

Many days in a dark dungeon had not softened the message of the prophet. He was still standing as tall and as straight as an iron pillar.

Jeremiah took the opportunity while standing before the king to plead his own case. “What wrong have I done against you, your servants or this people that you have put me in prison?”

Zedekiah was as guilty as the wicked princes who had cast Jeremiah into the dungeon— he had failed to exercise his power to prevent this injustice.

### **Verse 19**

Where were the prophets who had so confidently asserted that Nebuchadnezzar would never come against Jerusalem?

### **Verse 20**

The prophets were the ones who ought to be in jail for so completely deceiving the nation. Humbly Jeremiah pleaded with the king not to allow him to return to the prison at the house of Jonathan.

### **Verse 21**

Zedekiah did not set Jeremiah free. But he did order that Jeremiah be transferred to the court of the guard. Perhaps Zedekiah was actually keeping Jeremiah in protective custody. Knowing the hatred of the princes for this man of God, he chose to keep him where the palace guard could watch out for his safety. As long as bread was to be found in the city Jeremiah was to receive his daily ration

## CHAPTER 38

### Verses 1-2

The imprisonment in the court of the guard offered Jeremiah the opportunity to communicate the message of God once again. He seems to have been able to converse with the soldiers who defended the city as well as with the general populace.

Meanwhile the final stage of the siege of Jerusalem had come. It was only a matter of days until the city would fall to the Chaldeans. The prince, highly displeased with the leniency being shown the prophet, watched his every move.

Four princes in particular seem to have been particularly bitter enemies. Shephatiah is mentioned only here. The second prince named Gedaliah. His father Pashur is probably one who had just put Jeremiah in the stocks earlier in his ministry.

Jucal (or Jehucal) was one of the princes sent by the king only a few weeks before to request Jeremiah to pray for the city. Pashur was one of the messengers of the king who had visited Jeremiah in an earlier interview.

### Verse 3

There in the court of the guard Jeremiah openly proclaimed the message he had been preaching ever since the Chaldean armies had first appeared in the land. Those who defected to the Chaldeans would escape with their lives; those who remained within Jerusalem were doomed for the Lord would shortly give the city into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

### Verse 4

The princes were both alarmed and angered by such public proclamation. They rushed to Zedekiah demanding that Jeremiah be put to death for high treason. The charge against Jeremiah that he weakened the hands of the men at war, is no doubt an accurate assessment of the impact of the preaching of Jeremiah.

The phrase “men of war that remain” suggests that many had gone over to the Chaldeans. The public statements of the prophet could well be classified as

treason except for one fact. The words which Jeremiah spoke were not his own but the divine message which he had been charged to proclaim. It was God, the true sovereign of Israel, who was instructing and commanding His subjects to capitulate to the Chaldeans.

For what they regarded as treason the princes demanded that Jeremiah be put to death. The struggle against the Chaldeans was literally a matter of life and death. "This man is no longer seeking the welfare of the people but the hurt."

### **Verse 5**

Weak-kneed Zedekiah capitulated to the demands of his princes. "Behold he is in your hands, for the king can do nothing against you."

### **Verse 6**

Having gone through the formality of gaining the consent of the king, the murderers hurried Jeremiah off to his doom. They did not want his blood on their hands! Their plan was cruel. They cast Jeremiah into a cistern which served as a dungeon. So deep was the cistern that they had to let Jeremiah down into it with ropes. Though there was no water in the cistern the bottom of it was covered by a thick layer of mud. Slowly the prophet sunk into the mire.

The pitiless princes wished this spokesman for God to die a slow, torturous, and frightful death. Unbelief makes men intolerant of God's spokesmen; intolerance makes men cruel. They left him there. They were rid of him. They had effectively silenced God's messenger.

The dungeon experience is without question the lowest point in the life of Jeremiah. He had learned to cast himself upon the Lord and trust Him for deliverance.

### **Verse 7**

God had not forgotten His faithful prophet. He still had a service to render to his King. That dungeon would not become a death chamber for Jeremiah. God stirred up the heart of a negro eunuch, who was attached to the court of Zedekiah to take pity upon the prophet and to intercede on his behalf.

When Ebed-melech heard of the imprisonment of Jeremiah he was filled with righteous indignation against the princes and courageous compassion with regard to the prophet. Ebed-melech—whose name means “servant of the king” - must have been a friend and follower of Jeremiah. He was an Ethiopian eunuch doubtlessly in charge of Zedekiah’s harem. Ebed-melech was putting his position if not his life on the line when he rushed to the gate of Benjamin to plead for the life of Jeremiah. What amazing courage this humble man was able to muster in the face of a gross injustice to a friend.

### **Verse 9**

As he stands before the judgment seat of the king the Ethiopian slave humbly said, “My lord, the king” and forcefully made his case. He accused the princes of absolute wickedness in their plot against the man of God. He pleaded that he might be permitted to rescue Jeremiah before he died of hunger and exposure.

### **Verse 10**

Zedekiah may have been shocked to learn what the ruthless princes had done with Jeremiah. He grants permission for Ebed-melech to rescue Jeremiah from his place of imprisonment. Lest the princes try to use force to prevent the rescue operation, Ebed-melech is instructed to take thirty men to assist him.

### **Verse 11**

Armed with royal permission to rescue the prophet, Ebed-melech hastened to the task. On his way to the court of the guard he stopped at the royal house which was under the national treasure house.

There he gathered some old rags and then hastened on to the cistern where Jeremiah was confined.

### **Verse 12**

At the mouth of the cistern he let these rags down to Jeremiah by ropes telling the prophet to pad his armpits with them before securing the ropes around his chest. How thoughtful and gentle this deliverer!

### **Verse 13**

Slowly, ever so gently, Ebed-melech and his men hoisted the helpless prophet to light, fresh air, solid earth and a measure of freedom. Jeremiah remained a prisoner in the court of the guard until Jerusalem fell to the Chaldeans.

### **Verse 14**

Shortly after Jeremiah's rescue from the cistern King Zedekiah summoned him for another interview. The situation in Jerusalem had further deteriorated since the two men had faced each other before. It would only be a matter of weeks and a breach would be made in the walls and the enemy would come pouring through to completely overwhelm the faint and sickly inhabitants.

Surely now that Zedekiah has permitted Jeremiah to be rescued from sure death the prophet would have some kind word. How completely the king misunderstands this messenger from God.

There, probably in the darkness of the night, Zedekiah urged Jeremiah to honestly answer his petition--not to withhold anything. He wanted to know the final issue of the siege.

### **Verse 15**

Jeremiah knew the king really did not want to hear what he had to say. Somewhat sarcastically he said, "If I tell you will you not put me to death, and if I give you counsel you will not harm me?"

### **Verse 16**

The desperate king then swore that he would not harm Jeremiah nor permit the princes to do so.

### **Verses 17-18**

Convinced that Zedekiah was sincere in his oath, Jeremiah delivered the word of the Lord to him. It is the same message which Jeremiah had presented to the king and his people on numerous occasions: liberty and life are ours if you surrender to the Chaldeans; defeat and death lay ahead if you continue to resist.

### **Verse 19**

Zedekiah had certainly pondered the alternative of surrender. This tortured little weakling now confided in Jeremiah the reason why he had elected to hold out in Jerusalem until the bitter end. “I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand and they mock me.”

### **Verse 20**

Zedekiah feared that those Jews who earlier had deserted to the enemy would be especially severe with him because he had caused the city to endure the miseries of a siege.

Jeremiah immediately assured the king that his fears regarding the Jews on the outside would not be realized if he would but surrender.

“I beseech you,” says the prophet, “obey the voice of the Lord.” If you will only surrender all will be well with you!

### **Verses 21-22**

On the other hand, Jeremiah warned Zedekiah that if he resisted the Chaldeans to the bitter and inevitable end the very members of his own household would turn upon him in unsympathetic mockery.

### **Verse 23**

Jeremiah pictures the women of the harem—the wives and concubines and their attendants—marching out of the city as captives of the Chaldeans chanting a proverbial taunt-song aimed at Zedekiah. “Your close friends have misled and over powered you; while your feet were sunk in the mire, they turned back.”

The fifth and final conference between Zedekiah and Jeremiah ends with a strong emotional appeal to the king.

The prophet makes three final points. If Zedekiah continued to resist the Chaldeans:

1. He would shortly see those he held most dear—his wives and children—being led out as spoils of war to the enemy soldiers.
2. He himself would not escape from the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.



3. The king through his obstinacy would have to bear the ultimate responsibility for the destruction of Jerusalem as though he himself had set the torch to the beloved city.

#### **Verse 24**

The interview with Jeremiah closed, not with the king accepting and acting upon the word of the prophet, but with a request that the princes not be told of the conversation, "Let no man know of these words and you shall not die."

#### **Verses 25-26**

The king carefully instructed Jeremiah as to what he should say if the princes interrogate him. Jeremiah should not tell them that he had petitioned the king not to cause him to return to the dungeon in the house of Jonathan to die there.

#### **Verse 27**

The precautions of the king were well taken for shortly the princes pounced upon Jeremiah, probing him with questions about the interview with the king. It was truth as far as it went. Jeremiah did not tell the inquisitive princes the whole truth nor was he obligated to do so. The princes did not have a right to know the full contents of the privileged conversation between the king and his spiritual counselor. Jeremiah's answer seemed to satisfy the princes and they did not breach the subject to him anymore, "for the conversation had been overheard."

#### **Verse 28**

Without farther harassment Jeremiah was permitted to remain in the court of the guard until the day that Jerusalem was captured by the Chaldeans.

### **Chapter 39**

For years Jeremiah had been preaching that Jerusalem would fall to the enemy from the north, the Chaldeans. Only through national submission to Nebuchadnezzar, the servant of the Lord, was there any hope of deliverance.

The fall of Jerusalem to the Chaldeans was one of the monumental events of Old Testament history.

### **Verse 1**

The siege of Jerusalem began in the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah, that is, in January 588 B.C.

### **Verse 2**

The siege was brought to a successful conclusion in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, that is, July 587 B.C. What a fateful day that was when the city was broken up, that is, a breach was made in the walls.

### **Verse 3**

After eighteen long weary months during which most of that time the people in Jerusalem were at the point of starvation, the city fell into the hands of the Chaldeans. As soon as the outer areas of Jerusalem had fallen the Chaldeans established a military government for the city. These three or four Chaldean officers administered martial law upon the city until the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar, the captain of the garrison forces, who came about a month after the breach was made in the walls.

### **Verse 4**

When the lower city fell to the Chaldeans Zedekiah knew that within a matter of hours he would be captive in the hands of his enemies. Under cover of night he and what was left of the army make a desperate dash for safety. It must have been his intention to cross the Jordan river.

### **Verse 5**

But in the plains around Jericho the Chaldean army overtook him. The king and his staff were taken in chains to the headquarters of Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah some two hundred miles to the north. There Zedekiah was forced to stand in the judgment of the king against whom he had violated a sacred oath of allegiance.

## **Verses 6-7**

In swearing fidelity to his overlord, the vassal would call upon the gods of both nations to punish him if he proved unfaithful to the terms of agreement. The overlord would punish in the most severe way the vassal who disregarded the treaty and rebelled.

If this particular vassal treaty followed the terminology which was more or less standard in such documents, Zedekiah may well have said something like the following: “May my sons and my officials be slain before my eyes and my eyes blinded if I am unfaithful to any of the terms of his treaty. May I be carried to Babylon in fetters of bronze and languish in prison until my death if I violate this agreement.”

Those self-maledictions, uttered as part of a formal vassal treaty, were literally fulfilled at Riblah. The last sight which Zedekiah saw was the slaying of his own sons. Then his eyes were blinded and he was carried away to Babylon.

The tragedy of Riblah is that all of this could have been avoided had Zedekiah only heeded the word of God spoken through the prophet Jeremiah.

## **Verse 8**

Nebuzaradan, the captain of the king’s body guard, did not arrive on the scene in Jerusalem until a month after the city fell.

When he arrived, he put the city to the torch and broke down the walls which had for so many months thwarted the Chaldeans’ might.

## **Verse 9**

The Judeans who had already defected to the Chaldeans and those who were captured when the city fell were prepared for deportation to Babylon.

## **Verse 10**

Only the very poor of the land were left. The text here indicates further that these poor were given the vineyards and fields.

### **Verse 11**

Nebuchadnezzar had given specific orders to the captain of his guard with regard to the welfare of Jeremiah.

### **Verse 12**

No doubt Nebuchadnezzar had learned of the preaching of Jeremiah through some of those who had defected during the siege. He must have regarded Jeremiah as a friend and ally and so consequently ordered that he be given special treatment.

### **Verse 13**

Upon arriving in Jerusalem Nebuzaradan consulted with the Chaldean officials on the scene in order to prevent any possible harm to Jeremiah by conflicting orders or ignorance of the royal decree.

### **Verse 14**

Jeremiah was removed from the court of the guard and committed into the care of Gedaliah who has been appointed or would shortly be appointed as governor of the land. Gedaliah was instructed “to carry him home.”

### **Verse 15**

These verses provide a bright conclusion to the dark story of the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. The passage suggests that God takes care of His own and rewards men of faith who have the courage to act decisively.

While still in the court of the guard Jeremiah was given a message for Ebed-melech. In the course of this servant’s daily work he would have had occasion to be in or near the court of the guard.

### **Verse 16**

Jeremiah was instructed to go to this eunuch with a message of hope. Ebed-melech would see the city of Jerusalem captured and destroyed just as the Lord had spoken through His prophet.

### **Verse 17**

This is an oblique way of saying that Ebed-melech need not fear reprisals at the hands of the wicked princes who hated him for rescuing Jeremiah. Ebed-melech must have been harassed with fear as to his personal future when Jerusalem was captured. As a royal servant he knew that he would most likely be killed by the Chaldeans. Jeremiah assures him that this will not be the case. "You shall not be delivered into the hands of the men of whom you are afraid."

### **Verse 18**

Though his life would be endangered in that day, God would deliver him. His life would be given to him for a prey, that is, a prize of war. God will be gracious to this humble servant because he had put his trust in the Lord.

What a contrast between this royal servant and the king he served. The servant trusted God and risked his life to take a stand for right. His master tried to save his life by refusing to heed the word of God.

## **Chapter 40**

The events in Judah following the fall of Jerusalem center around the Babylonian appointed Gedaliah, his administration, his assassination, and the aftermath of his death.

