

Introduction

For 42 years Jeremiah preached in Judah, trying to awaken the nation to what was about to happen to it, to get them to turn around, to save the nation from the judgment of God. And in all those 42 years, never once did he see any sign of encouragement. Never did he alter for one moment the headlong course of this nation toward its own destruction. Never did he see any sign that what he was saying had any impact at all upon these people. Yet he was faithful to his task.

Author

- Jeremiah was a prophet in and to Judah during the dark days leading up to its destruction by Babylon. At the same time, Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets with the exiles in Babylon.
- Jeremiah's father Hilkiyah was a member of the Levitical priesthood (as was Ezekiel) and lived in Anathoth, a small village about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. This city was one of the cities given to the descendants of Aaron the priest by Joshua (Joshua 21:15-19). There is no evidence, however, to indicate that Jeremiah ever entered the priesthood in Jerusalem.

Date

- Jeremiah's life extended from *the 13th year of the reign of Josiah* (Jeremiah 1:2) through the fall of Jerusalem (1:3), and beyond to the remnant taking Jeremiah hostage and going to Egypt (Jeremiah 43:7). The dates would be 627 to 562 B.C. There are a large number of chronological references in the book, which help date many of his prophecies.
- Unlike Ezekiel, whose prophecies are arranged in chronological order, Jeremiah often placed prophecies together that are dated years apart. His messages were given during times of stress, upheaval, and need. Often the messages seem to be a repeat of previous messages, partly because they are given at different locations to different people, and sometimes given many years apart, to people who had not previously heard them.
- It seems that the last chapter was appended to Jeremiah's prophecies by the same author who compiled the Book of Kings.

Historical Background

- Jeremiah's call to ministry was in the 13th year of King Josiah. Josiah was a descendant of King David, and he came to the throne when he was 8 years old and remained on the throne for 31 years, dying at age 39.
- In the 18th year of Josiah's reign over Judah (at age 26 and 5 years after Jeremiah's ministry began), a copy of the Mosaic Law was discovered in the Temple. Josiah then began a diligent effort to remove idolatry from Judah. He succeeded in removing the outward forms but did not reach into the people's hearts. After his death, the people returned to their wicked ways. In fact, there is no mention at all of his reforms in the writings of Jeremiah. However, God told Josiah, *because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke...and you wept before Me...you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil which I will bring on this place* (see 2 Kings 21–22).
- The Assyrian Empire to the North (which had conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.) was defeated by a new empire rising to power—the Babylonians (modern day Iraq) in 612. Therefore, under Josiah, Judah threw off the yoke of Assyrian dominion and enjoyed a brief period of national independence until 609.
- When Assyria collapsed, Egypt sensed an opportunity to reclaim much of western Palestine, including Judah, which it had earlier lost to Assyria. Although Egypt had feared Assyria, she now feared Babylon more, so she entered the conflict between Assyria and Babylon on Assyria's side. In 609 Pharaoh Neco II marched with a large Egyptian army toward Haran (just north of the Sea of Galilee) to support the remaining Assyrian forces against Babylon.

- King Josiah did not want Egypt to replace Assyria as Judah's taskmaster, so he mobilized his army to stop the Egyptian advance. A battle took place on the plain of Megiddo—and Judah lost. Josiah was killed and the Egyptian army continued on to Haran (2 Chronicles 35:20-24), gaining control of Palestine at the border town of Carchemish on the Euphrates River. Assyria ceased to be a major force in history.
- Judah had appointed Jehoahaz king in place of his father Josiah, but after a reign of only 3 months, he was deposed by Pharaoh Neco and taken to Egypt, where he died. Neco then plundered the treasures of Judah and appointed Jehoiakim (another son of Josiah) as Neco's vassal king (2 Kings 23:28-36).
- For four years, the Egyptians and Babylonians faced each other at Carchemish, with neither side able to gain the upper hand. Then in 605, crown prince Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonian forces to a decisive victory and pursued the fleeing Egyptians south through Palestine to the very borders of Egypt.
- Two events in 605 influenced Judah's history:
 1. King Jehoiakim (appointed king by Pharaoh) switched allegiance to Babylon after the Battle of Carchemish and agreed to serve as a vassal king for Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:1).
 2. On August 15, Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon, died. Nebuchadnezzar was forced to cut short his conquest and return to Babylon to claim the throne.
- Nebuchadnezzar solidified his rule over this newly acquired territory by appointing kings and taking hostages to assure continued loyalty. During this first campaign through Palestine, he took Daniel captive (Daniel 1:1-6).
- Judah remained a vassal state until late in 601 when Nebuchadnezzar made another advance through Palestine towards Egypt. His army suffered a major defeat from Egypt and was forced to retreat. It was then almost three years before his army could make another full-scale offensive.
- Judah's King Jehoiakim was a political chameleon. After Babylon's defeat in 601 he again changed sides and supported Egypt (2 Kings 24:1). This was a fatal mistake.
- By December 598, Nebuchadnezzar's army was prepared for an attack and his chief objective was to take Jerusalem to teach it (and no doubt other vassal nations, too) the awful consequences of rebelling against Babylon. Jehoiakim died during the time of Babylon's attack and was followed to the throne by his son, Jehoiachin. After only a three-month reign, Jehoiachin saw the folly in opposing Babylon and surrendered Jerusalem in March of 597. Jehoiachin was taken prisoner to Babylon, but in the 37th year of the Exile, he was brought out of prison and elevated above other conquered kings and *changed his prison clothes and had his meals in the king's presence regularly all the days of his life* (Jeremiah 52:31-34).
- Nebuchadnezzar looted Jerusalem and deported 10,000 of the leaders, skilled laborers, and soldiers (2 Kings 24:12-16). Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah (Josiah's third son—1 Chronicles 3:15) was placed on the throne as Judah's vassal king.
- King Zedekiah was weak and vacillating. During his 11-year reign, Judah continued to decline, both spiritually and politically. Rather than learning from the past, it repeated the past. When another Pharaoh (Hophra) came to power in Egypt in 588, Judah once again revolted from Babylon (2 Kings 24:20–25:1; Jeremiah 52:3-4). A coalition of vassal states (Judah, Tyre, and Ammon) refused to remain under Babylon's control. Nebuchadnezzar's response was swift and harsh. The army of Babylon surrounded Jerusalem and began a long siege. In July-August 586, the city fell and was destroyed and the Temple was burned. The Babylonians *slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon* (2 Kings 25:7), where he was in prison until he died (Jeremiah 52:1-15).
- The Babylonians *left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen* (Jeremiah 52:16). Among them was Jeremiah (whom the Babylonians may have protected because they perceived his prophecies as being 'pro-Babylonian'). They put Gedaliah in charge of the Judeans. Gedaliah was assassinated by an Ammonite named Ishmael, who then took captive the remnant of the people in Gedaliah's town of Mizpah (just north of Jerusalem). Johanan led forces and rescued the

remnant and Ishmael escaped back to Ammon (east side of the Jordan River) (Jeremiah 40–41). So Johanan then led the remnant to Egypt, even though the prophet Jeremiah said, *The Lord has spoken to you, O remnant of Judah, “Do not go into Egypt!”* (Jeremiah 42:19). But they disobeyed God again and, taking Jeremiah hostage, they continued down to Egypt, where evidently Jeremiah died.

Structure and Style

- *Lack of Chronological Order*—As mentioned under “Date,” the book has no chronological progression. For example, many of Jeremiah’s prophecies against the nations were written early in his ministry (25:1, 13) yet the content of these prophecies are recorded near the end of the book.
- *Literary Nature*—There are three types of literary materials found in the book: poetic discourses, prose discourses, and prose narratives.
- *Logical Arrangement of Material*—The basic theme of the book seems to be God’s judgment—first on Judah (chapters 2–45) and then on the Gentile nations (chapters 46–51).

