

WRITER

Many Bible students have viewed Jeremiah as the weeping prophet of God. He is considered the weeping prophet because he was often despondent, discouraged and temperamental in reference to the burden of his mission to an apostate people who would not repent. However, when studying the book to its conclusion, he is a prophet of hope, regardless of the moral degradation of the generation in which he lived and the calamity he experienced in the fall of Jerusalem. He was emotionally concerned about the fate of Judah, but offered hope for the future. He was given the unfortunate privilege as a prophet to see the doom of the people of God because of their sin. But he was also given a message of hope beyond the doom. He was given a message of restoration under a new covenant and relationship with God. At the time of his ministry, he was viewed as a pessimistic prophet of misery by his contemporaries. But in reading the book, we can only view him as an astringent personality in a time of woeful sin among God's people, which sin resulted in their captivity and destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. He preached at the time of the end of a national independent Israel. We can understand his sadness as he saw and experienced the close of an Israel that would never exist again as an independent nation.

One would think that the personality of Jeremiah did not initially fit the message he had to proclaim. It was a time of international upheaval among the nations. God's people in the latter part of the 7th century, and beginning of the 6th B.C., were caught up in and tossed to and fro by the struggles of the time because of the turmoil that existed between the Assyrians, Egyptians and Babylonians. The Medo-Persian Empire was in its initial beginnings in the early part of the 6th century B.C. The conclusion to this international turmoil would be the captivity of God's people. In order to declare this message to Judah, the young, and often emotionally immature Jeremiah, was called (Compare 11:13-23; 12:1-6; 15:10-21; 17:14-18;

18:18-23; 20:7-18). However, after years of confrontation with the false prophets of his time, and the leaders in government, Jeremiah matured into a strong leader for God who could stand alone against a nation of people that was destined for destruction.

Jeremiah was born in a small village northeast of Jerusalem called "Anathoth" (1:1-3). Anathoth was possibly a Levitical city that dated back to the time of Joshua (Ja 21:18; see 1 Kg 2:26). Jeremiah's father was Hilkiyah, who was possibly from a family of priests who had descended from Abiathar. Jeremiah's name means "the Lord has appointed," or "whom the Lord sends forth." It seems that he belonged to or was associated with the aristocratic class, moving among the princes and rulers of Judah. His ministry, therefore, took place primarily in Jerusalem.

BOOK

Jeremiah was possibly called by God when he was in his early 20s. He was probably born somewhere between 650 to 645 B.C., during the latter years of the reign of Manasseh. He was called in the 13th year of Josiah. Since Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, he and Jeremiah were probably about the same age. We are not told exactly when he died. Some have asserted that he died in Egypt, while others have assumed that he escaped from Egypt and fled to Babylon, where he died a natural death in his old age between 575 and 560 BC. Baruch was his personal scribe. He wrote Jeremiah's pronouncements throughout his ministry, and possibly composed the structure of the book as we have it now in our Bibles.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jeremiah was contemporary with Huldah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, prophets in Judah, and with Ezekiel and Daniel among the captives in Babylon. Jeremiah's ministry lasted from 40 to 45 years. In the early part of his ministry, the Assyrian Empire was dominant in the Near East, but began a rapid decline after the death of Ashurbanipal in 626 B.C. In 612 B.C., Nineveh fell to a coalition of forces of the Babylonians, Medes and Scythians who

were led by Nabopolassar, king of Babylon. At the time, the Egyptians and Babylonians were the contesting world powers for control of the Near East. When Nineveh fell, some of the Assyrian leaders fled to Haran and sought to reorganize remnants of the Assyrian army. They then sought an alliance with Pharaoh-necho of Egypt in order to withstand the forces of Nabopolassar. Pharaoh-necho heeded the call of the Assyrians, and thus marched his army up the west coast of Palestine toward Carchemish. On his way, Josiah, the king of Judah, presumptuously attacked the Egyptians at Megiddo, and consequently was defeated and killed. By this time Nebuchadnezzar had replaced his ailing father, Nabopolassar, and became the king of the Babylonians. One of the most decisive battles of history of the Near East was fought when the Babylonians encountered the Assyrian-Egyptian coalition at Carchemish. The Babylonians dominated the Assyrian-Egyptian forces at this battle in 606 B.C. (See 46:1,2). This brought the Babylonian Empire into firm control of all the regions of the former Assyrian Empire, and subsequently, Babylonia became the dominant empire of the Near East. It would be the Babylonians whom God would use to bring judgment on Judah because they had fallen into apostasy. The oracles of this book will define the depths to which they morally degenerated, even to the offering of their own children in human sacrifices (7:30,31).

Throughout the years of Jeremiah's ministry, the throne of Judah was in constant turmoil. Manasseh had just concluded 55 years of one of the most wicked rules of an Israelite king. The son of Manasseh, Amon, then came to the throne, but reigned only two years. Josiah succeeded Amon, and then initiated a religious restoration, though the restoration was more outward than an inward change in the hearts of the people (2 Kg 22:3 - 23:25). Josiah was unfortunately killed by the Egyptians at the battle of Megiddo (2 Kg 23:29). The people then selected Jehoahaz, his son, to reign (2 Kg 23:30-33). After only three months on the throne, Pharaoh-necho replaced him with Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah (2 Kg 23:34-37). Jehoiakim was a wicked king (22:13-19). In 598

B.C. Jehoiakim died and was replaced by his son, Jehoiachin. However, after reigning for only three months, the young Jehoiachin surrendered to the Babylonians and was taken into exile with 10,000 Israelites. The Babylonians then placed Zedekiah, a third son of Josiah, on the throne in Judah. Zedekiah eventually rebelled against the Babylonians, which resulted in the final siege of Jerusalem and its destruction in 586 B.C. Gedaliah was subsequently appointed by the Babylonians as governor of the region, but was eventually assassinated by rebellious Jews (41:1-3). It was at this time that a group of assassins fled to Egypt, taking the aged Jeremiah with them (43:5-7). Jeremiah's whereabouts after this is unknown, though tradition indicates that he may have made his way to Babylon, though this is uncertain.

Introduction & Call

(1:1-19)

Outline: (1) Introduction (1:1-3), (2) Calling and commission (1:4-19)

INTRODUCTION

1:1-3 There has been no question concerning the authorship of this book. Jeremiah was born of Hilkiah in the village of Anathoth (See Ja 21:18; 1 Kg 2:26,27). This Hilkiah played a predominant role in the discovery of the book of the law during the reign of Josiah (See comments 2 Kg 22). Jeremiah was probably about the same age as King Josiah when he began his ministry. **To whom the word of the Lord came:** God personally called Jeremiah for the ministry in order to deliver His final words to a nation that was coming to an end. The end of national Israel as an independent nation was at hand, and thus Jeremiah was personally called as a prophet who lamented over the doom of Israel as an independent nation. **Thirteenth:** Since Josiah began to reign when he was eight, then he would have been 21 years old when Jeremiah began his ministry. The date was around 626 B.C. His ministry continued to the days of King Zedekiah and the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

| GOD'S PROPHECY OF THE NATIONS | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | Amos | Isaiah | Jeremiah | Ezekiel | Others |
| Babylon | | 13:1 – 14:23 | 50 – 51 | | Habakkuk 2:6-17 |
| Philistia | 1:6-8 | 14:29-32 | 47 | 25:15-17 | |
| Moab | 2:1-3 | 15 – 16 | 48 | 25:8-11 | |
| Damascus | 1:11,12 | 17:1-3 | 49:23-27 | | |
| Egypt | | 19 | 46:1-26 | 29 – 32 | |
| Edom | 1:9,10 | 21:11,12 | 49:7-22 | 25:12-14 | Obadiah |
| Tyre | 1:13-15 | 23 | | 26 – 28 | |
| Ammon | | | 49:1-6 | 25:1-7 | |
| Nineveh | | | | | Nahum |

Chapter 1

CALLING & COMMISSION

1:4-8 Jeremiah's call was indicated only by the fact that the word of the Lord came to him. God transcended the affairs of His people through Jeremiah in order to convey to them final words while they were still in the land of promise. **Formed ... knew ... sanctified ... ordained:** Before Jeremiah was born, God had chosen him for a special ministry to His people. We assume that he was brought forth for this special ministry to which God set him apart and commissioned him. **Prophet:** This is from the Hebrew word *nabi* that is used over 300 times in the Old Testament to refer to one who was sanctioned by God to speak forth the word of God. The emphasis was not so much on speaking of things to come in the future, but in teaching the will of God to the people in the present. However, most of the foretelling message of the prophets is recorded, though the ministry of the prophets was to exhort the people to remain faithful to God and His law. **To the nations:** He was to be a prophet not only to Judah, but to all those nations who affected God's people in some way at this time in history. He would also speak of the doom of those nations who negatively affected God's people. **I cannot speak:** As Moses, Jeremiah knew his own inabilities, and thus sought to use them as a means by which to excuse himself from his initial calling (Ex 3). He confessed to his youth, and thus could not understand why God would call such a young person for such a great ministry. But God knows who we are before we discover ourselves (See Mk 10:40). He knows our abilities, though hidden from our own self perception, for He gave them to us. God had given Jeremiah all the gifts that were necessary for the ministry unto which He called him. **Do not be afraid:** From past history, Jeremiah knew what it meant to receive a call from God to be a prophet. He knew of the hard times of Isaiah and the other prophets who suffered death from the hands of fellow Israelites who refused to hear the word of God. **Deliver you:** God would keep this promise, and thus, would not allow Jeremiah to die an untimely death at the hands of those who opposed him. It is for this reason that we

assume that he died a natural death in his old age.

1:9-12 Words in your mouth: The message came to Jeremiah by revelation, and was written by inspiration. It was not a message that originated from the prophet. God used the prophet as the medium through whom He communicated His word. **Set you ... over the kingdoms:** It was the authority of the word of God that set Jeremiah over the nations. He spoke the judgment of God that was to all the nations that affected Israel throughout her history. **Destroy ... build:** Because God was working to build and destroy nations, Jeremiah's pronouncements of this work of God was by revelation. The prophets could know the work of God among the nations only if they were told through revelation. Jeremiah came in a time when Judah had forgotten the word of God (Hs 4:6). Judah, the remnants of God's people in the land of Palestine, had given herself over to apostasy, and thus was not concerned for what Jeremiah had to say. Regardless of the resistance to his message, however, he had to speak the word of God. **What do you see:** The visions not only confirmed Jeremiah's calling, but also gave him a message. **Almond tree:** The first vision was a pun on the Hebrew word for almond, meaning "to wake" or "to watch." It was the first tree to bud in the spring. The meaning of the vision for Jeremiah was that God was awake in order to confirm His word of condemnation, for both His people and the nations who had attacked His people in the final years of their demise. Thus God was working among the nations in order to make sure that His pronouncements through the prophets were fulfilled.

1:13-19 Boiling pot: The second vision referred to God's judgment that was about to be poured out upon the nations. The historical background would be the times that immediately followed the death of Ashurbanipal, the king of Assyria. The Assyrian kingdom would fall, after which the Babylonian Empire would come upon the world scene. The Egyptians would be defeated at Carchemish with the remnants of the Assyrian Empire. Nebuchadnezzar would then begin his reign over the Near East. Judah and Jerusalem would not be spared. With a coalition of mercenaries from armies of the north,

God would eventually move the Babylonians against Judah for her sin of running after other gods. After Jerusalem was destroyed, and the seventy years of captivity completed, then the Babylonians would be conquered by the Medo-Persians. **Do not be dismayed:** The calling to deliver such a harsh message of doom to Judah challenged the emotional strength of the young Jeremiah. God knew that Jeremiah would be hated and despised for what he had to say to the people. He knew that his life would be threatened. Nevertheless, the man of God must not be apologetic for the message that he must deliver, knowing that the message is from God. **They will fight against you:** When God's men deliver messages that the people do not want to hear, the people will fight against the speaker, not the message of the speaker. Those who are ignorant of the word of God, and have created religious traditions after their own desires, have no desire to listen to the word of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). In such situations, therefore, God's men must be confident. They must understand that the people are fighting against the word of God, and not against them personally, though the attacks of the rebellious will be against their person. **Deliver you:** God has not always delivered His messengers (See Hb 11:35-40). But in the case of Jeremiah, God knew that he needed the comfort of knowing that he would complete his mission. He would not succumb to the murderous hands of idol worshipers, but would live out his life.

The Sin Of Israel

(2:1 - 10:25)

Outline: (1) Apostasy of Israel (2:1 - 3:5), (2) Call to repentance (3:6 - 4:4), (3) Enemies of Israel (4:5 - 6:30), (4) The temple sermon (7:1 - 8:3), (5) Exhortations (8:4 - 10:25)

Chapter 2

APOSTASY OF ISRAEL

2:1-3 In the wilderness: When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness after they came out of Egyptian captivity, they were totally dependent on God. But once they were settled in the land of promise, they became self-sufficient. They no longer felt that they needed God

for their survival. **Betrothal:** Israel became an unfaithful wife. She committed spiritual adultery with foreign gods in order to enhance her relationships with her trading neighbors.

2:4-8 Once Israel was secure, the people forgot the God who delivered them out of Egyptian bondage. They became self-sufficient, and thus gave themselves over to any concept of a god that would conform to their desires. They ran after false gods, giving the idol gods credit for what God had done for them in blessing them in the land. Their leaders led in the apostasy of the people, seeking to please the people according to their own desires. God did not do them wrong. Nevertheless, they were ungrateful for what He had done in giving them birth as a nation and blessing their years in the land.

2:9-13 *My people have changed their Glory:* Other nations did not change from one god to another, but Israel did. They sinned by forsaking the true God who had so miraculously made Himself known to them. In forsaking God, they created other gods after their own imagination. They did this, not because God had forsaken them, but because they desired to be the master of their own lives. They created gods that would allow them to do their own will. **Fountain of living waters:** They left the fresh waters that came from God in order to drink the putrid waters of a stagnant cistern. All religiosity, therefore, that is not from God is putrid in His sight.

2:14-19 The northern kingdom of Israel had gone into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. Their captivity illustrated what would happen to the southern kingdom if they did not repent. Since God had done so many great things for Israel (the northern kingdom), then God asked Judah to determine the reason for which they went into captivity. **Noph:** This is Memphis of Egypt. Josiah was shamefully defeated at Megiddo, and subsequently killed by the army of Egypt (2 Kg 23:29,30). Judah was defeated by the Egyptians, and Israel went into captivity because she had forsaken the Lord. Regardless of their defeat by the Egyptians who had told Josiah not to engage them in battle, there was also a pro-Egyptian element among some in Judah. There was also a group who would trust

in the Assyrians during the threat of the Babylonians. But dependence on foreign powers would not change their destiny of captivity that they had brought on themselves. **Sihor:** The Nile River. **River:** The Euphrates River. **Forsaken the Lord:** Judah did not learn from the example of her northern sister. Judah was following after the example of apostasy of Israel, and thus was headed in the same direction of captivity.

2:20-25 I have broken your yoke: God had given them freedom, but they had brought themselves into the bondage of their own religious beliefs. God will set us free, but we seek to bring ourselves into the bondage of our own selves. **Though you wash yourself:** Men cannot wash themselves of their own sin. Only God can cleanse us of sin, for sin is against God. But in order to be cleansed, we must repent. In order for Judah to escape her destiny of captivity, she must repent and return to God. Israel was planted as a good vine, but she produced a worthless vine. She was married to God, but she became a harlot. She was as a camel that broke loose and ran at will from her owner. As a donkey in heat, she ran to be satisfied by pagan gods. **"I am not polluted":** Judah's sinful culture was so far removed from the will of God that she did not realize that she was in rebellion against God. She no longer had a moral conscience that would bring her back to the will of God. People who have no moral conscience in reference to the word of God will not repent because of their ignorance of God's word. They had forgotten that to which they had to return (Hs 4:6).

2:26-28 Since their gods were the invention of their own minds which they created in order to live according to their own moral standards, then the challenge here by God is that they see if they can deliver themselves in the time of calamity. They had forsaken God's protection, and went after their own self-sufficiency. Now that they were in trouble, God challenged them to see if they could deliver themselves. Since their leaders had led them into national calamity, God challenged the people to look to such false leadership in order to be delivered.

2:29-37 In vain I have chastened your children: God sought their repentance by chastising them with famine

and pestilence, but to no avail. The people even killed those men of God whom God had sent to turn them from their wicked ways. They killed the prophets and continued in their own sin. **We are lords:** A civilization is in a hopeless condition when the people reject God and establish for themselves their own moral laws. In this case, Judah refused to have the knowledge of God in their lives in order to live by their own moral standards (See comments Hs 4:6). **I am innocent:** One cannot claim innocence when he seeks to remain ignorant of the presence of God. God created us to search after Him (See comments At 17:26,27; Rm 1:20). If we do not search for Him, then we will be held accountable for our own behavior. Jeremiah was sent to take away their ignorance through the preaching of the word of God. Through him God was speaking His will and informing the people of their coming doom. They could not, therefore, claim ignorance when calamity came. The very existence of Israel was grounded in the miraculous work of God. If the nation had forgotten the law of God, at least the people could have resorted to the oral truth of the fathers. This would have at least led them to seek out the word of God in order to restore themselves to His moral standards. But their desire to live according to their own moral codes was greater than any search for God and His will. Because they refused to have God in their knowledge, they would be brought to shame by the Egyptians and Babylonians as the northern kingdom had already been brought to shame by their captivity by the Assyrians.

Chapter 3

3:1-5 Judah had polluted herself with spiritual adultery. Her repentance would not be easy, for it would take a paradigm shift from her culture of sin in order to return to God. The illustration of returning to a divorced wife illustrated the fact that Judah's sin would forever wound her innocence (See Hs 2:1-5; 9:1). When one wanders in the wilderness of sin, he is wounded for life because of the sin. Repentance and forgiveness can restore one to the family of God, but the forgiven sinner will have to live with the scars of sin for the rest of his

life (Compare comments 1 Tm 1:15,16). **Will He remain angry forever:** Josiah's reforms produced some surface results. However, the repentance of the people was shallow. After Josiah was killed by Pharaoh-necho, the people soon went back to their former apostate culture. It would have taken two to three generations before a true restoration of the culture to have been completed. The outward performance of tearing down the idols and banning the priests of the false gods was only a temporary restoration on the part of the people. Because they did not repent in their hearts and change their behavior, they were soon back in sin and destined for captivity.

CALL TO REPENTANCE

3:6-10 Judah could see the bad example of her northern sister. Yet she did not learn from the apostasy and captivity of the northern kingdom. She too committed harlotry with idols. For this reason, Judah was more accountable because she had the example of sin and judgment that came upon the northern kingdom, but did not take heed to the warnings. **Bill of divorcement:** God divorced the northern kingdom, and thus allowed her to be taken by another, the Assyrian Empire. **But in pretense:** The outward reforms of Josiah did not reach to the heart of the people (See 2 Kg 22 & 23). As a result, Judah soon returned to the wayward behavior that was characteristic of her northern sister before she was taken into Assyrian captivity. Without bringing forth the fruit of repentance, superficial repentance profits little.

3:11-18 **More righteous than treacherous Judah:** Because Judah had the example of the consequences of Israel's sins, she was more accountable. **Return, backsliding Israel:** It is important to understand that in this context the term "Israel" refers to the northern kingdom. **I will take you, one from a city and two ... and I will bring you to Zion:** The northern ten tribes, Israel, were promised that a remnant of their families would be restored from their captivity. When the eventual return of the captives came after the fall of the Babylonian Empire to the Medo-Persians, a remnant of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel were restored as

one people to the land of Palestine. There were no lost tribes from which a remnant did not return. God kept this promise that He made to the repentant remnant of all twelve tribes. **They will say no more, "The ark of the covenant"**: God never intended that the ark of the covenant be permanently located in Jerusalem. It was not in His plan that the temple be built, or that Jerusalem be the center of government for His people. All these things were concessions that God allowed for the people and David after they had been in the land for several centuries. He originally planned that the ark be moved among the tribal territories, with the continual relocation of the tabernacle on a regular basis (Compare comments Dt 12:21). But this changed when David permanently located the ark in Jerusalem, and Solomon later built the temple. Judah thus took possession of the ark, the symbol of the presence of God. This action marginalized the northern tribes from access to the ark. In the new order, however, this would change. No longer would the presence of God be symbolized by the location of the ark. No longer would the temple be the center of their religion, though they would rebuild it. God would be in their hearts wherever they were. That which spiritually divided the people would be taken away, and thus they would be one as a nation in spirit and worship. They would once again view the throne of God to be in heaven, and not in Jerusalem (Compare comments Jn 4:19-24). It would be to heaven they would look for God, not to any man-made structures on earth, though Jerusalem would play an important part in the restoration to come and God's initiation of the new order (See Is 2:1-4). **They will come together**: A remnant of all twelve tribes would restore the unity of Israel as they came from the former Assyrian and Babylonian territories back into the land of their inheritance, and to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple (See comments Er & Ne).

3:19-25 It brought pain to the heart of God to watch His people go into spiritual adultery. Nevertheless, He had a plan that would bring them back and unite them as one people. In order to produce permanent repentance, however, there would be great pain on the part of back-

sliding Israel. They had to suffer the pain of captivity. It took captivity for Israel to realize the futility and foolishness of idol gods. Once they confessed to the foolishness of their idolatry, they were ready to be restored to the land of their inheritance. However, the first generation of captives never saw the land again. It was only their children and grandchildren who were released by the Medo-Persians and allowed to return to Palestine. Because of their idolatrous thinking and practices, the generation that first went into captivity had to die in captivity.

Chapter 4

4:1,2 Their repentance involved a total commitment to God. They had to turn from following after their own desires (idol worship) and return to obedience to the law of God. There had to be a change in attitude and in behavior. **Will not be moved:** If they repented, they would not be removed from the land and taken into exile. **Swear:** They had to make an oath that there was only one true and living God. Making the oath meant that they bound themselves to follow the law of God.

4:3,4 When Josiah broke down the idols and cut down the groves where they worshiped their false gods, it was only a superficial restoration. God here calls on them to go deeper in their thinking by changing their hearts. The old idol thinking in their hearts must be cut off and cast away. Changing religious ceremonies does not produce repentance. Josiah changed the ceremonies, but the people had not changed their hearts. **Circumcise:** There was more to circumcision than a sign of the covenant between God and Israel (Dt 30:6). When an Israelite child was circumcised on the eighth day, he was in a covenant relationship with God. When Israel went after the worship of other gods, it was treason against the covenant. It was now time to be circumcised again in their hearts in order to renew their devotion to God (9:26; 33:7-9; compare Rm 2:25-29; Gl 5:6; Cl 2:11).

ENEMIES OF ISRAEL

4:5-9 The Assyrians had come from the north and taken the northern kingdom into captivity in 722/21

B.C. The same would happen to Judah. The Babylonians would come around the Fertile Crescent and descend on Judah from the north. Since Judah would not repent, it was a time for them to sound the call for battle, for their judgment was coming upon them.

4:10 This was what the false prophets were saying to the people. They taught that Jerusalem would never fall.