### **Verse 1**

In chapter 39, Jeremiah was freed from prison and committed to the care of Gedaliah. He was taken to his home where he must have remained for some time. Evidently while mingling with the people, Jeremiah was picked up by Babylonian soldiers under orders to fetter the Jews and prepare them for deportation. In the absence of his protector Jeremiah did not receive any special favor from the soldiers who were in charge of the deportation.

### **Verses 2-6**

Nebuzaradan, the commander of the occupational forces, found Jeremiah among the captives in Ramah. He quickly and apologetically removed the

chains from the wrists of the prophet. How embarrassed Nebuzaradan must have been to discover that Jeremiah had been subjected to the indignities of being a captive when Nebuchadnezzar had expressly given orders that he be treated with kindness.

Upon freeing Jeremiah, Nebuzaradan allows the prophet to choose his own course of action. If he should choose the former alternative, Nebuzaradan promises to personally see to his welfare. "Now while he was not yet gone back, that is, while he was still in the process of making up his mind, Nebuzaradan suggested that if he should choose to remain in the homeland he should join Gedaliah the newly appointed governor. Jeremiah chose to cast his lot with the humble people who remained in the land.

### **Verses 7-8**

After the fall of Jerusalem, Judah became a province of the Babylonian empire. The Holy City, of course, had been completely destroyed, reduced to a heap of ashes. Jerusalem had been a thorn in the flesh of Nebuchadnezzar for so many years that he had unleashed his vengeance against her.

Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah, a member of a prominent Jewish family, as governor. He did not appoint a Babylonian as governor because he did not wish to arouse the hostility of those Jews who remained in the land.

Gedaliah was an ideal choice. He came from a god-fearing and influential family which through the years had supported the contention of Jeremiah that Nebuchadnezzar had been appointed by God the ruler of the world.

Be that as it may, it would have been very difficult for Nebuchadnezzar to have found a man better qualified than Gedaliah to lead the Jews in reorganizing themselves. Nebuchadnezzar intended to create in Palestine a self-governing commonwealth under Babylonian sovereignty. The great king hoped to maintain the loyalty of the new colony by granting to them as much freedom as possible, especially freedom of religion.

The wisdom of Nebuchadnezzar's choice of Gedaliah became evident at once. Gedaliah immediately launched into a program of reconstruction. His

first goal was to unite the various factions into which the remnant of the people was divided. Scattered throughout the land were small guerrilla bands which had somehow escaped capture and destruction by the Chaldean army. Once the main body of foreign troops withdrew, these guerrilla units either came voluntarily or were summoned to Mizpah. Gedaliah wished to discuss with the leaders of these troops the future of the community in Palestine.

### **Verse 9**

Gedaliah honestly and forthrightly presented his program to these captains and urged them to use their influence to secure peace throughout the land. *First*, he assured these former soldiers that they had no reason to fear serving the Chaldeans. *Second*, Gedaliah calls upon these leaders and their followers to dwell peacefully in the land and render service to the king of Babylon. If they continue to do this he promises them a life of peace and tranquility.

### **Verse 10**

Gedaliah assures them that he would stay at Mizpah and handle the affairs of government. He would act as liaison between Judeans and the Chaldean officials who might appear from time to time in the land. Finally he urges the people to get busy and gather the harvest for the coming winter.

### **Verses 11-12**

Some months earlier, when hostilities had broken out in Palestine, Jews now began to filter back to their native land. Catching the spirit of the reorganized community they joined in harvesting the land. After reaping an abundant harvest, the remnant settled down in their homeland.

The peace and tranquility of the tiny remnant in Palestine was soon shattered. Ishmael, a member of the royal family, began plotting behind the scenes to assassinate Gedaliah. It is clear that Ishmael is being used as a political pawn of Baalis, the king of the Ammonites. Baalis must have coveted the territory of Judah for himself and decided that Gedaliah was standing in the way. Envy, jealousy and greed must surely have been the factors which drove Baalis and Ishmael into their unholy alliance.

## **Verses 13-14**

Somehow word of the treacherous plot had reached the ears of Johanan. Perhaps Ishmael had even tried to enlist Johanan in the conspiracy. At once he warned the governor. Gedaliah, being the righteous and godly man that he was, could not bring himself to believe that the report was true.

## **Verse 15**

But Johanan knew that the death of Gedaliah would mean disaster for the tiny remnant. He was convinced that the reports concerning Ishmael were true. Privately he pressed the matter with the governor, offering to immediately slay Ishmael if Gedaliah so desired. He underscored the point that if Gedaliah were slain the Jewish remnant in Palestine would be scattered and destroyed.

## **Verse 16**

If Gedaliah had merely been putting up a brave front before there is no reason for him to do so now. He ordered that no action be taken against Ishmael and he accuses Johanan of making false accusations against a fellow officer. While of course Gedaliah was right in refusing to allow the assassination of Ishmael, it does seem that he should have taken active steps to protect his own person. His lack of cautiousness led to his own assassination.

## **Chapter 41**

### **Verse 1**

It was in the seventh month that Ishmael began to set his plan in motion. The Chaldean armies which were to avenge the death of governor Gedaliah arrived in Judah in 582 B.C.

When Ishmael and his crew of ten cutthroats arrived in Mizpah Gedaliah still suspected nothing. He invited these men of the nobility to dine with him.

### **Verse 2**

During the course of the meal, a flagrant violation of the rules of the orient, the assassins suddenly rose up and slew Gedaliah.



### **Verse 3**

In the ensuing panic these dedicated extremists were also successful in slaying all the Jews present in the banquet hall and even the Chaldean body-guard.

### **Verse 4**

For two days Ishmael and his brigands controlled the town of Mizpah. No one was allowed to leave the town and therefore no one outside Mizpah knew that the crime had been committed.

### **Verse 5**

The women, children and old men left in Mizpah were no match for the armed soldiers of Ishmael though they were few in number. A group of eighty pilgrims approached the town of Mizpah on their way to offer sacrifices at the ruins of the Temple in Jerusalem. These men were pious Israelites living in the former territory of the Northern Kingdom.

Though the Temple had been destroyed and Jerusalem was in ruins these faithful few continued to observe the appointed festivals of the Law of Moses. However, the festivals were no longer occasions for joy but for lamentation. The shaved beards, torn clothes and cut bodies are signs of the most intense mourning.

### **Verse 6**

Cunning Ishmael, shedding crocodile tears as though the two were sharing in the lamentation of the hour went out to meet the pilgrims. He lured them into the town of Mizpah with the appeal that they should salute Gedaliah the governor of the land while they were in the vicinity.

### **Verse 7**

As the unsuspecting pilgrims entered the town, Ishmael's gang pounced upon them and murdered seventy of these harmless and helpless people. The corpses of these victims were thrown into an old cistern constructed three hundred years earlier by King Asa when he fortified Mizpah against the possible attack of King Baasha of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

### **Verse 8**

During the massacre ten of the eighty men were spared because they offered to show Ishmael the whereabouts of stores of wheat, barley, oil and honey.

### **Verse 9**

Probably these goods were stored away in underground cisterns on their fields. The bribe was sufficient and Ishmael spared the lives of these men. Perhaps this reveals Ishmael's motive in the massacre. He is seeking supplies and booty for his band of robbers and for the king of Ammon, who had sponsored the enterprise.

### **Verse 10**

After the slaughter of the Israelite pilgrims Ishmael and his men took captive the entire population of Mizpah. Among the captives were "the daughters of the king," that is, princesses of the royal house whom Nebuchadnezzar had permitted to remain in Judah.

### **Verse 11**

It was not long before the Mizpah massacre was discovered. When Johanan and the other captives heard what had happened they took decisive action.

### **Verse 12**

They immediately gathered together their fighting men and set out in pursuit of the brigands. The force of Johanan caught up with Ishmael at the great waters near Gibeon three miles southwest of Mizpah.

### **Verses 13-14**

When the frightened captives saw the forces of Johanan approaching they took new heart, broke ranks and ran in the direction of the deliverers.

### **Verses 15-16**

Ishmael and eight of his men were successful in escaping from Johanan, but two of the murderers apparently were caught and slain.

### **Verses 41:17-43:7 The Plight of the Remnant**

Following the death of Gedaliah, the tiny remnant in Judah was thrown into confusion. Gedaliah was dead; Ishmael had escaped. It would only be a matter of time before Nebuchadnezzar would appear to avenge the death of his governor. The preceding narrative has skillfully portrayed the dire plight of the people who remained in the land following the destruction of Jerusalem. But they had one consolation—God was still with them and the prophet of God was still available to deliver His word to them.

### **Verses 17-18**

No doubt Nebuchadnezzar would construe this as an act of overt rebellion against his authority. Since the real assassins had escaped, surely the Chaldeans would pour out their wrath on the Jews who remained in the land. They must leave the land before the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar appeared on the scene.

Without even pausing to return to Mizpah to gather their belongings the Jews headed south in a panic-stricken flight. They stopped for the night near Bethlehem at the habitation (or inn) of Chimham. It was at one of these rest stops (called khans) that the tired remnant stopped for the night. Their intention was to seek safety in Egypt.

As long as Gedaliah was alive the tiny community had prospered. The utter confusion and helplessness of the remnant after the governor's death only serves to underscore the marvelous leadership of Gedaliah.

## **Chapter 42**

### **Verse 1**

It is while the people were encamped near Bethlehem that Jeremiah returns to the narrative. Since Jeremiah is with the remnant at the inn of Chimham it would seem reasonable to assume that he had been among the captives led away by Ishmael. At any rate Jeremiah now comes to the forefront again as a spiritual counselor of the people. The entire group of fugitives assembled before the prophet in order to receive an oracle from the Lord. Johanan and Jezaniah acted as spokesman for the group.

## **Verse 2**

Very courteously they made their request. They desire that God might direct their path.

## **Verses 3-4**

Jeremiah agrees to fulfill their request. Jeremiah knew, however, that these people already had their minds made up as to what they were going to do. They had decided that it was necessary to flee into Egypt and they assumed that this decision should be endorsed and confirmed by the Lord.

## **Verse 5**

Anticipating that God would not approve of their plan, Jeremiah warns the people that he will speak only that which the Lord reveals. He will not alter the word of God to suit the present circumstances. He would not hold back the truth.

## **Verse 6**

Somewhat over enthusiastically the people take a vow that they will act in accordance with the word of God. It is obvious from what follows that they were not sincere in this declaration. Like so many of God's people, they were willing to follow His word only in so far as His word met their approval.

## **Verses 7-9**

Jeremiah waited ten days before the Lord clearly made known His will to the mind of the prophet. It seems as though God was preparing the heart of His messenger both to receive and to communicate His word to the people. No doubt the people were perturbed by the delay. They knew what the divine directive had to be, so why delay.

Each day they manifested their impatience and disgust. Still Jeremiah refused to speak until he was certain that the message was from God. After ten days of prayer wrestling with God, the answer came. Jeremiah immediately called for the entire encampment to hear God's word.

The response of the Lord contains two parts: the way of peace and the way to punishment. To this is added word of exhortation by Jeremiah.

### **Verses 10-12**

The word of the Lord concerning the way of peace came as a complete shock to the assembled remnant. It was God's will that they remain in Judah! If they chose to remain in the land, God would build them up, that is, cause them to prosper. God was not angry with them.

Quite the contrary. The Lord declares: "I repent Me of the evil that I have done unto you." This is not a confession of mistake or of remorse for the disasters which He had brought upon them. Rather it means that His attitude and conduct toward His people now has changed. He is not hostile toward them any longer.

After the general promises of peace and prosperity, the Lord addressed Himself to the specific fears of the community. Their anxiety concerning the reaction of Nebuchadnezzar to the death of his governor was groundless. God was with them and would deliver them out of the hand of the Chaldean king — the king whom they feared would actually show mercy to them. How often in the life of a Christian the worst fears prove to be ungrounded.

### **Verses 13-18**

The people as free moral agents had a choice to make. If they chose to remain in the land they would enjoy peace and prosperity. But if they chose flight to Egypt they would experience the punishment of God. The choice was up to them. God lets man choose his destiny.

In Egypt the people imagined that they would enjoy peace and plenty. They would escape, so they thought, the ravish of war. Not so, said Jeremiah. The sword will follow you to Egypt and there you will experience all the horrors of war. There you will die of the sword, famine, and pestilence.

Just as in the past the nation had experienced the judgments of God, so would the wrath of God be poured out upon the remnant if they disobeyed this

command of God. They would become an object of execration and horror; they would be accursed and derided. They would never again see their homeland.

### **Verses 19-22**

As Jeremiah delivered the word of the Lord he could see in his audience the hardened look of rejection. Earnestly he exhorts his hearers to follow the divine directive and remain in the land. “This is not my personal opinion; the Lord has spoken concerning you O remnant.

You surely know that I have admonished or testified against you this day.” Your guilt is all the more serious in that you sent me unto the Lord to inquire concerning His will and you pledged yourselves to submit to that will.

This disobedience had sealed their death warrant. Unbelief does not alter the word of God. “Be absolutely sure of this one thing,” says the prophet: “If you persist in your manifest intentions to go to Egypt you shall die of the sword, famine, and pestilence.”

## **Chapter 43**

### **Verse 1**

While the people heard the prophet, it was obvious that the word of God was not getting through to them. Scarcely had he finished speaking when opposition arose. A certain Azariah, most likely a brother of Jezaniah, seems to have assumed the role of chief spokesman.

### **Verse 2**

Joining with him were all the “proud men.” The Hebrew word used here is used of those arrogant, insolent loud mouths who have the audacity to speak out against God and question His word. “You are a liar!” they yelled at the prophet. “God did not send you to say, do not go down to Egypt!”

### **Verse 3**

They did not attempt to answer Jeremiah's arguments; instead they challenge his integrity and veracity.

They point the finger of accusation at Baruch and hurl a groundless but vicious charge at the faithful scribe: "Baruch has set you against us in order to give us into the hands of the Chaldeans."

### **Verses 4-6**

Defiant disobedience must be rationalized and Baruch was made the scapegoat. Perhaps he was in the employ of the Chaldeans in some capacity. At any rate the attack was made against him was patently absurd.

Jeremiah does not even bother to try to dissuade the crowd, which by this time had become a mob, from their course of action. Unbelief had hardened into apostasy. The die was cast. To Egypt they would go.

Having determined to disobey the commandments of God, Johanan instructed the people to hastily make preparation for the flight to Egypt. All the men, women, children, and the king's daughters are told to pack their meager belongings for the trip southward.

Jeremiah and Baruch are both listed among those who went down to Egypt. It is impossible to imagine that this faithful man of God agreed to join the refugees of his own accord since he knew that the whole venture was contrary to the will of God.