- *An overview of Jeremiah:*

Chapter 1—Jeremiah’s Call

Chapters 2–25—Jeremiah’s 13 messages of God’s judgment on Judah

Chapters 26–29—How the people responded to Jeremiah and his message

Chapters 30–33—Before the judgment began, Jeremiah pointed ahead to Judah’s future hope

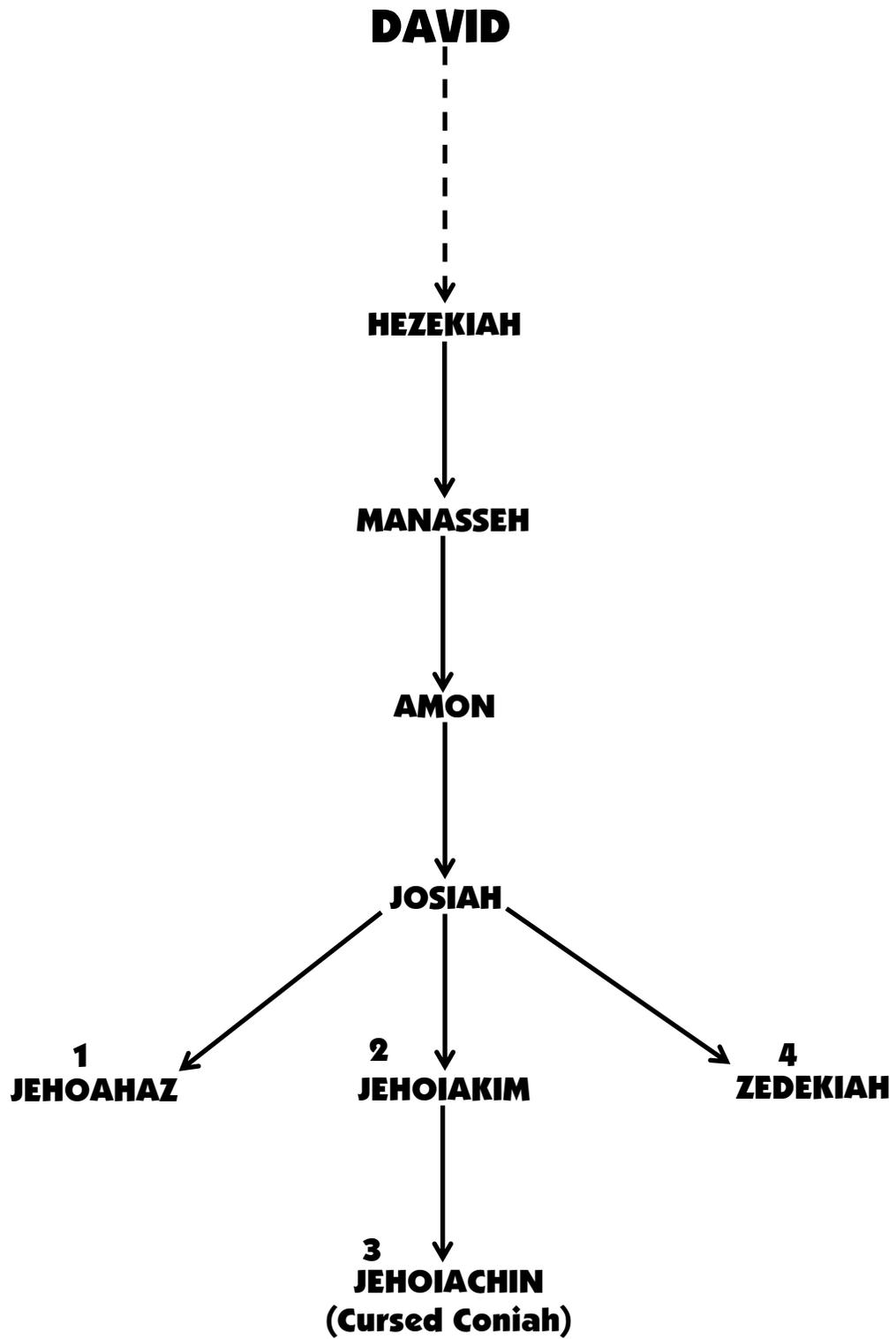
Chapters 34–36—Continues the theme of rejection from chapters 26–29

Chapters 37–45—Judah’s destruction was inevitable because she had rejected the Word of God.

Jeremiah now sketched the events that occurred before, during, and after the fall of Jerusalem.

Chapters 46–51—If God carried out His judgment on His people, the nation of Judah, because of their sin, how could the rest of the world hope to escape? Jeremiah here foretold of God’s judgment on the Gentile nations.

KING	REIGN	SCRIPTURE	GOOD or EVIL	HIS END
HEZEKIAH (descendant of King David)	25 years old Reigned 29 years	2 Kings 18:1—20:21; 2 Chronicles 29:1—32:33	Good	Time of Prophet Isaiah, he prayed and received 15 years of additional life, during which he showed Babylon the treasures of the Temple and conceived his wicked son Manasseh
MANASSEH (Hezekiah's son)	12 years old Reigned 55 years	2 Kings 21:1-18; 2 Chronicles 33:1-20	Evil	The most wicked of Judah's kings, died natural death
AMON (Manasseh's son)	22 years old Reigned 2 years	2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chronicles 33:21-25	Evil	Killed by his own servants in his own house
JOSIAH (Amon's son)	8 years old Reigned 31 years	2 Kings 22:1—23:27; 2 Chronicles 34:1— 27	Good	Killed in battle by Pharaoh Neco II at Megiddo
JEHOAHAZ (Josiah's son)	23 years old Reigned 3 months	2 Kings 23:30-33; 2 Chronicles 36:1-4	Evil	Pharaoh took him to Egypt where he died
JEHOIAKIM (Josiah's son)	25 years old Reigned 11 years	2 Kings 23:34— 24:5; 2 Chronicles 36:4-8; Jeremiah 22:18-23	Evil	Killed in Jerusalem by the Babylonians
JEHOIACHIN (Jehoiakim's son—called "Coniah" by God and cursed by God, <i>write this man down childless...no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah</i>)	18 years old Reigned 3 months	2 Kings 24:6-16; 25:27-30; 2 Chronicles 36:8-10; Jeremiah 22:24- 30; 52:31-34	Evil	Taken in exile to Babylon, ended up eating with the Babylonian king
ZEDEKIAH (Josiah's son)	21 years old Reigned 11 years	2 Kings 24:17—25:7; 2 Chronicles 36:10-17; Jer- emiah 34—39:7	Evil	Babylonians slaughtered his sons in front of him, put out his eyes, and took him captive to Babylon
RULERS				
GEDALIAH (son of Anikam, who saved Jeremiah's life [Jeremiah 26:24], son of Josiah's scribe Shaphan, who read the Law which had been lost, to Josiah)	Appointed by Babylon as Governor in Judah for 7 months	2 Kings 22:8-13; Jeremiah 40:13—41:10	Good	Killed by Ishmael, the Ammonite
JOHANAN	Self-appointed leader	Jeremiah 41:11—43:7	Evil	Takes the remnant from the Land to Egypt (with Jeremiah held hostage), in direct disobedience to God





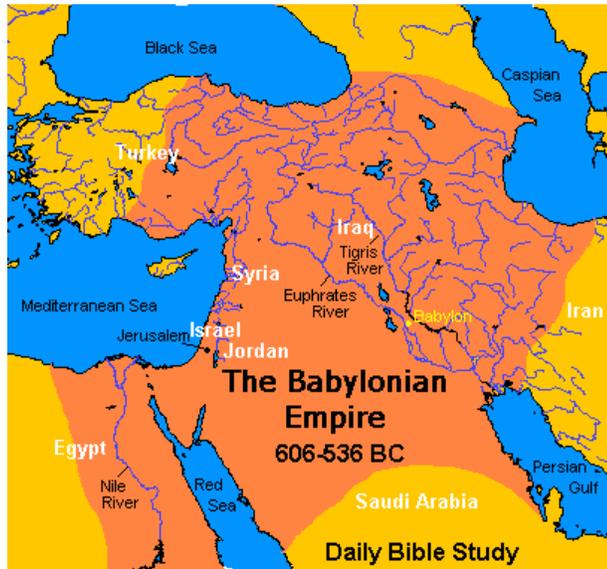
Israel

The Northern Kingdom lasted about 200 years and taken captive by Assyria in 722 B.C.