4:11-18 In this section Jeremiah resumes his pronouncement of judgment upon Judah. Jeremiah perceived the impending danger that was manifesting itself in the city of Dan at the northern extremity of Palestine. The proxy judgment of God through the Babylonians was on its way to Jerusalem. The Assyrians and Egyptians had been defeated at Carchemish by the coalition of nations from the east that was led by Nebuchadnezzar. And now, the king of Babylon had his eyes set on Judah, who through Josiah had previously sided with the Assyrians and Egyptians. With the defeat of the Assyrian/Egyptian coalition at Carchemish, the international stage was set for the demise of Judah and the eventual destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The false preachers in Jerusalem had promised the people that the city would never fall. But God revealed to Jeremiah that it was doomed.

4:19-22 The revelation of the doom of Judah and Jerusalem greatly affected Jeremiah. Because God had revealed that national Israel as an independent nation was coming to an end, he lamented over the city and the people. He cried out for the people to repent in order that the city might be spared. But his cries were to no avail.

4:23-26 These passages seem to be eschatological. Jeremiah looks back to the beginning of time in order to see the future. As nothing existed in the past before the creation, so nothing will be left after God's final judgment of the world (Compare comments 2 Pt 3). Sin would eventually cause a cataclysmic destruction that would come upon all the world. Sin caused the fall of Israel. It will eventually lead to the end of the world. The destruction of the existing world, however, meant the deliverance of the people of God. In order for God's people to be truly

delivered, sin must be taken away.

4:27-31 Since Judah's sin had gone to the point where the people would not repent, then God's judgment could not be stopped. Their apostasy had become their culture, and thus they would not return from their ways. As an immoral woman, the virginity of Judah had been spoiled. She had laid with idol gods and corrupted herself with foreign idolatry. There was now no recourse except captivity that would result in a new birth for the people. The old Israel must die in the bondage of captivity in order to be reborn through the restoration of a repentant generation. The old Jerusalem was as a woman in labor, agonizing in order to give birth to a new Jerusalem that would eventually come. The old Jerusalem would die in the process of giving birth to the new Jerusalem.

Chapter 5

5:1-6 Jeremiah was placed in the same dilemma as Abraham in Genesis 18. He was sent to find anyone in Jerusalem who would execute justice or seek the truth. There were many who proclaimed, "The Lord lives." However, such pious words came from the mouths of those who paid only lip service to God. The fact was that Jeremiah searched in vain and found no one who had a godly heart and was searching for the truth of God. **Harder than a rock:** God had afflicted them with famine, pestilence, calamity and national defeat by their enemies. But they had moved so far from God that they did not realize that such acts of discipline on the part of God were actually from Him. They were thus hardened to correction and would not repent. Only people with a conscience for God will respond to chastisement. Because God could find no righteous people in the city who would respond to His chastisement, the city was doomed. **Broken the yoke:** They had broken from God and were running wild with idolatry. Since they had turned from God, they fell victim to every sort of falsehood (Compare comments Ep 4:12-16). Those who give up the truth give themselves over to believing lies.

5:7-9 Since their apostasy was against God, God asked if He should pardon them of their sin. They had com-

mitted spiritual adultery by following after the harlotry of the pagan gods to whom they had given themselves. Because they had given themselves to such gods, they behaved immorally according to the lust of their own flesh. Their apostasy, therefore, demanded that punishment follow in order that God stand as a just God. They had to be held accountable for their apostasy.

5:10-14 Strip away: They were to be cut back to the roots. In order for a new plant to grow from the roots, the old Judah of sin had to be completely taken away. Only their children and grandchildren would return from the captivity. **The prophets will become wind:** The people had believed the false prophets who proclaimed peace. Jeremiah stood alone against the declarations of these imposters. He reminded the people that the word of God was not in their false prophets who spoke for their own gain. Time would prove Jeremiah correct. Sometimes God's speakers must speak the truth, knowing that they will be proved true many years later. **Words ... fire:** God's word is always a consuming fire that is unleashed on the wicked (Hb 4:12). In this case, God's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem would literally come to pass. According to the prophecy of Jeremiah, the Babylonians would burn the city, which thing they did in 586 B.C.

5:15-18 I will bring a nation: God would bring the Babylonians from the north in order to exercise His destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. They will come with a great army and arrows that will kill many. They will devour the land, taking captive their sons and daughters. The picture here is of a cruel army of Scythians and Chaldeans who would have no mercy on the Jews. **I will not make a full end:** Though the Israelites would come to a disastrous end, there would be hope. A remnant would be spared. However, they would not realize the fulfillment of this promise until many years later when the remnant would be allowed to return to Palestine.

5:19-31 When they eventually asked why God allowed calamity to come upon the nation, they would ask how God could be justified in allowing such to happen. The first reason why God allowed such to happen was that they had forsaken God and ran after idols they had cre-

ated in order to satisfy their own desires. **Foolish people:** The second reason was an indictment against their character. They exercised little common sense in reference to obedience to the will of God. When they reviewed the work of God in their history, they should have been moved to be loyal to Him. **Will you not tremble:** The third reason they went into apostasy was that they ceased to fear God. And since they had no fear of God, they did not believe that He would punish them for their apostasy. Instead of having a reverent heart for God, they manifested a spirit of rebellion. **Wicked men:** The fourth reason for their judgment was that they became a morally debased people. They became a society of social injustice. **Prophets prophesy falsely:** The fifth thing that led to their destruction was in reference to their religiosity. They had created a false religion that was propped up by preachers who preached what the people wanted to hear. And what the people wanted to hear was perverse. Their moral degradation was condoned by religious leaders who would not stand against their morally perverse society. Because the people loved their way of life, they would not tolerate any preacher who would speak against their sin. Their end was destruction because they were beyond any moral conscience that would move them to return to God (Ep 4:19; 1 Tm 4:1,2). They were so morally degraded that they did not realize they were lost.

Chapter 6

6:1-8 What is stated in these verses is revelation from God. Jeremiah pictures the city of Jerusalem under siege. He first pictures the fact that the inhabitants should flee. **Children of Benjamin:** Jerusalem was within the tribal territory of Judah and Benjamin. The remnants of the Benjaminites are told to flee. **Beth-haccerem:** This was possibly a high point outside Jerusalem from which warning was given of approaching enemies. **Tekoa:** Tekoa was south of Jerusalem. It was a place of many caves where people could hide. **Pitch their tents:** The siege begins. There was an effort to take the city by surprise, but this failed. Then a plan was devised to take it by night, but this effort failed. The enemy then cut down trees and

built ramps against the walls and gates. **This is the city to be visited:** As a well keeps her water fresh, so Jerusalem kept her wickedness active and fresh in order to reap the just judgment of God. **Full of oppression:** The culture was morally corrupt. It was beyond moral repentance, and thus deserving of termination. The citizenship was plagued with crime and corruption, and in bondage to its own sinful ways. Once a society becomes the victim of its own moral degradation, then it is given over by God to complete destruction. The few righteous people who live in such a society unfortunately have to suffer among those who have given themselves over to wickedness. **Be instructed:** This is the plea of God to every society. Only by being instructed in the moral standards of God, by which a society can repair itself, is there the possibility for a better society. Only when civic leaders stand up to the moral decay of their societies can there be leadership that will change the destiny of the people. In this case, the leaders refused to listen to God, and thus the nation was coming to desolation.

6:9-15 Thoroughly glean: In chapter 5 the vines were to be cut down to the root. The vineyard is to be thoroughly picked. The punishment of Judah is to be thorough. The consequences of her sin resulted in the severity of her destruction. The extent to which God took them in destruction indicates the extent to which they went in moral decay. **I am full of the fury:** As Moses, Jeremiah pled for the people. He knew that their moral degradation was so vile that they deserved the just punishment that God would render. Nevertheless, he was greatly moved because of his love for the people. The revelation that came to him from God greatly disturbed him because he was given a vision of the cessation of Israel as an independent nation. It was too much for him to fully comprehend. Nine hundred years of history and the existence of Israel as a free nation was coming to an end. A nation was born out of Egyptian captivity, and now it was to die. It was too much for the young prophet to comprehend. **Ear is uncircumcised:** They were spiritually deaf. **Word ... reproach:** They scorned the preaching of the word of God. The words of Jeremiah irritated

them. **Covetousness:** They were greedy for the things of this world, which greed moved them to idolize possessions. **Prophet ... priest:** Their religious leaders sought their own financial well-being. They spoke lies in order to maintain their positions among the people. They should have been warning the people of destruction because of their sin, which thing was spoken in the law. But they had become ignorant of the word of God, and thus convinced the people that Jerusalem would never fall. These religious leaders were so morally vile that they themselves no longer blushed at the open immorality of the people. Because they had no moral courage, they too would be swept away in the coming destruction. Jeremiah's ministry is the same as the sincere evangelist today. He knows that the world is coming to an end with a great destruction (See comments 2 Pt 3). When Jesus comes, it will not be a time of peace for the world. It will be a time of destruction (See 2 Th 1:6-9). There are false prophets who are saying that Jesus will come to bring peace on this earth. But to the contrary, when He comes again He is coming with destruction. Those who are preaching peace on earth when Jesus comes are deceiving the people. Since the true evangelists of God know that Jesus will be the revelation of the wrath of God upon all wickedness, they too lament as Jeremiah over those in the world who will face a consuming fire (Mt 25:41). They lament that Jesus is coming to take vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel (See comments 1 Pt 4:11).

6:16-21 Ask for the old paths: This was the only escape route. God was referring to their old ways of living righteously in a covenant relationship with Him. To find their way out of darkness, they had to seek the way back to righteous living through the word of God. But here, the old paths referred to behaving according to the word of God. The old behavioral patterns were good because they were right. **We will not walk:** The proof that they had gone beyond repentance was in the fact that they refused to do that which was right. The prophets were preaching the old paths, but the people would not listen. They were thus without excuse. They could not

claim that they were ignorant of the right ways of God. **Watchmen ... trumpet:** On several occasions God had sent His prophets to preach the right ways to the people. But they refused to listen to the prophets. As a result, God called on all the nations to assemble and see that He had spoken the right ways to His people, but they refused to listen. Therefore, He was a just God in bringing condemnation upon them. **Incense from Sheba:** It was not that they became irreligious. They brought into their religiosity practices from the nations around them. Because they had mixed the pagan practices of the religions of the nations with what God had commanded through the law, their religiosity became unacceptable to God. **You will find rest for your souls:** This could happen only if they looked for and practiced the old paths. They must walk in the paths of God's truth and righteousness. Only when one does this will he truly have peace with God.

6:22-26 The enemy that would be coming from the north, the Chaldeans and Scythians, would without mercy bring down judgment upon Judah. **Our hands wax feeble:** The army that was coming upon them was so great that Judah's army would be terrified by their presence. The danger would be so great that the people would confine themselves to the city. No one would venture outside to gather grain and fruits from the crops. Thus with great lamentation Jeremiah cried out to the inhabitants of the city. He urged them to put on robes of repentance and ashes of mourning. Doom was imminent and the people must respond with fear of God, for only God could deliver them.

6:27-30 Tower and fortress: God placed Jeremiah as the only hope for the people. If the people listened to him, then their defense against the army of the Babylonians would be successful. The people were going to be refined as ore. The bellows would increase the fire and purify the ore. However, because the people were rebellious and stiffnecked, they would be poured off as useless slag in the process of refining. They were rejected, therefore, because they did not respond to God's process of refining them.

Chapter 7

THE TEMPLE SERMON

Some have believed that the message of this chapter was given in the first part of the reign of Jehoiakim (608 B.C.). The result of the message was explained in chapter 26. But it is also possible that the message was given in the last years of Josiah, with similar thoughts given at a later date.

7:1-15 This message was delivered at the temple gate. The time of deliverance may have been during one of the national festivals. **Amend:** Jeremiah's call for a change in their behavior. Their repentance must be more than the outward reformation of ceremonies as that which took place during the days of Josiah when he destroyed the places of idol worship throughout Judah. Their repentance must be sincere and from the heart. The exhortations that Jeremiah makes in verses 4-9 indicate the moral low to which they had digressed to be considered such a vile society. But because God was calling on them to repent, they could be assured that God still cared for them and sought their good. **This house:** They were incredibly audacious. They did all those things that were against the law of God, and yet came to the temple that had been dedicated to God. They were as the Pharisees and priests who crucified Jesus. They planned and executed a murder scheme, but would not take back the thirty pieces of silver they had given to Judas to betray Jesus (Mt 26:15; 27:3-8). Taking back the money into the temple treasury was against the law. Legalistic religious leaders with evil motives will always be inconsistent in their application of the law. They will break the law in order to keep their own law and traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9). **Den of robbers:** They were religious leaders who clung to their positions in order to maintain their financial security (See Mt 21:13). They used the religious spirit of the people as an opportunity to be supported full-time. **The temple of the Lord:** Since they believed that God would not allow the temple to be destroyed, they concluded that God would never allow Jerusalem to fall. But the people were trusting in the lying words of their false prophets. **Shiloh:** Jeremiah reminded them of

their history. The ark was at one time placed in Shiloh (1 Sm 4). The people subsequently made Shiloh a sacred place. But eventually, Shiloh was destroyed. God would do the same to Jerusalem, regardless of whether the ark was in the city. Man should never make any place sacred, and thus assume that God condones his desire for holy places. God's throne is in heaven. ***I will cast you out:*** They had the example of their northern ten tribes who were taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. God said that the same would happen to Judah.

7:16-20 *Do not pray for this people:* Jeremiah was moved to pray for the people. But sometimes a people are beyond prayer (See comments 1 Jn 5:16,17). If they were set in sin, then they did not deserve the prayers of a righteous man. They were beyond any request that God would answer for their deliverance. ***In the streets:*** The people had become so accustomed to their idol gods that they openly made sacrifices to them in the streets of Jerusalem. ***Queen of heaven:*** This is possibly a reference to Ishtar, a Babylonian fertility goddess. ***My fury will be poured out:*** Their brazen sin could not go unpunished.

7:21-28 *Your burnt offerings:* There is sarcasm in these words. Performing the ceremonies of religion will not keep one from apostasy. And when one is in apostasy, keeping religious ceremonies will not bring him back to God. The burnt offerings were to be offered completely to God. Nothing was to be eaten by the people as with the other offerings. The peace offering was to be eaten by the people. In this rebuke, Jeremiah stated that they might as well put the burnt offering with the peace offering and eat the whole thing. Neither offering was made to restore their relationship with God. God had rejected all their offerings because they had been brought before Him with an insincere heart. When God brought them out of Egypt, He commanded them to obey His laws concerning the sacrifices. Their offering of the sacrifices, therefore, was evidence of their obedience. They had to obey the law concerning the sacrifices in order to manifest their loyalty to His law. But such loyalty had long passed from Israel. ***Imagination of their evil heart:*** They created gods that would condone their evil desires.

God had given them laws to obey in order to proclaim their loyalty to Him. But they combined the sacrifices commanded by God with the sacrifices of their idol gods. God then sent His prophets to remind them of the purpose for which His sacrifices were given. But they rejected and killed the prophets. There was nothing else that God could do to turn them back. **Worse than their fathers:** They continued on a moral spiral downward. There was no turning back, and thus they were ripe for destruction. **They will not hearken:** They had morally degenerated to the point of no return. As Isaiah's mission to the northern kingdom (Is 6), so was Jeremiah's to the south. Both preached to a stubborn people who had hardened their hearts against God. The prophets preached, but there would be no response to their sermons.

7:29-34 Cut off your hair: This message was addressed to Jerusalem. The cutting of the hair was an act of mourning. In this case, they were to mourn over their sin. They should mourn over the fact that they had set up idols to false gods in the temple that was constructed to honor God. By doing such, the religious leaders were forcing the people to honor the inventions of men. They had built an altar to Molech, the god of the Moabites (2 Kg 21:5). They had involved themselves in human sacrifices. The location for these atrocities was Tophet. It would eventually be called the Valley of Slaughter. It would be named such because many Israelites would die there during the siege of Jerusalem. Another reason they should mourn is that in the day of their destruction there would be so many killed that the dead would not be buried. The beasts and birds would feed upon them. There would be no one left in the land to scare away the predators. In the destruction of the city, the enemies of Judah would desecrate the tombs of the former kings and princes of Israel. Their bones would be scattered under the heavenly bodies that they formerly worshiped.

Chapter 8

8:1-3 Jeremiah here concludes the horror that was pictured in the preceding message. Those who escaped death during the destruction would go into exile. How-

ever, their exile would be so terrible that they would have wished that they had been killed in the destruction of Jerusalem.

EXHORTATIONS

8:4-7 Israel's apostasy was unnatural. If one would fall down, he would naturally get up. But not Judah. They fell into sin, but would not return to God, for they had no desire to turn to that which Jeremiah preached. Instead, the people continued to backslide. They ran in their sin as a horse into battle, not knowing the peril that awaited them. The stork and swallow obey inborn instincts. Judah, however, had lost her moral compass. She established a culture of sin, and thus was content to continue in wickedness, for she thought that her behavior was not contrary to the word of God.

8:8-13 The people were the victims of their religious leaders. The scribes had twisted the law, and the false prophets and priests dealt falsely with the people. They preached peace when the nation was headed for destruction. Though the leaders twisted the Scriptures, the people were at fault for not checking their teachings with the word of God. God's judgment of the supposedly wise religious leaders would thus be harsh. He would give their wives to others. **Not at all ashamed:** This reveals how hardened they had become. Their consciences had been seared with self-deception. Judah had thus become a worthless vine and fig tree. She could bring forth no generations that would bring glory to God. The people had rejected the law of God that would have preserved them in the land. But now, they had digressed to the point that they were no longer good for producing a posterity of righteousness in their children. Before the disease of their sin was passed on to another generation, it was time for them to suffer the calamity of national destruction.

8:14-17 It seems that the farming people were more perceptive of the impending danger than those who lived in the city. They put their trust in fleeing to the fortified cities in times of peril. But there they would face death. They might hope for better times, but there

were no better times to come. The enemy of the north was already on its way. Jeremiah speaks in a verb tense as if it had already happened. Thus it was too late for repentance. The time had come for the land to be devoured. The enemy was as a serpent that could not be charmed, but would eventually bite.

8:18-22 The fate of the people greatly disturbed Jeremiah. He had seen a terrible future for the people. It was the end of an independent national Israel. No more would the Jews be an independent nation in their own land. They would always be controlled or occupied by other nations. But Jeremiah's cry to the Lord was answered with a question. Jeremiah must discern why they had provoked God to anger. **Harvest is past:** They failed in their opportunity to repent. **Summer is ended:** They had neglected the opportunity to produce righteousness. **Not saved:** And now it was time to reap what they had sown. **I am hurt:** Jeremiah lamented the certain doom of his people. He complained by asking if there were no healing left in Gilead. Gilead was known for the production of a balm that was made from the resin of the mastic tree. There was healing still available. There was still a physician to heal the sick. But Jeremiah wondered why there was no healing. The people were not healed because they did not seek the balm. They did not seek the great Physician. In the stubbornness of their rebellion, they had lost the opportunity to heed the pleas of God that they turn from their sin.

Chapter 9

9:1-8 Fountain of tears: Jeremiah was indeed the weeping prophet of Judah. He saw so much sin, and was told so much calamity that was in the future, that he could not contain himself. **Lodging place:** Jeremiah was so stunned by the destruction that was coming that he sought to escape. His stress had driven him to his emotional limits. He wanted God to take him to a wilderness. He had been shunned and abused by the people because of his message. **Adulterers ... treacherous:** They were spiritual adulterers in that they had married themselves to false gods. They were a generation of liars. Neigh-

bors could not trust one another. **Supplant:** This is the same Hebrew word that is used for "Jacob." They were as Jacob, who dealt treacherously, in order to gain an economic advantage over one another (See Gn 27). **Taught their tongue:** They lived in a culture of deceit, and thus those who were born into the culture grew up learning how to deceive. It was a culture that was built on deceit, and thus neighbors could not trust one another.

9:9-11 Weeping and wailing: The devastation that was to come was revealed to Jeremiah. He responded as many evangelists today to whom the destruction of the world has been revealed in the word of God (2 Th 1:6-9; 2 Pt 3). He responded with weeping and wailing, knowing that destruction is coming, not peace. In Jeremiah's prophecy, it was revealed that the land would be totally devastated. He saw Jerusalem lying in a heap of ruins. It would become a place for roaming jackals. And such did the Babylonians do to Jerusalem and Judah in 586 B.C. when they destroyed the city.

9:12-16 Wise man: The people were without spiritual understanding simply because they had forgotten the law of God (Hs 4:6). They were so caught up in their affairs of life that they did not take time to ask questions concerning the destruction that was coming upon them. **No one passes through:** Palestine was the major trade route between the countries to the north and Egypt to the south. Normally, there were traders continually going through the land. But this had all stopped. No one was asking questions concerning why. The reason was that the Near East world at the time was in international turmoil with conflicts between the Babylonians, Assyrians and Egyptians, all of whom struggled for control of Palestine. All trade had stopped in the region. **After the imagination of their own heart:** Herein lies the problem with a society that is so obsessed with consuming the things of the world. Their minds were not on spiritual things, but on things of this world. They were concerned with only the present, not with the impending danger of the international turmoil that would eventually bring destruction to the gates of Jerusalem. **Wormwood ... gall:** They would be given to great sorrow and suffer-

ing because of their apostasy from God. They would be scattered among the nations as captives. Their end was near, but they were so consumed with their own selfish interests that they paid no attention to the international turmoil that was occurring among the nations.

9:17-22 Mourning women: These were women who were called to mourn in times of grief. The times were so severe that God told Jeremiah to call in women to mourn over the dire situation of Judah. The purpose of the mourning women was to stimulate mourning in the lives of others. God went to this length to stimulate mourning over Jerusalem. But it was to no avail. The people were simply indifferent to the impending destruction. **We are plundered:** The possessions of the people of the countryside had been plundered. But the calamity that was to come was to be worse than the loss of possessions. There would be the loss of life, the captivity of women and children, and the end of national Israel as an independent nation. The dead would be so great in number that no one would be able to bury them. They would be left to rot in the sun, eaten by birds and beasts. Death is personified by Jeremiah as one who goes about seeking to kill. This is the one who reaps the harvest of humanity.

9:23,24 Judah had taken pride in her human wisdom, defenses and material prosperity. But all these things were worthless in defending one against the power of God. Jeremiah warned that they should not take courage in the proclamations of their supposed wise men. On the contrary, they should take pride in grace, righteousness and just judgment. It is upon these virtues that great nations are built.

9:25,26 I will punish: God is not a respecter of persons. Therefore, being a Jew was no guarantee that one would be treated with greater respect in judgment. The Jews, therefore, had no advantage over the Gentiles when it came to the judgment of God. The most important thing to remember is obedience to the word of God (1 Co 7:19). If one does not obey God, whether he is circumcised or uncircumcised, then he will suffer the judgment of God. In reference to Judah, the meaning is that religious ceremonies of the law do not give one an advantage over

the Gentiles to whom the ceremonies of the law were not given. God judges according to our hearts, not according to our performance of religious ceremonies.

Chapter 10

10:1-16 House of Israel: It is not certain whether Jeremiah was addressing all Israel, or just the ten northern tribes who had already been taken into Assyrian captivity. If he was addressing the northern kingdom, then he was exhorting them to remain faithful to the Lord while in captivity. **Do not learn the way of the heathen:** While in exile, it would be tempting to appease one's captors by paying homage to their idol gods. Since Israel was taken into captivity because she did such in Palestine, Jeremiah urged the people to refrain from continuing idol worship in captivity. They must be reminded that giving homage to such false gods was useless. Jeremiah then described the foolishness of idol making. Idols cannot speak or go anywhere. They can do nothing. They are stupid and foolish. The only power of an idol, or fetish, is in the minds of those who make them. Idols are made in order to reinforce the misguided minds of those who make and honor them. They are physical representations of those who are ignorant of the true and living God. **King of the nations:** God was not only the king of Israel, but all nations of the world. Since He is the king of the nations, then all nations should give honor to Him. He is the source of wisdom and knowledge. The god that is represented by every idol can be understood simply because the idol god is the product of the human mind. But the God who created all things is beyond our full comprehension. Men make idol gods. But the God of all things created the minds of men.