The angry leaders must have forced the old man and his faithful companion to go with them in order that they might share whatever fate awaited the group in Egypt.

### **Verse 7**

One of the saddest verses in the whole book of Jeremiah is chapter 43:7. "So they came into the land of Egypt; for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord; they came even to Tahpanhes.

The Israelites, who nine hundred years earlier had been delivered from Egypt, have now returned. These who are seeking peace and security were marching into the jaws of death."

## **Verses 8-44:30**

These verses contain the last recorded oracle of Jeremiah. That oracle was delivered before the death of Pharaoh Hophra in 569 B.C. These verses cover a period of approximately thirteen years.

Jeremiah did not cease from his prophetic activity in the land of Egypt. Indeed, the final three oracles of his ministry were delivered on Egyptian soil.

### **Verse 8**

The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah at Taphanhes. The city was one of the major fortresses guarding the eastern entrance into Egypt.

It was also an important commercial center, since all the caravans going to and from Egypt passed through there. Shortly after the Jews arrived in Taphanhes Jeremiah delivered his first oracle to them.

### **Verse 9**

God instructed him to “take great stones . . . and hide them in the mortar in the brickwork which is at the entry of Pharaoh’s house in Tahpanhes.”

### **Verse 10**

The “brickwork” is most likely the brick pavement at the entrance of this royal residence. The men of Judah were present to observe the prophet performing this strange act. When Jeremiah had finished burying the stones beneath the brickwork he rose to make a startling announcement.

He predicted that Nebuchadnezzar would come to Egypt and place his throne on the very spot where the stones were hidden. Here on this very spot the Great King would spread his royal canopy.

### **Verse 11**

The invasion of Nebuchadnezzar would have terrible consequences for the inhabitants of Egypt and for the Jews who were seeking refuge there. Some would die of deadly wounds suffered in battle, others from famine which would result when cities were besieged. Still others would be carried away into captivity or given over to the sword of the executioner.



## **Verse 12**

Nebuchadnezzar would have no respect for the gods of Egypt. He would put the torch to the temples of the land and carry their images away to Babylon as trophies of war. He will break the images of Beth-shemesh as well.

## **Verse 13**

Beth-shemesh means “house of the sun.” The place was called Heliopolis by the Greeks and On by the Egyptians. It is located near the southern point of the Egyptian Delta region a few miles south of Tahpanhes and about ten miles northeast of modern Cairo. A famous temple dedicated to the sun was located here which had in front of it a row of obelisks. It is to these obelisks that the present passage points.

Jeremiah’s prediction of a Chaldean invasion of Egypt was fulfilled in a marvelous way. In this invasion the king of Egypt was killed and the Jews in Egypt carried away captive to Babylonia.

## **Chapter 44**

Nothing is more inspiring than to see an old soldier of God faithful until death on the battlefield for the Lord. This chapter offers the last glimpse of Jeremiah. He is still fighting for the God he serves; he is still appealing to the people he loves. How grieved Jeremiah must have been to see the remnant in Egypt persisting in idolatry.

For an entire lifetime he had tried to guide this people in the paths of covenant faithfulness to the Lord. But Jeremiah had failed to stem the tide of national apostasy. It was a heavy burden upon his heart that the old prophet tries once again to warn the miserable remains of his people of the error of their ways.

The Jews who fled to Egypt had settled all over that land. From these widely scattered places the Jews had assembled for some kind of religious festival in honor of the heathen queen deity, the queen of heaven. Tahpanhes was

probably the site of the gathering. This may have been the last opportunity that Jeremiah had to address the entire remnant which had fled to Egypt.

The warning of the prophet passes through three distinct phases.

1. He offers to these Jews an explanation of the past calamity which had befallen the nation. (verses 1-6)
2. He expostulates with them concerning their present sin. (verses 7-10)
3. He declares that judgment will yet befall them in Egypt. (verses 11-14)

### **Verses 1-2**

Jeremiah turned first to history. He reminds his hearers that Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were uninhabited and in ruins.

### **Verse 3**

The people of God had provoked His wrath by their wickedness. They had committed the sin that God detested above all others—they had burned incense to strange deities and had paid homage to gods of their own making.

### **Verses 4-5**

Even though they had violated the First Commandment, God had earnestly and persistently sent prophets to plead with His people to turn from their abominable idolatry; but still they persisted in this wickedness.

### **Verse 6**

Because of the stubborn refusal to turn from the path of idolatry, the anger and fury of God was poured out upon the cities of Judah.

### **Verses 7-8**

Turning from the explanation of past calamity the prophet begins to make an application of the lessons of history to the remnant in Egypt.

Jeremiah found it hard to understand why the people continued to offer incense to pagan deities in view of the terrible consequences of that action in the past.

The bewilderment of the prophet is reflected in the two questions he addresses to the remnant in this paragraph. “Why do you continue to commit this great evil against yourselves? If it continues every man, woman, child, and infant of Judah will be cut off in the wrath of God.”

### **Verse 9**

“Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers? he asks, and then, using the technique of emphasis by enumeration, he adds, and the wickedness of your kings, their wives, and your own wickedness and of your wives?”

### **Verse 10**

Surely, they had not so soon forgotten that the wages of sin, is death! But alas it is true. They have not humbled themselves (lit., bruised themselves) that is, made themselves contrite in repentance.

They do not fear God nor walk in His law and statutes.

### **Verse 11**

God declares that He will set His face against His people. All Judah will be cut off.

### **Verse 12**

One must wait until the final clause to find a note of hope. An awesome trinity of verbs in verse twelve spells out the disaster: they shall fall, they shall die, they shall be consumed. What irony! They fled to Egypt in order to escape bloodshed, privation, carnage, and exile. But these Jews who had stubbornly set their will against that of their God and had emigrated to Egypt would meet with war and famine, destruction and death in that land. “From the least to the greatest,” none would escape. Though the remnant in Egypt would die, their memory would live on in the minds of men for use in expressions of astonishment, execration, cursing, and reproach.

### **Verse 13**

Just as God had punished Jerusalem “by sword, famine, and pestilence,” so God would now pour out His wrath upon those Jews who dwell in the land of Egypt.

#### **Verse 14**

None would escape the judgment in order that they might return to Judah even if they might have a desire to do so. Only a small number of the present remnant will ever see their homeland again.

Jeremiah did not intend to offer consolation. It was his purpose here to shock, to jar and hopefully thereby to lead these people to repentance.

#### **Verse 15**

Jeremiah’s ministry ended on the same note with which it began. The people rejected the word of God which he brought to them. God had warned him at the outset, “They shall fight against you but they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you to deliver you.”

From that day forward Jeremiah had forced his people into confrontation with the word of God that is sharper than any two-edged sword. That tender-hearted and timid youth had indeed become the iron pillar, fenced city and brazen wall that God had predicted. With unflinching courage, he stands up in the midst of that pagan festival to manfully preach the word.

Resentment in the faces of that apostate audience is quite obvious as Jeremiah strikes at them with the whiplash of divine rebuke. That resentment boils over into violent anger when Jeremiah mentions the guilt of the women of Judah.

Men who exhibit amazing restraint when being personally attacked often burst into uncontrollable rage when someone criticizes their wives. They might have ignored the old prophet and dismissed what he said as being the sentiments of a religious fanatic. But he had touched a sensitive nerve and they felt compelled to reply to him.

#### **Verse 16**

The defiant reply of the accused people is not clothed in diplomatic camouflage. They mince no words. "We will not hearken unto you." They do not accuse Jeremiah of speaking falsely in the name of the Lord, they do not even bother to argue the point. They could care less what the God of Jeremiah expected or demanded of them. Even if the word of the prophet does come from the Lord, they will not receive it. Rather they declare we will certainly do whatsoever thing comes forth out of our own mouth."

They are expressing their determination to perform the vows that they have made to the queen of heaven, Ishtar, to offer incense to her and pour out libations to her.

### **Verse 17**

In attempting to rationalize their idolatry the assembly offers three arguments.

1. They argue that the worship of the queen of heaven is nothing new. Their fathers had worshiped her throughout the land of Judah and even in the streets of Jerusalem. Could a religion practiced for so long by so many be wrong?
2. The assembly argues that the worship of the queen of heaven is advantageous to the nation. "When we faithfully worshiped this goddess all was well; but from the day we ceased to worship her we experienced one calamity and disaster after another."

### **Verse 18**

Rather than thanking God for the blessings He had poured out upon them they attributed their prosperity to their false gods. The people were forced to cease the open worship of the queen of heaven during the reformations of King Josiah. But no sooner had the reform under Josiah commenced then one calamity after another struck the nation culminating finally in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah had one interpretation for the events of the past few years while the people had an altogether different one. They interpreted the decline and fall

of their nation as being due to the exclusive worship of the Lord and the neglect of other deities who might have been able to save them.

On the other hand, the prophet regards the disasters which had befallen his people as due to the gradual degradation of the people through idolatry practiced in the days of Manasseh and Amon and renewed subsequent to the death of Josiah.

Boiled down to its simplest terms, this second argument of the assembly is simply this: We will worship the god who has done the most for us. The queen of heaven has done more for us than the God whom you represent. Therefore, we will serve the queen of heaven.

Like so many people today those Jews were searching for a religion which would give them the maximum amount of blessing for the minimum amount of service.

### **Verse 19**

The third argument is added by the women who were present. "Whatever acts of worship were performed by us," say the women, "were done with the consent of our husbands." In other words, since we have the approval of our husbands for this worship you have no right, Jeremiah, to interfere with it. Thus, the whole community is involved in this final rejection of the Lord as the sole deity of Israel.

### **Verses 20-21**

The last recorded words of Jeremiah come in response to the brazen remarks of the remnant of Egypt. Jeremiah does not wilt under pressure nor does he run from controversy. He stands eloquently alone against what must have been a smirking, jeering, shouting crowd.

The contention of the crowd was that God had forgotten them. Because God did not immediately punish them for their idolatry back in the days of Manasseh did not mean that He had failed to take note of their sin. God did remember their iniquity, Jeremiah affirms.

### **Verse 22**

Because of His longsuffering and patience, He delayed the execution of the inevitable sentence. God could no longer bear their sin. Then and only then, was the wrath of God poured out on Judah and that is why that land is a desolation, an astonishment and a curse without inhabitant to this very day.

### **Verse 23**

It is because of your idolatry and flagrant disobedience to the word of God that you are in your present condition.

### **Verses 24-25**

The Jews in Egypt served their idols with greater loyalty than they had ever shown for the service of the Lord. With bitter sarcasm Jeremiah declares: “You have made vows to worship the queen of heaven. Very well, then fulfill your vows!”

### **Verse 26**

Then Jeremiah abandoning his sarcastic tone becomes deadly serious. “But if you perform those vows you have made your choice of deities. You have committed the ultimate rebellion and therefore you will experience the ultimate punishment.”

Jeremiah holds out two threats.

1. God will withdraw His name from the lips of His people.

The Lord no longer regards Himself as their covenant God and therefore they have lost the right of calling upon His name.

### **Verse 27**

2. God assures the remnant in Egypt that He will watch over them for evil and not for good.

What a dreadful thought! Just as God watches over His word to fulfill it, so now He is watching over His people to see that they are punished for their apostasy.

None of their pagan deities or religious rites will be able to divert the disaster which will befall them. All the Jews who live in the land of Egypt will die by the famine or by the sword.

### **Verse 28**

All the Jews in Egypt would perish is here immediately qualified. A tiny remnant shall escape the general slaughter in Egypt and shall return to the land of Judah.

Even in this judgment/speech grace shines through. But why does Jeremiah in this stern sermon, want to mention the few individuals who will be saved? He is pleading with them to return to the Lord. He can offer no hope to the Egyptian community of Jews as a whole, but he can hold out some hope to those who might turn in faith to the Lord.

### **Verses 29-30**

Lest any of his hearers think that the message he has delivered originated in his own imagination Jeremiah offered the audience a sign which could confirm the prophetic character of his dire threats. God would shortly deliver Pharaoh Hophra to his political enemies just as He had delivered Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

Jeremiah probably did not live to see either the sign or the prophecy of the Chaldean destruction fulfilled.

## **Chapter 45**

### **Verses 1-2**

This chapter dates back to the fourth year of Jehoiakim. That was the crucial year in the political history of Judah and in the ministry of Jeremiah. It was in that year that Nebuchadnezzar was able to defeat the Assyrian / Egyptian coalition and assume control of the Near East. That was also the year in which the words of Jeremiah were first put into written form.

Chronologically chapter 45 would have fitted much better after chapter 36.



If Baruch was, as has been plausibly suggested, Jeremiah's biographer and the editor of his master's messages, it could well be that he has placed this chapter here for a definite purpose. It is only here that Baruch reveals himself as a person. Throughout the rest of the Book of Jeremiah he is content to remain in the background and simply record the message of his master. It is like a quiet meadow in the midst of a tumultuous battlefield. After all the rumbling of chariot wheels, the carnage of battle, the fall of cities and nations the reader is ready for something milder.

Here the focus shifts from international conflict to the problems of a single individual. God is just as concerned about the troubled mind of one of His faithful as about the course of international policies. After an introductory word verse two contains a gentle rebuke.

### **Verse 3**

Baruch had been complaining. He was disturbed, weary and tired. "Woe is me now! For the Lord has added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest." There is no indication as to why Baruch felt this way. Perhaps Baruch had become discouraged and depressed as he recorded from the lips of Jeremiah that long series of charges and threats against his people. For the first time he saw the deplorable spiritual condition of the nation.

The thought of that impending catastrophic destruction brought anguish to his heart as even to the heart of his master. His city, the Temple, and all he had held dear would be swept away. His own personal hopes and aspirations would be dashed to the ground. Added to the burden which future prospects laid upon his heart was his present predicament. He was in hiding with Jeremiah under the threat of execution by the tyrant Jehoiakim.

It seemed to him that ever since he had volunteered his scribal services to Jeremiah that one heartache, disappointment and sorrow had been added to another. The burden had become too great. He was utterly weary because of his own sighing. He could find no rest for his soul.

### **Verse 4**

To the tired and weary Baruch, God sent His messenger with a word of comfort. It was not a word of sympathy for this would merely have added fuel to the tormenting flames of self-pity within the soul of Baruch. Nor does God promise this secretary immunity from the difficulties of the time.

Rather God deals with the despondency of Baruch by revealing to him the depths of the divine agony. The thought of the passage may be paraphrased as follows: "You, O Baruch, are experiencing the very worst form of self-pity. Well now, consider! What I Myself built I am about to tear down. What I planted, I am about to uproot." In other words, God is saying to Baruch "What is your hurt compared to Mine?" The amazing teaching of this little chapter is that God too experiences pain.