Judah

The Southern Kingdom lasted about 300 years and taken captive by Babylon in 586 B.C.

500s B.C. — The Babylonians (Iraq)



The Babylonians, whose capital was Babylon, invaded the Southern Kingdom of Judah three times:

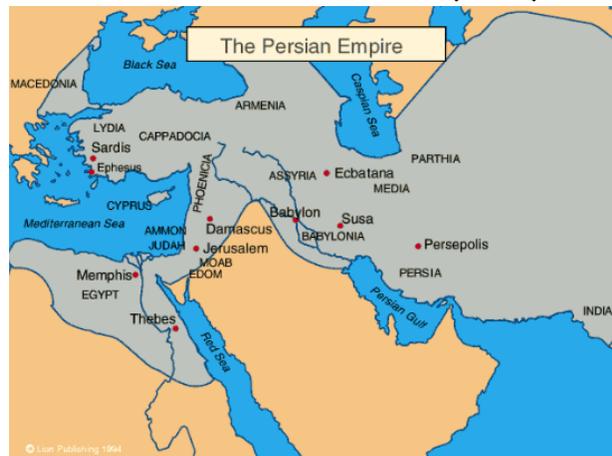
- (1) 605—In the first invasion of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar on his return from Egypt, Daniel was taken captive to Babylon.
- (2) 597—In the second invasion of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel, King Jehoiachin, and 10,000 others were taken captive. Zedekiah is made the vassal king.
- (3) 588–586—In the third invasion of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the city was destroyed, the Temple was burned, and 50,000 were taken captive to Babylon.

700s B.C. — The Assyrians



The Assyrians, whose capital was Nineveh, conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. and took those ten tribes into captivity. They did not return to the Land until 1948 A.D.

400s B.C. — The Persians (Iran)



They let the Judeans return to the Land to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, & Nehemiah



2014 A.D. — Modern Middle East Countries

Chapter 1

Jeremiah's Call to Ministry as the Prophet of God

Verses 1-3—Jeremiah's background

- The year was 627 B.C. and Jeremiah was 20 years old.
- *The son of Hilkiah, of the priests*—Jeremiah was of the family of Aaron and his father was of the priests, but there is no indication that Jeremiah ever functioned as a priest in Jerusalem or elsewhere.
- *Priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin*—Anathoth was a village about 3 miles north-east of Jerusalem. The territory of the tribe of Benjamin bordered Judah on the north side. The east/west dividing line passed beside Jerusalem (Joshua 18:15-16). Anathoth was a city allocated by Joshua to the priests (Joshua 21:15-19). Benjamin was not part of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Rather, it was part of the Southern Kingdom, which was primarily made up of the tribe of Judah.
- Although Jeremiah was born in the blood lineage of the priesthood, he began functioning as a prophet when he received *the word of the Lord*. A prophet was one through whom God spoke directly to His people. God chose the person when He began speaking to him. The prophets were spiritual advisors, primarily during the times of the kings.
- God's call of Jeremiah came in the 13th year of the reign of Judah's King Josiah. Josiah became king in 640 B.C., so the 13th year would be 627 B.C. Jeremiah continued to be God's spokesman through the time of Josiah's son King Jehoiakim, his son King Jehoiachin, and to the 5th month of the 11th year of Josiah's son King Zedekiah and the exile of Jerusalem in July-August 586 B.C. That's at least 41 years. However, 39:11–44:30 also record events of Jeremiah's ministry after the Exile began, so his ministry lasted about 50 years.

APPLICATION—Some things Jeremiah could not change about himself—his nationality (Jewish), his country (Southern Kingdom of Judah), his family (priestly bloodline), the time in which he was born (just prior to and during the Babylonian Exile). God does not hold you responsible for those things. He chose those things for you. But you will be held accountable for what you do in light of those.

Verses 4-5—The Jeremiah's appointment from God

- *The word of the Lord came to me saying*—God initiated the call. It wasn't Jeremiah's idea.
- *I formed you in the womb*—reminding us of Psalm 139:15
- *I knew you*—Not only did God form us in the womb, He knows us, who we are, what we are like, i.e., we are a person to God, not just an embryo or fetus. The word "knew" is used for a close personal relationship (Genesis 4:1; Psalm 1:6; Amos 3:2).
- *I consecrated you*—to set apart as holy. Ephesians 1:4 says, *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*. We, too, are set apart as holy to God.
- *I have appointed you a prophet to the nations*—Jeremiah had a specific assignment from God. We know this because it is written in the Word of God. Jeremiah's assignment was to be a prophet not only to Judah (chapters 2–45) but also to the Gentile nations (chapters 46–51).

APPLICATION—We do not have a specific appointed assignment that we know of. We do have general assignments, such as *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations* (Matthew 28:19); *present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God ... and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind* (Romans 12:1-2); *let us not lose heart in doing good* (Galatians 6:9); *be strong in the Lord* (Ephesians 6:10); *set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth* (Colossians 3:2); *this is the will of God, your sanctification, that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality* (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8); *... handling accurately the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15); *consider it joy ... when you encounter various trials* (James 1:2); *be of sound judgment* (1 Peter 4:7); just to mention a few— [See the Relational Concepts' *Concepts*' brochure, "Determining the Call of God for Our Lives"]

Verse 6—Jeremiah's two reasons why he was not qualified to be a spokesman for God:

1. *I do not know how to speak*—He claimed he lacked eloquence and a speaking ability. Moses gave the same excuse when God appointed him as leader of Israel (Exodus 4:10).
2. *I am a youth*—He was probably referring to his lack of experience.

APPLICATION—What’s our excuses for not doing our assignments in the previous application verses?

Verses 7-8—But the Lord said to me—Three things:

1. *Everywhere I send you, you shall go*—God would pick the audience, the ones to whom Jeremiah would speak.
2. *All that I command you, you shall speak*—God would give Jeremiah the words to speak. He didn’t need to be an eloquent speaker. He was simply to be a faithful messenger.
3. *Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you*—Jeremiah must have been aware of his times because the people did try to get rid of him several times (11:18-23; 12:6; 10:1; 16:11; 37:15-16; 38:4-6). Notice God didn’t say He would keep Jeremiah from suffering, only that He would “deliver” him.

APPLICATION—We are to be faithful witnesses of the Word of God, pray for open doors and speak with wisdom toward outsiders (Colossians 4:3-6), but God chooses the audience—it’s the Holy Spirit who convicts (16:8). Jesus said, “*Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*” And He gave us His promise, “*I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (Matthew 10:28; 28:20). God did not promise He would deliver us from suffering in this life. We have an eternal deliverance.

