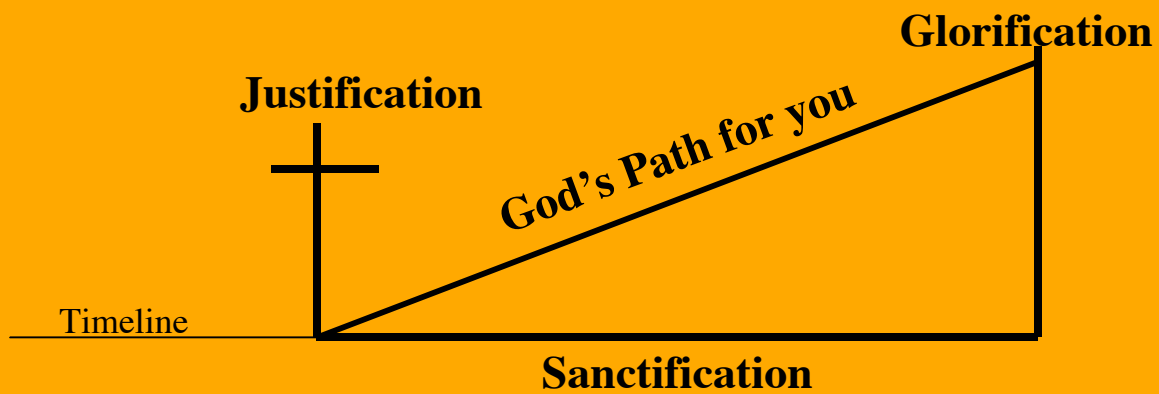




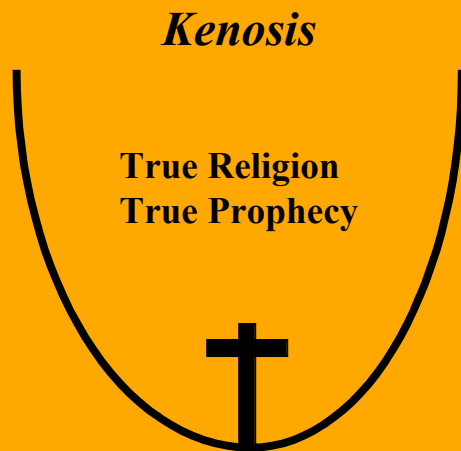
Classroom in a Book Discipleship Series
Book 5

The Crisis Facing Disciples:

A New Look at the Book of Jeremiah



Opposite the *Kenosis*



by

William E. Vinson, Jr., PhD

The Crisis Facing Disciples: A New Look at the Book of Jeremiah

Vinson

- Sermon #1. God's Holy People are Wicked
- Sermon #2. Repent or Suffer Destruction
- Sermon #3. The Temple Sermon
- Sermon #4. The Broken Covenant
- Sermon #5. The Worthless Girdle
- Sermon #6. The Drought
- Sermon #7. Keep The Sabbath
- Sermon #8. The Potter
- Sermon #9. Is God Going To Fight The Battle For Judah?
- Sermon #10. Against The False Pastors And Prophets?
- Sermon #11. Good And Bad Figs
- Sermon #12. Sermon on the 23rd Anniversary of Jeremiah's call
- Sermon #13. Sermon of the Temple Court
- Sermon #14. The Yoke
- Sermon #15. The Purchase of a Field
- Sermon #16. The Coming Captivity
- Sermon #17. Sermon on the Rechabites

**God moves from corporate to individual responsibility.
Jeremiah 31:29-30**

Lawlessness	You are a law unto yourself. You do not accept external restraints at all.
Under law	You behave according to the restraints of an external code.
Having the Law written in your heart	You are restrained by the Spirit of God.

**CLASSROOM IN A BOOK
DISCIPLESHIP SERIES**

Book 5

**THE CRISIS FACING DISCIPLES:
A New Look at the Book of Jeremiah**

by:

William E. Vinson, Jr.

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Preface

THE CLASSROOM IN A BOOK DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

The *Classroom in a Book Discipleship Series* is a unique approach to education. The author has thirty plus years of experience in classroom teaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Internet teaching. The teachings covered Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Church History, Hermeneutics, Christian Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, Evangelism, and Biblical Backgrounds. In other words, the teacher was a generalist in the world of specialization.

God sent two people into the classrooms that have made this series possible. One student brought in some audio recording gear into the seminary classrooms and recorded everything said by teacher and students. The other person, Helen Agnew, transcribed the tapes into weekly sessions. Finally, Helen put all the weeks together for a course into a book, which became the nucleus for a formal book. Next came the editing phases in which the improper English and sentence construction was corrected. Also, the organization and thought flow was improved in order to facilitate a reader's comprehension.

Each class session became a chapter that went through several iterations of the editing process. Also, Helen provided computer drawings of the theological charts and models used by the teacher. These models were inserted into the book at the appropriate places.

INFORMAL WRITING STYLE

You should be aware that the chosen style of communication in this series of books is much more informal than the typical. I have worked to retain the folksy way of expression that I use in the classroom and pulpits in order to enhance your learning experience.

Dear saint, you are in for a treat. There will be points of time in which your mind will be so absorbed into thinking about our Most Wonderful Lord, that you will be unable to resist sharing them with a loved one.

CLASS PROCESS

Each book is a semester-long class. The subject matter is explored very thoroughly because all the students are participating in the questioning and answering. You will have the next best thing to being in the classroom. In fact, there will be times in your reading in which you will be in the classroom through imagination.

BENEFITS

Discipleship has been declared by many to be the greatest need in Southern Baptist life today. In my latter years of teaching, some churches sent some of their members to take my classes at Southwestern Seminary. The reason that was given was that it was a very good source for discipleship training. This discipleship training is a step up from Sunday school and other training because *it involves seminary training at the lay-ministry level*. Armed with this new discipleship training, the new lay ministers are fulfilling their calls and impacting the Kingdom of God in very positive ways. Pastors are benefiting by having some new lay ministers to help them minister. Churches and society are benefiting by receiving positive help that is theologically sound and practical.

For you, the busy Christian of today, this series is a rare opportunity to remotely participate in a seminary classroom to learn from the teacher and your peers in high impact and

focused studies that are not available in any other books. The teacher's experience of teaching as a generalist will provide *interconnected insights and truths* that are not available in specialization. The *student interactions* in these books will create a *relevancy* that is unheard of outside the classroom. The quality of the *class dynamics* will lift you up into unparalleled densely packed teachings that will greatly improve the *efficiency of your learning*. You owe it to yourself to jump into this series because you can get an education that is the next best thing to actually going to seminary.

In addition to the student interactions recorded in each chapter, the major points that I made which would be the source of the tests given to the classroom students are stated in the text, and the *test questions* are stated at the end of each chapter (class session). The *answers* to those tests are given at the end of the book for you to check yourself. If you seriously want to know that you have accomplished the goals of each chapter and to be able to teach a course like this, answer those questions to the point that you can do so without going back into the chapter itself—i.e. memorize those points and charts.

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Introduction

One of the devices that Christians use to dismiss the relevance of the Old Testament prophets is to consider their messages to be confined to their era. Basically, the messages are viewed as pertaining to the Israelites. However, in order to keep preaching from the Old Testament, even though it is infrequent preaching at best, we preach sermons which are mere history lessons about an ancient people. The idolatry of Israel is viewed as pertaining to them, not us. Certainly, every one in our church or Sunday School class can see that we are not as stupid as the ancient Jews. We have no idolatry. We are clean from drunkenness, theft, murder, rape, and child sacrifice.

Well friend, I have some bad news for you. We are not clean. We are worse than the Jews were because we have more divine help than they had. We have the New Testament, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit to help us. We have everything going for us, but yet we are not disciples of Jesus. “How can you say that?” you might ask. My answer is just look at the mess our land is in. If our land is in a mess, then we who are called by God’s Name are not true disciples of the Lord (2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23).

The people of Judah during Jeremiah’s time felt just like how you and I and the church of today feel. They were convinced that they were not involved in idolatry. They were not making sacrifices to Baal like Israel, their sister kingdom to the north, did. They were worshiping faithfully by going to the Temple. They were taking their sacrifices to the Temple. They were good citizens and obeying their king. They were good religious people who were obeying their priests and prophets. Idolatry in their midst? Of course not. The accusations of idolatry came from Jeremiah who, after all, was a lunatic who

preached doom and gloom. They even gave him a nickname: Mr. Doom and Gloom.

The people of Judah could not hear Jeremiah’s call for repentance from their idolatry for two reasons. First, they were hearing messages from their official priests and prophets that the peoples’ sacrifices in the Temple without the necessity of holy lives were meeting God’s requirements. Second, the priests and prophets also negated God’s threat of Babylonian invasion for the peoples’ unholy living. The priests’ and prophets’ assured Judah that God would never let a foreign people plunder His House.

The Judeans thought that they had no idolatry to repent of. How could trusting in their worship in the Temple be idolatry? How could believing that God would not allow His Temple to be plundered be construed as idolatry? The people of Judah had a Temple fetish, but their zeal for the Temple was a good thing in their eyes. They could not see that it was idolatry.

Go to today. Why can we not hear the call to come out of idolatry? Perhaps, we too cannot see anything wrong with messages about attending church, tithing to the church, doing all ministry inside the church. Our esteem for the local church has taken on a life all its own. It is usurping God’s resources. The church is not the Lord. In fact, the local church, when it is perceived as an institution, is not even the body of Christ. Christians are the body of Christ. The church is defined by its name—the called out ones. Can devotion to the institutional church be idolatry? Elevation of the Temple of God was idolatry. Perhaps elevation of the local church is problematic as well. Jeremiah has something to say to this issue.

What else is hindering our holiness today? Lack of repentance from all of the evil which

has invaded the church stems from a lack of preaching for repentance. Just like the preachers in Judah, we are careful not to offend anyone with our preaching. Thus, our preaching has church growth as its goal, not the turning from sin. We pander to the fleshly desires of the congregations.

In grading papers, I have read with much heartache the many papers which told of youth ministers who had a need to preach and teach against divorce. They were stopped by the pastors who threatened to fire them. Most of their youth groups were children of divorced parents. What would the church do if it lost its youth group and their parents because the teaching was according to the Bible? The answer was to avoid the problem and teach about something safe.

If church growth is the holy grail, then my friend, we are already up to our eyeballs in

idolatry. If church attendance and tithing are the only two essentials for discipleship, then we are in trouble. If the church is an institution, then we are idolaters. If parachurch ministries are the evil that our seminaries, colleges, and churches say that they are, then we are in free fall with nothing left but to hit the bottom in apostasy.

Are you brave enough to see what Jeremiah has to say about the idolatries in Judah? Your answer of yes with a readiness to see what Judah did which was so bad speaks to your perceived self-innocence. However, will you also answer yes to the same question when it comes to looking at “our” idolatries which are condemning America and its church to the rule of Antichrist? Then read on, my friend.

Chapter 1

THE PROPHET, WARNING OF JUDGMENT

Jeremiah 1-6

BACKGROUND

We are going to look at the man, Jeremiah, and look at Judah, and then we are going to look at what God has to say about all of that. Thus the call of Jeremiah is the first thing we will deal with. The first three verses tell about his ministering during the days of Josiah (v. 2) and of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah (v. 3).

The Rulers of Jeremiah's Time

Who are the six rulers who span the time of Jeremiah's ministry? I will give you a date and the name, and you are going to be responsible for knowing them.

1. Josiah: 640 to 609 BC.
2. Jehoahaz: 609 BC (reigned for three months).
3. Jehoiakim: 609 to 598 BC.
4. Jehoiachin: 598 BC. (Reigned for three months).
5. Zedekiah: 597 to 586 BC.
6. Gedaliah: 586 to 585 BC. A governor installed by Babylon.

King Josiah and the Deuteronomic Revival

Josiah is a godly king, one of the finest kings that ever sat on the throne of Judah. During Josiah's reign, the people of Judah remodeled the Temple. During the remodeling effort, they found an old scroll of Deuteronomy stuck in the wall of the Temple. After their examining and questioning the scroll, Josiah had them to read the scroll to him. Upon hearing the content of God's Word, He said, "We are not in obedience to the commands of God's Word! This is God's Word to us, and we are not obeying this Word. We

are going to start obeying this Book of Deuteronomy." Thus he implemented anew the Book of Deuteronomy.

That fresh implementation of a long lost book of Scripture was the source of the revival that took place in Josiah's time. Josiah, then, is credited with being a good king and a person who is re-establishing God's rule in the land.

A form of theology which is current today, Deuteronomic Theology, comes out of a wrong perception of that ancient revival based on the Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomic Theology is basically a perverted hermeneutical method of interpreting the effects of your religion. The new hermeneutic places the rewards for obedience and curses for disobedience wholly into the temporal realm. Thus you can tell if someone is obedient by simply examining his or her temporal blessings or lack thereof. The rich and powerful are in God's will, and the poor struggling people are obviously disobedient.

Ironically, Josiah implemented a good reform based on the book of Deuteronomy, and out of that came today's perversion of "Deuteronomic Theology."

King Jehoahaz

Jehoahaz was elected king by the people to succeed Josiah after he was killed by Pharaoh Necco of Egypt in battle in 609 BC. However, Necco decided that he did not want Jehoahaz on the throne, and exiled him because he did not want to have to fight the King of Judah again. The idea of a new fight was because this guy Jehoahaz is of the same heart as Josiah. So Necco exiled him and put

in his place his own choice, Jehoiakim.

King Jehoiakim

Jehoiakim was to be the king during most of Jeremiah's recorded ministry. He was a wicked king who chose not to follow Josiah's revival even though Josiah was his father. Instead he picked up the practices of Amon and Manasseh, two wicked kings, who preceded Josiah. Amon and Manasseh had brought idolatry into the land, and Jehoiakim reinstated their style of rule and brought idolatry back in.

King Jehoiachin and King Zedekiah

Following Jehoiakim in 598 BC is his son, Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin is captured by Babylon because of a slight rebellion that began along that time. After he was taken away, Zedekiah was put in his place by Babylon. Soon afterwards, in a full-blown siege because of another rebellion, Zedekiah was captured also by Babylon, and Judah fell to Babylon in full captivity.

Since 721 BC was the time of Israel's fall to Assyrian captivity, Judah had outlasted Israel by more than a 100 years. The year 586 BC is the historical landmark for the Babylonian captivity. Zedekiah, the king when that happened, had bargained with God and tried to fool God with a false revival. He pretended to obey God.

Gedaliah as Governor

After Zedekiah, Babylon installed Gedaliah as governor. However, the Jews assassinated Gedaliah after less than a year on the throne. At that point, then, there is a fleeing into Egypt of the assassins and their proponents who were attempting to escape the vengeance of Babylon. Jeremiah was taken hostage into Egypt by those rebels, and the last parts of the book of Jeremiah were

written in Egypt.

Jeremiah the Man

Analysis of Jeremiah's ministry through the eyes of man would show that he was not very effective or profitable for God's Kingdom. Jeremiah's ministry, as seen through the eyes of God, however, is a model to follow. Thus we want to look at him as God sees him, to see what a real prophet is all about.

The call of Jeremiah

Jeremiah

1:4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, [and] I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

1:6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I [am] a child.

1:7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I [am] a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

1:8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I [am] with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

1:9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

1:10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

What are the characteristics of Jeremiah's call by God?

1. He was foreknown by God, v. 5.
2. He was formed by God in the womb, v. 5.
3. He was chosen by God, v. 4.
4. He was ordained by God, v. 5.¹
5. Called a prophet to the nations, v. 5.

¹ Items 1 through 4 occurred before the birth of Jeremiah. This says something about abortion!

6. He felt inadequate, v. 6.
7. No excuses are allowed to him, v. 7.²
8. No fear is allowed for him, v. 8.
9. God is with him, v. 8.
10. He was equipped by God, v. 9.
11. He is set over the kingdoms, v. 10.

Deliverance for Jeremiah

In reference to items #8 & #9, look at verse 8: God says, "Be not afraid, I am with thee to deliver thee." God's deliverance of His prophet is not from but through something. You need to put this down as a characteristic of God. This is typical God. This is the way He does things. When you ask God to get you out of something, He says, I am going to get you through this.

Class, you need to buckle down and get your nose and your jaws set as you head on through your trials. Go with God because God will be with you. He will deliver you. Do not think in terms of escapist theology where you do not have to suffer, you do not have to sweat, and you do not have to endure any hardships. Do not think that you are just going to kick back, and the treasures of heaven are going to rain down on your head.

God does deliver you out of bondage. That deliverance is called redemption. But when it comes to trials, He is in the enabling business of taking you through those trials. You can glorify the Lord by going through the trials. If He took you out of the trials, then there is no way for you to glorify God by obeying Him in self-denial.

This understanding of deliverance is a positive approach to life. It will enable you to

grin, smile, and rejoice as you go through the hardships of life. Those hardships are opportunities for glorification, and when you see them that way, all of a sudden your attitude can change to the positive.

God says, "I will be with you. You need fear no evil." The earthly example can be seen in the family. Have you ever seen a little child holding on to a father's hand? That little child receives much security and will have no cares or anxieties as they walk along. You too can go across the wilderness holding onto the hand of your Father. You know that he will be with you as He takes you through the troubles, not out of them. Once you get that mindset, then you can go through life without fear and anxiety. You can face the uncertainties and the trials and the struggles with a smile, a praise, and a song in your heart. It makes the difference for you.

If you translate this deliverance as a "delivering through," then as you go into trials, you will have confidence like Paul had when he was stoned and left for dead. God did not deliver him out of that trial. He took him through the stoning. What did Paul do when he got up? He went back into the town that he had been dragged out of. You must have some good theology in order to go back into the town. You must know that you are holding on to God's hand.

Equipping

In reference to item #10, verse 9 says that God touched Jeremiah's mouth and put His words in it. That meant then that from that point on, God's words were already in him.

Consider this: Has God put his words in your mouth? Every one of you has been called, and I suspect that in many cases, He has put them in you at the call. That is why you have that burning drive, and you are all the time thinking, "What is the message?"

² "You will go where I want you to go, and say what I want you to say. No excuses." It gives you a feeling of strength and courage when God tells you like that. You can feel immobilized, but God says, "I do not care what you feel. You are going to go!" Knowing this gives you strength and courage.

What do I need to tell the people?" You do not even have to think back to the call. You just have the drive which is a mystery. That drive is because God has zapped you. You just can hardly stand it unless you are delivering that message. As some have said like Jeremiah, "I have fire in my bones. If I do not let it out, I am going to burn up!"

Over the Nations

In reference to item #11, God declares that Jeremiah is going to pull down and destroy, and build up and plant. What you need to see here is that the prophet's message is going to appear causative. When the prophet says the kingdom will fall, and the kingdom falls, people are going to look around and say, "Jeremiah made the kingdom fall." He said, "It is going to fall, and it fell." He said, "The kingdom will rise, and the kingdom rises." And his prophecies appear causative, but the reason they appear so is because of the certainty of God's Word, not of Jeremiah's power. God put the Word in Jeremiah, and so as Jeremiah proclaimed God's announcement that the kingdom is going to fall, it is an announcement of an event that will surely come to pass. The kingdom will fall, and the people are going to think, "That prophet has a lot of power." That perception is how Jeremiah is being put over the nations.

Two visions: The Almond Tree and the Boiling Pot. Jeremiah 1:11-12

The first vision is described in verse 11 with its interpretation in verse 12.

Jeremiah

1:11 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.

1:12 Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

The interpretation is that God is going to hasten to perform His Word. My understanding is that the almond tree is the first tree to bloom in the spring, and you can count on the almond tree to be blooming before any other tree blooms. In my understanding, God is saying through this vision that He is not going to be dallying. He is going to perform His Word quickly. He is even going to hasten and be working ahead of their predictions.

The second vision comes up in verse 13, and that is the boiling pot that is about to boil over from the north. The interpretation is in verse 14.

Jeremiah

1:13 And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof [is] toward the north.

1:14 Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.

The interpretation here is that the people who are in the north are going to be the instruments of God's disciplinary action on Judah. The people of the north are Babylon. Thus Babylon is going to be used by God as a rod to bring discipline to Judah.

Henry: What that is saying is that God is going to use other people to do His work.

V: That is good. Habakkuk once asked the question: "Why are the bad (pagan) people prospering, and the good (God's elect) people suffering?" This question comes from Deuteronomic Theology. And the answer is because God is using the bad people to bring discipline upon His own people.

The Babylonians are not going to escape their own judgment. The nations that God uses to bring discipline on Judah will not escape. Those nations will be punished as well, but they serve a purpose for God. They are like a switch in His hand, and He is going

to take that switch and tear into His child until that child wakes up, and says, "Oh, this pain can be avoided, can't it?" God, then, says, "All you must do is turn from your wicked ways." The people, then, will say, "We have a good idea. You know what we ought to do? We ought to turn from our wicked ways." (laughter around the room) As soon as they turn, God stops switching them. And that will be when He breaks the switch.

For us the switching could be at the hands of an evil government or of crooked tax collectors, police, or whatever. It will seem like we are suffering unjustly at the hands of evil people even though we are God's chosen. "Why are we suffering when that evil person is prospering and causing our suffering?" Well, God uses the evil people of the world to bring discipline on His own children, but that does not mean that the evil people are going to escape. It appears in our eyes like they are exempt from punishment because they are prospering: "Why are they exempt?" The answer is that they are not exempt. The order of disciplines is just a matter of God's perfect timing. He is going to work on the evil people real hard, but He is first going to use them while they are still around to bring profit back into His people. That understanding of suffering is very important for us.

Reasons for God's action

Verse 16 declares that God's action is because the people have been wicked.

Jeremiah

1:16 And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

Idolatry is their wickedness. God's commandment in verse 17 is:

Jeremiah

1:17 Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and

arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.

What are the elements in the commandment to Jeremiah based on the people's wickedness in this verse?

1. Gird up thy loins.
2. Arise.
3. Speak unto them all.
4. Be not dismayed.

We are going to be evaluating Jeremiah as we go along. I want you to see whether Jeremiah implements this commandment.

Frankly, I am astounded at how well Jeremiah does especially when I compare my puny attempts at obeying this commandment. Jeremiah is going to be esteemed in your eyes as well. You are going to see a real prophet of God here in this study.

God commands Jeremiah to gird up, arise, speak, and be not dismayed. Be not dismayed means that you should not lose your courage. For example, when you look at the faces of people opposing you, you can lose your courage, you can lose your initiative, you can lose your resolution. Sudden fear and anxiety can cause this dismay in you. God says to Jeremiah and to you and me, "Do not lose your courage, do not lose your initiative, do not lose your resolution."

When you are pastoring and in the pulpit (every one of you is in a pulpit of some kind), you will look at the faces in the congregation. You know these people, and they hold various sins to be dear to their hearts. You must tell them that God says, "Do not do that evil thing any longer." He says, "That act is evil; put it far from you." They will gnash their teeth against you because they hold that sin dearly.

There are also some people involved in things that God declares to be abominations. In this group could be your main tithers and

supporters. They are doing something that is a disgrace to God. You could look out there and say, "Well, I cannot preach against this sin because my main supporters will get mad. I cannot preach against this other sin because my deacons will get mad. I cannot preach against this other sin because someone else will get mad and that will cut my finances. I could end up having to go get another job. Let me find something to preach that is safe." So you shift your messages to the love of God. That is a good topic. We can preach on the love of God, and they will all love that. Some will even commit to giving more money. "Okay, I am going to preach on the love of Jesus next. Then we will do the love of the Holy Spirit." But, you see, that is being dismayed.

God gives a commandment to Jeremiah. He says, "Be not dismayed at their faces," and He threatens a specific punishment for him for disobeying this commandment. He says in verse 17, "Lest I confound thee before them." Now confounding means to ruin, destroy, put to waste, refute, discomfit, and shame. Confound is a strong verb. So God says, "If you look out there at their faces and you are dismayed, I am going to take you in front of the whole nation, and I am going to ruin you in front of them; I am going to shame you in front of them. Do not fear their faces. If you fear their faces, I am going to waste you in front of them."

The penalty for breaking this commandment of not being dismayed is very strong. It carries with it a threat that makes me quake. Jeremiah heard this stuff, and you are going to see that Jeremiah is not going to show dismay. He is going to do his proclamation, he is going to preach, he is going to go where God says go, and he is going to say what God tells him to. He is going to have the fear that borders on dismay, but he is going to show a strong front.

Many times after telling God's Word to the people, they gnashed their teeth at him. He then went to his dwelling place. As soon as he closed the door, he went before God and fell down and wept, saying, "God, why are you doing this? You make me go out there and tell them things that they do not want to hear. I cannot stand this. I do not want to go out there and do that."

God does not care what you want. What God wants is what counts. Jeremiah slobbered and cried and carried on, but then he got up, straightened up, and went out to be Jeremiah, the prophet of God, once again. When he got through with the next message, and the people were gnashing their teeth at him, he went behind the door, and cried again, "God, what are you doing to me?" But he heard clearly that threatening part, you see. God said, "If you are dismayed in front of them, I will confound you in front of them." So Jeremiah is being very careful.

This is good stuff. I really like it because it gives me much help for my own calling.

There is a promise there in verses 18-19. Jeremiah

1:18 For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

1:19 And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I [am] with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Again, God promises to deliver Jeremiah through the trials. God says, "The people are going to come and rail against you, but you are going to be a brasen wall before them. They are going to beat their knuckles bloody on you but they are not going to prevail because I am with you and I am going to deliver you. I am going to take you through

all these trials.” He does not give him this kind of song and dance where, “Do not worry about it, Jeremiah, I am going to put a shield between you and the people, and they are going to be over here, and they are going to gnash their teeth, but they are not going to do it at you. I am not going to let you see their anguish, I am not going to let them pound against you, I am not going to let them hurt your delicate skin.”

God does not promise a coveted bed of roses, such as: “I will deliver you out of trials, pain, and suffering.” That is not God’s style. God’s style is to give you the opportunity to die on a cross and give glory to Him. It is a challenge for you. I want you to meet the challenge.

JEREMIAH 2

Sermon #1, God’s Holy People are Wicked. Jeremiah 2

You need to make note of these sermon points. You never can tell when you will have to preach this stuff. I have had a lot of sermons come out of Jeremiah, especially the Temple sermon. People have gone out and preached these and gotten thrown out of “real good” (sarcasm) churches. When God’s messages are rejected, you, the messenger, will likely be rejected too.

This first sermon is titled, “God’s Holy People are Wicked.” This is dealing with Josiah’s revival. The context of this sermon is in the midst of Josiah’s revival where Josiah has implemented much change, going back to the Word of God found in Deuteronomy and implementing the rules of God in the land. But now here comes Jeremiah as a wet blanket in the midst of all this good stuff going on. He points out that the changes are external without a change of heart. Jeremiah is going to be saying that

God’s holy people are wicked, and that is not going to set well with the people of Judah.

1. God’s people walk after vanity.

Jeremiah 2:1-17

a. Idols are vanity. Jeremiah 2:5

Jeremiah

2:5 Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

“Vain” means “empty,” and so when you walk after an idol, your religion, your power, all of that has become empty. Now this is a threat. It should be a threat to you and me. If we have idols in our lives, then we have vanity and emptiness, and we lose our power. We can be religious and have the “seeming” power, but not have the real power because we are empty and vain.

b. The leaders are going the wrong way themselves. Jeremiah 2:8

Jeremiah

2:8 The priests said not, Where [is] the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after [things that] do not profit.

Listen to this! Look at what he is talking about: the priests, pastors, and prophets.

There are two kinds of prophets, and I am not talking specifically about false prophets and true prophets. There are prophets on the king’s payroll and prophets called by God. Jeremiah is not on the payroll. Jeremiah is an itinerant prophet. Jeremiah is like Isaiah and like Amos. Some of these people work a job. Amos was a shepherd. These people are bi-vocational ministers. They may be fully employed in the secular marketplace, but they are doing the ministry voluntarily. Jeremiah, you see, is a prophet who is called by God. Jeremiah, did not say, “How much does this

job pay?” God said, “Go,” and He touched his mouth, put His Word in him, and said, “Be not dismayed. If you are dismayed, I will confound you.” Jeremiah, then, goes out to do the ministry, and it is not a paying job. Who are all these prophets over here that are doing wrong, all of these priests, all these pastors? These are the guys on the payroll. You have the “school of the prophets” or a “college of prophets,” a “collection of prophets.” These prophets, you see, are on the payroll of the king.

The prophetic office was installed by God to correct the king. If the king is doing the hiring, then he will hire those who are like minded with him. That is why these prophets in Judah are false. They are paid to preach politically correct sermons.

The priests are in the same boat with the prophets. They too are politically correct in order to keep their jobs.

The pastors are the nation’s leaders. These would be your government people. These would be the princes and the king and the people who are in charge. They are going in the wrong direction. So all the leaders of Judah are going the wrong way.

- c. The people exchanged God’s glory for vanity. Jeremiah 2:11

There is a certain amount of incredulity here. Watch this:

Jeremiah

2:11 Hath a nation changed [their] gods, which [are] yet no gods? . . .

God, through Jeremiah, is posing this absurdity as a question. The obvious answer to the question is “no.”

Jeremiah

2:11 . . . but my people have changed their glory for [that which] doth not profit.

So he is saying that a foreign people who have idols as their gods would not even think

about changing out their idols. But God’s people ironically will change out the living God for vanity that does not profit.

- d. The people have no spirit here. Jeremiah 2:13

Jeremiah

2:13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, [and] hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Living water is like the water running through a stream, a cold, running stream that is refreshing. They looked at that stream, and they drank from it. They used that refreshing good water, and they said, “Oh, we don’t want this good water; let’s go over here and dig a pit, and we’ll let the rain water collect in that pit.” After the water goes in there, most of it will evaporate or drain out of it, leaving nothing but mud. Absurdly, they then say, “Oh, we like this mud better than that running water; we want to get our water out of this mud pit.” This is what God’s people are doing.

As an aside, once you begin to see the play on water, you will recognize it when it comes up again when we get to the book of Revelation. We are going to be dealing with this water business a good bit in the book of Revelation. The water symbolizes the Spirit or religion. Judah’s religion is false; their water does not refresh.

Wanda: By trading living water for dead water, you become dead also instead of living to God. The product of that trade is their power. They are giving up the real power, and they have chosen human power.

V: That is because the Spirit is not in them, thus no power. The power comes through the Spirit.

- e. They have forsaken God’s leadership. Jeremiah 2:17

Jeremiah

2:17 Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?

2. They will suffer the results of their sin.

Jeremiah 2:18-19

Jeremiah

2:18 And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

2:19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that [it is] an evil [thing] and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear [is] not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

Here is something that I harp on in all my Old Testament courses. That something is that if we can look at Judah and Israel as only a historical people and put them way over there in juxtaposition to ourselves, i.e. observe God's description of God's people who were way back there in history. Then we can sit over here in our isolation and innocence and say, "Look at those stupid people." That then places a big chasm between us and them. God is just wearing them out, angry at them, and Jeremiah is telling them what for, and we are over here innocent and thinking that we do not need any of this stuff. When we do that, then we begin to think that all we need to do is use their demise as a warning for us not to leave our supposed innocence and go wandering over into those pitfalls over there.

What I want you to see is that these words are also to us right here and right now. We have sin in the camp. We cannot escape this warning by our standing over here in our wonderful self-righteous innocence looking at Israel over there getting reprimanded for their wickedness. It is not like that. But if we

achieve that, if we play that game, we will escape God's redemptive warnings to us.

When we study this book, we could get our goose bumps without a change in our lives. But if we read the Word of God in such a way that when He says, "My people are wicked!" and you say, "I am one of His people. I am, therefore, wicked," then we may start looking for our wickedness so that we can repent and change our behavior and draw close to the Lord. Then we will not suffer the destruction of our country. We will not suffer the severe disciplines that will come through disease or through loss of life or through all manner of bad things because God disciplines those He loves. Please listen to the verdict on our wickedness when He says that if God's people who are called by His name will humble themselves, pray, turn from their wicked ways, and seek God's face, God will hear from heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their land.³ Is our land healed? No . . . then His people have not turned from their wicked ways. There is wickedness in the camp. None of you are innocent. I am not innocent. You have sin in your life; I have sin in my life. We may not have the same kind of sin in our lives, but it is up to me to find the sin that is in my life and repent from that. It is the same for you. There is only one perfect theologian, only one perfect man, and it is not one of us. That means then that we have some changing to do, some growing to do, some wrestling with the issues to do. But we cannot do it if we sit over here in our innocence and throw rocks at Judah and Israel because that gives us an out. There are no outs here.

I want us to hang on to this perception of Old Testament warnings. Any time we are doing an Old Testament book, we must not fall into that trap of historicizing. I have been

³ 2 Chronicles 7:14.

in too many churches where everybody is sitting up there, “Idolatry is not a problem for me. Those people back in Jeremiah’s time were in idolatry! What was wrong with *them*? How come they were in idolatry?”

Those people whom I have encountered in many churches have more idols in their lives than you can count. You preachers and teachers want to say to the people, “You are in idolatry,” but you are going to get a black eye if you do. This is why I do not get invited to churches the second time. In fact, I get uninvited. Idolatry in the churches just continues on. You never run out of this problem.

Verses 18 and 19 have to do with drinking the waters of the various rivers. Again it is reflecting on what you are going to see in the book of Revelation. To drink the water is to drink the spirit, and the spirit of Egypt is one spirit, the spirit of Assyria is the other.

The Assyrian River is the river that is predicted in the book of Revelation to dry up. When that river dries up, there is a certain bad thing that is going to happen to this earth. There are people who are looking for the actual water to dry up, but if I am right, that is a spirit which is going to dry up.

3. Their sin is harlotry. Jeremiah 2:20-25

Jeremiah

2:20 For of old time I have broken thy yoke, [and] burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

We are going to see harlot and whoredoms repeated as a refrain throughout chapters 2-3, and even further. These terms are also going to connect with the book of Revelation which mentions the great harlot riding on the beast.

The amazing thing in verse 20 is that the people have pledged that they will not transgress God’s law. They say, “I will not trans-

gress the law,” and he says, “While the very words are in your mouth, you are running around on every high mountain and under every tree, and you are playing the harlot.” Does that apply to you? (pause and think about it)

4. The results of their wickedness. Jeremiah 2:26-37

a. Shame. Jeremiah 2:26.

Jeremiah

2:26 As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets,

Shame is experienced throughout by all the leaders, kings, princes, priests, and prophets.

Please be aware that God sees Israel and Judah as identical to His people. Israel was the name given to all of His people. However, when the nation divided, Israel became the northern kingdom, and Judah became the southern kingdom. God did not divide Israel. The two together make up His people. Thus occasionally, He calls His southern part by the northern name. He sees them all as one people who together are, in fact, Israel.

At the time that Jeremiah was getting these words from God, Israel did not even exist any longer. Israel had already been annihilated. Samaria had taken the place of Israel. When Assyria conquered Israel, they took all of Israel’s main citizens out of Israel, and took them to Assyria, and took citizens of Assyria and put them back into Israel. There were a few remnants of Israel left in the land, but they intermarried with the transplanted Assyrians. That is where the Samaritan got its connotation of being subhuman because of that intermarriage between Assyrians and the remnant of Israel that was left behind.

Israel had gone out of existence and was called Samaria during Jeremiah’s time. But

here is God a hundred years after Israel had gone out of existence calling Judah by the name of Israel. All of Judah and all of Israel He named Israel. They named themselves Israel and Judah. After the Northern Kingdom took the name of Israel, the Southern Kingdom had to have a name, so they took the name of their tribe, Judah. But when Israel went out of existence, Israel still existed—in Judah. God calls Judah Israel because God had named them Israel.

So you can get mixed up when you are reading in the Old Testament, when you see God say Israel, and you think, Israel is gone. What is He talking about? He is talking about His son Israel who now lives in Judah. So do not get mixed up on that; I have seen people get all tangled up in this kind of thing. Sometimes He will say, “Judah, Judah, Judah” in several verses, and in the very next verse He will say, “Israel.” But that is His son, and He can call His son whatever He wants to.

b. They have no help. Jeremiah 2:27-28

Jeremiah

2:27 Saying to a stock, Thou [art] my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned [their] back unto me, and not [their] face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

2:28 But where [are] thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for [according to] the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

When we pick an idol, that is where our power is. If we look to God for our salvation, and if we serve Him as our God, then we can ask Him for help in our time of trouble. But if we choose some other thing, *i.e.*, a system or a church or a religion or a government (it can be a very good thing), you must request your help from that thing. If what you put your trust in is higher than your trust in God,

it is an idol. If you have picked something else as your security, then pray to that in your time of trouble.

God says, “Do not say ‘arise’ to me. If you are worshipping that other thing, say ‘arise’ to it.”

Joe: People are counting on banks, credit cards, health insurance, medical science, and all of that.

V: We are. We are counting on personal wisdom and eloquence of words, education, human skills, all these kinds of things. If that is what you are going to count on, then get down on your knees and pray to it in your time of trouble because that is what God says here. “But where [are] thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee . . .”

c. Their wickedness kills the prophets.
Jeremiah 2:30

Jeremiah

2:30 In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

God sends prophets to His people. He is sending prophets to His people today. We are turning our backs on them just like Israel and Judah did. As a result we are isolating them, destroying them in the same way.

In many cases the prophets were destroyed by their own people, physically. Isaiah was put in a hollow tree and Manasseh, his king, ordered him to be sawed in half.⁴

Steve: When you say prophets, do you mean pastors or preachers?

V: No, prophets. There is a difference. Let me show you orientation. When I stand in front of you, and I have a message from

⁴ This is not clearly biblical. Tradition says that this happened. Hebrews 11:37 hints at this also.

God (He has given me a message), then I will come to you and express the message. My orientation is that I have my face towards you and my back towards God. That is the prophetic orientation.

So the prophetic function is to be a mouthpiece for God who calls for corrective actions by the government leaders and church leaders. God commands the prophet, "Go where I say go and say what I tell you to say." And so you who are called by God might try to give some lame excuse, like not knowing how to talk. You may claim that you are like a child and do not have good words and all like that. Then God says, "Do not say that! Do not fear! Do not be dismayed!" He just drops the hammer on you. You are reeling from all of this, but you come out here and express God's message to the government and church leaders.

A pastor does some of that as a function, but it is not his office. His office is pastor. All of us have the call on our life to function as prophets, priests, and kings to the world. So, you see, you have your back to God and your face to the world. You are trying to bring God's warnings and also the Gospel to the world. That is the prophetic orientation.

The priestly posture is just the opposite of all of this. The priest gets with the people. He senses the people's pain. He knows what their hurts and needs are. He is aware of their sins, but he takes the cause of the people to the Lord. The scenario is that He meets with the people, he turns, he goes to God, and he says, "Oh, God! the people are hurting, and I am asking for help for the people. They need help in their bodies." That is priestly intercession which is the priestly orientation.

The priestly orientation is just the opposite of that of the prophetic. So the priest takes the calls of the people to God. The prophet takes the calls of God to the people.

That is the way that orientation shakes down, you see.

A king, on the other hand, represents God in the ruling of the people. Thus the kingly orientation is governing the people as God's representative. Then if that king gets out of step with God, the prophet is the mouthpiece of God who goes to the king and says, "You have stepped out of line. God does not like what you are doing, and if you do not line up right, God is going to whip this land." There is the necessity of the prophet whenever there is a king or human government that rules over the people instead of God.

Go back to Saul. Saul was selected by the people. The people came to Samuel and said, "We want a king! We must have a king; the Philistines have a king, why can't we have a king?" Samuel said, "God is King." They responded, "We don't want that kind of king, we want one of these real kinds of kings." Samuel said, "No, you don't want that. If you get one of those kinds of kings you are going to have taxation, and government corruption, and he will take all of your daughters and your sons and everything that you have." The people said, "We don't care, we want all of that." Samuel went to God to plead; he said, "God, they want a king." God said, "Do not despair, they are not rejecting you, they are rejecting me. Give them what they want."

So God was dethroned, and Saul was enthroned in God's place. The minute that happened, a corrector was needed. The corrector, then, is the prophet. You see, God will punish the country for its idolatry and unethical behavior. So the prophet calls for repentance. God does not want all the innocent people, especially the children, punished by the Babylonians for the sins of the majority. So He sends a prophet to the king and says through the prophet, "King, we must get it right." If the king does not listen, the

prophet will go out into the streets and tell the people, "We must get it straightened out. If we do not, there is a boiling pot in the north that is going to come down upon us." So there is a call for repentance by the prophet. If you repent, God will heal your land. But if you do not repent, there will be a terrible devastation of the land, and it is the innocent, the little people, that get hurt the most in the devastation.

For the most part the kings and the princes are all excused from the devastation. They can risk all of this devastation for they are still going to be honchos in the new empire in which their kingdom will have been assimilated. It is the little people who are enslaved or killed or eaten.

The prophet is a merciful way for God to call for repentance rather than just ticking off the time leading toward the coming devastation. A pastor has a prophetic *function* as a part of his *pastoral office*. All Christians have three calls on their lives. Those three calls are to *function* as prophet, priest, and king. Functioning as a prophet, one takes God's Word to the people and government.⁵ This Word always contains a call to repent. Functioning as a priest, one takes the needs of the people to God as an intercessor. Functioning as a king, you are to oversee as a steward of God every thing and person under your authority.

Jack: Are you saying God uses the prophet to open the door for repentance?

V: Yes. The sending of a prophet is a merciful action by God. God sends the prophet because He does not want you to suffer. Prophecy is solicitation for repentance and a warning for its lack. Most people do

⁵ All Christians have the prophetic *function*, but the prophetic *office* belongs to the professional preacher ordained to the office by God and who preaches corrections and warnings to the government and churches.

not want to hear the bad message. Why do they not want to hear the bad message? Because they do not intend to change, so they kill the messenger. That is why He says there in verse 30:

Jeremiah

2:30 . . . your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

And so Jesus Christ was a prophet, and because He came to call them to repentance, they killed Him. We killed Him! And today we hate the messenger who brings the message that causes discomfort in us. But you had better get used to it because you are going to be the messenger bringing discomfort to others. You are going to have everybody gnashing their teeth at you, but you are going to be a brasen wall in these last days.

d. They manifest bloodiness. Jeremiah 2:34.