Perhaps if more preachers and teachers and even church members like Baruch would only stop to contemplate that God knows pain, perhaps they would be able to view their own trials and troubles in the proper perspective.

When one begins to meditate on the Scripture, "God is not willing for any to perish but that all should come to repentance" surely then the magnitude of the divine hurt would be impressed upon the mind.

### **Verse 5**

Having pointed out to Baruch His own genuine grief, the Lord seems to chide this scribe by saying, "And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not!" What were the great things to which Baruch aspired? One can only guess. Did he aspire to preach the word of the Lord in the masterful style of Jeremiah?

Did he anticipate that the nation would heed the cry for repentance, recognize Jeremiah for the man of God he was, and give Baruch the recognition he deserved as the righthand man of this great prophet? Did he have his sights set on some position of political power? The truth will never be known.

### **Chapter 46**

With the exception of the Book of Hosea, every prophetic book of the Old Testament contains at least one oracle (message of doom) concerning a foreign

nation. The foreign nation oracles in the Book of Jeremiah seem to be organized in a definite pattern. Jeremiah placed first in the collection of oracles Egypt, the great and ancient archenemy of Israel to the south. Then he places together a number of oracles addressed to smaller nations of his day which, along with Israel, were somewhat like pawns in the struggle between the great powers.

The climax of this part of the book is reached in chapters 50-51 when Jeremiah announces the judgment upon Babylon, the greatest power of that time.

### **Verse 1**

Standing first in the collection of oracles against the nations are two utterances against Egypt. The first of these found in verse 1-12, is dated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 B.C.). The theme of this oracle is the Egyptian defeat at Carchemish.

### **Verse 2**

This verse serves as a preface to the first oracle concerning Egypt. The oracle describes the defeat of Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, that is, 605 B.C.

### **Verses 3-4**

The first poetic description of the Egyptian defeat at Carchemish begins with a graphic picture of the preparations in the Egyptian camp on the eve of the great battle. One can feel the excitement here as Egyptian officers bark orders to their men. "Prepare the buckler and the shield! Draw near to battle!" The buckler was the small round shield carried by the light infantry; the shield covered the entire body and was borne by those heavily-armed.

The chariot and cavalry forces as well are directed to make ready for battle. "Harness the horses" shouts an officer and the deadly chariots which are such an important part of the ancient army of Egypt are immediately made ready for action. "Mount up," shouts the officer in charge of the cavalry unit. Then comes the command, "Stand forth with your helmets." Since helmets were not worn except when actually in battle this command is equivalent to an order to engage the enemy. Confident of victory the mighty army of Egypt rushes forward. The

battle that should decide the fate of the world and the destiny of nations has been launched.

### **Verses 5-6**

The picture suddenly changes. The prophet himself is astonished at what he sees and expresses his amazement. How can it be that such a well-trained and disciplined army could be thrown into confusion and flight? It is beyond comprehension that such a magnificent army could be thoroughly defeated and routed.

Jeremiah uses his favorite expression “Fear was round about” to describe the terror that plunged those hardened soldiers into flight. Even the most swift and mighty among them will not be able to reach their homeland. They will stumble in exhaustion, stumble over the slain, stumble over one another in their haste to flee the scene of battle.

They will fall in a foreign land, in the north, by the river Euphrates.

“Why does this happen,” the prophet asked in the opening line of verse 5. The answer is found in, “Thus says the Lord” (that is, the oracle of the Lord) in the last line of the same verse.

Egypt will meet the defeat at Carchemish because God has so decreed it. It is His judgment against Egypt.

### **Verse 7**

The rivers mentioned are the arms and canals of the Nile in the Delta region.

### **Verse 8**

The pride and confidence of Pharaoh is revealed in his boast, “I will go up and cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants.

### **Verse 9**

By means of a sarcastic imperative Jeremiah urges the hosts of Egypt to hasten onward to their destination. Cush, Put and Lud (Ethiopians, Libyans and

Lydians) refer to the countries of Pharaoh's mercenary troops. From the days of Pharaoh Psammetichus these African mercenaries formed the major part of the Egyptian army.

Who could withstand such a vast and heavily armed host? No wonder Pharaoh makes his boast. But God alone decrees what nation will rule His world, and God has chosen Nebuchadnezzar. Pharaoh will meet his doom at Carchemish!

### **Verses 10-12**

These verses picture the results of the battle. Instead of victory for Egypt or for Babylon, Carchemish will be a day of victory for the Lord. By describing the defeat at Carchemish as a "sacrifice" Jeremiah indicates the religious significance of the battle.

The phrase "the day of the Lord of hosts" designates a day which God has reserved for the punishment of His adversaries and the deliverance of His people.

### **Verse 10**

At Carchemish God will take vengeance on "His adversaries." The Egyptians are not God's adversaries because of the unmerciful oppression to which they had subjected the Israelites centuries earlier. That debt had long since been settled when God brought the terrific plague/judgments upon the land of Egypt. But the Egyptians had continued to show hostility toward the people of God in more recent days.

### **Verse 11**

This verse describes the Egyptian defeat at Carchemish as a wound for which there is no known cure. But search as they may they would not be able to find any medicine which would heal Egypt of the mortal wound received at Carchemish. Even the famed balm of Gilead would avail nothing.

### **Verse 12**

What a sad day that will be for Pharaoh. Defeat and confusion follow the battle. The cry of the retreating soldiers can be heard throughout the land. In

their haste to escape from the battlefield the mighty men of the Egyptian army stumble over one another.

Jeremiah's prediction for what would take place at Carchemish was marvelously fulfilled.

### **Verses 13-14**

Jeremiah urges that an alarm be sounded in the border towns of Egypt that they might prepare to meet the foe. Jeremiah had previously warned these Jews of the coming invasion and had predicted that they would perish in the slaughter.

### **Verse 15**

“Why has your strong one been swept away?” The reference is to Apis, the sacred bull, one of the high gods of the land of Egypt. The mighty one of Egypt cannot stand before the armies of the Mighty One of Israel. Apis shall be “thrust down.” When the Lord brings Nebuchadnezzar against Egypt he shall demonstrate His superiority to the gods of Egypt.

### **Verse 16**

Not only does the Lord thrust down Apis, He causes many of the soldiers of Egypt to fall in battle. The Egyptian troops are thrown into confusion. They stumble over one another in their haste to flee the scene of battle. Jeremiah hears the mercenaries urging one another: “Arise, let us go over to our own people and the land of our birth.”

### **Verse 17**

Being devoid of patriotic feeling, it is natural that these hired soldiers should flee from the doomed country. In their respective countries these mercenaries report the ruin of Egypt and heap ridicule upon Pharaoh. “Pharaoh, King of Egypt is only a noise,” they say. Pharaoh is nothing but a noisy braggart who makes big boasts and promises but cannot make them good. “He passed the appointed time.”

The idea here is that every nation has its appointed time for glory and power. That appointed time for Egypt was passed.

### **Verse 18**

Egypt's appointed time has come to an end. Therefore, the Lord swears by an oath that the coming of Nebuchadnezzar is sure and certain. No one shall be able to withstand him for he is the appointed instrument of the Lord.

As surely as Mount Tabor and Mount Carmel tower over the surrounding landscape in Palestine, so Nebuchadnezzar will tower over Egypt in overpowering splendor and majesty.

### **Verse 19**

In view of the certainty of the coming invasions, Jeremiah urges the inhabitants of Egypt to prepare themselves for captivity. Their capital city, Noph (Memphis) shall be laid waste.

### **Verse 20**

The second stanza of the poem emphasizes the plight of Egypt by means of several figures. The first picture is of the heifer and the gadfly.

### **Verse 21**

Egypt had hitherto enjoyed wealth and luxury. She is like a very fair heifer, well-fed, sleek and beautiful. This beautiful animal suddenly finds herself pained and fleeing from the sting of a tiny gadfly from the north. The picture is intended to describe the weakness of Egypt in the face of her new enemy to the north.

### **Verse 22**

The second picture is of the fleeing fat calves. The mercenaries of Egypt are likened to "fatted bullocks" or more precisely "calves of the stall." These hirelings have no taste for real war. They have gotten all they could out of Egypt and have become fat and prosperous in the process.

But now they read the handwriting on the wall and hastily flee to their native lands. It was the day of accountability for Egypt, the time of calamity and divine visitation.

### **Verse 23**

The third picture is that of the advancing woodsmen and the hissing serpent. The woodsmen are of course the Babylonians who will unmercifully demolish that which belongs to Egypt as the axmen clearing a forest. Egypt can only emit a hiss of defiance as she slithers towards her hole in the face of advancing woodsmen. Thus, the ancient power of Egypt which Ezekiel once compared to a crocodile has become nothing but a serpent hissing with impotent rage.

The fourth picture is that of a great swarm of locust. The phrase “it cannot be searched” could refer to the forest of the preceding figure or could equally well refer to the vast number of the invaders who are compared to a huge swarm of locusts. Plagues of locusts are not at all uncommon in this region of the world.

#### **Verse 24**

In the closing verses of the poem the prophet drops his figures of speech and becomes much more precise in his predictions. Egypt will be completely humiliated by being given into the hands of the people from the north. God has decreed that He will punish “Amon of No”. Amon the sun god for centuries was the chief god of Egypt; No is the biblical name for Thebes, one of the famous cities of the land located in Upper or southern Egypt.

#### **Verse 25**

Amon and the other gods of Egypt will be punished in the sense of being discredited when the Lord brings His instrument of judgment upon the land. Pharaoh and the “kings” or officials of royal blood will also taste of the wrath of the Lord along with all the foolish people who put their trust in Pharaoh.

The Jews who fled to Egypt after the death of Gedaliah would be in the latter category.

#### **Verse 26**

That there will be no doubt as to who the conqueror of Egypt will be, Jeremiah specifically names him. It will be none other than Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon.



Jeremiah holds out brighter prospects for the Egyptians. “And afterwards it shall be inhabited as in the days of old.”

### **Verse 27**

Just as Egypt’s troubles are to be but temporary, so also would be the troubles of Israel. To those Israelites who are in captivity in foreign lands Jeremiah directs this word of encouragement: “Fear not! Do not be dismayed!” God will save Israel from afar, that is, He will bring them back to the Promised Land.

Once restored to Palestine Jacob will enjoy peace and tranquility and no foreign power shall again make him afraid.

### **Verse 28**

“Fear not,” the prophet repeats, “for I am with you.” Those nations which were responsible for taking the people of God captive will be utterly destroyed.

While the captivity is for Jacob a divine punishment, yet it is a measured punishment designed for correction and not destruction. What a comfort it is to know that even in the darkest days God has His hand upon His children.

In the most difficult circumstances God’s people can manifest courage and faith because they are fortified by the promises of God.

## **Chapter 47**

### **Verse 1**

This word came from the Lord “before Pharaoh smote Gaza.” Since Pharaoh Hophra made an expedition as far north as Sidon during his reign he has been nominated as the mysterious Pharaoh.

### **Verse 2**

Borrowing a figure used earlier by Isaiah ([Isaiah 8:7](#)), Jeremiah describes the conqueror of the Philistines as an overflowing flood. The prophet sees the waters slowly rising in the north, gradually swelling, and then sweeping south-

ward like a torrential stream which carries ruin and destruction along its course. The mighty river shall overflow all the land of the Philistines.

### **Verse 3**

Jeremiah can hear the shrieks, screams, and howls of despair mingled with the sounds of the prancing steeds and rumbling chariots and grinding wheels of the Chaldean forces. The fathers are so terrified that they abandon their wives and children to the on-rushing enemy.

### **Verse 4**

The day of ruin has come to Philistia. No Philistine will be able to go to the aid of Tyre and Sidon and those cities as well will taste the wrath of the invincible conqueror. Those who inhabited Philistia in the days of Jeremiah are only the remnant of the original invaders from Caphtor, the island of Crete.

The Philistines had already suffered greatly in wars with Egypt and Assyria. Now the remnant of that once proud people will again suffer judgment at the hands of the God of Israel.

### **Verse 5**

In the second stanza of the poem the figure changes from an overflowing stream to a devouring sword. The sword of the Lord creates havoc in Philistia. Gaza and Ashkelon, two of the principal cities of the land, suffer immeasurably. Baldness and the cutting of the flesh mentioned are both signs of deep mourning. By self-mutilation these heathen folks tried to arouse the pity of the gods.

### **Verse 6**

Someone asks, "O sword of the Lord, how long will it be before you are quiet?" Then follows the appeal, again addressed to the sword, "Put yourself into your scabbard, rest, and be still!" Does this question appeal come for the prophet or from the Philistines? Some feel that this is a cry for mercy on the part of the Philistines. Since no sign of sincere sorrow for their sin or genuine repentance is manifested, the prophet as God's spokesman must reject their pleas.

It may have been Jeremiah himself who, seeing in his mind's eye the devastation and destruction of Philistia, cries out for the sword of God's wrath to be returned to its scabbard.

After further reflection and possible divine revelation Jeremiah realizes that the sword of the Lord cannot be sheathed until its work of judgment is done. The righteous wrath of God must be poured out upon Ashkelon and the whole seashore, all of Philistia.

### **Verse 7**

Justice must be done. When Almighty God brandishes His sword of wrath there is no stopping until the work is complete.

The Philistines had been most bitter enemies of the people of God from the time of the judges. This alone would be reason enough for the awful destruction which is here depicted. But in addition to this Jeremiah emphasized again and again that the nations which refused to submit to the yoke of Babylon would have to drink of the cup of God's wrath.

## **Chapter 48**

The Moabites occupied the region east of the Dead Sea and for the most part south of the river Arnon. The Arnon flows through a steep, twisting gorge in the Mountains of Moab and was of great strategic importance in antiquity.

The Israelites first came into contact with the Moabites at the end of the period of wilderness wandering. At that time Balak, king of Moab, hired Balaam to curse Israel (Numbers 22-24). This was the beginning of a long history of enmity between the two nations. The Moabite Stone as well as the Bible reflects the hostility between the Israelites and the Moabites.

### **Verse 1**

“Woe.” This word is derived from the Hebrew vocabulary of lamentation and expresses the idea, “how sad it is.” Here Jeremiah must feel genuine sympa-

thy for the Moabites in the calamity they are about to experience at the hands of an unnamed northern army. The prophet sees in his mind's eye the enemy devastating the northern cities of Moab, those cities north of the Arnon River.