Verses 9-10—Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth—This was a visible manifestation of God to Jeremiah, to give Him confidence that He was really sent from God with God’s message:

1. *Behold, I have put My words in your mouth*—These would be God’s words, not Jeremiah’s.
2. *I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms*—Jeremiah was selected by God for a particular job:
 - *To pluck up and to break down*—to announce God’s judgment on Judah
 - *To destroy and to overthrow*—the nations would be completely destroyed
 - *To build and to plant*—But there would be God’s future blessing on His people

Two Confirming Visions

1. *Verses 11-12*—The blossoming almond branch

- The Hebrew word for “almond tree” is *shaged*, meaning “to watch or to wake.” It is named the “awake tree” because in Palestine it is the first tree in the year to bud and bear fruit. Its blooms precede its leaves, as the tree bursts into blossom in late January.
- God used a play-on-words to associate the almond branch with His activity. “Awake and watching” is the same word *shaged* as “almond tree.” As people “watch” the almond tree to indicate the coming harvest, so God is “watching” His Word to perform it.

APPLICATION—Jesus said, “*I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He*” (John 13:19, see also 14:29). It is the very essence of prophecy—events happen to confirm what God has said, so we’ll believe in the Living God.

2. *Verses 13-16*—The boiling pot

- The pot was boiling and it was *facing away from the north*, i.e., its contents were about to be spilled out toward the south.
- God said the pot represented disaster that will be poured out on those who live in Judah by those coming from the north.

- Although Babylon was located to the east geographically, the invading armies followed the fertile crescent north, along the Euphrates River, rather than crossing the desert.
- God made the point that He is responsible for this invasion—*For, behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north,*” declares the Lord; “and they will come.” God is sovereign even over the Gentile nations.
- These Gentile nations will *set each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem*, indicating that the city would fall to them. Jeremiah recorded the fulfillment of this prophecy in 39:2-3.
- Judah’s fall to Babylon would be God’s judgment on her for:
 - a. *They have forsaken Me*
 - b. *Have offered sacrifices to other gods*
 - c. *And worshiped the works of their own hands*—violating their covenant with God (Deuteronomy 28), worshipping the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1).

God’s Challenge to Jeremiah

Verses 17-19—“Gird up your loins—(Exodus 12:11; 2 Kings 4:29; 9:1; Luke 12:35; Ephesians 6:14; 1 Peter 1:13)—The idea of getting ready to move.

- *Speak to them all which I command you—Don’t leave any detail out*
- *Do not be dismayed before them, lest I dismay you before them—Jeremiah was to be bold in his message before the people. If he spoke without confidence or courage, then God would cause him to be alarmed.*
- *I have made you today as a fortified city, and as a pillar of iron and as walls of bronze*
- *They will fight against you*
- *But they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,” declares the Lord.*

APPLICATION—As we study through the book of Jeremiah, there will be many times when Jeremiah thought his life was in danger. And he did suffer much from the people, but he was not overcome. It was a promise specifically to Jeremiah that God made and kept as He sent Jeremiah out on a specific task to God’s specific people of Judah at the specific time in their history just before and during the Babylonian Exile. Others did not have that promise. Read Hebrews 11:36-37.

There’s a little Sunday school chorus that goes, “Every promise in the Book is mine: every chapter, every verse, every line...” That’s simply not true!! Be careful what promises you claim. Ask: Is this really a promise God is making to me?” Even if it is in the New Testament, it doesn’t necessarily mean it’s a promise for you. What happens when you claim promises that are not yours to claim and God doesn’t fulfill the promise because He never made the promise to you? Either (1) you become angry with God for not doing what you thought He said He would do or (2) you begin to question your own faith.

God’s Judgment on Judah (chapters 2–25)

These chapters contain 13 messages of judgment against Judah.

Message #1 Judah’s Faithlessness to God—Chapters 2:1–3:5

Verses 1-3—Thus says the Lord, “I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth...your following after Me in the wilderness”—When the Israelites left Egypt in the Exodus, she had times of disobedience, but generally, she was a nation who followed God (Exodus 14:31). Israel was holy to the Lord—Holy = set apart for God (Exodus 19:6; 11:31), like the first of His harvest (Leviticus 23:9-14), chosen to be the first nation to worship God. He would bring disaster against anyone who came against her.

APPLICATION—Remember as a new believer the devotion you had to God? Is there more or less devotion now?

Verses 4-8—What injustice did your fathers find in Me? That resulted in them going far from Me and walking after emptiness and to become empty?

God's Record:

- God brought them up out of Egypt
- God led them through the wilderness
- God brought them into the fruitful land

Israel's Record:

- *But you came and defiled My land*

APPLICATION—It is us who move, not God. For example, God came to Eden, but Adam was hiding.

Three Groups Led the Nation into Disobedience to God

1. *The priests did not say, Where is the Lord? And those who handle the law did not know Me*—Those who were to instruct the people about God did not themselves have a relationship with Him. See Malachi 2:7 and Matthew 23:1-36.
2. *The rulers also transgressed against Me*—Those who were to guide and protect the nation (first the judges, then the kings) did so by foreign alliances rather than trusting in God.
3. *And the prophets prophesied by Baal and walked after things that did not profit*—Instead of declaring God's words of rebuke and correction, they got the people to follow worthless idols, such as Baal (a Canaanite idol god of fertility—1 Kings 18:18-40; 2 Kings 10:18-28; 21:1-3).

APPLICATION—Don't blindly follow leadership. Think for yourself. You will appear alone before God.

Verses 9-12—"Therefore, I will yet contend with you," declares the Lord—"contend" means "to bring charges against," like a court case or lawsuit. God wants them to observe how the other lands are faithful to their idol gods (Kittim = Cypress, Kedar = northern Arabian desert tribes), who are not even real gods. But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit—but Israel has not been faithful to the one and only true God of the universe who can profit them, that is, protect them, etc.

****Memory Verse****

Verse 13—For My people have committed two evils:

1. *They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters*—Natural springs, with their cool, clear running water were the most dependable and satisfying water source in Israel (such as En Gedi).
2. *To hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*—Cisterns were large pits dug into the rock and covered with plaster. They were used to gather rainwater, which was brackish. And if the rainfall was below normal, the water would run out. Worse yet, if the cistern developed a crack, it would not hold any water at all.

To turn from a dependable, pure stream of running water to a broken, brackish cistern was idiotic, yet that is what Judah did when she turned from God to idols.

APPLICATION—What are some religious cisterns today?

Verses 14-16—The land has been laid waste and her cities destroyed by foreign invaders, especially Egypt (Memphis and Tahpanhes). A word picture of the Egyptians (who shaved off all the hair on their bodies) shaved the crown of your head (Jews did not cut their hair).

Verses 17-19—Have you not done this to yourself, by your forsaking the Lord your God, when He led you in the way? Besides forsaking God for false idol gods, they also forsook God by making alliances with other nations like Egypt and Assyria to try to guarantee safety. But no alliance could protect Judah

from the results of her sin when God brings judgment on her. Then she will *know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God.*

APPLICATION—God leads us in “the way” of His Word. When you disobey, you will reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7-8). You will have “done this to yourself.” For example, adultery will destroy your family.

Four Verbal Pictures to Describe Judah’s Spiritual State:

1. *Verse 20*—God broke off Israel’s Egyptian yoke, but instead of serving Him, they acted like spiritual prostitutes, worshipping the idols on the high hills.
2. *Verse 21*—God *planted you a choice vine*, but in spite of His care, she became *the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine*, a bad, wild vine, incapable of producing any good fruit.
3. *Verse 22*—Judah was stained before God by her iniquity, and it could not be washed off, even with lye (a strong mineral alkali) or soap (a strong vegetable alkali).
4. *Verses 23-25*—Judah was like a wild animal in heat. She could not be restrained in her lust for the foreign idol gods.

Verses 26-28—Judah credited its very existence to the idols of wood and stone, not to God, but when they were in trouble, they had the nerve to ask God to save them. But God said, “*Where are your gods which you made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of trouble.*” They had as many gods as they had cities.