10:17-22 Jeremiah seems to go into a dialogue with a personification of Jerusalem. In the dialogue, the inhabitants of the city are commanded to take up their baggage for they are going on a journey into exile. **Sling out the inhabitants:** This is strong language, indicating that God extracted the inhabitants of Jerusalem and threw them as stones from a sling into distant lands. The city responded with dismay, mourning her loss and calamity.

She complained about her leaders who were too inept to gather the scattered flock. A great commotion was heard from the north, indicating that the armies of God's judgment were on their way to the city.

10:23-25 In view of the calamity that was coming upon God's people and Jerusalem, Jeremiah was humbled to prayer. He perceived the insignificance of man in comparison to God. **It is not in man:** No greater words could have been uttered concerning the inability of man to determine his own moral standards by which to live. When men are left to themselves in order to establish moral laws, the wicked take advantage of the innocent and weak. They begin to dominate the weak, even to the point of genocide of one class, tribe or ethnic group. It is for this reason that men must have a Divine standard for establishing moral laws. Only our Creator can be this standard. **Correct me:** Man must look beyond himself in order to receive direction and correction. Asking for God's discipline and instruction is the plea of the righteous. **Mercy with justice:** If man were to be legally accountable for his violations against God's law, no one would stand just before God (Rm 3:9,10,23). Therefore, in order for any man to be saved, there must be mercy from God. Thus grace reaches forth with mercy in order to pardon those who transgress God's law. **Fury:** Jeremiah, as David, saw any attack against God's people as an attack against God and His work through His people. He thus cried out an imprecatory prayer that God bring judgment upon the enemies of Israel. This prayer was answered when God terminated those nations who had arrogantly set their hand against the people of God.

Confessions And Prophecy

(11:1 - 20:18)

Outline: (1) The Covenant (11:1 - 12:17), (2) Parables and proclamations (13:1-27), (3) The drought (14:1 - 15:9), (4) Confessions of the prophet (15:10-21), (5) Exhortations (16:1 - 17:18), (6) Call to obedience (17:19 - 20:18)

Chapter 11

THE COVENANT

11:1-17 The historical setting of the following confes-

sions was probably during the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.) and the early reign of Jehoiakim (608-597 B.C.). God takes the people back to the covenant that He established with them at Mount Sinai (Dt 27 – 30). In his reforms, Josiah renewed the promise of the people to keep ceremonially the laws of the covenant. However, God reminded them that their obedience to His law had not always been the case for they were a rebellious people. God redeemed Israel out of Egyptian bondage. He took the initiative to free the people from bondage and give them birth into nationhood. He established a covenant with them, exhorting them to hear the words of the covenant and do them. Nevertheless, their fathers failed to be obedient. They walked in the imagination of their own hearts and followed after their stubborn desires.

Conspiracy: God told Jeremiah that there was a conspiracy among the men of Judah. Josiah had implemented outward reforms, but the hearts of the people had not changed. They were rebellious and stubborn as their forefathers, and thus conspiring to turn again to idols. ***I will bring evil upon them:*** The revival of rebellion among the people would be punished. In their punishment, God told Jeremiah that they would not cry out to Him, but to their idol gods, proving that they had a heart of conspiracy. Their idol gods, however, would not save them (2:28; 7:17,18). ***Do not pray:*** The revelation concerning their former disobedience was possibly for the sake of Jeremiah. God wanted him to understand that as in the former times, the people had their hearts set on spiritual treachery. They would not become loyal to Him again. He is told, therefore, that he must not intercede for them through prayer, for God was going to bring deserving judgment upon them. He would not answer any prayers to save them. ***Vows and sacrificial flesh:*** Performance of law cannot take the place of loyalty of the heart. Their performance of the laws of the covenant were futile because they had an adulterous heart of treason. ***Olive tree:*** Israel was at first beautiful as a new olive tree. But she became corrupt and vile. She was no longer good for producing spiritual fruit. It was time, therefore, for her to be plucked up and burned. Israel had violated the

conditions of the covenant, and thus God was no longer obligated to carry out His part of the covenant, that is to make Israel prosper and protect her from her enemies.

11:18-23 When the preacher speaks the truth, opposition will come from those who are in bondage to their own self-deceptions. Opposition will also come from those who are in bondage to their traditions that they honor above the truth of God. In this case, there was a plot to kill Jeremiah in Anathoth, Jeremiah's hometown. ***I was like a lamb:*** Jeremiah may have been somewhat naive concerning how serious this opposition became when their traditional religiosity was disturbed by the preaching of the truth. The plot caught him by surprise because it came from his own relatives. ***Vengeance:*** As David, Jeremiah asked that God bring judgment upon those who would harm him. ***I will punish them:*** Anyone who would set his hand against a man of God should read carefully these words. Those who would set themselves against one who is doing the work of God will reap the vengeance of God. Sometimes God's vengeance is carried out in life, but certainly it will be carried in the afterlife. It is a blasphemous act for one to raise his hand against one who is speaking forth the word of God (See 2 Kg 2:22-24).

Chapter 12

12:1-4 Jeremiah's complaint was as Job's. He wondered why the righteous had to suffer in the presence of a good and benevolent God (See comments Jb 10:1-12).

12:5,6 Jeremiah was shaken by the treachery of his relatives and neighbors in Anathoth. He complained to God. He was a young prophet at this time, not realizing that anyone who would stand up for God to speak against a culture of sin would be severely persecuted. But he soon learned that the most vehement people who stand against the preaching of the truth are those of the religious community. ***Footman ... wearied your:*** God countered Jeremiah's complaints. If a soldier was worried about the foot soldiers, then certainly he would be terrified with the charging horses. ***Land of peace:*** If those of his own homeland troubled him, then what would he

do when going into a jungle of opposition wherein lions were ready to ravage him? It was into these lions that God was leading Jeremiah. **Multitude after you:** God warned Jeremiah that there was worse to come. If his own people rose up against him, then certainly the whole nation would seek his demise. Anyone who would stand up and preach to a generation of people that has wholly forsaken the word of God can expect no less. True men of God are willing to stand alone against the masses who have gone into apostasy. Those who preach amidst the majority who are in apostasy are revolutionaries. They bravely seek to turn people back to God, away from the apostate society in which they live. They thus produce social chaos in producing a paradigm shift away from that which is the norm for religious conduct. The initial leaders who lead in religious paradigm shifts, therefore, are ostracized from the masses as was Jeremiah. They are despised and rejected. They are leaders who never see the fruits of their ministry, for religious paradigm shifts take one or two generations to be fully realized.

12:7-13 Heritage: Jeremiah's rejection by his relatives and friends of his homeland was an object lesson. Israel was the bride of God. But she betrayed Him by going after the idol gods of the nations. As Jeremiah was compelled to forsake his family, so God was compelled to forsake Israel, for she no longer wanted to be in a covenant relationship with Him. **A lion:** Israel was a raging lion that had turned against Her creator. **Speckled bird:** When God turned Israel over to the international turmoil that prevailed at the time, she was as a speckled bird ready to be devoured. **Vineyard:** Israel was ready to be trampled down as a prized vineyard that should have brought forth good fruit for her Maker. But she produced worthless fruit. As a vine that produces grapes for wine, she had lived her productive years, and now, needed to be plucked up in order that a new vine be planted. The land was to be turned over to those who did not care for it. Though she was sown to produce wheat, she produced thorns, and thus was worthless for the purpose for which she was planted.

12:14-17 Israel was chosen for a specific purpose in

history, which purpose Israel's neighbors did not understand. That purpose was to be the nation through whom God would bring the Messiah and Savior into the world in fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers (Gn 12:1-3). However, when God chose Israel, this did not mean that He turned away from the nations of the world and ignored them. God is the Lord of all those who would seek to do His will. The neighboring nations who worked against Israel would be punished because of their abuse of God's people and refusal to honor the inheritance of Palestine that was given to Israel. But those nations who would turn to God would be blessed. The Bible historian must not forget that God chose Israel in order to preserve a portion of the world society for the revelation of His plan of redemption. The whole world had previously turned to sin before the days of Noah's time (Gn 6:5). Lest this happen again among the populations of the world, God chose a specific people who were led by Abraham, our father of faith. When this nation turned to wickedness, God's plan was to purify the nation through captivity, and then continue His work through them to bring the Savior into the world. **Destroy that nation:** The neighboring nations that abused Israel would be destroyed from existence if they did not forsake their idolatry and come to God. God would take back the inherited land of promise from the land grabbers, and give it back to His people whom He would pluck out of the nations to whom they had been driven.

Chapter 13

PARABLES & PROCLAMATIONS

13:1-11 This is the parable of the waistcloth. Since Jeremiah by this time in his ministry was well-known among the people, it is probable that he actually made the 500 kilometer trip to the Euphrates River in order to bury the waistcloth. Other Bible students think he simply went to a small village northeast of Jerusalem. The message of the lesson was that God had clothed himself with Israel. But His people did not seek to be clothed with Him, and thus followed after the imagination of their own heart. They became spiritually marred while

being worn by God. When Jeremiah retrieved the buried waistcloth, it was rotten and ruined. So it would be with Israel. Israel was rotten with sin and ruined for God's purpose for which He chose Israel. Judah, the remainder of Israel in the land, was to be cast away as a useless waistcloth. The useless generation of Israel that was taken into captivity would die in captivity. Only their children and grandchildren would return to the land after the initial release of exiles in 586 B.C.

13:12-14 This was the parable of the wine vessel. The occasion may have been one of the festival celebrations where the wine vessels were visible to everyone. Judah had drunk too much sin, and thus was reeling with rebellious drunkenness. Because of the wicked example of the rulers, the people had lost their moral direction. In their moral confusion, they were in conflict with one another. As their sin fermented, they became a society that was turning on itself. In the end, God would smash the wine vessel of Judah.

13:15-19 *Give glory to God:* Jeremiah was dedicated to his people, and thus he pleaded with them to turn from their society of sin. Though God knew that they would not turn, Jeremiah's heart moved him to plead that they save themselves from the darkness into which they had cast themselves (See At 3:19). Their only hope was to listen to the voice of God, lest the light of His way be turned into a shadow of death. At the end of his plea, he realized that they would not listen. Their destiny, therefore, was sealed. They would go into captivity. *The king:* Jeremiah pleaded with the leadership of the nation. The king at this time was probably Jehoiachin (2 Kg 24:8-12). *The south:* Egypt would not come to their aid. Their only recourse, therefore, was to humble themselves before God. If they humbled themselves they would live, though they would still go into captivity. This eventually happened when Jehoiachin and the first group of exiles were taken by Babylonia in the first captivity of 587 B.C. (See 2 Kg 24:14-16).

13:20-27 Jerusalem (Judah) is addressed as a shepherd girl who has lost her flock. The Babylonians would come and set over the flock one of their choice. The people

of God had digressed from desiring and appointing God-anointed kings, to choosing their own kings, and now to foreign powers choosing their kings (2 Kg 20:12,13). This would be the final humiliation of Israel as a nation. If the people cried out as to why God would allow such to happen to His people, the answer would be clear. It was because they forsook their God. **Can the Ethiopian change:** Once sin becomes the culture, there can be no immediate change without divine intervention. A leopard cannot change who he is or how he appears. Judah could not change from her culture of sin. Their sin had become their culture, and thus they could not change their cultural identity without the help of God. And in this case, God's solution for their sin was bondage. **I will scatter:** As the chaff is blown away by the wind at the winnowing floor, so will Judah be scattered. Because of their falsehoods, adulteries and lewdness, they could no longer be God's representative nation among the nations. They had morally become as the nations, and thus gave up their right to represent God among the nations.

Chapter 14

THE DROUGHT

14:1-6 A severe drought became the occasion for Jeremiah to rise up and proclaim the reason for the drought. Jeremiah believed that the drought was an act of God. The drought had ravaged the land. The conditions were so bad that it brought the people to their knees in mourning.

14:7-9 Herein is their definition of their concept of God. They believed that God would behave according to the actions and desires of man, just as they manipulated their idol gods. The famine had humbled them to desperation. They were a distressed people crying out for deliverance from their plight. They voiced their confessions, but their hearts were still hardened to the ways of the true and living God. With all their complaining, they blamed God for their suffering. And because they blamed Him, they demanded that He relieve them of their suffering. They believed that they could command the behavior of God, while forgetting that they were actually the problem. We are not told if this drought was

the direct work of God. If it was, then it was brought on because of their sin in order to move them to repentance. If it was not, then their concept of God was that He could be called on only in times of despair and calamity in order to relieve them of their calamity. Their concept of God was that He was fickle and would respond to the whims of their desires. Such was the behavior of the gods they had conceived in their minds, and thus they assumed the God of heaven would so behave in response to their pleas.

14:10-12 *They loved to wander:* Those who have no love of the word of God will wander from one religious group to another, seeking one that will please their own desires (See comments 2 Tm 4:3,4). The Israelites wandered from one idol god to another, seeking those who would condone their ungodly behavior. ***Remember their iniquity:*** God's remembrance of sin means that He punishes sin. Again God called on Jeremiah not to pray for the people that He forget their sin. He reminded Jeremiah that their requests to Him were shallow and insincere. They would pray to the god they thought would deliver them out of their dilemmas. And since they were suffering, their sorrow would exist only until they were delivered from their calamity. Insincere prayer and fasting that is not from one whose life portrays total commitment to God will profit nothing in response from God. God answers the prayers of those who walk in the light of His word (Compare 1 Jn 2:3,4; 3:22).

14:13-16 *The prophets:* Jeremiah proclaimed that the false prophets were the problem. They had led the people astray. And true, God did not send these prophets to the people. They were self-proclaimed religious leaders. However, the problem with false prophets is that fickle people are willing to listen to them. They can prophesy lies only when the people give a willing ear. They will accept a lying vision when the people seek those who will speak according to the behavior they want to live (2 Tm 4:3,4). When the people want to be deceived, they will find someone to speak the deceptions they want to hear (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). For this reason, both the prophets and people must share in the responsibility of the calamity that was to come.

14:17-22 Tears day and night: Jeremiah's grief over the condition of Judah was an expression of what God felt. The drought had taken its toll on the land and the people. People were dying. There was famine and disease. While the false prophets presented themselves to the people with a deceptive holiness, the people were succumbing to the severity of famine. **Have you utterly rejected Judah:** Jeremiah's question assumes that he believed that all would die. **We acknowledge:** Jeremiah confessed for Judah. But his confession would not turn the nation from idolatry. He confessed their sin in order that they not be annihilated. **Remember ... covenant:** It was not that God had forgotten the covenant. Jeremiah's plea that God remember the covenant was a plea to spare some of the people in order that all the people not be annihilated. **Vanities of the Gentiles:** There were no gods among the Gentiles who could cause it to rain. Only the God who created water and clouds could bring rain again upon the land. Jeremiah thus relinquished himself to wait until God answered his plea for the rain. If the rains came, then he would know that God still sought to preserve some of Judah in order to continue the covenant that He had established with them at Mount Sinai.

Chapter 15

15:1-4 Jeremiah was sincere about his concern for the people. However, God would not accept his intercession on their behalf. In the days of Moses and Samuel, the people responded to natural calamities with repentance. But at this time in their history, they were beyond repentance, for they could not discern that the natural calamity was sent from God. They had deceived themselves into believing that their behavior was according to the will of God. But it was not according to the will of the one true and living God. It was the will of their gods that they had created after their own desires. These gods allowed them to live according to their own moral standards (See comments Hs 4:6). For this reason, the Judah that existed at this time was consigned to destruction. All this was the result of not being able to recover morally from the sinful leadership of their leaders, especially

King Manasseh (2 Kg 21:1-26; 24:3,4).

15:5-9 These verses are a lamentation over the people. Jeremiah laments the fact that no one would take pity on the people. No one would ask concerning the welfare of Jerusalem. God had worked through chastisement in order to encourage repentance. But they would not repent. And thus, God was tired of trying to turn them back. **Widows:** So many men would die in the war that would come that there would be a great increase in widows. **Her sun has gone down:** Jerusalem could have continued to live as a city, but the wickedness of the inhabitants brought her to a premature death.

CONFESSIONS OF THE PROPHET

15:10-14 This is a personal dialogue between Jeremiah and God. It was a time in Jeremiah's ministry when he was overwhelmed with the burden of his work. The people suffered from the wicked leadership of King Manasseh. There had been a plot against Jeremiah to take his life. The land was suffering from a severe famine. Add to this the fact that Jeremiah was now ostracized from the people because of his message. **Woe to me:** The burden of the ministry and the times brought Jeremiah into a state of despondency. As most leaders who lead alone at the front in order to initiate a social and religious paradigm shift to that which is right, he felt that he was failing in his ministry because he could see no immediate results of his labors. **I will set you free:** Verse 11 is God's encouragement of Jeremiah, that in desperation, those who were now his enemies would eventually appeal to him for help. Verse 12 would possibly be Jeremiah's response. In other words, Jeremiah questioned whether he could break the iron of the Babylonians who were coming from the north. In his despondency, he questioned God as to how he could ever keep back the advancement of the Babylonians. Verses 13 & 14 are God's reply to Jeremiah's doubt concerning his feelings of inadequacy in stopping the coming destruction. God assured Jeremiah that He would allow all the land and city to be plundered. Jeremiah would also be taken into a land and to a people whose language he would not understand (43:4-7). In

general, God told Jeremiah that in Judah's case, it had to get worse before it could get better.

15:15-18 Jeremiah continued to be in despair, regardless of God's encouragement. He may have possibly felt somewhat sorry for himself because he was alone in his ministry of the word of God to a rebellious people. However, he was not alone, for there were other prophets as Huldah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah who were contemporary with him in his ministry. **Your words ... I ate:** He accepted the ministry of being the medium through whom God would communicate a message of doom to the people. God's word brought joy to him, but defiance from the people brought despair. **I sat alone:** Those leaders who would stand up to preach the word of God will often find themselves sitting alone. Revolutionaries who seek to initiate a social and religious paradigm shift from apostasy to righteousness will always stand alone. **Why is my pain perpetual:** Jeremiah cried out in deep despair, feeling that God would not come to his aid. God replied with a rebuke in reference to his faith. If he would repent of his lack of faith, God promised to restore him to confidence. As a man of God, God did not accept his woe-ful complaints (See Jb 3; 6; 7). God required of him total commitment to his ministry. If Jeremiah would accept his destiny, then he had to accept all the rejection that would come with it. God knew that Jeremiah was committed to the task. Therefore, He asked Jeremiah to look deep within himself in order to stir up his convictions.

15:19-21 God's reply to the prophet's self-pity were words of chastisement. A confident prophet of God could not wallow in self-pity and despondency. Such only develops into a lack of confidence in one's self and ministry. Stress makes one want to do that which a prophet can never do, that is, run from the people in order to find emotional relief. If Jeremiah would sort himself out, then God would go to work for him. In order to reassure him, God promised that no one would take his life, but that he would die of old age. God's encouragement was not that he would experience great results from his ministry, but that he would live throughout his ministry.

Chapter 16

EXHORTATIONS

16:1-4 God did not want to increase the emotional burden of Jeremiah with the responsibilities of a family. He did not want him to have children who would be born into such a depraved society, and consequently suffer the unbearable calamities that were coming. God knew that the burden of a family in such a distressful time would be too much for the prophet to bear (See comments 1 Co 7:26).

16:5-9 The times of joy were soon to be gone from the land. The calamity would be so great that the dead would not be buried. **Break bread:** There would be no more funeral services for the dead, for there would be too many to bury. **Consolation to drink:** No one would be left to console the loss of a father or mother. **In your days:** Jeremiah was given a time in which all these things would occur. He would see the end of national Israel as an independent nation.

16:10-13 The inability of the people to return to God is explained in this text. **What is our iniquity:** The moral standard by which they lived was sinful, though they thought that they were living right before God. The fact was that they were living according to their beliefs in their false gods, which gods were the creation of their own desire to live a wicked life. **Because your fathers have forsaken Me:** Their digression into a culture of sin began with their fathers. Thus, the fathers had passed to the children a religious and moral culture that was contrary to the will of God. **Not kept My law:** Once they behaved culturally contrary to the will of God, they could not go back, for they had seared their consciences (Hs 4:6; see comments Mk 7:1-9). **Worse than your fathers:** Sinful cultures do not get better. They continue to digress further into moral degradation (See Gn 6:5). **So that you may not hearken:** They were at the point of no moral return. Their consciences had been seared and their hearts hardened against God (See comments Rm 1:18-21; 1 Tm 4:1,2).

16:14-18 In the midst of a message of calamity, there was a message of hope and rebirth. The joy of the new

generation over being set free from the captivity of their enemies would be greater than their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. **I will send:** God would fetch His people out of all the lands to which He had sent them after the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria and after the fall of the southern kingdom to Babylonia. A remnant of all twelve tribes would eventually return to the land. But first, God had to discipline them because of their apostasy to idol gods. The generations that would come from the initial captives had to be morally molded for the restoration to come.

16:19-21 The time would come when even the Gentiles would realize the foolishness of idols. They would come to recognize the great God of Israel because of what He would do in bringing His people back into their land from which He had driven them. **The Lord:** That is, "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex 3:14).

Chapter 17

17:1-4 Iron ... diamond: The apostasy of Judah would not be changed. God had worked every calamity against the people, but they would not recognize that the calamities were His work of discipline in order to restore them to the law of the covenant. In view of the general pronouncement of the cause of their apostasy from God, they had become rich, and thus consumed upon their own selves to the neglect of the poor. In fact, their wicked economic practices had created the poor. Once materialism becomes the culture of a society, those who possess the wealth of the economy will do everything to maintain their riches, even to the neglect of others. Leaders will hang on to power to the hurt of the people. Rich business people will oppress and exploit their laborers. Israel's apostasy was more than a change in religion. It was a change in culture. It was a change from a farming culture where no poor class existed to a rich social culture of the elite who created and oppressed the poor. The only way to correct such a society was to send it into the humiliation of poverty. And that God did to Israel by sending His people into captivity. He kept them in slavery until the materialistic culture had died off, and a

new culture of humble servants could be brought forth as in the time when the Israelites came out of Egyptian captivity.

17:5-8 Who trusts in man: If they thought that they could trust in themselves, or in an alliance with another nation to deliver them from certain calamity, they were mistaken. God had determined their destiny, and no man could change it. **Trusts in the Lord:** A tree in a dry area sends its roots far into the ground for water. So it is with those who have a deep faith in the Lord. When times of great turmoil come, the deeply faithful will drink from the riches of God's care for them.

17:9-11 The basic nature of a man cannot be trusted if he has turned his back on God. When men leave the moral standard of God, they become deceitful and treacherous. Judah was incurably sick, and thus could not be healed of the lusts for material things. God is constantly searching the hearts of men. He tests and examines the deepest feelings and emotions of men in order to determine what we love the most. In this case, God found a heart of unrighteous materialism. Thus the riches of the greedy that had been unjustly acquired would soon be taken away.