Nebo is not the mountain but a near-by village named in honor of the Semitic deity Nabu. Misgab ("the high fortress") and Kiriathaim ("the double city") are in the vicinity of Nebo. The inhabitants of these cities are dismayed and stupefied in the face of the enemy onslaught.

### **Verses 2-5**

In Heshbon, the main city north of the river Arnon, the destroyers from the north assemble for the final push into Moab proper. The villages of Madmen and Horonaim just south of the Arnon are sacked and destroyed by the enemy. Jeremiah can hear the wails of panic-stricken men and terrified women and children as they flee southward up the road that leads to Luhith and on to the valley that leads to Horonaim. The location of these two villages are unknown.

### **Verse 6**

Knowing the destruction that awaits Moab Jeremiah urges the inhabitants of that nation to flee for their lives. "Be like the heath (desert shrub) in the wilderness."

### **Verse 7**

Flight is necessary because the judgment of Moab is inevitable. Moab will fall because she has put her trust in her works (strongholds) and in her treasures instead of the living God. The Moabites should also flee because their national god Chemosh will not be able to save them. Indeed Chemosh will not even be able to prevent his own captivity: "Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests and his princes together."

### **Verse 8**

The inhabitants of Moab shall flee because the destruction will touch every part of the land. No city shall escape. The Jordan valley which formed part of

the boundary of Moab on the west shall perish. The plain or plateau (the Transjordanian highland) which stretches from the Arnon north to Heshbon, shall also experience the devastation.

### **Verse 9**

In order to escape the destroyer Moab will need wings and the prophet prays that she shall be provided with them.

### **Verse 10**

A curse is pronounced upon the destroyer if he is negligent in performing the task which the Lord has given him.

### **Verse 11**

Why is Moab to suffer so terribly? In answering this question Jeremiah utilizes the figure of wine and wine jars.

Owing to its mountainous terrain and some-what isolated geographical position (shielded by the Dead Sea on the east) Moab had remained comparatively undisturbed throughout history. Moab had never seen her cities totally destroyed and her people carried away into captivity. Due to its relatively undisturbed existence Moab had become a strong and proud nation with a culture and character unchanged by foreign influences.

All that is about to change.

### **Verse 12**

God is about to send to Moab what the KJV renders as “wanderers.” The ASV gives a better translation “them that pour off,” and the RSV a still a better translation “tilters.”

The reference is to those whose job it was to pour the wine out of the aging vessels into vessels of skins or earthenware. The tilters who will come to Moab will not perform their task in the careful manner which men of that profession normally used. They will in fact pour Moab on the ground and then smash his vessels.

### **Verse 13**

Moab is to experience a radical and abrupt change in fortunes. Her proud, ancient culture will be poured out like wine from the jar; her political existence smashed like an earthenware jar.

Two aspects of Moabite pride are doomed to horrible disappointment.

1. Their confidence in Chemosh will be shaken in that day when they discover that he is unable to save his people from calamity.

Like the inhabitants of the fallen kingdom of Israel who had placed their trust in the false religious system established by Jeroboam at Bethel, the Moabites would come to realize the folly of misplaced trust.

#### **Verse 14**

They would come to realize that Chemosh was a nonentity.

2. Their pride in military might well prove unjustified. How sad it is, says Jeremiah, that you are saying, we are strong men, powerful men of war!

#### **Verse 15**

What sinful vain glory! Moab shall be spoiled, the walls of her cities scaled by the enemy, her chosen young men slaughtered in battle. This is the oracle which the King of all nations and the God of history, the Lord of Hosts, has spoken concerning Moab.

#### **Verse 16**

The ruin of Moab was prophesied by Balaam eight hundred years before and foretold by Amos and Isaiah is now approaching.

#### **Verse 17**

All who are friends of Moab are sincerely urged by the prophet to bemoan the fate of that nation for the scepter of Moabite sovereignty and the rod of Moabite splendor is broken.

### **Verse 18**

Even Dibon, the highly honored royal city will be disgraced in the coming calamity. Dibon, personified as a delicate damsel, is bidden by the prophet to descend from her glory and sit in thirst, that is, in the dust. Why this ignominy and shame for the proud city built on two hills? The mighty strongholds of Moab are destroyed by the invader.

### **Verse 19**

The inhabitants of Aroer spot the fugitives from the north coming down the King's Highway which passed through Dibon and Aroer and ask them what has happened.

### **Verse 20**

In anguished cries the refugees reply, "Moab is confounded; "Moab is shattered!" Jeremiah urges the inhabitants of Moab to "howl and cry," that is, take up a lamentation for their land. He urges the fugitives and inhabitants of Aroer to spread the word that Moab has been destroyed.

### **Verses 21-24**

The judgment of God has come upon the land. City after city has fallen.

### **Verse 25**

The horn of Moab (symbol of power) is cut off and the arm (symbol of authority) has been broken.

### **Verse 26**

By so despising the people of God the Moabites had in effect magnified themselves against the Lord.

### **Verse 27**

The divine command has been issued: Moab must drink the wine of God's wrath. Like a drunken man, Moab reels and totters, vomits and then falls into his own filth.

From the very beginning of their dealings with one another the Moabites had treated the Israelites with the same contempt which one has for a thief caught in the act of stealing.

### **Verse 28**

As often as the name Israel was mentioned the Moabites would “wag their heads” in a gesture of contempt. Because of the impending judgment Moab is advised to seek refuge where the dove and wild pigeon makes its nest in the inaccessible rocky crevices of the mountains.

### **Verse 29**

Without question the major theme running through the oracles against the nations is that of national arrogance. National arrogance is an affront to the Lord and He must deal with it. The proud will be humbled.

Jeremiah depicts again and again the shame, degradation and disgrace into which the nations shall fall.

Isaiah many years earlier had emphasized this characteristic of the Moabites and now Jeremiah borrows his terminology to make the same point. The point is forcibly made by piling up synonyms for pride and haughtiness.

### **Verse 30**

“I know His wrath (oracle of the LORD.)” The term “wrath” here probably refers to the arrogant, angry outbursts to which proud men are so prone. “His boasts are false and his deeds are false.” The basic idea is that in his words and in his works, Moab is essentially untrue.

### **Verse 31**

Because Moab is doomed to destruction, Jeremiah takes up a lamentation over that land. The weeping prophet was not only concerned with the destruction of his own people, he was deeply moved by the thought that others would suffer too. Kir-heres is the chief fortress of Southern Moab and in mourning the loss of that city the prophet suggests that the conquest of Moab is complete.

### **Verse 32**



The prophet's sorrow is deeper than that of the city of Jazer located fifteen miles north of Hesbon. Jeremiah is distressed to think that the luxuriant vineyards of Sibmah (located near Heshbon) which stretches as far as the Dead Sea and the Sea of Jazer, must now be destroyed. These famous and beautiful vineyards will be hopelessly ruined, ruthlessly trampled down and destroyed by the enemy, together with the summer fruits.

### **Verse 33**

Joy and gladness, normally characteristic of that plentiful land, shall disappear. Since the vineyards will be destroyed, the winepresses or wine vats will contain no wine. The shouting which shall be heard in the land will not be the joyous shouts of the grape treaders, but the battle shout of the invading soldiers.

### **Verse 34**

Throughout the land a cry of woe is heard.

### **Verse 35**

Since the whole land of Moab is depopulated, no longer will sacrifices be offered at the shrines, nor incense burned before the idols.

### **Verse 36**

Jeremiah again expresses his personal sorrow over the destruction of Moab. He compares the agony of his heart to the pipes or flutes whose monotonous and mournful sounds filled the air during funeral services. The prophet weeps because the riches, the abundance of Moab, have perished.

### **Verse 37**

Everywhere he looks the prophet sees signs of mourning: bald heads, clipped beards, cuttings upon the body, sackcloth about the loins.

### **Verse 38**

On every roof and in every street the lamentations can be heard. The Lord, the God of Israel, has broken Moab like a vessel which no longer pleases Him.

### **Verse 39**

“Moab has turned the back with shame,” that is, fled before the enemy. If Moab falls to the enemy, what chances do the less powerful nations have for survival?

#### **Verse 40**

The reason for their terror is completely justified. The conqueror of Moab will swoop down like an eagle and spread his wings over the whole land.

#### **Verse 41**

No doubt Jeremiah is here referring to Nebuchadnezzar who is reported to have conquered Moab, Ammon, and the neighboring peoples in 582-581 B.C.

The figure of an eagle is a favorite description of a victorious conqueror. The defenders of the land will be as terrified as a woman experiencing the pangs of childbirth.

#### **Verse 42**

When the conquest is complete Moab will be destroyed and eventually will cease to be a nation. All of this must happen because Moab has “magnified himself against the Lord,” the God of Israel.

#### **Verse 43**

The judgment coming upon Moab will be inescapable. In that day of divine visitation, the Moabites will be confronted by fear, the pit and the snare.

#### **Verse 44**

The one who flees from the terror will fall into the pit; the one who climbs up out of the pit will be captured by the snare.

#### **Verse 45**

These verses seem to reflect a popular proverb meaning that men would go from one danger into another until they are finally, inescapably trapped. Some fugitives of Moab will attempt to seek safety in Heshbon, the neighboring city of

the Ammonites. Heshbon, can offer no refuge. In the words of an ancient proverb, “A fire shall come forth out of Heshbon” which will consume the corner or side of Moab and the crown of his head.

### **Verse 46**

Far from being a place of safety, Heshbon will be the spot from which the Chaldean flame will spread southward through Moab. The Moabites are called “tumultuous ones” because of their noisy and boastful opposition to the people of Israel and their God. The prophecy ends as it began with a “woe” against Moab. Those who worship the god Chemosh will go into exile. Their deity would not be able to save them from this fate.

### **Verse 47**

A note of hope is appended to the prophecy of doom against Moab. “In the latter days,” the New Testament age, God, because of His infinite grace, will turn the captivity, that is, reverse the fortunes of the Moabite people. This is not a prediction of the restoration of the Moab’s national existence; rather it concerns the descendants of Moab who will hear the gospel and will become heirs to eternal life through Christ.

Perhaps the fulfillment of the prophecy is the numerous Arab Christians of the countries of Syria and Jordan.

## **CHAPTER 49**

This chapter is an oracle, a divine document, against Ammon.

The territory of Ammon lay just north of Moab with its capital Rabbah (modern Amman) on the Jabbok River. The Ammonites and Moabites were closely connected by descent and frequently united together in attacks against Israel.

Prior to the Israelite invasion of Transjordan under Moses the Ammonites had been dislodged from their traditional home by the Amorite King Sihon.

When the Israelites defeated Sihon, they assigned the former Ammonite territory to the tribe of Gad. With the Assyrian deportations of the northern tribes the Ammonites were able to gradually filter back into their ancient territory and occupy towns and villages which for centuries had belonged to Israel.

### **Verse 1**

The crime of Ammon is infringement upon Israelite territory. Jephthah had attempted to settle the issue of diplomacy back in the period of the Judges. To the charge that Israel had taken by force the territory of the Ammonites, Jephthah replied that as a matter of fact the Ammonites did not occupy that territory when Israel had entered the land. Since Israel had not taken the land from Ammon originally and since Israel had already occupied the land for three hundred years, Jephthah argued that the Ammonites no longer had any claim to the territory. (Judges 11:12-28)

The king of Ammon refused to accept this reasoning and war broke out between the two peoples with Jephthah inflicting a crushing blow upon the Ammonites. Now, centuries after Jephthah, the territorial issue has been raised again. Since the Assyrians had removed so many Israelites from the area in 734 and 722 B.C., the Ammonites were able to occupy certain villages in the tribal territory of Gad.

It is to this incursion that Jeremiah refers in verse one. "Has Israel no sons? Has he no heirs?" the prophet asks. Their king is better read as a proper name "Malcam" as in the ASV. Malcam or Milcom or Molech was the chief god of the Ammonites and here represents his people as Chemosh represents the Moabites.

### **Verse 2**

The seizure of Israelite territory is an affront to the Lord for "He is there," that is to say, it is His land.

Therefore, the Lord will bring about the conquest and destruction of Ammon. Rabbah and her daughters (minor cities depending on her) will be de-

stroyed, burned and left desolate. Israel then will be able to recover the territory lost to Ammon.

### **Verse 3**

In view of the forthcoming destruction of the land, Jeremiah calls upon the Ammonites to cry and howl in lamentation over their fate. In uncontrollable grief, Jeremiah pictures them running hither and trying to find safety behind the hedges or stonewalls around the fields and vineyards.

The reason for the grievous lamentations is that their god Malcam has been carried off into captivity along with his priests and his princes.

### **Verse 4**

The Ammonites were proud of their fruitful valleys, particularly the valley of the Jabbok River.

The apostate nation had turned from the living God and placed their trust in their natural resources and treasures. Ammon boasted, "Who shall come unto me?"

### **Verse 5**

The false confidence will be shattered when God brings a fear upon the land. It will be every man for himself. With only the thought of self-preservation in mind the inhabitants of Ammon will flee in all directions. "Every man right forth" probably means each man for himself. No one bothers to collect or rally the fugitives. What a sad future awaits those who regarded themselves as invincible.

### **Verse 6**

The Ammonites will in the future experience the grace of God.

### **Verses 7-22** (An oracle against Edom)

Edom was an exceedingly mountainous country rich in copper and iron ore. Because of its mineral wealth and because a main north-south trade route, the King's Highway, passed through it, Edom was under constant threat of attack from surrounding nations.

### **Verse 7**

The oracle against Edom begins with a series of rhetorical questions deigned to mock the wisdom for which that land was renowned. The calamity comes with such suddenness upon Edom that the professional wise men, counselors, and statesmen are incapable of offering any helpful advice.

Teman is a city in the northern part of Edom. Human wisdom is certainly inadequate in the face of the judgment of the living God. The calamity draws near. Jeremiah calls on the neighboring Dedanites who inhabited the region south of Edom.

### **Verse 8**

“Dwell deep” probably means to withdraw deep into the desert regions where they would be safe from the approaching destruction. It is the time of Edom’s judgment; the Lord will bring calamity upon Edom.

### **Verse 9**

The complete devastation of Edom is indicated by two powerful figures of speech. The enemy like grape gatherers will leave no gleanings in the land. Like thieves they will unsparingly plunder the land until they have their fill.

### **Verse 10**

The descendants of Edom, those who shared his land and those who lived around about his land, would all suffer in the coming calamity. Most important, Edom himself “is not,” that is, would cease to exist as a nation.

### **Verse 11**

All the warriors of Edom shall be cut off in the conflict leaving their wives and children as helpless widows and orphans. Yet the gracious God of Israel will care for these helpless ones if they but look to Him for protection.