APPLICATION—We often go our own way, yet in time of trouble call to God and expect Him to listen and help.

Signs of Judah’s Lack of Spiritual Responsibility to God

1. Judah Brought Charges Against God

Verses 29-30—In a reversal of verse 9 where God brought charges against Judah, here Judah brings charges against God. But God said His judgment of them is deserved because “*you have all transgressed against Me,*” declares the Lord. God’s chastening judgment was to bring about correction, but it was in vain because the people refused to respond, even killing God’s prophets.

APPLICATION—Do we blame God and not take responsibility for our own actions?

2. Judah Forgot God Days without Number

Verses 31-33—God pleads with the people to *Heed* [give serious attention to a warning or advice and take it into account when acting] *the word of the Lord*. Has God’s words been unknown, like a wilderness, or unable to be seen, like a thick darkness? So why do the people think they are free, independent of God? He gives an illustration. Can a bride forget to wear her wedding dress? *Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.* Jeremiah sarcastically concluded that Judah had become so skilled in the art of pursuing illicit love that even the worst of women could learn new secrets of seduction by observing her perverse ways.

APPLICATION—How many days did you not read God’s Word last week?

3. Judah Refused to Admit Her Sin Against God

Verses 34-35—Also, Judah shed the lifeblood of the innocent poor. If these people had been breaking in (caught as a thief), then the one responsible for the death was considered guiltless (Exodus 22:2). But Judah kept insisting, *I am innocent.* Therefore, she would experience God’s judgment, *because you say, “I have not sinned.”*

APPLICATION—Your “righteousness” will keep you from God (Matthew 9:12-13). The closer you get to the light, the more dirt you see. Paul (“least Apostle” in 1 Corinthians 15:9; “least of saints” in Ephesians 3:8; and at the end, “foremost sinner” in 1 Timothy 1:15).

4. Judah Solved Her Problems by Changing Alliances with Other Nations

Verses 36-37—Judah kept changing the way she dealt with other nations. But her new alliance with Egypt would be just as disappointing as her last alliance with Assyria because *the Lord has rejected those in whom you trust, and you shall not prosper with them.*

APPLICATION—God wants us to trust Him, not come up with other deliverances and reject Him.

Verses 3:1-5—Based on the only passage in the Law regarding divorce—when a man divorced his wife and she became another man’s wife and the second man divorced her, she was prevented by law from ever being reunited with her first husband (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Judah had separated from her Husband, the Lord God. She lived as a harlot with many lovers. “*Yet you turn to Me,*” declares the Lord—in time of trouble (end of 2:27). You can’t have it both ways. Judah could not serve the idols and also turn to God.

APPLICATION—James called this being a “double-minded” person (James 1:7-8).

She has violated the Land. She has played the harlot with idols on every hill. *By the roads you have sat for them,* waiting eagerly for lovers, a type of activity commonly done by cult prostitutes (Genesis 38:13-14; 20-21). Wickedness, *like an Arab in the desert,* waiting to plunder caravans.

Therefore, God judged Judah by withholding the showers and spring rain. Yet Judah *refused to be ashamed* (see 2:35), refused to admit her sin before God. Judah called to God, saying, “*My Father, Thou art the friend of my youth? Will He be angry forever?*”—Judah wanted rain. She asked God to stop being angry. Her words were hollow cries designed merely to manipulate God. *You have spoken*—Her talk was of friendship, but *you have done evil things*—her actions never changed. *You have had your way*—a way that turned her back on God (2:27).

APPLICATION—You say you follow God—but where are you, what are you doing and saying on Saturday night? You want God to listen to your prayers, but do you listen to what He says in His Word? Do you just “talk” Christianity, or do you “live” Christianity?

Message #2 God’s Call to Repentance—Chapters 3:6–6:30

In light of Judah’s sin (Message #1), God called the nation to repentance (Message #2).

Verse 6—in the days of Josiah the king—Early in Jeremiah’s ministry.

The Call to Repentance (3:6–4:4)

Verses 3:6-11—The story of two sisters: the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Faithless Israel committed spiritual adulteries with idols *on every high hill and under every green tree.* God waited for her to repent, but she didn’t. So He sent her away and gave her *a writ of divorce.*

[The northern 10 tribes of Israel went into exile to Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:5-20) and did not return to the land until 1948 A.D.] Meanwhile, her *treacherous sister Judah* did not learn from Israel’s fall. She also *polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.* But Judah added hypocrisy to her sins. *Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception.* She pretended to return to the Lord, so God said, *Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.*

APPLICATION—Jesus also spoke against the hypocrites (Matthew 23:3f).

Verses 12-19—Jeremiah paused in his condemnation of sin to offer a message of repentance and hope to the Northern Kingdom. God is gracious, *only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God*. If they would return to God, God would bless them, they would increase, and He *will bring you to Zion* (Jerusalem). Now God talks of 8 blessings of the Millennial Kingdom:

1. *I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding* (compare to 2:8).
2. No more ark of the covenant (which represented the presence of God)—it won't even come to mind.
3. *They shall call Jerusalem "The Throne of the Lord."* God's throne will be there instead of the ark.
4. *All the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord.*
5. *Nor shall they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart.*
6. *The house of Judah will walk **with** the house of Israel, and they will come together*
7. *to the land I gave your fathers as an inheritance.*
8. God said, *You shall call Me, "My Father," and not turn away from following Me.*

APPLICATION—There is an earthly future for Israel!

Verse 20—The roadblock to restoration was Israel, not God.

Verses 21-25—It seems that Jeremiah continues to look into the future when Israel will repent and return to God. They will admit the idols are a deception, and they will lie down in shame and humiliation before God. They will admit *we have sinned against the Lord our God*, and since the beginning of their nation, *we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God*. And God *will heal your faithlessness*.

Verses 4:1-2—God promised to respond positively if Israel and Judah would return to Him. However, the repentance had to be genuine and demonstrated by the act of putting away the idols.

APPLICATION—What John the Baptist called "fruits" of repentance (Matthew 3:8).

Verses 3-4—Jeremiah used two metaphors to show the need for repentance before God's blessing can come:

1. Farming—break up the unused ground, get out the thorns, before the seed can be sown.
2. Circumcision—Physical circumcision was an outward profession of allegiance to God [a sign of the covenant between the Jews and God—Genesis 17:9-14; see also Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 9:25-26; Romans 2:28-29]. But repentance needed to be inward—*remove the foreskins of your heart*. Unless Judah would truly repent (not just pretend to), *My [God's] wrath [would] go forth like fire and burn with none to quench it*.

APPLICATION—The same for us—repentance needs to start in your heart.

The Warning of Coming Judgment (4:5-31)

Verses 4:5-9—What will God's wrath look like? *I am bringing evil from the north, and great destruction*. Although Babylon is due east from Judah, rather than cross the Arabian Desert, the invaders would go the northern route of the Fertile Crescent, along the Euphrates River, and invade from the north. People in the countryside will flee *into the fortified cities*. Yet *your cities will be ruins without inhabitant*. The *heart of the king...will fail; and the priests will be appalled, and the prophets will be astounded* when this happens.

Verse 10—Jeremiah’s response to God is, “*Thou hast utterly deceived this people...saying, “You will have peace” whereas a sword touches the throat.* In fact, God continually warned the people of the coming judgment/invasion. Through His prophets He said there would be no peace. So the interpretation must refer to the false prophets, whom we know were prophesying “peace” (Jeremiah 6:14). Therefore, Jeremiah must be referring to the fact that God allowed these false prophets to deceive the people in order to bring about His judgment on them for turning away from God and worshipping the idols.

APPLICATION—God sometimes deceives people so they won’t believe (1 Kings 22:19-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:11). Why? To bring about His plan. Still, people are responsible for not being deceived because the truth is available.