17:12-18 Jeremiah speaks of hope and praise of God. God's rule from heaven was originally the foundation of the faith of Israel. But it would come to pass that those who had forsaken their faith in God, would be ashamed, for they would be taken into captivity. They would be ashamed because they had given up their hope and trust in God. **Let them be ashamed:** The word that Jeremiah spoke was from God, and thus in his defense before his persecutors, he reminded them that the calamity about which he spoke was coming from the Lord. Jeremiah was only the messenger who brought to the people a message of doom from God. Unfortunately, the people had moved so far from God that they could not discern the fact that Jeremiah was speaking a message from God.

CALL TO REPENTANCE

17:19-27 The materialism of the people had carried over into profaning the Sabbath, a day in which they

were supposed to cease from work as a sign that they honored the covenant they had with God. Keeping of the Sabbath was to be a signal that the nation was obedient to the law of the covenant. When they forgot the law, then they carried on with their thirst to gain as much as possible through trading with one another and the exploitation of their laborers. The profaning of the Sabbath, therefore, manifested the real problem among the rulers and people. It was not that they were violating a legal code of the law, but that they had rejected God's conditions of the covenant. It was a signal that they had forgotten God and created a religion that would conform to their materialistic culture. If they would repent, then they would keep the laws of the covenant. God would then keep them in the land, and save the city. Unfortunately, neither would happen because they had strayed so far away from God that they could not morally find their way back. And since the people considered Jeremiah to be speaking false ideas, they rejected him and his message of repentance.

Chapter 18

18:1-4 When the clay pot is marred, the potter must start over by reshaping the clay into something different. The point was that Israel had to be remolded and shaped into another nation. The same clay was used, but a different nation would come forth from captivity. All those to whom Jeremiah spoke would die. Only their children and grandchildren would benefit from their repentance. A different generation of Israelites would be restored to the land.

18:5-10 Since God gave birth to the nation of Israel by their deliverance from Egyptian captivity, then He had the right to remake the nation, since the culture of the nation to which Jeremiah prophesied was different than the nation that came out of Egyptian captivity. The nation of Israel was brought forth from Egyptian captivity for the purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world for the salvation of all men. However, the existing nation to whom Jeremiah spoke forsook the purpose for which it was created. For this reason, the Creator of the

nation decided to start again with a morally remolded remnant that would descend from those who were going into captivity. God could do this with Israel because the nation continued to exist only because of God's watchful eye over her. When He looked the other way, the nations of the world were too fierce for her, and thus the nations consumed her in captivity.

18:11,12 *We will walk after our own devices:* God gave Israel the freedom to choose concerning their destiny. If they chose obedience, then they would remain in the land. If they chose rebellion, then they would be cast out of the land. If they found themselves living contrary to the law of God, then they could repent, and He would restore them. This happened many times throughout their history. But now, they chose to walk according to the laws that they had created after their own desires. For this reason, destruction of the old Israel was imminent. The Divine Potter was at this time in the process of forming a new pot out of the clay of a marred nation.

18:13-17 *Who has heard such things:* It was not natural that a nation forsake its national gods. The gods of a particular nation were symbols of patriotism. Those who would be patriotic to the nation and the king, therefore, honored the gods of the kingdom. But Israel forsook her God, and ran after the patriotic symbols of foreign nations. God chided the people in these verses by pointing out the absurdity of such behavior. ***Astonished and wag his head:*** The foolishness of Israel's turn to the gods of other nations with which she would make any economic treaty caused the nations to deride her for her fickle nature. They viewed such frivolous idolatry as unpatriotic to one's nation.

18:18-23 *Devices against Jeremiah:* The religious leaders devised a plot against Jeremiah. Since he had attacked them for their poor leadership of the people, they retaliated with vengeance (See also 11:21-23). Jeremiah had attacked them because they used their positions and support from the people to lead the people away from God. ***Will evil be rewarded for good:*** The very people for whom Jeremiah had made intercession were now turning against him. This was the last straw for Jeremiah.

As David, Jeremiah voiced an imprecatory prayer to God that He bring down judgment on them. Jeremiah finally understood the reprobate nature of the people as God understood them at the beginning of his ministry. **Pit ... snares:** Anyone who would take the side of God against false religious leaders would do well to look for pits and snares. Religious leaders who crave their positions because of pomp, power and purse, will often seek the death of those who proclaim the fallacy of their behavior and twisted beliefs (See comments At 19:24-41). The scribes and Pharisees hated Jesus for threatening their positions, possessions and power. And thus, such people will also hate the true servants of God (Jn 7:7; 15:18,19).

Chapter 19

19:1-13 In order to illustrate the destruction that was coming, Jeremiah was instructed to take some of the older people who were more mature in their thinking, and demonstrate before them what was coming. What Jeremiah did before them is stated in verse 10. The message was that Judah and Jerusalem would be shattered by their enemies. They would never be restored to what they were in the day when Jeremiah revealed this message. The destruction in 586 B.C. by the Babylonian army would be the termination of national Israel as they knew it. However, from a remnant of Israel, God would make a new nation. **Tophet:** A rubbish heap. The reason they would become a rubbish heap was that they had offered sacrifices to other gods. **Valley of the Son of Hinnom:** This valley south of Jerusalem was used by Manasseh as a place to worship false gods (2 Ch 33:6). It was a place where children were sacrificed. When Josiah initiated a restoration in Judah, he turned this place into a rubbish heap and changed the name to Tophet (2 Kg 23:10). **Make void the counsel:** All the schemes of Judah to deliver themselves would accomplish nothing. **Food for the birds:** There will be so many dead that there would be no place to bury them. The Babylonians would take their captives and leave the dead bodies lying on the ground for the birds and animals to eat. **Eat the flesh of their sons:** Hunger would be so great in the city that during

the time of the siege parents would eat their children in order to survive. The people would become crazed because of the trauma of the siege.

19:14,15 Jeremiah repeated at the temple the message of verses 3-9. The bravery of Jeremiah in these times was strong. He had grown from the timid young prophet to one who could stand alone in the religious center of an apostate nation and proclaim its destruction (At 14:19). His words caused such a stir on this occasion that Pashur beat him and put him in stocks.

Chapter 20

20:1-6 The reaction of Pashur indicates that many in the crowd were listening to what Jeremiah was saying. **Stocks:** In order to discredit Jeremiah, he was put on public display for the jeers of those who rejected his message. Because he stood against the message and positions of the religious leaders, he now for the first time suffered direct persecution from their hands. Nevertheless, by this time in his ministry Jeremiah had grown strong in character and the power of his message. **Magor-missabib:** That is, "terror on every side." **You have prophesied lies:** Pashur was evidently leading in contradicting Jeremiah's message by saying that there would be peace, not calamity in the future of Judah (8:11). Jeremiah declared the reward for such lies. He prophesied that Pashur and his family would go into captivity. Pashur had to witness personally the calamity that would come upon the people. All his friends, however, would die in disgrace. **Riches ... treasures:** The materialistic greed of Judah had led her into apostasy. Through the Babylonian conquest, therefore, God would take away all the treasures in which she trusted. **And there you will die:** The generation of initial captives died in captivity. Because of their wicked leadership, all leaders of the initial captives died before the expiration of the seventy years of captivity. Only the children and grandchildren participated in the first return from captivity that took place 536 B.C.

20:7-10 In this bitter complaint to God, it is noted that Jeremiah did not turn from his destiny as a spokesman

for God. He tried not to speak, but he could not contain that which was in him. He was thus truly speaking the word of God from his heart. His conviction drove him to warn the people. His knowledge of what was in the future compelled him to speak out. He did not doubt the message. On this occasion, he simply revealed the tremendous burden to preach the message of God to a people who were rebellious against what God wanted them to do. He was firm in that he told the people what they needed to know, but did not want to know and do. He would lead them where they should go, but did not want to go. Great leaders for God proclaim God's word and lead the people in this manner.

20:11-13 *Therefore, my persecutors will stumble:* Anyone who would rise up against one of God's men can expect calamity in his own life. The enemies of the preacher will not prevail simply because of the message of truth that the preacher speaks. The word will endure forever (Mt 24:35; 1 Pt 1:25). One may kill God's representative, but he can never kill the truth. It was the imprecatory request of Jeremiah that those evildoers who persecuted him be punished by God. Jeremiah was not the instrument of God's punishment of the evildoers. Jeremiah knew that it was God who would carry out vengeance.

20:14-18 Jeremiah wanted no birthday celebrations because of the misery of his work. He happened to be born in an era when God's people had totally forsaken Him. God thus needed a man as Jeremiah who would take a message of doom and destruction to a people He was casting off. Jeremiah's time of birth, therefore, would have been unfortunate for any true prophet of God. Nevertheless, in order for God's justice to stand, His people had to be warned. When they eventually went into destruction, and some into captivity, they could never say that they had not been warned. Jeremiah's ministry, therefore, was to defend the justice of God before a reprobate generation of rebellious apostates.

Prophecy Of The End

(21:1 - 29:32)

Outline: (1) Beginning of the end (21:1-10), (2) Judgment against the

royal family (21:11 – 23:8), (3) Judgment against false prophets (23:9-40), (4) Parable of the figs (24:1-10), (5) Preview of the end (25:1-38), (6) Opposition (26:1 – 29:32)

Chapter 21

BEGINNING OF THE END

This context takes us to the end of Judah and Jerusalem that occurred in 586 B.C. It was then that the Babylonians laid siege to the city and destroyed it (See 37:3 – 38:28), taking into captivity the remainder of the Israelites.

21:1,2 Zedekiah: He was the last king of Israel before the captivity. **Inquire:** In view of the idolatry into which the nation had fallen by this time, and Pashur's persecution of Jeremiah, we would assume that Zedekiah's plea to the Lord was the last resort after he had consulted all his false gods. The plea, therefore, would reveal a belittlement of the God of heaven in the mind of Zedekiah. He belittled God by considering Him to be the last "god" to which he would plea for the deliverance of the nation. We cannot believe that he had now become a monotheist and true believer in the God of heaven. We would also suppose that this was a humiliating command in reference to what Pashur was to do. He now was commanded by the king to request prayer from Jeremiah whom he had formerly beaten and publicly mocked (20:1,2).

21:3-7 Destruction and death were certain. The historical calamity that would befall Jerusalem, and was unchangeably written with a stylus of iron, had now come to fulfillment. No request would turn the course of history. They had waited too long to repent.

21:8-10 God set two options before the people. They could surrender and give themselves over to the Babylonians. Or, they could stay in the city and fight. If one gave himself over to the Babylonians, a person's booty from the battle would be his own life. Those who remained in the city would die from the natural catastrophes and war that came with a city under siege. Those who would surrender would thus begin the hard road to cultural rehabilitation. It would start with total submission to the enemy. In their humiliation, their arrogance, that

brought them to this point in history, would be crushed. Their children would thus be born to parents who had suffered the humiliation of captivity. In growing up in captivity, the children, therefore, would begin the spiritual road back to submission to God. On the other side of the captivity, a new generation would come forth in service to God (See comments Er & Ne).

JUDGMENT AGAINST THE ROYAL FAMILY

21:11-14 This exhortation is a general message to the kings of Judah. Those material things that were acquired by the exploitation of the oppressed, and which the rich oppressors cherished so much, would be taken from them by their captors. The corrupt rulers would lose all they had taken from the people through corruption. **Inhabitant:** Since the Hebrew word here is feminine, reference is probably to the city of Jerusalem. However, in view of the context, reference could be to the royal family that lived in Jerusalem. **Who will come down against us:** Whether Jerusalem, or the royal family, self-sufficient arrogance was their character. God would come down to them in judgment. **According to the fruit of your deeds:** When people deal harshly with others, with the same harshness God will deal with them. We will be judged according to our deeds (2 Co 5:10).

Chapter 22

22:1-5 The morals of the leadership of a nation determine the direction in which the nation is headed. **The exploited:** In a corrupt nation, there is no one to take the defense of the poor, widows, orphans and foreigners. If the king will not come to their defense, then the nation is morally doomed.

22:6-9 The rulers of Judah remained corrupt, and thus reaped the punishment of the Lord. The royal family was taken from the Jewish society and would never rise again on earth. **They forsook the covenant:** Though the nations remained patriotic to their national gods, Israel forsook her God. Though the nations did not have a correct view of the covenant between God and Israel, they at least knew that a nation should never forsake

her national god. They thus mocked Israel because she broke the covenant between herself and her God by violating the conditions of their covenant with their God.

22:10-12 Never return again: Those who were taken into captivity would die in captivity. **Do not weep:** Jeremiah told the people not to weep for Josiah, but for Shallum who would be taken into captivity by the Egyptians. **Shallum:** Or, Jehoahaz. His father, Josiah, was killed by Pharaoh-necho at Megiddo. The people then made Shallum their king in Jerusalem. However, after three months Pharaoh-necho took Shallum as a captive into Egypt (2 Kg 23:30-34). Pharaoh-necho then placed Eliakim (Jehoiakim), another son of Josiah, on the throne.

22:13-17 Jehoiakim was a ruthless and oppressive king. He brought misery upon the people. He followed after his own corrupt heart, exploiting the people for his own gain. He was in power for himself, not to serve the needs of the people. He was so corrupt that he placed his own people in bondage by having them work without pay. He stole the goods of the people, confiscating at will all that pleased his greed. He was a murderous king (26:23). **Your father:** Jeremiah contrasted Jehoiakim's life and reign to the life and reign of his father Josiah. Josiah sought to restore Judah to God. Jehoiakim sought to lead God's people away from God. The father failed to pass on to his son a moral ethic, for the son gave himself over to rebellion against all for which his father stood.

22:18,19 Jehoiakim would come to a disgraceful end. Because he grievously oppressed the people with his corrupt behavior, no one would lament his death. He would be disposed as a dead donkey, laid in the sun to rot.

22:20-23 Jeremiah commanded them to go to the north, east and west to those nations on which Judah relied. They would find that these nations were all gone. **Spoke to you in your prosperity:** When they were rich and economically doing well, they had no urge to depend on God. In their self-reliance, they refused to listen to God. However, their idol god of prosperity brought them into poverty and captivity. **Inhabitant of Lebanon:** The name "Lebanon" was sometimes used in prophecy to refer to Jerusalem. Because the temple and palace were

constructed from the cedars of Lebanon, the figure of speech referred to the residents, specifically, the king, as dwelling in houses that were built from the cedars of Lebanon.

22:24-30 Coniah: That is, Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah (28:4). This oracle of Jeremiah speaks of Jehoiachin before he was taken into captivity, and then of his time in captivity. He was a corrupt and unrighteous king as his father, Jehoiakim. Fortunately, his reign was only three months before Nebuchadnezzar took him and the first group of captives into captivity in 597 B.C. He and his mother, Nehushta, with his wives, were taken with 10,000 Israelites into Babylonian captivity. Though he was taken into captivity, the Israelites still considered him their king of choice. Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, another son of Josiah and uncle to Jehoiachin, on the throne after Jehoiachin was taken into captivity (28:1-4; Ez 17:22). **Write this man childless:** Though the people may have envisioned Jehoiachin and his descendants continuing the Davidic lineage of kings, Jeremiah pronounced a termination for his heritage as kings in Jerusalem. As national Israel came to an end, never again to enjoy the pride of nationhood, the demise of the nation was symbolized by the termination of the Davidic kingship on earth through the descendants of David. Earthly kings did Israel no favor in keeping the nation close to God. Earthly kings were fallible, and thus, their leadership behavior in many ways led the people away from God. Now that the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel had gone or were going into captivity, God sought a restoration of God's sole kingship over the repentant remnant, and eventually with the new spiritual Israel that would be ruled directly from heaven through King Jesus (See Ep 1:20-23; Ph 2:5-11; 1 Tm 6:15). The earthly kings led Israel into destruction. King Jesus would reign from heaven and lead the spiritual Israel into victory (See Mt 28:18).

Chapter 23

JUDGMENT AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS

23:1-4 Shepherds: In view of the subject of the pre-

ceding chapter, reference here is probably to the kings of Israel who led the people astray from God to embrace idolatry. Beginning with Solomon, the kings led the people to the idol gods of the nations around them. In most cases, the reason for this was to establish alliances for trade and economic gain. However, the elders of Israel did not turn the people away from the evil influences of their kings, and thus they had to shoulder a great deal of the blame for the apostasy. ***I will gather the remnant:*** God would gather His flock from all the nations to which they were scattered in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. He would bring the flock to Him, and no more allow Israel to have kings on earth. The sin of the kings and leadership of Israel resulted in the flock being scattered. God would thus never allow this to happen again in Israel. By the time of Jesus the Romans had appointed Herod as a king over Israel. But he was not a king who was recognized or sanctioned by God. He was a vassal of the Roman Empire who was initially appointed procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar in 47 B.C. God would remain Israel's only king, ruling from heaven. God the Father would reign until He handed all authority over to His Son (Mt 28:18; see comments Dn 7:13,14). Those who would feed His flock on earth would be directed by the authority of the word of Jesus who is now reigning over all things from heaven (Jn 12:48). As God reigned on earth through the authority of His law that He had given to Israel, so Jesus now reigns on earth through the authority of His word.

23:5,6 Jeremiah prophesied that the righteous Branch would reign and prosper. He would execute righteousness and justice on the earth (23:5; see 33:15). In conjunction with this prophecy, Zechariah prophesied of the inhabitants of Jerusalem in reference to the coming of their King. The King would come to them riding on a donkey (Zc 9:9; see Ps 2:6; 72:1-4). Hosea was more specific. He related these events to the time of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy of Joel 2:28 when he said that the children of Israel would return and seek David their king (Hs 3:5). The time when Israel would seek their king again would be in the last days of national Israel.

Jeremiah prophesied of a King that would reign. Zechariah reaffirmed the reign of this King (Zc 9:9). Jesus is the blessed “King who comes in the name of the Lord” (Lk 19:38). Matthew applies the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 to the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem (See Mt 21:5-9). Jesus is the “King of kings” (1 Tm 6:15). It was for this destiny that Jesus said He was born (Jn 18:37). Jesus is the King that was prophesied to come and reign on the throne of David. All Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus’ kingship on the throne have been fulfilled. Jesus is the righteous Branch who is now reigning on the throne of David in heaven (See Lk 24:44). **On the earth:** The Branch would come to the earth, but He would assume His kingship only when He ascended from the earth (See comments Dn 7:13,14). The Branch would not reign on this earth. He would reign from heaven through the power of His word that would be preached on earth (Jn 12:48).

23:7,8 In speaking of the restoration of the remnant to the land, Jeremiah reveals that the event of the restoration will be known as the beginning of the new Israel. They will speak of it more than their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. **From all the countries:** A remnant of all twelve tribes would be restored to the promised land. God never intended that all Israelites be restored to the land. He sought only a faithful remnant who would carry on with the national identity of Israel in order that it be known that the promises to the fathers were fulfilled when the Messiah came into the world (See Gn 12:1-3; compare Gl 4:4).

23:9-15 Full of adulterers: Reference is probably to spiritual adulterers. These were those who had given themselves over to idols. **In My house:** They even brought the idols into the temple in Jerusalem. Thus the false prophets in Jerusalem were forcing the people to conform to their folly in reference to the idols. When the people came from the rural areas for the festivals, they were brought into the presence of the idol gods in the temple area. **Folly in the prophets:** These full-time religious leaders preached, as Balaam, for gain. In order that they maintain their positions, they preached that which the idolatrous people wanted to hear. They thus

led the people to commit spiritual adultery with false gods. They spoke lies to the people in order to maintain the favor of the people. They did not speak against greedy people who exploited the poor. The people became the culture of Sodom and Gomorrah, and thus were deserving of judgment. **Horrible thing:** This was probably sodomy (See comments Rm 1:18-32). **Profaneness gone forth:** Both in their behavior and in their preaching, the false prophets led the people into that which was an abomination to the Lord.

23:16-22 Jeremiah condemns the false prophets for speaking what they wanted instead of the word of God. The source of their message was from their own thinking, and thus their motives for what they spoke were contrary to the word of God. They were also speaking what the people wanted to hear in order that they maintain their positions as prophets. They were not walking in the counsel of the Lord. They were hypocrites. As a prophet, they had presumed to be speaking for God. However, they had received no commission or commandment from God to speak on His behalf. The fact that they were speaking lies was evidence that they were not speaking for the Lord.

23:23-32 The deists are wrong. God is near, for in Him we live and have our being (At 17:28). He is omnipresent. **I have dreamed:** A preacher should be careful about allowing his dreams to determine his message. Too many preachers today seek a following by presumptuously supposing that their dreams are a revelation from God. **Deceit of their own heart:** Those who do not know the Bible have only one source from which to speak. They must speak from what they or other men say. Thus imaginations run wild among those who have never come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tm 3:6,7). **Forgotten My name:** See comments Mk 7:1-9. **Speak My word faithfully:** The man of God should speak those words that are written by the inspired hands of Bible writers (1 Pt 4:11). He should trust in the word of God, not in his dreams. The chaff had nothing to do with the wheat after the harvest, and thus the dreams needed to be blown away. **Like a fire:** The word of God will consume the lies of men (Hb 4:12).

Like a hammer: The word of God will smash to pieces the false dreams of those who are led about by their own fantasies. **Steal My words:** Those who claim that “God spoke to them” are actually counterfeiting the word of God. They claim to speak a word from God when actually they are relying on the imagination of their own minds. These are false prophets who fashion themselves after a pretense of religiosity in order to gain a following of people (See comments 2 Co 11:12-15).

23:33-40 The oracle of the Lord was an earnest message from God that was laid on the conscience of His prophets. It was something that one should not take lightly, though the false prophets rejected it. The false prophets spoke flippantly about receiving an oracle from God through their dreams, or, as they said, “God says.” This stern message of Jeremiah thoroughly rebukes such pretense of religiosity and presumptuously speaking for the Lord. What happened during Jeremiah’s day was that the term “oracle” was so misused by false prophets, that God told Jeremiah that he should use it no more. Instead of saying, “the oracle of God,” Jeremiah was to say, “*What has the Lord spoken?*” This was a case where a term that was good was eventually used with a wrong definition because it had been misused by the false prophets.

Chapter 24

PARABLE OF THE FIGS

24:1-10 **Carried away captive Jeconiah:** The first of three Babylonian captivities took place in 597 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar carried away Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) and 10,000 Israelites (2 Kg 24:8-16). After this event, God revealed to Jeremiah the parable of the figs. (See also Jeremiah’s message to the captives in chapter 29). **Good figs:** These were the exiles who were already in captivity. **Bad figs:** These were those who still remained in Jerusalem. There was a difference in the hearts of the two groups. The good figs would repent and return to the Lord. The bad figs, however, would continue to walk after the desires of their own hearts. Those who were in captivity would eventually understand that God can be found wherever a believer is located. God is not a God

who is confined to a particular land, nor is He bound to the ceremonies of any particular religious order, or temple. He is the omnipresent God who lives in the hearts of the obedient (29:10,13; Lk 17:20,21). On the other hand, the bad figs of Jerusalem were trusting that God would not allow either Jerusalem or the temple to be destroyed. These figs would be scattered. Simply because they had escaped the first captivity did not mean that they would escape future raids on Judah by the Babylonians. **For their good:** The good that would come from the trial of their captivity would be their repentance. And in repenting, they would give birth to a repentant generation who would in the future restore the existence of Israel for the coming of the Messiah.