### **Verse 12**

Edom must drink of the cup of God's wrath. The calamity is inescapable. After all, if the chosen people of God shall not escape His judgment, how could Edom?

### **Verse 13**

Since Israel must suffer, Edom cannot be unpunished. Furthermore, God has taken an oath that Bozrah, the chief city of northern Edom, and the other cities of the land shall become perpetual desolations.

### **Verse 14**

God has revealed to the prophet that He has sent a heavenly ambassador or messenger to the nations urging them to come to battle against Edom.

### **Verse 15**

God guides the counsels of nations. Often, they carry out His plans and fulfill His purposes without even being aware that they are being used of God. The Lord has decreed that Edom shall be small among the nations and despised among men.

### **Verse 16**

The God of Israel will humble the arrogant pride of Edom. Even though they might build their fortresses as high in those mountains as an eagle might build her nest, God will bring them down to the ground.

### **Verse 17**

Suddenly the picture changes. The battle is over and Edom has fallen. Centuries pass and Edom remains uninhabited, a complete desolation. Those who pass by the area will hiss and whistle in astonishment at the extent of the desolation.

### **Verse 18**

The destruction of Edom shall remind men of the earlier destruction of the cities and of the plain in that the whole region would henceforth be uninhabited.

### **Verse 19**

The enemy which is to come against Edom is compared to a lion that comes up from the pride of the Jordan to pounce upon the prey. The lion which is extinct in Palestine today, posed quite a threat to the inhabitants of the region in Biblical times. The lush vegetation which grows along the sides of the Jordan River, the so-called pride or swelling of the Jordan, was a favorite haunt for lions in those days.

In this passage Edom is called “the habitation of the strong,” that is, strong sheepfold or, as some prefer, permanent or perennial pasture (ASV). The phrase “I will suddenly make him run away for her” is difficult and has received various explanations. Probably the meaning is that God will cause the people of Edom to flee in fear from their strong habitation in the face of the ravaging lion.

The one who comes to rend and ravage Edom is the appointee of the Lord. “And he who is chosen, him will I appoint over it.” No mortal has the right to question the decision of the Lord, no one can “appoint Me the time.” This terminology seems to be taken from the court of law. A plaintiff in a law suit had the right to appoint the time of the trial. But no one can take God to court, as it were, and their protest against his sovereign decisions. The prophet does not name the one appointed by the Lord to conquer the land of Edom.

#### **Verse 20**

The God of the universe and the King of nations has decreed that Edom shall be destroyed. The enemy will drag away the Edomites as sheep to the slaughter. Even the most-feeble among them will not be spared. The pasture upon which the flock of Edom had grazed will be turned to desolation.

#### **Verse 21**

The sound of Edom’s fall will shake the earth and the wail that shall arise will be heard at the Red Sea.

#### **Verse 22**

As the enemy is strong as a lion, so he is also as swift as an eagle. The towering heights of Edom will offer no difficulty to this conqueror. When he



swoops down and spreads his wings over Bozrah the heart of the most fearless men will become “as the heart of a woman in her pangs.”

### **Verse 23**

The oracle against Damascus opens with a vivid picture of the consternation that sweeps over the land of Aram with the approach of a dreaded enemy.

The exact meaning of the phrase “there is sorrow on the sea” is uncertain. Some take the expression to mean that the anxious concern over the invasion of the land extends to the seashore, that is, throughout the country.

### **Verse 24**

As the news of invasions sweeps southward even Damascus, the once proud and powerful city, becomes paralyzed by fear. Jeremiah compares the anguish of Damascus to that of a woman in travail.

### **Verse 25**

The fear of the foe has so paralyzed the inhabitants of Damascus that they cannot flee from their city even though they realize that to remain there will mean disaster to them. Men have sung praises of the city of Damascus throughout history. Because of its geographical location at the juncture of several important trade routes the city in antiquity was prosperous and flourishing. In appreciation for the beauty of this place the prophet refers to it as “the city of my joy.”

### **Verse 26**

But because the inhabitants of Damascus would not flee from before the enemy “her young men shall fall in her streets and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day.”

### **Verse 27**

The phrase “kindle a fire” denotes the ravages of war. The conflagration shall consume the “places of Benhadad.” The destruction comes from the Lord, the God of Israel.

Most likely the prediction was fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar after the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.) when he victoriously marched throughout the Hatti land, that is, Syria-Palestine.

### **Verse 28**

The oracle begins with an exhortation to the troops of Nebuchadnezzar to arise and plunder Kedar and the other Arab tribes of the eastern desert.

### **Verse 29**

The Chaldeans will heed the exhortation and will confiscate the tents, flocks, beautifully ornamented tent hangings, the vessels, and camels of the Arab tribes. The expression “fear on every side” is characteristic of Jeremiah.

### **Verse 30**

Some regard the expression here as the battle cry of the invader; others regard it as descriptive of the effect that the enemy battle cry produces among the Arab tribes.

Jeremiah earlier urged the Dedanites to “dwell deep,” that is, retreat into the impenetrable desert. Now he urges the inhabitants of Hazor to do the same.

The desert dwellers of antiquity relied on the vast expanse of the desert to protect them from the scourge of war. Jeremiah urges the desert people to retreat even further into the trackless waste.

### **Verse 31**

Again, the prophet turns to the attackers and urges them to launch the attack against the Arab tribes.

Three facts about the Arab tribes are mentioned as incentives to the invaders.

1. The Arabs are described as a nation that is at ease, that dwells without “care” (ASV).

In other words, the Arab nations have hitherto felt secure from attack and thus a Chaldean invasion would catch them off guard.

2. The Arabs have no walled cities which would involve the invaders in prolonged siege.
3. The Arabs dwell alone, that is, they have no power neighbors or allies upon which they can call for aid.

### Verse 32

The second part of the oracle against the Arab tribes contains a divine declaration concerning the destruction and subsequent desolation of the area. The camels of the desert tribes will become spoil for the invader. Those who escape the initial onslaught will be scattered to the wind, that is, in all directions.

The phrase, “them that are in the utmost corners” (KJV) is more correctly rendered “them that have the corners of their hair cut off.” The hair from the edges of the beard and from the temples was considered as something unusual. The calamity of invasion shall surround these Arab tribes.

### Verse 33

As a result of the attack the area of Hazor will become a perpetual desolation, a habitation for jackals (not dragons as in KJV). No man will dwell in that area again.

### Verse 34

Elam was located in the hill country east of Babylon and north of the Persian Gulf. Only brief allusions to Elam can be found in the Bible.

Isaiah names the Elamites as allies of Assyria in the campaign against Judah. The same prophet predicts that it will be the Elamites along with Medes who will ultimately conquer Babylon. (Isaiah 21 and 22)

The question will naturally be raised as to why Jeremiah delivered this oracle against far-distant Elam. Some evidence exists that Elam was giving Nebuchadnezzar trouble about this time and the Jewish exiles may have been looking to that nation for deliverance.

God then directed Jeremiah to utter this brief oracle against Elam in order that the illusions and delusions of the Babylonian exiles might be dashed to

pieces. The oracle against Elam is dated “in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah” shortly after King Jehoiachin had been deported to Babylon.

Babylonian operations against Elam seem to have been conducted in the winter of 596 B.C. which would fall in the early part of the reign of King Zedekiah.

### **Verse 35**

In spelling out the doom of Elam the prophet makes four points.

1. The strength of Elam will be demolished.

God declares that He will break the “bow of Elam,” the weapon on which that nation chiefly relied.

### **Verse 36**

2. The inhabitants of Elam will be dispersed, scattered to the four winds as they seek refuge in surrounding nations.

### **Verse 37**

3. The Elamites will be dismayed when the fierce anger of the Lord is poured out on their nation.

Even in captivity they will be hounded by the sword of the Lord until they are utterly consumed.

### **Verse 38**

4. The rulers of Elam will be destroyed.

The real Ruler of this world will set up His throne in Elam, remove the king and princes of the land, and appoint a ruler of His own choosing. When Cyrus, the anointed of the Lord, incorporated Elam as a province in his vast empire, the present prophecy was fulfilled.

### **Verse 39**

In the latter days, that is, the days of the Messiah, the Lord will “bring again the captivity of Elam,” that is, reverse the fortunes of Elam. Elamites will experience the spiritual deliverance and blessing of the Messiah’s kingdom.

Men from Elam were present in the Pentecost audience when Peter preached the first Gospel sermon (Acts 2:9).

The basic theme is the destruction of Babylon and the deliverance of Israel. Following almost every message of doom for Babylon is a message of hope for Israel.

## **Chapter 50**

In the first part of the Babylonian oracle the major theme of Babylon's defeat and the minor theme of Israel's return are skillfully blended. A four-fold breakdown is observable.

1. Babylon's destruction and Israel's deliverance. (Verses 2-10)
2. Babylon's desolation and Israel's restoration. (Verses 11-20)
3. Babylon's visitation and Israel's vindication. (Verses 21-28)
4. Babylon's recompense and Israel's redemption. (Verses 29-34)

### **Verse 1**

The oracle begins with an announcement to all the nations of the destruction of Babylon.

### **Verse 2**

The news spreads like wild fire as signal standards are raised in the market places of lands under Babylonian hegemony. Bel-Merodach (Marduk), the chief god of Babylon, has been shamed by what has happened to their city.

The idols and images of man's making are absolutely useless when God begins to intervene in human history.

### **Verse 3**

In spite of all those gods can do, an army attacking from the north, the Medo-Persian armies led by Cyrus the Great, have defeated Babylon. The defeat of Babylon by Cyrus was the first in a long series of disasters which that city would suffer and the place would eventually become an uninhabited desolation.

#### **Verse 4**

The overthrow of Babylon is the signal for the deliverance and return of Israel and Judah. The passage is devastating to the Anglo-Israel theory which contends that Israel, the northern Kingdom, migrated to Europe after the collapse of the Assyrian empire.

Here both of the former kingdoms join together in returning in repentance to the Lord their God and to Zion the holy city.

#### **Verse 5**

Jeremiah hears the remnant of Israel exhorting one another to join themselves to the Lord in an “everlasting covenant that shall not be forgotten.”

#### **Verse 6**

The prophecy of Israel’s deliverance began to be fulfilled when Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon, issued a decree granting the captives the right to return home. From that remnant which returned, God raised up the promised Messiah who established with spiritual Israel the New Covenant, the everlasting covenant, for which the remnant yearns in this verse.

How did God’s people come to be captives in far off Babylon? Like lost sheep abandoned by their shepherds (their spiritual and political leaders) Israel had wandered away from the fold.

On the mountains of Palestine, they worshiped their pagan gods with immoral acts. Their resting place, the habitation of righteousness, the hope of their fathers was completely forgotten.

#### **Verse 7**

The enemies of Israel used this apostasy as an excuse for their heartless and cruel oppression of the people of God.

#### **Verse 8**

For this reason, Israel is urged to flee from the midst of Babylon, to be as he-goats who lead the flock.

#### **Verses 9-10**

But now Jeremiah foresees an end to that dreary period of Israel's history. The hour of deliverance will come, for the Lord will stir up a "company of great nations from the north country" who will defeat and plunder Babylon.

#### **Verse 11**

The Chaldeans discharged their office as chastiser of Israel with arrogant and malicious joy. The satisfaction which they received in plundering Jerusalem is compared to a heifer calf frisking about the threshing floor eating her fill. Like strong stallions which neigh in triumph and challenge, the Chaldeans raise a loud and boastful cry after they have subdued Jerusalem.

#### **Verse 12**

But God has taken note of the arrogant amusement of the Chaldean conquerors and has decreed that the "mother" of Babylon, that is, the land of Babylonia, "shall be utterly put to shame and confounded." Proud Babylon shall become the very least of nations, a wilderness, a dry land, a barren desert.

#### **Verse 13**

She shall experience the wrath of the God of Israel; she shall be utterly uninhabited. Visitors to the ruined city will be astonished by the desolation which marks the spot.

#### **Verse 14**

The prophet next turns to the attacking armies and in direct address urges them to execute the divine vengeance on Babylon. He urges the nations to put themselves in battle array around about Babylon and unleash their deadly arrows, "For she has sinned against the Lord."

#### **Verse 15**

No defense of the city will be able to repel the attacking force for this is the vengeance of the Lord." Realizing the futility of further assistance, the Chaldeans "give the hand" that is, they surrender to the invader. Subsequently the walls of the famous city are razed and Babylon experiences the same humiliation which she has inflicted on others.

### **Verse 16**

The agricultural regions of Babylon, famous in antiquity for abundant productivity, will be destroyed by the invader. When Babylon is laid waste, the exiles from all nations flee to their respective lands.

### **Verse 17**

The picture of the destruction of Babylon in verses 14-16 is a composite which includes prophetic allusions to many different sieges of Babylon. These verses were not entirely fulfilled by the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. because Cyrus did not raze the walls of the city and he was very careful to spare the rural regions of Babylonia.

### **Verse 18**

But the tables are due to be turned. Assyria has already received its chastisement; that of Babylon will not be delayed.

### **Verse 19**

Then will Israel again feed peaceably on its own pasture both west of Jordan (Carmel); (Mt. of Ephraim) and east of Jordan (Bashan; Gilead) where they shall enjoy the spiritual and material blessings of the Lord.

### **Verse 20**

In the postexilic times God will provide for the remnant of His people, the spiritual Israel of God, absolute forgiveness. This verse looks ahead to the cross of Calvary where the Son of God bore the sins of the world. The efficacy of that sacrifice was retroactive to sins committed under the old law as well as sins of the present and future.

The remnant of Israel, the spiritual Israel, in both Testaments consists of those who turn to the Lord in faith, repent of their iniquities and obey the commandments of God appropriate to that dispensation of time.

**Verse 20** states the grounds of the promise of restoration in verse 19. God can restore the remnant of Israel to spiritual blessings and prosperity because they



have repented; God can pardon this remnant because of what He knows will transpire at Calvary.

#### **Verse 21**

Again, the adversaries of Babylon are addressed. They are called upon to go up against the land of Merathaim. That is, “double rebellion” and the inhabitants of Pekod, that is, “punishment” are utterly destroyed.

#### **Verse 22**

The idea in these two enigmatic designations for Babylon is that God will punish that land because of her excessive rebellion. Following this summons the prophet describes the execution of the commission. He hears the terrible noise of war and destruction in the land.

#### **Verse 23**

“How sad it is,” he says sarcastically, “that the hammer of the whole earth is broken and smashed.” Babylon the instrument which has smashed the whole world into submission, has served its purpose and is now broken. The once proud land has become a desolation among the nations.