Verses 11-12—Jeremiah returned to God’s announcement of the coming invasion of Judah by the Babylonians. God compared the armies to *a scorching wind from the bare heights in the wilderness in the direction of the daughter of My people.* The western wind from over the Mediterranean Sea is refreshing and mild and helps with the winnowing (separating the grain from its husks/chaff by tossing it in the air and letting the wind blow through it). The hot, dry, east wind that blows in from the desert is not used to winnow because it is too strong and withers the vegetation (Genesis 41:6; Jonah 4:8). Ezekiel also compared Babylon’s invasion to the coming of the east wind (Ezekiel 17:10; 19:12).

Verses 13-14—Jeremiah now compares Babylon to an approaching storm. God again appeals to Judah to repentance. *Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved [from the Babylonian destruction].* Notice that it is not just their actions but also their *wicked thoughts lodging within* them.

APPLICATION—Satan fell when God saw his thoughts (Isaiah 14:13). God will judge our thoughts (1 Corinthians 4:4).

Verses 15-18—The approach of the Babylonian army would be proclaimed from Dan (a city on the northern border of Israel) and from Mt. Ephraim (the hills to the north of Jerusalem). They are coming to Jerusalem. Why? “*Because she has rebelled against Me,*” declares the Lord. Judah herself is responsible for the coming invasion. *Your ways and your deeds have brought these things to you. This is your evil. How bitter! How it has touched your heart!*”

Verses 19-22—Jeremiah responded to the news of the coming invasion by crying out in anguish. His heart was pounding as he thought of the coming disaster. But God says of Judah, “*My people are foolish, they know Me not; they are stupid children, and they have no understanding of God or His ways.* In a reversal of Proverbs 1:2-3, the people are *shrewd [intelligent skill] to do evil, but to do good they do not know.*

APPLICATION—It’s not what you do in Christ’s name but whether you know Him (Matthew 7:23).

Verses 23-28—Jeremiah pictured God’s coming judgment as an undoing of Creation. Judah would be *formless and void* (see Genesis 1:2), there would be *no light* (Genesis 1:3-5), the mountains would be quaking, there would be no man, and the birds would flee. *The fruitful land* (God’s will, His desire) *was a wilderness* (God’s plan, judgment for disobedience, God keeping His Word of the Mosaic Covenant). Although *the whole land shall be a desolation, yet I will not execute a complete destruction.* There is hope in judgment because God will leave a remnant. Nevertheless, judgment will come, *for this the earth shall mourn.* Then God makes a strong sovereignty statement: *I have spoken, I have purposed, and I will not change My mind, nor will I turn from it.* Later, several times, God tells Jeremiah not to pray about it and that even if Moses and Samuel were to pray about it, God would not change His mind (15:1). Judgment is coming.

Verses 29-31—As the invading army approached Judah, the people in *every city flee; they go into the thickets and climb among the rocks.* However, in Jerusalem, the people tried to act like a harlot to be attractive to the Babylonians. They *dress[ed] in scarlet...decorate[d] with ornaments of gold...enlarge[d]*

your eyes with paint. But it won't work. *In vain you make yourself beautiful; your lovers [Assyria and Egypt] despise you [no help].* As the Babylonians approached, Jerusalem cried out in pain, *as of a woman in labor...stretching out her hands* for help. But there was no help. *Murderers [the Babylonians]* were coming.

The Reasons for the Coming Judgment (chapter 5)

Verses 1-3—God sent Jeremiah out to *roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem.* He was to see *if you can find a man, if there is one who does justice, who seeks truth.* Reminds us of Abraham's plea to God about Sodom in Genesis 18:22f. If Jeremiah can find one, *then I will pardon her [Jerusalem].* But Jeremiah could not find even one. Instead he found:

1. Hypocrisy, they said, *"As the Lord lives,"* but *they swear falsely.* They said the right words, but they were lies.
2. *They refused to take correction.*
3. *They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent.*

APPLICATION—God looks for one person who will stand for Him—Noah (Genesis 6:5-6), Abraham looking at Sodom (Genesis 18:22-33), Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, wrote that God said, *"I searched for a man among them who should ... stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one"* (22:30). In your family, among your friends, God is looking for one person to stand for Him and His righteousness. Does He see you or does He find no one?

Verses 4-6—Jeremiah thought it was because they were poor that *they do not know the way of the Lord.* So he decided, *"I will go to the great and will speak to them for they know the way of the Lord. But they too, with one accord, have broken the yoke..."* He expected that the leadership (priests, prophets, kings) would know to follow God, but they didn't. So God would judge the leaders and the people for their sin against Him.

APPLICATION—The more you have received from God, the more it's expected for you to know "the way of the Lord."

Verses 7-9—God asks two questions of Judah:

1. *Why should I pardon you?*
2. *Shall I not punish you?*

God makes the answers obvious:

1. *Your sons have forsaken Me*
2. *And sworn by those who are not gods*
3. *When I had led them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the harlot's house (idolatry)*
4. *They were well-fed lusty horses, each one neighing after his neighbor's wife (adultery)*

So God would punish Judah for her idolatry and her adultery.

APPLICATION—God does not overlook sin. His justice demands punishment for sin. Christ had to die as punishment for our sins in order to satisfy God's justice.

Verses 10-13—God's choice vine had become a wild vine (2:21). So God called His invaders to *Go through her vine rows and destroy. But do not execute a complete destruction; strip away her branches, for they are not the Lord's.*

APPLICATION—So as at the flood, Sodom, and the Second Coming, the evil ones would be taken, stripped away like dead branches, and God's faithful remnant is left.

Both Israel and Judah *lied about the Lord and said:*

1. *"Not He, or He is not,"* which seems to be a denial of God and His power.

2. *“Misfortune will not come upon us.”* Very similar to what Satan told Eve, “Surely you will not die” when God had said, “Surely you will die.” It’s a denial of the consequences of sin. And a denial that God has the power to carry out the judgment.
3. God’s *prophets* (such as Jeremiah) *are as wind* (full of hot air!) and that *the word is not in them*, that is, they are not speaking God’s words when they prophesied punishment and doom. Therefore, *“thus it will be done to them!”*

APPLICATION—The same message we hear today—A denial of God, a denial of the consequences of our sin, and a denial of God’s Word.

Verses 14-19—Therefore, thus says the Lord...because you have spoken this word—consequences of their own words. God says about His words, I am making My words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it will consume them. God’s words coming out of Jeremiah’s mouth will consume them (compared to the “hot wind” they thought his words were in v. 13), that is, His words about the Babylonian invasion will happen exactly as He said they would.

His description of Babylon: *from afar...an enduring nation...an ancient nation...a nation whose language you do not know...all of them are mighty men...they will devour your harvest, your food, your sons, your daughters, your flocks, your herds, your vines, your fig trees, and your fortified cities in which you trust.*

Yet...I will not make you a complete destruction—God will leave a remnant in the land.

When they say, “Why...?” then say to them, “As you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours—the reason for the Babylonian Exile.

Verses 20-31—Judah does not see God, hear God, fear God, or tremble in His presence—a God who is so powerful that He controls the boundaries of the sea, and the waves cannot go any farther than He decrees, no matter how mighty they are. He gives the spring and autumn rain. He makes the harvest happen.

APPLICATION—Again, a reminder of Romans 1:18-32. “Even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (v. 21).

The sins of the people:

1. Have turned their hearts away from God
2. *Have withheld good from you*—In the Mosaic Covenant (Deuteronomy 28), God promised physical blessing on the Land if the people would obey Him, and cursing if they turned away from Him.