Jeremiah

2:34 Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

The bloodiness is not something that is in secret. They (and we) are proud of it. But they do not hold a candle to our bloodiness. We kill millions of babies! We tear their bodies apart and then pull the parts out of the womb. Sometimes, even while they are in the midst of birth, we punch a hole through their skulls and suck out the living brains and use those brains in experiments. We are proud of these actions. We manifest bloodiness and we are proud of it.

e. They are self righteous and secure. Jeremiah 2:35

Jeremiah

2:35 Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.

Can you not hear your own church people saying this: "I am innocent. Surely His anger

shall turn from me.” I have heard it! I can hear it ringing in my ears!

JEREMIAH 3

5. There is an invitation to return to God.

Jeremiah 3:1-5

- a. Observe your wickedness. Jeremiah 3:2

Jeremiah

3:2 Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.

If you cannot see your wickedness, then you cannot repent. This verse deals with harlotry, whoredoms, and adultery. All of these words connect with idolatry which is found all throughout chapter 3. But if we can just see that we are not the innocent people but a bunch of harlots, then we can repent. But unless we can see it, we cannot repent.

- b. God gives discipline to help you see. Jeremiah 3:3.

Jeremiah

3:3 Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.

3:4 Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou [art] the guide of my youth?

The discipline He gives here to Judah is that He withheld the rain. He creates a drought, and the people are supposed to be able, with the motivation of a drought, to ask, “Why is there a drought?” Maybe we are doing something wrong. Maybe, then, we will be able to see our wickedness.

In the book of Revelation this drought is going to be spiritual drought. I dare say that in Jeremiah's time it was a spiritual drought

as well. But there may also be a drought which is an actual physical lack of rain, a physical drought. However corresponding with that drought is the loss of spiritual power in which the souls are dried up and without the power of God. Without God's power, the people (including us) are unable to walk through life knowing that they are being delivered through their present and future trials.

- c. Invitation with attached warning. Jeremiah 3:4-5.

Jeremiah

3:4 Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou [art] the guide of my youth?

3:5 Will he reserve [his anger] for ever? will he keep [it] to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

God is saying that the people in a sinful nation need to cry out to Him because they should certainly understand that God is not going to hold His anger forever? Eventually it will come down on them (and us) if they (we) keep on speaking and doing the evil things that we are capable of. Instead, we are to repent and cry out to God.⁶

Sermon #2, Repent or Suffer Destruction.

Jeremiah 3:6 to 6:6

This sermon basically addresses the sin of the land after revival. After the Josianic revival there is a sin in the land, and it is addressed here in Sermon #2.

Sermon #1 was addressing the sin in the middle of the revival. That sin occurred when these people were red hot in the midst of their revival. After revival they had turned their lives around. They had come back to God because they had implemented the Word of God, the newfound scroll of Deuteronomy.

⁶ This sermon is outlined sparingly in the answer key.

They had turned to God. The priests were waxing eloquent in their acts of comforting the people. The prophets were warning the people and helping them understand God's cause. Now, here came Jeremiah contradicting everything that they thought they were doing right, "You guys are wicked! Look at you! You are full of blood. Examine yourselves; you are playing the harlot on every high hill." These people in the middle of revival were saying: "What? You cannot be talking about us because we now have it right!"

I want you to see this irony. When the people of God are at the peak of their growing close to God, here comes Jeremiah saying, "You people are sick."

Surely, that same thing could not be said of us now could it? Well here we are. We have our nice churches, and we are having our revivals, and we go to church, sing songs, and it is so wonderful. Are you not glad that there is no Jeremiah today? What would Jeremiah say to us? It would not be this soft kind of stuff coming out of our pulpits which panders to divorce, abortion, homosexuality, feminism, and hedonism. He would rip us up and down because we are worse than those people of Jeremiah's time.

When there are people who have just drawn closer to the Lord than they have ever known possible, and the prophet enters the scene and calls for repentance, they do not know what he is talking about. They cannot figure it out. We must have ears on before we can hear God's Word which warns us to . . .

. . . Repent or Suffer Destruction

1. Judah is more treacherous than Israel was. Jeremiah 3:6-11.

This scripture is a very graphic description of Israel. Israel, remember, has gone out of existence. Israel is the sister of Judah, and it

is no longer in existence. At this point, God is referring to Israel as the northern kingdom, and He is comparing Judah with Israel. They are sisters, and together they are His people.

Jeremiah

3:6 The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen [that] which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.

3:7 And I said after she had done all these [things], Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw [it].

3:8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

3:9 And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.

3:10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD.

3:11 And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

That passage is an indictment for Judah! God gave Israel a bill of divorce for playing the harlot. The effect of that divorce was that Israel was taken slam out of existence. But now here is Judah being even more treacherous than Israel. After having observed why Israel was taken out of existence and given a divorce by God, Judah is doing the same thing, but with a "treacherous" flavor to it. Judah is saying, "Oh, we love the Lord, we just love the Lord." You see, it is lip service, but their heart was far from Him. They were faking their love for the Lord. It was a feigned revival.

Deuteronomic Theology

Deuteronomic Theology⁷ is a theology of temporal gain. It is to interpret the promises of God as promises for riches and power during one's lifetime. Your motivation in this brand of theology is self-centered interest. It is selfishness; it is greed. The key for unlocking wealth and temporal success and gain is seen as obedience of God's requirements.

God says all through Deuteronomy, "If you will do this, I will do this." So God's Word becomes a menu. "I would like for God to do such and such. What do I have to do to get Him to do it?" This kind of "theologian" will begin to compute the requirements, and then, "Oh, I must do this requirement because I want that provision right there!"

Do you not see what Deuteronomic Theology becomes? It is a fake love of God; it is self-love, self-centeredness, selfishness. It is just the opposite of *Kenotic* Theology, what Jesus did. Jesus gave, sacrificed, and put everything down, including His own life; He denied Himself.

Our requirement is the same as what was required of Jesus: deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow the Lord.⁸ That is not where you calculate it out, and say, "I need me some . . . take money for example. He promised to

⁷ True Deuteronomic Theology may bring God's blessings in the temporal realm for a nation, a family, and even an individual. However, it may take many different forms. God's Hands are not tied only to temporal blessings or only to eschatological blessings. He is, however, absolute in His fulfillment of His promises. They will always take place in the eschaton, but sometimes He will give blessings in the temporal realm as well, especially in the corporate dimension, i.e. family and state. His promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is absolute for the temporal healing of His peoples' land. But His commandment to the individual is to lay up treasure **"in heaven," in the eschaton.**

⁸ Matthew 16:24.

give back a hundredfold of whatever I give. Thus, if I give a hundred dollars, then I will get back ten thousand dollars (100 x 100)."

The temporal gain expected from Deuteronomic Theology will lose your eternal gain to be received from *Kenotic* Theology. He that expects gain in this world loses in the next.⁹ You must deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow Jesus right through a lifetime of sacrifice in order to be glorified in His glory. But if you get your glory now, you will not get it in the eschaton.

Deuteronomic theology is a gimmick to show you how to get your glory now. Through it you may try to manipulate God by building your behavior into a formula. You determine to box in God by trying to force Him to bless you temporally because you have obeyed Him. A child of God ought to obey Him because of Who He is. Jeremiah obeyed Him, and he catches hell on earth. That is one of the things that you are going to get here on earth. It is going to cost you much persecution to follow the Lord. Jeremiah is a pretty good example of an Old Testament man following God, God's way.

Jeremiah is now calling a spade a spade. He is in the midst of all these people in white-hot revival. They are really cooking in their renewed worship. Jeremiah steps up into the midst of this revival and says, "You are a bunch of fakers. You are doing all of this religious stuff for personal gain, not for your love of God. You think this is revival? You don't know what revival is!"

This is what he is saying to us as well. It is hard to hear this kind of thing especially

⁹ Even for those who are not saved, this is true. Hell-bound sinners who do good will have a lessening in their eschatological penalties. Vice versa is also true. Hell-bound sinners who do more evil will receive an increase in their penalties. God will not forget a good deed done to one of His Own, or vice versa.

when we believe that we are innocent.

Here are these Judeans who have been blessed by God so that they have outlived their sister. Their sister prayed to Baal. God gave her a bill of divorce, and He annihilated her. Now here is Judah. They are not praying to Baal. They are clean and saying, "We know one thing; we don't pray to Baal." But what are they doing? They are taking God's Word, manipulating it, and turning it around for self-centered greed.

Jeremiah is going to try to straighten all that stuff out. He is laying it on them. He says that they are more treacherous than Israel was. They think that they are more righteous? Nah! they are more treacherous.

- a. Judah saw Israel's harlotry. Jeremiah 3:6-7
 - b. Judah did the same thing as Israel, except subtly. Jeremiah 3:8-9
 - c. Judah feigned revival. Jeremiah 3:10. It is a lip-service love.
2. Judah is called to repentance. Jeremiah 3:12-22.

The call to repentance is a continuing refrain from a true prophet of God.

- a. One, if not all, is called to repent. Jeremiah 3:14.

God wants a remnant revival. Everybody is not going to revive. God wants a remnant. Will you be the remnant?

Jeremiah

3:14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

- b. Those who repent will receive good pastors. Jeremiah 3:15.

Jeremiah

3:15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

3. Salvation is only in God. Jeremiah 3:23 – 4:4.

- a. There is a delusion that you can continue your own path and still have salvation's benefits.

Jeremiah

3:23 Truly in vain [is salvation hoped for] from the hills, [and from] the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God [is] the salvation of Israel.

What we want is to eat our cake and have it, too. We want to be able to continue our own lifestyle and have God's blessings upon us. That is why when a prophet comes into our midst, and calls for us to repent, we do not want to hear that. We do not like that kind of message. We want to hear, "You are the apple of God's eye." He loves you, He is going to bless you, you have been saved, Jesus lives in your heart, and so, God is going to pour out all manner of blessings upon you. And if two of you just gather and pray together in agreement, why He will give you anything that you can ever ask for.

You see, there is no call for repentance in that kind of so-called prophetic message. True prophecy, TRUE PROPHECY, always has a call to repentance. If it does not have God's call to repentance, turn your back upon it.

- b. Idolatry usurps resources. Jeremiah 3:24.

Jeremiah

3:24 For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.

Idolatry will use up your resources. Idolatry takes away all the goodies that you have. If you have so much time and so much talent to give to God, and you do not give it to God, but give it to an idol, those resources are gone, squandered.

When you build, you should build in God's

power, in yoke with Him. You will build a building that will stand. But when you build with an idol, it will fall. Your building anything in vain usurps God's resources. Even a good thing diverts God's resources from His *best* thing.

The Doctrine of Holiness means that you have been cleaned up and set aside for God's sole use. A holy person is a person who has been moved out of his own ownership. He is no longer to use himself because he is not dedicated to himself. Also he is not dedicated to his ideas or his ambition, and he is not dedicated to a family or to something else. A holy person is set over into a new arena, and that arena is for God's use. Now God will use that person to take care of his family and to earn a living. God will use that person, you see, in a lot of different ways, but when a person is holy, he is dedicated to God for God's use. That means, then, that God can spend you as His resource.

Let us say for example that we are God's money, and I am one of those coins. I put myself on the altar. When my will is surrendered, I am a spendable resource for God. In this case God can use me however He would like. I should not use myself as my own resource. I should not spend myself the way I want to. I should not indulge my own dreams: "I'll just be a teacher and a minister. I think that I'll also be a farmer on the side and a race car driver and everything over here that is fun." I cannot do that and be holy. To be holy means I throw myself on the altar to be spent by God as He sees fit. That is what holiness is. You cannot have it both ways. If I take up my own life, and use it for my own purposes, that is idolatry, and it usurps God's resources.

Suppose that I have taken the reins of my own life and am spending my own resources the way I think they ought to be spent. God is

no longer spending them. The only way He can spend them is if I place myself at His disposal and stand ready to be spent how He decides to spend me.

Do you know how He spends His people? Through sacrifice and sometimes death. Our forefathers have been burned at the stake, sawed in half, required to go through hell on earth.

If you want to see how God spends His resources, take a look at the heroes of faith in the book of Hebrews, and you will see where our forefathers have been spent by God, and that is why they are heroes of faith. Some of those heroes wandered in the desert without proper clothing, lived in holes in the ground, were eaten by lions, were sawed in two, were burned to death, and were all despised and ridiculed. They refused to be released from their agony because they wanted a better resurrection.

That call to sacrifice and suffering is the call on your life too: "Will you be the two of a family? Will you be the one of a city that God can take and use as His own resource?" That is the call here, and if you will be the one, God will give you the good pastor, Jesus. If you will be the one, He will take you to Zion.

If you will be the one—that is the everlasting call. This call is the clarion call today, which is continuous and current. He is looking for a remnant that He can use. That call is to you right now. Will you answer the call? Pause right here and talk to God about His call to holiness. Put yourself on the altar to be set aside for God's exclusive use. Let me pray for you right now. This is an invitation. Will you be the remnant to be at God's disposal? Bow your head.

Dear Lord God, as for me and my family, I surrender myself to you, and I want to be a part of that remnant. I want to be one or two

of that family, the one of a city or whatever. God, please take me and use me however you want, and I pray for these who read this book. I voice this prayer as just one representing many. We lift ourselves up to you. Will you please take us and use us just like Jeremiah challenged. God, we respond; we respond to your Word because we love you, Lord. In Jesus' name, and for His glory, we pray. Amen.

JEREMIAH 4

- c. Blessings for you and others originate in your going to God. Jeremiah 4:2

Jeremiah

4:2 And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

This is how you become a blessing to the nations. People that you do not even know are going to get blessed out of what you just prayed. There is going to be impact on this planet because of you, what you have just done because when God spends you, good things happen. People become blessed when God spends His resources.

- d. God wants a real purging of the heart. Jeremiah 4:3-4

Jeremiah

4:3 For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench [it], because of the evil of your doings.

God wants the real McCoy, not where you come close to Him with only your lips while your heart is far from Him. He wants you to circumcise your heart which means that you

will remove that old unholy separation off of your heart that is between you and God. Open up your heart. Let God do something in your heart. He is looking for the real thing. You are sowing your seeds. If you sow among the thorns, and you may have already sown there, the thorns may grow up and choke you down. Then you become unprofitable to God. You do not want to be unprofitable. So get rid of the thorns and do not sow there any more.

You know what happens sometimes when I am preaching in a church? It would be like talking to brickbats out there in the congregation. I mean there are no ears to hear God's call to holiness. They cannot hear a word about the real requirements of holiness or discipleship. Those people are thorns, rocky ground, thorny ground, shallow ground. They hear but don't change.

There are other times though when I have been preaching or teaching, and there will be some of the softhearted people there. Those people will receive those seeds, and the next thing I know, their lives are changed, their families are changed, then they are ministering, and then they are running the race for God, carrying their baton, and ready to hand it off to the next generation. That was good ground.

4. The destroyer is coming. Jeremiah 4:5-31

Do you think that will preach today? He is coming! He is coming! Many will repeat these words, but their lives belie their words. Take the book of Revelation, and we will look at the destroyer.

- a. The leaders are going to perish this time. Jeremiah 4:5-9.

Jeremiah

4:5 Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the

defenced cities.

4:6 Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.

4:7 The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; [and] thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.

4:8 For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us.

4:9 And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, [that] the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.

God is changing the expected outcomes here. He is taking away this business where the leaders escape the wrath of God. In the normal course of events of a country being conquered by another country, the leaders are taken in and given positions of leadership in the conquered land in order to smooth the transition. That scenario is not going to play this time. This time whatever happens to the little people is going to happen to the big people too.

b. Jeremiah asked God about deceit.
4:10.

Deceit is a popular word in the book of Revelation, and that word, in both places, will connect up real good in this study.

Jeremiah

4:10 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.

This is “tongue in cheek” by Jeremiah. The school of prophets says: “Ah, yes, God loves you; He is going to take care of you. There are not going to be any bad things happening to you. This is the Temple of God right here in our land. Do you think God is going to let a foreign nation come in here and

ravage His Temple? Of course, not! Do you think God is going to let the bad things happen to His people? You know that God does not want bad things to happen to His people!” Have you heard that? I have heard things like that a jillion times. All these paid prophets, you see, are saying all this kind of thing about God to His people with no call for repentance. They promise unconditional blessings without a call to repentance: “Surely, God is not going to let the pagans come in and take His Temple!” The paid prophets have been saying that in order to get not only the blessings of the people but also those of the king.

At this point, Jeremiah pretends to ask, “God, have you been deceiving these people by telling them that no harm will come to them and that it is going to be peaceful for them? Yet, you are telling me that the sword is coming? What kind of contradiction is this?” Please see that it is a tongue-in-cheek way to say openly that the prophets of Judah are liars.

c. God’s people are foolish. Jeremiah
4:22

Jeremiah

4:22 For my people [is] foolish, they have not known me; they [are] sottish children, and they have none understanding: they [are] wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

This is a bad accusation for the Judeans and for you and me: “My people are wise to do evil, but ignorant to do good. They are foolish.”

JEREMIAH 5

5. God will overlook many for the righteousness of one. Jeremiah 5:1

Jeremiah

5:1 Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can

find a man, if there be [any] that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.

Now this is a principle of the New Testament here. You see Jesus is the righteous one, and because of the righteous one, many are pardoned. Under this principle, God is saying, "Is there a man?" He is not talking about Jeremiah. He is telling Jeremiah to go out into Jerusalem and find a righteous man, and if one is found, God is going to pardon the whole bunch. Jeremiah must go up and down the streets and check out everybody. If only one righteous man can be found, God will pardon the whole bunch. Now the same promise is available today. Is there one other than Jesus? Will you be one? I want you to be one. Stand up and be counted. Be counted for Jesus.

6. God will not overlook the problem. Jeremiah 5:2–6:15.

a. The prophet identifies with God. Jeremiah 5:7

Jeremiah is saying,
Jeremiah

5:7 How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by [them that are] no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.

So Jeremiah has taken up God's cause to the point where "whatever God said, that is what I say, too." He is so closely identified that he feels the same anger and wrath at the people. He is not going to overlook their apostasy.

b. There is false security among the people. Jeremiah 5:12.

Jeremiah

5:12 They have belied the LORD, and said, [It is] not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine:

You see, that lie is what the prophets are saying. All the prophets besides Jeremiah are saying, "We are not going to have this evil. The sword is not going to come upon us, and there will be no famine." Jeremiah is saying just the opposite. He is pointing out the fact that the people have a false security based on the lies of the prophets. What they are being led to believe is that God is a respecter of persons. God is not a respecter of persons! Just because you are His child, God is not going to restrain Himself from disciplining you. God is not going to swoon over you because you are so great. That is not the way it works.

God respects actions, not persons! He expects proper actions out of His child. If His child does not give proper action, He will apply the same kind of discipline on His child that He applies upon the people who are persecuting others for self-gain. As a matter of fact He will use Babylon to wear His child out because He is not a respecter of persons. But these false prophets are saying, "Oh, you are a child of God. You do not need to worry about famine and the sword and evil because you are going to have peace. God does not want you to suffer."

c. The prophets are become channels of demonic words, and are called wind-bags. Jeremiah 5:13-14

Jeremiah

5:13 And the prophets shall become wind, and the word [is] not in them: thus shall it be done unto them.

5:14 Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

Ear tickling will devour you. It will destroy you. Do not listen to ear ticklers.

d. Apostasy dulls your senses. Jeremiah 5:21

Jeremiah

5:21 Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:

So as soon as you start moving into apostasy, you can no longer hear the truth. Have you ever noticed that there are times in your life when something will just jump slam out of the Bible and grab you in a strangle hold from which you cannot get loose. Why did it not do that the day before? It could be because you have just now read it, but it could also be because you were in apostasy when you read it before. When your heart softens, when the circumcision of the heart happens and you are open, kapow! You will show it to others: "Oh, my goodness, look at this!" They look and say, "What? This! What are you talking about?" Their glibness is because they cannot see what you are seeing.

- e. Wicked people prosper by devouring others. Jeremiah 5:26-27

Jeremiah

5:26 For among my people are found wicked [men]: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

5:27 As a cage is full of birds, so [are] their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

This passage describes a win-lose economy. God's economy is win-win. God's economy is a multiplication economy. In a win-win business transaction between two people, one person sells something to the other, the other must be enriched by what he bought, he must win, and the seller must be enriched by the money. So it is a win-win. What these wicked people want is win-lose, where the person who sells gives a product that is not a good product. It is a cheap thing that falls apart. The seller wins by getting the money, and the buyer is a sucker who loses.

Win-lose is the wicked economy. God

wants a win-win economy. Therefore in business it is incumbent upon every Christian to make sure that in a transaction the other person wins. It is your responsibility to see that the buyer wins. If he does not win, you are at fault. You cannot do win-lose where you step on the other guy to elevate yourself. No, no. That is what God is describing here.

- f. The prophets and priests are evil, but the people love it that way. Jeremiah 5:31.

Jeremiah

5:31 The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love [to have it] so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

- g. What will you do in the end? Jeremiah 5:31.

This is a good question for the beginning. When you are ministering in the church, and you lead someone to the Lord, then in your teaching of them, in your counseling, in your getting them oriented into a Christian pilgrimage, you must deal with end times. Answering the question of what they will do in the end helps them to focus on the destination of their path from the beginning.

You must bring the end times into consideration. There is going to be a judgment, a judgment of works. What will you do in that end-time judgment. You must walk the walk that gets you the proper judgment at the end times. That is what he asks here in verse 31. What will you do in the end?

JEREMIAH 6

- h. The false priests and prophets heal the people slightly. Jeremiah 6:13-15

Jeremiah

6:13 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one [is] given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

6:14 They have healed also the hurt [of the daughter] of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when [there is] no peace.

6:15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time [that] I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

Whenever a prophet is proclaiming to the people that good things are coming, that they are going to have peace, that there is not going to be destruction, that all of these bad things are going to be kept far from them, and there is no call for repentance, then there is a healing slightly. Here in this passage is a description of what false prophets do.

The same thing is applicable today. False prophecy gives a false peace and security to agony in the soul. There is agony because, you see, all the people out here are doing all this wickedness. They know in their hearts that they are wicked, and yet they are going to a church and the preacher says, “God loves you, He is going to bless you,” and there is no call for repentance. That is a healing of the hurt in the heart slightly. It is not a permanent healing, not a complete healing, but a slight healing. Just like these priests were doing. They are helping soothe the agony without a change that will cure the agony.

You can apply this principle straight up and down throughout history. Please mark this lesson down. True preaching is what we are required to do. When you bring your message, there must also be a call on the people to draw close to God and away from their own sins. Every message has to be like that.

7. Stand and walk in the old ways. Jeremiah 6:16-30.

a. You will get rest. 6:16.

Jeremiah

6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where [is] the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk [therein].

You will receive rest for your souls by standing and walking in the old ways.

Oscar: I believe that idea connects with the New Testament. We do all that we can do, then we stand. When we do all that we can in the Lord, then we can stand and enter into God’s rest.

V: That is right. All of God’s Word connects. And then there is that other passage in Matthew about “take my yoke upon you and you will have rest for your soul.”¹⁰

b. Listen to your watchmen. Jeremiah 6:17

Jeremiah

6:17 Also I set watchmen over you, [saying], Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

The watchmen are the people on the walls. The city was defended by a wall, but you do not just let the people in the city depend only upon the wall. You put watchmen on the wall. When the watchmen see danger coming, they blow the trumpet to alert the people of the city. The watchmen are there for a purpose. A prophet is a watchman who is to warn the people of the dangerous times. So listen to your watchmen.

c. Jeremiah is made the test for the people. Jeremiah 6:27.

Jeremiah

6:27 I have set thee [for] a tower and] a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.

This applies to you too. You have become the test. Jeremiah is bringing bad news to the

¹⁰ Matthew 11:29.

people. We are going to be dealing with some of the bad news and how the people react to it and to Jeremiah. How the people react to Jeremiah is his being the test for the people. You see, how the people receive Jeremiah is going to be the test of their character. Do they receive him, or do they reject him? He is the prophet of God. If they say that he is the prophet of the devil, then they are going to fail the test. But if they say that he is the prophet of God and he bears the Word of God, then they must make some radical changes in order to pass the test.

When you become the test, there is agony for your soul because when the people reject God's Word they reject you because you are the test. These are the kinds of times when

you bring God's Word to the people, and they gnash their teeth at you, you will go home, you will weep, you will say, "Why? Why can't they hear? The destruction is coming, let them turn. Why won't they turn?" You will agonize, and your heart will break. You will suffer. When you are the test, you will suffer. There is no escape. You will suffer, and most likely you will do it all alone. Nobody will understand your suffering. God touched your mouth when He put His Word in you. He touched you. He sent you. You suffer. It is hard. Every one of you is going to suffer because you are reading this book. It is too late.

Chapter Questions

1. Who are the six rulers who span the time of Jeremiah's ministry?
2. What is the name of the hermeneutic that places the rewards for obedience and curses for disobedience into the temporal realm?
3. What are the characteristics of Jeremiah's call by God?
4. What are the elements in the commandment to Jeremiah based on the people's wickedness in Jeremiah 1:17?
5. List the points of Sermon #1, God's Holy People are Wicked. Jeremiah 2.
6. What is the prophetic function? What is the prophetic orientation?
7. What is the priestly function? What is the orientation of a priest?
8. What is the kingly function and what is his orientation?
9. List the points of Sermon #2, Repent or Suffer Destruction. Jeremiah 3:6 to 6:6

Chapter 2

TRUST IN THE TEMPLE

Jeremiah 7-10

JEREMIAH 7

We are now going to look at the Temple sermon. Please note that Jeremiah is not an official prophet. He is not on the payroll. This is a prophet of God, not of the school of prophets. God is going to give him some instructions that make me quake in my shoes when I look at myself having to do these things. God, in fact, could come along and give any one of us these kinds of instructions.

The first two verses of Chapter 7 are God's instructions to Jeremiah to preach this sermon in the temple gate.

Jeremiah

7:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

7:2 Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all [ye of] Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD.

Please try to imagine what this sounds like to Jeremiah. It would be like the Word of the Lord coming to you saying, "Go to the Southern Baptist Convention, which is a huge gathering, and stand in the doorway and give them this reprimand from Me, to every one that enters to worship in my name." You might think, "Well if it is a good positive Word I might could do that. I could tell them something good that they want to hear."

But God is going to tell Jeremiah to tell these people something very unsettling especially in the context of the ongoing revival. This sermon is during the Josianic revival. Josiah had found the scroll of Deuteronomy in the Temple walls during the remodeling process. After examining it, Josiah said, "Oh, my soul: we are outside of God's Law." They had departed from the Word of God so far that when they found a scroll of God's Word,

it was a shock to them. Josiah, the king, said, "We are going to put this Word into practice." Josiah implemented a reform in the whole kingdom of Judah.

By this time of Josiah's revival, Israel, the northern kingdom, was gone. Israel had gone into idolatry, and Assyria had conquered and taken Israel captive and had replaced Israel's citizens with Assyrians.¹ Sometime after Israel's demise, Josiah reigns in Judah, the Southern Kingdom, and he has implemented revival during Jeremiah's time.

Jeremiah is prophesying and preaching this great Temple Sermon during this Josianic revival. The two sermons that we dealt with last week were also during that revival. Now here comes the Temple Sermon towards the end of the Josianic revival, during that period in which Judah has reformed, has repented, has gotten all cleaned up, and is going to the Temple to worship. Judah is doing it right; so they thought!

The people of Judah, in the midst of revival, would be thinking: "So, Jeremiah, what are you doing here? How come you are preaching to us about our need to repent?" Please try to imagine what that would feel like. Jeremiah is being sent into that kind of

¹ That is where we hear later in New Testament times about the Samaritans. The Samaritans are a mix of the Assyrians with the remnant of Israel that was left behind. There were not many left behind so the citizens of Samaria are mostly Assyrian. That mixture of race had a bad connotation, and in the Lord's time, during the New Testament, the Samaritans located just north of Judah were looked down upon. The people were not worthy of associating with. That mixture of races is where the disdain for the Samaritans came from.

environment. I would hate to be put into a predicament of this kind of setting. I find myself in other smaller predicaments of this sort. But I find it difficult to think about telling the whole nation/convention what Jeremiah has been instructed to tell them especially after they have already repented and cleaned up, and gotten it altogether. They do not think that they need a prophet to tell them anything. Besides that, the paid professional prophets are telling them just the opposite of what Jeremiah tells them.

JEREMIAH 7

The Temple Sermon, Sermon #3 Jeremiah 7:1–10:22

1. Mend your ways. Jeremiah 7:1-7

Jeremiah

7:3 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

7:4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the LORD, The Temple of the LORD, The Temple of the LORD, [are] these.

7:5 For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour;

7:6 [If] ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt:

7:7 Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

And so Jeremiah comes right to the point and starts hammering right away on the lie that is causing the apostasy that is entrenched and disguised as revival. This sermon is going to be hard to hear by somebody who has already been through revival, has gotten cleaned up, and is now coming to church (Temple) to worship. They are coming with eagerness in their hearts, a desire to draw

close to the Lord, and they are coming into the church (Temple). But here comes Jeremiah, and He says, “Repent. Get your ways straightened out, and quit listening to these lying words about the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord.”

Think about going into a church, and saying, “Quit listening to this bunch of lying stuff about going to church, about going to church, about going to church. Rather, mend your ways!” This is coming down hard, and it is hard for me and for you to hear this kind of message, but we must hear it because this message is just as relevant today as it was in Jeremiah’s time. Besides that, we have not yet come through revival. We still need to go through revival.

2. You are believing lies. Jeremiah 7:8-11

Jeremiah

7:8 Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.

7:9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;

7:10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

7:11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen [it], saith the LORD.

If the saint of God comes into His Temple to worship, and he is not amending his life, i.e. his life belies his words, then that is hypocrisy. God is saying through Jeremiah, “If you are not amending your unseemly life, and you come into the Temple called by my name, then you are making the Temple a den of robbers.”

Make no mistake about it. God sees the contradiction between your worship and your behavior. This kind of worship is a lack of respect for God. if you say you love God, but

live like you hate God, do not think that it is going to get all well for you just because you come into His Temple, crying out “The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord.” That esteem for going to the Temple to worship is not going to make it well between you and God. The only thing that is going to make it well is for you to amend your life to equal your words. Make your words and your life be the same thing, and then you will not be making God’s house a den of robbers.

Henry: You know this is exactly what I hear when I am witnessing and ask what church they go to. They always say, “I do not want to go there because they are a bunch of hypocrites.”

V: Whenever your life is not equal to your words, it is hypocrisy. Now God goes even further than that. His position is that you are involved in hypocrisy if your actions belie your ontology—not your words, but what you are on the inside. If you have Jesus living in your heart, then your actions should correspond with His actions. When they do not, that is hypocrisy in God’s eyes. But only God can look upon the heart. Therefore, when we observe people we compare their actions and their words. And that is where the hypocrisy is seen at the human level. But with God it is even deeper than that. It would extend even into your thought life.

3. The Temple is no protection. Jeremiah

7:12-15

Jeremiah

7:12 But go ye now unto my place which [was] in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.

7:13 And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not;

7:14 Therefore will I do unto [this] house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to

you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

7:15 And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, [even] the whole seed of Ephraim.

Shiloh was the worship center for Israel in the Northern Kingdom, and Jerusalem is the worship center for the Southern Kingdom. Shiloh was completely wiped out by the Assyrians. In that invasion, the northern “Temple” of the Lord was wiped out by a pagan group. God says to Judah, “Hey, you know what I did to Shiloh? Do you remember that? Do you think that you are going to be safe because My Temple is among you? That is not going to work.” He is saying, “If I wiped out Shiloh, I will also wipe out Jerusalem.”

In 7:15 above, God says that He wiped out all of Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom. He makes that same threat for the Southern Kingdom. He is getting to the point where he is about to make an irrevocable decree.

Before Jeremiah, Isaiah preached to Judah during the time in which Israel was about to fall. Isaiah told Judah how to relate to Israel’s alliance with foreign nations. Judah is not to rely on an alliance with them based on the strength of flesh. We are not to lean on the fleshly arm. Instead, we are to lean on God. Now that is easy to say. It is easy for me to sit here in a safe environment and say that. But one time when the Assyrians were surrounding Jerusalem, they had hedged up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage. There were campfires of warriors surrounding Jerusalem as far as you could see. Men were walking on the city’s wall and looking around, “Is there any escape for us? There is no human escape!”

Isaiah is saying, “Lean upon the arm of the Lord. Do not work a deal by allying with other nations. Stand firm, and God will fight your fight.” As a result, Hezekiah, a strong king, looked at death right in the eyes, I mean stared a torturous kind of death in the face,

and said, “I will stand here and see our deliverance by God.”

They stood there, and that night there were 185,000 Assyrians killed by an angel—bam—185,000 warriors were killed in one night by God. The remainder of the Assyrians fled for their lives, and the people of Jerusalem came out and plundered all of their tents and all of their supplies and weapons and everything. They put to flight an overwhelming enemy and got richer in one night than they ever dreamed possible. And so Isaiah has a lot to say to Judah, but it is preparatory to the time of when Jeremiah comes on the scene.

When Jeremiah comes on the scene, Judah does not have Hezekiah as the king. Instead, it has Amon, who is an evil king, and then came Josiah and his reform, and then we get this series of bad kings. Judah is going over the edge in apostasy. They are going to get on the slippery slope, and they are going to slide out of existence. This is going to happen in Jeremiah’s lifetime.

You are going to study about the apostasy of God’s people in these two books of Isaiah and Jeremiah. The irony is that Jeremiah comes on the scene when the “church” has come through revival, when the “church” has gotten their act together, and they are diligently worshipping the Lord. They are coming to the Temple with consistency and regularity. They are weeping and getting on their knees. They are bringing sacrifices. They are worshipping God and praying to God. Against that backdrop, here is Jeremiah saying, “If we do not get it turned around, we are going out of existence just like Israel did.”

Last week we saw that one of his sermons said that God issued Israel a bill of divorce because of her idolatry, and “you, Judah, are more treacherous than your sister.”² I relate more to Jeremiah because this is the stage of

the church in the world today. It is self-righteous. It is a church that feels secure, a church that is hearing nothing but good things, and a prophet comes on the scene saying, “Repent!” “Repent from what? We have a building program, money, air conditioning, and paved parking! What do you want us to repent from?”

Jeremiah, in his stage of history, relates much closer to where we are today. So that is who I relate to more than Isaiah. Isaiah was just as strong, a wonderful prophet, and he got in there and hammered all he could, but Israel went down the tubes. Judah was on the slide, on the skids, and the king, Manasseh, sawed Isaiah in half. He did not want to hear any more words out of that guy. Now here comes Jeremiah, and he is going to be saying the same kind of words that Isaiah said, and they are wondering—“We have a good king, we are getting it all right—what right does Jeremiah have in preaching the Temple sermon? This is a tough sermon, and it is for sinners, not us.”

A student friend of mine preached Jeremiah’s Temple sermon in his church. They gnashed their teeth at him and said, “Repent from what? What is wrong with you?” Class, this sermon is going to be rejected today just as it was in Jeremiah’s day. Where are the wise men today? We are going to see that question rise up.

Trusting in a thing for protection is fetishism. Here are two related references:

Micah

3:11 The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, [Is] not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.

I Samuel

4:3 And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark

² Jeremiah 3:8

of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

These are the paid prophets and priests, the professionals. They are saying what they say for money. They are proclaiming peace and protection from God. They say, "If God is among us, there can be no evil befall us."

This is fetishism. I do not know whether or not you have had church history, but fetishism is a branch of idolatry that has evolved into church institutionalism. This fetishism in the Old Testament is a forerunner of that thing of today. That fetishism described above is the thinking that the Ark is going to give some kind of efficacious protection for the people just because they have the Ark and are God's chosen people.

Fetishism connects with the idea that there is some respect of persons with God. This happens when you think that since you are a child of God, or since you go to church, or since you tithe to the church, then no evil can fall upon you. Just as the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple were seen as protective, the church is now seen that way.

Well, what happened to the people of Shiloh? Shiloh does not exist; the people of Shiloh no longer exist. They were gone even before Jeremiah's time. That kind of protection because of a "thing" is fetishism, and he is saying here that if you think the Temple of the Lord is going to be your protection, then you have missed the boat. God is your protection, and you go to worship God. You worship Him in Spirit and in truth, not just materialistically.

If your worship is confined to the Temple of the Lord, then you have adopted a materialistic religion, not a spiritual one. We must worship God in Spirit and in Truth. If you must have the material trappings, then you are twisting that worship around to where your religion has become a materialistic religion,

and you are localizing God. The popular saying today is that to localize God, you put Him in a box. If God is here in this place only or over here in this church only, then that is localizing. Getting your protection from the Ark of the Covenant or the Temple of the Lord is a materialistic fetishism.

4. Do not even pray for this people. Jeremiah 7:16-20

Jeremiah has an aching in his heart, and he wants to help his people. He does not want them to take the hit. And then God says, "Do not pray for these people."

Jeremiah

7:16 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.

God says, "Can you not see what they are doing? Look at these people. The children gather the wood, the fathers kindle the fire, the women knead the dough. They make the cakes to the queen of heaven. They do not even make them to me!" God is angry because these people are doing the same thing that Israel did, and they are trying to disguise it because they keep on worshipping in the Temple and doing all their religious stuff. But it does not count as true worship. God does not like this kind of stuff—a split devotion. Look at this whole family working as a super pious team in their add-on idolatrous worship of the queen of heaven.

Homer: This verse just jumped out to me. It is the idea that when we get on our knees and pray to God, I want God to cleanse my heart and forgive me of all my sins because He does not hear us if we are dirty with sin. Many people get on their knees and pray without ever realizing that you need to have your heart cleansed. Kneeling is a humble posture, but it is not the essential thing. Even if you do kneel and you do not have your heart right . . .

V: Neither kneeling nor sacrifices do any good if your heart is not right as manifested in your behavior. That is a good observation. God is talking about their hearts. The people are doing their religious thing, and they are doing it with gusto, but it does not count because religion alone does not make a person holy.

Mary: What is the religious thing?

V: They are worshipping in the Temple and bringing their sacrifices.

Mary: They are just pretending?

V: No, they are not pretending. I think they are doing the real thing to the best of their ability with the exception of their hearts not being right. The reason I say that is because their behavior and their words do not match. ***They are compartmentalizing.***

Oscar: You said last week that they found much lacking in their religion from the Deuteronomic scroll. So, they got their religion back in conformance with the Scriptures, but their lives stayed the same.

Jack: We are doing the same thing today. We are going to church because of a good praise team or something in church, and we are worshipping that. We are not worshipping God. We are going to church because there is a bunch of other stuff going on that does not have anything to do with worship. It may even be false worship.

V: I think you guys are on the right track. The thing about worship is that it changes your life. True worship is an encounter with God like Isaiah had in Isaiah 6. When he met God, he saw himself and said, "Oh, I am undone." He could see that he was a filthy sinner. After God purged Isaiah's lips, Isaiah could then hear. Prior to the cleansing, he could not hear. However, afterwards he could hear God saying, "Who will go for us?" Then with his heart right, he began to say, "What about me? I will go." And then God says,

"Go." And then Isaiah says, "For how long?" He could hear God, and talk to God because his lips and his heart were clean. Everything was right. That is spiritual and true worship. Now when you have that kind of worship, there will be a change of life. So Isaiah went in obedience, and he took his hits, and they sawed him in half.

If you worship God in truth and in spirit, there will be change. What we have in Judah during Jeremiah's time is not true worship. They come and worship with their lips, but their heart is far from him.³ They walk in a different direction from that of truth. They talk in one direction, but walk in a different direction. That is not true worship. Deuteronomy has a lot of promises and blessings and curses throughout. It is put in a dichotomy. You will get the blessings if you do this, but if you do that other you will get the curses. You can line the blessings up and then pick out your choices. You can work it like a menu: I want this blessing, this blessing, and this blessing, so I do this, this, and this. That is an attempt to manipulate God. It is a materialistic religion because it puts God in a box and attempts to force Him to do your bidding. When you do this, you are attempting to make Him perform for you. That means that you are trying to switch places with God by making Him the servant. That is idolatry.

5. Eat your sacrifices and offerings.

Jeremiah 7:21-28

Jeremiah

7:21 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

7:22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:

7:23 But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your

³ Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8.

God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

God is saying here is that if you are going to have a blessing from Him at all, it must be through obedience. The Mosaic Covenant was: “If you will *obey* my voice, . . .” And you remember what the people said? “All that the Lord has said, we will do.”

Homer: Obedience is how we show our love.

V: Yes, according to John chapters 14 and 15, if there is no obedience, then there is no love. And so God is saying, “Obey my voice.” Yet the people are trying to substitute for obedience their bringing their sacrifices into the Temple, that good, old, normal, ritual kind of worship, so that the people can give God their offerings and keep their lives to themselves. But God says, “No, I want your life.” How does He get your life? by your obeying Him. That is what slavery is, and you are purchased as a bond slave to the Lord. ***Therefore, your total sacrifice is of your life through obedience.***

The people of Judah are bringing their meat offerings to God in order to please Him. However God says, “I tell you what, take all your offerings, pile them up and eat them yourselves. They will be much better for you than what you are doing with them. I do not even want them. Even your best first fruits—I do not even want them either. Eat them yourselves.”

Jeremiah

7:24 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels [and] in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

7:25 Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending [them]:

7:26 Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor

inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.

Here is some more bad news coming to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah

7:27 Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.

Now Jeremiah is being sent out to stand in the gate and preach when the Holy Day comes. All of the people of Judah are going to come in to the temple through the gate. And Jeremiah is going to be preaching to all the people coming through those gates to worship. God is saying, “Go up there and stand in the gate.”

Imagine this little old guy, Jeremiah, who is not even an official prophet on the payroll, and he is going to stand up there and holler out to all the crowds that are in the midst of revival and are gathering to worship. He is going to say, “If you are coming in to worship the Lord, let me tell you what He says: ‘Pile up all your offerings and eat them yourselves.’”

Can you even get a grasp of this, the irony in all of this? God says to Jeremiah, “You know how when I brought the children out of Egypt, how I sent my prophets to them, and they killed them? Prior to you, Isaiah was sawed in half. Guess what? They are not going to listen to you either, but go out there and tell them anyway.” Jeremiah must have thought, “Why should I tell them if they are not going to listen?”