#### **Verse 24**

The prophet indicates that the element of secrecy and surprise which excludes all resistance will prevail at the capture of Babylon. Like an unsuspecting beast caught in a snare of the trapper, so has Babylon been captured. The reason for the calamitous fall of the city is that Babylon had “striven against the Lord.”

#### **Verse 25**

The quick and surprising capture of the city will be possible because the Lord of Hosts has opened his armory and brought into use all the means of attack which it affords. Though God uses secondary agents to accomplish his purposes against Babylon that which they do there is the work of God.

### **Verse 26**

As the Lord has emptied His arsenal against Babylon so also shall all the storehouses in Babylon be emptied and the contents destroyed.

The phrase “cast her up as heaps” refers to the huge piles of rubble which were left after the city has been totally demolished.

### **Verse 27**

The doomed warriors of Babylon are compared to sacrificial animals (bull-ocks) to be slaughtered. Woe unto those armies! The time of punishment has come, the day of national accountability.

### **Verse 28**

Meanwhile the Jewish captives shall hasten to Zion to proclaim the good news that the Lord has executed vengeance upon the enemies of His people. The destruction of God’s Temple has been avenged! Israel has been vindicated by the divine visitation upon Babylon.

### **Verse 29**

The prophet calls upon the archers to encamp round about Babylon and to thereby prevent escape of any of the defenders of that doomed city. Again, he calls upon the invaders to recompense Babylon, to do to her as she has done to others. The reason for the divine antagonism against Babylon is made perfectly clear: Babylon has been proud against the Lord.”

### **Verse 30**

Those who attempt to defend the doomed city will fall in the streets.

### **Verse 31**

“Behold I am against you O Pride,” declares the Lord. Babylon is Pride personified and the Lord of Hosts has appointed the day of her punishment.

### **Verse 32**

The Lord will bring that proud one to totter and fall and no one will be able to lift her up again. God's judgment like a fire, shall consume the cities of Babylonia.

### **Verse 33**

Thus, will the Pride of Babylon be humbled. In contrast to the recompense of Babylon is the redemption of Israel. As in the days of the Egyptian bondage the children of Israel and Judah are held fast in the iron grip of an oppressor.

### **Verse 34**

Yet to those disheartened and discouraged captives Jeremiah strikes a note of hope. Their Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts, is strong! He will take up the cause of His helpless people.

The word translated here "Redeemer" is the Hebrew *goel*, the title of the near kinsman, to whom belonged, according to ancient law, the duty of revenging a murder, as well as that of advocate and general protector.

So now the Lord is about to rescue His people and take vengeance upon their foe. Actually, all the nations had been troubled by the Babylonian oppressor. Therefore, when God acts on behalf of His people to disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon the world at large will reap the benefits of peace and tranquility. It was the policy of Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon, to gain the good will of subject peoples by permitting all deported people to return to their native land.

### **Verses 35-37**

The Lord will use the agents of sword and drought through the centuries to destroy all which supports Babylon's power and glory: the inhabitants of the city as well as the civil and religious leaders, the liars, boasters or soothsayers, the strong armies and foreign mercenaries, the treasures of the city, and the ancient and elaborate irrigation systems.

### **Verse 38**

This tidal wave of destruction will sweep Babylonia because that land was “a land of graven images and they are mad over idols.” The Hebrew word translated “Idols” literally means “horrors” or “terrors.” The cruel, bloodthirsty and immoral gods of Babylon were indeed horrible creations of the depraved mind of man. What a pity that the highly cultured Babylonians had not used their wisdom and knowledge to turn to the true and living God. Certainly through their contacts with the people of Israel they had numerous opportunities to come to know the Lord of Glory.

### **Verse 39**

The place will be fit only for desert creatures, the wolves, or jackals (literally, “howling creatures”) and the owls or ostriches.

### **Verse 40**

The sword and the drought will eventually make Babylon “as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.” Following its destruction Babylon will never again be inhabited by human beings.

### **Verse 41**

For the third time the prophet announces the approach of the conquerors of Babylon: “Behold, a people shall come from the north.” Many kings all over the world are being stirred up to the attack against Babylon.

### **Verse 42**

The vast host surges forward towards Babylon armed for war. The sound of their coming is likened to the roar of the sea. They are cruel and ruthless warriors who show no pity to the daughters of Babylon, that is, the inhabitants of the city.

### **Verse 43**

The king of Babylon is petrified at the news of the approaching host. His hands become limp; distress seizes his heart like that of a woman beginning her travail.

## **Verse 44**

It matters nothing to the Lord whether the nation be small and insignificant like Edom or a mighty empire like Babylon. Any nation which proudly lifts itself up against the Holy One of Israel will be punished.

Babylon's conqueror will burst upon the land like a lion from the pride (jungle) of the Jordan leaping upon a helpless and unsuspecting flock. No shepherd or leader of Babylon will be able to withstand the impact of this divinely appointed one.

## **Verse 45**

The Lord has taken counsel against Babylon and has laid plans for the destruction of that land. The invader will make desolate the inhabitants of that land like helpless sheep.

## **Verse 46**

The earth trembles in astonishment at the news of Babylon's fall. The final gasping cry of Babylon is heard throughout the nations of the earth.

## **CHAPTER 51**

### **Verses 1-2**

The description of the destroyers of Babylon continues. God is raising up against Babylon a destroying wind and strangers by means of which He will winnow or sift the inhabitants of Babylonia as a farmer winnows the chaff from the grain.

The word "Leb-kamai" is most interesting. The term literally means "the heart of those who rise up against me." By this title Babylon is designated as the very heart of opposition to the Lord.

But the word Leb-kamai has another meaning too, a meaning that the English reader completely misses. When Leb-kami is decoded it spells the word "Chaldeans" in Hebrew. (The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is replaced by

the last letter, the second letter by the next to the last, the third by the third from the last.)

### **Verse 3**

The attacking armies are again addressed. In spite of the fact that the Babylonians stand guard with their weapons and arrayed in their armor, yet the archers are urged to attack them from without.

### **Verse 4**

No one is to be spared; every Chaldean soldier is to be slain in the streets of the city.

### **Verse 5**

The reason for the slaughter is two-fold.

1. By means of the destruction of Babylon the Lord will prove Israel and Judah have not been forgotten, that is, widowed by their God.
2. The land of Babylon is full of guilt with respect to the Holy One of Israel.

### **Verse 6**

The word translated “though” in the KJV and ASV is best rendered “for” or “because” and the “guilt” is best rendered as that of the Chaldeans and not the Israelites. As God begins the judgment of Babylon the chosen remnant is exhorted to flee out of the midst of the city.

The idea is that the people of God must not allow themselves to become embroiled in the defense of Babylon and possibly lose their lives in that futile effort. Babylon’s destruction is an act of divine vengeance; the city is doomed to destruction.

### **Verse 7**

Beautiful Babylon with her achievements, wealth and power, was like a golden vessel in the hand of the Lord. Many nations drank the wine of God’s

wrath from that golden vessel and became as helpless and pitiable as an intoxicated man.

The Lord will now smash Babylon as a man smashes a vessel which is no longer useful and no longer pleases him.

### **Verse 8**

Now turning to the sympathetic bystanders, the prophet calls for lamentation over the fall of Babylon. Those addressed are foreigners who, whether by choice or force, have resided in Babylon, and who therefore have an interest in the fate of that city. These are now summoned to heal Babylon, because they are now servants of the Great King and are thus obligated to render assistance to him.

### **Verse 9**

Those who are addressed do not refuse to render the service, but their efforts are in vain. "Flee out of the midst of Babylon and save every man his life."

### **Verse 10**

The Jewish captives in Babylon rush home to Zion to declare there what God has done to Babylon. "The Lord has brought forth our righteousness," they sing. The avenging hand of God has vindicated His people. The idolatry of Israel has been sufficiently punished and God's people are again to be accounted as righteous.

### **Verse 11**

In this verse the agents of the divine judgment upon Babylon are identified as the Medes. Media was a country located northwest of Persia. About the year 548 B.C. Cyrus the Great was able to unite the Medes and Persians.

Together they became the force that tipped the mighty Babylonian empire.

The Medo-Persian army was the instrument used by the Lord to execute His vengeance upon Babylon for the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

## **Verse 12**

The Lord Himself directs the attack against Babylon: “Set up a standard against the walls of Babylon!” “Make the watch strong!” “Set the watchmen!”

The first order of business in a siege in antiquity was to blockade the city to prevent anyone from leaving or entering with supplies. Furthermore, a guard had to be posted about the camp of the besieging army lest the soldiers within the city launch a surprise attack.

“Prepare the ambushes!” These would be small groups of soldiers strategically hidden who would press into the city when the besieged made a rally. The Lord has planned the fall of Babylon and He will execute that plan.

## **Verse 13**

The greatest supports of the power of Babylonia were the waters surrounding the city and the great riches which Nebuchadnezzar had accumulated. The fruitfulness of the Babylonian territory (the produce of the fields) depended on the overflowing of the Euphrates. By an extensive system of dams and canals the Babylonians had learned in very ancient time to direct the waters of the Euphrates to every area of the otherwise barren plain region of Mesopotamia. It is no wonder then that the prophet addresses Babylon as the city which “dwells on many waters, abundant in treasures.”

The mighty walls, the great waters, the fertile lands, the enormous wealth, the multitude of inhabitants, all together are helpless before the Lord of Israel who declares to mighty Babylon, “Your end has come!”

The covetousness of Babylon has reached full measure. Her plundering, profiteering, and exorbitant taxation will soon come to an end.

## **Verse 14**

The Lord of Hosts has bound himself by an oath that the “shout,” that is, vintage song, would be raised over the fallen city. To lighten their task and express their satisfaction with the yield of the crop, those who tread the grapes to produce the wine would often sing a happy song. But, the vintage song’s mean-



ing would be that the teeming multitudes of Babylon will in no way be able to prevent the destruction of their city.

### **Verse 15**

The point of the passage is that mankind and man-made idols are helpless before the Almighty God. Israel's God has created the earth and spread out the heavens.

### **Verse 16**

He it is that controls the rains and brings the storms.

### **Verse 17**

In contrast to Him, men are stupid and ignorant. The skillful craftsmen who fashions images and passes them off as gods are perpetrating a gigantic hoax. The idols are lifeless and vain. Those who fashioned them will be utterly ashamed of their creations in the day of God's judgment.

### **Verse 18**

The idols will be unable to protect themselves in that day let alone their worshipers. In the day of their visitation they shall perish.

### **Verse 19**

The "portion of Jacob," that is, Israel's God, is unlike any of the idols venerated in Babylon. He is Creator of everything including the tribe of His special possession, Israel. It is the God of creation, the God of Israel, the Lord of Hosts who has bound Himself by oath to destroy Babylon.

### **Verses 20-21**

After establishing that the Lord is superior to all the gods of Babylon, Jeremiah proceeds to address the conqueror of Babylon: "You are my battle axe and weapons of war." God will use the Medo-Persian armies to destroy Babylon. No nation or military force will be able to stand before God's battle axe.

### **Verses 22-23**

The strong as well as the weak, the old as well as the young, the exalted as well as the lowly will all be shattered by the conqueror.

### **Verse 24**

The Jews held captive in Babylon will have the satisfaction of seeing the requital of their enemy.

### **Verse 25**

The second major section of the Babylon oracle concludes with the Lord declaring His hostility to Babylon: “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain.” “Destroying mountain” is translated “mount of corruption,” referring to the Mount of Olives (2 Kings 23:13). The Mount of Olives evidently received this appellation because of the idolatrous rites which were performed there.

The picture here is of an active volcano which belches forth destruction to all the earth. The expression “roll you down from the rocks” probably refers to a volcanic eruption during which rocks mixed with burning lava are hurled from the crater and stream down the sides of the mountain. After the fiery outburst of divine retribution Babylon will be nothing but a burned out crater, its power for evil completely exhausted.

### **Verse 26**

So completely burned-out is that mountain that its stones are no longer fit for building material. Babylon will never again serve as the seat of an empire; her position as first city of the world is completely shattered; her glory is gone forever. Babylon will be forever desolate.

### **Verses 27-58**

These verses of the Babylon oracle, emphasizes the final doom of Babylon. The attack of the enemy is again described in vivid detail. Israel lodges a complaint before God concerning their treatment at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. The Lord acknowledges their complaint and assures His distressed

people that Babylon will be punished for her crimes. Babylon's demolition will mean Israel's liberation, and Babylon's retribution, Israel's return. To all this is added a final pronouncement against Babylon.

### **Verse 27**

Once again in this oracle the Lord calls upon the nations to make preparations for the final onslaught against Babylon. The standard and the trumpet were means of gathering and directing the operations of great hosts of men in antiquity.

It was the custom in that time to begin every war with sacred rites in which the soldiers consecrated themselves to the deity. The campaign against Babylon is viewed throughout this oracle as a holy war because it has to do with a "work" of the Lord and the vengeance of His sanctuary.

The cavalry which would play such an important role in the conquest of Babylon is compared to a plague of locusts (cankerworm).

### **Verses 28-29**

Led by the rulers of the Medes the vast army marches southward toward Babylon causing the land to tremble and be in pain at the news of their approach. God has determined to make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitant and that divine purpose is about to be fulfilled.

### **Verse 30**

The prophet turns his gaze to what is happening among the defenders of Babylon. At the approach of the enemy host the Babylonian soldiers become panic-stricken. Cowardice makes them withdraw into the strong fortification where they helplessly watch the bars and gates battered down and the dwelling places burned.

### **Verse 31**

From every quarter of the city the messengers hasten to the royal palace with the news that the city has fallen to the enemy.

### **Verse 32**

The enemy has seized the passages across the river Euphrates which ran through the city thus cutting off all hope of escape. The reedy swamps around Babylon are put to the torch both to cut off escape and to burn out fugitives who might have sought refuge there.

### **Verse 33**

Babylon is like a threshing-floor, a piece of ground made level by trampling or treading, which the Lord God of Israel is already preparing for the harvest. It is “yet a little while” and the time of harvest and subsequent threshing shall come to Babylon.

### **Verse 34**

Jeremiah hears as it were the bitter complaints of the Jewish captives against the Babylonians. Like some great monster of the sea or river the king of Babylon had swallowed all in which Israel delights (his “delicacies”).

Just what monster Jeremiah has in mind as he penned these words is uncertain. It was probably a crocodile or perhaps a large serpent.

Nebuchadnezzar had “cast out” Israel, that is, he had rejected and discarded Israel as though the people of God were something worthless or repulsive.