Wicked men are found among My people:

1. *They set a trap, they catch men*
2. *Their houses are full of deceit*
3. *They have become great and rich...fat...sleek—moral evil does not hinder prosperity*
4. *They excel in deeds of wickedness*
5. *They do not plead the cause of the orphan*
6. *They do not defend the rights of the poor*

APPLICATION—Paul told the Ephesian elders, *“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert...”* (Acts 20:29-30). Perhaps the most deceptive thing the enemy can do is have a traitor among our midst to lead us away from the truth. But you are

responsible to be on the alert and not be deceived. Consider yourself warned!! When you are with believers, especially if you are receiving teaching, is the time to be most alert.

An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land—

- *The prophets prophesy falsely*—they say theirs are the words of God, but they aren't
- *The priests rule on their own authority*—not God's authority of the Mosaic Law
- *And My people love it so!*

But what will you do at the end of it?

APPLICATION—Paul warns, “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths*” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). The warning is there for us today! See also Romans 13:18; Galatians 1:8; Jude 16; and Psalm 55:21.

The Certainty of the Coming Judgment (chapter 6)

Verses 1-3—Flee for safety—

- *Benjamin*—just north of Jerusalem
- *From the midst of Jerusalem—*
- *Blow a [warning] trumpet in Tekoa*—about 11 miles SE of Jerusalem (Amos 1:1)
- *Raise a signal over Beth-haccerem*—a vantage point just south of Jerusalem

For evil looks down from the north—the Babylonian invasion coming from the north. The destruction will be so complete that the area will be pasture land for shepherds (Nehemiah 1:3; 2:3, 11-17). [The hills from which the shepherds saw the angels at Christ's birth, 500 years later.]

Verses 4-6a—The eager Babylonians wanted to attack at noon, but weren't prepared, so they will attack at night. They will cut down trees and *cast up a siege against Jerusalem*.

Verses 6b-9—Jerusalem was punished for her oppression. *As a well keeps its waters fresh, so she keeps fresh her wickedness*. A cistern is a hole that collects rainwater and becomes stagnant over time. A well, however, has water seeping into it from the water table, so although it is also a hole, its waters are fresh. So wickedness keeps seeping into Jerusalem. The Babylonians will glean as a grape gatherer gleans grapes from the vine.

Verses 10-15—Over three dozen times in Jeremiah it is stated that the people would not listen to Jeremiah's warning of the coming destruction. *Their ears are closed* (lit. “uncircumcised”). They found God's Word to be offensive. *The word of the Lord has become a reproach to them; they have no delight in it*.

Therefore, God's wrath was to be poured out on all elements of society—from the children to the old, and everyone in between. The people would lose their houses, their fields, and their wives to the invaders. The wickedness is in all levels of society—from *the least of them even to the greatest of them*, and in the leadership, *from the prophet even to the priest*. *Everyone deals falsely* (lies).

APPLICATION—It was recently reported about our society that for the first time, people are lying today for no reason. Up to now, they might have lied to keep from hurt someone's feelings, to avoid getting in trouble, etc. But now it's common, especially among college-age people, to lie for absolutely no reason.

They [the prophets and priests] have healed the brokenness of My people—refers to the people's spiritual problem and its spiritual and physical effects (see 8:11, 22; 10:19; 14:17; 15:18; 30:12, 15)—*superficially* (only seeming to be real, affecting the surface of something). How did they do that? By *saying, “Peace, peace,” but there is no peace*. More lies (see 8:11; 23:17). God had not given them that

message—in fact, God was telling them just the opposite. And the people loved hearing what they wanted to hear (5:31; see also Romans 16:17-18). They were not seeking the truth.

They were not even ashamed at all [of the abomination they have done—lying to the people]; they did not even know how to blush—they were so hardened, they had no shame about deceiving the people, even when their lies were exposed. But God promised that these false leaders would fall when the city was destroyed (8:12).

APPLICATION—False teachers always give positive answers and short-term solutions.

Verses 16-21—Judah strayed from the ancient paths, where the good way is. They were to walk in it. Their history of Abraham, Moses, David, etc. were examples of those who obeyed God. It's where you shall find rest for your soul. But they said, "We will not walk in it." God also set watchmen over you...but they said, "We will not listen."

APPLICATION—They had examples of those in the past who obeyed God and they had prophets (especially Jeremiah) who warned them now, but they refused to turn to God in repentance and obedience. We have that in God's Word—examples and warnings. We are without excuse when we refuse to turn to God in repentance and obedience.

Therefore—God said, "I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their plans, because they have not listened to My words." The Babylonian Exile was the result or "fruit" of their devices. Part of those devices was to bring elaborate sacrifices to God. God asked, "For what purpose..." They were not the result of a love for God. So God said, "Your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me."

APPLICATION—See also Isaiah 1:11-15; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 10:1-2. Religious observances themselves are not pleasing to God—even if it is the sacrifices He prescribed in the Mosaic Law. Why? Because He wants your heart, not your religious functions. For example, in Malachi 1:6-12, God told how the people were bringing sacrifices, but they were lame and blind and sick animals. They gave God the leftovers and kept the best for themselves. God said, "To this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My Word" (Isaiah 66:1-2).

Therefore, thus says the Lord, "Behold, I am laying stumbling blocks before this people." This probably refers to the Babylonians because that is what He talks about in the next verse.

Verses 22-26—Jeremiah concluded his second message by again pointing out the enemy coming from the North. They are cruel and have no mercy as they come against you, O daughter of Zion (Jerusalem). As the people hear of the Babylonians' advance, their anguish will be pain as of a woman in childbirth. They will be afraid to go out on the roads. They will mourn as for an only son.

Verses 27-30—God had made Jeremiah an assayer and a tester among My people, that you may know and assay their way. An assayer examines and analyzes something. A tester uses a difficult situation or event to provide information about someone or something. The people are the metal. When Jeremiah gathered information and analyzed the nation, he concluded all of them are stubbornly rebellious. God tried to refine them through judgment, but in vain the refining goes on.... The wicked are not separated out in the refining process, so the nation was like rejected silver—because the Lord has rejected them.

APPLICATION—1 Corinthians 5 addresses a similar issue. God said, "Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges." We are to examine and analyze the believers we associate with and "you are not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person ... not even to eat with such a one." They are to be "... removed from your midst." The reasons are two: (1) For the person's own good. If they are no longer part of your association, perhaps they will repent of their immorality and turn back to God. (2) "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven." The person's immorality will influence others toward immorality. So for their own good and

for the protection of the rest of the believers, that person needs to be removed. But don't be surprised if the person might be like Judah and be "*stubbornly rebellious ... and in vain the refining goes on.*" [Of course, the person should be confronted with their sin and urged to repent—and this should be done by the body of believers the person is associated with—Matthew 18:15-20.]

Message #3 False Religion and Its Punishment—Chapters 7-10

605 B.C., about 22 years after the last message, Jeremiah is 42 years old. This message is often known as Jeremiah's Temple Address. It focuses on God's punishment of the people because of their false religion.

Verses 1-8—God told Jeremiah to *stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim there this word to all you of Judah, who enter by these gates to worship the Lord!* The message is the same as he has been saying:

1. *Amend your ways and your deeds*—that is, repent
2. *Do not trust in deceptive words*—from the false prophets and priests
3. *Truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor*
4. *Do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow*—the helpless in society who could not easily protect themselves if wronged (Deuteronomy 14:29; 16:11; 24:19)
5. *Do not shed innocent blood in this place* (Deuteronomy 19:10-13; 21:1-9)
6. *Nor walk after other gods to your own ruin*

Three times they said, "*... the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord...*" Evidently they were thinking that God would not allow anything to happen to His Temple, that it was a sort of good luck charm that would protect them from any attack. But God did not value buildings over obedience to the covenant. If they would repent and obey God, *then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers...* Instead, they *are trusting in deceptive words* that the Temple would protect them—but God said through Jeremiah, *to no avail*—being in the Temple will not protect them from God's wrath.