That same question is boiling in my own heart: “Why should I tell them if they are not going to listen?” I think that we have to tell them because of God’s mercy. God is faithful to send the prophet no matter how the prophet is treated. God sends another prophet, and another prophet, and another prophet. God does not give up as long as the people are alive. God is there with His prophet, sending

them out, calling the people to repentance. Even when they kill his prophet, even when they kill His Son, God is still there calling them to repentance, sending His prophets.

You are the prophets. It is not an office that you have been called to. It is the function. If you “must” have an office with a payroll, then you belong to the other group of prophets. But if you can hear the Word of God, and take that Word and run with it, you are God’s prophet. Not official in any human’s eyes, but it is written in heaven. It is a stewardship principle now for you and me to be good stewards over these charges and these understandings that are coming into us right now in this lesson.

6. Start your grief process, destruction is coming. Jeremiah 7:29-34

This is a message for today: Go ahead and start your grieving because destruction is on its way. It is coming.

Jeremiah

7:29 Cut off thine hair, [O Jerusalem], and cast [it] away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

7:30 For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

Child sacrifice is an abomination to God. Think about it. They had child sacrifice at a frequency of about one per month in a village. We abort thousands every day.

The Temple has become an idol. Once you move into idolatry, then all manner of idols will pop up. Once you make the step, then it opens the floodgates. Here come all kinds of idols to the point where you have the example that I gave to you about the child and the father and mother all working as a team to make an offering to another idol. Once you break the barrier, the floodgates are opened.

If you have an idol in your life, then you have a bunch of idols. Once you cross the threshold, then God is dethroned. Once God is dethroned, then you will have yourself on the throne part of the time, and you will have others on the throne some of the time. You may even have religion on the throne some of the time. You will have whatever wave of mania comes by to sweep you into the stream. That would be another idol to just penetrate your subconscious. You are just wide open to have this and that and everything other than God controlling your life.

When God is your true boss, then you are exempt from idolatry. But when He stops being boss, you have crossed the threshold into idolatry.

JEREMIAH 8

As we turn to Jeremiah 8, the next point in the series is:

7. The people choose death over life. Jeremiah 8:1-3

Jeremiah

8:1 At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves:

8:2 And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.

8:3 And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

In verse 3, it says that death shall be chosen over life. That seems like absurdity,

but let me give you four things that I note about this as we look at our society:

- a. Drugs are being chosen.
- b. AIDS is being chosen (a disease of behavior).
- c. Abortion is being chosen.
- d. Euthanasia is being chosen.

Abortion and euthanasia are perfect examples of choosing death over life. When looking at these four items, choosing death is not as absurd as it might appear when reading Jeremiah. Our society has demonstrated this to the fullest. Most people would say that they would not choose death over life, but they protest in the streets and stop traffic and say with their signs, "I am pro-choice--I choose death by abortion."

8. The people cling to apostasy. Jeremiah

8:4-13

Jeremiah

8:4 Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?

8:5 Why [then] is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

8:6 I hearkened and heard, [but] they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

8:7 Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.

8:8 How do ye say, We [are] wise, and the law of the LORD [is] with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he [it]; the pen of the scribes [is] in vain.

8:9 The wise [men] are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom [is] in them?

8:10 Therefore will I give their wives unto others, [and] their fields to them that

shall inherit [them]: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

8:11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when [there is] no peace.

8:12 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

8:13 I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: [there shall be] no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and [the things that] I have given them shall pass away from them.

You need to see here that there is a cause that is brought here in the mix, and this cause is covetousness. In one of the first two sermons that Jeremiah preached, God said, "Do not look on the faces of the people and take bribes, but preach My Word so that they will hear what I said." But now, the false prophets look upon the people, and they think, "Now, if I say that such and such is sin, then he will quit giving to the church. I do not want that, so therefore I cannot preach against that sin. I need to tell them only about God's love for them and how they can have the victorious life." Then when that prophet preaches, he is preaching comfort to the people saying, "Peace" when destruction is coming. And the people will feel so much better. They came to church hurting and in anxiety, and they leave feeling that the Lord is taking care of all of their problems. They will think, "I do not have to worry about anything. I can just go on living and seeking the good life." And they will go about their business of not living their confession.

Thus the false prophet has healed them slightly by making them feel better without a change of life. False prophecy can be judged by this one thing: Is there a call for repen-

tance? True prophecy always calls for repentance because there is error in every one of us. 1 John says, "He that says that he has no sin is a liar!" So we are all guilty before God.

Why do we cling to deceitful prophecy? Why do we hold so fast to it? Then God answers the question by saying that because from the least to the greatest we are all filled with covetousness. Then God says that the prophet and the priest deal falsely. That false dealing means that covetousness is the driving motor here for the false prophet and the priest.

What I drew in my Bible is the *kenosis* upside down (chart 2.1) right there by verse 10 so that I could see what destroys true religion.

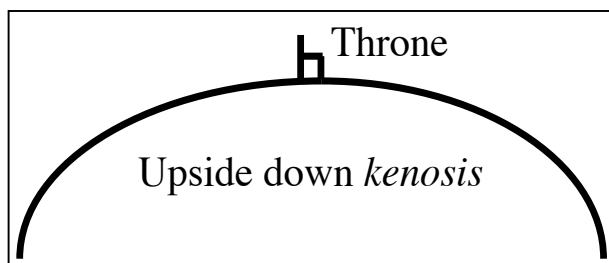


Chart 2.1

The *kenosis* which is in Philippians 2:5-11 looks like chart 2.2. It has the descent from heaven by the Lord, and He comes down, down, down through the humbling of Himself, the emptying of Himself, becoming a servant, becoming obedient, obedient even to death on the cross. And you see, this is the path that our Lord took. He came down from heaven, took on the form of a man, and became an obedient man, a humble man, a man that was going to the cross and He even died on the cross. In His exaltation, which came after His temporal sufferings and sacrifice, He gets the name that is above all names, and

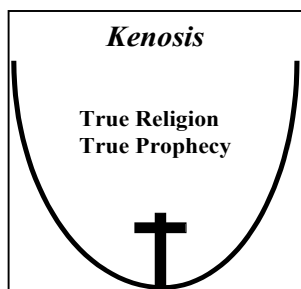


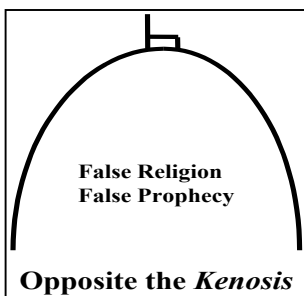
Chart 2.2

to which every knee will bow. Jesus received the exaltation from God because He was an obedient servant. The obedient servant gave his life.

That sacrificial life is what God wants from you. He wants you to give your life in the same way as Jesus. Jesus is our pattern from God, and He says, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ." This is the mind that Christ had, and it is described in chapter 2 of Philippians. That kind of mind means that you are to give your life in sacrificial obedience. If you live this life of sacrifice, then after death you will be exalted. But Satan comes along and says, "No, no, no, you do not need to do that. What you need to do is climb up here (see chart 2.1) and be the greatest Christian that has ever lived, and have the applause of men, and people will just swoon over you." "Man! that guy can perform miracles; he is the greatest Christian that I have ever seen. People get healed by his prayer. He has money. God has blessed him with money and power." However, the problem is that he keeps getting money because he preaches what the people want to hear. Jesus did not get any money! Nobody threw any money at Him! But this guy just keeps on climbing. He gets his throne at the pinnacle, he gets to be the greatest preacher in the whole world, but then there is the fall to come. He comes down after that great ascension. So if you lose your life, you will gain it (*kenosis*), but if you live your life now for yourself, you will lose it (opposite of the *kenosis*).⁴ That is the principle of win-lose versus lose-win. We must lose temporal glory now to win eternal glory for after death.

Now, what is driving the false prophets and false priests (chart 2.3 on the next page)? Is it self-denial? No. It says plainly that it is covetousness. Covetousness is not on the *Kenosis* chart!

⁴ Matthew 16:25

**Chart 2.3**

religion, false prophecy or true prophecy? Scriptural understanding of the Christian life makes sense only under the *kenotic* model of true discipleship.

Jeremiah has come into the temple gate, and he is laying it out to these people in this great procession that is coming through the gates. He is hammering away at these high-rent and official priests and prophets, too.

The priests and prophets come strutting through at the head of the great procession, and their robes are flowing. They are important people, and they have their big scrolls so that everybody will see them. Phylacteries are on their heads, and on their arms so that they can carry their scriptures between their eyes and on their arms in order to symbolize that their thoughts and their actions are according to Scripture. Everybody is bowing and scraping and exclaiming: "Oh, look at these great men of God."

Jeremiah contradicts the popular evaluations, "You are false prophets and false priests, and it is covetousness that is driving you." Jeremiah is strong! He says, "You are healing the daughter of God slightly. You are saying, 'Peace, peace when there is no peace.' Destruction is coming; cut your hair and cast it away. Start your grieving process."

9. Get ready because here it comes.

Jeremiah 8:14-21

Jeremiah

8:14 Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced

If we climb, we get a pay raise; we get a promotion. There is that principle of climbing right there on the Opposite of the *Kenosis*. The question is, what do you want: false religion or true

cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

8:16 The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.

8:17 For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which [will] not [be] charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.

It looks to me like the situation is one in which God knows that His people are not going to repent. He is calling for repentance, but at the same time He is sending His wonderful prophet to alert the people to the coming destruction. They are not going to repent, and God knows that because He is saying, "Go ahead and get ready for destruction now because here it comes. These are the terrible things that are going to happen to you."

10. Is there no balm in Gilead? Jeremiah

8:22

Jeremiah

8:22 [Is there] no balm in Gilead; [is there] no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

He is speaking irony like we might say today, "Does a fish swim? Does a bird fly?" The obvious answer of yes is to be applied to the issue being discussed. What God says is that His people should naturally be healed. Because Gilead was the exporter of the balm and their commerce was in balm, then why are the people with the balm not healed by the balm? In other words, why are the people who have a healing God not healed?

11. Jeremiah is the weeping prophet.

Jeremiah 9:1-2

Jeremiah is anguished over his own people's apostasy. They have every benefit, but

yet they are not repenting, not turning in the right direction. He is hurting deeply because of the destruction that is going to come on them, and he has to announce it.

Jeremiah is, on the one hand, an anguished prophet who identifies with God in his righteous indignation and anger that wells up in him. On the other hand, he is a weeping prophet who is identifying with the people with his hurt and broken heartedness. He is not enjoying one bit having to announce this coming destruction. He is also not enjoying one bit having to stand in the gate of the Temple and take the abuse from the people who are rejecting him and his message.

JEREMIAH 9

We will look more and more at the man as we go along. We will see more about his personality. That personality is going to begin to shine through in this Temple sermon which is one of the most renowned sermons of the Old Testament. It is coming from a weeping prophet. The following verse describes the kind of person that he is:

Jeremiah

9:1 Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

The description of Jeremiah's grief is as if the destruction is already a completed thing. He feels that the destruction is certain because God announced it. It is almost like it has already happened.

Jeremiah

9:2 Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they [be] all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

This is the dichotomy that is in Jeremiah. In verse 1 he is weeping for his people; in verse 2, he is angry with his people: "I need to get out of here, away from this treacherous people." You have to admire him for staying

when he wants to flee. When he wants to run from them, he stays. That doing what you do **not** want to do is the test of our obedience. Will we do what God told us to do?

12. God's people are filled with deceit.

Jeremiah 9:3-8

Jeremiah

9:3 And they bend their tongues [like] their bow [for] lies:

9:4 Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.

9:5 And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, [and] weary themselves to commit iniquity.

Verse 6 has deceit. Verse 8 has deceit. This is the nature of apostasy. Once you move away from God as your Lord, then you move into covetousness and the climb is enabled through deceit and lies, laying in wait in treacherousness. That is what apostasy does.

13. God will feed his people wormwood.

Jeremiah 9:9-26

The words wormwood and deceit connect with the Book of Revelation. They are coming to Christians now just as they did in Jeremiah's time.

Jill: I hear that the word, Chernobyl, translates to wormwood.

V: I have heard that, too. But there is a wormwood far worse than that. It is already here. When we study the book of Revelation, it will shock you. Jeremiah's book is pointing to what God thinks about His people, the church in our time. There is this promise here in verse 15.

Jeremiah

9:15 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, [even] this people, with

wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

Listen, this verse is talking about God's people! He says, "I am going to do this. Me! The God of Israel is going to do this." Class, God is not a respecter of persons. If you are called by His name and you behave unseemly, you are going to get your spanking. There is no exemption just because you are a saved child of God.

JEREMIAH 10

14. Look where you are obtaining your customs. Jeremiah 10:1-21

Jeremiah

10:2 Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

- a. Do not get your customs from outsiders.

You get your customs from God, not from outsiders. Getting our customs from society leads to political correctness and will mess us up. These sub points are parenthetical to number 14.

- b. Also do not get your customs from God's family or yourself. Jeremiah 10:23.
- c. Get your customs from God. Jeremiah 10:24-25.

15. We are brutes. Jeremiah 10: 22.

God is inserting an irony here. We are backing up to point number 14. In verses 1-21 he is talking about brutes. The people of Judah have become brutes; even the wise men have become brutes (verses 7, 8, 14, 21).

Jeremiah

10:7 Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise [men] of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, [there is] none like unto thee.

10:8 But they are altogether brutish and

foolish: the stock [is] a doctrine of vanities.

These are brutes being described in verses 7-8. He is talking about people who consume and waste. That waste can be of your time, your talents, your calling, your opportunities, anything that you do that wastes or indulges yourself through consumption. That wastefulness is brutish. Waste is what brutes do. A brute will eat another brute. A brute will jump in a fight and consume all the food, and the other brute will perish. To be brutish is to have no regard for your fellow. Brutishness has no regard for eternal destiny. Brutishness is temporally oriented. Get all you can get right now at the other's expense. Here in this verse, is the statement that even the wise men are brutish and foolish.

In verses 14 and 21, the pastors are described as brutish.

Jeremiah

10:14 Every man is brutish in [his] knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image [is] falsehood, and [there is] no breath in them.

10:21 For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

When a pastor becomes brutish he scatters his sheep (verse 21). The sheep are depending upon the pastor to feed them. What does he do? He eats their opportunities to follow the Lord; he fleeces them and eats them just like a wolf would. A wolf comes in and scatters the flock and grabs the defenseless and eats the defenseless sheep. What kind of pastor would come up and say, "I am your pastor; I will protect you from the wolves" and then devours his own sheep? That is the brutish pastor. That is what we have here. A pastor, then, who is preaching in order to receive is eating his sheep. That is what is occurring here in Judah. Man, what a disaster!

Wanda: So, because the people are accepting what is being preached is why they are going to get punished!

V: Exactly! And so when the Babylonians come in to lay siege on Jerusalem, cannibalism is going to break out in the city because they are going to run out of things to eat. In the midst of the siege, God's people are actually going to act out of the lowest levels of brutishness.

This is hard stuff here in this Temple Sermon. It is a sermon that is hard to preach, it is hard to teach, it is hard to hear.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RELEVANCE OF JEREMIAH

Following are some questions asked of the class concerning the relevance of Jeremiah. These are questions that God asked His people, and the class was asked to answer them as typical members of the present-day church.

1. Jeremiah 7:9-10. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Paraphrase: Will you still do these abominations even if you are saved?

The following answers do not reflect the true beliefs of the answering student. However they do reflect the "attitudes" being regularly displayed by members in their churches:

- a. What are the abominations? What am I doing wrong?
- b. I do not steal. What have I stolen?
- c. I am saved.
- d. Everything I do is under the blood.
- e. I am forgiven for past sin, present sin, and future sin.
- f. What are the other gods (Baal) that we

burn incense to?

- g. Devotion to sports teams is not idolatry.

2. Jeremiah 8:5. Why [then] is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? Paraphrase: Why are God's people continuing their backsliding?

- a. Well, it was the way I was raised. Life's experiences have caused this.
- b. It is just that the world got a hold of me.
- c. All of us, including you, sin and fall short of the glory of God.
- d. In order to keep up with our society today, we must go out and maintain two jobs.

V: Once I was teaching a Sunday school class in which there were a bunch of engineers. I was planning and putting together a missionary journey. For this mission, I was trying to get the people to go, and to fill out the number needed for the team. Many wives were planning to go, but the men were not ready and did not want to go. Their one common excuse was this thing about work: I have to do this at work, and I have to do that for work, and I just had a job change, and I have a new boss, and I have to get my assistant lined out and all. It was all about work, all about money, all about climbing. I said, why don't you all work less, and do more in your Christianity? You would have thought that I had turned into a skunk right there in the midst of them. That was the strangest thing they had ever heard. Work less? That makes no sense to a climber.

- e. My kids are so involved in soccer and football and little league. I have to take them to all their activities.
- f. I give my money so that others can go.
3. Jeremiah 8:6. I hearkened and heard, [but] they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Paraphrase: Why is there no confession of sin?

- a. What sin?
 - b. I do what everybody else does. It cannot be sin!
4. Jeremiah 8:12. Were they not ashamed when they had committed abominations? Paraphrase: Is there no shame in sin today?⁵
- a. I can remember when a young lady became pregnant outside of marriage. The family hid her away. Now she is totally acceptable in society. Both those attitudes are wrong.
 - b. What about homosexuality? Now they are treated almost like heroes. Hate-crime legislation will stop anybody from fighting against this abomination. There is no shame there for the homosexuals; they are the heroes. The shame will be on us. We will be like Jeremiah. We are hateful for calling homosexuality an abomination and will eventually be put in prison for a hate crime for saying it. That makes us, then, the ones to be ashamed.
- V: Class, it is strange that you took God's side on this issue of shame for sin. The destruction is coming, and we are getting there fast.
5. Jeremiah 8:14. Why do we sit still?
- a. Who wants to obey God? His commands are difficult.
 - b. We might be blamed for actions that we have not done because it is anticipated that we might offend someone.
 - c. I am too small and without sufficient skills or power to make a difference.
 - d. Just one person alone will not make a difference.
 - e. I do not want to be crucified for no positive gain.
 - f. Christians will not stand in support of me.

- g. There are no absolutes. Therefore, what I believe is just my opinion.
- h. God has already done it all.
- i. I already go to church every time the doors open. I go to Sunday School, Training Union, Prayer Meeting, and Wednesday night suppers.

6. Jeremiah 8:22. [Is there] no balm in Gilead; [is there] no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? Paraphrase: If healing is available from God, why are we sick?

Jack: That would be a good title for a sermon. One answer is that the cure is worse than the illness.

V: That statement Jack is the way it is perceived by the Christian people. If they are going on their path and God is saying, "Go this way," but they go another way, the sickness comes upon them. When destruction is coming to them, and the consequences of sin is falling on them because of the law of the harvest, then the way to get out from under all that destruction is to repent, and go God's way.

They are still sick because they will not change from their chosen ways. They are insisting on going their own way. They want to go a particular way, and they go that way, and they are accepting of the consequences. They actually choose death over life.

7. Jeremiah 9:7. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? Paraphrase: What is God going to do to His people?
- a. He is going to bless us.
 - b. We are going to pray in agreement, and get all the things that we ever wanted.
 - c. He is going to pour out a blessing on us that is so large that we cannot even

⁵ The class suddenly took the pastors' side instead of the congregation's side in their answers.

hold it.

- d. Since we are the perfect bride of Christ, He must bless us.

V: God says, "I am going to melt this people down in great trials. What else can I do for My people?"

8. Jeremiah 9:9 Shall I not visit them for these [things]? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Paraphrase: Shall I not visit them and take vengeance for these things?

What has happened here is that there is an erroneous concept that the Christian people have picked up on. It violates a very strong principle that God has. That erroneous concept is that once you have been forgiven, God is never going to discipline you. God is just going to bless you because you are His precious child, and He has already paid for all your sins including those after salvation.

We must understand that to whom much is given, much is required.⁶ What is actually going to happen here is that He is going to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt, that He is not a respecter of persons. God says plainly, "I am not a respecter of persons."⁷ That statement means that God respects behavior, not personhood. If a saint of His behaves wrongly, He is going to spank that saint. He will not spank that saint any worse than He would a lost person unless the saint knows more than the lost person. To whom much is given, much is required. To that saint who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin,⁸ and he will be beaten with many stripes.⁹

So discipline is proportional to how much maturity that you have, but if a lost person sins and a saint sins, we think that the saint

gets set over here for blessing and swooning over by God, marveling at how wonderful that saint is, and that the lost person will get a spanking.

Sybil: So if you are praying for knowledge and understanding and wisdom, you had better be willing to pay the price.

V: Yes, because they always come with responsibilities.

Sybil: What this is saying is that sin has consequences.

V: Yes, it does, and it does not matter whether you are saved or unsaved.

Mary: John 15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" has application here.

Oscar: David sinned with Bathsheba. That evil brought terrible consequences.

V: Yes, the consequences for sin came upon David without respect of David's being God's child.

Oscar: God forgave him, but He still suffered the consequences. Hebrews says that God's discipline proves that He loves you.

V: God loves the sinner, but there is still going to be a spanking.

Oscar: And David was a man after God's own heart.

9. Jeremiah 9:12. Who [is] the wise man, that may understand this?

Ted: Whoever has ears.

V: That is a good way to state it.

These are a series of questions that God asks in the Temple sermon, and they are worthy of knowing. When you preach this sermon, these questions are relevant.

10. Jeremiah 10:7. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? Paraphrase: Who would not fear the Lord?

Wanda: My God loves me, why should I

⁶ Luke 12:48.

⁷ Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11 plus others.

⁸ James 4:17.

⁹ Luke 12:47.

fear Him?

Bob: I have heard people say you should not fear the Lord.

V: Fear of God is primary for me.

Tim: I think it is a different fear from being afraid that a dog will bite you.

Henry: It is more of a respect, or a reverence.

V: If you are walking the right path, there is a reverential fear. If you are walking a wrong path, there is fear of the spanking.

Tim: That second walk is about the same as when you are afraid that the dog will bite you.

V: Following the spanking are the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Now we will answer the question about wisdom that is discussed in chapters 8 and 9 of Jeremiah: **What is the difference between true wisdom and false wisdom?**

We read this scripture last week, but we will read it again.

- The wise man will receive, not reject, the Word of the Lord.

Jeremiah

8:8 How do ye say, We [are] wise, and the law of the LORD [is] with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he [it]; the pen of the scribes [is] in vain.

8:9 The wise [men] are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom [is] in them?

- Glory in what God does.

Jeremiah

9:23 Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise [man] glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty [man] glory in his might, let not the rich [man] glory in his riches:

9:24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I [am] the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteous-

ness, in the earth: for in these [things] I delight, saith the LORD.

- Be circumcised in heart.

Jeremiah

9:25 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all [them which are] circumcised with the uncircumcised;

9:26 Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Amon, and Moab, and all [that are] in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all [these] nations [are] uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel [are] uncircumcised in the heart.

Circumcision is merely an outward thing, you see. But the inner thing, circumcision of the heart, describes a wise man.

- When the Truth is learned, declare it.

Jeremiah

9:12 Who [is] the wise man, that may understand this? and [who is he] to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth [and] is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?

You see, if you understand something from God, the wise man has a corresponding responsibility to declare it. You cannot just understand it and hold it in your heart as a big secret. You must declare the truths that you know.

God's people have been unwise in their behavior.

Jeremiah

9:13 And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;

9:14 But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

So here are a people who are hearing the word of the Lord, but they are glorying in something completely different. They are uncircumcised in the heart, and what are they doing? Walking after their own imaginations.

Now take this principle to today. The circumcised versus uncircumcised in heart, the rejecting versus the accepting of the Word of God, the hearing the Word of God with understanding to declare it versus the walking after one's own imaginations. It gets close to home! And so this distinction between true

wisdom and false wisdom that is declared here by Jeremiah is right here with us today, and we need to examine our own selves, you see. This false wisdom gets so close to us now that I see it everywhere.

TRUE WISDOM	FALSE WISDOM
1. Accepts the Word of God. Jeremiah 8:8-9	1. Rejects the Word of God. Jeremiah 8:8-9
2. Glories in God. Jeremiah 9:23-24	2. Glories in wisdom, might, and riches. Jeremiah 9:23-24
3. Circumcised in heart. Jeremiah 9:25-26	3. Uncircumcised in the heart. Jeremiah 9:25-26
4. Understands what is spoken by the Lord so that we can declare it. Jeremiah 9:12	4. Forsakes the law and walks after one's own imagination. Jeremiah 9:13-14.

Chapter Questions

1. List the points of the Temple Sermon (Sermon #3) and the appropriate Scripture for each point. Jeremiah 7:1–10:22
2. What is the main teaching of the Temple Sermon?
3. What can false prophecy always be judged by? What does true prophecy always call for and why?
4. Draw the chart showing true religion/true prophecy and label it with its name.
5. Draw the chart showing false religion/false prophecy and label it with its name.

Chapter 3

CONFESSIONS

Jeremiah 11:18–12:17; 15:10–16:9; 17:12–18; 18:18–23; 20:7–18;
11:1–17; 13:1–27; 14:1–15:9; 16:10–17:11; 17:19–18: 19:1–20:6

Now, we will look at some information about the prophet himself. Then we will review the sermons that God required of him.

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

Jeremiah 11:18–12:17

I identify with Jeremiah: the pain, the suffering, the tears, and his questioning of God. With all of these things that Jeremiah goes through, I can identify, and I think that you can, too.

Plot on Jeremiah's Life

The irritations by Jeremiah increased to the point in which Jeremiah's kinsmen began plotting against him. He had gone to the Temple to preach that the prophets and priests were lying. He told the people not to believe their prophets and priests. He said that the prophets are proclaiming a message that is only slightly healing Judah.

Because of Jeremiah's preaching, the prophets and the priests are feeling threatened by the likelihood of losing their livelihoods. This loss is certain to occur if the people quit listening to them. If the people quit listening to the king's ministers, then why should the king continue to pay them? Because of Jeremiah's exposing some things that have become a threat to their livelihood, the official prophets and priests start plotting against Jeremiah to get rid of him. This could happen today if you go beyond preaching the Bible to exposing sin too like a true prophet.

Jeremiah

11:18 And the LORD hath given me knowledge [of it], and I know [it]: then thou shewedst me their doings.

11:19 But I [was] like a lamb [or] an ox [that] is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, [saying], Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.

In this passage is a description of the plot, and Jeremiah says that the Lord had given him some insight to this plot. However, he had come to the point of meeting this plot resignedly like an ignorant ox being led to the slaughter. An ox being led to the slaughter does not know that he is going to be slaughtered. He has been led by his owner all his life, and now the owner is leading him again. The owner just leads him up there, and bang, he is dead.

So likewise, here comes Jeremiah; his owner is God. God is just leading him right along, and he has been following the Lord, following the Lord, and now, "Oh, my soul, look here, God is leading me to the slaughter." Jeremiah has become enlightened to the planned assassination of him by the prophets and priests.

Jill: Do you think that the prophets and priests thought that what they were doing was right? Or do you think that they were just doing it to save their jobs?

V: Oh, no. They think that they are right. Jeremiah knows that he is right, but the other prophets and priests think they are right too. Additionally, they have the righteous high ground. They have the affirmation, after all, of being the ones who are on the king's official staff and payroll. They have the entire nation and religious institution for

support of their positions. The people also think that the prophets and priests are right for the same reason.

Jill: They think that what they are doing is what God wants them to do?

V: Yes, God says that you, we, our generation of real disciples, will be hunted by those who seek to kill you in order to serve God. This persecution is happening in this Old Testament time. They are seeking to get rid of Jeremiah because they believe in their hearts that they are doing the right thing.

Joe: It is spelled out in Revelation. They are going to be killing the Christians thinking that that they are serving God.

Betty: What have I gotten myself into? Christianity is dangerous!

V: Yes, *real* Christianity is dangerous. That question is what Jeremiah is going to ask also. So Betty, you already identify with him.

Why Do the Wicked Prosper?

Now look at what happens here in the next passage. Jeremiah begins to ask that famous question, and every one of you is going to ask this question also:

Jeremiah

12:1 . . . Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? [wherefore] are all they happy that deal very treacherously?

Now please note that Habakkuk, another true prophet of God, asked this same question: “Why do the wicked prosper? Why do the saints suffer? Why do the wicked persecute the saints?” The wicked prosper, persecute the saints, and take the possessions of the saints. Why does God allow it?

Jeremiah is asking that question just like Habakkuk did. But unlike Habakkuk who is asking it of wicked nations which were persecuting Israel, Jeremiah is asking it about God’s people (though wicked, they bear the

name of God) who are persecuting God’s real prophet. Then he goes on and begins to evaluate these wicked people.

Jeremiah

12:2 Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou [art] near in their mouth, and far from their reins.

He is saying that these people who are plotting against him are wicked. They think that they are right. They think that they are righteous, and he says, “They prosper, and You, God, are growing them and bringing forth their fruit. Yet in their mouths, they are close to you, but their hearts are far from you. They are pious frauds. Why do they prosper?” Pious frauds are prospering, and Jeremiah is asking why God is allowing it.

That is a question that will hound you all the way to the grave. You are going to ask that question over and over again.

Jeremiah is complaining to God. He is straightforward with the Lord. He talks to the Lord here straight out of his heart. He is honest. His integrity is pure before God, and he brings his question out on the table before God.

Look at verse 5. This answer I have heard over and over again. When God hears you whining and carrying on, He says:

Jeremiah

12:5 If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?

Jeremiah is standing there wondering, “What kind of deal is this? This is not the answer I want. Certainly, I want to be able to outrun the footmen, but now you want me to outrun the horses?!!!” So God is saying to Jeremiah, “You are complaining at the human level. All I am asking you to do is deal with a bunch of humans here, and they are going to contend against you. Now if you are going to

get all wearied doing that level of battle, how in the world are you going to do the giant job that I have for you?" My dear friend, God is asking you and me that same question.

Okay, we are getting a good picture of Jeremiah. One thing about him is that he is honest in his prayer. He does not dance around or mince his words; he goes straight to God and brings out what is truly on his heart. Jeremiah probably hung his head after God's rebuke. I can imagine that he probably said, "I will not ask Him anything again!"

THE SPECKLED BIRD

What is the significance of the speckled bird analogy in Jeremiah 12:9? Judah opposes God but is still different enough from the other nations to be persecuted by them.

Jeremiah

12:9 Mine heritage [is] unto me [as] a speckled bird, the birds round about [are] against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour.

Here is the situation. It is going to pop back up in the Book of Revelation, and the Antichrist, the Beast, is going to favor the harlot for a period, and then he is going to turn on the harlot, even though the harlot is a harlot, not the faithful bride of Christ, but a harlot. The harlot still bears the name of the church, and Antichrist is going to devour it. Even though it is a harlot in love with the Antichrist and all he represents, it is still a speckled bird, and it is going to be devoured by Antichrist and his nations.

So the speckled bird is not only an indictment here, but also it is a warning for the harlot in the book of Revelation. Some of this stuff from Jeremiah will apply in the book of Revelation. This analogy of the speckled bird is one of them.

PASTORS IN GOD'S VINEYARD

The pastors who should have cared for the vineyard have destroyed the vineyard.

Jeremiah

12:10 Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

How would you like to be that kind of pastor? You think that you are doing it right, but you are actually destroying God's vineyard, trodding it down, making it a wilderness.

Joe: So that is who he is referring to when I asked if they thought they were doing right?

V: Yes, but not only the pastors, the prophets and priests think they are right too. The pastors in a theocracy are the government leaders, i.e. the king and princes. Judah's king and princes think they are cultivating God's vineyard, but they are not. They are destroying His vineyard.

Jeremiah is preaching one thing, and the false prophets are preaching something else. Now the false prophets are the official prophets of God, but they are false because of what comes out of their mouths.

You have two different messages, then, coming to the people of Judah. Please remember the words, "Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord." The false prophet prophesied of peace, prosperity, and the blessings of God because they worshiped in the Temple of the Lord. They omitted a call for repentance. Those false prophets engendered compartmentalization—pious in their worship but sinful in life's conduct.

The true prophet does not heal the daughter of God slightly by just making them feel good so that they can just leave to continue their behavior and say, "Boy, wasn't that a

good sermon?” “Yeah, that was a good sermon. I have goose bumps all over me.” But the true prophet heals the people not with words alone but with a call to action to go with the words.

There is nobody on this earth who does not need to repent because we are all failures when it comes to measuring up to God’s Word. We should see ourselves in the mirror of God’s Word, and that reflection is going to come back and force us to say, “Oh, my soul, what a mess!” We need, then, to start cleaning our lives up based on what the Word of God reflects to us in that mirror. Then as we clean up, we think, “Man, I am finally clean.” Then we go back and look in the Word of God, and we see, “Oh, another mess! It is yet another part of me that is all messed up.” We not only have to clean up from our sins of commission, but we also have to clean up from the countless sins of omission. This process is an endless cycle. Each cycle enables you to see more clearly than you could the prior time around. You go through those cycles, and it never ends. You never get there. You are all the time trying and striving to meet the upward call of Jesus Christ.

CRISIS FOR JEREMIAH

During this crisis for Jeremiah, we are going to look at him through his eyes and then through God’s eyes.

Jeremiah

15:15 O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.

15:16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

15:17 I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because

of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation.

15:18 Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, [which] refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, [and as] waters [that] fail?

I want you to see here the progression in this prayer. He starts off kind of easy, and he is moving along, saying look at what I have been doing, and look at what they have been doing to me. Then he says further, “God, are you going to be a liar and a failing waters?” This prayer is getting into some hard questioning of God. You certainly cannot accuse Jeremiah of being timid. He is a weeping prophet and all of that, but this prayer is hard hitting. He is doing battle here in this prayer with God.

We saw before how he was complaining about running with the footmen, and how he is now going to run with the horses. But now here he is running with God? No, he is not going to run with God because God is going to work him over.

He brings out here in this prayer that God has called him, but it is not working out right. His own countrymen, his own kinsmen, are lining up to kill him. They are plotting against him. Everything is going wrong. He is preaching like God instructed him. He preached in the Temple; nobody obeyed. God said, “Go preach in the court.” He preached in the court; nobody obeyed. God said, “Go preach in the streets.” He preached in the streets, and nobody obeyed. “God, You must be a liar to me!” And God says . . .

Jeremiah

15:19 Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, [and] thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.

15:20 And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they

shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I [am] with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

15:21 And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

How did Jeremiah handle his persecution and what was God's response in Jeremiah 15?

1. Jeremiah presents his righteousness and asks why he is suffering and accuses God of lying and of being failing waters.

It is very comforting to know that you can get this far and still live. You know there is a boundary out here somewhere, and Jeremiah went all the way to the edge, and he is still alive. There is hope for me, too.

2. God said repent or give up your office: "If you repent, I will deliver you."

Before we leave this passage, we need to understand how this applies to us as well. Because everyone of us will have bad periods in our lives—if you do not have it now while you are running with the footmen, you will eventually have it when you are running with the horses—it is a given. The Christian life is not one in which you get over a hurdle and then it gets cushy. There is not any apex to this deal. It is always an upward challenge. Always! There is no getting over all the struggles and getting cushy. Do not expect cushy. So you are going to run with the footmen, you are going to run with the runners, and then you are going to run with the horses. Just brace up for it because that is where you are going. If it starts getting cushy, it is because you have dropped out of the race.

Okay, now let us go back. I want you to see something about this crisis here. When Jeremiah starts this prayer in verse 1, he puts himself forward and says, "Now, Lord, you know me, and I want you to remember and

come visit me. Let us come together and talk about this. I want you to take revenge on my persecutors. Don't you remember how long I have suffered in all this persecution?" You see, he is presenting a case before God, and he is going to put all his evidence out before God and then stand on that evidence and ask for some things.

So here we have this case that Jeremiah is building before God, and he is trying to build up enough evidence to sway God into his mindset. And really what Jeremiah is doing is that he is planning to give an invitation to God for God to repent and get on board with him as someone who knows what this stuff is all about.

We do not ever do this, do we? We never ask God to change our situation on the basis of our meritorious works or because we are, in some way, special (sarcasm)!

So here is Jeremiah: "This is what I have been doing, and you know me, you know that I have not sat with the mockers, and I am filled with indignation against all this mess that is going on. You know that I can see the error of their ways and all of that. Now my question to you, God, is why is there such pain in my life? I cannot get loose of it. It is getting worse; it is an incurable pain. Now they are plotting against me, and there is even more pain. You said I was going to be a brasen wall, and a fenced in city, and nobody would prevail against me. Here I am dying in all this pain and all this massing of an attack. They are going to kill me any minute now. You must be a liar!"

I want you to see here that Jeremiah is interpreting his call based on the comfort level of his call. You need to have this drilled into you because I see too many people start out on the path, and when it gets tough, they say, "This cannot be God's will for me; this is painful." They veer off. They seek an easy

way, and think that it is God's path because it feels good. That is not what you are supposed to do. You are supposed to get your marching orders from God, and when (not if) it gets painful out there, you still mush on.

Beth: Maybe you can almost know it is the right path because it is uncomfortable.

V: Right you are Beth. And it is going to get more so as you go down God's path. It is going to get worse and worse and worse, but you are growing. As you grow and grow and grow you can meet those growing difficulties head on. But if you go over here to the easy path, you just shrink into a little, tiny, bottle-sucking Christian.

Beth: God does not take the struggles away. He just gets you through them.

V: Yes, instead of getting you out of the struggles, He gets you through them!

Now if Jeremiah were to go out there and preach and everybody should fall on their faces in repentance and all like that, Jeremiah would probably puff up. I could imagine his praying proudly: "Where else do you want me to go, God?"

Oscar: But the encouraging thing is that God answered. He did not leave Jeremiah hanging.

V: Yes. Now if Jeremiah had been less than honest, there may have been a significant change in what happened. But Jeremiah did not dance with God. He went straight to him—pow! He went right to Him. And God came right back very calmly and said, "Repent or lose your office."

JEREMIAH 16

God is still dealing with Jeremiah here.

3. You are not going to have a family.

Jeremiah

16:2 Thou shalt not take thee a wife,

neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place.

Jeremiah thought he had God on the ropes. Instead, God says, "Repent or lose your office. You are not going to have any family life, no wife or children. You are going to be all alone."

4. You will have no friends or social life.

Jeremiah

16:8 Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink.

"Not only are you not going to have any family, but you are not going to have any friends or social life. Jeremiah, you are going to be all alone, pal."

Joe: That is kind of like me since I have started coming to school here.

V: Brace up Joe because more is coming.

5. You will be a true minister. (True ministers do not run from the call.)

Jeremiah

17:16 As for me, I have not hastened from [being] a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was [right] before thee.

17:17 Be not a terror unto me: thou [art] my hope in the day of evil.

Jeremiah is confessing that he is performing the duty of a pastor in trying to lead the people of God. Jeremiah preaches not because he wants the woes to come upon the people. He is preaching the words that God put in his mouth. Therefore, Jeremiah pleads with God not to be a terror to him. At this point Jeremiah was feeling terrified when God very calmly had said, "Repent or lose your office." I think that statement scared him terribly.

6. There is plotting against Jeremiah by the religious leaders. Jeremiah 18:18-20

Mary: How is this God's response?

V: It is not His response; it is a part of the destiny for Jeremiah that God is rehearsing.

Mary: But the question for all of this is: "How did Jeremiah handle his persecution?" What was God's response?

V: No, Jeremiah had already acknowledged the persecution by accusing God of being a liar. Now, God is responding to Jeremiah in two ways. First, God tells him to repent or else. Secondly, God tells him that He going to take him through the persecution with the additional pressures of having no social life and no family life. God is going to make a kenotic minister out of him who is going to be plotted against by the religious leaders. Basically, deprivation in the midst of persecution are the things that God is going to take Jeremiah through.

Mary: There is plotting against Jeremiah by . . .

V: . . . the religious leaders.
Jeremiah

18:18 Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

I want you to see something here. The wrongful presupposition of the priests and prophets, the religious leaders, is that the Law is not going to leave the priest, and the Word of God is not going to leave the prophet, and Wisdom is not going to leave the wise man. So we priests and we prophets and we wise men conclude that we can do the thing that seems right to us, and we are still within the Law, we are still wise, and the Word of God is being expressed out of our mouths. So you see it is a presupposition that they are still close to the Lord. In their eyes they are right.

Beth: Because I am God's spokesman, I have to be right.

V: Yes! That is the presupposition. Because I have the title of prophet, it is the Word of God that comes out of my mouth. Because I have the title of priest, the Law of God is exercised by me. Because I am a wise man, then I express the Wisdom of God in all situations. They presume that they are right, and that Jeremiah is the problem. You are going to face those same issues. Some of you have already faced those things: in the minds of your opponents and even in your own minds.

Beth: The difference there is that Jeremiah has a God-given right, and the others do not have that. Is that right?

V: Yes. But it is an area of current debate. An office carries responsibility because there is something substantial in the office. So when you have the office of pastor, you can be a false pastor in a true office. There is something substantially given by God in the office of pastor, but the guarantee of rightness is not it.

Coming with the office is the corresponding ministry. The ministry is substantial to the office. You will be judged on your ministry in a higher way if it is accompanied by the office.

All are called to ministry. You are going to be judged on what you do with the gifts that you have been given. The statement "to whom much is given, much will be required" (Luke 12:48) is the standard of God's judgment. An office is a gift from God, and there will be an accounting for its use. It is, however, not the office that makes you right. What makes you right is whether you speak and do the Word of God in your ministry.

Henry: Why is it when people get paid for something, they think it makes them an

expert.

V: It is our presumption that an official titled office makes us right. The secular parallel is that might makes right, e.g. the government is always right.

JEREMIAH 20

We are going to jump over to Chapter 20 and look at this last part of the grief process. This description in Jeremiah 20:7-18 is of the grief process in suffering. Jeremiah is strong in his approach.

Steve: He puts a whole new slant on "come boldly to the throne."¹

V: He surely does! He went up to the throne and called God a liar, and God very calmly did not kill him. He just said, "Repent or lose your office. If you will repent, this is what I am going to do with you." So then God delineates all that He is going to take him through.