### **Verse 35**

For this violence, outrage and indignity Israel would see the vengeance of the Lord upon Babylon.

### **Verse 36**

In response to the appeal of oppressed Israel the Lord declares that He will take up their cause and bring vengeance upon their enemies. The “sea” and “fountain” of Babylon shall dry up.

### **Verse 37**

Probably the reference here is to the Euphrates River and to the irrigation canals which crisscrossed the country bringing fertility to an otherwise arid land.

Babylon rapidly became an uninhabited desert marked by shapeless and unsightly “heaps” that is, mounds of ruins, and occupied only by jackals. Those who pass by the desolate site of Babylon will hiss and whistle in astonishment at what has befallen the once proud metropolis.

### **Verse 38**

In Jeremiah’s day the Babylonians were like lion cubs growling in exultation over the spoil which they had won from conquered nations.

### **Verse 39**

But while the Babylonians are in the midst of their greedy enjoyment the Lord will prepare for them a banquet of His own making. He will pour them out a full cup, not of wine but of wrath. Not realizing the fatal contents of that cup, the Babylonians drank, become intoxicated, and fall into the drunkard’s sleep—a sleep from which they never will awake.

### **Verse 40**

The devouring lion shall become as a lamb led to the slaughter. The mention of the lambs, rams and he-goats may be a way of saying that all classes of the population will go down to the slaughter.

### **Verse 41**

Jeremiah begins this section of his oracle with a sarcastic lamentation over the fall of Babylon. The “how” is not the how of amazement but is the “how sad it is!” and is used here sarcastically. “How sad it is that Sheshach, the pride of the whole earth is captured.” “Sheshach” is a cryptic name for Babylon.

How sad it is that Babylon the mighty metropolis has become a desolation and an astonishment among the nations.

### **Verses 42-43**

A sea of foreign invaders sweeps over the land of Babylonia leaving in its wake desolation, a desert, “a land where no man dwells”.

#### **Verse 44**

The fall of Babylon will be as much a judgment upon the gods of Babylon as upon the city itself. Bel, the chief god of Babylon, will be forced to disgorge all that he has devoured of the riches of subjugated nations. No more would Babylonian conquests bring a stream of captives to the prison house of Babylon.

Indeed, those massive walls themselves would fall and all prisoners within would be free to return to their native lands.

#### **Verse 45**

The gods of Babylon had their moment of glory and seeming triumph when they destroyed Jerusalem and brought the people of God into captivity. The fall of Babylon means liberation for the people of God and the prophet returns to this minor theme which runs throughout the Babylon oracle.

He repeats what he earlier has urged that when the captives see the fierce anger of the Lord beginning to be poured out upon Babylon they should flee from the city.

#### **Verse 46**

Meanwhile they should not be disturbed by rumors of war and internal conflict for these but foreshadow that final day of doom for Babylon.

#### **Verse 47**

The defenders of Babylon are wounded and slain in the very midst of the city and the gods are unable to intervene on their behalf.

#### **Verse 48**

When the destroyer from the north, the Medo-Persian armies capture Babylon the whole universe rejoices.

#### **Verse 49**

Heaven and earth rejoice because once again the Lord has demonstrated His wisdom, power and justice, as, again, it becomes evident that He and not Satan is the real Ruler of this universe.

The sin of Babylon against Israel shall be recompensed. Just as Babylon had caused so many of Israel to fall in battle, many from all over the land of Babylonia shall be slain when Babylon falls.

#### **Verse 50**

The prophet next turns to those who have escaped the sword of divine vengeance against Babylon. He bids these exiles to remember the Lord and Jerusalem and not to tarry in Babylonia.

#### **Verse 51**

The Babylonian victory over Jerusalem was regarded by the heathen as a sign of triumph for their gods. Those Israelites who tried to remain faithful to the Lord alone were subjected to constant reproach and ridicule by their neighbors.

#### **Verse 52**

But again, the Lord reminds those captives of what He has previously stated in this oracle, that the days are coming when He will vindicate Himself by executing judgment on the gods of Babylon.

#### **Verse 53**

Though the city should raise her defensive walls and towers even to the heavens, yet the city will not be able to withstand the assault of the destroyer sent against her by the Lord.

#### **Verse 54**

With prophetic ear Jeremiah can hear the cry at Babylon as the destruction of the city commences.

#### **Verse 55**

The foe sweeps into Babylon like a great sea, its roar drowning out “the great voice” (the tumult of the city).

### **Verse 56**

The military arm of Babylon is crushed, the defensive weapons are destroyed.

### **Verse 57**

The leaders of Babylon will drink the cup of God's wrath and fall into a helpless stupor that they may not be able to defend the city.

Indeed, they will be slain in their drunkenness and will "sleep a perpetual sleep"—the sleep of death.

The Lord of hosts, the King of creation, has spoken it and it shall come to pass.

### **Verse 58**

The broad walls of Babylon, which must have appeared impregnable to the captives there, will be overthrown and the gates of the city will be burned, that is, attacked, destroyed and melted down.

### **Verse 59**

In the fourth year of his reign King Zedekiah made a trip to Babylon to meet his overlord Nebuchadnezzar. In that same year a number of ambassadors from the neighboring countries had assembled in Jerusalem to map plans for a new rebellion against the Chaldeans' leadership. Hearing of this conclave, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Zedekiah to Babylon that he might reaffirm his loyalty and renew his vassal oath.

Accompanying Zedekiah on the trip was Seraiah the chief chamberlain whose job it was to prepare in advance the royal chambers. No doubt Seraiah would ride one day's journey ahead of the royal party to make all necessary arrangements at the next halting place along the way. Seraiah was a brother of Baruch, Jeremiah's faithful scribe, and a friend of the prophet.

### **Verse 60**

When Jeremiah learned of the trip to Babylon he seized the opportunity to secure the help of Seraiah in carrying out a very special mission. The prophet



gathered together into one book-roll all the oracles against Babylon which he had written or uttered up until the fourth year of Zedekiah.

### **Verse 61**

Seraiah was given the scroll and commanded to read it aloud in Babylonia.

### **Verses 62-64**

As he opens the scroll he is to summarize its contents before he begins to read. When the reading has been completed he is instructed to bind a stone about the scroll and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates. As he does so he is to cry “thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again.”

### **Verse 65**

The words, “they shall be weary’ are the last words of the Babylon prophecy. With respect to the city of Babylon it was an announcement of doom.

## **Chapter 52**

Chapter 51 closes with an editorial note: “Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.” Whoever was responsible for adding chapter 52 must have added these words so as to carefully distinguish between his words and that of the great prophet, Jeremiah. Just who the author of Jeremiah 52 was nobody knows. The most likely candidate for the authorship of Jeremiah 52 is Baruch the faithful secretary of Jeremiah. This chapter describes in detail the fall of Jerusalem, the event which vindicated the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah.

### **Verse 1**

Zedekiah was but twenty-one years old when he came to the throne of his country as the vassal of a foreign king.

### **Verse 2**

Religiously he followed the same course that his brother Jehoiakim had followed in that “he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.”

### **Verse 3**

A prophet of God with divine counsel was available to him, yet Zedekiah refused to submit to the program of God. Jeremiah advised submission to Babylon; Zedekiah plotted rebellion.

Throughout his reign Zedekiah refused to give heed to the word of God. Because of political leaders and the populace of Jerusalem having repudiated the will of God, the Lord was angry with His people and saw to it that they were cast out of his presence. Yielding to the advice and pressure of his youthful advisers, Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar.

### **Verse 4**

Zedekiah's disastrous policy was apparently built on the false premise that the Lord would intervene and save Jerusalem as He had previously done in the reign of Hezekiah.

How presumptuous for men to expect God to work miracles when they are not willing to submit themselves to do His will! Nebuchadnezzar was not long in bringing his forces to punish the rebellious vassal. The tenth day of the tenth month became a date of infamy in the history of Judah.

### **Verse 5**

For almost seventy years the Jews took note of that sad occasion by fasting. Jerusalem withstood the Chaldean siege for eighteen months.

### **Verse 6**

The sacred writer has shown amazing reserve as he describes those last agonizing weeks, "The famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land."

### **Verse 7**

In the fourth month of Zedekiah's eleventh year (July 587 B.C.) the Chaldeans were successful in making a breach in the walls of the city. This day too for years was commemorated by a fast. Zedekiah and the remnants of his army attempted to flee by night, thus unwittingly fulfilling the prophecy of Ezekiel

(Ezekiel 12:12). The king and his men fled in the direction of the Arabah, the lowland region through which the river Jordan flows.

### **Verse 8**

Perhaps they were attempting to escape across the Jordan to some friendly neighboring nation. When the Chaldeans caught up with Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho the bodyguard of the king deserted him; it was every man for himself.

### **Verse 9**

The Chaldeans dealt ruthlessly with Zedekiah. After his capture near Jericho, Zedekiah was taken some two hundred miles north to Riblah where he was brought face to face with the Great King to whom he had sworn allegiance eleven years earlier. There Nebuchadnezzar pronounced judgment upon his faithless vassal.

### **Verse 10**

The judgment upon King Zedekiah is one of the saddest recorded in the Bible. First, he witnessed the execution of his own sons and also some of the princes of the land.

### **Verse 11**

That turned out to be the last night he saw, for Nebuchadnezzar had his eyes put out. Finally, he lost his freedom; he was carried to Babylon where he remained in prison until the day of his death.

### **Verse 12**

After the city of Jerusalem fell to the Chaldeans the soldiers awaited further instructions concerning the fate of the city. A month after the successful breaching of the walls, Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard arrived from Riblah with the orders of Nebuchadnezzar.

### **Verses 13-14**

Nebuzaradan's orders were to destroy Jerusalem and prepare its inhabitants for deportation to Babylon. The entire city including the Temple area was put to the torch and the walls were razed.

### **Verse 15**

Those who had deserted to the Chaldeans during the siege and the rest of the multitude, that is the country people, were prepared for the long trip to Babylon.

### **Verse 16**

Only the very poorest people were left in the land to serve as “vinedressers” and “husbandmen.”

### **Verse 17**

In order to facilitate transportation, the larger items of Temple furniture—the brazen pillars, the bases and the sea—were broken up.

### **Verse 18**

The two eighteen-cubit bronze pillars stood immediately in front of the Temple proper. When they were set in place back in the days of Solomon they were given names. One was called Jachin (“He shall establish”); the other Boaz (“In it is strength”). The “bases” were the supports of the ten portable lavers at which animals about to be offered as burn-offerings were washed. The “brazen sea” was a huge laver at which the priests washed their hands and feet before offering sacrifice.

The smaller Temple vessels of brass, gold and silver were transported to Babylon where they became trophies of victory in the temples of the gods.

The “pots” and the “shovels” were used in the Temple for carrying away the ashes after sacrifice. The “basins” were probably used in the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood. The “spoons” were incense cups. The word translated “snuffers” is of uncertain meaning.

### **Verse 19**

The pots, basins and spoons are mentioned a second time simply because such vessels were made of gold and silver as well as brass. The function of the “cup” is unknown. The “firepan” was used for transporting hot coals. Ten candlesticks or lampstands illuminated the interior of the Temple. The “bowls”

were connected with the table of showbread and were probably used for libations.

### **Verse 20**

The total amount of the brass carried away by the Chaldeans was so great that it seemed to merit the special emphasis given to it.

The mention of the “twelve brazen bulls that were under the bases” presents a two-fold difficulty. In the Book of Kings, the bases were under the lavers, while the bulls supported the molten sea. It is stated in 2 Kings that Ahaz had already taken away the twelve bulls and sent them as tribute to Assyria more than a century earlier.

The second difficulty is easier to cope with than the first. It is entirely possible and even likely that the twelve bulls had been replaced since the days of wicked King Ahaz, perhaps during the reforms of King Hezekiah.

### **Verse 21**

The focus here is on the two pillars taken by the Chaldean soldiers. Each pillar was eighteen cubits (twenty-seven feet) high with a circumference of twelve cubits (eighteen feet). The pillars were hollow with metal being about four inches (“fingers”) thick.

### **Verse 22**

These pillars were crowned with capitals of brass which were an additional five cubits high.

### **Verse 23**

A lattice work (network) surrounded the capital upon which were surmounted one hundred ornamental pomegranates, twenty-four on each side and one at each corner.

### **Verses 24-25**

Verse 10 alludes to the execution of the princes of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah; verses 24-27 expand upon that allusion by naming the princes who were slain.

Seraiah, the chief of priests, was the grandson of the great priest Hilkiah. After Seraiah, the priest Zephaniah is mentioned.

Three keepers of the threshold were also among those executed at Riblah. Officials of the state are also executed along with “seven men who saw the king’s face,” that is, who were part of the king’s personal entourage. “The scribe of the captain of the host” is listed among those slain. “Scribe is a title given to the highest officer of the state. This scribe was likely the head of the war department of Judah.

#### **Verse 26**

In addition to the priests and civilian officials, some sixty of the “people of the land” were also executed by Nebuchadnezzar. The sixty men were singled out from the ranks of the conscripted soldiers for execution as a warning to the rest of the troops. The group that was destined for death was taken to Riblah to stand trial before Nebuchadnezzar.

#### **Verse 27**

The king of Babylon “smote” them (perhaps had them flogged) and put to death.

#### **Verses 28-30**

These verses speak of three deportations of Jews to Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The first deportation took place in 605-604 B.C., the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim. The last deportation took place in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar 582 B.C., five years after the fall of Jerusalem. In this deportation, which is mentioned only in Jeremiah, 745 people were involved.

#### **Verse 31**

King Jehoiachin, along with members of his family and court, had been carried away to Babylon in 597 B.C. Until the end of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Judah was kept in prison.

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded on the throne by his son Amel-Marduk (“the man of Marduk”) who was called by the Jews Evil-Merodach (stupid one of Marduk).

He was able to hold the throne of Babylon for only two years (591-559 B.C.) before being assassinated. Within the first year of his reign Amel-Marduk “lifted up the head of Jehoiachin” that is, restored him to royal favor and ordered him released from prison.

### **Verses 32-33**

It may be that Daniel and the other highly esteemed Jews at the Babylonian court used their influence to secure the release of the imprisoned king. This also might account for favor bestowed upon Jehoiachin when his throne was placed above the thrones of the captive kings in Babylon.

Thus, after thirty-seven years Jehoiachin was permitted to put off his prison garments and eat at the royal table.

### **Verse 34**

As long as he lived Jehoiachin received a daily allowance of all that he needed for himself and his family besides the food which he enjoyed at the royal table.