Chapter 25

PREVIEW OF THE END

In this chapter the reader is taken back to the 4th year of Jehoiakim that was around 588 B.C. There was great international turmoil occurring that resulted from the recent battle of Carchemish in 606 B.C. It was during this battle that the remnants of the Assyrian army, in a coalition with the Egyptians, were finally defeated by Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonians pursued Pharaoh-necho to the southern boundary of Palestine. He then turned his sights on Judah and Jerusalem. Subsequently, Judah became a vassal of the Babylonian Empire (See 2 Kg 24:1; Is 39:5-7; Dn 1:1). It was during this time that some initial Israelite captives were taken into Babylonian captivity with Jehoiachin. During these years of turmoil, Jeremiah ministered the prophetic word of God to the remaining Israelites in Judah, confronting them with the inevitable downfall of the southern kingdom if they did not repent.

25:1-7 All the people of Judah: By this time, Jeremiah had worked as a spokesman for God for 23 years. Not only had Jeremiah cried out to the people that they repent, God had been persistent throughout Judah's history to call the people continually back to His word. **Turn now everyone from his evil way:** If the people of Israel had not been so rebellious, we would have no writings

of the prophets, for the prophets were sent to call the people to repentance. However, because they would not listen to God, they stirred His anger. As a result, He unleashed calamity upon them in order to encourage their repentance.

25:8-11 My servant: God first used the Assyrians to discipline the northern kingdom. He then used the Babylonians under the kingship of Nebuchadnezzar to discipline Judah. God disciplined His people through the proxy of these nations in order to restore their loyalty to Him. But they would not listen. The northern kingdom of Israel thus went into captivity in 722/21 B.C. Now it was time for the southern kingdom to go into captivity. **I will take from them:** God would take their nationhood from them, and thus they would cease being an independent nation throughout the remainder of their existence. After the Medo-Persians defeated the Babylonians and freed the Jews, the Jews were still under the control of the Medo-Persians, though they returned to Palestine. At the time, Palestine was under the occupation of the Medo-Persians. When the Greeks repelled the Medo-Persian Empire, Palestine was under the control of the Greeks. When the Romans eventually became the world power of the Near East, the Jews were under the control of the Roman Empire. When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C., therefore, it was the end of Israel as a nation who determined her own destiny. **Seventy years:** This would be seventy years that was marked by the dominance of the Babylonians, which ended when the Medo-Persians conquered the Babylonians in 539 B.C. We must keep in mind that this number represents the time that the Israelites were under the control of the Babylonians, whether the Israelites were in Palestine or in captivity. When Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Assyrians and Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish in 606 B.C., the control of Palestine fell under the Babylonians. At this time the Babylonians took Jehoiachin and 10,000 Israelites into exile. The Medo-Persians conquered the Babylonians in 539 B.C., and subsequently in 536 B.C. allowed the first Jewish exiles to return to their homeland. This was a period of seventy years from the time of

Babylon's initial control of Palestine to the first return of exiles in 536 B.C. However, some Bible students interpret the seventy years as figurative, symbolically referring to the complete time they were to be in captivity until they were morally prepared to return with their total faith in God.

25:12-14 Though God used the Babylonians to discipline His people, He would turn on them because of their arrogance and mistreatment of His people. He would render to them that which they had rendered to His people.

25:15-26 *The wine cup of this fury:* God was not only the God of Israel, but of all the nations. Though we are not told all the details concerning how God punished the nations that are listed here, we know that He worked in the affairs of the world in order to bring down judgment on them because of their maltreatment of His people. **Ruin ... horror ... derision ... curse:** Judah and Jerusalem had suffered all these calamities. It was now time for judgment to be meted out on all surrounding nations, lest the nations arrogantly assume that the God of Israel was impotent. If only Israel was punished for her sins, then the surrounding nations would have assumed that the Israelites' God was only a regional god, and thus not omnipresent among the nations. But because Jeremiah made the prophecy concerning the calamity of the nations, then the nations would conclude that they too suffered as the God of Israel had prophesied they would. **Arabia:** Or, Kedar (49:28-33).

25:27-29 *You will certainly drink:* Regardless of whether the nations accepted the fact that God declared that they would suffer punishment, He would still bring judgment upon them. God's work cannot be changed by the rejection of man. Once God has made a prophecy concerning the destiny of a nation, its fulfillment cannot be changed.

25:30-38 The preceding picture of judgment of the nations is now expanded. God is a lion who goes forth in His fierceness in order to bring judgment on the nations. The Lord had a controversy with the nations in reference to their sin against His people. We must not assume

that the Lord was going forth with punishment simply to bring down judgment on the nations. The reason for the judgment was because of their maltreatment of His people. He was bringing national Israel as an independent nation to a close. But the nations, who continually harassed His people, would not go unpunished for their arrogant maltreatment of His people. They too would be brought to an end. **Plundered their pasture:** The rulers and lords of the nations would wail because their source of help would be cut off. The judgment would go out against all the nations, and thus one nation could not help another. There would be no place to escape the judgment of God.

Chapter 26

OPPOSITION

26:1-6 The date for this prophecy was 604 B.C., just two years after the Babylonians defeated a coalition of forces between the Assyrians and Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish. Amidst the fall of the Assyrian Empire, and the defeat of Pharaoh-necho of Egypt, the Fertile Crescent world was in turmoil. These were times of international change. Judah was still mourning the death of Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh-necho. The people had placed Jehoahaz (Shallum) on the throne, but Pharaoh-necho removed him and placed Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah. Jehoiakim was a ruthless and wicked ruler. As a result, Judah plunged deeper into apostasy since the reforms of Josiah were not from the heart of the people. **Stand in the court:** This was God's last appeal to Judah, and thus He commanded Jeremiah to go to the heart of Judah's wayward religiosity, the temple in Jerusalem. The occasion for the deliverance of this message was during one of the Jewish festivals when those of all Judah came to Jerusalem. The message was direct and plain (See 7:1-14). If they did not repent, the temple would be destroyed as the Philistines destroyed Shiloh.

26:7-11 Priest ... prophets: This was the religious clergy that was financially sustained by the people. When Jeremiah said that their source of income would be destroyed, they schemed, as did the Pharisees and priests

during the ministry of Jesus, as to how they would murder Jeremiah. This was the plan of the religious leaders, not the government leaders. The irony of this is that all the true prophets of God had been saying the same thing throughout the latter time of the northern kingdom, and now the end of Judah. Jeremiah's message, therefore, was a contradiction to what the false prophets were saying, that is, "Peace, Peace." It was also an attack against the professionalism of the priests and false prophets. His message of doom manifested their failure to keep the people close to the word of God.

26:12-19 *The Lord sent me:* In contrast to the false prophets who sent themselves, Jeremiah immediately proclaimed that what he said was not his opinion, but the message of the Lord. They could kill him, but this would not change the fulfillment of the proclamation that he had made against the city and temple. ***Micah:*** Some of the rural religious leaders evidently stepped forward to remind the people that what Jeremiah spoke was the same message as the prophet Micah (See Mc 3:12). When Micah spoke against the city, Hezekiah and the people did not put him to death. The end of the debate resulted in the rural religious leaders convincing the politically minded religious leaders in Jerusalem that it would be a great evil to put Jeremiah to death.

26:20-24 *Urijah:* The mention of Urijah indicates that there were many other prophets of God working in Israel who are not mentioned in the Bible. They ministered the word of God to Israel as Jeremiah, but they did not have their messages recorded by the inspiration of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired selected prophets to write in order that we might have their writings as resources from which to learn (Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). In the case of the murder of Urijah, we are given this historical information in order to be reminded that the prophets of God risked their lives to preach the message of God. Some were killed, and thus their deaths give evidence to the fact that they believed the word of God that they spoke (See comments Hb 11:32-40).

Chapter 27

27:1-11 The Septuagint omits verse 1. The consensus of most textual scholars is that the reading should mention Zedekiah, not Jehoiakim, as is stated by the KJV. Verses 2,12 & 20 clarify the fact that Zedekiah is the king to whom reference is made. The events of this chapter happened in the beginning years of the reign of Zedekiah, specifically in the fourth year (28:1). **Edom ... Moab ... Ammonites ... Tyre ... Sidon:** The nations were seeking an alliance with Zedekiah in order to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. **Bonds and yokes:** This was an illustrated prophecy. The message was that these nations should submit to Babylon, and thus accept their fate of being vassals to the Babylonian Empire. The reason for this is that in the future the Medo-Persian Empire would take over all the territory of the Babylonian Empire. When the captives would be allowed by the Medo-Persians to return to their homelands, there would be peace in the homelands. Jeremiah's message was that God was the creator of all things, and thus controlled all things. He was in control of the activities of the kingdoms of the world on behalf of His people. At this time in history He had given control of the nations of the Near East into the hands of the Babylonian Empire. Anyone who would proclaim a different message than this, or work against His plan, should be considered a false prophet, and thus was lying to the people. Those who would not accept their subservient role in relation to Babylonian control would be punished and removed from their land. Through their captivity, they would cease as nations. But those who accepted the yoke of Babylonian control would continue to exist in their land. **Many nations and great kings:** The time would come when the Babylonians themselves would be placed under the yoke of another nation. This would take place in 539 B.C. when the Medo-Persians would take over the Babylonian Empire.

27:12-15 Jeremiah specifically turned to Zedekiah in order to rebuke him for his thoughts of rebellion against the Babylonians. Zedekiah was not a sensible leader, and thus listened to the proclamations of the false prophets who sought to turn his ear toward revolt. Zedekiah was

under the pressure of the visiting kings and the false prophets who were in Jerusalem. God knew that he needed a prophecy that would save him. He thus said to him that if he did not submit, he would die. It was God's will that he submit to Nebuchadnezzar, for God was working through this king of Babylon.

27:16-22 This message was directed to the professional prophets. Some of the vessels of the temple had been taken into Babylon in the 597 B.C. subjugation of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The professional religious leaders were saying that these vessels would soon be brought back to Jerusalem and restored to the temple. The fact was that God would allow the remainder of the temple vessels to be taken to Babylon, which they were in 586 B.C. when the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed (2 Kg 24:8-16). Once the people had completed their years of captivity, and when the exiles returned to rebuild the city and the temple, they would bring with them the vessels of the temple (See comments Er & Ne). But this would happen only after the seventy years of captivity were completed.

Chapter 28

28:1-4 Hananiah represented all the professional prophets who spoke lies to the people, arrogantly claiming to be speaking the word of God. He was brazen in his pronouncements, claiming them to be a prophecy of the future. The events of chapters 27 & 28 took place in the same year of the reign of Zedekiah. The result of Jeremiah walking the streets of Jerusalem with a yoke on his neck had its effect. Evidently, the people began to believe Jeremiah, for all reports concerning the international turmoil that was prevalent at the time seemed to indicate that Jeremiah was correct. The controversy became so strong, that Hananiah was moved to make this false prophecy concerning the future.

28:5-9 *Amen! May the Lord do so:* As Hananiah's prophecy was public, so Jeremiah publicly proclaimed that he wished that his prophecy were true. *Nevertheless:* Jeremiah used the prophecy of Hananiah as an opportunity for a contest between the prophecies of false

prophets and those prophecies that actually came from God. **The prophet:** If a preacher is so presumptuous as to claim to know the future, then he must suffer the consequences of his presumptuous proclamations. Verse 9 is the test of the true prophet. If one claims to have spoken concerning the future, and the thing comes to pass, then he can claim to be a prophet of God. However, there is a difference between prediction and prophecy. Prediction is forecasting the future with indications that exist in the present. We predict the future by reading the events of the present that indicate what will probably happen. Thus in prediction there are hints as to what will be. But in true prophecy there are no present indications of what will be. In order for prophecy to be truly believed as prophecy, there must not be any present hints of what will be. There must, however, be enough detail in the prophecy for the beholders to determine when the prophecy is fulfilled. And thus, true prophecy is not vague or unclear concerning the details that must be fulfilled in order for the beholders to understand that the prophecy was real.

28:10,11 *Jeremiah went his way:* After Hananiah removed and broke the yoke, there was no need for a public confrontation in words. Jeremiah simply went away in order to wait for God to answer his prophecy concerning the coming calamity. Once God fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy, then people could look back to the words of Jeremiah and learn from them. They could then come to the conclusion that the prophets in which they had trusted were indeed false. The fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecies was the final evidence that the words of Jeremiah be read and believed for centuries by those who have faith in God.

28:12-17 *You make this people trust a lie:* The majority of the people seemed eager to trust the lies of those who claimed to be prophets of God, but were not. People are gullible, and thus in times of stress they seek prophets who will prophecy messages of peace and safety. But in the historical situation in which Judah was at this time, there would be no peace and safety. National Israel had to come to a close in order to give birth to a faithful rem-

nant in seventy years. What is important to remember here is that Jeremiah made Hananiah take responsibility for the lies that he spoke. Jeremiah did not blame the people, though they would suffer the consequences of their belief in the lies. But the final responsibility for the lies must be carried by the one who spoke them. **A lie:** The lie also involved preaching that the people could live a morally degraded life, and yet continue without punishment. Hananiah condoned the behavior of the people, and thus prophesied peace and safety, making the people believe that they could live in moral degradation and idolatry, and yet go without punishment. Preachers who do not speak straightforward the word of God are lying to the people. They are making the people think that all is well, when actually they may be on a road to doom. **Hananiah the prophet died:** Before the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the end of Judah and Jerusalem, God knew that Jeremiah needed the fulfillment of an immediate prophecy in order to shock the people into listening to him. This prophecy was of the death of Hananiah.

Chapter 29

29:1-9 This is the first of two letters in this chapter. It seems that the false prophets were still working, even among the captives in Babylon. This letter was sent to Babylon, therefore, to encourage the exiles to accept their predicament. Many of them would not return, for they would die by the time of the return in 536 B.C. when the Medo-Persians would take over the Babylonian Empire and release the captives. Therefore, it was imperative that they procreate in captivity in order to give birth to the remnant of Jews who would eventually return to the land of Palestine. It was the responsibility of the parents, therefore, to bring up a faithful generation of sons and daughters who would eventually be the seed generation who would give birth to a new generation of Jews in Palestine. **The letter:** There were emissaries going to Babylon on behalf of Zedekiah, and thus Jeremiah sent this written exhortation from God. In the letter, Jeremiah encouraged them to settle in and make peace with

their captors. He exhorted them not to be deceived by those among them who were speaking things the Lord did not command. **Jeconiah:** Or, Jehoiachin.

29:10-14 Seventy years: This period of time in captivity means that those to whom Jeremiah wrote this letter would not be alive when the seventy years were completed. Only their children would realize the promise of restoration to the land, and thus they must settle in and start procreation for the continuation of Israel (See comments Er & Ne). The confusing thing at this time was that Jerusalem and the temple were still standing. But this would soon change, for Nebuchadnezzar would eventually destroy the temple in 586 B.C. It seems that the false prophets in Babylon among the initial captives who were taken in 597 B.C. had some effect on the people. They were giving the people a false hope that they would be returning in the near future. For this reason, they were having trouble with settling down and being content as captives among the Babylonians. Therefore, the message of Jeremiah was to remind them that where they were was the will of God. They must accept the fact and carry on with life.

29:15-19 Prophets in Babylon: Reference would be to Ezekiel and Daniel. **Make them like vile figs:** The exiles needed to remember that they were in a better situation than those who remained in Jerusalem. God would make the remainder of the Jews in Jerusalem like vile figs that are distasteful and cast away (See 24:1-10). Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. Thousands of Jews would be killed in the destruction. The Davidic kings on earth would be terminated. No more was a Davidic king to reign in Jerusalem on this earth (22:30).

29:20-23 Ahab ... Zedekiah: These two were immoral liars. Not only did they preach that which was contrary to the word of the Lord, they also committed adultery with their neighbors' wives. Thus God would use their deaths as an illustration of God's judgment against all those who would speak and live contrary to the word of God.

29:24-32 A former letter of Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon had contradicted the preaching of Shemaiah.

Shemaiah then wrote an angry letter to Zephaniah, a priest in Jerusalem. Shemaiah wanted Jeremiah thrown in prison. He accused Jeremiah of being demented, one who had presumptuously made himself a prophet of God. Those prophets who called themselves into the ministry, as Shemaiah, assumed that every other prophet had also presumptuously assumed the ministry and position of a prophet. Religious men who seek positions and support from the people will often give themselves titles by which they can exalt themselves over the people. ***I will punish Shemaiah:*** The pronouncement of judgment that was laid on Shemaiah for his slander was that he would have no descendant who would enjoy the happiness and freedom that God would eventually bring to His people when they were allowed to return to their homeland.

Consolation And Counsel

(30:1 – 36:32)

Outline: (1) From tragedy to triumph (30:1 – 31:1), (2) Restoration (31:2 – 33:26), (3) Broken promises (34:1-22), (4) The Rechabites (35:1-19), (5) The scroll (36:1-32)

Chapter 30

FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

30:1-3 *Bring again the captivity:* In the midst of great national turmoil, God delivered a message of hope to the people. The foregone conclusion was that they would go into captivity, which thing the people did not believe at the time this message was delivered. Regardless of their beliefs, however, they would go into captivity, but would eventually return to the land. ***Israel and Judah:*** Israel, the northern kingdom, went into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. The southern kingdom was soon to go into Babylonian captivity. A remnant from all Israel, from both the northern and southern kingdoms, would eventually return as a united Israel after the Babylonian captivity.

30:4-11 This passage looks beyond the return of the Jews to the land. It looks to a time in the latter days when the returned people would serve David their king. Reference is thus Messianic, for Jesus would be the descendant of David who would sit upon the throne of the Lord

in heaven (See comments Dn 7:13,14; At 2:21-30). **Break your bonds:** The beginning of God's defense for His people began when He allowed the Medo-Persians to overthrow the Babylonians, which event took place in 539 B.C. The Medo-Persians then allowed all former captives to return to their homelands, which homelands were at the time under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire. **Full end of all nations:** Those nations that took Israel into captivity, the Assyrians and Babylonians, would cease to exist. However, Israel would continue because of the preserving work of God to carry out His purpose for the existence of Israel (See 46:27,28).

30:12-17 You have no healing medicines: Because they had digressed into a culture of sin, there was no one to help them out of their predicament simply because everyone else was also sick with sin. Only God could help them. And for Him to help, He had to drive them back to the standard of His law. In order to accomplish this, God had to humiliate them with captivity. Once He had taken away their arrogance and self-sufficiency, He was able to bring them home to His law, and then to their homeland. **Those who devour you:** Since God used the nations to discipline His people, only He could bring them out of captivity by working among the nations. And since no one cared for the Jews, God reached out with compassion to His chosen people through whom He would bring the Messiah into the world.

30:18-24 City ... palace: Both the city and royal palace would be rebuilt. However, there is no mention of the rebuilding of the temple, since the temple was never in the original plan of God as a center of faith for Israel. God originally intended that the tabernacle be rebuilt continually throughout their history and moved among all the territories of the twelve tribes. It was David's desire that the temple be built, to whom God made a concession, and thus it was built by Solomon (See 1 Ch 17). In the termination of national Israel, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C., God turned the clock back to His original plan. There would be no king of Israel on earth. Worship would not be centralized around a building. Earthly kings split the loyalty of the people

between God and man, and the temple localized the religious ceremonies of the law. Captivity taught the Jews to be loyal only to God, without the physical props of a king, capital, or temple. They learned that since they could be in a relationship with God while scattered throughout the world, then they could do the same when they returned to Palestine. **My people ... your God:** While the Israelites were in apostasy in Palestine, God turned them over to the nations. The repentant remnant, however, would restore the covenant in that they would be obedient to the conditions of the covenant. They would know that they were the people of God. **Whirlwind of the Lord:** Reference could be to the Holy Spirit who goes forth and works in the affairs of man. At least reference is to the power of God to bring about His eternal plan of things for which He created the world. God will accomplish His eternal plan regardless of the activities of man on earth. (The statements of 31:1 should conclude the subject of this chapter.)

Chapter 31

RESTORATION

The statements of this chapter could be divided into a message primarily to the northern kingdom (vss 2-22), a message to the southern kingdom (vss 23-26), and a message to both kingdoms as the united people of God (vss 27-40).

31:1-6 Grace: God was going to accomplish among the nations that which Israel could not do, that is, deliver herself from captivity. Everlasting love: God never falls out of love with man (See comments Jn 3:16). Because God still loved Israel, He would be faithful to His promise to restore them to the land. **I will build you:** This is a promise of the restoration of those who went into the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C. They had been in captivity over 130 years before the southern kingdom went into its final captivity in 586 B.C. They had possibly given up hope of any restoration to Palestine, and thus this prophecy was sent to them in order to give them encouragement. They were witnessing from afar the destruction of the land, and thus possibly gave up all hope

that there would ever be a restoration of the remnant and reestablishment of Israel.

31:7-14 The return of the renewed remnant would be a joyous occasion. It would be a time for all the remnant of Israel to return to their homeland. **North country:** In traveling from Assyria and Babylonia to the east, the sojourners would have to go via the Fertile Crescent, and thus come from the north into the land of Palestine. God is pictured in this context as a loving Father who has compassion on His firstborn. They were His firstborn, for Israel was the first nation that God called into existence when He called them out of Egyptian captivity. **From the hand ... who was stronger:** Israel could not have delivered herself from captivity, for the yoke of the captors had to first be broken. Only God could break the yoke of the Babylonians. The Medo-Persians, through the work of God, broke the Babylonian Empire, which empire had previously conquered the Assyrian Empire. The Medo-Persians thus controlled all the territory that was formerly controlled by the Assyrians and Babylonians. The return of the Jewish exiles, therefore, was a relocation of Jews within the Medo-Persian Empire. Their freedom consisted of being freed from those within the Empire who used them as their servants.

31:15-17 Ramah: This was a high point that functioned as a natural boundary between the northern and southern kingdoms. When the southern kingdom was eventually taken into captivity, this was probably the location where the Babylonians assembled the captives in order to deport them to Babylonia (40:1-6). **Rachel:** She was the grandmother of Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim represented the northern kingdom, and thus Rachel was considered the maternal ancestor of the northern kingdom. In this context, she grieves over the exile of her children who had gone into Assyrian captivity. **Restrain your voice:** The exhortation is that Rachel cease her crying for her lost children, for they will be found and returned.

31:18-20 Smote on my thigh: This was a gesture of grief. Since Ephraim grieved over their sin, then those of the northern kingdom were ready to be brought back

into the land. Ephraim would thus be remembered because of repentance.

31:21,22 Signposts: Whether literal or figurative, both meanings for a signpost would be needed to direct Israel home. Those who were taken in the Assyrian captivity would have been gone from the land of Palestine for almost a century and a half. These returnees would have been several generations removed from their forefathers who were originally taken into captivity. They thus needed direction in order to return to the land possessions of their fathers. But they surely also needed spiritual direction and encouragement to make their way back to the roots of the law of the covenant and the sacrificial ceremonies of the law. **A woman will encompass a man:** This was probably a proverb whose meaning has been lost. But we could possibly understand it to mean that Israel, as the bride of God, would cling to Him as she should have throughout her history. They had committed spiritual adultery by marrying themselves to foreign gods. They were religious polygamists. But in the future they would never leave God to run after idol gods.