Jeremiah is probably sputtering around, but after God told him all that He was going to take him through, he is probably thinking, "Dadgum!? It is going to get worse?" So here he says, "Oh, Lord, thou hast deceived me!" But I want you to see here that what he is doing is trying to get straight in his mind his call, because when God called him, He did not tell him all about the suffering part. He told him he was going to be a brasen wall and a strong pillar, and that nobody would prevail against him. Jeremiah says, "Yeah, I think that I would like to be a brasen wall and a strong pillar so that nobody will prevail against me!"

When He calls us, we have an understanding of that call, and most of the times we do not know what that call really means. So Jeremiah is trying to understand his call in the

context of an incurable pain that will not get well. Therefore, he determines that God is a liar. That is when God straps it on him.

Jeremiah is trying to figure this thing out. If Jeremiah has this continuous pain, but yet God said that he was going to be a brasen wall, then deception is the only way to explain the contradiction.

Steve: That is why God feeds us small bits. If He let us see the whole picture, we are not going to want to walk the road.

V: You are right. We very likely would not. If He called you, like He did Michael Sattler, one of our forefathers who was tortured and then burned at the stake, and if in the call He said, "You are going to die by being burned alive if you accept my gift of eternal life," then . . . Man! That is just too awesome to even think about.

Jack: We have the infallible Word here. We cannot call Him a liar. I cannot do it.

V: Well, there are many calling Him a liar. Any time you do not believe the real message in that Bible, you are calling God a liar because you have accepted another statement as the truth to be believed.

Homer: Yes, the false prophets of today.

Jack: Yes, that is what I am saying, but a true child, who wants to be just like Jeremiah, will not call Him a liar.

V: Well, Jack, Jeremiah is a true child, and he called God a liar. Also not all false prophets are unsaved people. A true child of God can be a false prophet. All you have to do is preach and warn out of your own carnal spirit.

You seem to be putting a lot of faith in the guarantee of correctness and right actions by one's ontology and/or office. This assumption is wrong. Even Peter, a Christian and an apostle, was wrong on several occasions.

¹ Hebrews 4:16.

Now back to Jeremiah; he is in that discovery process. When Jeremiah first heard God's call, he jumped to a conclusion that his call was to the upside down *kenosis*. He was going to climb up on his throne of power, and his enemies were going to come at him. However he was going to be victorious, and the whole world was going to bow at his feet. That, of course, is not what is coming at all.

He had a misunderstanding, and he is coming to grips with the new understanding of his call.

Pete: That is almost a foreshadowing of the disciples who thought that Jesus was going to be an earthly king. . . .

V: Good point, Pete, it was a misinterpretation of the Messiahship that got them in trouble, and they began to scatter when He was crucified. If they had just listened to their Messiah when He declared the *kenosis* over and over again, "I must go and be killed." And there is Peter declaring the upside down *kenosis*, "Oh, be it far from you, Lord." And Jesus told Peter, "Get behind me, Satan. You do not even know the things of God (*kenosis*). You love the things that are of man (upside down *kenosis*)." The things that are of man are what Jeremiah was thinking when he heard brasen walls, strong pillar, and all that: "Yeah, that is what I want. Count me in on that one, Lord."

Pete: Man, I have to admit that I have been guilty.

Joe: Well, they come to school here because they have been called, and they come to school here because they know that they are going out here to a church that has 500 or more members in it. . . (sarcasm).

V: That is right. That describes the minimum size church to be acceptable (sarcasm). Most students interpret God's call like Jeremiah did.

GRIEF PROCESS

Jeremiah 20:7-18

1. Jeremiah thinks that God deceived him. Jeremiah 20:7

Jeremiah is weeping and carrying on, and he says, "Thou has deceived me. Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed." He said, "You are bigger and stronger than I am, and you just made me believe the wrong thing. It is your fault, and here I am in this pain."

2. There is fire in Jeremiah's bones, and he cannot stop speaking.

Jeremiah

20:8 For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.

20:9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But [his word] was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not [stay].

Jeremiah declared, "If you are going to do me like that, then I am not going to preach any more." He tried to stop preaching, but the pressure of the message to be preached was like a fire that could not be quenched except by preaching.

3. God is patient, but Jeremiah is impatient.

When you are suffering, you want some relief, and you want it yesterday. God is patient. His patience is manifested by His giving you relief in the form of taking you through the suffering. We normally want relief by being removed from the suffering. We say, "Get me out of this, Lord," to which He responds, "Follow me."

4. Despair.

Jeremiah

20:14 Cursed [be] the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

20:15 Cursed [be] the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad.

20:16 And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide;

20:17 Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb [to be] always great [with me].

20:18 Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

Now this is really low. Jeremiah is way down at this point—way, way down.

Now the test of your metal, the test of your character, the test that you must pass or fail, the test that God is going to be looking at, you see, is when you get down to the low point where Jeremiah was. When you get down to that point, you will be saying, “Cursed be the day that I was born, this is just not right, God has deceived me. He called me to be a Christian, to have a victorious life in Jesus Christ so that in Him I can do all things. Here I am failing all over the place. Nothing is going right. I have incurable pain in my soul. I cannot get rid of it.” When you get down to the point where you can say with Jeremiah, “I am a mess, I cannot do this, there is no point in going any further.” When you get there, you are at the testing point. That is when you can glorify Jesus. You can step forward and say, “I believe that Jesus takes me through the suffering, not out of it.” When you can go through it by reaching that point, then you are where you can glorify Jesus. There is no glorifying Jesus if you get down to that point, and you bawl like a baby, and you just hold on to your bottle or your pacifier and say, “I am not going any further,” and you demand to be lifted out of it. And He, like a sympathetic parent, reaches down, picks you up, and says, “Okay, I knew you

could do it, but you just are not willing to pay the price. I will put you over here with the other toddlers. You just sit over there and suck your bottle and let me find a true warrior. Here is a warrior over here. I will take him through the trial.”

Mary: That is when we fall below our call line.

V: Yes. This life is the time that we have in order to get there. You see, there will be no braggarts in heaven. You are not going to get into heaven and say, “Man, I excelled in everything I did. Everything that God called me to do, I knocked it out. We are going to be up there bowing our heads. It is just a matter of who failed the least and passed the test when he had nothing left of his own power to pass it with.

JEREMIAH 11 SERMON #4, THE BROKEN COVENANT

We are moving away from Jeremiah as a person so that we can go back to the sermon part where God is addressing Judah. He is using Jeremiah to do what Jeremiah was born to do, i.e. preach repentance to God’s people. Up to this time we have been talking about Jeremiah the man, what he is seeing and experiencing, his emotional content, his pain, and why he is called the weeping prophet. But now we are moving back to the point where we were before addressing Jeremiah the man.

This is the message to Judah that comes through the ministry of Jeremiah.

1. Judah has broken the covenant of God.

Jeremiah

11:3 . . . Cursed [be] the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant,

Note that the repentance is not just being sorry about it, but in verse 4 it says obey God.

And that obedience is not a second point. That obedience is just a part of how you get restored after breaking the covenant. You get restored by asking for forgiveness and changing your behavior, i.e. obeying and keeping the covenant.

When you get off the path, what is repentance? You should ask for forgiveness by admitting to God that you were wrong, and then you should *get back on God's path*.

This stuff here that is going around today where you get off God's path and you weep and ask God to forgive you while you stay off the path, that is not what we are talking about when we say repentance.

Many people in many areas of life are off their paths. They confess, but they do not change their lifestyles. When you are convicted, you should not ask for forgiveness and stay in the sin. When you are convicted, you should ask for forgiveness and get out of the sin. Get back where you are supposed to be.

Henry: Repentance includes correcting it.

V: That is right! If you are preaching and exercising your prophetic ministry to either the saints or the government leaders, call for true repentance.

Henry: That is what John meant when he said: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."²

V: Yes, please note that God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Whatever Jeremiah preaches you can hear from the apostles. You are certainly going to hear it also in the book of Revelation because God has not changed. We should be hearing this exact same stuff today from Jeremiah and John: "Obey God."

2. Go preach it in the streets in all the cities

of Judah.

Jeremiah

11:6 Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.

Do God's Words! **Hear and do!** Hearing God's Word and knowing God's Word is not enough. We must *do God's Word*.

3. Pray not for these people.

Man, this is scary to me. God actually commanded Jeremiah to quit praying for His people.

Jeremiah

11:14 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear [them] in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.

11:15 What hath my beloved to do in mine house, [seeing] she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest.

When you are the prophet, it can come to the point of God saying, "That is it, preach it in the streets, but do not pray for them. Proclaim the disaster. Since they will not obey, then they will be killed." When that is your proclamation, then do not turn around and say, "Oh, God, do not kill them! Oh, God, do not kill them. They are ignorant. They are deceived." No, they have heard God's Word. They have even killed God's prophets. Since they are making informed choices, then God may require that we no longer pray for them. Now that is getting big-time serious.

You should keep on praying for the people to whom you are preaching until God says, "Do not pray for them." There have been times when I have been bringing a call to repentance to somebody, after having worked and worked and worked with them.

² John 14:21

With a few of those people, I have finally concluded that I was through—that is it. It is over with.

Tim: That scenario is described in the New Testament in the spiral of sin of Romans 1, when you fall so far, your mind is reprobated.

V: Yes, and God says that He will not contend forever with the spirit of man.³

Joe: Sometimes their hearts are hardened, and God knows that you cannot do anything more for them.

V: That is right, and that conclusion will come to you from God. You will be dealing with somebody, and you will have hope for them, hope, hope, hope, and blam! hope for them disappears. You will know it the minute that it happens. You will know it immediately. You might as well just turn your ministry to another person so that you may sow seeds on fertile ground. Because where you are sowing on old hard ground, you are just wasting your time. It is like casting your pearls before swine.⁴ But you will know it when it happens. Thus you should not turn away until you absolutely know it. The call for us is to pray for those to whom we are proclaiming. Pray for them, and proclaim God's Message to them.

SERMON #5, THE WORTHLESS GIRDLE Jeremiah Chapter 13:1-11

Jeremiah is to put on a girdle, wear it for a while, take it off, go all the way up to the Euphrates River, hide it in a hole of a rock, and then come back without it.

God said that He would send Jeremiah back up there to get it after a time. So

³ Gen. 6:3.

⁴ Matthew 7:6

Jeremiah did what God told him to do.

When Jeremiah went back to retrieve the girdle, it was all rotted and falling apart. However, he put it on and returned to walk around while wearing it. People noticed Jeremiah and began talking about him. They were wondering, "Why are you wearing that thing?" His sermon follows the illustration.

1. God said that Judah is as intimate to Him as His own girdle.

God wears Judah around His waist like a girdle. As intimate as that girdle is to Jeremiah is how intimate Judah is to God. God put Judah on as a girdle. Judah did not jump onto God, but God gave Judah that intimacy.

2. Judah is useless like the rotten girdle Jeremiah is wearing.

You have here a statement about Judah being very intimate with God but also that they are useless, worthless, not worth wearing around His waist. He ought to just throw them away.

Wine Bottles

This is a two-point sermon about the girdle and the wine bottles that is all contained in the first eleven verses. The rest of the chapter is an extension of the sermon. I cannot figure out how to link it, but here are the points. You can figure out how to link them together when you start preaching it.

Jill: Do we make them sub points in our notes?

V: I do not know how to link them; you can link them however you want. I do not know how to link them because the next part is about wine bottles, but this portion is not about wine bottles. I think that the wine bottles portion is the effect, or penalty, connected with the girdle sermon as the cause.

Jeremiah then tells them that they are going to be treated just like a bunch of wine bottles. They will be filled with wine; that means they will be drunk.

Please note that in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Exodus, and the prophets, you should not interpret drunkenness with being merely from wine. When God says you are drunken, it most likely means that you are so filled with the joy of your career, with your own devotion and good fortune, or with your ministry, or with some other thing that your mind has drifted away from God. You have lost your focus. God is your reality and should be your primary focus. If your mind is not on that reality, you are a drunk person.

Ted: You encapsulate your eternal reality into the temporal realm.

V: Yes, any time we lose our focus, we come under the judgment of being drunk.

Now I have not yet finished the wine bottles part. He says that He is going to fill somebody up with wine. Who is He going to fill? See verse 13. He says that He is going to fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings and even the priests and even the prophets. He is going to fill them/you all with drunkenness. You all are going to get so busy worshipping in the Temple that you are not even going to know who God is because you are going to be like a bunch of drunks.

Larry was telling me about two drunks that he was ministering to at the racetrack. They were so drunk that they had lost the ability to know where they were, where they were headed, which way was up, and which way was down. You see what was important in their lives had narrowed down to just the immediate thing right smack-dab in front of them. The rest of life was of no concern to them at all.

This lack of concern for eternal things is

what is happening right now, right here in America.

Then God says, "Not only am I going to fill you with the cares of life so that you forget who I am, I am going to smash you against each other."

Church fights, business fights, and political fights within a convention are smash, smash, smash. Everybody smashes and smashes against each other.

Several of you may get together to work on a project. You can form a team of five people for example. Then one will likely become obstinate over a preference: "Well, I think we ought to do it this way." Smash. Smash. Smash. The project does not get done. "Well what 'I' think we need to do is teach this group over here rather than over there. We need to start a ministry over here." Smash, smash, smash. All kinds of peripheral things enter in to create friction and smashing.

God calls that myopic behavior drunkenness because we can see only our own little perspective. We cannot see the big picture. Basically, we are looking through a little knothole, and when we see an elephant's leg, we think that we are looking at a great, gray tree.

Oscar: You are saying that God is making them lose sight of Him?

V: He is not making them willing. They are already willing to focus on the temporal life. He is bringing all this stuff into their scenario because that is what they want.

Oscar: I mean that it appears that God is doing the opposite of what He wants from them. God wants them focused on Him, but He is making them lose focus. Why is He making them lose focus?

V: He is not causing them to lose focus. It is like this: He comes up to me and says,

“Do not jump over that cliff.” I do not hear Him. I am a drunken person with a noose around my neck. God sends a prophet over to me and says, “If you jump over that cliff you are going to hang yourself.” Since I am drunk and want to do my own thing, I do not listen. I jump over. The slack runs out, and wham, I am hanged.

So who did the hanging? Did God hang me? It looks like God hung me, but actually He warned me. When I insisted on jumping, He did not overrule my will. I hung myself.

Oscar: This is like what you said about the prophet appearing to be causative.

V: Right, he warns us to turn or else. When the or else occurs, it looks like the prophet caused it.

Henry: Could this be similar or compared possibly to the hardening of the heart.

V: Yes, it is very much like the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh.

Joe: I am trying to summarize what you just said. What I have is “The Lord made them drunk,” and I put in parentheses “with themselves.”

V: No, they made themselves drunk by focusing on the temporal, and God warned them via the prophet. He also allowed them the freedom to make their own choices.

Sybil: And then I was trying to note that second part, and I was going to put, “The Lord will make them turn away from Him.”

V: It sounds causative the way you are saying it, but it is not. I think that it is like God will allow us to turn from him after exhausting all restraints and warnings. Allow would be a good word to use.

Beth: You mentioned a while ago the depravity. Getting to that point as described in the New Testament is basically what God

is saying here. You get to a point where there is just not much focus on God by the people out there.

V: Right, and you ministers become impotent to do anything for them. God lets them run as far away as they want.

Mary: The temptation is there, and He allows us to follow the temptation.

Pete: He tries to put a stop to it, but if you persist on going your own way, He will allow it.

Jill: So God allows them to lose sight.

V: Yes, that is drunkenness.

Joe: We become self-centered?

V: Yes, and that is drunkenness. And the self-centeredness results in smashing together.

Mary: So point number 3 is becoming self-centered.

V: Yes.

3. Wine bottles means becoming self-centered. Jeremiah 13:12-14.

4. Captivity is predicted for willful self-centeredness. Jeremiah 13:15-20.

5. What will you say during God’s punishment?

Jeremiah

13:21 What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? for thou hast taught them [to be] captains, [and] as chief over thee: shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail?

13:22 And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, [and] thy heels made bare.

When He tells you something and you disobey, and then He says, “If you do not repent, I am going to punish you,” and then you respond to His threat, “My way is a good

way; there is nothing to repent from.” The punishment is sure to come. What are we going to say when it comes? Are we going to say, “Why are You punishing me? Why are You doing this to me?”

He is going to answer these “why” questions by telling you that your evil is no longer behavioral, it is ontological. God’s explanation is, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?”⁵ The obvious answer is no; nobody can change their skin? “Can the leopard change his spots?”⁶ No, the leopard cannot change his spots. Then for you to do good when you are accustomed to evil being good falls into the same category as changing your being. If you cannot change your skin, how are you going to change your evil when you are evil but think that you are good? Your behavior is ontological or a part of your being.

Beth: Say it again.

Oscar: Evil is no longer behavioral, it is ontological.

Steve: Ontological is who you are.

V: Yes, it is in your being.

Beth: What is the derivation of that word, ontological?

V: “Ont” means being, and “logical” means within the category. Thus one’s behavior naturally flows out of one’s being. The skin of an Ethiopian and the spots of a leopard have to do with being, not behavior.

Sybil: Really what it comes down to is what I put in parentheses, “Will you repent?”

V: Yes, but what God is saying is that your inability to repent is because the evil is part of your makeup now. Basically the depravity of the person in Romans 1 is where

you go—all the way to the bottom. Here, they are going all the way to the bottom. And the reason is that they think they are right. You cannot repent when you think that you are right or that your behavior is not wrong.

SERMON #6, THE DROUGHT.

Jeremiah 14

There is a long description about the drought. Six verses describe the extent of that drought and how desperate the people were for water for the animals and plants as well. The whole land was desperate for water, and the people were dying without it.

1. They want God’s help without the necessity of their repentance. Jeremiah 14:7-10.

This is “foxhole religion” here. This is good teaching material right here.

Jeremiah

14:7 O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, . . .

They/we are saying, “We are wrong, O Lord . . .”

Jeremiah

14:7 . . . do thou [it] for thy name’s sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

14:8 O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man [that] turneth aside to tarry for a night?

14:9 Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man [that] cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, [art] in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

14:10 Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.

⁵ Jeremiah 13:23

⁶ *Ibid.*

What they want from God is redemption and deliverance without the need for real repentance. ***They/we want to repent with our mouths, not with changes in behavior.***

Why would they even think that lip service was sufficient? It is because their prophets have healed the daughter of God slightly. They have preached peace in the name of the Temple without calling for repentance. They are not accustomed to repentance, and they want God to rescue them because He is God, because we are His name's sake, and because He lives here among us. For all of these reasons, they want God to deliver them. They just want their deliverance, but they are not planning on changing their ways.⁷

Today, we will weep and fall down on our faces and say, "Oh, God, we have sinned against You, Oh Lord. We are so bad. Please get us out of this trial because of Who you are, not because of what we are doing." Where is the repentance? That is just a big game! We are covered up with this mess!

This great lesson on repentance should be taught in your Sunday schools, in your churches, in your fellowships, wherever you can get the message in.

We need to alert the people to this foxhole religion which is, "Oh, God, get me out of this. I know that You will remove me from this trial because of Who You are, because of Your great love for Your people. If you get me out, I will change my wicked ways."⁸

⁷ We heal the daughter of God slightly by preaching escapism. We say that God will not allow his children to experience THE tribulation. However, we must go thru the devil's tribulation that he has for us. Even though it will intensify in the latter days, we must go thru it as a test of obedience. Our forefathers were tortured and killed. Why do we expect to be exempt from the same thing?

⁸ This is an attempt at bargaining with God. The "if" sets the condition for the first move to be on God, then

There is no repentance with foxhole religion—just mere words of promise. Is there confession of sin? Yes, but where is the repentance? This is a game: "I will confess that I am a sinner and promise anything if You will just get me out of this mess."

2. The people are rejected because of their false prophets. Jeremiah 14:11-16.

The prophets did the teaching but the people are the ones who must hang. The prophets did the bad thing, but the people pay the price. The people are rejected because of their believing the false prophets.

Carl: The prophets were telling them what they wanted to hear.

V: Exactly. Everybody is guilty in this scenario.

Jeremiah

14:11 Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for [their] good.

14:12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.

14:13 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.

14:14 Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

This is hard stuff. False prophets, who are thinking that they are right, are prophesying that good sweet stuff without a call for repentance. Now this kind of religious thinking is ingrained in Judah's being. They can

we promise to make our move as some kind of reward for God's doing what we asked.

no longer repent because a leopard cannot change his spots.

Folks, if this kind of thing is ingrained in Judah, is it also ingrained in us? I ask because we are widely practicing this same kind of religion.

3. Jeremiah's intercessory prayer.

Jeremiah

14:17 . . . and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.

Here is a picture of the weeping prophet who sees Judah as a sick people in famine, and their prophets and priests go about in the land without knowing their purpose. He says that the prophets and the priests do not know what they are doing. And then he says,

Jeremiah

14:19 . . . why hast thou smitten us,

You see Jeremiah is identifying with the people. Jeremiah is feeling the hurt because he is one of the people. God has "smitten us."

Jeremiah

14:19 . . . and [there is] no healing for us? we looked for peace, and [there is] no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!

When Jeremiah identifies with the people, he becomes the weeping prophet, feeling the pain, and the agony of knowing that his people are going to be destroyed.

4. Judah's system is like it is because of Manasseh. Jeremiah 15:1-9.

Manasseh was a prior king who brought idolatry into the nation. Manasseh was the evil king who sawed Isaiah in half and led his people astray.

5. How do the people respond to God?

Jeremiah

16:10 And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the

LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what [is] our iniquity? or what [is] our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?

So the people are saying, "Why is God mad at us. We have not done anything." You can go to Malachi, and see this same thing over and over again when God says, "You have done this and this and this," and they say, "When did we do all that stuff? We never did any of that." It occurs over and over again.

So if you cannot admit your sin, then you cannot get back on the path. Once you feel like you are straight up and down, and there is no error in your system anywhere, then you are way off the path. You cannot get back on the path while thinking like that. You just think you are on the path.

Here they are, they are off the path. They think they are on the path. "Why are you bringing this evil against us?"

Here is what God says to them:

Jeremiah

16:11 Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD

Because your forefathers have forsaken Me is why this evil is coming against you. But let me tell you one more thing:

Jeremiah

16:12 And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart,

You remember that we saw that word "imagination" back a ways when it described the people as walking after their imaginations instead of walking after the objective Word of God by seeing "It" as a light unto the path. We are to walk on that path as the objective Word of God says it. Our problem arises when we make the objective Word of God subjective by saying, "Well, now, He does not

want us to suffer.” So we just kind of drift away from any sacrifice or suffering, “Oh, here is the path over here, everybody.” So the whole church runs over there, and “Yes, we can walk over there comfortably.”

Then here comes some trouble-making, Jeremiah-kind-of-prophet saying, “You are off the path. The path is the *kenosis*.” The church responds: “He is a party-pooper. You must know that God wants us over here where we are because there is no suffering or sacrifice where we are. This is good over here where we are.” But the prophet says, “If you do not get back on your path, God is going to wipe you out.” The church’s response: “Surely, he must be a false prophet. That is surely what he is. He is a false prophet! He is not a loving Christian. He is a mean-spirited Christian who doesn’t understand God. He does not understand that you have to interpret the Word in the context of God’s love. Our God does not want us to suffer tribulation (sarcasm).”

That scenario is what we are up against. You and I and everyone else will find that we are off the path at some points in our lives. When off the path but thinking that we are on the straight and narrow path of God because it feels good, we will find it impossible to repent. We will want the easy path to be the path of God. And when a prophet comes along and says, “You are not on the path because you do not even know where the path is,” we will conclude that he is mean-spirited and that we will not listen to him: “I am not going back to that church. I am going to this good church over here.”

6. God is our refuge. Jeremiah 16:19-21

JEREMIAH 17

7. The lack of repentance affects your children.
Jeremiah

17:1 The sin of Judah [is] written with a pen of iron, [and] with the point of a diamond: [it is] graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars

That verse means then that the sin of Judah is indelibly written in the hearts of its people.

Jeremiah

17:2 Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.

17:3 O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance [and] all thy treasures to the spoil, [and] thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders.

17:4 And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, [which] shall burn for ever.

When God calls you to repent, and you fail to repent, your children will have that sin burned into their souls so that they will spontaneously reenact what they have seen you do.⁹

Carl: Is that what is referred to as the generational curse?

V: Yes, and what is happening here is that you have trained your children in the art of non-repentance. When God, then, calls them to repent, they will reject it.

Now here is the hurting thing. Even if you subsequently turn and repent, you have already burned the indelible mark into the soul of your children. So you escape, but the child is caught in the trap. The lack of repentance has destructive consequences for your children.

Always be soft-hearted. When you are

⁹ Class, this is happening in America now. The people of God cannot repent because they believe that they are absolutely innocent. Has our evil become ontological?

caught in a bind in a problem with God, fall on your face. Let your children see you. Fall on your face, weep, confess and turn openly from your wicked ways and get back on your path, and they will wonder with awe at their parents who believe this stuff of God. That repentance, then, will burn into their souls. *Hypocrisy and non-repentance burns a mark that will never be erased in the souls of your children.*

SERMON #7, KEEP THE SABBATH

1. Stand in the gate and preach to keep the Sabbath. Jeremiah 17:19-22.

Jeremiah had already been called to preach in the Temple as the people went in. Now God is telling him to go out to the city gates. When the people come in and even when the king comes in or when visiting dignitaries come in, strap the command from God on them!

Now please get this. There are going to be non-Jews coming into the city. Jeremiah asked the Lord what He wants preached. The Lord says, "Tell them to keep the Sabbath." Okay, here comes these kings and all their people coming into the city. There is Jeremiah telling them to keep the Sabbath.

What is the Sabbath to the pagans? Ironically, he probably got a better hearing from the visiting people than he did from his own people.

2. Disobedience brings punishment. Jeremiah 17:23-27.

God says, "If you do not listen to Me and keep the Sabbath, I will burn your city down." God is putting a threat behind His commandment.

JEREMIAH 18 SERMON #8, THE POTTER.

Jeremiah 18:1–20:6.

1. The potter shapes the clay; God shapes Israel. Jeremiah 18:1-17

God can take Israel and smash it down, get another lump of clay, and start another pot just like the potter sometimes will discontinue making a pot because he finds the lump to be defective. He will throw it down, get another glob of clay, and start another pot.

JEREMIAH 19

2. God can break Judah just like the potter breaks his defective vessel. Jeremiah 19:1-13.

This sermon included a demonstration in which God told Jeremiah to take two pots and a group of people out to a cliff, stand on the rocks, and smash the two pots together and throw them down over the cliff. They will fall and break into tiny pieces. Then Jeremiah was to tell the people that God can smash you just like the potter can smash the vessels.

3. Jeremiah preaching in the Temple court. Jeremiah 19:14-15.

He has been out preaching in the streets, he has preached in the gates, he has been preaching in the Temple, and now he is preaching in the Temple courts. He is preaching all about this potter's stuff, about the wheel and the clay and the shaping of the people of Judah, and these people are getting fed up with him.

JEREMIAH 20

4. Jeremiah is put into the stocks. Jeremiah 20:1-6.

You need to get the picture. Jeremiah has been faithful, he is the weeping prophet, he

preaches the Word that God has given him, he does not want to lose his office, he is in agony, he is in intercessory prayer for the people, he breaks the two pots, he preaches in the Temple Court, and then the chief priest walks up to Jeremiah and smacks him right in the face. Smites him good, knocks him down. I think he did not stop with one punch. I think this guy catches Jeremiah off guard and nails him, and then beats the stew out of him and puts him in the stocks.

Imagine that you are Jeremiah. You have done everything that God told you to do. You have been bold, you have pleaded with the people, you have worked diligently with God, and you have pleaded with God. You have put your life on the line for God to save these people, and get yourself out of pain, and God says, "I am going to put you through much pain; you will know what pain is. But they are not going to prevail against you. I am going to make you a brasen wall."

You faithfully do what God says, and here comes the honcho. He busts you in the face, knocks you down, you are bleeding, you are paining and wondering, "What kind of deal is this?" Then they drag you over and stick you in the stocks. The people are parading by laughing, "There's the great prophet of God! That is what a false prophet looks like. Look! Look at this guy over here in the stocks with the blood dripping off of him!"

Now try to imagine that you are the man with the blood dripping off of you. Would you be willing to come out of the stocks and preach the Word of God? You had better be willing because wherever you are in your pilgrimage right now, it could change to be like this kind of situation. People could be mocking you. You must be able to come out of those stocks and preach the Word of God.

The Nature of Sin

What is the nature of sin? (This nature corresponds with the sermon on the broken covenant.)

1. Disobedience. Jeremiah 11:3.
2. Makes us useless and vain. Jeremiah 13:7 and 10 and 17:11.
3. It excludes self-help as a remedy. Jeremiah 13:23.

This exclusion of self-help is the part that also connects back to the leopard and his spots. If you cannot change your spots, you cannot change your behavior that is derived from your evil being either.

4. God does not violate the free will. Jeremiah 14:11.

Free will has to do with the false prophets. The people, you see, are following the false prophets. They are making a free and informed choice to follow the false prophets. It is an informed choice because the true prophet is also warning them. God does not stop them from following the false prophets. The false prophets have freely chosen to preach what they were preaching. Free will is then inviolate in God's eyes.

5. Sin is hard to recognize. Jeremiah 16:10.

Here is where the puzzlement entered. The people are accused of sin, and they say, "Where have we sinned? Why would God bring all this evil against us? We have not done anything so evil."

6. Sin comes from a deceitful heart, and is a mystery. Jeremiah 17:9.
7. Sin hurts your children. Jeremiah 17:2-7

Chapter Questions

1. Explain the speckled bird analogy as it applies to Christianity. Jeremiah 12:9
2. How did Jeremiah handle his persecution and what was God's response in Jeremiah 15?
3. Describe Jeremiah's grief process. Jeremiah 20:7-18
4. Outline Sermon #4, The Broken Covenant, Jeremiah 11.
5. Outline Sermon #5, The Worthless Girdle. Jeremiah 13:1-11
6. Outline Sermon #6, The Drought. Jeremiah 14
7. Outline Sermon #7, Keep The Sabbath. Jeremiah 17:19-22.
8. Outline Sermon #8, The Potter. Jeremiah 18:1-20:6.
9. What is the nature of sin?

Chapter 4

THE PROPHET AND THE KINGS**JEREMIAH 21**

Let's turn our attention to Zedekiah, and his request for prayer. In chapter 21, Zedekiah sends a group over to Jeremiah, and he says,

Jeremiah

21:2 Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.

What I want you to see here is that this request reveals a presupposition of Zedekiah that God is a respecter of persons. The presupposition here, and the way he words his request, is that God is:

1. A respecter of persons,
2. Going to exercise his wondrous works without regard to what we have been doing,
3. Going up from us.

Zedekiah's primary presupposition is that God is a respecter of persons. Somehow he thinks that God is going to take care of His people because of who they are. Second, he expects God to go up and fight their battles for them regardless of how they have been behaving. Third, he is presuming that God's abode is with this supposedly great people here because of the question, "Will you go up from us?"

After all of the preaching that Jeremiah has been doing during the reigns of these kings we finally come down to Zedekiah. How is it that Zedekiah had not heard one thing about getting it right? Here he is sending a delegation to Jeremiah inquiring of him to pray on behalf of the people to find out if the Lord is going to go up from them and fight their battle. After all this time that God

had been telling the nation of Judah to get their act turned around, they have the gall to ask if God is going to fight their battle for them after rejecting all His calls to repentance.

Sam: Kind of like it is today, isn't it? Please, God, get me out of this spot so I can keep on sinning.

V: Yes, the request disregards behavior. Judah had idolized the Temple, and God had already told them, "Okay, now if you are going to have an idol, then in your time of need, go pray to that idol." Then Zedekiah comes along, holding on to his idol, and all the people are holding on to their idol, the Temple, and he says, "Go pray, ask God if He is going to go up and fight our battles for us." Why does Zedekiah not go over and bow down to the Temple and ask that Temple to go fight his battle for him? God has already told him through the Temple sermon, "If that is what you want, then be ready to pray to it in your time of need."

Zedekiah must be concluding that God must be a respecter of persons. Zedekiah must think that God must violate all of His principles and His Word and come and do these things for Judah simply because they are His people. To the contrary, God is saying, "Get your behavior right, or you are going to have problems."

This question came to Jeremiah who prayed as they had requested. Let us look to see what God says to them.

SERMON #9**IS GOD GOING TO FIGHT THE BATTLE FOR JUDAH?**

Jeremiah 21

1. God is going to fight against Judah.

Jeremiah

21:5 And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath.

And God goes further to say that if there is one Babylonian left in the whole army and he is wounded, I will strengthen that Babylonian's hand that he will defeat the entire nation of Judah. That is how God is going to fight against His own people because they have worshipped the Temple instead of Him.

2. The people will have to leave the city in order to live.

It seems to me that God is trying to separate the people from their idol, the Temple. Live separated from the idol, or die if you stay with it.

3. Do justice and forsake your religious pride, and you will live. Jeremiah 21:12-13.

This is directed to the king himself, not to the people. "Do justice and forsake your religious pride and you will live. Otherwise I will punish you."

Jeremiah

21:12 O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver [him that is] spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench [it], because of the evil of your doings.

21:13 Behold, I [am] against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, [and] rock of the plain, saith the LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?

Verse 12 says execute judgment. Verse 13 is the question presented to idolaters who say, "Who is going to come against us since our God is here, our Temple is here, the Ark of the Covenant is here, who is going to invade us? How can they come against us when we have

all these things going for us?" That statement is from religious pride.

Carl: Can I go back to point 1 for just a minute? Point 1 says that God is going to fight against Judah. Do you think that some of the spiritual battles that we have now could be God trying to get our attention, or that there is something in our life that we need to work out? It looks like Satan is attacking us; it is like spiritual battle. Yet, could it be God fighting against us in a way to get us to come to our senses?

V: Let me give you a "yes." But let me give you some explanation to go with that "yes." I am aware of a pastor right now who is struggling, truly struggling, fighting against the tide, and trying to do this thing, and trying to do that thing and push and push and it seems like all of hell is coming against him. He is building this church in the same way that these kings built Judah. His church is prospering just as Judah prospered. God spoke to Judah clearly through Jeremiah. God speaks to our pastors today through Jeremiah, the New Testament, and especially through the *kenosis* (chart 4.1). Right now that pastor is thinking that all hell has come against him when in fact God is saying, "I am going to fight against you; I am going to take away all of your spiritual power, and any success you get will be human success, achieved through human power."

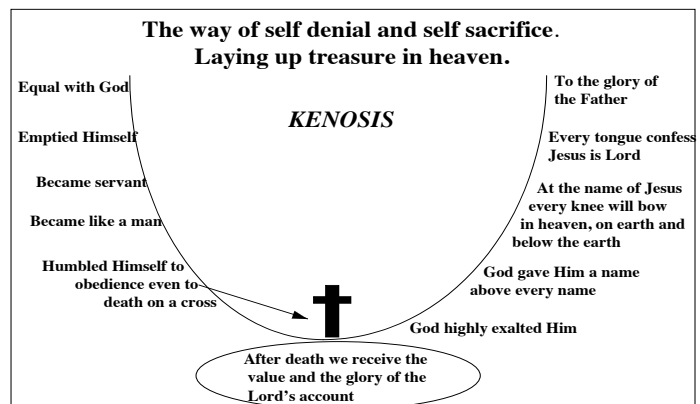


Chart 4.1

God says, “If you will deny yourself by walking the downward *kenosis*, the obedience, the humility, and the whole thing, then I will support you, and all of my power will be released into the situation. But if you reject my command by serving an idol, then when you come to that point when all hell comes against you, pray to your idol. That is all the help you are going to get.”

I see this scenario time and time again, but what you just now said is right. So sometimes when you turn your *kenosis* upside down, and you start your climb, and all hell comes against you, and you say, “Oh, God, help me,” you are doing just like Zedekiah. “Oh, God, are you going to fight my battle for me?” And He said, “I will not fight your battle for you; I will fight against you. All of your success will be only at the human level.”

Ted: Is it possible that you do not know what the idols are in your life?

V: Yes, it is even likely. Most people do not know that they have idols because Satan works through deception.

Carl: That is kind of like what I was fixing to say. Last week you talked about God giving them over to their imagination. That is the same as what you just said. The idea of imagination has stuck with me the whole week. It seems to me that many times a person may begin thinking about things, and the next thing that happens is that he quits thinking and begins imagining. The result is that you will begin to imagine that you are accomplishing all of these great feats when you are really not. In the imagination, you tend to leave God out of the picture.

V: You certainly may. This happens to all of us at some time in our walk, and it may be happening very frequently among us and in us. But God expects us to deny ourselves and be sacrificial. When we do that, when we surrender all, then God’s power comes into the equation. But if we are walking in our

human strength with all of our glory and with all of our education and all of our everything that we can muster and bring into the situation, then He says, “Okay, let’s see what you can do, big boy,” and then He backs away.

Ted: What did all those do who were being opposed by God? Also who caused the suffering? God is not the one that causes us to suffer.

Betty: Sin causes suffering.

Joe: Yes, we sin by not going on God’s chosen path. We do our will instead of His will.

V: Amen, Joe! That is the problem that gets us in these predicaments—our wills expressing our pride.

Henry: Well, is the church going along with him and his misdirection? If they pray to God, and God does not intervene in that situation . . .

V: . . . God has already intervened by giving us Jeremiah, the New Testament, and the *kenosis*. Many Christians are so busy following a man in his efforts to build his empire that they forget their own responsibilities to God and His Word.

Oscar: So you are saying his church is following along behind him.

V: Yes. He says, “Come on. Let’s build this church (idol).” And the people pray, “Oh, God, please help us build our idol. We are using foolproof plans from a church growth seminar that was taught by a proven expert on church growth. Please, God, help us too!”

Carl: This is what a group of us talked about at the first of the class. Churches like these are bringing stuff into religion that God hates. What is going to happen to us? We are getting a plain and clear picture from Jeremiah about what is going to happen.

Homer: But they cannot see and repent.

Beth: They can if they read God's Word: Jeremiah, the New Testament, and the *kenosis*.

Wanda: But they think God's Word is ruling in their church because they are following the pastor who is following God.

V: Or you could follow a group, a voting group, a power block, a tradition, a dream or something like that. Don't forget that following a pastor or a teacher into idolatry is often confused with following God.

Henry: You know, sometimes it is hard to discern if our leading is from the Holy Spirit or if it is self.

V: Yes! So beware!

Joe: You know that these people in Jeremiah's day were at a disadvantage to what we are today because we have this Word to go by. They did not have this Word of God. That is why I cannot understand about some of the things we are doing because we have God's Word that they did not have.

V: They had God's Word through the prophet Jeremiah, but they did not have all that we know from the New Testament and the Holy Spirit's enlightenment.

Steve: They had God's actual prophets coming and talking to them.

V: Yes, and we do too. We also have Jeremiah that we can read over and over anytime we want to.

Pete: Some Christians do not like the Old Testament and do not teach out of it.

V: Right, Pete, some people do not accept the Old Testament as God's Word that is currently relevant for us who are under the New Testament.

Tim: *WE* are some of them that do not teach enough out of the Old Testament.

V: Joe, I want to revisit your point concerning our will. Now, if we have a prevail-

ing philosophy of Existentialism, which is that everybody is right because rightness is subjective to the individual. Now if you add to that our tenant of the priesthood of the believer in which everybody has a right to think what they will and believe that they are right, then where are the checks and balances? As the *spirit* of a man leads him, he can just say that God's *Spirit* told him to do that and believe it as fact. And if you get enough church members who are ready to vote for it, then man's willful subjectivism becomes church policy.¹

We are in a predicament here. Christians are becoming a people who do what is right in their own eyes. But it is pretty straight forward what God is saying to us through Jeremiah. He is laying it out there. Repent! Prophecy of blessing that leaves out repentance is false prophecy.

Tim: Building on the point about our being worse than they were when we have God's Word and Spirit," God said, "I commanded them to obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you will be my people. Walk in My ways that it may go well with you." However, He continued, "They did not listen to the prophets that I sent. They disobeyed, so they went backward doing worse than their fathers did." Doing worse!

V: Yes, and the proof is that Israel had already fallen by this time, but Judah is still in place in spite of her more treacherous sin.

Israel worshipped Baal. They carved out the little bull, and they bowed down to it, and they worshipped it openly. Their prophets were prophets of Baal. God destroyed His people Israel because of that idolatry.

Here comes Judah, and they are being careful not to worship a bull. Instead, they

¹ My course on philosophy of religion delves into this satanic attack that is wreaking havoc in God's Church.

are going to worship the Temple. Surely God will respect them for that! The Temple is one of God's main holy things, i.e. the Temple and the Ark of the Covenant. And so Judah is doing the same thing that Israel did. Only the idol is different. Because of the sacred disguise of their idol, God said, "They are more treacherous than Israel because they are disguising their idolatry in a good thing." The Temple is a good thing; the Ark of the Covenant is a good thing. They are trying to latch onto a good thing, and elevate it too high.

That elevation, my friend, is idolatry. There are many good things in our Christianity of today. But when you elevate one of them too highly, you have the same problem as Judah. That kind of idolatry is treachery.

Tim: It is also being a drunkard.

V: Yes. A drunkard is one who has lost his focus and is stumbling along off of God's true path. A very close parallel would be the local institutional church as an idol. We call this Institutionalism.

Jack: Concerning the Temple, our bodies are the Temple of God. But when we go to the extent that we think that we are above and beyond all, then we are the false . . .

V: . . . false prophets to ourselves. And we even make ourselves into gods who are going to dictate to God what He should do. When we elevate ourselves too highly, our desires and needs become the highest things in our value systems. Under this scenario, there is nothing else that compares to what I want. And so I ask God to give me this thing that I want. Or even worse, I find someone to agree with me and we pray in agreement in order to force God to give us what we want.

And where in this scenario is the *kenotic* suffering? The suffering has degenerated into not getting everything you can think of that you want (sarcasm). Instead of suffering, it is to be deprived of status, power, and acclaim.

Mary: So number 3 is simply to do justice.

V: No, do justice and forsake religious pride. You see, religious pride is causing the idolatry. He is saying, "Get your behavior right, and forsake your idolatrous position" which is assuming that God is a respecter of persons and is going to just give you everything you can name. Holding to the idea of God being a respecter of persons means that you do not hold to the idea that blessings from God depends upon behavior (true Deuteronomic Theology which is eschatologically focused).

Let me share this with you. If God is a respecter of persons, then He will give you what you want just because you are His child. But He is not going to do that. God is no respecter of persons. He checks our behavior. He says, I am sick of all these religious sacrifices. I want your obedience. So He is looking for someone to step up and be a true disciple. That expectation is a challenge to us. If we forsake the challenge, and continue to pray and ask for His help, then we are saying that God is a respecter of persons. It is a simple thing, but it will elude even the smartest Christian who is surrounded by these kinds of ideas in the church.

Sybil: Is it anything like knowing that I did wrong and knowing that I am in this situation, but not expecting God to take me out of it? The idea is to go on through it. Is that something like what we are trying to do?

V: Not exactly, you need to do some repentance.

Jack: Yes, you know that you have done wrong, and then you repent and say, "Okay, Lord, I was wrong. Please help me. If You want me to go through this situation, please be with me. Take me through it, and I will just follow you through it."

Jack cont'd: I know it is going to happen to all of us. You are in trouble, you know you

have done wrong, you have repented, you have changed your attitude, you have changed your mind, and you say, “Okay, Lord, I am ready to take my suffering, but please go with me.”

V: Yes Jack. Please see that your description is different from foxhole religion. Foxhole religion puts the first move on God: I am in this predicament (the predicament is the foxhole). I am in it and the bombs are falling all around me, and I start praying, “Oh, God, get me out of this predicament. If you will just get me out of this situation, I will repent, and I will do whatever you want.

But, the kind of approach that you have described is repentance with a willingness to go on through the trial. Repent and surrender is the right approach.

Jack: If we are in this position and we know what we have done wrong, then we have to ask God to please forgive us of our sins and take our lives from here and do what He wants to with them.

Bob: You have to change your mind!

V: Yes, change your mind and your behavior. Then surrender to God by denying yourself, picking up your cross, and following Him. That is *kenotic* discipleship.

Oscar: Foxhole religion is similar to a person getting in with a bad crowd or finding himself or herself in a bad spot hoping they can come out unscathed.

V: In repentance, you must change your mind and your behavior. Then you must be willing to take the scathe as just consequences of your bad behavior. Please note also that taking the scathe as consequences of good behavior is the downward move of *kenosis*.

Kenosis is sacrifice. God wants you to sacrifice. Sacrifice is what He wanted from His only begotten Son. You are His adopted son. He wants sacrificial obedience from you too. It is a really simple proposition, but what

we usually do is to turn that proposition around. We want God to sacrifice so that we can go through life indulging ourselves as we like. When we get into a little bit of a tough spot, “Well, God fix this for me.”

You see your mindset is one of self-elevation. When you lack the power to lift yourself up, then you ask God to do it. If He should lift you up, you will then think that you can do all that your heart desires. You can indulge yourself, and then when you start paying the price, you can say, “Oh, God, I need some more help over here.” Is God supposed to ignore your idolatry and lift you up?

That perspective is the reverse of what Christianity is. But there is a lot of that being taught. You need to hang on to what I am saying here. You are going to hear a hundredfold more that is opposite from what you are hearing now.

My voice is the very minuscule, minority voice, but I am here to tell you that what I am telling you is the Gospel Truth. That other stuff of self-elevation, being lifted up, and wielding God’s power in your hand like a wand, so that you fix this thing and that thing do this and do that is trying to assume God’s role. Your approach to life as being strong in the Spirit and doing all these self-indulgent miracles is making God a slave. No, people, we are the slaves.

SERMON #10 AGAINST THE FALSE PASTORS AND PROPHETS.

Jeremiah 23

1. Woe to the pastors because they are scattering God’s flock.

Jeremiah

23:1 Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.

23:2 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my

people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

I want to talk to you about what “scattering the flock” means. There are many pastors who think that scattering the flock is when members get moved out of their particular church. They think that God’s vineyard is their own personal vineyard, and that the fruit is to be accrued for their benefit. Now this describes the false religion that we talked about in a prior lesson where the people, the pastors, the leaders, the elders, are using God’s vineyard for their own purposes. If you ask them, “Are God’s sheep being scattered?” they will say, “No, we are content, everybody is in place in my church, everything is good.”

If you ask God are they being scattered, He would say, “Yes,” because scattering is defined from the point of reference. That point of reference is in God. Scattering is when you move sheep away from God, not away from your church. There are many who think that scattering means that “We had a church split, and they have gone off, and now I do not have all my flock here, and these teachers of the Bible have scattered my flock.”

Sybil: So scattering means moving away from God.

V: Yes. When God sends Nebuchadnezzar to Judah to scatter His flock all over the landscape, God is not actually scattering them. He is actually purging them in order to bring them back to Himself. He is trying to get them loose from these false pastors who want to control them. They want them all right there under their control so that they can have their flock and have their big Temple and have the acclaim of men.

As elders and teachers and preachers that you are, you must know that your job is not to draw God’s flock to yourself, but rather it is

to get God’s flock to reach up and take the Lord’s hand. Then let the Lord be those people’s Lord. It is simple.

You would be a good shepherd if you could lay down your life like John the Baptist. He was working as hard as he could (preaching and baptizing). Soon, he had a great flock of disciples. He was standing there talking with two disciples when the Lord walked by. He told his two disciples, “There goes the one that I have been preaching about, the one that is greater than I. Follow Him.” Those two disciples left John standing there all by himself, and followed Jesus.

Getting the people to follow Jesus is what we are supposed to do. We need to get the people to go running after the Lord, to get their hands together with the Lord’s Hand. We teach them the Bible, and encourage them to follow Jesus. That is what we are supposed to do. That is not what these pastors were doing. Yes, they had them all grouped there, and they had them all marching in lockstep, and they were doing the religious thing right down the line. But God said, “You are scattering my flock” because the point of reference is God.

If the flock is moving away from God, they are being scattered. If the flock is moving to Him, they are being exhorted. Equipping and exhorting is what our job is. We are to get the people to follow Jesus and not gather them around ourselves so that we can use them to bring profit for us.

Jack: You were talking about the splitting of churches and stuff, and I know that maybe there is a fine line in there, but if you have a pastor that tries to gather a whole bunch and carry them over here to another church, is he in God’s will, or is he scattering God’s flock because he is really not trying to gather God’s flock together? He is trying to just get them separated.

V: Well, it depends on whether God

wants what he is doing. I cannot answer that question with only the information that you have provided. What I would be inclined to think is that the person is trying to build himself up, but the other pastor may be trying to do the exact same thing, build himself up. So then you would have two people, both scattering the flock.

Mary: It is not their flock anyway. The flock belongs to God, and He can do whatever He wants to with it.

V: It is hard . . . it is truly hard to get that point across in practice, Mary.

Jill: In the situation he was describing, could that pastor that is trying to pull the others away ever be in the right?

V: Sure, it depends upon God's will.

Jill: But if he is pulling them away because the other preacher is preaching sermons without repentance, not what God's Word says, then that is fine because he wants them to learn faithful obedience, and he has determined to lead them towards God. While the first pastor might say he is scattering the flock, what he is really doing is saving them.

V: A great example of that principle is Martin Luther. Luther gathered the flock towards God. He was declared heretic and was accused of scattering the flock. Even today we are called "separated brethren" by the Roman Catholics. However, this flock that you and I are a part of has been gathered to God not scattered from him. At the same time, we are considered to have been separated, from our supposed holy father, the Pope.

JEREMIAH 37: PRAYERS

Okay, we are not going to do the rest of Chapter 23 right now because I want to go to Chapter 37. We are going to look at some of the prayers. Zedekiah is a screwed up king even though he is a praying king. His prayers

are not too good because he prays from a point of self-elevation.

Zedekiah thinks that since he is the king he deserves to be elevated by God. In chapter 37, we are going to see where Zedekiah wants Jeremiah to pray again.

Jeremiah

37:3 And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us.

At this point, Pharaoh's army has come out of Egypt for the purpose of besieging Jerusalem. But the Babylonians are already besieging Jerusalem. Now the problem is compounding for Jerusalem by an expansion of the Babylonian siege with the addition of Pharaoh's army.

Zedekiah is a praying king. So he is praying, "Get these Babylonians off of us, God." So Jeremiah takes up the request to pray, but the answer is not what Zedekiah expects. Yes, Babylonia is going to break off from its siege, because of the approach of Pharaoh's army. They are breaking off because they do not want to engage in a possible war against Pharaoh. Zedekiah is praying, "God, get these Babylonians off of me." Zedekiah soon observes that the Babylonians leave. Then he is going to say, "God answered my prayer." And Jeremiah is trying to tell him, "This is not God answering your prayer of deliverance from trial. Their leaving is for the purpose of testing what you are about. Your trial is to see whether or not you meant business or whether yours is a foxhole religion. If the Babylonians leave and you return to your evil ways, they are going to come back. And since there is no repentance in you, and you are not really going to change, you just might as well figure that they are coming back. This is just a temporary reprieve about which you should not get too excited."

Zedekiah is saying, "If they leave, is not

that a blessing from God because we are His people?” Jeremiah says, “Hold it. You know the only way that you can be blessed, and this is the maximum blessing you can get, is to go into captivity. That is the best thing you can get out of this deal because you have done too many wrong things. If you will surrender to the Babylonians when they come back, you will live, but if you stay in this city and try to hold on, you are going to die.”

Zedekiah then says, “Well, how are we going to be delivered from Babylonia if they come back after us?” Jeremiah says,

Jeremiah

37:19 Where [are] now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?

“You remember your prophets who said, ‘Peace, Peace,’ and they healed the daughter of God slightly. They said because the Temple is here, there will be no destruction to come upon us.” Jeremiah reminded him of those false prophets because they had been saying that there is not going to be any trouble to come upon Judah because they were God’s people.

I can hear the same things today. “There is not going to be any problem. Everything is going good. The economy is growing, the churches are growing, and we have building programs all around. What can happen to us? We are doing fine. Besides, we will be raptured before any tribulation comes our way.”

Well, the prophet who claims that we are doing fine is a false prophet. We need repentance throughout the entire land and church. There is not a single Christian who has a perfect heart and a perfect life. Every one of us has need for repentance.

The way that you are going to find your area of repentance is through looking into the mirror of God’s Word so that you can see yourself clearly. When you are looking

through the world’s mirror or through any other thing, you are going to see a false image, an image that looks better than it is. If, however, we can look at ourselves through God’s Word, we will see where we need to repent, where we need change in our lives.

Every one of us needs to repent. I do not care who the person is. Even Billy Graham needs to do that. There is nobody that has arrived. Even the Apostle Paul said, “I haven’t arrived” when he was looking at the end of his life. We have to do that. That is why we are studying God’s Word in this course.

Here we have a situation in which Jeremiah is saying, “If you will leave the city in surrender, you will live, but if you stay in the city, you will die.” That pronouncement upsets the princes who are the next layer of government under the king.

Coming down from the top of the hierarchy is the king, then the princes, then the judges, then the prophets, then the priests, and so forth. The second level of hierarchy from the top decides that they cannot put up with this treasonous speech, so they just go and grab Jeremiah, beat him, and put him in prison (37:15).

What Jeremiah is preaching brings consequences against his body, against his reputation, and against his freedom. Jeremiah is preaching the truth, and bad things are happening to him. Bad things happen to those who draw close to the Lord. Our lot is hard.

Pete: In those situations, I think about what happens down the line, what kind of life do I show to the people that are oppressing me. When we have bad times, we must keep our light shining. Otherwise we may destructively influence a soul that is lost.

V: That is good, Pete. It was the blood of the martyrs that propagated Christianity around the world. Menno Simons was saved when about 300 people were massacred by

the Roman Catholics. He looked at them and he thought, “Man, all they had to do was just recant what they believed and come out of their fort, and they would have lived. They died instead. They must believe this stuff! I must investigate what they believed.” Then it happened to him, too. The light you shine in this predicament . . .

Jill: . . . even one soul is worth it to God.

V: Yes, the eternal soul of another is far and away more important than physical death for me and you.

JEREMIAH 38

In Chapter 38, we are going to have a worsening for the preacher of Truth. The people and the princes are upset at Jeremiah because he is preaching that in order to live they must leave the city and fall captive to the Babylonians in order to live.

Preaching like Jeremiah was doing while the princes (the government) want all of the people to stay in the city is going to cause friction. The princes want the people to stay and fight and win against the Babylonians because they think that they cannot lose because of the Temple. Both parties think that they are right. Jeremiah thinks that he is right because he has received the message from God. The princes think that they are right because they have the Temple. When two parties think that they have right on their side, and their sides differ, friction will result.

The princes say that the preaching by Jeremiah is undermining the fighting will of their warriors. So they conclude that they need to shut him up for the welfare of the country.

The princes then put Jeremiah in a cesspool. They lower him down in this thing, and he sinks into the mire. There he lives in a situation in which he cannot lie down because he would drown.

Imagine this scenario: you are standing up in that stuff and bogged way down in it. So what you would have to do is lean back against the wall and hope that you would wake up should you slump into sleep. You are trying to stay awake. Perhaps you could try to brace yourself so that maybe you could get some sleep while you are standing.

Jeremiah is there in a cesspool. This is the man of God! Class, you are going to hear all manner of sermons that say, “God does not want His people to be in a cesspool. God does not want His people to suffer and be smote, put in prison, and then taken out and stuck in a cesspool. God does not want bad things to happen to His people.” You hear this all of the time. But God *allows* bad things to happen to His people because the *kenosis* is sacrifice. Jesus, our Lord, went all the way to the cross and died. That was for our benefit. When bad things happen to you, God is using them for the redemption of others. Your life is not just for your enjoyment. Your life is for God to use as one of His resources. He wants to purchase something with your sacrifice just like He used Jeremiah here.

When the king calls Jeremiah out and says, “Have you got a word from God for me?” Jeremiah comes out, straps the truth on him again, and is sent straight back into the cesspool. He is being faithful when he could have avoided all of this suffering by becoming a false prophet, and he would have gotten the good things, the good life. But he does not do that. He stays true to his commitment, and it costs him. But Jeremiah is buying something, a life-giving notice from God to His people.

Certainly, I do not want a saint to suffer, but the suffering that Jeremiah did is beneficial to me where I stand right now. I believe that there have been people for centuries that have looked at Jeremiah and said, “That is my model, what I am going through is nothing. I

will stand in the cesspool until somebody comes and gets me out.”

There is Jeremiah. All he had to do was to recant, and he would have been out of there. He did not recant, but God sent a man, a black man. Does it seem like every time somebody needs to be redeemed, God sends a black man? When His own Son was collapsing under the cross, God tapped a black man and said, “Pick up your Lord’s cross and carry it for Him.” This is what His disciples are supposed to do: deny ourselves, pick up our Lord’s cross, and follow Jesus.

So here is Abedmelech who is a black man, an Ethiopian, who begs the king to let him get Jeremiah out of that cesspool. The king says, “Go.” Abedmelech takes a group of men with him; it takes 30 of them. Jeremiah is so bogged down in this mess that they can hardly pull him out. If they just told him to hold on to the rope, they could not have pulled him out. So they put it under his armpits. They used rags so that the ropes would not cut him in half. They hook it up under his arms, rig a harness, if you will, and they pulled. He finally comes loose from the mire and is lifted out.

The king calls and asks again, “Tell me surely since you have suffered all of this, you have come to your senses. What does the Lord have in store for us now?” Jeremiah says, “If you will surrender and fall captive to the Babylonians, you will live. If you do not, you are going to die.” Jeremiah preached the very same message without regard to his own welfare even though they might put him back in the cesspool. Jeremiah is going to faithfully preach the same message regardless of what the king is going to do to him.

THE KINGS DURING JEREMIAH’S MINISTRY

List the five kings of Judah during Jeremiah’s ministry?

1. Josiah, 640 to 609 BC (started the Deuteronomic reform).
2. Jehoahaz, 609 BC (reigned for three months and was captured by Necco, the Pharaoh of Egypt).
3. Jehoiakim, 609 to 598 BC (had no respect for God, His message, or His prophet;² conquered by Nebuchadnezzar).
4. Jehoiachin, 598 BC (reigned for three months, removed by Nebuchadnezzar).
5. Zedekiah, 597 to 586 BC (captured by Nebuchadnezzar in the final siege, destruction of Jerusalem, and captivity of Judah).

Nebuchadnezzar killed Johoiakim in 598 BC, but Jehoiakim was king during much of Jeremiah’s preaching. Some of that preaching will be taken up in the next chapter. During his rule, the country was prospering, and there was no war coming at him. But he was leading his people in the wrong direction.

When Jehoiakim died Jehoiachin came to the throne for three months. His rule was very short because Nebuchadnezzar came to assault Jerusalem, conquer them again, take Jehoiachin out, and install Zedekiah. Judah went, in a very short time, from peace and prosperity to a conquered nation with their king taken out and another put in his place against the people’s will.

After Nebuchadnezzar installed Zedekiah, Jeremiah’s preaching begins to change. The change acknowledges that the possibility of repentance is past. Now, it is, “You are going to have to surrender to live, or you are going to die. By the way where are all your official prophets? What did they say? They said, ‘The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord. Because of the Temple, Judah was invincible.’”

In Judah’s scenario, there was one man, Mr. Doom and Gloom, one man who stood against the whole dadgum world. One man!

² Important to remember.

They threw him in a cesspool, beat him and put him in prison. He had no family, no friends, no social life. After each day of ridicule, he went home behind the door and wept like a baby. Jeremiah was the weeping prophet. He had no comforter in the human realm. Yet, he stayed firm.

What about us? Can we pass the tests? Can we even halfway walk through this kind of test? Or will we tuck our tails and run at the first sign of trouble? Do we preach that God doesn't want His children to suffer?

Unlike Jeremiah, we have a lot of comfort from our families. You have a spouse; you have friends. You have the seminary; you have schoolmates; you have a lot of comfort in your churches. You have exhortations, strengthening, under girding. Jeremiah did not have those comforts to help him. In his wrestling with God, he called God a liar. Can you blame him? He called God "a failing waters," and then God said, "Repent or lose your office." His call included God's taking him through the struggles. He said, "I am just going to quit preaching. I will not say another thing." Then the message started burning in him like fire. He said, "I am caught by this incurable pain, God you are stronger than I; you have deceived me; you have tricked me; you have called me into this thing, and it is because I had no way to fight against you."

Jeremiah's life is being consumed by God because God owns him, and God can spend him just the way He wants to. He can spend you too just the way He wants to. The only difference is: what will your will allow God to do? If you will surrender your will, God will use you, but it will not be to elevate you! It will be to sacrifice you to raise up others, and then in the eschaton, He will elevate you. Our elevation (glorification) happens after this life is over with.

Take heart! I do not know what struggles you are going through. Surely you are going through struggles. All of us are going through

struggles. Take heart. This is good stuff for you. If you could just fall back on a couch, not have any struggles, and have everybody just swooning over how great you are, then you would be just like the regular lost people. They can do that. They are quite good at doing that. What we must be able to do is go down into the sacrificial life, not fall on the couch, but go down into the pit, and keep on going and keep on going until you hit the bottom. Then God can elevate you after death. This life of sacrifice is what you are called to do. Take heart, go through it, you have many advantages. Jeremiah had no advantages. You have the same Lord walking with you that he had. We have more advantages than he had. Let us join hands and go through it together, and let us make the best that we can out of it.

THE FALSE PROPHETS

Jeremiah 23

Let us now go back to chapter 23:9. These are the prophets that Jeremiah was referring to when he asked the king, "By the way where are your prophets now?" Where are all those prophets that preached peace and good tidings all the time?

Jeremiah

23:9 Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.

23:10 For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force [is] not right.

23:11 For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.

23:12 Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery [ways] in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, [even] the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

23:13 And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.

23:14 I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies; they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.

23:15 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

23:16 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, [and] not out of the mouth of the LORD.

23:17 They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

23:18 For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard [it]?

23:19 Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.

23:20 The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

23:21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

23:22 But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

23:23 [Am] I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?

23:24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

23:25 I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

23:26 How long shall [this] be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, [they are] prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

23:27 Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

23:28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What [is] the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.

23:29 [Is] not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer [that] breaketh the rock in pieces?

23:30 Therefore, behold, I [am] against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.

23:31 Behold, I [am] against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.

23:32 Behold, I [am] against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

23:33 And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What [is] the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD.

23:34 And [as for] the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house.

This passage continues in the same spirit. God does not like this false prophet stuff of religious apostasy. I do not care who you are, how many ordinations you have, how much

payroll you are on, or how big your church is. These condemning words are what God says to the false prophet. This is a big time problem, and these prophets have become a fountainhead whereby the poison is going out from them into all of Judah. It does not stop there. These false prophets have become a fountainhead of poison to the entire world.

Friends, we are a fountainhead too. What comes out of us is either going to be poison (wormwood) or is going to be life-giving Truth. We have to get this thing right.

You see on national TV where the Presbyterians are meeting, and they are asking, "Does God want to ordain homosexuals?" They are looking in the Bible through the lenses of current philosophy, and they say, "Now God is a God of love, and not one that would exclude anybody. He loves all people, and therefore He loves these homosexuals. Now if He loves homosexuals, then surely they will have the same right of ordination as anybody else."

Thus, the Presbyterians are becoming a fountainhead spewing forth something. Is that something a life-giving truth or is it a poison that is going to go out all over the world and disgrace God like these prophets described in the book of Jeremiah? I think that they are a fountainhead of poison because they have done exactly the same thing that these prophets did in Jeremiah's time. They have left off repentance in their messages. Using the excuse that God is love and a respecter of persons. The homosexuals are His children, thus they do not have to repent because of who they are.

God tells the people, "Do not listen to your prophets." I think He is saying the same thing today to many denominations including ours. Do not listen to your prophets. Get away from them. They are wormwood. They will make you wormwood and make you drink the water of gall if you stay with them because they are a fountainhead of poison.

They are coming up with their own ideas and visions and dreams of their own hearts, and they are deceiving the people. Get away from them. God says further: "But if they had stood in My counsel and had caused My people to hear My Words, then My people should have turned from their evil ways and from their evil doings."

Jeremiah

23:18 For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard [it]?

If the prophet stands in God's counsel when he preaches, the people will turn from their evil. That is not the case any more in many churches and even whole denominations. The people are not turning from their evil. There is no call to repent.

ERRORS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALSE PROPHETS

What are the errors in the thinking of the false prophets?

1. They are profane. Jeremiah 23:11
2. They commit adultery, walk in lies, and confirm evil doers. Jeremiah 23:14.
3. They sent profaneness unto all of the land. Jeremiah 23:15.
4. They make the people vain and speak visions of their hearts (they tailored their sermons to their own desires.) Jer. 23:16
5. They predict peace even for those walking after their own hearts (they are pandering to passions). Jeremiah 23:17
6. God did not send them nor did He speak to them. Jeremiah 23:21.
7. They did not stand in God's counsel, and they did not turn their people from evil (no moral effect). Jeremiah 23:22.
8. They thought of God as a local deity. Jeremiah 23:23
9. They cover their lies with dreams. 23:25.
10. They are prophets of their own deceit.

Jeremiah 23:26³

11. They thought of the Word of God as a tranquilizer rather than fire. Jer. 23: 29
12. They steal God's Words.⁴ Jeremiah 23:30.
13. They preface their messages with "God says." Jeremiah 23:31.
14. They caused the people to err by lies and lightness.⁵ Jeremiah 23:32.

SERMON #11 GOOD AND BAD FIGS

Jeremiah 24

Jeremiah puts forward two kinds of figs. One batch is good figs and the other batch is bad figs. However, Jeremiah tells his people

³ The false prophets are themselves deceived. If they believe that they are right, they can preach it straight out of their heart. Since they believe they are right, the proclamation of the false prophecy is coming out of a deception that is within them.

Today, false prophets read the scripture with a presupposition that this Old Testament was for a long time ago, but we have progressed and are now dealing with a God of love and forgiveness. What if you should buy into this presupposition, that God made them the way they are but covers everything with grace.

If you over-emphasize grace, you get a false Christianity. Grace is so huge that it is unspeakable, but it is limited. Grace will forgive you, but it does not okay your behavior. I do not care who you are, you can be the biggest, wealthiest, most powerful Christian in the history of the world, but if you behave wrongly, you are going to be punished.

Today's false prophets try to say that Jeremiah was for only those under the Law. But God did not destroy the Law. He came to fulfill it. God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow; He does not change. "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things . . ." (1 Cor. 10:6) for the purpose that we do not repeat them.

⁴ Stealing God's Words works like this: God speaks to an issue, and He says some words that are dealing with that issue. You are to take the whole context that God is dealing with. He had some words about it, and it may be that He is condoning something. The preacher wants to speak to a separate issue that he wants to promote. He steals God's words that condone the first thing, but not the second thing. Then he uses them to promote his issue, the second thing.

⁵ Lightness is when you are dealing with something very solemn and heavy, *i.e.* God's Word. To pass over that Word is to treat it lightly.

something that is completely different from what they were thinking should the captivity actually come.

First of all many folks are going to be taken out of their homeland. They are going to be taken all the way to Babylon. To the Judeans, that is like being taken all the way to the other side of the world. Nevertheless, some of the people are going to remain right here in the land. The people think that the good figs are the ones who will remain in the land, and the bad ones will be taken to Babylon as slaves. They naturally think this way because under the perverted version of Deuteronomic Theology, God always openly punishes the bad and rewards the good. But under God, reward and punishment do not necessarily follow man's own self-evaluations. Jeremiah says, "Contrary to your understanding, the good figs are going to Babylon as captives, and the bad figs are going to stay here, just backward to how you are thinking."

Thus in chapter 24, the point of the sermon of the good figs and bad figs declares that the good figs (v. 7) will be exiles, and the bad figs (v. 8) will stay in Judah.

SERMON #12 THE ANNIVERSARY OF JEREMIAH'S CALL

Jeremiah 25

What are the main features of Jeremiah's sermon on his 23rd anniversary of his call?

1. Jeremiah's preaching for 23 years was consistent. 25:1-3.
2. There were other good prophets who called for repentance. 25:4-6.
3. The people were not receptive. 25:7.
4. Nebuchadnezzar is God's instrument of discipline. 25:9.
5. Judah will be enslaved for 70 years. 25:11.
6. Babylon will be punished afterward. 25:

12. 33.
7. All nations of the earth will suffer. 25:15- 8. The shepherds will not escape. 25:34-36.

Chapter Questions

1. What three presuppositions did Zedekiah make concerning God?
2. Outline Sermon #9, Is God Going To Fight The Battle For Judah? Jeremiah 21
3. What is the thesis of Sermon #10, Against The False Pastors And Prophets? Jeremiah 23
4. List the five kings of Judah during Jeremiah's ministry?
5. What are the errors in the thinking of the false prophets?
6. What is the point of Sermon #11, Good And Bad Figs? Jeremiah 24. How does that apply to Christians?
7. What are the main features of Jeremiah's sermon on his 23rd anniversary of his call?

Chapter 5

TRUTH, FAITH, AND TRADITION

Jeremiah 26-35

SERMON #13

SERMON OF THE TEMPLE

COURT

Jeremiah 26

God gives Jeremiah the following instructions:

Jeremiah

26:2 Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD'S house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD'S house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word:

He said proclaim these words to everybody who comes into the Temple, and this particular service is one in which the people of Judah's cities are all coming. It is not just the Jerusalem crowd worshipping this time. It is all the cities of Judah. They are coming into the Temple in city groups. Each group is usually led by the prince of the city. They come together to the gates and gather in the court. Then they move into the Temple, into the sacrificial areas, and the princes will leave their people at that point and go to the king's house.

There is a gathering, then, of the king and the princes of the country. They, then, conduct their business. The princes then come back to the Temple at a later period, and there will be a procession of royalty into the Temple, and they will do their worship at that point. But right here at their initial entrance into the Temple, God tells Jeremiah to stand there in the Temple court when all the people of the particular city enter initially. He is to start preaching to each city group. God gave Jeremiah the preaching assignment and the words to be preached.

Jeremiah

26:4 And thou shalt say unto them, Thus

saith the LORD; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you,

26:5 To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending [them], but ye have not hearkened;

26:6 Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

God's words: "I will make this house like Shiloh" is a threat to their idol. God is attacking them right at the point of their idolatry. You remember that we talked about how the Temple Sermon pointed out the continuous refrain, "Temple of the Lord, Temple of the Lord"? The people thought that there was some vicarious protection over them and their welfare from the Babylonians by the fact that they had the Temple in their possession. They thought that with God's Temple in their midst, how could the Babylonians come in and invade God's place when He is resident right here in this Temple? Their protection was supplied by the Temple, and the extent of their worship was Temple worship.

Please understand that we can also fall into that trap. This warning is as relevant today as it was in the day that Jeremiah said these words. If we think that there is some kind of efficacy for our going to a church, then we are in the same boat they were in. There might be a Jeremiah assigned to the church that says, "You people, if you do not hearken unto God and start following Him, then He is going to destroy this church and your land."

God is warning the Judeans: "If you do not listen to Him, God is going to destroy this Temple and turn it into the same rubble that He did to Shiloh, the worship center of the

Northern Kingdom.”

Now starting in verse 7, we are going to look at the reaction of the priests and the prophets when they heard Jeremiah speak these words. In verse 8 they said, “We are going to take him saying, ‘You will surely die. Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord saying this house shall be like Shiloh? and this city shall be desolate without inhabitants.’” Their anger is overflowing, but about this time, the princes and the king make their grand entrance.

Jeremiah

26:11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man [is] worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

Being undeterred by the prophets and priests clamoring for his death because of his fear of God and determination to complete the commission from God, Jeremiah obediently makes his speech to the princes also.

Jeremiah

26:12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

26:13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

26:14 As for me, behold, I [am] in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.

26:15 But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

26:16 Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man [[is] not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

The picture is that the prophets and the priests are ready to kill Jeremiah. The princes, who are the government people, are saying, “Hold it! He is just preaching what God told him to preach.” This is quite a reversal, folks.

Jesus said in the New Testament that there is going to come a time when the religious people are going to persecute you in the name of God. That is what is happening here in Jeremiah’s time. The prophets and the priests are the official professional religious people who are persecuting Jeremiah. They are doing it because he is attacking their idol.

The princes who do not have any of the deeper understandings of God are the ones who bring the voice of reason into the situation. That would be kind of like us being persecuted by the church, and the mayors of our cities coming to our rescue: “Hold it! What is wrong with the preacher? He is just preaching what God told him to preach.” What a neat turn of events.

Carl: The priests and the prophets were upset because they had been telling everybody that they would have nothing but peace and prosperity and that God would look out for them because they were God’s people and God’s residence was in Judea. The people were being told that they did not have anything to worry about. And Jeremiah was contradicting them by telling them just the opposite.

V: Right.

In verse 20 there is a name I would like for you to circle—Urijah who was a contemporary of Jeremiah. He was a good prophet who prophesied what the Lord told him to preach. King Jehoiakim killed him. Please note that right here at the time of Jeremiah, there was another good prophet who was an unheard of guy, you see. You do not know much about him except the little bit in verse 20. Jeremiah, then, was not totally

alone in God's mission. There was another one who was killed.

What I want you to see here is that when the persecution comes, you may be that unknown person. You may be like Urijah, and there may be another one over here that has all the notoriety, and he is the one like Jeremiah. Both are faithful in God's eyes.

Jeremiah

26:20 And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah:

The Jeremiah-like one may preach the same message that you are preaching, but he may get the notoriety. You may experience death for preaching the same message while he may escape death.

Many of our forefathers were burned at the stake, and nobody even recorded their names. Nobody knows them. There were about 300 Anabaptists that were burned at the stake in England, and all they got was a number. They were like Anabaptist number 15 or number 227 or something like that—no names. In your little pilgrimage it could come out that you would be a no-name person. You get persecuted and put away, and nobody knows your name. But God knows your name.

Here is an example of giving your life for the Lord without anyone knowing of it. When we have gone through more than twenty chapters of Jeremiah, and we get this one little blip here about Urijah, and we do not know anything about him except that he was a faithful prophet of God. He was faithful enough to be killed for the faith. I admire that.

How was Jeremiah saved from death after declaring the fall of the Temple?

1. He appealed to the princes and the people

rather than the prophets and priests.

2. There was no change in his message.¹
3. God sent him.
4. Yes, he knows that they can kill him.
5. They will bring innocent blood on themselves and on the people.
6. The elders confirmed the princes by using Micah's example.

Jeremiah

26:17 Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,

26:18 Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed [like] a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

26:19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

Hezekiah was a good king. When Micah prophesied the same kind of prophecy, Hezekiah repented and went to the Lord, "Lord, what do you want us to do?" Hezekiah, as you recall, was one of the finest kings of the land. He led the people to repentance. But Jehoiakim was a sorry excuse for a king, and he refuses to repent. Jeremiah was preaching the Word of God, and he says either repent, listen to the Lord and follow Him, or else He is going to destroy this Temple.

¹ Look at verse 6 where he says, "Then will I make this house like Shiloh, I will make this city a curse among all the nations of the earth. There is your message. If you do not hearken to God and obey His ways, then this is what I am going to do." In verse 12 when he makes his appeal, he says to the princes, "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that you have heard." This is after they had grabbed him and were fixing to kill him. He just said the same sermon. Can you admire this guy? I just quake at the thoughts of my trying to do this kind of obedience.

The princes look at Jeremiah's preaching and think, "What is wrong with his telling us what the Lord said? This man is not worthy of death because he thinks that he is declaring the Word of God. He is not worthy of being killed."

Then the elders, who know something about God and their heritage, stand up and say, "The princes are correct. During Hezekiah's time there was a prophet named Micah, and Micah prophesied and Hezekiah repented, and the Lord did not destroy the city because here we are living in it. What is wrong with that? It worked with Micah and that king. We ought to do the same thing."

The elders confirmed the princes' statement by going back to Scripture. The elders went back to Scripture and pulled out the example that should apply in the situation at hand. The princes did not go to Scripture. They did not know anything about Scripture. They came at the accusation from a perception of this guy's doing what all prophets should be doing whether or not they are on the payroll. They figured that Jeremiah was not worthy of death. Since they were in charge of the death penalty, they thought, "He only preached what he thinks he heard from God. He is not worthy of death."

There are two separate groups coming together, one secular, and one from the scriptural point of view. The princes were not secular like our government people of today are, but they were not into Scripture like the elders were. The scriptural point of view confirmed wise secular government. It is interesting how this came about. If Jeremiah had made his appeal to the prophets and the priests, there would be no more book and no more Jeremiah.

That help from secular quarters is amazing to me. Paul also did some of this kind of stuff when he made the appeal to government when the Pharisees were ready to kill him. He made the appeal to the government to

protect him from the unjust demands of the religious leaders.

Pete: On this last Tuesday night, I actually included this passage in my ministry at the jail. I preached to 65 inmates and 15 gave their lives to the Lord. It was overwhelming. We only had an hour. The guards ran us out when guys were still coming up in answer to the invitation. As I left, I said to the inmates, "I will come back. Write your names down and give them to the chaplain. We will be praying for you." It was great. I got a standing ovation when I finished. I did not have time to spend with those who had answered the invitation because we have to leave as soon as the guards say the word. It was awesome.

V: You were right where you were supposed to be.

SERMON #14

THE YOKE

Jeremiah 27:8-11

This is an interesting sermon in which God tells Jeremiah to build a yoke and put it around his neck and go preach:

Jeremiah

27:8 And it shall come to pass, [that] the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

Jeremiah tells them that God has decided on Judah's punishment. Judah will be invaded by Babylon. Babylon is going to defeat God's people and take the nation captive into Babylon. Then Babylonians will be transplanted into Judah.

Jeremiah declares that the people of Judah must submit to the punishment. God has chosen to make this captivity the punishment,

and if Judah does not submit, He is going to kill them. The only way to live is for Judah to submit to the punishment, i.e. put their necks in the yoke and live. If they do not put their necks in the yoke, they will surely die.

Jeremiah

27:9 Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:

27:10 For they prophesy a lie unto you ...

God tells His people to get away from their lying prophets. The nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, those will God let remain alive in their own lands. He is saying that His people will submit to the punishment or they will die.

These false prophets are saying that Judah does not have to submit, because the Babylonians are not going to invade and conquer the land. They are saying, "Peace, peace," and "Temple of the Lord, Temple of the Lord." They are still professing that there is some kind of a vicarious efficacy in their having the closeness of the Temple right there in their own land. God is saying, on the other hand, "Do not listen to them, they are false prophets. If you want to live, submit to My disciplinary punishment."

SERMON OF THE YOKE

Jeremiah 28, (continued)

The sermon of the yoke describes the struggle going on between true and false prophecy. In Chapter 28, Hananiah, the false prophet, is going to challenge Jeremiah. He comes up and physically breaks the yoke off of Jeremiah's neck because it is made out of wood. He breaks it and throws it off of him, and declares with that action,

Jeremiah

28:2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken

the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Like Jeremiah's Sermon of the Yoke, Hananiah's sermon on the broken yoke is based on exemplary action. Then he says further,

Jeremiah

28:3 Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon:

28:4 And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Now in Babylon's first invasion, they took Jeconiah (king Jehoiachin) captive, and that is why he only reigned for three months, and then they installed Jehoiakim as the king. Jehoiakim has been serving and paying tribute and taxes to Babylon, but now he is in a rebellious mood, and he thinks that Judah can break away from its position of vassal nation.

Jehoiakim has not been truly threatened yet. Right now at this point, we have this upstart Jeremiah telling him that the whole city is going to be destroyed along with the Temple if they do not submit.

We need to study this conflict now between Jeremiah and Hananiah, two prophets,

Jeremiah

28:5 Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD,

28:6 Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD'S house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place.

28:7 Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the

ears of all the people;

28:8 The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.

28:9 The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, [then] shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him.

If a prophet is predicting good things without the call to repentance, it is false prophecy *unless* God should perform it, but you cannot declare prophecy of blessing to be good until God actually performs it. So if a prophet comes in your midst and preaches good tidings without a call for repentance, you cannot put any stock in that sermon until God performs what the prophet said.

The only sermon in which you can put stock is the one that calls for repentance. Otherwise those prophets are tickling your ears, saying what you want to hear. If you accept a prophecy of God's favor and blessings while you are immersed in idolatry or in some kind of evil, and there is no call for repentance, what kind of prophecy is that? The only proof, then, of any good tidings without a call for repentance is in the happening of the good tidings.

Jeremiah strapped that test of prophecy on Hananiah. Hananiah predicted the good tidings of God's protection and blessings because the Temple was in their midst, and Jeremiah said, "Yes, I pray that the good tidings do happen. However, you had better listen to what I am saying because I am issuing a call to repentance from God. Sermons of good tidings without a call to repentance cannot be declared to be from God until the good tidings actually occur."

A prophet of peace has the burden of proof. True prophecy is ethical and conditional. Otherwise, it is suspect until proven by actually coming to pass.

Jeremiah then puts on a new yoke. This time it is a yoke of iron. In verse 12 the Lord says, "All right, Jeremiah, you went out there with a yoke, and Hananiah broke it. Now go make a yoke of iron, and preach My Words again." Jeremiah does that and then . . .

Jeremiah

28:15 Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.

28:16 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.

28:17 So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

Can you imagine Jeremiah coming up there with a yoke of iron on his neck and saying, "You are making these people trust in a lie, and God is going to throw you from the face of this earth. This year you will be dead." I believe the people ought to become a little more fearful of God!

LETTER TO CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

Jeremiah 29

Jeremiah writes a letter to his countrymen who are already captives in Babylon among whom is the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel was one of the people who had been taken from their homeland by Nebuchadnezzar in the first captivity. The first was not the main captivity. It was just a preliminary. There were two capturing attacks. Nebuchadnezzar had already made one victorious sortie against the nation of Judah during which he took Jehoiachin along with their best craftsmen and some of their highest, promising people captive. Among those captives was Ezekiel.

Now Ezekiel, while in Babylon, is going to write the book of Ezekiel. When you read Ezekiel, you are going to see him talking

about Jerusalem as if he is there, but he is not there. He is going to picture in his mind the city from one of its gates and through its streets. It is going to sound like he is actually in the city, but he is not. He is in Babylon, and he describes what he sees in his imagination. He starts to preach to the people about what he sees as he is walking in his imagination through the city.

Jack: Judah had been raided once by Babylon and some were taken captive, but there is still an openness between Judah and Babylon?

V: Yes, at this point in history, there is not a Babylonian domination of a destroyed Judah, but of a Judah which is a vassal. That means that Judah is able to set its own policies and regulations and that kind of thing within this construct, but it was paying tribute and taxes to Babylonia.

Jack: They came and raided, but they did not wholly take them over. They just took people back with them.

V: Right, a good number of their more promising citizens.

Jack: They did not leave a governing body of Babylonians with them?

V: No. Except for the appointed king Jehoiakim, Judah is still under self-rule as a vassal nation.

Jack: At what point was Daniel?

V: He was also taken to Babylon along with craftsmen and people of skills. Jeremiah is still in Jerusalem and prophesying to Judah, saying, "Obey God and submit to Him! If you do not get it right, then submit to the yoke. And if you do neither, you are dead."

We are now at the point in which Jeremiah is told by God to talk to the captives in Babylon. So Jeremiah writes a letter. This letter is going to tell us something too. If you are in a captive situation, and many of us are because our government is enslaving us, then

we are not able to minister like we desire. Gary just described it in his prayer request in which he is under an oppressive authority. He has to live in that situation because he cannot get out. So Gary is like the Babylonian captive. Here is a letter to those captives and to Gary and to you when you find yourself in that same situation.

Jeremiah

29:5 Build ye houses, and dwell [in them]; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

29:6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

See that "increased there, and not diminished"? That means that you are to endeavor to prosper and minister in your situation.

Jeremiah

29:7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives and so you are to prosper where you are, and you are to seek the peace there so there will not be war there and disruption and chaos and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

29:8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that [be] in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

So what he is saying here is that when you find yourself in captivity under this oppression, prosper while submitting your neck to the yoke. That tells us something very important here.