31:23-26 Jeremiah's immediate audience, Judah, is here pictured in her restoration to truth in beliefs and behavior. At the time of writing, the people were in great social turmoil. But when they returned from captivity, they would carry on with a peaceful life. Jeremiah's words gave them hope for the future, and thus encouraged them to relinquish to their fate in captivity. If they surrendered to the Babylonians, things would eventually go well for their posterity. But if they resisted, the fathers and mothers who were killed would have no posterity.

31:27-30 All Israel, both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, would be brought back into the land. As a united people, God would bless their new existence in the land. **Pluck up ... to build:** They were plucked up because of apostasy. They would be rebuilt because of repentance. **Die for his own iniquity:** Instead of being punished as a nation for sin, those who would sin in the new Israel would be held individually responsible for the consequences of each person's sin. National accountabil-

ity would pass to individual accountability. **The fathers have eaten a sour grape:** The generation that followed the initial captivities may have complained that they were suffering because of the sin of their fathers. But they must be patient. God would treat those of the repentant remnant as individuals, thus holding them individually accountable for their sins. The children often suffer the consequences of the father's sins, but they do not suffer the guilt of their sin. Each man will give account of his own sin before God (2 Co 5:10; see Ez 18:3,20,21).

31:31-34 This is a very significant context that pointed to a new and exciting era, one in which all Christians now live. Before the cross of Jesus, God had a covenant relationship with Israel. Jews were born into this covenant relationship. As they grew up after birth, Jewish children were instructed concerning the covenant that God had made with the nation of Israel. However, this covenant was to change to a new covenant that would demand a different means by which one would come into a covenant relationship with God. In this context, God stated that He would establish a new covenant with the houses of Israel and Judah, which covenant would include all nations. Conditions for entering this new covenant would be different from the old covenant. In verse 33 God explained that the new covenant would be different in the sense that God would first put His law in their hearts. In other words, when one would come into a covenant relationship with God under the new covenant, the law of God would already be in one's heart in the sense that he would be an obedient subject to the law of God. One would already have been taught to know God before coming into a relationship with God under the new covenant. Before one is born again in obedience to the gospel, He is taught to "know God" and that which is necessary for obedience to be saved. One is thus taught the conditions for the covenant relationship before he comes into the covenant relationship. This was certainly the thought behind Jesus' statement of John 6:45 that all are to be taught of God. When one is taught the lordship of Jesus and the gospel, his response should be that he would seek to come into a covenant relation-

ship with God (See comments Hb 8:8-12; 10:16).

31:35-40 God's promise is based on His past performance. Since He has been faithful in carrying out His promises, then He will carry out all promises that He now makes concerning Israel. They will once again come into the land. **The city will be built:** Before the city was destroyed, here is a promise that it would be rebuilt (See comments Er & Ne). **Forever:** We must understand this as a reference to certainty, not unending existence. The physical city of Jerusalem has been destroyed and rebuilt a number of times throughout history. It still exists today. If the passage is Messianic, then reference here could be to the new Jerusalem, the church, that will exist without end.

Chapter 32

32:1-5 At this time Jeremiah was under house arrest because he spoke against King Zedekiah and his inevitable captivity (21:9; 38:2). The Babylonians had laid siege to Jerusalem, and thus the prophecies concerning Zedekiah's capture were coming to pass.

32:6-15 Anathoth was Jeremiah's home area. What transpired in this context was a prophecy. Hanamel was sent by God to Jeremiah in order to present the opportunity for Jeremiah to purchase a parcel of land that was his right to buy as a close relative. When Jeremiah perceived that the offer was the work of the Lord, he weighed out the designated purchase price in silver, for there was no coined money in Judah. All the legal procedures were followed concerning the purchase of land, including a sealed deed and an open deed for public examination. At the time, the field was overrun by the Babylonians who were laying siege to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Jeremiah bought the land at the market value in order to demonstrate that in the future, even after Jeremiah's death, the land would be used by the descendants of his family. Israel would be restored to Palestine.

32:16-25 Jeremiah himself probably wondered concerning the act of purchasing the land. His prayer to God reaffirmed the majesty of God in view of the calamity that Jerusalem was enduring at the very time he made

the purchase. Jeremiah rehearsed the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian captivity. Throughout the struggles of Israel's deliverance, God prevailed, and thus has a renowned name for what He did. After their deliverance from Egypt, however, they continued to fall from being loyal to God. Nevertheless, God remained faithful. The consequence of their unfaithfulness was taking place at the walls of Jerusalem where the Babylonians were building siege ramps against the city. What God had spoken in the past was coming true. Jeremiah was reassured, therefore, that what God had prophesied concerning the future, would come to pass. Zedekiah and the people would not only be taken into captivity, but there would be a restoration of the righteous remnant in the years to come.

32:26-44 Israel ... Judah: The northern kingdom, Israel, had already been taken into Assyrian captivity. In reference to the history of the nation in these statements, all twelve tribes are under consideration concerning the apostasy and punishment. Jeremiah reaffirmed the certainty of God's judgment upon His people because of their apostasy, which apostasy went as far as causing their sons and daughters to walk through the fire that was dedicated to the Moabite god, Molech. The only hope for Israel and Judah was to pass through the trials of national calamity, and then go into captivity where a new generation of Jews would be born. After the seventy years of captivity, a new generation would return to the land. **For this city has been to Me a provocation:** We must keep in mind that the centralization of government and faith in one city of Palestine helped lead to the division and apostasy of the people. God never intended that Israel have a king, or a capital for a centralized government and stationary place of religious ceremonies. Israel wanted all three, and thus had to pay the price for what these three things did in encouraging the division of the twelve tribes and their apostasy. The kings led the loyalty of the people away from the sole kingship of God who originally planned that He be their only king in heaven. The centralization of government in one city in Judah marginalized all other cities of the land. And

the centralization of sacrifices at the temple excluded the rest of the tribal groups from hosting the annual meetings at the tabernacle which was to be circulated throughout all twelve tribal territories. In the historical context of the destruction of Jerusalem, God was removing the king, the capital and the temple. That which encouraged their division and apostasy was being taken away in order that they be restored as a united remnant. ***I will gather them ... bring them ... to this place:*** The number of the repentant remnant would be so small that Jerusalem would be sufficient as a place for the restoration of the annual sacrifices. The Jews would be restored to the land, but they would never again possess the entirety of the land. They would never again be the glorious nation they were in the days of David and Solomon. The restored remnant would remain a small community of Jews who would wait for the Messiah to come, and then send forth His word to all the world from Jerusalem (See comments Is 2:1-4).

Chapter 33

33:1-13 This is the second message of God to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the guard. Amidst an attack on the city, famine and pestilence, the fall of the city was imminent. God sought to reveal things concerning their future what should bring encouragement for those who would believe that God is working in the present. ***Siege ramps and by the sword:*** The situation was desperate. This would possibly be the eve of the fall of the city. Those houses that were built next to the walls on the outside of the city had already been torn down. The materials from the houses were being used to build the siege ramps against the walls. God had hidden His face from the city, and thus it was destined to doom. ***I will bring it health and healing:*** Though the city would fall, God made a promise that He would rebuild it with moral health and security. The destruction of the city was the way to their healing. The city, and all Judah, had to die in order to live. ***I will pardon all their iniquities:*** The context reaches into the future when God would remember their sins no more. The restoration of Israel in

the future would be the sign that God had forgiven them. This would be a national forgiveness, but in the future there would be individual forgiveness in Christ. In the case of Israel, the only way to the joy that they would experience in the future was to endure the calamity that was upon them at the time these words were revealed to Jeremiah. Israel had to be totally laid destitute before she could be healed. All her material wealth had to be taken away in order for her to focus on the spiritual.

33:14-18 These were words of consolation and encouragement. Though the people would have to suffer the end of a national independent state of Israel in Palestine, they would not be terminated as a people of God. ***The days are coming:*** The Lord now takes their minds beyond the immediate circumstances of national Israel in order to focus on the future when the Branch comes. ***The Branch of righteousness:*** In the new order to come, Israel and Judah would be as one nation. Jesus would unite all men under His kingdom reign. As the true offspring of David, He would make this possible for His reign would be over all things (Ep 1:20-23). In Him there would be neither Jew nor Gentile (Gl 3:26-29). ***David will never lack a man to sit on the throne:*** Jesus would be the finality of those kings who would reign on earth upon the throne of David. He is now reigning by the authority of this throne which was always in heaven at the right hand of God (See comments Dn 7:13,14; At 2:24-35). ***The priests:*** All Christians are priests of God (1 Pt 2:5,9). As long as there is a Christian, then there will always be those who offer the sacrifice of their lives unto God (Rm 12:1,2).

33:19-26 ***If you can break My covenant:*** The fact was that since man cannot interfere with the natural processes of day and night, then man cannot break God's covenant with man. Since the orderly occurrence of natural laws continues without interruption, then God will continue with His plan to set one of David's seed upon the throne of David. From this seed, He will increase the people of God without number. ***Considered what this people have spoken:*** Some doubted that God would restore His people. What God reveals here is that after the restoration of the exiles from the seventy years of cap-

tivity, there would be proof that what is revealed here would eventually come to pass in Christ and the church. We can look back and understand these prophecies, but those who initially received them did not understand (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12). The generations that lived after them would witness the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecies. They would witness the fulfillment in the restoration of Israel. Their witness of the fulfillment in the restoration would thus give them hope that God would eventually reveal the Branch.

Chapter 34

BROKEN PROMISES

34:1-7 The date of this pronouncement was 586 B.C., the time when Nebuchadnezzar was in the process of besieging the city of Jerusalem, Lachish and Azekah. The cities of Lachish and Azekah were under attack by the Babylonians, but had not yet fallen. Those in Jerusalem were possibly hoping that the Egyptians would come to their rescue, but this was a false hope. God had determined the fall of Jerusalem and Judah, as well as Zedekiah being taken into captivity. Jeremiah thus urged Zedekiah to accept his fate and submit to Babylon (See 21:1-10; 32:3-5; 37:8-10; 38:17-23). **All the kingdoms:** When Babylon overthrew a nation, those of the nation were recruited to fight with the Babylonian forces. This phrase refers to all the nations that were under the control of the Babylonian Empire. **You ... will surely be taken:** See 52:8-11 (39:7; 2 Kg 25:5,6; Ez 12:13).

34:8-16 The law permitted one to give himself into the service of another Israelite. However, after seven years of service, the servant was to be freed (Ex 21:2; Dt 15:2). Those to whom Jeremiah spoke this message had long forgotten God's law concerning servants. **Covenant:** In compliance to the law, those who had servants made an oath to allow everyone who was a servant to go free. This action was probably taken because every person was needed to help fight against the Babylonians. However, when they assumed that Egypt would possibly come to their rescue, they reneged on their agreement. They thus violated an oath they had made for themselves and

the promise to the servants, as well as the law that an Israelite could not keep a fellow Israelite in bondage over seven years. They had made a step in the right direction, but then backed down. They thus profaned the name of God by making an oath in His name, and then refusing to keep their commitment to the oath.

34:17-22 I proclaim liberty for you: Because the people refused to honor their oath to set the captives free, the liberty about which the Lord would proclaim would be the reverse. Instead of going from captivity to freedom, which they had promised their servants, they would go from freedom to captivity. **Who has gone away from you:** The Babylonian forces had laid siege to Jerusalem. However, the arrival of the Egyptians from the south posed a threat to the Babylonians (See 37:1-10). Nebuchadnezzar thus briefly left his siege of Jerusalem in order to deal with the Egyptians. When the Egyptians were defeated, Nebuchadnezzar returned to his siege of Jerusalem.

Chapter 35

THE RECHABITES

35:1-5 This event took place during the reign of Jehoiakim, a short time after the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians at Carchemish in 606 B.C. **Rechabites:** This was a nomadic people among the Israelites who were probably descendants from the Kenites (1 Ch 2:55; see Jg 1:16). **Jonadab:** See 2 Kg 10:15-28. The influence of their spiritual father had great impact on the customs of this people. He had made a proclamation concerning their behavior, which proclamation became one of the cultural identification marks of the people. **Into the house of the Lord:** In order to confirm the stand of the Rechabites for the customs of their fathers, Jeremiah took them to a public place in the temple courtyard. He did this in order that all witness their commitment to the beliefs of their fathers.

35:6-11 What had been commanded by Jonadab was stated about two centuries before Jeremiah called for the Rechabites to give a testimony concerning their commitment. What Jonadab had committed his descendants to do was to live a nomadic life in the deserts and among

the Israelites. Their presence in the city at this time was only because of their fear of the Babylonians and Syrians.

35:12-17 With the command of one man, the culture of a committed people was determined for two centuries. But with Israel, they would not even listen to God, but forsook His commandments and ran after their own desires. Add to this the fact that the Rechabites had no prophets to constantly remind them that they should keep the commandments of Jonadab. Judah had all the prophets of God, and they refused to listen.

35:18,19 The faithful obedience of the Rechabites is a testimony to the commitment of a people to remain true to the righteous proclamations of their forefathers. Their reward for their faithfulness was that they would always exist as a people. And thus to this day among the Bedouin tribal groups of the Near East there are those who adhere to many of the traditions of the Rechabites.

Chapter 36

THE SCROLL

36:1-3 *So that I may forgive:* God now resorted to the power of the written word in order to stimulate repentance (See Hb 4:12). He had tried every means by which to encourage His people to repent and turn to Him. If they could read of all the warnings that He had given, they would possibly repent. God's efforts through the writing of His pronouncements, therefore, was to give them every chance to change their ways, and thus change their destiny.

36:4-8 *Baruch:* Baruch functioned as Jeremiah's stenographer. He recorded the words that Jeremiah dictated. God inspired Jeremiah through the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:20,21). Jeremiah spoke and Baruch recorded. We today have the privilege of reading what Baruch wrote. *I am detained:* We are not told by Jeremiah why he could not go to the temple. He could have been sick, ceremonially unclean, or restricted from going to the temple by the authorities.

36:9-19 The scroll was produced several months before an appropriate time came for its reading. The ap-

appropriate time was when a fast was called and the people were gathered together at the temple. Nebuchadnezzar had made an attack on Jerusalem the year before, and thus the people were now prepared to hear what was revealed on the scroll. As a result, the reading of the message brought a response from the people. When Michaiah heard the words of the reading, he hastened to have Baruch read it to his father and the other princes who were assembled. When they heard the contents of the scroll, they too were deeply disturbed. They concluded that the contents had to be revealed to the king. Before they did such, however, they questioned Baruch concerning the origin of the message. They wanted to be sure that it came from Jeremiah, the prophet. They knew that the message would probably be rejected by the king, and thus they told Baruch that he and Jeremiah should hide themselves.

36:20-26 *He cut it with a penknife:* The message of the scroll had its effect on the king. Against the protest of the princes, who considered the message of the scroll to be the word of the prophet of God, Jehoiakim cut up the scroll and threw it in a fire. He did the opposite of what his father, Josiah, would have done (See 2 Kg 22:10-14). Instead of repenting, he arrogantly lashed out. He immediately called for the arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch, whom he would probably have killed, as was done to the prophet Urijah (26:20-24).

36:27-32 *Take again another scroll:* We are not told exactly what was written on the first scroll, or what was again written on the second scroll. Baruch may have incorporated the material into the scroll that we now have as Jeremiah. We know that the message of the scroll was not the entirety of the book of Jeremiah that we have today, for the message of the scroll was read three times in one day to different groups of people. The message that was written on the first scroll was read and expanded in the second. Since there were approximately twenty years left in the ministry of Jeremiah, more material of his life and messages were recorded by Baruch, which material we have in the present book of Jeremiah. ***You have burned this scroll:*** Jehoiakim's disrespect for the

word of God cost him the reign of his posterity, and the dignity of his death. Jeremiah later prophesied that he would be disgraced in his death (22:18). **No one to sit upon the throne:** The curse that was pronounced upon the posterity of Jehoiakim was that he would have no heritage of kings that would reign upon the throne of David. Jehoiachin, his son, did reign for three months, but he was never considered a permanent king who reigned in Jerusalem. He surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and was taken into Babylonian captivity in 597 B.C.

The Destruction Of Jerusalem

(37:1 - 40:6)

Outline: (1) Futile efforts before the destruction (37:1 - 38:28), (2) The destruction of Jerusalem (39:1-10), (3) Deliverance of Jeremiah (39:11 - 40:6)

Chapter 37

FUTILE EFFORTS BEFORE THE DESTRUCTION

37:1-5 Nebuchadnezzar ... made king: God originally did not plan that Israel have a king on earth reigning over His people. He did not because an earthly king would have split their loyalty between Him and the king. Nevertheless, God relinquished to the desires of Israel and allowed them to have a king. However, the king that they would have had to be chosen and anointed by Him. After the anointing of the first kings, Israel later digressed from having God-anointed kings, to kings they chose for themselves. And at this time in their history, they had Zedekiah who was a king appointed by a foreign power. In the case of Zedekiah, he was unfaithful to his word (27:11-15), and thus led Jerusalem in rebellion against Babylon, which rebellion eventually led to the destruction of Jerusalem. **Pharaoh's army:** This would have been Pharaoh-hophra of Egypt (44:30). He intended to engage the Chaldeans in battle, and thus was coming to Jerusalem to help Judah. This brought a futile hope to Zedekiah and the Jews who were being besieged at Jerusalem. Zedekiah thus asked Jeremiah that he pray for their deliverance. However, God's revelation through Jeremiah was not what he expected.

37:6-10 Zedekiah's request to pray to the Lord was

a mockery of the Lord, for he had first consulted his prophets to pray to their false gods. As a final effort in a desperate hope, he at this time turned to God to see if there could be any help. The people had exhausted their efforts, and thus their last resort was to the God who created them as a nation. It is difficult to believe that Zedekiah was truly sincere in his hope that God would actually help them. The situation was that they were so desperate that they were praying to all their gods. **Do not deceive yourselves:** There was no hope. Even if wounded Chaldean soldiers were left after their attack of Pharaoh's army, they would still bring down Jerusalem with fire.

37:11-15 When the Chaldeans left to engage the Egyptians, Jeremiah took the opportunity to go to Anathoth in order to take possession of the land that he had purchased (32:6-12). Since he had previously encouraged the people to give themselves over to the Chaldeans (21:8-10), the sentry assumed that Jeremiah was leaving Jerusalem for good in order to join the Chaldeans. Jeremiah was arrested, and dealt with according to the desires of many of the leaders (38:1-6). What seems to be the situation is that the older and more honorable leaders had already been taken in the 597 B.C. captivity with Jehoiachin (36:11-19). The only leaders who were left were those subordinates who were defiant to the counsel of God concerning Jeremiah's advice to surrender to the Chaldeans.

37:16-21 The pit where they confined Jeremiah was deplorable to the point that it endangered his health. **Is there any word from the Lord:** Zedekiah was desperate at this time, for the Chaldeans had returned from their engagement and victory over the Egyptians. **Where now are your prophets:** Zedekiah and the people had run out of time by listening to the false proclamations of those who claimed to be sent from God, but were only sent by themselves. Since their predictions that Jerusalem would not be attacked by the Babylonians had failed, they were no longer in the picture as trusted men to be consulted. Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the fall of Jerusalem were being fulfilled, and thus Zedekiah sought any revelation concerning his own destiny. His destiny was that

he would be delivered into the hands of the Babylonians. **Commit Jeremiah into the court:** At least Zedekiah had a conscience that was favorable toward Jeremiah. He delivered Jeremiah from the dungeon and commissioned that he be fed a continual ration of food.

Chapter 38

38:1-6 Though Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard, he was able to communicate with the soldiers, encouraging them to turn themselves over to the Chaldeans (32:9,12). **Booty:** He who would give himself over to the Chaldeans would take away his own life as booty from the battle. He would live. **He is in your hand:** Weakness was at this time manifested in Zedekiah. He could not stand up against the hostility of his princes, and thus he had to a great extent lost the confidence of those arrogant and stiffnecked leaders who still believed that they could somehow hold out against the attack of the Babylonians. **The cistern:** This empty water pit was a sufficient prison for Jeremiah whom the leaders wanted to silence. When a man of God stands firm for the truth of God's word, he might find himself sunken in the mud of a cistern, ostracized from the people. In all the calamity that befell Jeremiah for his stand for the truth of God, he did not in these final days of Jerusalem, fall from his ministry.

38:7-13 No one would have suspected that a foreigner living among the Israelites would have had compassion on the prophet. The actions of the Ethiopian prove that he was a true proselyte, and thus a believer in Jeremiah and his word from God. **Thirty men:** The compassion of the Ethiopian stirred Zedekiah to do that which was right. The thirty men were to make sure that the Ethiopian was protected when he carried out the deed of pulling Jeremiah from the cistern.

38:14-23 This was Zedekiah's final conversation with Jeremiah. In it the desperate king sought revelation concerning his future, which revelation had already been told to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was afraid of turning himself over to the king of Babylon because of those who had already done so. He thought that they would en-

courage the Babylonians to hand down retribution to him because of his wicked treatment of them. **This city will not be burned:** Zedekiah had to make a decision that would affect all the lives of those in Jerusalem and the existence of the city itself. If he turned himself over to the Babylonians, the Babylonians would terminate their siege and save the city. However, the people still had to go into captivity.

38:24-28 As soon as Jeremiah left the presence of the king, the princes questioned him concerning what he had said to Zedekiah. Jeremiah revealed to them only that which would satisfy their inquiries. Jeremiah did not tell them all that transpired between him and the king. What he did reveal, however, satisfied them.

Chapter 39

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

39:1-3 After about a 30-month siege against Jerusalem, the city eventually fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (See ch 52; 2 Kg 25; 2 Ch 36:11,12). Archaeological discoveries have confirmed that the names Rabsaris and Rabmag were titles of military officer positions in the Babylonian army. This would indicate that the other names that are given here were also titles for military positions.

39:4-10 Instead of surrendering himself to Nebuchadnezzar as Jeremiah had previously advised, Zedekiah fled the scene of the defeated city. **Riblah:** This was evidently the Syrian military headquarters of the Chaldeans while they were in Palestine. **Slew the sons of Zedekiah:** Because Zedekiah did not follow the advice of Jeremiah, he had to pay the price for his rebellion. Before his own eyes, he had to watch his children killed. The cowardly leadership of Zedekiah also resulted in the death of the nobles of Judah. **Nebuzaradan:** This was the title of the commander of the Babylonian army. **Burned with fire:** The royal palace and temple were burned. The walls of the city were broken down in order to make the area defenseless. Nebuzaradan left the devastated country in the hands of many of the poor.

DELIVERANCE OF JEREMIAH

39:11-14 Only when the wicked leaders of Judah were overthrown was the righteous Jeremiah freed. See 40:1-6 for another possible occasion when Jeremiah was released during these chaotic times. **Gedaliah:** Ahikam, Gedaliah's father, protected Jeremiah after the temple sermon (26:24). It is possible that Gedaliah and his family went over to the Babylonians before the fall of the city. From the testimony of Gedaliah, Nebuchadnezzar was informed that Jeremiah was speaking among the people in the city that they should surrender to the Babylonians. As a result of this information, Nebuchadnezzar showed kindness to Jeremiah.

39:15-18 The righteous deed of Ebedmelech for his rescuing Jeremiah from the cistern was rewarded. Those who had heard of Ebedmelech's kindness toward Jeremiah were possibly seeking to find him in order to kill him for his good deed. But Ebedmelech's faith in Jeremiah and the Lord were rewarded with the preservation of his life. His booty from the calamity of the fall of Jerusalem was his own life.