And then, Jeremiah goes on to say in verse 20 that the full 70 years are going to be accomplished. He warns that many prophets are going to say to you all manner of good things like, "We are going to get out of here soon, we are going to be liberated," etc. Those are false dreamers. The full 70 years

are going to be accomplished, and then “When I get ready to bring you out, I will bring you out” is what God said. Therefore, seek God for your consolation.

Jeremiah

29:13 And ye shall seek me, and find [me], when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

There is a false prophet in Babylon, Shemaiah, in verse 24, to whom Jeremiah says,

Jeremiah

29:24 [Thus] shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,

29:25 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that [are] at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,

29:26 The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man [that is] mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks.

29:27 Now therefore why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you?

You see, Shemaiah, an official prophet, has retained his office and pay during his captivity in Babylon. He tells the government back in Judah: “Why do you not imprison those people that just come out and appoint themselves as prophets and mock us true prophets? They are not recognized as prophets because they have not been affirmed and licensed by the government? If official appointment of prophets by the government is the law, then why have you not done so to Jeremiah? Why do you let him run around loose?”

So Shemaiah is trying to stir up trouble for Jeremiah from Babylon by writing back to Judah.

The scenario is thus: Jeremiah instructs

his countrymen in Babylon to try to prosper while in captivity because their captivity would be for 70 years. However, the false prophet tickles their ears by preaching yearnings from his own heart, “Oh, no, we are getting out of here soon.”

Shemaiah writes back to Jerusalem: “You have this mad man running around who made himself a prophet. If the law is that anybody who makes himself a prophet should be put into prison, then why is Jeremiah running around loose? Jeremiah is a false prophet without proper endorsement and license.”

Now I want to go over to Ezekiel for a moment. Ezekiel’s prophecy is going to come out of Babylon, and it is going to be dealing with the false prophets of Israel.

Ezekiel

13:2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

13:3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

13:4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

13:5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

13:6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made [others] to hope that they would confirm the word.

13:7 Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith [it]; albeit I have not spoken?

13:8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I [am] against you, saith the Lord GOD.

13:9 And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of

my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I [am] the Lord God.

There is always a battle between the true prophets and the false prophets. Usually the true prophets take the hit. Urijah has taken the hit unto death. Jeremiah has been seized. They attempted to kill him, they put him in the mire of the cesspool, they have put him in prison, they have put him in the stocks, and now we are getting letters from Babylon that are asking why he is still running loose when there is a law demanding imprisonment.

Coming back to Babylon we have a message from Jeremiah. He says, “Do not listen to those lies that they are saying about your getting out of captivity early. The full 70 years are going to be served. Make your life there, prosper there, do what is necessary to make peace, and pray.” He is giving them, then, a plan for how to operate in captivity.

That plan for operating in captivity is for us today. We are going to see our country and our freedoms collapse, and we are going to be captives just like the Jews were captives. Our slave masters will be our own evil government. Jeremiah has given us a way to behave in captivity. That is a way that applies to us because when God brings His discipline, He means for us to accept His discipline. So if we, in our country, do not listen to God and turn from this wickedness, we, too, will be disciplined, and when that discipline comes, put your neck into that yoke.

Over in Babylon, there is a distinction among the prophets. Just as in Jerusalem, there were the false prophet Hananiah and the true prophet Jeremiah. Over in Babylon, Ezekiel and Shemaiah were preaching opposite things. One is saying that all manner of good things are going to happen: “We are going to get loosed from captivity because we are the children of God (in our case, the bride of Christ). We are the chosen people. God is

going to get us out of this.” Nothing about repentance is in any of that positive preaching.

Then there is Ezekiel dropping the hammer down. You see, the situation in Babylon is identical to the one that is in Jerusalem. This is all happening at the same time, in the same years, and they are corresponding back and forth. This is a terrific scenario here for our learning.

JEREMIAH’S COMMISSION TO WRITE THE BOOK

Jeremiah 30

In chapter 30, God tells Jeremiah to write this Old Testament Book bearing his name.

Jeremiah

30:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

30:2 Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.

Jeremiah writes the book, but it is going to be destroyed by king Jehoiakim. This book of Jeremiah in our Bibles is a rewrite. Jeremiah wrote the book just like God told him, but Jehoiakim cut it up with a knife and threw it into the fire. But then God told Jeremiah to write it again.

Ted: That is like what you did to my report. (Much laughter around the room)

V: I think that when Jeremiah rewrote it, he had the help of Baruch for whom I have much admiration.

But anyway, these are Jeremiah’s writings in our Bibles because God told him to write them. So these are the Words of God. That is something that we know!

Chapter 30 reads a lot like the book of Revelation. “Writing these words in a book,” is commanded by God in both places to provide us and all the world the preserved Word of God. Also there is this wonderful promise in verse 22:

Jeremiah

30:22 And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

That is a direct quote that is used in both the Mosaic Covenant and the book of Revelation. And then in verse 24, he says,

Jeremiah

30:24 . . . in the latter days ye shall consider it.

So you see that there is hope present. It is a message of redemption, and that message of redemption is that when time ends, God will still be God and His people will still be His people. In those days there will not be any oppression from without. Our final place will be locked up tight and sealed, and God will be God, victorious at the end.

There is a description of the Gospel in Chapter 31. Verses 29 through 34 is a statement of the New Covenant. Then there is a powerful statement in 31:15 about Rachel weeping for her children quoted in Mt. 2:18. Remember when Herod sent out soldiers to kill all the children? This is an obvious prophecy of that future event, and it happened exactly the way it is recorded in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah

31:29 In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

31:30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Now here God is talking about the house of Israel, and they have already gone out of existence by this time.

Mary: Explain the part about the fathers and the children.

V: Okay, but let me finish my thought, and then we will look at that.

Jeremiah

31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

31:33 But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

This is the New Covenant in which God dwells inside the believer. The Lord has to live inside of your heart. When someone has the Lord living inside of his heart, he does not need someone to introduce him to the Lord. He already knows the Lord. He has intimate, person-to-person knowledge. It would be foolish for me to go to a believer and say, "Let me introduce you to the Lord." He would say, "I already know the Lord. My Lord has saved me."

Lost people do not have Jesus in their hearts. They need an external law code to restrain them from evil. However, if you have the law written in your heart, then there is an internal restraint from evil. So you see, a person who is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit needs no law because the Spirit will draw tighter boundaries than the law ever did. Even the thought life comes under the restrictions of the Spirit. Whereas the external law code has nothing to do with thought, only with actions.

This is the New Covenant described here

in Jeremiah, and it is a very straightforward statement. This statement uses Old Testament language, but it is not law. Christians do not have to check the Law “code” because the Law’s “Spirit” is there within you, driving you.

Let us look now at the sour grapes. How do sour grapes set the children’s teeth on edge? This, of course, comes under the Law. If the father eats some sour grapes, how do the children have their teeth set on edge? It comes as the consequences of breaking the Law.

The consequences of the father’s actions reach down to the children. It is the same principle that is used in Jeremiah’s announced punishment of Judah. A bad king leads the people wrong, the people are the slaves of God, they are trying to do their best, but their false prophets hired by their king are saying, “The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, peace, peace” and healing the people slightly. The people can be as well meaning as they can possibly be, but they are going the wrong way. Because of the actions of the king and his prophets, the people will be punished. The punishment is the corporate dimension of leadership’s sins.

Another way of saying it is in the principle of federalism. In federalism, the higher the sin reaches, the broader the consequences become. The head of a nation can cause suffering by the whole nation.

Ted: The consequences of their sins affects future generations.

V: Right. Sometimes the consequences follow long after the sin.

Not only generations are affected, but hierarchy is too. Look at America. Can you see how the consequences of our government are bringing hardships and trials to the common people, the lower echelon. That trickle down of consequences is the principle of federalism. All of these trickle down conse-

quences have to do with Law. Anytime you are dealing with an external code, your principle is that the father’s wrong acts bring suffering onto those under him, i.e. the children. Wrong acts by the kings and princes bring suffering onto the citizens, and those by the head of the family bring suffering onto the family members. The community prince brings problems onto the community.

Federalism is a top-down kind of external thing when you are dealing with the Law. However, when you move to the internal kind of spiritual thing, it is the individual who affects the individual. Christianity, at the spiritual level, makes you responsible for your own sins. When you are dealing with an external code concerning actions, you are going to have consequences that go to the innocent people. Abortion would be a very good example.

Ted: The innocent would be the unborn babies.

V: Right, the unborn babies suffer the consequences of the sin of the mother.

Jill: But our nation has allowed them to bear the consequences, so again it comes from the top down.

V: Right. There is going to be punishment on this nation, and that punishment is already beginning to arrive. When you cheapen life, you are going to see kids killing kids, kids killing adults, adults killing adults, adults killing kids. You are going to see those atrocities everywhere. There is going to be pain and suffering for those atrocities.

EXPLAIN JEREMIAH’S TEACHING ON INDIVIDUALISM IN JEREMIAH 31

1. God moves from corporate to individual responsibility. Jeremiah 31:29-30

Three-step scenario.

1	Lawlessness	You are a law unto yourself. You do not accept external restraints at all.
2	Under law	You behave according to the restraints of an external code.
3	Having the law written in your heart.	You are internally restrained by the Spirit of God.

If the third step is Christian, and the middle step is the law for lost persons, then the first step would be that of a reprobate. If, then, everyone starts with lawlessness, then law for a child is the discipline of a parent. “If you do . . . I am going to punish you” is a parent disciplining, maturing, and nurturing a child to accept the next step of being under law. As that child is nurtured and admonished under that kind of environment, not abused but nurtured in that kind of environment, he will live. That is quite an accomplishment right there. He will live and he will have a good chance to become a good citizen and surrender to the law of the land so that he is not thrown into prison.

However, if the child does not learn to be under the law of the parent, he will not likely submit to the law of the land or the external law code. When this occurs, he is going to be restrained, not by law, but by prison bars. Somebody is going to restrain him. Therefore, he is either going to submit himself to the external law code, or he is going to be subjected to prison bars.

Now if the child has grown up to yield to external law, then he can much more readily see Who the lawgiver is. The ultimate lawgiver is higher than his parents who gave him their initial laws and higher also than the government which gave him the next layer of laws. He is able, then, to see the Creator who gives him the law of life.

So a parent’s good rearing of good citizens is part of the process of bringing them to

an ability to yield next to civil law and finally yield their lives to Jesus. But if you raise them to be lawless, they are going to have to be able to get through a complicated middle step in order to get over to the point where they are ready to yield their lives over to the Lord.

The process of leading the people of Judah from lawfulness to lawlessness and the steps of apostasy in the first chapter both deal with this issue as well.

We need to look at this process in which the people of God are moving from corporate to individual responsibility. Corporate responsibility is not a bad place because prior to that step is the step of each individual being a law unto himself or unto chaos, which is lawlessness. When we come to the man of sin, the beast in Revelation, the man of lawlessness, he will be a law unto himself. He is not going to be a man under the law, under the external code restraining him. He is not going to have any restraints. He is going to do what ever he thinks. He is just going to be a law unto himself, and he is going to make the external law to be what he wants to impose on everyone else. That is why your law in the end times is going to be a moving target. You are not going to know what is legal or illegal until Antichrist tells you.

In the end times, something can be good today and bad tomorrow. We are getting to that point already. You need to see this truth because the Supreme Court is changing its mind daily. The subjective law is coming because the law of codes based on the authorial intent of an external code, our constitution, is no longer governing our morals of this land. Instead, the subjective law of man, of the men of our courts and our government, can do things by decree now that could not be done in our country under the foundation of constitutional law. The law has become a subjective domain of our government leaders. They can do whatever they want to do no matter

what the law code says. Codified law is passé. The law is what our government wants it to say, what is expedient, what kind of message they want to send to us, the people.

As adults we must show our children a self-restraint. Even if you are not saved, and you do not have the law of God in your heart, you can at least give your children a good start at life if you will accept the external law code. Teach them the law of the parent first so that they will more readily accept the external law code of the land. If you will do that much, you can pass on a good heritage to your children, a blessing to your children. However, if you do not do this much, you will pass on a curse, i.e. their teeth will go on edge. If you will do it, however, you will pass on a blessing to them.

Federalism works well when the government is good, but lawlessness working through federalism is really ruining our land.

2. There will be no need to introduce a believer to Jesus because he will already know Him intimately. Jeremiah 31:34
3. The inner spiritual change will manifest itself in outward action. Christianity is an inside-out job. Jeremiah 31:33
4. The Lord of Hosts is His name. Jeremiah 31:23
5. The new covenant is future to Jeremiah, but its principles are already present. Jeremiah 31:31-33

SERMON #15

THE PURCHASE OF A FIELD

Jeremiah 32

Here is a situation in which the Babylonians have laid final siege to Jerusalem, and the invaders are camped around the city's perimeter. God comes to Jeremiah and says, "Do you see that camp out there on the other side of the wall?" He looks out there, "You mean the one where all the Babylonians are?" God says, "Yes, that is the one. I want you to buy that ground that their camp is on."

This is a redemption lesson similar to the one in which a kinsman, a redeemer, the oldest kinsman can redeem something from someone who is ready to get rid of it. The first option goes to the oldest kinsman. If he turns it down, the option goes to next oldest and so forth until there are no more kinsmen. Then it is up for sale to the public.

Well, nobody would want to buy the land upon which the Babylonian army was camped. God tells Jeremiah, I want you to buy that place. To his credit, Jeremiah hands over the money for a major real estate purchase. Jeremiah actually buys the land that the Babylonians are camped on. It is an interesting event because he is going to question God in verses 16 through 25.

Jeremiah

32:16 Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying,

Please notice the introduction of Baruch. His name is introduced in this purchase. We will hear more about Baruch next week. You are really going to fall in love with Baruch. He is truly a big league minister who apparently has been gravitating toward this crazy prophet of God who, at this point, is in prison. Persecution had escalated to the point that Jeremiah is now in prison. So he cannot go out in public and register his purchase.

This new friend of his, Baruch, comes to him, and Jeremiah says, "I need some help here. I need for you to go and file the evidence of this purchase." Baruch readily complies with Jeremiah's wish.

Jeremiah

32:17 Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, [and] there is nothing too hard for thee:

32:18 Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty

God, the LORD of hosts, [is] his name,
 32:19 Great in counsel, and mighty in
 work: for thine eyes [are] open upon all
 the ways of the sons of men: to give every
 one according to his ways, and according
 to the fruit of his doings:

Please note the law of the harvest stated
 here in the Old Testament (v.19). The law of
 the harvest gives everyone according to his
 ways and his doings.

Jeremiah

32:20 Which hast set signs and wonders
 in the land of Egypt, [even] unto this day,
 and in Israel, and among [other] men; and
 hast made thee a name, as at this day;

32:21 And hast brought forth thy people
 Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs,
 and with wonders, and with a strong hand,
 and with a stretched out arm, and with
 great terror;

32:22 And hast given them this land,
 which thou didst swear to their fathers to
 give them, a land flowing with milk and
 honey;

32:23 And they came in, and possessed it;
 but they obeyed not thy voice, neither
 walked in thy law; they have done
 nothing of all that thou commandedst
 them to do: therefore thou hast caused all
 this evil to come upon them:

32:24 Behold the mounts, they are come
 unto the city to take it; and the city is
 given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that
 fight against it, because of the sword, and
 of the famine, and of the pestilence: and
 what thou hast spoken is come to pass;
 and, behold, thou seest [it].

32:25 And thou hast said unto me, O Lord
 GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and
 take witnesses; for the city is given into
 the hand of the Chaldeans.

This is a long protest. You need to get the
 scenario. God said, "All right, Jeremiah, I
 want you to buy that land on which the
 Chaldeans are camped. They are putting
 mounts up and soon all of Judah is going to
 fall. And everybody is going to submit their
 neck to the yoke, or they are going to die by
 the sword."

When making a mount in a siege, all the
 enemy soldiers dig dirt and fill up baskets.
 Then they carry this basket of dirt on their
 heads and come up to the edge of the wall
 where they dump the dirt. Then they put that
 basket back up on their heads and run back to
 safety. All the while arrows are shooting
 down at them. The besieged soldiers on the
 walls are trying to kill these guys. The
 soldiers carrying the dirt to make the mount
 are getting killed right and left. This is the
 way a siege was conducted against walled
 cities. The soldiers ran up to the walls with
 their load of dirt, dumped it, and then ran
 back out hoping that they would not get
 killed. Enough dirt at the edge of the wall
 was dumped over the great expanse of time
 that a sloping ramp was built up to the top of
 the wall. When the ramp was high enough,
 then the invaders could run up that ramp in
 order to go over the wall.

While the mount was being built, the
 besieging army would bring up the catapults
 and the archers to try to destroy the defenders
 on the wall until it was time to run in and
 capture the city. They start with catapults
 bombarding inside of the city, disrupting, and
 creating chaos there. Then they start shooting
 fire into the city to catch it all on fire. The
 fire diverts the citizens to use their manpower
 trying to put out the fire. Then arrows are
 launched which results in a lot of people
 being killed at the wall. The main force runs
 up the ramp to invade the city, but many
 others run up at other points with ladders to
 scale the wall. They are, then, inside the city
 and the final battle is on.

Jeremiah says, "They are building the
 mount. You told me to buy the land beneath
 the mount. You are almighty, and you are all
 powerful, and you know all the ways of men,
 and you are going to bring judgment on all the
 evildoers, and here is the law of the harvest
 and everything, and you have told me to buy
 the land under the mount." But to his credit,
 when God told Jeremiah to buy the land,

notice that Jeremiah called the man that was selling the land, counted out the money, called Baruch to go register the sale, and he bought the land. He was obedient even when the deal made no sense.

Jeremiah's obedience just thrills me. He obeyed God's command in every detail. Then he makes this long complaint, but he prefaced his whole complaint all the way down to verse 25, with "You are so great, You know all men, and nothing is too hard for You, and You have a long, outstretched Arm, and You established the law of the harvest."

Then God answers back.

Jeremiah

32:27 Behold, I [am] the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?

Man! This is outstanding, and the fact that God will dialog with an individual questioning His commands gives me hope that He will dialog with me in my questionings.

SERMON #16, THE COMING CAPTIVITY

Jeremiah 34

The mound outside the walls is getting close to completion at this point in the book. Any minute now the invaders are going to be shooting in the arrows, and the city is going to be burning.

Sometimes we get into such a low state of spirituality that to move to where we are supposed to be is such a long distance move that God will give us some baby steps to get there. He will say, "If you will take this little step right here, I will bless you." When you get into that position, He gives you another baby step. He is easing you back to where you are supposed to be.

It took a long time for Judah to get down to this state of apostasy, and God said to them, "I want you to obey me." But they did not listen to Him. Then He said, "If you do

not obey me, I am going to do such and such to you." They still did not listen. He gave a series of calls to full repentance, and they did not listen to Him. That means that their state of apostasy was so bad that they could not even hear clearly any more. So in this sermon, He said, "All I want you to do is observe the Sabbatical point of letting the slaves loose. He was trying to give just the tiniest step for them. He was not even telling them to obey all of His commandments. He just gave them one little baby step: "If you will do this one thing, I will bless you." This promise is here in verses 8 through 10.

Sybil: Observe the slavery Sabbath?

V: . . . by letting the people go. In Jewish law when someone sold himself or herself into slavery, they were slaves only for six years. On the Sabbath year they were freed.

If you took Exodus with me, we dealt with this issue of slavery and God's parameters for it. On the seventh year the slave was supposed to be freed. However, the ruling class of Judah was using power to retain the slaves beyond the six years. They were, then, disobeying God's laws that protected slaves by putting a limit on how long their slavery was to last.

So this freeing of the slaves was a little baby step. God was asking them if they could do this one little thing in obedience to Him.

Jeremiah

34:9 That every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, [being] an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, [to wit], of a Jew his brother.

This, then, is the baby step. God said, "I want you to let everyone of your slaves, whether man or woman, go free." Verse 10 has their response.

Jeremiah

34:10 Now when all the princes and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let

his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let [them] go.

And so they observed God's command and obeyed it, and the slaves were released to be free again.

In summary, the mount was nearly finished outside the city wall. The Chaldeans were camped all about and at the point where they were about to launch the final attack. Jeremiah declares that God says to let your slaves go, and He will bless you. So, they obeyed and let the slaves go free. And God caused the Chaldeans to break off from their attack. They quit building the mount, they got up, and they returned to Babylon. Now that miracle should have told Judah something right there. But what did the Judeans do?

Mary: They took back the slaves.

V: Yes, this is pure treachery. I want you to see that. This is treachery, like "foxhole religion." You obey long enough to get what you want from God and then you resume your disobedience. That is treachery. God gave them this baby step, and they stepped up on that baby step, and they are ready to go the next step. But they stepped back down as soon as they got the prize for their obedience.

The sermon changes at this point. God announces to His people that there will not be any more blessing, now. The Chaldeans will be coming back. The destruction and captivity are surely coming.

You need to see this in your own lives. When He gives you a baby step, and you step up on it, there is more responsibility coming. However, if you take the blessing that results from your obedience and use it for self-indulgence, more blessing will not be coming.

When God moved the army away, it looked like the curse had been removed. They took that blessing to themselves and

then stepped back down off that step. That is when Jeremiah announced, "You thought that the curse had been removed. NO, they will be back!"

The Chaldeans will come back and mount a siege of attrition. The conditions will get so bad that the Judeans actually will become cannibals: mothers will eat their babies. This is the worst siege that I have ever heard about.

They had escape within their grasp. It had already been given to them. It was in their hands, but the Judeans traded it for a temporal blessing of self-indulgence. After this act of pure treachery, God washed His hands of them. In sermon #16, Jeremiah says, "Judah, you have purchased terrible suffering and bondage."

SERMON #17

SERMON ON THE RECHABITES

Jeremiah 35

Rechabites were a nomadic group that was camping in Jerusalem. Ordinarily they do not camp in defended cities. They would camp in their wanderings across the land and feed off the land.

The Rechabites had sought refuge in Jerusalem because it was a walled and defended city. They were a novelty in Jerusalem and were being entertained and provided wine to drink, but their vow was that they would never drink wine. They had every temptation to drink the wine since they were observing basically their last days on earth because of the immanent siege. They were tempted to drink the wine, and the only thing that restrained them was a vow. However, the Rechabites refused to drink the wine.

Their refusal judged Judah because if the Rechabites could restrain themselves because of a vow to a human being, and the people of Judah could not restrain themselves even though they had a covenant, a vow to God Himself, then the Rechabites became the

judge of Judah. Their actions judged Judah as treacherous, disobedient, and stiff necked. Verse 14 is the statement.

Jeremiah

35:14 The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their fathers commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.

God is speaking to the people of Judah.

His point is that the Rechabites obeyed their father, but the Judeans did not obey theirs. The Rechabites are going to be blessed forever according to verse 19.

Jeremiah

35:19 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

God gave the Rechabites a promise of eternal blessing for their faithfulness.

Chapter Questions

1. How was Jeremiah saved from death after declaring the fall of the Temple?
2. Describe Sermon #14, The Yoke. Jeremiah 27:8-11
3. Explain the principles of federalism or “sour grapes putting the children’s teeth on edge.”
4. Explain Jeremiah’s Teaching on Individualism in Jeremiah 31.
5. Explain Sermon #15, The Purchase of a Field. Jeremiah 32
6. Summarize Sermon #16, The Coming Captivity. Jeremiah 34
7. Explain Sermon #17, Sermon on the Rechabites. Jeremiah 35.

Chapter 6 THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

Jeremiah 36:1-32; 45:1-5; Jeremiah 39:1-44:30

JEREMIAH 36

Remember now that we are doing parts of the book out of order. It is difficult to figure out how to get Jeremiah back in order. It is my theory that it is out of order because the first book was destroyed, and Jeremiah was told to rewrite it. I do not know what the process of the rewriting was. Since they also had to flee to Egypt, an out of sequencing could have entered via the chaos. There are a lot of things that happened during that time frame.

Chapters 36 and 45 deal with Baruch. Then we will pick up with 39 through 44, which deal with the fall of Jerusalem and the flight into Egypt.

Last week, we talked about Baruch who was charged by Jeremiah with going out and making a deal on the land purchase. The land was beneath the tents of the Babylonians who were besieging the city. That was a strange situation, but Baruch did it. Jeremiah was obedient to the Lord by spending his money for that supposedly worthless land.

Now we come to the next strange event. One of the lessons that you learn in this event is that making friends with a man of God carries great responsibilities. Baruch picked Jeremiah to be his friend, and as such, he is going to have the responsibility of doing some things that he would never have dreamed about.

Here is the way Chapter 36 describes the scenario: Jeremiah is dictating to Baruch all the words that the Lord has spoken to him. Baruch writes them down in a book. Look at what happens here in verse 4.

Jeremiah

36:4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son

of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.

36:5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I (am) shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD:

Now God told Jeremiah, “Write this stuff down, and then go into the house of the Lord and read it into the ears of the people.” Now Jeremiah calls Baruch and tells him to write this stuff down. When Baruch finishes it, Jeremiah tells Baruch to go read this book to the people because “I am locked up in prison, and I cannot go into the house of the Lord and read it to them.”

What would it be like if God told you to go and preach something like the Temple Sermon in the court of the Temple? That would be hard to do. Well, what if He tells this guy over here who is your friend, but your friend is incapable because of a disease or imprisonment or something like that. The friend says, “I am locked up and confined to these quarters, and I cannot go read this book to the people in the church denomination, so I want you to go read this book to the people in the convention.” You see how tight it can get very quickly? It was not to you that God spoke the words; it was that guy over there. God told “him” to go read the book, but now it is you who must do it.

When you have a friend that is very close to God, the next thing you know you can be up to your eyeballs in tough assignments. You must be careful who your friends are if you want the easy life (sarcasm). That is what I am seeing in here. But all kidding aside, Baruch proves to be a truly faithful man

of God at this point, and he does this assignment.

Jeremiah

36:5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I (am) shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD:

36:6 Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD'S house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.

So now if I were Baruch, I would be stammering and stuttering and backpedaling and everything, but Baruch does this assignment without complaining.

Jeremiah

36:10 Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house, in the ears of all the people.

36:11 When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD,

36:12 Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, (even) Elishama the scribe and Delaiah the son of She-maiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.

36:13 Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.

Now let me give you the scene here. Michaiah is too young to be included in the meeting of the princes. All the princes are gathered together in the King's house. Michaiah is basically wandering around, and he goes over to the Temple, and he is there in the Temple hearing Baruch reading the book.

When he hears the extent of this book which deals with the Temple of the Lord, all this stuff we have been studying here, he is alarmed and he crashes the princes' meeting. He goes in unannounced, interrupts them in the King's house, and tells them, "This man, Baruch, is out here reading a book in the Temple. You need to hear what he is saying. He is announcing some very bad news."

Michaiah has himself done a significant and daring thing by going into the princes, and standing in front of them all and announcing that they need to hear the book themselves.

Jeremiah

36:14 Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them.

36:15 And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read [it] in their ears.

36:16 Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words.

36:17 And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?

36:18 Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote [them] with ink in the book.

36:19 Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

36:20 And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.

The king, then, was told what the book said and that Judah was going to be destroyed

by God because of their idolatry. So the King said, "Let me hear the book itself." They sent for the book, and read it to him.

Jeremiah

36:23 And it came to pass, (that] when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast [it] into the fire that [was] on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that [was] on the hearth.

36:24 Yet they were not afraid . . .

Now king Jehoiakim and his council of princes were not afraid of these announcements. This is quite a difference from what the princes felt before. The king and his council had no fear whatsoever of God. He had no regard for God. They did not rend their garments or anything like that. There was a petition that the roll not be burned, but he decided to burn it anyway. He meant to take Baruch and Jeremiah to kill them, but the Lord hid them. They did not tell anybody where they were. So even if the person was tortured, he could not disclose the whereabouts of Baruch and Jeremiah.

God then comes to Jeremiah again, saying, "Now I want you to write the book over again," and then He says, "In this one I want you to say. . . ." And here is a passage in verses 27 down to 32 that was not in the first book. This passage is new, and it says, "Because you have burned this roll, I am going to wipe you out." So there is a condemnation issued to the king by God in the second book that was not in the first book. This is because of the king's burning the Word of God, and having no respect towards God.

Please note how much courage was in Baruch to do what he did and how much courage was in Michaiah to do what he did. God commanded Jeremiah to go and read the book in the ears of the people when he was locked up and unable to do it himself. So,

Jeremiah passed the ball to Baruch.

Henry: Since they already had the words from God written down, then I suppose that anybody could read it to the people.

V: That is good theology, Henry. It is the Word that is perfect, not the reader.

If God commands you to do something, you either have to do it yourself or make provisions for it to be done by someone else. God commanded Jeremiah to go read the book in the ears of the people. How was Jeremiah going to do that? Did he do right by sending Baruch to do that?

Oscar: I think God wants us pastors to use people in ministry. God wants to make sure that the people who are under your authority are obedient to you as well as to Him, and I think this paints a picture of Jeremiah that showed that he was obedient. This is also part of a good friendship. If a friend cannot do something, you may be called to adopt that particular person's responsibility. That is what Baruch was doing.

Homer: God wanted to use Baruch, too.

Joe: Do you think that if God had commanded Jeremiah to do something, he would not give him the means for that to take place?

V: I think that God always gives the way to accomplish His call.

Henry: Baruch was that way.

Jack: When Moses did the same thing, he got out of what God told him to do by getting someone else. God chastised Moses about it. But there is nothing in the record that says that God chided Jeremiah for not doing what He had told him to do. So, I do not think there was a problem in Jeremiah's passing the assignment to Baruch. Therefore, we have to assume that the purpose was to get the book read in the courts.

Mary: He asked Baruch to go in there to do a job, and he did it.

V: Jeremiah had already tested Baruch with buying the property, and doing all that legal stuff. I can imagine the scenario with the town people snickering and carrying on, saying, "Look at Baruch, look at that dadgum idiot over there buying a worthless piece of land for Jeremiah." And there is Jeremiah sending him on this thankless mission. And now they are laughing and carrying on at Baruch. All the ridicule is landing on Baruch instead of Jeremiah.

There is a mind set that when God gives a command that the emphasis is on the means. The emphasis should be on accomplishment, i.e. getting the commandment done either by doing it yourself or by using a trusted helper. Jeremiah rightly said, "Baruch, I am in prison. God has told me to do this assignment, and I cannot leave. So you are going to do it." And Baruch rightly went and did the assignment.¹ Baruch, passed a tremendous test here by accomplishing the task. But now we are going to look at Baruch's agenda to find out whether he passed the whole test 100%.

Before we leave this scenario here, though, I want to address Michaiiah. Was Michaiiah trying to serve the Lord?

Mary: He was trying to serve the King.

V: Okay, that is good. And he heard this threat to the kingdom, and he took it to the King's house, and crashed the party. He figured that the message was important enough to crash the council meeting that was going on. He gives, then, a summary report of what Baruch had read. The princes took the roll to the king and sent Baruch and

Jeremiah into hiding. They read the roll to the King, and he destroyed it piece-by-piece as they read it. There was contempt for the message by the King, but Michaiiah had no contempt: he brought the message to the princes, the princes heard the summary report, and they immediately concluded that the prophecy was too important to let it go by without the king knowing it.

The princes were afraid, afraid on two sides. They were afraid on the side that the king was on because if he found out that that kind of threat had been announced in his kingdom, and they did not tell him about it, then he would come down on them. On the other hand, the threat could not be ignored because it came from Jeremiah who claimed to be speaking for God. They were caught in a bind. What they wanted to do then was to hide the messengers, but also get the message to the king. That is what they did.

But the message was destroyed and made out to be contemptible. So God tells Jeremiah to write it again. So here they go. They write it again. And now we can read the part there that was not in the first book. Is that not cool?

Henry: I have trouble writing a five-page term paper. Just think about Baruch!

V: That description of the burning of the first book was written in the second.

BARUCH

Jeremiah 45

We will now look at Chapter 45. Here is the rub: Baruch was obedient even though it took him into some very dangerous and treacherous waters. However, he did the work he was supposed to do. Apparently, however, there was something less than a true altruism in his heart. After God read his heart, He sends the following message to Baruch.

¹ The spiritual gifts were used in this story. Jeremiah used his gift of administration, and Baruch used his gift of service.

Jeremiah

45:1 The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,

45:2 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch;

45:3 Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.

45:4 Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, (that] which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land.

45:5 And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek (them] not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

Here is the deal: Baruch was experiencing the grief and the sorrow that Jeremiah had been experiencing. You remember how Jeremiah would go out and do the bidding of the Lord, and come back and cry and complain and weep, and even called God a liar and a broken cistern full of stale water, and that kind of thing? Jeremiah felt all of the pain and agony of doing the Lord's work. He was alone, all alone, one man.

Baruch now has been brought in as a companion helper to Jeremiah, and instead of it being only a comfort to Jeremiah, it was also more pain to Baruch. So Baruch gets a taste of the whole deal of what it takes to be obedient to the Lord. Now he is complaining, "Woe is me. Not only do I have sorrow, but grief is added on top of that sorrow." This is a situation in which Baruch is suffering bad things for doing the right thing.

We cannot judge whether a deed was good or bad by its results. A deed is good if you obey God. And usually when you obey

God, you get bad results in temporal terms as seen through human eyes. Bad *temporal* results from doing the right thing will happen over and over and over again. However, good *eternal* results occur in every case of doing the right thing.

The best example of the difference between temporal and eternal results is Jesus Christ's obedience of God to the nth degree. What did He receive? He received, in temporal terms, the most horrible death on earth. Yet, after that death, in eternal terms, He was exalted to be Lord of lords and King of kings.

This difference between temporal and eternal results is a lesson that we need to understand. On the one hand, Deuteronomic Theology wrongly confines blessings and curses to temporal results. Those terms are that if you do the right thing, you will prosper during this life. Also you may tell who is righteous and who is not by looking at their prosperity. Deuteronomic Theology can lead you away from the *kenosis*.

If you confuse the difference between the *kenosis* and the opposite of the *kenosis*, you can get your understanding about what God is saying to you reversed quite easily under Deuteronomic Theology. You can be going in the wrong path thinking that you are serving God because your actions are leading to prosperity. As a matter of fact, in the last days, there are going to be people persecuting the Christians, killing them, and thinking that they are serving God.

So beware of falling into this kind of theological trap which expects temporal prosperity. Our greatest heroes have been those who have been sawn in half, buried alive, drowned, and burned at the stake.²

² Hebrews 11:35-37 mentions some of these. Others are found in church history.

Do you know what the *kenosis* is?³ What I want you to see here is that in the *kenosis*, following God is a costly exercise, and there is no escape from the costs. It may cost you your life. Now the cost also could be in your not being able to do what you always dreamed of doing, or your not having the money or the career or the prestige that you wanted to have. Those are things that are sacrificed in order to obey the Lord.

Now Baruch wanted his cake and wanted to eat it, too. He wanted to obey the Lord, but he also wanted to be exalted in this temporal time. So he thought in terms of being obedient to God, and then having the king commend him by saying, “Yeah, you are doing good. You announced all this trouble for my kingdom, and you are doing good.” He imagined that the princes would all gather around him and clap him on the back, and say, “Man, you warned us, you saved our lives.” Of course, every prophet wants to hear those words. But will it stop you from prophesying if you do not hear those words? What if you prophesy that judgment is coming, and they bust you in the face? Will you be faithful to prophesy the next message? This question is on the heart of every pastor that steps into every pulpit. You must make a determination: “Am I going to preach God’s Word no matter what the reaction is from them, or am I going to tickle their ears so that they will clap me on the back?” That is the decision that every one of you must make.

Betty: That is the reason behind Paul’s statement when he said that he would that every Christian not have a family. It would be easier to do it if it is just you. If you have a family, then it becomes difficult.

V: You are right, Betty. Marriage adds responsibilities and priorities. But Baruch wanted, just like all of you, to preach the

gospel and then be clapped on the back. It did not work out that way. So then he is in the position of saying, “Woe is me. Now my sorrow is piled up to here, and it is the same kind of sorrow that Jeremiah has. Not only is my sorrow up to here, I have all this grief piled up on top of my sorrow.”

His sorrow is because of the reaction of his hearers. Because his hearers do not heed God’s message, they must suffer. What is his grief for? Grief is an emotion that you have because of a loss, like a loved one dying. What I want you to see here is that God read his heart, and He says that Baruch was seeking great things for himself, verse 5.

Here in this scenario, Baruch has done the work of a prophet because he is now God’s spokesperson. He read the book to the people.

When you go into the pulpit or go into the Sunday school class, and you read the words to the people, then you are doing the prophetic ministry like Baruch did. We might sometimes skip a particular part of God’s Word because that part will not be received well in this or that church. So, we will skip that part and go over here to this good part which just addresses love and does not address sin. So we read that “good” part to them and expound on that because we don’t want to receive sorrow and grief. Are we expecting praise and gladness from the people like Baruch did?

Please see that we are each a Baruch. Why do we read the Words? Are we reading the Words to get a clap on the back? Or are we reading the Words because God commanded us to read the Words. Baruch read the Words in obedience to God. You must give him credit. However, he surely had some idea that there was at least a possibility of his being rejected because of the negativity of the message. Look at the history of

³ See Chapter 2

Jeremiah. Jeremiah is still imprisoned, but Baruch obediently goes out there and reads the Words to the people. He has sorrow because the message is rejected. He has grief added to his sorrow because his reputation is shot.

Carl: In these days, if you are a true teacher, a true disciple, you cannot be rich or have material goods?

V: If you can show me how to be rich and have those material goods simultaneously with being in the *kenosis*, then we will have a new kind of Christianity. However, if we throw out the *kenosis*, then we can have the kind of Christianity that is prevalent in today's churches.⁴

Carl: So we are saying that Baruch was obedient because he did what God said. He was experiencing grief and rejection and all those things that Jeremiah had felt because bad things are happening from the good of that obedience.

V: Right.

Oscar: The lesson we are supposed to get from that obedience is that if you are doing right by God, serving Him justly, then you are going to suffer temporally. But then, we see that Baruch was really doing all that he was doing not to serve God, but to seek great things for himself.

V: Right. He wanted both to have his cake and to eat it, too. He wanted a clap on the back from God because he obeyed God, and he wanted a clap on the back from the people because of his service to them. But now, God said, "Stop! The reason you did all this. . . ."

You see, there is a hidden agenda in Baruch's obedience, and that hidden agenda is that he wanted great things for himself. Beware that this hidden agenda does not creep into your ministry. This agenda is the opposite of the *kenosis*, and God will call you out for that.

Tim: You mentioned that Deuteronomic Theology says that if you do good, you will get good. But it goes both ways. Doesn't it?

V: Yes, that is correct. Here is the thing that you must understand in life. In the doing of good, you must not expect temporal good. Baruch expected temporal good and was called to task by God. We are not to expect temporal good for our good works. The *kenosis* demands that you expect suffering and death. Not only do you expect it, you anticipate it to the point of carrying your instrument of death with you on that downward, sacrificial trek. "Deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me."

Now my friend, the *kenosis* is hard news, and every one of us turns into a Baruch in a given moment. We want to serve God, but we also want to throw down that cross, our own instrument of death. Rather than being killed or even suffering, we expect to serve God and be exalted. We expect to be put on a throne and have all the people swoon and say all manner of good things about us. Dear friend, it does not work like that. Being persecuted for our good works is the hard news of the *kenosis*. Suffering in this life is the reality of following Jesus. If we forsake that reality, I can guarantee you that you will end up running down the wrong path.

However, God sometimes blesses us in this temporal time in addition to blessing us eschatologically. In Baruch's case, he did good, and he is going to be rewarded for that in his mortality. His life is going to be spared. I think that there was enough understanding in Baruch that this thing about which

⁴ If God gives you a lot of money, it is for the blessing of others. Do not spend your days of life seeking fame and fortune. Instead spend your days of life in the Lord's ministry (Mt. 10:21; Lk. 12:21).

he was called out by God could have turned out to be really bad for him. And when it did turn out bad for him, he had grief because he was seeking a good name with the people in high positions with the king. So he does not get rewarded for his reversing the *kenosis*, but he was rewarded for his taking the chance in that very difficult obedience. Having his life spared by the Babylonians in their siege is a good temporal blessing for Baruch.

Take this scenario as an example: A pastor goes out and preaches to a congregation a hard sermon. He is obedient to read the exact Words that God said, and he says those things while knowing that he is at risk but hoping that he is going to be celebrated and get a pay raise and a bigger church. He preaches those words and a riot breaks out. However, suppose that he not only does not get the pay raise or the bigger church, but also they fire him and throw him out. He has no job now. He has sorrow, but he also has grief on top of sorrow. That is what Baruch had, but God chose to bless Baruch by preserving his life. In the case of the example of this pastor, he could be blessed by having his life spared from a disease or accident.

It is typical for us to suffer for doing good. We should expect that those unjust sufferings can and will land on us.

Homer: Baruch escaped with his life.

V: Yes, he did. That is a true blessing from God because Jesus' life was taken, Paul's life was taken, and many of our forefathers' and apostles' lives were taken. That loss of life is the pattern for the *kenosis*.

Mary: You expect to lose your life, carry your tool with you, and give up on this temporal blessings part.

V: Give up on this temporal part just like Jesus did. Baruch did lose what he was expecting to gain, but he gained what he was

not expecting to lose.

Carl: So how do you mix that with Deuteronomy? just that all of those blessings or curses will come later? Is that what we have to believe?

V: Absolutely. When you give only a temporal understanding to Deuteronomy then you are falling into the opposite of the *kenosis*. We Christians, all people of God, have to look beyond the temporal. If your eyesight gets trapped inside the temporal, then you say, "Oh! I must have done wrong because the results came out bad." Or, "I must not have preached the right sermon because they fired me." You cannot do it that way. You have to evaluate through an eternal perspective. Temporal results should show downward loss, but eternal results will consist of an upward reward. Loss should be expected in temporal downwardness. Blessing should come on the eternal upwardness.

The cursing of Satan comes to you when you are obeying God in the temporal realm, but that obedience is going to turn into the blessings of God in the eternal realm. However, if you get the blessings of Satan on the temporal realm, then you are going to get the curses of God on the eternal realm. Blessings from Satan is just the opposite of the *kenosis*. You have to be aware of the *kenosis* at all times, or you will be subject to stumbling and not understanding these critical things about blessings and curses.

Give the description of Baruch after his reading in the Temple.

1. Woe is me!
2. Grief is added to sorrow.
3. He was fainting in his sighings.
4. He had no rest.
5. He was seeking glory for himself (ambitious).
6. He should be content with his life. This

means that he had his life. With the having of his life, he should be content.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

Jeremiah 39

In dealing with the fall of Jerusalem, verse 2 shows that the city was broken up so that all the things that God had said were going to happen began to happen. Also in the first ten verses, I want you to see that all the nobles are slain (verse 6). Babylon killed all of the nobles of Judah. The princes who were in the house of the king are the ones who are slain. They were afraid of the king on the one hand, and they were afraid of what God said in the book of Jeremiah on the other hand. So they put the responsibility into the king's hands by calling him and telling him what all happened. He had the book read and destroyed, and then the princes were not afraid. That means then that the king and his princes lost their fear of God, and as a result all of them are slain.

Jeremiah is given more courteous, considerate, and respectful treatment from those Gentiles than he received from his own countrymen, the Jews. He was given a choice of going to Babylon with the captives or of staying in Judah. Even though Jeremiah chose to stay in Judah, he received a respect from the Gentiles that he never got from the Jews. All he ever got from the Jews was mistreatment.

Ebedmelech

The latter part of the chapter tells of the deliverance of Ebedmelech. Ebedmelech was the guy who rescued Jeremiah out of the cesspool. You remember how he was down in the mire, and Ebedmelech got 30 men and they put cloths under his arms and hoisted him out of there. Ebedmelech pleaded the case with the king and got permission to take a squad of men down there to get him out.

God is going to deliver Ebedmelech, and he says he is going to give his life as a prey to him, because "he put his trust in me, saith the Lord." That is the very last clause in verse 18 of Chapter 39.

Ebedmelech is not going to die in this invasion. God is going to see that Ebedmelech is delivered because he, in turn, delivered God's prophet, Jeremiah. Ebedmelech did that good deed for God's prophet, so God is going to do this good temporal deed for Ebedmelech. Sometimes God will bless both temporally and also eternally for our doing good, but He will always bless eternally for our doing good.

With the saving of Ebedmelech at the close of Chapter 39 came the captivity that is not described.

THE APPOINTING OF GEDELIAH BY BABYLON

Jeremiah 40

Chapter 40 is a history about Gedaliah. Gedaliah is appointed by the Babylonians to be governor. He immediately moved the capitol to Mizpah. The basic reason for moving it to Mizpah is that there was nothing left in Jerusalem.

The siege of Jerusalem is the most horrible siege I know of. It was a long-lasting siege in which cannibalism broke out. Women ate their own babies. It was a terrible thing. There was much famine and disease and pestilence and that kind of thing. Thus many people were destroyed because of those extra things that God allowed to be put on them because of their idolatry and treachery.

When the Babylonians carried away the Judean captives to Babylon, they left the poorest people there in Judah. They gave all of the land to the poor people. All of the fields, all of the ways of making money, they

gave to the poor people to manage. I think this is irony. The rich were managing and owning all of the land and were also abusing the poor people. Nebuchadnezzar conquers them, takes captive the upper and middle classes, the wealthy people, but leaves the poor. He gives to the poor all of the land. That description is in 39:10 where the poor people get all of the fields and the vineyards.

Gedaliah is appointed as governor, and in verse 10 he says something similar to what Joshua said; "As for me behold I will dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans which will come unto us." Basically He is saying, "As for me and my house, we are going to serve the Lord by serving his appointed rulers over us."

I want you to notice that when God says punishment is coming for your behavior unless you repent, it is a certainty that it is coming. If the people of God do not repent, the punishment comes. God expects you to go through the punishment. He does not expect you to bypass the punishment. Gedaliah, the appointed governor, said, "I am going to do service for the Chaldeans, our captors. I am going to live in the land, and I am going to serve the government that is over me. I am not going to worship their gods or anything, but I am going to serve them."

You remember when Jeremiah wrote to the Jews who were already in captivity in Babylon? He said, "I want you to serve the best interests of the Chaldeans. Marry and own land and build and prosper where you are, and it will be well with you." That principle means then that when God brings punishment to us, we are to bend our necks under the punishment, and make the most of it. Do as good as you can do, and profit the kingdom of God as much as possible with what you have.

If you are punished for idolatry or for

some other misdeed, submit to that punishment. It is like this: If your child misbehaves and you are going to spank that child, you expect that child to submit to that punishment. God expects that child to submit to your punishment. Well, when God's child misbehaves, and God says, "I am going to spank My child," then He expects that child to submit to His punishment because that is how He moves us back on path. You are that child. When He draws back His hand, you are not to run off. You stand right there and take the hit.

Tim: It hurts less if you grab His leg and hang on.

V: That is right, get as close to Him as you can.

Also a word needs to be said about the innocent who will be included in the punishment. Sometimes the innocent suffer for the sins of the country. Thus when God's discipline destroys the country, the good saints will suffer loss too.⁵

The Plot to kill the Governor

In this plot, Ishmael, one of the Jews, is going to try to kill Gedaliah. However, Johanan is going to warn Gedaliah of the plot against his life. Because Gedaliah is doing what he is supposed to do, he is expecting good temporal results, and thus he is prone not to believe the warning. As a result, Gedaliah is killed.

This assassination is going to create a

⁵ The principle of federalism can be illustrated in the family. When the father, head of the family, is a drunkard, the rest of the family suffers under his abuses. Their sufferings do not depend on their own behavior, but on the father's. The higher the sin goes, e.g. to the president of the country, the broader are its consequences, i.e. all the way out to all the citizens of the nation.

backlash by Babylon because Babylon appointed Gedeliah as the governor. The killing of the appointed governor is viewed as rebellion against the official rule of Babylon. The assassination was not only a slap in the face of Babylon, but it was also perceived as the first step of an uprising against Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar would not put up with an uprising. He then made his plans to quell the uprising, and his army began to march. Johanan plans to rescue some of the people who are in this gang of Ishmael's, and the remnant citizens of the land will have to decide whether they were going to run or whether they were going to stay and try to talk their way out of this predicament or whether they would stay and take the hit. The question of what they should do was brought to Jeremiah. They were standing at the point of either running to Egypt or staying where they were in Judah to face the Babylonians who were certain to dish out retaliation.

They asked Jeremiah to ask God what they were to do. They declared that they would do whatever God said. When Jeremiah takes this to the Lord, the Lord tells Jeremiah to tell them that they are faking it. They have another agenda. The word that is used here is dissemble. They are dissembling in their hearts. What this means is that it is dissimilar. You know what resemble is, it means to look like another thing. To dissemble means that you project a thing, but you are actually meaning another thing. It is almost like a mask. They dissembled when they said, "Whatever the Lord says for us to do, we will do it."

The people were hoping to receive confirmation from God on what they were actually going to do. If God said, "Go to Egypt," they would be receiving divine confirmation for what they wanted to do. They had a 50-50 chance of being able to

claim God's affirmation for doing what they were going to do. But if God said, "Stay in Judah," they had no plans of obeying that instruction. Their gamble was for a 50% chance that God would tell them what they wanted to hear. But their hearts are set on fleeing to Egypt.

I get these kinds of questions all the time. Many people ask me for counsel, and as long as I tell them what they want to hear, I am considered a good counselor. However, most of them have already decided what they are going to do, and they just want somebody to confirm it. If I do not confirm it, they go find somebody else to ask. They hunt around until they finally find a counselor that says, "Go do that." God reads their hearts, just as He read the hearts of the Judeans, and says, "You have dissembled in your hearts."

So, how did the remnant, after Gedeliah's death, dissemble in their hearts? They asked Jeremiah to pray for the Lord's directions on the promise that they would obey Him. They received God's answer but did not obey because that was not what they wanted to hear. What we have here is a people asking God for directions while having a basic "unstated intent" in their hearts to flee to Egypt.

That scenario with the remnant is dissembling in their hearts. If they ask God for direction, and God tells them something, and they have no intentions of doing it, then that is also disrespect. They have already chosen what they are going to do. Why did they even ask Jeremiah to pray? They knew what they were going to do. God knew what was in their hearts. Therefore, God accuses them of dissembling in their hearts.

Steve: Don't we do that all the time, though?

V: Yes, I believe that we do, and all of us sometimes act on our desires while knowing

that our desires are not in God's will. That knowledge is what I want to put on the table here.

Steve: We know what we are going to do, but yet we ask for prayer.

V: Right, and that combination is a disrespect of God. Basically that combination is the same thing we do when we head in our self-determined direction on a particular project, and then we ask God to bless it. We did not receive the project from God as something that He wanted us to do. We just take it upon ourselves. We sometimes figure out what we are going to do, and then we pray and ask God if that is what He wants us to do. We nearly always receive a "peace" about doing what we "want" to do (sarcasm). Then our confession, after we are well into the project, becomes: "The Lord led me to do this project." You know, we couch it in those terms, and then lastly our prayers become: "Oh, God, bless this project that You have given us." He says in Scripture, "How can I bless that temporal quest for glory? I want you to do the *kenosis*, but you are doing the opposite of the *kenosis*."

If God blessed our temporal projects that come not from Him but from our own desires for temporal rewards, then what does that do for the eternal rewards? The *kenosis* means that when you do good, you most likely will get a temporal loss? This sacrifice business, which is the core of the *kenosis*, is tough.

Steve: Are the Chaldeans and Babylonians the same people?

V: Yes, Chaldean is the name of the people group that constituted the Babylonian empire at that point in history.

MORE BAD NEWS FOR BARUCH

Jeremiah 43

We are going to see more grief added to

Baruch in Chapter 43. After Jeremiah told the Judeans that they had dissembled in their hearts and that they had no intentions of obeying the Lord, he also accused them of doing what they wanted to do anyway. Upon hearing this accusation, they turn around and accuse Jeremiah of lying. Not only do they accuse Jeremiah of lying, they say that Baruch put him up to it.

You must be careful whom you pick as a friend. If you pick somebody who is close to the Lord, you may be accused of a plot to manipulate the congregation, a conspiracy of lies and all manner of bad things. There are going to be negative reactions when you tell all manner of bad-news (Truth) to people.

The Judeans accuse Jeremiah of lying and Baruch of putting him up to it. This is an interesting event here that could happen to us as well. Our carnal tendencies are to read the Word of God and say, "God did not say what we just read" when it condemns our desires. We tend to read the Word of God and translate it into just the opposite of what God said. Our excuse is that surely God is a God of love, and He could never send anybody to hell or want one of His children to suffer. Everyone has been brainwashed into thinking that temporal success and glory and the applause of men prove that God is leading in your project.

Mary: Imposing our values of right and wrong and good and bad, causes us to take His instructions out of context?

V: Yes! Is that not what the Judeans are doing here? God has told them what they did not want to hear. And in order to justify their doing what they are going to do anyway, they say the prophet is a liar, and Baruch put him up to it. Baruch is just standing there minding his own business and not saying anything. But now he gets falsely accused.

Henry: The principle is that I can prove

that what I am doing is truly from God because I did such and such, and it increased my wealth.

V: That, Henry, is the deceiving principle. Once it is applied, then you start on that upside-down *kenosis*. We wrongly use Deuteronomic Theology, to prove that God is behind our doings.

After the Judeans accuse Jeremiah of being a liar and Baruch of putting him up to it, they go into Egypt anyway. Jeremiah and Baruch are taken captive by the remnant led by Johanan, who had defeated Ishmael. With this group's return to Egypt with their captives, Jeremiah and Baruch, this book is going to end with Jeremiah in Egypt, and we will have completed the circle of escape from Egypt (Exodus) and return to Egypt (Jeremiah).

In review, God destroyed Israel because of its idolatry with Baal. After the destruction of Israel, only Judah was left. Toward the end of Judah's existence, there were a series of kings who go down through Josiah, Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim, and . . . right down to this period, right here in Jeremiah's time that we are studying. Jeremiah's time goes through the reign of the last five kings of Judah.

Judah had its idolatry too, which was not Baal worship or the out and out bowing in front of a statue or any of that kind of stuff. It was worship of the Temple and of their religion rather than of God. That is a much more treacherous form of idolatry. God then says, "All right, if you like that stuff, I will bring in the captivity to you as well." So here comes Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians to invade and capture Judah.

After Nebuchadnezzar takes the middle-class, skilled laborers back to Babylon, then the remnant of poor people were left behind. Jeremiah gets to choose whether to leave or to stay, and he chooses to stay. Gedeliah, the

governor-king appointed to rule Judah for Nebuchadnezzar, is killed, and here comes the backlash. The remnant then is going to flee. They grab Jeremiah, and say, "Pray to God for us. He prays. . . ."

Sybil: The people that have been given the land are the ones who killed him. They have messed up by killing Gedeliah. Now they must flee for their lives.

V: So they are going to run for it, escaping to Egypt. Look at the irony. They have gone back to where they started. This is stupidity. But you see how day-to-day decisions can take you in a big old circle. You think you are doing the very best you can with every decision, but the next thing you know you are back in the midst of what God rescued you from.

God comes to set you free, to set the captives free, and He did. He set them free. They finally got their land, and they finally had their own king, and they finally had their own Temple, and they had everything going for them, and now in all their wisdom they became fools. They are back in Egypt, and they are going to start the cycle over. They have to get "saved" again (sarcasm).

Does that not sound familiar? We have people walking the aisle over and over again, getting baptized again and again, laying again the foundation of salvation. Because of the little day-to-day decisions, our lives become a tangled mess right back into the world again. We need rescuing again and again and again. But if you are following the *kenosis*, anything that happens to you has a good chance of being a good eternal thing because you are headed toward sacrifice.

If you get one more day of life, you have been blessed. If you are denying yourself, and somebody blesses you and gives you something, you ought to say, "My goodness, I am blessed beyond all people because of this

thing being given to me when I was thinking I was going to die next.” There should be, then, a level of rejoicing in the way we live our lives that would go with that concept of dying to self. But when you start turning the *kenosis* upside down, the day-to-day decisions take you right back into the world, and the next thing you know, you are all entangled and ensconced back in Egypt, and you need to be delivered again.

What we have at the end is God telling the remnant to dig the rocks down and place them as a monument under the ground in Egypt. Where these rocks are placed is going to mark where Nebuchadnezzar is going to spread his tent. His tent will cover these rocks because he is going to have dominion over all of Egypt, and he is going to catch those who ran from him. The words that Jeremiah said to them are going to come to pass, because Jeremiah said, “If you flee, you will die. If you stay and take your hits, you will live because God’s punishment is not going to be escaped.”

I do not care who you are. You can flee from God’s punishment all the way to the other side of the world, but just turn around and look for it because it will be coming. It will find you. God’s punishment will get you, and when He decides to whip you, you cannot run far enough. His belt reaches far away. Besides, the farther away you get, the more arc and velocity will be on that belt. Somebody said that what you need to do is run up and grab Him around the leg because He can hardly whip you hard when you are hugging on Him like that. I did that with my daddy, and my sons did that with me.

THE REMNANT OF JUDAH IN EGYPT

Jeremiah 44

Chapter 44 has Jeremiah’s message to the

remnant in Egypt after they have escaped from Judah and gotten into Egypt. And the remnant reply:

Jeremiah

44:16 . . . we will not hearken unto thee.

In Egypt the remnant’s idolatry turns from the Temple to blatant idols. That is when Jeremiah says, “You have come into Egypt, and now you are burning incense to idols. Quit doing that.” They say, “We will not listen to you.” Look at what their reasoning is.

Jeremiah

44:17 But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for [then] had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

But watch this:

Jeremiah

44:18 But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all (things), and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.

Here is the scenario: you remember that Josiah found the scroll, and he decided that they needed to have reform in his kingdom. The people, then, were moved away from worshiping idols by burning incense to them. They cleaned that up: “We are going to straighten this thing out; we are going to do our religion properly. We’re going to restore the Temple, we’re going to restore the sacrifices in the Temple, and we are going to do it right!”

So the people did it “right,” a so-called right which was really just another form of idolatry—Temple worship. When they did it “right” their way, here comes Babylon, and they get captured. So, their conclusion was

that if you quit burning incense to the queen of heaven, you are going to get captured. Therefore, what they determined to do is burn incense to the queen of heaven in order for things to go right for them again (Deuteronomic Theology is already perverted at this time).

That conclusion means that they never heard one thing that Jeremiah has said. Jeremiah said, “You are worshipping the Temple of the Lord and all of your religion, and God calls that idolatry.” The people did not hear that, so what are their evidences from which to draw their conclusion? “When we offered to the queen of heaven before that reform business, we prospered. As soon as we do the Josianic reform here comes Babylon. The problem, then, is that we are not to do it the way of reform. We will not listen to you, Jeremiah. We are going to do it just like we used to do it. Our forefathers before us used to do it that way. We are going to do it that way too because we want to prosper.”

Oscar: The people who follow after the universal church are not going to be sought after by the beast, it will be the Christians who are really practicing what God wants. They will be the target. So we had better get ready for that.

V: We had better. The Judeans are blaming basically the Josianic reformation as the cause of their problems. The reformation, the

restoring of good proper religion, was seen as the cause of their problems when actually it was a new form of idolatry which grew out of a perversion of the Josianic revival. It is stupidity to think that Josiah who instituted religious reform brought in a bad thing and caused them to suffer.

They conclude that if they had just stayed their idolatrous course by rejecting reform and continuing to worship the queen of heaven, they would not have suffered.⁶ So when they get to Egypt, and they have no pressure from the king, they go back to worshipping the queen of heaven, which is a straight up and down, undisguised idolatry.

Bob: Is the worship of Mary taken from this sort of thing?

V: I think that it is akin to Temple worship in that it is excessive esteem for something that is in fact a religious good thing.

All right, notice something here. ***If you do something wrong, you can prosper temporarily, and then that could lead you to believe that you are doing right instead of doing wrong.***

⁶ In a way, they were right. Satan rewards idolatry with prosperity, but God punishes it.

Chapter Questions

1. Describe Deuteronomic Theology.
2. Give the description of Baruch after his reading in the Temple.
3. Who took responsibility for removing Jeremiah from the cesspool? Explain the circumstances and the results.

Chapter 7 THE NATIONS

Jeremiah 46:1-52:34

GOD WILL DEAL WITH THE NATIONS

Jeremiah 46

I hope to do something significantly different in this chapter that I hope will stretch our minds out because I need mine stretched out. My mind shriveled up when I encountered the following question which we will consider first:

What are the common features in the prophecies against the enemies of Israel?

1. There is a promise to destroy these ancient enemies of Israel. Jeremiah 46 and 50.
2. There is a promise to restore Israel. Jeremiah 46:27-28 and 50:19.

In these remaining chapters God is pronouncing judgment against the world. He singles out the countries by name, He addresses their sin, and He addresses what punishment is coming their way. However, there is a difference in how God is going to address Egypt and Babylon.

Concerning the punishment for the enemies of Israel, He says that the countries are either going to be destroyed or they are going to be destroyed and restored. Moab, Ammon, and Elam are three of the countries that are going to be restored after their destruction. He has selectively picked out some countries for both destruction and restoration. There are, however, other countries that He is going to wipe out. That destruction will be the end of them. They will not be restored; they will simply cease to exist.

God names two countries which will not be restored: Egypt and Babylon. In contrast to the description of Babylon in chapters 50

and 51, there is a statement about the restoration for Israel.

The judgment comes to Israel because the pastors have led the people into idolatry.

Jeremiah

50:6 My people hath been lost sheep:
their shepherds have caused them to go
astray, . . .

This is an indictment against the shepherds. We have talked about the shepherds all the way through this book. This captivity, which occurred to Judah, is laid at the feet of the shepherds. That is an indictment from God. This will play into the thought question that I am going to ask later to which I do not have any certainty in my answer. We will dialogue and explore the issues in order to arrive at a conclusion.

God is going to raise up another nation out of the north. That nation will be Persia. The Medes and Persians are going to come against Babylon.

Please remember that in the previous lesson, God said to His people, "When you are in Babylon, you go about as good citizens, do your work, and bring peace in the land. You are to marry and give in marriage, conduct your affairs as unto the Lord, and pray for the king." Even though Babylon has captured God's people God says, "You pray for them, you bring peace to them, and you do all this good stuff for them because vengeance is not yours, but Mine."

God is going to raise up another pagan nation to attack and destroy Babylon. That nation is composed of the Medes and the

Persians.¹

So here is a promise that Babylon will be conquered, and He is going to even name the conquering nation of the Medes. God foretells of this historical event many years before the Medes and Persians actually become a nation. He even names Cyrus who is going to be the Persian king who is going to release the Jews. God is naming the nations and the kings before they even exist.

The law of the harvest is found in 50:15.

Jeremiah

50:15 . . . take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.

The law of the harvest is that we reap what we sow. God is going to take vengeance on Babylon for these things that they have done to Israel. Please try to think in terms of what the world has done to you and how God is going to take vengeance on the world. You are pilgrims in the world, and you are to live your life to bring peace. I want you to start drawing that parallel so that you can actually live in and bring peace to the world. It is God Who will take the vengeance.

There is going to be a judgment of nations, and God is going to use the bad nations to punish both His people and also other bad nations. Ultimately, God established the lake of fire for the bad, and it is going to be the eventual and ultimate punishment for people who are oppressing you. You are not to hurt back in revenge. Instead, you are to pray for the people, to pray for peace, and to work in the midst of the environment in which you find yourself. You are to try to

improve your environment.

You bring the witness and the peace that passes understanding that is in your soul. You bring it into the situation, and the people, the pagans, around you should benefit just because you are there. Those benefits really happen. When Christians are employed in a secular company, that company will improve. At least in my experience, every enterprise benefits when true (not lukewarm) Christian light and salt is brought into the situation.

In verse 19 is God's statement about Israel:

Jeremiah

50:19 And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, . . .

and in verse 20 He talks about Judah. I have talked to you before about how God keeps referring to Israel even after Israel ceased to exist. He uses the name Israel. Israel and Judah put together are the totality of God's Old Testament people. When He begins to talk about Israel, He is not just referring to the northern kingdom. Just remember that Israel was the first name for God's people, and so He will continue to use that name meaning the totality of His Old Testament people.

COME OUT OF BABYLON

Jeremiah 51

Chapter 51, then, deals with a later time frame which is going to carry us right into that discussion question with which I am wrestling.

Jeremiah

51:6 Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this [is] the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense.

Revelation

18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of

¹ Babylon today is Iraq, and the Medes and Persians are Iran, the ancient enemy of Iraq. Persia will defeat Babylon soon after Jeremiah's time, and that history will repeat itself in our time. In the recent past, Iraq has had the upper hand in the Middle East of the twentieth century, but now Iran is dominant in the twenty-first century.

devils, and the hold of every foul spirit,

Revelation

18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. Come out of her so that you do not partake in the sins or receive the plagues.

The verses in Revelation and the verse in Jeremiah say the same thing to me: God's people are to come out of Babylon. He is saying come out of her so that you will not partake of her sins, and if you come out of her, you will not partake of her recompense or the judgment that is coming. So, therefore, when we are talking about Babylon, we have a double reference here: (1) A reference in the historical sense in which Babylon is going to be judged by God, and Israel (God's people) is going to be restored. (2) In Revelation we have a Babylon that is going to be judged by God, and God's people in Babylon are to flee out of her in order to escape her punishment.

The reference in Revelation is a future event of the same nature as the one in Jeremiah. However, this reference in Revelation is for a nation which has ceased to exist long before Christ. Now it is being referred to again for the future. Therefore, the Babylon of the future has a symbolical kind of connection to the Babylon of the past, or it is an actual nation.

We are going to look at some more of these kinds of references. But for right now let us just go through the exercise here. I am going to ask some questions as I come to them, and the rest of our class time is going to be used for you and me in dialogue in our exploration of answers.

Jeremiah

51:7 Babylon [hath been] a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth

drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

Revelation

17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

17:2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

17:3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

We have again a direct reference between Jeremiah's historical context with Babylon and the end times of Revelation that is yet future to us. This is almost a word-for-word kind of correlation that we are dealing with here. The cup and the drunkenness and all of that are some things that I want us to explore.

Jeremiah

51:8 Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; . . .

Revelation 18:2: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit." There is a continuing implication here that there is some kind of special love for Babylon. It goes on to say that the people began to weep and howl over her destruction because of this special attachment and love for Babylon.

In the Old Testament there is some kind of special love for Babylon that rose up in the

hearts of God's people who had been captured and taken to Babylon. When Babylon is conquered, and Cyrus releases God's people to go back to Israel, many of them refuse to go. Some of them say, "We are staying in Babylon. This place is too good to be leaving." In spite of God saying, "Come out of her my people, do not partake of her sins, and do not partake of her judgment. Come out of her my people," God's people refused to leave.

Love for Babylon continues today with the people of God. In Revelation, this fantastic love is for Babylon by all peoples—even the people of God. God says, "Come out of her or you will partake of her sins and her judgment."

There are many connections between Jeremiah and the book of Revelation.

Jeremiah

51:13 O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, [and] the measure of thy covetousness.

Revelation

17:1 . . . Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

Jeremiah

51:37 And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons,

Revelation

18:2 . . . and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

Over and over, there are close parallels between the Babylon of Jeremiah's time and the Babylon of our time as described in Revelation.

Jeremiah

51:45 My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.

This verse tells me that God's anger, His wrath, is going to come down on Babylon. If His people are in Babylon, they are going to take the hit right along with the natives. "Get out! This is fair warning." This is the same principle here as in the Exodus when God said, "Take the blood and put it on the door post so that the death angel will pass over your house. This death angel is going to take every first born in the land. If you do not put the blood on your door post, whether you are Israel or not, your first born is going to die." This same principle is being communicated here, "Get out of the midst of her, and deliver you every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord."²

God warned His people in Egypt to "put the blood on the post because He was going to kill the first born." In this case described here in Jeremiah, he says, "Get out of her because the fierce anger of God is coming down on her. Get out of her." It is the same principle in both places. God is not a respecter of persons. He respects action. You must understand that! Get it indelibly in your head!

So, then, Jeremiah was instructed by God to write all the pronouncements against Babylon down in a book, and then he was commanded to give it to Seraiah who was a prince. Jeremiah told Seraiah to go read all these words in the midst of Babylon.

Amazingly, Seraiah is willing to befriend Jeremiah and do this risky task. Seraiah, a

² In Jeremiah 51:12 there is mention of the watchman. That is the refrain that occurs over and over again in Isaiah. Isaiah is always talking about putting the watchman on the wall to warn the people of approaching danger, and so there is also this idea of the watchman in Jeremiah too. Since we know the connections between Jeremiah and Revelation, you and I are now the watchmen on the walls. It is our job to warn the people of the coming dangers.

government official,³ one of Judah's pastors, then, is instructed after he reads those words:

Jeremiah

51:63 And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, [that] thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates:

51:64 And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far [are] the words of Jeremiah.

The book of Revelation speaks about two demons that are in bondage in the Euphrates River. They are waiting to be loosed by God. When loosed, they will come out and heap terrible destruction upon the earth. I wonder if God did not have this book thrown into the river with them just to torment them. With Jeremiah's book in there with them, I bet that they wanted to get away from it in the worst way, but they cannot. They are stuck with the book of Jeremiah down there in that river. What a book to be stuck with if you are on the wrong side. They are still thrashing and gnashing right now this very moment. When they are released from their prison, they are going to be angry.

Mary: They are going to be wroth! (Laughter around the room)

Oscar: What do you think about Jeremiah 51:58? There is something in there that. . . . What do you think of that verse?

Jeremiah

51:58 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

³ Are there any government officials today that will carry the words of warning from God's prophet to the ears of our government? Perhaps, Ted Cruz is that Seraiah of today

V: That points to both historical and end-times Babylon to me.

Jack: "Labor in vain" is talking about physical labor, right? We are talking about a Babylon that is not a real city. It is some kind of a symbol of the future, a future symbolical Babylon. There will be an attempt to be profitable, but their efforts will be in vain.

Jill: The Babylon that existed then is now Baghdad of Iraq.

V: It is not Baghdad itself, but near Baghdad.

Pete: And that is a Muslim area predominantly.

V: Yes, and all non-Muslims are their enemies. America and Israel are their deadliest enemies. Israel and America, because of their religions' godly foundations, are enemies of Muslims.

Soon after Jeremiah's time, Persia and Babylon became enemies. The Persians are the kingdom that God used to punish Babylon and end the exile.

The ancient saga of the Middle East is a continuing story. What we are seeing here in this book of the Bible could, with a change in the tenses of the words, be put in the newspaper today because of what is happening.

NO RESTORATION FOR EGYPT AND BABYLON

Here is the thing that just makes my brain want to shrivel up into nothing because the question is too big for me. What is it about Egypt and Babylon that just absolutely brings out God's wrath like it does. He just tells them straight out that they will not be restored. He does not talk about repentance or anything else. He just says that He is going to wipe them out.

Steve: Didn't God send His people into

Babylon to try to share His ways with them before they were destroyed?

V: We know that, but there is something that happens in Egypt and Babylon that stirs up the wrath of God and stirs up judgment. What is that something?

Ted: Would it be that they have a way to cause God's people to sin maybe more than the other countries have, because it says, "You made them drink of the wrath of your fornication"?

V: I think that could be the backbone of this issue.

Joe: They were drunk on her wine.

V: What does that mean?

Sybil: The Israelites followed their customs and beliefs instead of God's teaching or God's Word that He sent to them by their prophets.

Steve: God has given the Israelites every warning not to be idolaters, and yet they are. We continue the same thing today.

Bob: Daniel was in Babylon with Nebuchadnezzar during the same time frame as Jeremiah, and Nebuchadnezzar was influenced by Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar did acknowledge that Daniel's God was the true God. Am I wrong?

V: No, you are right on the money, but yet God pronounces His judgment against that king's country.

Why is God so wrathful against Babylon? Here is Nebuchadnezzar who attacked the holy land and conquered all of those towns and provinces that are named in these decrees here where God judges the surrounding nations. All of those were conquered by Babylon. Yes, Babylon was vicious in their conquest, and they took the best people back to Babylon. The displaced people had God's

prophets there in exile with them. Daniel was one of them. The Babylonians also gave Jeremiah good treatment. Then God says, "I am going to wipe Babylon out."

Henry: But Jeremiah was not in Babylon.

V: No, but he was well treated by Babylon in the captivity.

Joe: Anything was better than the way his own people treated him.

Mary: Maybe it has something to do with their arrogance. They do not need God, they are powerful in their own right, and they have dominated the world.

V: Moab magnified himself against God,⁴ but Moab was promised restoration. So even magnifying themselves against God was not actually as bad as what Babylon was doing. Babylon was actually treating the people good, honoring God, etc., and here He says, "I am going to wipe you out." On the other hand, Moab exalted itself against God but God said that He was going to restore Moab. What is going on?

Joe: Another point, Jesus said, "If you offend one of these little ones, you might as well have a rock tied around your neck and be thrown into the sea,"⁵ or something like that.

Carl: Maybe God feels that way because of His people. I guess all these countries have offended them, but I am thinking that Jesus' Words meant leading them astray or something like that.

Wanda: You know that God had that sort of attitude back in Genesis, or back in the beginning in the battle against the Ammonites. He hated them with a passion.

V: He brings them up again, the Ammonites. He is going to destroy them, but they too

⁴ Jeremiah 48:26

⁵ Matthew 18:6

are going to be restored.

Homer: Could that severe penalty go back to Abraham where He said, "Whoever curses you I will curse."⁶

Jack: That curse is one thing, but also pride has something to do with it. They were man-centered, world-centered, and they would not change. They stayed with their own ways, they did it their way and shook their fist at God the whole time.

Sybil: Does it have anything to do with the size of the country? Or the power they exercise, perhaps rather than size.

V: I think that that has something to do with it. Both countries enslaved Israel, but the other countries did not. The other countries resisted and oppressed Israel.

Sybil: Both of those countries retained or took them out of their homeland, but when the other countries warred with them, they left them in the Holy Land. Babylon took the majority of them to Babylon. Egypt enslaved them while they were refugees in Egypt. When they are conquered by Babylon or Egypt, they are taken into captivity, unlike how the other countries allowed them to remain in their land while ruling over them.

V: I think it has a whole lot to do with this idea of captivity. I think we are getting to the target here.

If you were dealing with Egypt and Babylon of today, not the physical and geographical countries, but with the kind we have been reading about in Revelation, what are they? Are God's anger and wrath stacked up against Egypt and Babylon of the future in a symbolic sense that corresponds to a parallel of his anger and wrath against the historical Egypt and Babylon? Where is this Egypt and Babylon of today? We have to know, because

He says, "My people come out of her or you are going to partake of her sins, and you are going to get her judgments." If we do not know what to come out of, then we are in trouble.

Jill: Do you think that He is using in Revelation the term Babylon to identify an area or identify a state of being?

V: If when you say area, you mean a geographical area, then I do not think that is what He means.

Jill: The apostate church possibly?

V: Yes, I think that could be one area.

Beth: I do not think our walls are really going to make the difference. We are supposed to be a country where "In God We Trust." We are supposed to be a God-fearing nation. Our nation has been trusting in God and God-fearing in the past, and I am not going to say that it will not turn back. However, I know that the nation has gotten progressively immoral and secular. So I think that Babylon is not a particular area, but it is the people. We have Babylonians right here.

V: Okay, have God's people been captured? If so, then God's wrath is mounting against what has captured God's people just like it mounted against the nations that captured God's people.

So, suppose that God's people have been captured by a "state of mind." Then God is saying, "Either come out of that state of mind, or you are going to get My wrath."

Jill: Look at Romans 2. It talks about wrath in there, and idolaters are there today.

V: The cause of Judah's captivity was idolatry, and Israel was wiped out because of idolatry. Israel's Baalism was blatant idolatry. Then Judah followed along into a subtle idolatry. It was not bowing down to golden calves and stuff like that. Their idol

⁶ Genesis 12:3

was the Temple of the Lord. So it was couched within worship of God.

Let's look now at the parallel in God's church. In Isaiah's and Jeremiah's history, both Israel, and Judah fall into idolatry. Israel falls into blatant idolatry, but Judah is treacherous. The real treacherous idolater, Judah, expresses their love for God, but their hearts are far from Him. Where is the parallel of those two kinds of God's people today? Which people is which?

Tim: In my personal opinion after having studied History of Christianity, I believe that the Roman Catholic Church, up until the Reformation, could be compared with Israel, and unfortunately the Protestant church since the Reformation could be paralleled with Judah. I do not mean that the Protestant church was like that immediately. Right after the Reformation, the Protestants were very true to the Lord for a while. However nowadays, you hear of many people who are just going to church on Sundays, and that is about the extent of their Christianity.

V: And so then, if we extend on that parallel, take the Judah half, the Protestant half, then the Protestant half goes into captivity to Babylon just like Judah went into captivity to Babylon. Jeremiah said to Judah in captivity to pray, work, prophesy, and do all that you normally are supposed to do. Even though you are in captivity in a foreign land, you still do as unto the Lord.

Okay, upon their release, God says, "Come out of her, my people, lest you partake of her sins and also of her judgment." The message to the Protestants today is for His people to come out of Babylon lest you partake of her sins and reap her judgment. Why is he saying that to us? We are the beautiful, spotless bride of Christ (sarcasm). He is saying it for the same reason He said it to Judah. ***Idolatry gets you captured!!***

I believe that the church has been captured because of idolatry. We are now slaves in Babylon, and He is saying to us, "Come out of Babylon." If we do not know what that "come out of Babylon" means, then we are destined to stay in Babylon just like His people did when Cyrus issued the decree for all of God's people to be released in order to go back to Israel, and only part of them came back. The rest of them stayed there.

Now, ***holiness*** means to be clean and dedicated to God's sole use (that is the definition of holiness). Sanctity, to be sanctified, means to be made holy, i.e. cleansed and set aside for God's sole use. If you have been saved, you have been cleansed and taken out of the world and set aside (sanctified, made holy) for God's sole use. Idolatry cancels holiness: "Oh, I am a Christian, but I want to be in the world for the world's use, or for my own use, or for someone else's use." That is the opposite of holiness. Yes, that Christian has been cleansed of his sin. But to be holy means to be clean ***and set aside for God's use***. When God wants to use you, He can use you anyway He wants to if you are holy. The holy man has no say in how holiness plays out except, "Yes, Sir, Yes, Sir, whatever you want, Yes, Sir."

Beth: If you are doing anything else, you are guilty of idolatry.

V: Exactly, and you are back in captivity to Babylon where the sin of Babylon is, and you are going to partake of the judgment of Babylon. So if you do not want the wrath of God to come down on you, get out of Babylon. God's wrath is coming!

We have read about God's wrath coming to Babylon and those in her over and over in the book of Revelation. The same words as pronounced by Jeremiah against Babylon are expressed in the book of Revelation. God told Jeremiah to write His Words in a book.

Then Jeremiah was told to get Seraiah to read it in the ears of the Babylonians, tie a rock on that book, throw it in the Euphrates, and pronounce that as that book goes down never to rise again, so will Babylon.

I think it gets extremely deep here. If you are a thinking person, you had better start thinking about this kind of stuff because if you have loved ones, and if you have any love for your own self, it is time to start understanding and heeding this warning. These are not games that we are playing. God is serious here.

Oscar: So going back to your question. It is making me think about being captives of Babylon. So talk to me about Egypt.

V: Okay. Egypt was also an enslaving nation. God's people, Israel, was enslaved by Egypt. If you are a slave to an anti-Christian nation, you can only serve God in some limited ways. Egypt enslaved Israel and allowed Israel to do its own worship, but Egypt limited the time and how of the Israelites' worship. God could not use them "where, when, and how" he wanted to. Egypt was saying, "You can use your people, but You just have to use them here."

Babylon was a whole different ball game. The capturing by Babylon was much more severe than the capturing by Egypt, but the enslavement after being transplanted to Babylon was very easy. Thus, there was the enticement of the good life by Babylon that created a love by God's people for Babylon. There was no love for Egypt by God's people, because their slavery was a much more blatantly forced and cruel labor including the killing of babies.

Now take those two descriptions to today. What is Egypt? Egypt is the state of bondage against your will. You have been enslaved to alcohol or to drugs or to a gang or to a club or to a tradition or to a government or to

something else (a lot of different things), and you just wish you could get loosed from it. However, you just cannot get out of it. You are in bondage against your will. You want out of it, but you cannot get out of it. This would be a picture of enslavement in Egypt.

What is Babylon? Babylon is much more treacherous. It entices you, and you want to be a slave to it. There is the sense in which culture has brainwashed God's people to the point where they feel like they want to strive to gain a certain kind of career, to get so much education, to satisfy our flesh in the world, and make our way into the climb to the good life, and gain a lot of money and prestige, and all of that kind of thing. You are unwilling to get out of it. That is the same thing that happened to God's people in Babylon. When Cyrus said "You are free to go home now; go back and re-establish your homeland." The people said, "We'd rather stay here." They chose, then, the rewards of the culture they were in over holiness, which means to be set aside for God's use. ***God means to have total use of you Christians which means that He can spend you however He wants to.***

Egypt, on the one hand, is that captivity where God's people were forced to build the cities and to make the bricks. It was an oppressive culture of slave labor. They wanted out of it, and they cried unto God, "God, get us out of this!" They were not "willing" to be enslaved to Egypt, but they could not gain their release.

Babylon, on the other hand, captured God's people in a war. Babylon took the Judeans captive back to Babylon. Thus they were held captive in Babylon similarly as they were held captive earlier in Egypt. The great distinction in the two captivities is that the people were free to prosper under Babylon's societal rules.

In our course on the book of Revelation,

we are going to look at Babylon in detail. But let me put this to you: this issue of Babylon is where you need to start thinking. If the fulfillment of the book of Revelation is at hand, at the very door, then there is a call for God's people to come out of Babylon now. I don't believe that God's people even know that they are in Babylon. So, they do not know how to answer God's command. There is a call for God's people to come out of Egypt also. They want to get out of Egypt, but they cannot find the door.

Jill: Finding the door is what we are to do for people.

V: That is right. We are the rescuers much like Moses who was sent by God to rescue Israel from Egypt. Even though he was just one little man, the power of God went with him, opened up all those avenues, tore down all the defenses, and wrought miracle after miracle after miracle. He brought those people out of Egypt. It is the same thing today: you are Moses and Jeremiah as well.

Israel, the Northern Kingdom, did not heed God's Word. Thus the Northern Kingdom fell and disappeared. I parallel Martin Luther's warning to the Roman Catholic Church with the prophets' warnings to the Northern Kingdom. Like Israel's blatant idolatry robbed God, The Roman Catholic blatant idolatry robs God of His resources. The Catholic situation was such that it had deteriorated to the point where their Christianity was religion, ritual, worship of the church, the pope, and Mary. But where is God in all this idolatry? He is in name only. Thus while their institutional church has continued to grow, they have lost much as far as true Christianity goes. That story of the Reformation parallels the fall of Israel and the saving of Judah. So then, if the message of the Minor Prophets was to an idolatrous

people, they went into captivity because their pastors kept them in idolatry.

We turn the biblical pages and we come to Jeremiah. His message is to an idolatrous Judah, the southern kingdom, which corresponds to the Protestant church. The Protestant church learned to stay away from the blatant idolatry of the Catholics. Our Reformation was a return to the Bible and to Jesus. However, we are even more treacherous in our idolatry.

We are retracing the steps of Judah. Judah did not bow and pray to Baal. They bowed and prayed to God, but lived their lives strictly for their own lust for prosperity. Likewise, we don't practice blatant idolatry like bowing and praying to statues. We bow and pray to God while denying the sanctification portion of salvation. We too live our lives for ourselves, thus denying holiness. Just as the Judeans refused to leave Babylon in order to allow God to use them the way that He alone wanted to do, we Protestants refuse to leave our lusts for prosperity and remain enslaved.

You are the Jeremiah, too. Where is the Judah to whom you are to proclaim the message of repentance? It is to your church. However, your church does not even know there is a threat of Babylonian captivity for them. Neither did Judah. He told them that you are practicing idolatry by calling on the Temple of the Lord as their protection. What are God's people doing today? They are depending on their church attendance for their protection while enjoying the prosperity of America. Just as Judah practiced compartmentalization by doing their religious thing and then living a life of lust for wealth and power, American Christians are practicing the same kind of compartmentalization.