Chapter 40

40:1-6 See 39:11-14. There is a great deal of time involved in the matters of making judgments by the Babylonians and the destruction of the city. Jeremiah was first released from the imprisonment by his Jewish countrymen (ch 39). He was then taken to his own house in Jerusalem. He remained there while the city and its walls were being torn down. During this time, Gedaliah was appointed by the Babylonians to be the governor of Judah. Once the city was destroyed, Jeremiah had to be taken before Gedaliah's administration in Mizpah. When the walls had been broken down and the city was being burned, the captives were moved to Ramah in order to be deported to Babylon. Since Jeremiah was moved with the captives to Ramah, we would assume that he, as all captives, was brought in chains to Ramah. But when Nebuzaradan found him among the captives, he apologized to Jeremiah, and then offered him the choices found in this context. **Now Jeremiah had not yet gone back:** While Jer-

Jeremiah was still making up his mind whether to stay in Judah or go to Babylon, Nebuzaradan suggested that he might want to join Gedaliah, who was now established as the governor of Judah. Jeremiah chose to stay with Gedaliah and the people.

Post Destruction Turmoil

(40:7 – 45:5)

Outline: (1) Governorship of Gedaliah (40:7 – 41:3), (2) Atrocities of Ishmael (41:4-18), (3) Flight to Egypt (42:1 – 44:30), (4) Message to Baruch (45:1-5)

GOVERNORSHIP OF GEDALIAH

40:7-12 Judah was at this time established as a province of the Babylonian Empire. Gedaliah, one from the prominent Jewish families, was made governor of the land. Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam, a prominent person during the reign of Josiah and Jehoiakim (See 26:24; 2 Kg 22:12-14). He was a man of faith, and thus believed the word that was spoken by Jeremiah. He thus went over to the Babylonians during the siege of the city, and later was appointed governor of Judah by the Babylonians. His governorship possibly extended to about five years. It was terminated by his assassination. This conspiracy led to another deportation of Jews in 582/81 B.C. (52:30). **Ishmael ... Jonathan ... Seraiah ... Jezaniah:** These were possibly self-appointed representatives of the remnant of people whom the Babylonians left in Judah. Though Gedaliah promised that he would represent them fairly before the Babylonians, there was a conspiracy by Ishmael. Ishmael was of the royal family (41:1), and thus his scheme to assassinate Gedaliah was an act of jealousy. Since Gedaliah had not gone over to the Babylonians, Ishmael possibly thought that Gedaliah was a traitor, and thus should not be the governor of Judah. Since he was of the royal family, Ishmael possibly thought that it was his right to be the governor.

40:13-16 Baalis: We are not told the reason why Baalis wanted to kill Gedaliah. It may have been that he wanted to recover some territory that he had previously lost to the Israelites. Whatever the case, he used Ishmael to carry out his evil deed. **Johanan:** This man was faithful

to the governorship of Gedaliah, and thus warned him of the conspiracy. Unfortunately, Gedaliah was somewhat naive concerning any danger of assassination, but also noble in his character. He refused to listen to the warning of threats against his life, and subsequently he paid the price for his naivety.

Chapter 41

41:1-3 Treachery took advantage of the goodwill of a naive governor. The result of his naivety was his own death and the death of many others who were following the instructions of God to submit to the Babylonians. Because Ishmael was an arrogant guerilla leader who was born of royal blood, he saw Gedaliah as a governor both weak and compromising. Though Ishmael was following after his wicked rebellious spirit, we must not forget that God always turns Satan's work through people against himself. In this case, God wanted to humble the defiant Jews. He thus allowed this massacre to happen in order to further infuriate the Babylonians. As a result of the events that took place in reference to the evil deeds of Ishmael, the Babylonians came again and took more captives into Babylonia in 582/81 B.C., thus decimating the population of Palestine. At this time, the Babylonians also extended their raid into Egypt, taking from there fugitive Jews who sought to escape.

ATROCITIES OF ISHMAEL

41:4-10 *Certain men came from Shechem:* These were mourning pilgrims who came with their offerings. Since the atrocity of Ishmael was so hidden, the people did not know what had transpired the previous day. The wickedness of Ishmael and his men was here manifested in that they killed seventy innocent and sincere men. God surely knew that such people as Ishmael and his men were left among the remnant that the Babylonians left in the land. Therefore, more cleansing of the land of these wicked people had to take place. Further cleansing was carried out by the Babylonians in 582/81 B.C. when they made another raid on the land.

41:11-15 *The people ... came back:* Ishmael had taken

many princesses of the royal family with him when he was going over to the Ammonites. It must be noted that he possibly accused Gedaliah of being a traitor in going over to the Babylonians. However, he himself was also a traitor when he went over to the Ammonites. His reason for killing Gedaliah and his princes, therefore, was possibly out of jealousy, for Ishmael probably thought that he should have been appointed as governor of the land. But his actions in this situation revealed his wicked character. Once the people heard what he had done in killing innocent people, they turned from him and fled to Johanan.

41:16-18 Johanan, and those with him, assumed that the Babylonians would make an indiscriminate raid on the remnant of the Jews because of what Ishmael had done. Not knowing what to do, they gathered everyone together at Chimham in order to make their flight into Egypt. It is at this time that Jeremiah again begins his messages to the remnant.

Chapter 42

FLIGHT TO EGYPT

42:1-6 This was a situation where the people were tired of conflict and bloodshed. At the time, they thought that the only recourse to escape the reprisals of the Babylonians for the death of Gedaliah was to flee to Egypt. There may have been some desire on the part of some to stay in Judah, but in their hearts they wanted to flee. **The Lord your God:** They may have still been overcoming their idolatrous culture with which they had lived for decades. Their use of the pronoun “your” indicates that they did not have a monotheistic relationship with the true God of heaven. They had been steeped in idolatry for so many decades that they could not think of only one God. Their idol gods had failed them, and thus they turned to the God of Jeremiah as a last hope. **I will pray ... according to your words:** They had promised that they would obey the words that came from Jeremiah's God, which promise they later failed to keep. It seems that Jeremiah made the prayer based on the promise of the people, knowing that the people probably would not lis-

ten to him, as they had not listened to him in the past.

42:7-17 After ten days: The people needed to settle down before an answer came from the Lord. **Called ... all:** This was not a private or secret meeting among the leaders, but among all the people involved. **If you remain:** The message was clear. God promised that if they remained in Judah, no harm would come to them from the Babylonians. They would prosper in the land. In the historical context, they would in seventy years be joined by those who would return from captivity, for in seventy years the Medo-Persians would take control of Palestine upon their defeat of the Babylonian Empire. **I will relent:** We must not confuse this statement with human emotions. God said that He would not carry out the calamity that He would bring on them if they would obey His will. God had considered that the calamity that He had already brought on Judah was sufficient to change their culture of idolatry, and thus their course in history. **Do not be afraid:** God called on them to exercise faith in Him. They had no reason to expect a retaliation from Babylon. They simply had to trust in God to protect them. **But if you say:** Jeremiah anticipated their reply to God's request that they remain in Judah. The fact was that if they fled to Egypt, they would continue to experience war, pestilence and famine. This did happen when Nebuchadnezzar went into Egypt in 582/81 B.C. on a raid to defeat Egypt and take captives from there to Babylon.

42:18-22 See this place no more: They had to make the choice. God would not make the choice for them. If they chose to go to Egypt, then they would suffer the anger of God, and thus would never return to Judah. They would suffer the same fate as those who were carried away captive to Babylon. **Deceive yourselves:** They truly wanted to flee to Egypt. Their request to Jeremiah to pray for instructions from God, and their promise to render obedience, was self-deception on their part, if not dishonesty. They had not yet given up their arrogant rebellion in order to be submissive to God. They would thus continue to reap the consequences of following after their own desires.

Chapter 43

43:1-3 All the proud men: These were the insolent leaders who presumed to speak for the people. Since Nebuzaradan had left the poor in the land, the remnant of the land was controlled by the rebellious leaders who had determined to flee to Egypt. In this case, they called Jeremiah a liar, for they did not believe that the pronouncement he made came to him from the Lord. They believed that it only came from Baruch. These were little men as leaders who assumed to wear the big hats of leadership for the people. They were thus blinded to the fact that great faith in God was the right course to take in their situation.

43:4-7 So they came into ... Egypt: It seems that Jeremiah and Baruch were taken by force to Egypt. If everyone was to suffer the calamity that Jeremiah pronounced, then the proud leaders seem to think that Jeremiah would suffer from the fulfillment of his own prophecy. **Tahpanhes:** This was a fortified city of Egypt that was located in the northeastern part of the Nile Delta. It was the logical place to receive protection from any threat of the Babylonians. However, the city did not offer protection, for the Babylonians later came and took this city and many others in Egypt in 582/81 B.C.

43:8-13 Jeremiah's first revelation from God in Egypt was an illustrated prophecy of what was to come. He took some large stones and buried them in mortar in the brickwork in front of the Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes. This was Pharaoh's official house when he visited Tahpanhes. The prophecy was that Nebuchadnezzar would come and set his throne upon these buried stones. **My servant:** Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant by whom He brought judgment by proxy upon His people (25:9). With no more trouble than what a shepherd exerts to put on his cloak, the Babylonians would overtake Egypt. The Jews who had fled there would be caught in the calamity that would come over Egypt. In the artifacts of Nebuchadnezzar, he mentions his conquest of most of Egypt in 582/81 B.C. He made Egypt defenseless for the conquest and occupation of the Medo-Persian Empire that would come in 539 B.C.

Chapter 44

44:1-10 While the Jews were still in Judah, Jeremiah reminded Judah that their northern sister went into Assyrian captivity years before because of their idolatry. Now that a remnant of Judah resided in Egypt, he reminded them that God desolated Judah and Jerusalem because of the sin of idol worship. However, as the Jews were stiffnecked when they were in Judah, so they were in Egypt. They were determined to worship the queen of heaven, a goddess of fertility (See 7:16-20). The Lord thus pronounced the same condemnation upon the rebellious Israelites in Egypt. As the northern kingdom, they too had forgotten their origins. **Wives:** The desire to continue in worship of the queen of heaven came from the women.

44:11-14 *Cut off all Judah:* The punishment for idolatry was the destruction of a society of people. The influence of the idolatrous culture of Egypt was too great for the remnant of Jews who lived there. They continued in their idolatrous beliefs in a culture of idolatry, and thus refused to listen to the exhortations that came to them through Jeremiah. They were thus doomed to the same destruction as their brothers who had been taken into Babylonian captivity. In the case of those who were residing in Egypt, however, they would die by the sword and famine. Those in the captivity of Babylon would die a natural death. Neither group of captives would ever see the land of Palestine again. However, their children and grandchildren would. **Longing to return to the land of Judah:** They had deceived themselves into thinking that they would eventually return to Judah. Only a few fugitives escaped the sword of Nebuchadnezzar when he humbled the Egyptians and were able to return.

44:15-19 *We will not hearken to you:* There was no hope for this rebellious and stiffnecked generation of people. God was patient with them, but they had gone beyond the point of repentance. In this case, the women manifested their defiance to the things that Jeremiah preached. **But since we ceased to burn incense:** This is an illustration that while the people were enduring calamity in Judah, they had no idea that the calamity was

brought on them by God. When they went into idolatry, God started sending calamities upon the people, which calamities included famine. At the time, God sent the prophets to tell them that the famines were the punishment of God for their idolatry. But they never made the connection between the calamities and the work of God in punishment for their idolatry. They only concluded that they must continue their idol sacrifices in order to restore their prosperity, which thing only took them deeper into idolatry, to the point of even making their children to pass through fire in honor of Molech. When societies give up on God, they begin to spiral down to their own destruction. God is not an option to those societies that have given up on Him. The idolatrous society of Israel could never make a connection between their calamities in their latter years when they suffered from the chastisement of God. It took the humiliation of captivity to restore them to the old paths that were taught in the word of God. Much credit must be given to the Jewish scribes in captivity as Ezra who set themselves to teach the people the word of God (See comments Er).

44:20-23 Jeremiah reminded them that the calamities that came upon them while they were in Judah were a result of their idolatrous worship and evil behavior. ***Evil of your deeds:*** There was more to the idolatrous worship than ceremonies of sacrifices and offerings. The worship involved immorality and the murder of innocent children who were offered in sacrifice to the Moabite god Molech. ***The Lord could no longer bear it:*** God was patient with them, encouraging them to repent in response to the preaching of the prophets. But because He could no longer bear the wickedness of the people, He sent forth the calamities as punishment for their evil deeds in order to encourage their repentance.

44:24-30 ***Perform your vows:*** There is irony in Jeremiah's response to the keeping of their vows. Since they had made their promise to serve the gods of their imagination, then they would reap the consequences. And the consequences would be that they would never return to honoring the true God of heaven. They made their choice of which gods or God they would serve. They

thus dismissed the God of heaven from their minds, and consumed their worship with the gods they had created after their own imaginations. God would thus make an end of them simply because they no longer functioned as His people in order to accomplish His purpose for the existence of Israel. The Jews that fled to Egypt, therefore, ceased to exist, except for the few fugitives who fled when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Pharaoh-hophra in 582/81 B.C. Though there was a colony of Jews that existed in Egypt about two hundred years later, they were not descendants of these Jews who were consumed by famine and sword. A colony of these Jews may have existed in Egypt at the time of Jesus' birth, and it was to this colony that Joseph and Mary took Jesus when they fled Herod (Mt 2:13-18).

Chapter 45

MESSAGE TO BARUCH

45:1-5 Baruch was the scribe for Jeremiah. We are not told of the circumstances that caused Baruch to come under great stress. We would conclude, however, that his work as the scribe for Jeremiah brought the same reaction that was unleashed on Jeremiah. At the time, there was great calamity that was brought on by famine, pestilence, and with the turmoil of what was happening among the nations. All this was present during the fourth year of the wicked reign of Jehoiakim. Baruch believed the prophecies of Jeremiah, that Judah and Jerusalem were coming to an end. National Israel as an independent nation was in its last days. We would assume, therefore, that Baruch was emotionally affected by these circumstances. Jeremiah's exhortation to him was that he take his mind off the things of this world and focus on the things of God. In the promise that the Lord made to him, he would escape with his life from all the calamity that was transpiring around him.

Judgment Against The Nations

(46:1 - 51:34)

Outline: (1) Judgment against Egypt (46:1-28), (2) Judgment against the Philistines (47:1-7), (3) Judgment against Moab (48:1-47), (4) Judgment against Ammon (49:1-6), (5) Judgment against Edom (49:7-

22), (6) Judgment against Damascus (49:23-27), (7) Judgment against Kedar and Hazor (49:28-33), (8) Judgment against Elam (49:34-39), (9) Judgment against Babylon (50:1 - 51:64), (10) Historical pronouncements (52:1-34)

Chapter 46

JUDGMENT AGAINST EGYPT

46:1-6 Beginning with this chapter, Jeremiah fulfills his ministry as God's prophet to the nations (1:5). Not only did many of the prophets deliver the word of God to the Israelites, they also preached to those nations who in some way affected God's people. If they affected God's people in a negative manner, they would not go unpunished. **Carchemish:** This oracle is in reference to the battle of Carchemish that took place in 606 B.C. This was a decisive battle between the Babylonians and the remnant of the Assyrians who had called for the help of the Egyptians. This major conflict in the Near East marked the regional change from the Assyrians to the Babylonians. **Line up the shield:** With the expectation of victory, the Egyptians were encouraged to prepare for battle. **Their mighty ones are beaten down:** The expectation of victory was turned into dismay. The Babylonians defeated the Assyrian/Egyptian army at Carchemish. Because of fear, the Egyptians stumbled in fleeing from the battle scene that took place by the Euphrates River.

46:7-12 The metaphor of the flood is taken from the overflowing Nile River of Egypt during the rainy season. Egypt thought that they, with the Assyrians, would overflow the Babylonians. But they were sadly mistaken. Egypt had come with an army of mercenaries from Ethiopia, Libia and Lydia. The Egyptians became the sacrificial offering of the Lord. The mercenary army of Pharaoh-necho did not have the loyalty that was demanded to keep them in the battle against the ruthless Babylonians. Thus Pharaoh-necho was shamefully defeated. There was not enough balm in Gilead to heal the Egyptians' wounds that they received in their defeat at Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar would again attack the weakened Egyptians in 582/81 B.C. when he went to bring down retribution on those who had rebelled against Bab-

ylonian control of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

46:13-19 This message was to Egypt after her defeat at the battle of Carchemish. Her defeat left her vulnerable to attack that would come in 582/81 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar. **Migdol ... Noph ... Tahpanhes:** These were border towns that led into Egypt. In the message, these towns are alerted for an attack. Some believe that after the battle of Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar pursued the Egyptian forces as they retreated to their own land. This would have been around 605/04 B.C. However, in the Babylonian Chronicle, Nebuchadnezzar recorded that he made an attack on Egypt in 582/81 B.C. **The Lord drove them away:** This statement credits God with the defeat of Egypt at Carchemish. Since God was using the Babylonians as His proxy to bring judgment on Judah, then we would conclude that no coalition of nations could have defeated the Babylonians. **Let us return to our own people:** This would be the actions of the mercenaries after the defeat of the Egyptian forces at Carchemish. Since their objective to align with Egypt had failed, they returned to their own nations. **Egypt is a big noise:** This would be a reference to Pharaoh-necho who had mustered a mercenary army in order to attack the Babylonians. **So will he come:** According to verse 26, reference here would be to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian forces. **Noph:** Or, Memphis. Egypt's capital city would be laid waste.

46:20-26 Heifer: Egypt was like a heifer that was feeding off the produce in the lush region of the Nile River. But suddenly she is pained by a small gadfly. She would be stung by the Babylonians from the north. **Hired men:** The mercenary soldiers were as clumsy fat bulls who were not trained and disciplined to be soldiers. They thus fled from the war, which may explain why the Assyrian/Egyptian coalition was defeated at Carchemish by the hardened Babylonian soldiers. **Like a serpent:** As the Babylonian forces axed their way through the forest of nations and cities, the Egyptians would flee as they retreated from the presence of danger. Their only defense was a hiss, for they could not stand before the Babylonians. As a woodsman clears the forest, so would

the Babylonians slice through the cities of Egypt. **No:** Or, Thebes, the capital city of upper Egypt.

46:27,28 Whenever there were punishments poured out on those who affected Israel in a negative way, it meant deliverance for the people of God (See 30:10,11). Though God used the nations to punish His people, He eventually judged those who had arrogantly fought against the survival of His people. **Not make a full end of you:** God spared a remnant through whom He would continue the seedline of woman and the heritage of Davidic kings. From this seedline would come the Savior of the world.

Chapter 47

JUDGMENT AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

47:1-7 This oracle went out to the Philistines before they were attacked by the Egyptians. We are not told when this attack transpired, or by which Pharaoh. We would only assume that it would have been Pharaoh-necho on his way to engage the Babylonians at Carchemish. **Waters rise up:** Taking the literal setting of the rising of the flood waters of the Nile River, which meant a blessing of crops to the Egyptians, it would mean destruction to both the Egyptians and Philistines. The Babylonian forces would come from the north and consume the Philistine cities. The Babylonian Chronicle, wherein Nebuchadnezzar reported concerning his campaign into Palestine, reports that on his way to Egypt after Carchemish, he ravaged the Philistine cities. This took place around 605/04 B.C. **Limppness of their hands:** They had been exhausted by swinging their swords in battle against the Babylonians. In desperation, they could do nothing but flee for their lives. **Tyre and Sidon:** Since these two Phoenician cities were probably in alliance with the Philistines at this time in history, they too would succumb to the flow of the Babylonian army from the north. **Baldness ... cut:** These were personal actions of despair. One would cut off his hair or cut himself. **Rest and be still:** This was a cry for relief from attack. It was a cry by the Philistines for mercy from the Lord. **Given it charge:** The sword of the Lord through the Babylonians could not be

put into its scabbard until the punishment of the Philistines had been meted out in full. **Caphtor:** Though possibly a reference to Philistia (See Am 9:7), it is used also as a reference to the island of Crete (Ez 25:15,16).

Chapter 48

JUDGMENT AGAINST MOAB

48:1-5 Jeremiah here joins Isaiah as one of the prophets of God who made a special pronouncement against the Moabites. The prophecy is that their cities will be destroyed and their inhabitants will flee. On the roads leading to and from Luhith and Horonaim, there would be refugees fleeing as they mourned over the cities.

48:6-10 **Chemosh:** The national Moabite god would not save the people. The people would be ashamed of their god who allowed them to be destroyed. The priests, with the imagination of their national god, Chemosh, in their minds, would be taken into captivity. **City ... valley ... plain:** There would be no safe place in all the nation. **Wings:** The attack against the people would be so great that there would be no place to which the people could escape. They would need eagles' wings in order to fly away to a safe place. **Trusted in your works ... treasures:** The reason for their destruction would be their arrogance and materialism as a people. The nation trusted in themselves instead of putting their faith in God. **He who keeps back his sword:** The Lord was determined to bring judgment upon this nation. God would also bring judgment on any nation who would not lift up her sword against Moab.

48:11-17 The metaphors of this message were taken from the many vineyards that existed in Moab. Because of her great vineyards, she was wealthy. Her wine vessels were never empty. **Settled on his dregs:** The Moabites had become accustomed to a life of ease. The people had digressed into an indifferent society of indolence. **They will empty his vessels:** Their easy life was going to come to an end. They had escaped destruction for centuries, but now, their cities would be destroyed and the people taken into captivity. **Moab has been plundered:** At the time of the prophecy, Israel and Judah had already been

taken into captivity. The Moabites had mocked them as they were taken into captivity. They mocked them because their God was not able to protect them. But this would all change. The god of the Moabites, Chemosh, would not protect them. Their pride and arrogance would also lead them into captivity. The Israelites would be restored to their land, but the Moabites would cease to exist as a nation. **Ashamed of Bethel:** Reference was to the golden calf that Jeroboam had set up in Bethel. The idol was the invention of the imagination of men's minds, and thus it would do nothing in protecting the people from the attack of foreign armies.

48:18-25 Come down from your glory: The fortified cities of Moab are to be destroyed, leaving the people defenseless and fleeing. When it is asked what has happened, all are called on to lament over the fall of the nation. **Horn:** The power of Moab is destroyed. **Arm:** The authority of the nation has been broken. All the major cities of the nation were defeated and destroyed.

48:26-33 Magnified himself against the Lord: This was the reason for the termination of the nation. As Israel, who also became arrogant, Moab had to be humbled and humiliated. Moab was arrogant against God's people, and thus God brought judgment down upon her. Because she jumped for joy when Israel was taken into captivity, she too would suffer the same captivity because of her haughtiness. **Pride ... loftiness ... arrogance ... haughtiness:** See Is 16:6-14. Every word was used by Jeremiah to describe the disgraceful attitude and character of the Moabites. **I will wail for Moab:** Some have suggested that verses 31 & 32 turn from the prophecy to the feelings of Jeremiah concerning the fall of Moab. Such could be the case after Jeremiah heard God's revelations concerning the fall of this relative nation of Israel. However, it is better to assume that the revelation remains unbroken, and thus the "I" in the text refers to God's lament over this nation that had long since forsaken the faith of Lot their father (Gn 19:30-38).

48:34-39 Cause to cease ... him who offers: The purpose for the punishment of Moab was to reveal that their god Chemosh was false. He could offer them no protec-

tion from destruction. Since all the altars and places of sacrifice would be destroyed, many would find their way back to faith in God. These would be those who were granted the opportunity to return from their captivity. **Bald ... shaved ... cuts:** The entire nation mourned the death of the nation. As independent Israel, Moab was an idolatrous nation that was brought to an end. She would no longer exist in history as the nation of Moab.

48:40-47 Fly as an eagle: The one who would destroy her with swiftness would fly down upon her as an eagle on an unsuspecting prey. Reference here would probably be to the Babylonian Empire through the kingship of Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed Moab and Ammon in 582/81 B.C. **Strongholds are surprised:** The slothful nature of the Moabite society could not produce a soldier who could stand before the ruthless professional soldiers of the Babylonian Empire. When the attack of the Babylonians came, therefore, the strongest Moabite soldier was surprised and terrified at the fierceness of the Babylonians. **Visitation:** When the Lord visited, it was a time for judgment and destruction. In the case of Moab, it was a time when the nation would come to an end. It would no longer exist as an independent nation of the world. **Bring against the captivity:** They would not be restored as a nation. However, a repentant remnant would be restored to their homelands when the Medo-Persian Empire took over the Babylonians in 539 B.C. When the Medes and Persians took over the former territory of the Babylonian Empire, it was the policy of Cyrus, the king of the Medo-Persian Empire, to allow former captives of the Assyrians and Babylonians to return to their homelands, as long as their homelands were within the domain of the Medo-Persian Empire.

Chapter 49

JUDGMENT AGAINST AMMON

49:1-6 Settled in its cities: The Ammonites were land grabbers. They had stolen the land that had been given by God to Gad as a possession. Since Israel had heirs to all the land possessions, then the Ammonites had no right to take the land that had been given to Israel as an

inheritance. When the northern kingdom of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C., the Ammonites grabbed the land of Gad that was on the eastern side of the Jordan River, land that the Israelites were awarded before they crossed the Jordan to possess the land during the days of Joshua. **Boastful ... about the valleys:** The Ammonites trusted in the productivity of their land, and thus took pride in their wealth as a nation. Their fertile valleys and fortified cities were a thing of pride. They thus deceived themselves into thinking that no one would attack them. **Rabbah ... daughters:** Though they thought that they would not be attacked, Rabbah, the capital, and all the daughter cities would be burned with fire. The people would flee in confusion, running to and fro within the walls of their fortified cities that were to be destroyed. Milcom, the national god of the Ammonites, would be taken into captivity with the priests who would also go into captivity. There would be no one who would come to the rescue of the Ammonites. No one would make an effort to save her. **Heshbon:** Though Heshbon was actually in Moab, Ammon was evidently attacked first, with Ammonite refugees fleeing to her relative city of Heshbon (See Gn 19:37,38).

JUDGMENT AGAINST EDOM

49:7-13 See also Ob 5,6. As the descendants of Esau, the Edomites were the perpetual enemies of the Israelites since the days they came out of Egyptian captivity. **Teman:** See Jb 2:11; Am 1:12. **Wisdom:** The Edomites were not wise because they dared to afflict the people of God. **Dedan:** God warns the Dedanites to flee from the surrounding area of Edom, lest His destruction that He is bringing on Edom affect them. There would also be a warning in this message that the Dedanites not become involved in the affairs of Edom, especially in making an alliance against them. **Leave your fatherless children:** Since the fathers would be killed in battle, God would take care of their children by raising up a new generation that respected the one true and living God. **Bozrah:** The capital of Edom would be destroyed, and subsequently all the cities of Edom would be laid waste and not be rebuilt.

49:14-22 See Ob 1-4. **Your fierceness has deceived you:** The Edomites took pride in the fact that they were a fierce people. But they had deceived themselves into thinking that they were invincible. **Dwell in the clefts of the rock:** The city of Petra was built in a gorge of mountains, and thus was easily defended. It was almost impenetrable. Though Edom thought that no army could penetrate her natural defenses, God would bring her down. Her overconfidence in her natural defenses would lead her to be unprepared, and thus vulnerable to destruction. **Desolation:** God makes no promise of a surviving remnant of the Edomites. As an independent nation, she would go out of existence. The nation would be laid waste as Sodom and Gomorrah. Jeremiah's picture of the fall of Edom is a vivid description of a proud and arrogant nation coming to a close. The more the nation had exalted herself, the greater the judgment that God would bring down upon the people. The outcry of the inhabitants would be so great that it would be heard as far west as the Red Sea, her border with Egypt. Her mighty warriors would cry out in pain as a woman giving birth.

JUDGMENT AGAINST DAMASCUS

49:23-27 The capital city of Damascus is used by Jeremiah to refer to the nation of Syria. These were the Armenian people. Syria fell to the Assyrian invasion in 732 B.C. Before this date, the nation was a continual threat against the people of God (See 1 Kg 15:18-21; 20:1-21; 22:3; 2 Kg 16:5,6; Is 7:1-16). Damascus was a famous city of the Near East, but unfortunately she was located as the northern gateway for the Assyrian, Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires as they moved to control the Fertile Crescent, Palestine and Egypt. The oracle here announces the fall of her young men who have died in her streets. She was made to drink of the cup of God's wrath. **Benhadad:** This was the name of several of her kings (See 1 Kg 15:18-20; 2 Kg 13:24).

JUDGMENT AGAINST KEDAR & HAZOR

49:28-33 **Kedar ... Hazor:** These two cities probably represent the Arabian tribes to the east of Palestine and

Edom (Gn 25:13; see Is 21:16,17; Ez 27:21). The one who would destroy and control this area would be Nebuchadnezzar, who would be expanding the Babylonian Empire. Since the people of these areas were primarily nomadic, the cities that they had constructed were not fortified against invasions. They were thus easily defeated and the people scattered. In this oracle of judgment, it is stated that Nebuchadnezzar plundered their herds and flocks in order to maintain his army in his continued conquest of the Near East. **Hazor:** Instead of representing a specific city or town, this reference is possibly to a seminomadic people of wealth in the desert. Their wealth was in their herds and flocks, and thus their devastation was the plundering of their herds and flocks by the Babylonian army.

JUDGMENT AGAINST ELAM

49:34-39 Elam represented the territory east of Babylon toward the Persian Gulf. Shushan, or Susa, was the capital. It was conquered by Ashurbanipal, the king of Assyria, in 640 B.C. It later became independent with the fall of the Assyrian Empire. During the existence of the Medo-Persian Empire, Susa became one of the capitals of the empire. Because Elam was a small country, there is little information about its history. There were exiles already in Babylon at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah. Since these exiles possibly sided with the Elamites in their opposition to the Babylonians, this oracle was possibly written against the Elamites in order to dispel the exiles' hopes that the Elamites might overthrow the Babylonians. We have no historical information concerning the destruction of the Elamites. We are simply told in this prophecy that they would have no chance against the enemy that God would bring against them. Their famous archers would not be able to defend them (Is 22:6). **Latter days:** Since we do not have any evidence of the restoration of the Elamite kingdom, we could assume that reference here was to the latter days of national Israel when the Messiah would call all men from their captivity into the kingdom of God (Compare comments Is 2:1-4).

Chapter 50

JUDGMENT AGAINST BABYLON

The material of chapters 50 & 51 is focused on the condemnation of Babylon and encouragement of Israel. Each reference to the doom of Babylon is almost always followed by a message of blessing to God's people. The prophecy is in the past tense, and thus in her infancy as a nation, Babylon is portrayed as overthrown.

50:1-3 Since Babylon manifested her arrogance among the nations, then the news of her condemnation would go forth to the nations. Her enemy out of the north, a coalition between the Medes and Persians, would overthrow her. **Bel ... Marduk:** The god of the Chaldeans (Bel) was eventually identified with the god of the Babylonians (Marduk). When the kingdom fell, the national god also fell.

50:4-10 The captives are encouraged by the announcement of the fall of Babylon. The fall would be so great that Babylon's demise would be used in apocalyptic literature to symbolize God's overthrow of kingdoms that men thought would never be overthrown (See comments Rv 14:8). **Israel ... Judah:** A remnant of all the tribes of Israel would be restored to their homeland in Palestine. God never intended to bring all Israelites back to Palestine. He promised that only a representative remnant of all twelve tribes be restored to the land in order to reestablish the identity of Israel as a nation (See comments Er & Ne). Once the identity was reestablished, then it would be known that all prophecies concerning the Messiah would be fulfilled when the fullness of time came (Gl 4:4). **Perpetual covenant:** The exiles would set their faces toward Jerusalem and renew the covenant that they had broken with the Lord. Their former leaders (shepherds) who would have died by the time of the return, had led them away from the Lord by their apostasy to idol religiosity. It was they who had sinned against the Lord. The Assyrians and Babylonians who devoured them claimed innocence. However, they did not give credit to God for their victories over God's people. They claimed the conquests for themselves. Through the prophets of Israel and Judah, they could have known that God was working

through them, but they refused to give God credit for using them to chastise His people. **Flee away from the midst of Babylon:** The people of God are encouraged to flee from Babylon as refugees. God would bring judgment upon her, and thus she was coming to an end. As she had destroyed the nationhood of others, so she would be likewise destroyed never to exist again.

50:11-16 The condemnation of Babylon in the text continues by depicting the fall of the city. She proclaimed herself to be first among the nations, now she would be the last, and thus be left desolate. Since she rejoiced over the fall of Judah, others will be astonished over her fall. God calls on the nations to attack, for Babylon was guilty of attacking the people of God. Though she was the proxy instrument of God to judge Judah, she arrogantly claimed the victory for herself. **Everyone will flee:** When the Medo-Persians took over the territory of the conquered Babylonian Empire, she allowed the former captives to return to their homelands that were within the territory of the Medo-Persian Empire.

50:17-20 Assyria ... Babylon: The Assyrians took the northern kingdom into captivity in 722/21 B.C. Babylon took the remainder of the Israelites into captivity in 586 B.C. Israelites were thus scattered throughout the territories of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. God would later use this scattering of His people for world evangelism that would come in the 1st century (See comments Is 2:1-4). **I will pardon:** Those who afflicted Israel would be punished, but Israel would be pardoned and restored to her homeland.

50:21-27 The context returns to judgment upon Babylon. **Merathaim:** Or, "double rebellion." **Pekod:** Or, "punishment." These symbolic names for Babylon portray her sin. She was the hammer that broke the nations. She is now broken and shattered. God opened the armory of His weapons that He uses against the nations. He unleashed His weapons upon the nation that had tormented and destroyed so many other nations. Babylon was a warrior nation, and thus God was a strong warrior against her. As Babylon had snared other nations, so she was snared. The city of Babylon fell to the Medes and

Persians with very little struggle. The Babylonian Empire capitulated without any major battle, though she had been built as a result of victories in great battles.

50:28 Vengeance: Babylon's destruction of the temple was to the Babylonians a sign that they had overcome the God of the Jews. Thus judgment on Babylon was God's vengeance on them for thinking that they had defeated the God of the Jews. Those in Jerusalem, therefore, would rejoice when the announcement would be made that Babylon had fallen.

50:29-32 Babylon was to be rewarded for her work. As she had done to others, so it would be done to her. As she took other nations out of existence, so she would be taken out of existence. As she was proud and arrogant against others, other nations were called to humble her.

50:33,34 Israel is encouraged by her deliverance. **Redeemer:** Israel was in bondage from which she could not deliver herself. Only God could work among the nations in order to release her from her captivity. Through God's grace, therefore, Israel was released from bondage and brought back to her homeland. However, it took the destruction of her captors in order to accomplish the freedom of His people. And so it has happened in reference to the Christian's deliverance from the kingdom of Satan (See comments Ep 4:7-10).

50:35-40 A sword: As the Babylonians had used the sword to amass their empire, so the sword will devour the nation. All the leaders, princes and priests alike, would suffer from the strike of the sword. **Mixed people:** Those mercenaries who were in allegiance with the Babylonians, would forsake their commitment and allow the empire to fall. Though their soldiers were fierce against those they conquered, they would become feeble as women. She would be plundered of her riches and made ashamed of her idols, which idol gods would not deliver her in her day of calamity. **Sodom and Gomorrah:** As the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah ceased to exist, so would the Babylonian Empire. People continue to exist who make up empires, but the government, kings and princes, cease, no longer to rise again. Since many of the ancient empires were based on the leadership of a

predominant king, and his son or sons who reigned after him, when the dynasty was terminated, the empire ceased to exist. So it would be with the Babylonian Empire. The people of the empire would continue under the control of a new empire.

50:41-46 Many kings: A coalition between the Medes and Persians took over the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. **No mercy:** As Babylon had shown no mercy to the nations she conquered, no mercy would be shown to her. **King of Babylon:** See Daniel 5 where Belshazzar was given a sign of his doom. **Outcry is heard among the nations:** The fall of the Babylonian Empire caused great joy among all the nations who had succumbed to her might. All those exiles who had been taken from their homelands rejoiced over the empire that had decimated their homelands. There was no remorse over the fall of the Babylonian Empire.

Chapter 51

51:1-10 Winnow: As a wind separates the chaff from the wheat, the enemy of Babylon would blow her away as chaff. The archers of the enemy would shoot their arrows through the strongest armor of the Babylonians. She is to be utterly destroyed because of her sin against God's people. **Not been forsaken:** These prophecies of the doom of Babylon were made many years before Babylon fell. When the prophecies were fulfilled, Israel would know that God had not forsaken His people. **Flee:** If one would save his life, then he must flee from Babylon. Since she is beyond healing, as was Israel and Judah in their days of apostasy, then there would be no healing. **Revealed our righteousness:** The destruction of Babylon was the vindication of God's people.

51:11-14 The Medes: The wind that would blow through Babylon is mentioned here in writing over seventy years before the Medo-Persians conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. We can be sure that the captive Jews were watching with anticipation the affairs of the international community in the years immediately before the completion of the seventy years of captivity. We would assume, therefore, that when Cyrus led the Medo-Per-

sian coalition into the city of Babylon, that he had the support of the Jewish community that was scattered throughout the former Assyrian and Babylonian territories to which they had been taken captive. It may have been because of this support that Cyrus was generous in commissioning the Jews' return to their homeland in 536 B.C.

51:15-19 Since it is reasonable to conclude that God is the creator of all things, then idolatry, which is the manifestation of the spiritual inventions of man, is insane. God has revealed Himself to those He created (Rm 1:20). It is foolish, therefore, to ignore the evidence of God in the created world in order to follow after something that has been created after the imagination of men. For this reason, the invention of idols is a disgrace to the thinking of men. Idols are the result of men who seek to deceive themselves by believing their own lies.

51:20-23 *You are My battle ax:* God used the Babylonians to punish Judah, as He used the Assyrians to punish Israel. But each nation, though used by God, did not give credit to God for their existence or accomplishments. They were pagan nations who simply sowed havoc among God's people, submitting them to slavery throughout their empires. For this reason, they would reap what they had sown. The consequence of their maltreatment of God's people would be their annihilation from existence. These two empires would never exist again in history.

51:24-26 Nebuchadnezzar had exalted the Babylonian Empire as a mountain over the nations. But in her punishment by God, she would be leveled as the flat plain on which the city was originally built.

51:27-33 The combined nations of the Medes and Persians would strike the Babylonians. The Medes possibly took the leadership in assembling a coalition of people from surrounding nations. What is portrayed in this prophecy, and what possibly happened, was that the city of Babylon fell without a battle. The Babylonian soldiers are pictured as staying in the barracks, and thus they made no effort to ward off the offensive of the Medes and Persians. Babylon fell without a major battle being fought.

51:34-40 *The violence done to me ... upon Babylon:* Though Nebuchadnezzar had committed atrocities against Israel, those who ruled the Babylonian Empire after his death would pay the price. The reason for the destruction of the empire, therefore, was because of Nebuchadnezzar's maltreatment of the people of God during his reign. **Take vengeance:** God's work through the Medo-Persians to bring down the Babylonian Empire was an act of vengeance. Since God's people were helpless in delivering themselves, God came to their rescue. **Make her springs dry:** The figure here is evidently taken from the hanging gardens of Babylon. Water was also channeled into the city where it was made into waterfalls, and thus cooled houses. When the waters were dried up, the people sweltered in the extreme heat of the region.

51:41-44 **Sheshach:** Some believe that this was a code word for Babylon. **Feast:** Reference could possibly be to Belshazzar's feast in Daniel 5. **Astonishment:** No one thought that Babylon would fall. She was so powerful because of her warrior culture that there was no nation who could defeat her. Nevertheless, the one true God punished the false god Bel. Babylon would no longer be the power to which the nations of the Near East would submit.

51:45-51 If one would save his life, then he must flee out of the city of Babylon, for it would fall. Though written over seventy years before the fall of Babylon, God had already made the judgment that the city fall. Before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, God in His foreknowledge had already consigned the fall of Babylon. And when she did eventually fall, all who were affected by Babylon on earth were joined with angelic beings in singing for joy over her fall (Compare comments Rv 14). **You who have escaped:** They must never forget that Jerusalem and the temple were desecrated by those who were unbelievers. They must never forget the shame that was brought upon God by the destruction of those things in Judah that represented the presence of God.

51:52-58 Though Babylon had fortified herself against the strongest attacks, those who would plunder the city had arrived. No fortification would stand against God's

decree that the city fall. The attackers would be like a surging wave that cannot be stopped. It was a time of God's retribution upon those who had persecuted His people. Babylon's fall, therefore, was repayment for what Babylon had done to others. **Drunk:** The leaders of Babylon were disoriented as a drunk, and thus could not organize the forces of the nation against the attackers.

51:59-64 Since Zedekiah made a visit to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign, the year would be 594 B.C. Though Jeremiah had formerly prophesied that Babylon would destroy Jerusalem and take God's people into captivity, his prophecy of these words foretell the fall of Babylon. Jeremiah wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know that Babylon would not escape the vengeance of God for what he was about to do to Jerusalem in 586 B.C. **Seraiah:** He was possibly the brother of Baruch who accompanied Zedekiah on his trip to Babylon. **Read all these words:** The sending and reading of the scroll would bring comfort to those who were already in captivity. It would give them a message of expectation. They would be looking for the time when Babylon would fall. When the city eventually fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C., the captives knew what it meant. They knew that it was time to return to their homeland. **Cast it into the middle of the Euphrates:** When the Babylonian Empire fell to the Medes and Persians, it never resurfaced again as a nation in the history of mankind. It was simply one of those empires of yesteryear that passed through time for God's use in disciplining His people. We know of the Babylon Empire today only because of the historical mention of it in the Bible and archaeological discoveries that confirm its past existence.

Chapter 52

HISTORICAL PRONOUNCEMENTS

52:1-3 Zedekiah: See 2 Kg 24:18-20. Zedekiah lived after the wickedness of Jehoiakim, who was one of the most wicked kings of Judah. The moral leadership of Judah at the end of its existence was so digressed away from the moral standards of God, that the people had no example of morals before them to follow. When the lead-

ers of any nation are morally degraded, the people of the nation follow.

52:4-7 Jerusalem ... was besieged: See 2 Kg 25:1-5. The wicked leadership of the kings of Judah was one thing that led to the destruction of Jerusalem and captivity of the people. At the end of a 30-month siege, the city of Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians on July 18, 586 B.C. The biblical records of this event are found in this text, the Kings and Chronicles, and Ezekiel. Secular records of the fall can be found in the Lachish Letters, the Babylonian Chronicle, and inscriptions in Egypt.

52:8-11 See 2 Kg 6 & 7. Zedekiah cowardly fled from the scene, realizing that the prophecy of Jeremiah of his captivity was going to take place. His flight from the people manifested his character and attitude in reference to being a leader for the people. He was a coward who thought only of himself. When morally degraded leaders assume to be leaders of a country, they often forget that their leadership role includes moral leadership, as well as leadership in government. The private life of good leaders is never something known only to themselves. Good leaders lead by the example of their lives.

52:12-16 See 2 Kg 25:8-12. Since Jerusalem had suffered through earlier captivities, and yet was left standing, we would assume that the original plan of Nebuchadnezzar was not to destroy the city or the temple. But because of the defiance of Zedekiah and those he led, in this final conquest of the city he commissioned Nebuzaradan to level the city as punishment to the Jewish nation. Such was in fulfillment of prophecy, for God wanted Israel completely humbled. He wanted Israel as an independent nation to end. He wanted the centralization of their faith and government through earthly kings to come to a close. The same end of Israel would come in about five hundred years from this date. When Jesus came, God again wanted to signal the end of Israel through the destruction of Jerusalem (See comments Mt 24). When Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, God brought Israel to a final ending, never to restore the nation again as part of His work.

52:17-23 See 2 Kg 25:13-17. Nothing is said of the ark

of the covenant. If it still existed at this time it would surely have been taken to Babylon. Some historians believe that it was taken to Egypt in an earlier raid on Jerusalem during the first part of the reign of Rehoboam. The description of some of the temple structures that was given here by Jeremiah was possibly for the benefit of those who would after the captivity rebuild the temple. When the returnees came again to Jerusalem during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, they rebuilt the temple. However, the temple they built was not of the grandeur of the temple that had been built by Solomon and was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

52:24-27 See 2 Kg 25:13-17 (See Jr 29:11 – 43:7). **Riblah:** This was possibly the city where Nebuchadnezzar set up his command center during the raid of the cities of Palestine. From this location, he sent out his army under the leadership of his commanders. It was thus from this city that the captives were assembled in order to be marched off to Babylon.

52:28-30 The number of captives that are listed here are found nowhere else in the Bible. The deportation of 3,023 captives in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign is recorded in 2 Kings 24:12-14, but there it is recorded that he took 10,000 captives. Jeremiah's account is a record of only the fighting men, whereas the account in 2 Kings is a record of men, women and children. **Seventh year:** The beginning of the reign of kings was carried out in two different ways. Here, the system of registering the beginning of the reign of a king was to date his reign from the beginning of the first year when he ascended to the throne. In the 2 Kings account, the system was used to allow one year to pass before counting the beginning of the king's reign at the end of the first year of reign. He had thus actually been on the throne for one year. **Eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar:** This would be a conquest of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. **Twenty-third year:** There is no mention of this deportation in the Scriptures. However, the Jewish historian Josephus in the first century A.D. mentions that Nebuchadnezzar campaigned in Egypt in the twenty-third year of his reign, where he captured and took Jews into captivity.

These may have been the Jews who fled there after the rebellion of Gedaliah.

52:31-34 Evil-merodach: This king succeeded Nebuchadnezzar II. He was a lawless king. He was killed by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, having reigned a little over one year from 562-560 B.C. **Above the throne of the kings who were with him:** It may have been that Nebuchadnezzar took a king alive to Babylon as a prize and symbol of his conquest of each nation he conquered. Among those kings was Jehoiachin, whom he exalted in captivity and gave a daily ration of food. Jehoiachin was taken into captivity when he was only eighteen years old, and thus he grew up in captivity (2 Kg 24:8-15). He was taken in the 597 B.C. captivity. He humbled himself before his captors, and thus gained their respect. He was thus recognized as royalty in captivity, and given a place of honor at the king's table. Archaeologists discovered several years ago over 300 clay tablets that contain the administrative records of the Babylonian Empire. Jehoiachin is mentioned on four of these tablets. These tablets date from 595 to 570 B.C. The four tablets mention food rations that were given to Jehoiachin and his entourage. Jehoiachin is named as the "king of the land of Judah." The tablets also mention rations that were given to the sons of Jehoiachin.

Commentary by Roger E. Dickson

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ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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