The results of the Babylonian siege were disastrous. The captivity and exile for Judah

was completed. However, the final results were that the Judeans preferred to stay in Babylon because it offered the good life. Rather than being set aside for God's use, they preferred to establish their own career paths which provided fame and fortune and power and status.

Babylon for today is the same kind of seeking. Instead of being set aside for God's use, we are seeking the good life in which we obtain fame, fortune, power, and status for ourselves. Instead of training up our children for God's service, we push them into the same captivity of the upside down *kenosis*.

If you love yourself, get out of Babylon. If you love your children and your wife and your husband and your friends and your relatives, tell them to get out of Babylon before it is too late. Inside Babylon is the upside-down *kenosis*. Outside of Babylon is the *kenosis*, the path of sanctification.

Now if the events in the book of Revelation are way out yonder somewhere in the distant future, then what you are losing is the opportunities for eschatological treasures provided by holiness. But if the book of Revelation is at the very door of history, what you can lose is so much more.

I want you to hear the seriousness of this warning by Jeremiah. This is not just a parade of nations about which God is saying, "I am going to get you, I am going to get you, I am going to get you." You can read it like that, and many people do. But there is more to it than this. When you read Jeremiah and you see the exact same words and warnings repeated in the book of Revelation, there is something to be heard right there, and if we have ears to hear, we need to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Beth: Another thought I had, too. When John wrote Revelation, he had access, of course, to the Scripture, the Old Testament.

What else do we know about John as we study Revelation?

V: We know that he knew the Old Testament as did all the apostles. He knows this book of Jeremiah, and he is making the connection. Listen to this! I believe that the connection is as solid as it can be. When he started using the exact same words, he was really trying to reach the people who are dull of hearing. He is trying to say to us, "Look!"

You know how the disciples asked the Lord, "Why do you use parables?" "So that these unbelieving people will not know what I am talking about. These people do not have ears or the faith to believe what I am talking about. I am not going to cast my pearls before swine, but you are supposed to know." They said, "Well, tell us what it means!" Even they themselves were not listening. I think that God has used words in the book of Revelation to point back exactly to what he is talking about so that people, as dumb as us, can take a look at the warning and see the reality and do something before it is too late.

We are going to close this course with the call to prophecy. Will you be a Jeremiah? Will you be a Moses? Moses is to God's people in Egypt as Jeremiah is to Judah.

Where is today's prophetic ministry? If you will not do it, who will do it? That is the call to you ministers. This is not a call to the prophetic office, but a call for you take prophetic action to warn your people to come out of Babylon.

I am going to close in prayer, and I pray that you will respond positively to God.

Father, I just want to thank You for the book of Jeremiah, and Your prophet who stood up and stayed right in the midst of his country's demise and kept on warning them to stop their idolatry. I thank You for Baruch, the faithfulness of that man who befriended

Jeremiah, and then was willing to go out on a limb and do the work that Jeremiah gave to him. He warned God's people. Now, God, I pray that I'll be like that, too. I pray that everyone reading this book will give their lives to a life of holiness, to come out of Babylon, to be clean and dedicated to Your use, that You will be able to spend us as You see fit. I

surrender my life to You, Oh, my God. Use me to glorify the name of Jesus Christ, to bring profitability to Your Kingdom, and to warn the Christians to come out of Babylon and to restore holiness, the sanctification portion of salvation. I love You, Jesus, and I pray in Your name, my Lord and my Savior, my Master and my God. Amen.

Chapter Questions

1. What are the common features in the prophecies against Egypt and Babylon?
2. Compare the captivity of the Israelites in Babylon to the captivity of the Israelites in Egypt.

CONCLUSION

Does Jeremiah have any relevance for today? Since he is the prophet from God to address idolatry among God's people, then the answer to that question is relative to how the people of God are doing today.

Just the day before yesterday, there were people going door to door in our neighborhood handing out flyers advertising their church. They were very excited and upbeat in their salesmanship because there was not any confrontation at all in their approach because all that they spoke were glowing words of praise for their church. Why were they out there in the heat knocking on doors? Could the answer be that they wanted more members for their church? Could the answer be that they wanted people saved, but since they did not know how to witness, they were resorting to getting the prospect for salvation to the church where the pastor could do the witnessing? Could the answer be that they wanted both the above, but the primary motive was to increase the membership of the church?

To obtain the answer, I examined the advertisement. Was there a presentation of the gospel present in the advertisement? No. Was there a mention of Jesus in the advertisement? No. So what was in the advertisement? nothing but glowing tributes to the various programs in the church that anyone would enjoy. In order to get that particular joy, all one must do is attend that wonderful church.

It is difficult to question idolatry today because elevating the church is now considered the same thing as elevating Jesus. So, how can elevating Jesus through the local church be idolatry?

Jeremiah faced the same kind of dilemma. The nation of Judah was still in the midst of the Josianic revival in which there was a significant turning back to God after the

Deuteronomic scroll was found in the Temple wall during a remodeling project. The people were worshiping in the Temple with their sacrifices and attendance. The prophets were preaching that peace was the nation's lot because God would not let a pagan nation plunder His nation. After all, the Temple (God's home on earth) was in Jerusalem. The idea was prevalent that God would never allow another nation to violate His Temple. The priests were preaching the same things. However, God commanded Jeremiah to preach just the opposite to the king and his princes, the people, the prophets, and the priests. So, Jeremiah preached that God's people were in the midst of idolatry.

The clergy of Judah could not see how the revived worship and sacrifices were evil. Their Deuteronomic Theology was that if the people were doing good, then God would bless the people, the nation, and the preachers. The nation was prospering. So, the conclusion was that God's people were doing good.

Go to today. The people are going to church and giving their sacrifices. Surely God is pleased with the growing church.

Parallel with Judah during Jeremiah's time which had its prophets saying, "the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord," Christians today are saying, "come to our church, come to our church, come to our church." The obvious difference is that God is mentioned in Judah's refrain, but today's glowing witnesses, flyers, TV ads, and program billings do not mention the Lord unless it is as a descriptive: "Come to the place for Christian fellowship with other second singles." "In our church, the seniors take wonderful trips for the Lord. But wait, Judah was condemned by God for idolatry.

God was so displeased with His people in Judah that He told them to go ahead and eat their sacrifices rather than bring them to Him. He said that they would at least get some benefit from eating their sacrifices. What did God want from Judah? Obedience!

What does God want now? Obedience! What kind of obedience does He want? He wants a lot more than church attendance. He wants YOU! He has purchased you, and the price that He paid is infinite in value. Therefore, He owns you, but does He possess you? God's possession of you is called sanctification. Sanctification is an ongoing process in which He progressively makes you holy. To be holy, two things are required. First, one must be clean, i.e. a fit vessel for God's use. Second, one must allow himself to be set aside for God's use. Did you get that? You are to be set aside for God's use, not for your use or the church's use. Certainly, God uses many of us in the church, but it should not stop there. He has rights to use us at all times (24/7) in all places.

The second requirement of holiness, being set aside for God's use, is the snagging point. How can we allow God to spend us when we are so busy pursuing the good life? Everyone knows that God wants us to be happy, right? Wrong! God wants you to enjoy the good life to the maximum *in eternity*. The requirement for the eternal good life is temporal sacrifice of your will to the Lord. The result of this sacrifice is that you will not get to go, do, say, have, or be what you want for yourself. Holiness is the going, doing, saying, having, and being what God wants for you. Sanctification is the process of achieving that maturing holiness.

The two requirements for holiness are becoming a clean vessel and being set aside for God's sole use. The first step of achieving holiness is called justification. We now call it salvation today. It is the forgiveness of sin and the new birth into a clean person that God

gives to anyone who will believe that Jesus died to pay for our sins and rose again as Lord. At forgiveness, we are made clean persons and set aside for God's sole use. The word church (ecclesia) defines our being set aside by God because it means literally "to be called out of" the world and into God's purchased assets.

We Baptists have down pat the justification step. It is the next step that we mess up. This calling out and being set aside for God's sole use is the doctrine of sanctification. We confuse going to church and giving our money in sacrifice as being the meritorious Christian life. We are duplicating the idolatry of Judah because we esteem going to church and giving our money as our protection. Like the Judeans, we compartmentalize our lives into worship and living. We go to church to get saved and worship. But we live our lives as we see fit. What happened to our being set aside for God's sole use?

We confuse holy living with just avoiding the sins of commission. This allows us to live for ourselves as long as we are not lying, stealing, killing, etc. We are using our own lives for ourselves; we are committing the sins of omission. Therefore, we are idolaters because God is being robbed of His assets. Our holiness of works has been stolen from Him. He still owns us because holiness of person is eternal, but we are not following our Lord Jesus as one of His assets.

God is calling His people to repentance from our idolatry. The process for moving out of idolatry is delineated for us in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Our first step is to humble ourselves. As long as we esteem our own theology, church, status in this world, accomplishments, and selves, there cannot be any humbling of ourselves unless it is pretend humility.

The second step is prayer. However, our prayers mostly ask for temporal blessings for

ourselves rather than ask what God wants of us. We change places with God and ask Him to work for us. When we wave our wand at something to be done, God is supposed to jump to it.

The third step is to seek God's face. This is the obedience which comes after the humbling and praying. However, we have changed this step into worship. This is where our church attendance and giving money reside.

The fourth step is to turn from our wicked ways, i.e. to repent. This is the sticking point because we do not know from what we are to repent: Lying? Stealing? Adultery? Pornography? Abortion? Divorce? Etcetera? We are not doing any of these sins of commission. So, we conclude that we have no need for repentance.

So, God's solution for His people to be holy is being replaced with what we have today—idolatry. We judge ourselves via our own standards and conclude that we are the apple of God's eye, and that he practically swoons over our wonderfulness. Thus we go on unimpeded with our church attendance, giving our money, and living life for ourselves.

Pastor, where is the call for humility when your church brags about how good it is, how good the pastor is, how good its programs are?

Where is the prayer in your church when it is a prayer to bless the institution and its programs instead of seeking to bless God with sacrifice. What? The church is to sacrifice? That is considered blasphemy in many circles. Christians are to sacrifice to the church because to do so, is considered sacrificing to God. Ask yourself where God says to sacrifice to a thing, to an institution, to brick and mortar, to an idol?

Where is the call for repentance? Do most preachers preach against divorce as an

abomination? Remarriage after divorce? Homosexuality? Adultery? Unequally yoked marriages? Gambling? Drug and alcohol abuse? Pornography? Abortion? How about neglecting their duty by not participating in political elections? Or even voting for pro-choice candidates? God told the Jews to come out of Babylon, and He commands the Christians to come out also. Do you preach about coming out of Babylon? Or do you promote going further into Babylon by seeking the American dream?

Do you preach for obedience by following the Lord? Is there training offered for discovering and using your spiritual gifts in ministry? Are doors opening to the members for doing their ministries? Is the senior's ministry in your church seen as entertaining the seniors? Or is it seen as equipping and opening the doors to ministry *by* the seniors? What about the same questions for the youth? What about the second singles?

Drunkenness, an often repeated description of the opposite of holiness, is to focus on the affairs and concerns of this life in the world in such a way as to devote your life to the seeking of fame and fortune, i.e. the good life. Drunkenness in the Old Testament books does not mean merely to be inebriated with alcohol or drugs. It means to be out of focus on your walk with the Lord. When you are not following the Lord, your life's path will be meandering in a continuous hunt for self gain. If you are walking after the treasures of this world, then you are drunk.

Jeremiah preached condemnation without hope for restoration to only two countries: Egypt and Babylon. Where, or better yet, what is this Egypt and Babylon of today? Both of these countries enslaved God's people. Those enslavements were maintained in two ways: force and enticement.

Enslavement by Babylon was broken by the decree of Cyrus, king of the Persians, when he defeated Babylon. Cyrus issued a

decree that the Jews were free to go back to their homeland. Strangely, the Jews refused to leave when they were told to go back and resettle their homeland. The reason for refusing to leave Babylon was that they had found the “good life” there. They had their fame and fortune in Babylon. Why should they go back to a devastated land and start over? God’s people willfully continued their enslavement in Babylon because they liked it.

How was the enslavement of God’s people by Egypt broken? He told Egypt through Moses to let His people go.¹ God’s people wanted to leave Egypt, i.e. their will was to go. Egypt, however, prevented God’s people from leaving by overpowering their wills.

God’s people have been enslaved by enticement and by force. Babylon’s enslavement was by enticement, and Egypt’s enslavement was by force.

God’s people are being enslaved by force via drug addictions, expectations of others, political correctness, wars, etc. When the slaves are willing to come out of these enslavements, their wills are overpowered. Thus, these are undesired enslavements. This kind of enslavement of God’s people is exemplified by Egypt’s enslavement of the Hebrews.

God told His people in Babylon through Cyrus to go.² Now, He commands us in the New Testament to come out of Babylon.³ Where is Babylon today? We have to know, because He says, “My people come out of her or you are going to partake of her sins, and you are going to get her judgments.”⁴ If we do not know what to come out of, then we are in trouble.

The answer today is the same as that of yesterday, and the day before that, all the way back to Jeremiah. The more treacherous enslavement is that of enticements. We must come out of enslavement to the good life of fame and fortune (Babylon). Today, we must reinstate our obedience to follow Jesus by living sacrificially as required by the *kenosis*.⁵ To be a disciple of Jesus Christ, one must first deny himself, second pick up his cross, and third follow Jesus.⁶ Who must live sacrificially? The individual saint, the family, the church, the church association, the convention, anyone that is holy must live sacrificially! It is not acceptable for “things” to consume the Lord’s saints. Those things are fame, fortune, status, career, possessions, church, applause of others, etc., etc.

How can we hear this message? Well, it must first be preached. God said that His prophets and priests were healing His daughter slightly. They were preaching peace and good tidings for Israel. The people were loving the messages because they were content with their lives of idolatry. They were secure in the presence of the Temple. How could they fear discipline by a foreign nation when God was residing in their midst? Jeremiah said that they could not hear God’s message because they were listening to false messages from the preachers. Well, are the messages of repentance being preached today by our preachers? I think not because, just like the Judeans, the Christians are content to go to church and give their offerings for God. Simultaneously, the Christians are content to live all the rest of their lives for themselves.

The threat of reduced nickels and noses is shaping our preaching. Do you want proof? Check out how the church has promised not to preach against vile, evil candidates for political office just so that they do not have to pay income taxes. The church will not talk

¹ Exodus 5:1.

² Jeremiah 51.

³ Revelation 18:4.

⁴ Revelation 18:10

⁵ Philippians 2:5-11

⁶ Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23.

about politics which is involved in all of life in order to increase its net revenues. Our preachers are preaching to heal God's daughter slightly. We preach about the love of God which soothes the people who are struggling mightily through a life that is increasingly oppressive because of the unjust laws suppressing the good and promoting the bad.

When we cannot humble ourselves, pray rightly, seek His Face, and repent, what are we to do? I guess that the answer to that question is to continue in our enslavement to idolatries of self, church, and Babylon. Self, as an idol, will not endure humbling, will pray by giving God His work list, will seek His Face by going to church, and will not repent because there is nothing wrong with our activities. How can we repent? We will all most likely ask: "Repent from what?" How can one repent when he thinks that he is serving God?

How would you like to be a pastor who is accused by God of tearing down His vineyard? Jeremiah says that the false prophet heals the daughter of God slightly. Every pastor assumes that he is right and preaching right. How can one know he is right? In Jeremiah, the pastors thought that they were right because they had the king's blessings, the entire institution behind them, and unanimity among the professionals.

My conclusion is that Jeremiah has much to say not only to us individual inebriated saints but also to the church of today. He says that if the preachers are preaching good things from God without a call to repentance, then they may actually be false preachers. Any good thing preached without a call to repentance cannot be judged as true until it actually comes to pass. Thus the jury is still out on many preachers today.

You must hear this message from Jeremiah. We are steeped in idolatry. God is not pleased with us. Our country is a mess. He

will not heal our land unless you and I humble ourselves and pray, seek His Face, and turn from our wicked ways.⁷ Only then will He hear our prayers, forgive our sin, and heal our land. If we do not do this soon, the Antichrist will soon be on his throne and our children and grandchildren will be faced with taking the mark of the beast or having their heads chopped off.

Please pray with me:

"Dear Lord Jesus, I am under terrific conviction right now. I do not know what to do except to turn to You. I want to come out of Babylon so that I can be devoted to You in true holiness. I want to forsake my idolatry of the church, self, fame, fortune, and the expectations of others. Please sanctify me to Your use. I have no abilities to accomplish this petition other than surrendering my will. To the best of my ability right now, I surrender to You. Please take me into Your use beginning right now. I am holding onto no strings. As simple and straightforward as I know how, "Here I am, please use me in Your ministry."

Dear reader, if you prayed that prayer and you meant it, please sign below to indicate that you want this signature to be recorded in heaven. Then please pass this book on to another to read.

⁷ 2 Chronicles 7:14.

ANSWERS TO CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

1. Who are the six rulers who span the time of Jeremiah's ministry?
 - a. Josiah: 640 to 609 BC.
 - b. Jehoahaz: 609 BC (reigned for three months).
 - c. Jehoiakim: 609 to 598 BC.
 - d. Jehoiachin: 598 BC. (Reigned for three months).
 - e. Zedekiah: 597 to 586 BC.
 - f. Gedaliah: 586 to 585 BC. A governor installed by Babylon.
2. What is the name of the hermeneutic that places the rewards for obedience and curses for disobedience into the temporal realm? Deuteronomic theology
3. What are the characteristics of Jeremiah's call by God?
 - a. He was foreknown by God, Jeremiah 1:5.
 - b. He was formed by God in the womb, Jeremiah 1:5.
 - c. He was chosen by God, Jeremiah 1:4.
 - d. He was ordained by God, Jeremiah 1:5.
 - e. He was called a prophet to the nations, Jeremiah 1:5.
 - f. He felt inadequate, Jeremiah 1:6.
 - g. No excuses are allowed to him, Jeremiah 1:7.
 - h. No fear is allowed for him, Jeremiah 1:8.
 - i. God is with him, Jeremiah 8.
 - j. He was equipped by God, Jeremiah 1:9.
 - k. He is set over the kingdoms, Jeremiah 1:10.
4. What are the elements in the commandment to Jeremiah based on the people's wickedness in Jeremiah 1:17?
 - a. Gird up thy loins.
 - b. Arise.
 - c. Speak unto them all.
 - d. Be not dismayed.
5. List the points of Sermon #1, God's Holy People are Wicked. Jeremiah 2.
 - a. God's people walk after vanity: Jeremiah 2:1-17
 - b. Idols are vanity. Jeremiah 2:5
 - c. The leaders are going the wrong way themselves. Jeremiah 2:8
 - c. The people exchanged God's glory for vanity. Jeremiah 2:11
 - d. The people have no spirit here. Jeremiah 2:13
 - e. They have forsaken God's leadership. Jeremiah 2:17
2. They will suffer the results of their sin. Jeremiah 2:18-19
3. Their sin is harlotry. Jeremiah 2:20-25
4. The results of their wickedness: Jeremiah 2:26-37
 - a. Shame. Jeremiah 2:26.
 - b. They have no help. Jeremiah 2:27-28
 - c. Their wickedness kills the prophets. Jeremiah 2:30
 - d. They manifest bloodiness. Jeremiah 2:34
 - e. They are self righteous and secure. Jeremiah 2:35
5. There is an invitation to return to God: Jeremiah 3:1-5
 - a. Observe your wickedness. Jeremiah 3:2
 - b. God gives discipline to help you see. Jeremiah 3:3.
 - c. Invitation with attached warning. Jeremiah 3:4-5.
6. What is the prophetic function? What is the prophetic orientation?
The prophetic function is to be a mouthpiece for God. The orientation of a prophet is to have his back to God facing the people to speak for God. One takes God's Word to the people. This Word always contains a call for the people to repent from their sins.
7. What is the priestly function? What is the orientation of a priest?
The priestly function is to be a mouthpiece for the people. A priest faces God with his back to the people to speak to God for the people.
8. What is the kingly function and what is his orientation?

When functioning as a king, you are to oversee as a steward of God every thing and person under your authority. A king faces down upon that over which he is steward.

9. List the points of Sermon #2, Repent or Suffer Destruction. Jeremiah 3:6 to 6:6

a. Judah is more treacherous than Israel was: Jeremiah 3:6-11.

(1) Judah saw Israel's harlotry. Jeremiah 3:6-7

(2) Judah did the same thing as Israel, except subtly. Jeremiah 3:8-9

(3) Judah feigned revival. Jeremiah 3:10. It is a lip-service love.

b. Judah is called to repentance: Jeremiah 3:12-22.

(1) One, if not all, is called to repent. Jeremiah 3:14.

(2) Those who repent will receive good pastors. Jeremiah 3:15.

c. Salvation is only in God: Jeremiah 3:23-4:4.

(1) There is a delusion that you can continue your own path and still have salvation's benefits.

(2) Idolatry usurps resources. Jeremiah 3:24.

(3) Blessings for you and others originate in your going to God. Jeremiah 4:2

(4) God wants a real purging of the heart. Jeremiah 4:3-4

d. The destroyer is coming: Jeremiah 4:5-31

(1) The leaders are going to perish this time. Jeremiah 3:5-9.

(2) Jeremiah asked God about deceit. 4:10.

(3) God's people are foolish. Jeremiah 4:22

e. God will overlook many for the righteousness of one. Jeremiah 5:1

f. God will not overlook the problem: Jeremiah 5:2-6:15.

(1) The prophet identifies with God. Jeremiah 5:7

(2) There is false security among the people. Jeremiah 5:12.

(3) The prophets have become channels of demonic words, and are called windbags. Jeremiah 5:13-14

(4) Apostasy dulls your senses. Jeremiah 5:21

(5) Wicked people prosper by devouring others. Jeremiah 5:26-27

(6) The prophets and priests are evil, but the people love it that way. Jeremiah 5:31.

(7) What will you do in the end? Jeremiah 5:31.

(8) The false priests and prophets heal the people slightly. Jeremiah 6:13-15.

g. Stand and walk in the old ways: Jeremiah 6:16-30.

(1) You will get rest. 6:16.

(2) Listen to your watchmen. Jeremiah 6:17

(3) Jeremiah is made the test for the people. Jeremiah 6:27.

Chapter 2

1. List the points of the Temple Sermon (Sermon #3) and the appropriate Scripture for each point. Jeremiah 7:1-10:22

a. Mend your ways. Jeremiah 7:1-7

b. You are believing lies. Jeremiah 7:8-11

c. The Temple is no protection. Jeremiah 7:12-15

d. Do not even pray for this people. Jeremiah 7:16-20

e. Eat your sacrifices and offerings. Jeremiah 7:21-28

f. Start your grief process, destruction is coming. Jeremiah 7:29-34

g. The people choose death over life. Jeremiah 8:1-3

h. The people cling to apostasy. Jeremiah 8:4-13

i. Get ready because here it comes. Jeremiah 8:14-21

j. Is there no balm in Gilead. Jeremiah 8:22

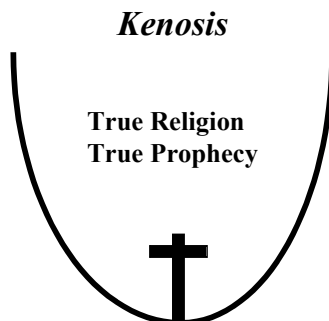
k. Jeremiah is the weeping prophet. Jeremiah 9:1-2

l. God's people are filled with deceit. Jeremiah 9:3-8

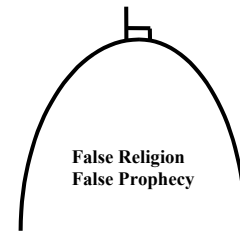
- m. God will feed his people worm-wood. Jeremiah 9:9-26
 - n. Look where you are obtaining your customs. Jeremiah 10:1-21
 - (1) Do not get your customs from outsiders.
 - (2) Also do not get your customs from God's family or yourself. Jeremiah 10:23.
 - (3) Get your customs from God. Jeremiah 10:24-25.
 - o. We are going to be getting our punishment from brutes. Jeremiah 10: 22.
2. What is the main teaching of the Temple Sermon?
 - a. God wants a life religion rather than a mere Temple religion.
 - b. Do not trust in the Temple for security.
 - c. True worship is not place-sensitive or carnal ritual, but a life-changing application. (Localizing God is a material religion.)
 - d. True religion is of the heart (essence, not form).
 - e. Stop idolatry (getting your customs from others).
 3. What can false prophecy always be judged by? What does true prophecy always call for and why?

False prophesy: Promises blessing without a call for repentance?

True prophecy: always calls for repentance because there is error in every one of us.
 4. Draw the chart showing true religion/true prophecy and label it with its name.



5. Draw the chart showing false religion/false prophecy and label it with its name.



Opposite the *Kenosis*

Chapter 3

1. Explain the speckled bird analogy as it applies to Christianity.

Just as a flock of birds will attack a bird which has a different appearance even though it is a member of the same flock, Israel will also be attacked by the surrounding nations. Though Israel practices the same abominations as their neighbors, there is enough of a semblance of God, which distinguishes it enough to be attacked by the other nations.
2. How did Jeremiah handle his persecution and what was God's response in Jeremiah 15?
 - a. Jeremiah presents his righteousness and asks why he is suffering and accuses God of lying and of being failing waters.

God's response:
 - b. God said repent or give up your office: "If you repent, I will deliver you."
 - c. You are not going to have a family. Jeremiah 16:2
 - d. You will have no friends or social life. Jeremiah 16:8
 - e. You will be a true minister. (True ministers do not run from the call.) Jeremiah 17:16.
 - f. There is plotting against Jeremiah by the religious leaders. Jeremiah 18:18-20
3. Describe Jeremiah's grief process
 - a. Jeremiah thinks that God deceived him. Jeremiah 20:7
 - b. There is fire in Jeremiah's bones, and he cannot stop speaking. Jeremiah 20:9
 - c. God is patient, but Jeremiah is impatient.
 - d. Despair. Jeremiah 20:14-18

4. Outline Sermon #4, The Broken Covenant. Jeremiah 11.
 - a. Judah has broken the covenant of God. Jeremiah 11:3.
 - b. Go preach it in the streets. Jeremiah 11:6
 - c. Pray not for these people. Jeremiah 11:14-17
5. Outline Sermon #5, The Worthless Girdle. Jeremiah 13:1-11
 - a. God said that Judah is as intimate as His own girdle.
 - b. Judah is useless like the girdle Jeremiah is wearing.
 - c. Wine bottles means becoming self-centered. Jeremiah 13:12-14.
 - d. Captivity is predicted. Jeremiah 13:15-20.
 - e. What will you say during God's punishment? Jeremiah 13:21-22.
 - f. In the analogy of the wine bottles, God compared the people of Judah with wine bottles being filled with wine. Wine represents drunkenness. Drunkenness in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Exodus, and the prophets means not with alcohol but with the worldly cares and concerns that causes one to forget God, to be concerned with oneself to such an extent that God is forgotten. If we do not give to God our selves, our work, our totality, we will become so concerned with worldly matters that God is left out, and that is spiritual drunkenness. In our concern we smash into one another in trying to get what we think we deserve just as a person drunk with alcohol cannot walk straight but bumps into things. God does not cause this, but He steps back and we do it to ourselves.
6. Outline Sermon #6, The Drought. Jeremiah 14
 - a. The drought. Jeremiah 14:1-6.
 - b. They want God's help without the necessity of their repentance. Jeremiah 14:7-10.
 - c. The people are rejected because of their false prophets. Jeremiah 14:11-16.
 - d. Jeremiah's intercessory prayer. Jeremiah 14:17-22.
 - e. Judah is like it is because of Manasseh. Jeremiah 15:1-9.
 - f. How do the people respond to God? Jeremiah 16:10-18.
 - g. God is our refuge. Jeremiah 16:19-21
 - h. The lack of repentance affects your children. Jeremiah 17:1-4.
7. Outline Sermon #7, Keep The Sabbath. Jeremiah 17:19-27.
 - a. Stand in the gate and preach to keep the Sabbath. Jeremiah 17:19-22.
 - b. Disobedience brings punishment. Jeremiah 17:23-27.
8. Outline Sermon #8, The Potter. Jeremiah 18:1—20:6.
 - a. The potter shapes the clay; God shapes Israel. Jeremiah 18:1-17
 - b. God can break Judah just like the potter breaks his defective vessel. Jeremiah 19:1-13.
 - c. Jeremiah preaches in the temple court. Jeremiah 19:14-15.
 - d. Jeremiah is put into the stocks. Jeremiah 20:1-6.
9. What is the nature of sin?
 - a. Disobedience. Jeremiah 11:3.
 - b. Makes us useless and vain. Jeremiah 13:7 and 10 and 17:11.
 - c. It excludes self-help as a remedy. Jeremiah 13:23.
 - d. God does not violate the free will. Jeremiah 14:11.
 - e. It comes from a deceitful heart, and is a mystery. Jeremiah 17:9.
 - f. It hurts your children. Jeremiah 17:2-7

Chapter 4

1. What three presuppositions did Zedekiah make concerning God?
 - a. A respecter of persons because He is going to fight for us because we are His people,
 - b. Going to exercise His wondrous works without regard to what we have been doing,
 - c. Going up from us.

2. Outline Sermon #9, Is God Going To Fight The Battle For Judah? Jeremiah 21
 - a. God is going to fight against Judah. Jeremiah 21:5
 - b. The people will have to leave the city in order to live.
 - c. Do justice and forsake your religious pride, and you will live. Jeremiah 21:12-13.
3. What is the thesis of Sermon #10, Against The False Pastors And Prophets? Jeremiah 23

Woe to the pastors because they are scattering God's flock. Jeremiah 23:1-2
4. List the five kings of Judah during Jeremiah's ministry?
 - a. Josiah; 640 to 609. Deuteronomic reform.
 - b. Jehoahaz; 609 (reigned for three months and captured by Necco, the Pharaoh).
 - c. Jehoiakim, 609 to 598. He had no respect for God, His message, or his prophet.
 - d. Jehoiachin, 598. (Reigned for three months).
 - e. Zedekiah, 597 to 586. Also captured.
5. What are the errors in the thinking of the false prophets?
 - a. They are profane. Jeremiah 23:11
 - b. They commit adultery, walk in lies, and confirm evildoers. Jeremiah 23:14.
 - c. They sent profaneness unto all of the land. Jeremiah 23:15.
 - d. They make the people vain and speak visions of their hearts (they tailored their sermons to their own desires). Jeremiah 23:16
 - e. They predict peace even for those walking after their own hearts (they are pandering to passions). Jeremiah 23:17
 - f. God did not send them nor did He speak to them. Jeremiah 23:21.
 - g. They did not stand in God's counsel, and they did not turn their people from evil (no moral effect). Jeremiah 23:22.
 - h. They thought of God as a local deity. Jeremiah 23:23
 - i. They cover their lies with dreams. Jeremiah 23:25.
 - j. They are prophets of their own deceit. Jeremiah 23:26
 - k. They thought of the Word of God as a tranquilizer rather than fire. Jeremiah 23:29
 - l. They steal God's Words. Jeremiah 23:30.
 - m. They preface their message with "God says." Jeremiah 23:31.
 - n. They caused the people to err by lies and lightness. Jeremiah 23:32.
6. What is the point of Sermon #11, Good and Bad Figs. Jeremiah 24. How does that apply to the Christians?

The point of the sermon of the good figs and bad figs declares that the good figs will be exiles, and the bad figs will stay in Judah.
7. What are the main features of Jeremiah's sermon on his 23rd anniversary of his call?
 - a. Jeremiah's preaching for 23 years was consistent. Jeremiah 25:1-3.
 - b. There were other good prophets who called for repentance. Jeremiah 25:4-6.
 - c. The people were not receptive. Jeremiah 25:7.
 - d. Nebuchadnezzar is God's instrument of discipline. Jeremiah 25:9.
 - e. Judah will be enslaved for 70 years. Jeremiah 25:11.
 - f. Babylon will be punished afterward. Jeremiah 25:12.
 - g. All nations of the earth will suffer. Jeremiah 25:15-3.
 - h. The shepherds will not escape. Jeremiah 25:34-36.

Chapter 5.

1. How was Jeremiah saved from death after declaring the fall of the Temple?
 - a. He appealed to the princes and the people rather than the prophets and priests.
 - b. There was no change in his message.
 - c. God sent him.
 - d. Yes, he knew that they could kill him.
 - e. They will bring innocent blood on themselves and on the people.
 - f. The elders confirmed the princes by using Micah's example.

2. Describe Sermon #14, The Yoke. Jeremiah 27:8-11

The sermon of the yoke describes the struggle going on between true and false prophecy. Jeremiah makes a yoke of wood, but Hananiah broke it off. God then told Jeremiah to make a yoke of iron, which he did, and Hananiah could not break it. Hananiah, a false prophet, was preaching what the people wanted to hear. But Jeremiah kept on preaching that the nation must submit to Babylon for their punishment. However, he also declared that God would bring them through that punishment and would, in turn, punish Babylon.

3. Explain the principles of federalism or “sour grapes putting the children’s teeth on edge.” The consequences of sin reaches downward to the lower echelon of people, or in the case of sour grapes, the children suffer for the father’s sin. This occurs in the external code situations. In Christianity, each individual is responsible for his own sin.

4. Explain Jeremiah’s Teaching on Individualism in Jeremiah 31.

a. God moves from corporate to individual responsibility. Jeremiah 31:29-30 A three-step scenario.

(1) Lawlessness (Reprobation)

(2) Under law (Accepts external code)

(2) Having the law written in your heart (Christian)

b. There will be no need to introduce a believer to Jesus because he will already know Him intimately. Jeremiah 31:34

c. The inner spiritual change will manifest itself in outward action. Christianity is an inside out job. Jeremiah 31:33

d. The Lord of Hosts is His name. Jeremiah 31:23

e. The new covenant is future to Jeremiah, but its principles are already present. Jeremiah 31:31-33

5. Explain Sermon #15, The Purchase of a Field, in Jeremiah 32

God tells Jeremiah to purchase the field on which the Babylonians are camped. Jeremiah

complies, but since he is in prison, he asks Baruch to file the purchase for him. God actually dialog’s with Jeremiah to accomplish this task. This purchase is to promote the hope of redemption.

6. Summarize Sermon #16, The Coming Captivity. Jeremiah 34

In this sermon God told Jeremiah to tell the slave owners to observe the Sabbath by allowing their slaves to go free. On the seventh year the slave was supposed to be freed. However, the ruling class of Judah, once they got this slave class established, retained them in slavery beyond the six years. They were, then, disobeying God’s laws for slaves. That law protected slaves by putting a limit on how long their slavery was to last. This was a baby step for Judah to get back into obeying God’s laws. However, when God blessed them by withdrawing the Chaldeans, the people of Judah took their slaves back, an act of pure treachery. God then promises that the coming captivity will not be turned back.

7. Sermon #17, Sermon of the Rechabites. Jeremiah 35

The Rechabites had vowed to another man that they would not drink wine, and when offered the wine by the Judeans, they refused, thereby keeping their vow. Their refusal judged Judah because if the Rechabites could restrain themselves because of a vow to a human being, and the people of Judah could not restrain themselves even though they had a covenant, a vow to God Himself, then the Rechabites became the judge of Judah. Their actions judged Judah to be treacherous, disobedient, and stiff necked. God gave the Rechabites a promise of eternal blessing for their faithfulness.

Chapter 6

1. Describe Deuteronomic Theology.

If you do the right thing, you will prosper during this life. Also you can tell who is righteous and who is not by looking at their prosperity. Deuteronomic Theology can lead you away from the *kenosis*.

2. Give the description of Baruch after his reading in the Temple.
 - a. Woe is me!
 - b. Grief is added to sorrow.
 - c. He was fainting in his sighings.
 - d. He had no rest.
 - e. He was seeking glory for himself (ambitious).
 - f. He was to be content with his life.
3. Who took responsibility for removing Jeremiah from the cesspool? Explain the circumstances and the results.

Ebedmelech, a black man, asked permission of the king and led 30 men to help him lift Jeremiah from the cesspool using cloths rather than ropes in order to ensure that Jeremiah's arms were not cut off. God is going to deliver Ebedmelech, and He says that He is going to give his life as a prey to him, because "he put his trust in me, saith the Lord."

Chapter 7

1. What are the common features in the prophecies against Egypt and Babylon?
 - a. There is a promise to destroy these ancient enemies of Israel. Jeremiah 46 and 50.
 - b. There is a promise to restore Israel. Jeremiah 46:27-28 and 50:19.
2. Compare the captivity of the Israelites in Babylon to the captivity of the Israelites in Egypt.

As captives in Egypt, the Israelites were forced into hard labor and were not free to return to their land. As captives in Babylon, they were given the good life, freedom to worship God, and eventually freedom to return to their land. The children of Israel had to battle the Egyptians with Moses as their leader for their freedom and were even chased by the Egyptians after being released. In contrast, many of the children of Israel chose to stay in Babylon after receiving their freedom because of their good living conditions.

Glossary

- Affirmation:** an assertion of truth; something asserted as being true; a formal declaration acceptable in a court; a positive statement asserting that a goal the speaker or thinker wishes to achieve is already happening (dictionary).
- Analogy:** a comparison between two things that are similar in some respects, often used to help explain something or make it easier to understand; a similarity in some respects; a form of logical inference, reasoning that if two things are taken to be alike in a particular way, they are alike in certain other ways (dictionary).
- Annihilate:** to destroy something completely, especially so that it ceases to exist (dictionary).
- Brute:** displaying extreme cruelty and savagery (dictionary). A brute will eat another brute. A brute will jump in a fight and consume all the food, and the other brute will perish. To be brutish is to have no regard for your fellow. Brutishness has no regard for eternal destiny. Brutishness is temporally oriented.
- Carnal:** relating to somebody's physical needs or appetites, especially as contrasted with spiritual or intellectual qualities; relating to or consisting of the body (dictionary).
- Confirmation:** verification that something has been or will be done; something that supports, validates, or verifies something (dictionary).
- Confounding:** to ruin, destroy, put to waste, refute, discomfit, shame.
- Covet, covetous:** having a strong desire to possess something that belongs to somebody else; wanting to have something very much (dictionary).
- Deuteronomic Theology:** to wholly place the rewards for obedience and curses for disobedience into the temporal realm.
- Dichotomy:** a separation into two divisions that differ widely from, or contradict each other (dictionary).
- Dismayed:** feeling discouraged or disappointed; to be filled with alarm apprehension, or distress a sudden loss of courage or confidence (dictionary).
- Dissemble:** to put on a false appearance in order to conceal facts, feelings, or intentions; to put on the appearance of something not actually felt or true; to hide real beliefs or intentions through misleading speech or behavior (dictionary).
- Efficacy:** ability to produce the necessary or desired results (dictionary).
- Eschaton:** End times.
- Federalism:** the principle that the higher the sin reaches, the broader and lower the consequences reach. The head of a nation can cause suffering by the whole nation. An example is "sour grapes eaten by the father" which set the children's teeth on edge.
- Fetishism:** belief in, use of, or worship of a magical fetish; excessive or obsessive attachment or devotion to something (dictionary). Judah had a fetish for the Temple.
- Holiness, Doctrine of:** to be clean and set aside for God's use.
- Integrity:** the quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles or professional standards (dictionary).
- Islam:** the religion of Muslims, based upon the teachings of Muhammad during the 7th century and now the second largest of the great religions in number of believers.
- Itinerant:** traveling from place to place, especially to find work or as a part of work. Somebody who moves from place to place (dictionary).
- Juxtaposition:** to place two or more things together, especially in order to suggest a link between them or emphasize the contrast between them.
- Law of the harvest:** The law of the harvest gives everyone according to his ways and his doings.
- Manipulate:** to control or influence somebody or something in an ingenious or devious way; to change or present something in a way that is false but personally advantageous (dictionary).
- Muslim:** somebody who believes in and practices Islam.

Myopic: lack of seeing the big picture; showing a lack of foresight or long-term planning (dictionary).

Pious: Devoted to one's religion in such a way that it affects all parts of life.

Proclamation: a public or formal announcement; the act of announcing something publicly or formally (dictionary).

Propagated: to reproduce a plan or spread ideas or customs to many people (dictionary).

Repentance: regret or contrition for having done something wrong (dictionary). In Christianity it means to be sorry for sin and turn away from sin and to the ways of God.

Scattering the flock: Moving God's people away from God.

Secular: not religious or spiritual in nature (dictionary).

Shiloh: the worship center of the Northern Kingdom (Israel), as opposed to the Temple in Jerusalem of Judah, the Southern Kingdom.

Vanity (in vain): empty of spiritual values.

Vicarious: experienced through another person as a substitute for somebody else (dictionary).

Urijah: a contemporary of Jeremiah. He was a good prophet who prophesied what the Lord told him to preach. He was killed by King Jehoiakim.

Wormwood: False Prophecy. God is going to be pointing His hostility and anger and retribution upon the clergy.

Yoke: a wooden frame for harnessing work animals; something that is oppressive and restrictive when used on people (dictionary).

PERSONAL LEARNING ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR CREDIT TOWARD THE CERTIFICATE IN DISCIPLESHIP STUDIES

If you want credit for this course toward the Certificate In Discipleship Studies, you will need to write an answer to the following three questions and email them to:

papers@4disciples.org

Write the answers in a Word document and then save it as your "PLA for Jeremiah" in Rich Text Format (RTF) in the drop down window provide in the "Save As" option. Then send the PLA as an attachment to your email to the address above.

1. What is the full name of this course?
2. What are the main truths and insights I have learned through this course?
3. In what ways will this course help me in my personal Christian experience?
4. How will my service as a Christian disciple be improved as a result of this course?

Note: At least one page each per questions 2-4 would be appropriate.

A 4Disciples Instructor will evaluate your answers and determine whether or not you have demonstrated satisfactory learning, personal growth, and approach to ministry. If the instructor evaluates your answers as "satisfactory," then a certificate of course completion will be sent to you. When you have successfully completed all ten courses in the Steps to Discipleship Program, then the Certificate in Discipleship Studies will be awarded.