Verses 9-15—The people commit sins such as *steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, offer sacrifices to Baal, walk after other gods*—then they come to the Temple, and *stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, "We are delivered!"—that you may do all these abominations?* Paul said, *are to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be!* (Romans 6:1). Being God's people is not a license to safely continue to live in sin. Being God's people means being obedient to God. Non-repentant sinners pollute God's Temple. *This house...has become a den of robbers*—just as it was at the time of Jesus (Matthew 21:12-13). Just as Jesus saw it, so God said, "*I have seen it*"—There are no secrets from God.

APPLICATION—Today we are the Temple of God, where His name dwells. Do we think we can live in sin and say, "It's okay, I'm saved, I'm forgiven." God knows what you are bringing into His Temple—your body, soul, and mind.

They think they are safe in the Temple—so God told them, "*But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first.*" It is a town about 20 miles directly north of Jerusalem, in the hills. It's where the Tabernacle stood for about 350 years when the Israelites first lived in the Land (Joshua 18:1; Judges 18:31; 1 Samuel 1:3; 4:3-4). It's where the story of the little boy Samuel and the priest Eli occurs. They were to *see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.* The Bible doesn't give us the specifics of what happened at Shiloh, but after the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant—when the people were doing a similar thing, using the Ark as a good luck charm in the battle (1 Samuel 4:10-11)—the priests evidently fled to Nob, on the northern edge of Jerusalem (1 Samuel 22:11) and Shiloh was abandoned. Archeology indicates that the village of Shiloh was destroyed about that time (1050 B.C.), probably by the Philistines, and it continues to be a ruins to this day.

Now, because you have done all these things...and I spoke to you...but you did not hear... therefore:

1. I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust [they made the temple a sort of good luck charm and were trusting it instead of trusting God], and to the place which I gave you...as I did to Shiloh—deserted and a ruins
2. I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out...all the offspring of Ephraim [northern kingdom of Israel]—taken into exile.

Verses 16-20—God told Jeremiah to not pray for Judah because He will not hear (that is, respond) to Jeremiah’s prayer (see also 11:14; 15:1). Judah’s sin is so bad now, no one can appeal to God to stop the coming judgment. God gives an example of their sin: whole families were acting together—*the children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes* [impressed with the goddess’ image or in the symbol shape of the moon or stars] *for the queen of heaven* [a female astral deity worshipped primarily by the women but with the husbands’ support—some of these were the Canaanite fertility goddess Astarte and the Babylonian goddess Ishtar]. They also *pour libations* [wine or oil poured out as a religious offering] to them.

They did this to spite God, but their false worship did not damage God. The people would bear the consequences of their actions—*Is it not themselves they spite.... Therefore thus says the Lord God, “Behold, My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man...beast...trees...fruit...it will burn and not be quenched.*

Verses 21-29—God told Judah to do their burnt offerings and sacrifices, but God *did not... command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt....* What He did command them was, *Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people.* The first thing we see at Mt. Sinai is the Ten Commandments. But instead of obeying God’s commands, they *went backward and not forward.* But God did not give up on them. Since the day they came out of Egypt, God *sent you all My servants the prophets*, to try to get the people to obey God, *yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they did evil more than their fathers.*

APPLICATION—God did not save you to be religious but to obey Him.

Jeremiah was to do two things:

1. God’s told His prophet Jeremiah, now *you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you.* God’s truth is to be proclaimed whether they believe it or not (Romans 1).
2. Jeremiah is to *take up a lamentation...for the Lord has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath.*

Verses 30-34—“*For the sons of Judah have done that which is evil in My sight,*” declares the Lord...

1. *They have set their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it—*2 Kings 21:3f; 2 Chronicles 33:3-5, 7; Jeremiah 32:34, 35; Ezekiel 7:20; Daniel 9:27; 11:31.
2. *They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom—*High places were used to worship idols. The Hinnom Valley is just below the city, on the south side. It’s where the refuse from the Temple sacrifices and the garbage were continuously burned. Jesus looked out over this valley called Gehenna (Greek word for Hebrew word ge-hinnom) and compared hell to this “Lake of Fire” (Matthew 5:22, 29-30). “Topheth” possibly came from the Hebrew word for “oven” or “cook stove.”
3. *To burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind—*horrible child sacrifice was made to these idols (2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Jeremiah 19:5). Not only did God never command such a thing, He would not even think of such a horrible thing for people to do. God’s law protected the children. Jesus loved the children.

APPLICATION—“evil in My sight,” declares the Lord—this is the essence of all sin. Sin, by definition, is what is evil in God’s sight. Romans 3:23 fall short of the glory of God.

This valley will one day be re-named *the valley of the Slaughter* because there will be so many dead bodies when Babylon attacks Jerusalem, there will be no place to bury them. So they will pile up in this valley, where they will be food for the birds. And the voice of joy and gladness will cease in Jerusalem, *for the land will become a ruin.*

APPLICATION—Similar to the Tribulation, where the blood will be as high as a horse’s bridle for 200 miles (Revelation 14:20).

Verses 8:1-3—At that time—when Babylon attacks, even the dead bones of those who died before the fall of Jerusalem will not escape. They will be brought out of their graves and exposed to the elements they had once worshipped—the sun, the moon, and to all the host of heaven, which they have loved, and which they have served...and which they have worshipped. They will not be re-buried but they will be as dung on the face of the ground—total disgrace. And those alive will want to die rather than live.

Verses 4-7—God asked a series of questions to expose Judah’s stubborn refusal to turn back to Him.

1. *Do men fall and not get up again?*
2. *Does one turn away and not repent?*

Why then has this people, Jerusalem, turned away...in continual apostasy...hold fast to deceit...refuse to return?

God is listening and heard—but what He heard was *not right* and *no man repented of his wickedness, saying, “What have I done?”* Instead, *like a horse charging into the battle* (quick and with energy), they charge into their own course, away from God, away from repentance. Even the birds of the sky *observe the time of their migration*, they know when it’s time to return north or return south, *But My people do not know the ordinance of the Lord*, that it was time to return to her God. Judah had even less wisdom than a bird!

Verses 8-13—Judah said, “We are wise” because the law of the Lord is with us. However, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie. They perverted the law of God. In doing so, they have rejected the word of the Lord, so what kind of wisdom do they have?

This rejection of God’s law was *from the least even to the greatest...from the prophet even to the priest.* While God’s prophet Jeremiah was continually saying Babylon and destruction was coming, the false prophets were lying, saying, “*Peace, peace,*” *But there is no peace.* Of course, these are just words—*they heal the brokenness of...My people superficially.* It made them feel better for a little while. But it was a lie. They thought all this was not serious, when, in fact, it was terminal!

APPLICATION—What things make people feel superficially better but don’t address their sin and need for repentance?

They were not ashamed of this lie. In verses 10b-12, Jeremiah repeats 6:13-15. *They did not know how to blush...therefore...at the time of their punishment they shall be brought down, declares the Lord.* And God would punish the nation by taking from the harvest that He had given them.

Verses 14-17—Jeremiah pictures the coming invasion. The people would flee to the cities, but it would do no good. There will be terror as Babylon comes into the country from the north, by Dan. He compares it to God sending poisonous snakes who will bite them.

Verses 18–9:2—The people are crying from the distant land of Babylon. They ask, “Is the Lord not in Zion?” But the Exile is not a result of an absence of God, it’s because the people *provoked Me with their*

graven images, with foreign idols. There is *no balm in Gilead* to heal the people. “Balm” was the resin of the storax tree that was used medicinally. Gilead, east of the Jordan River, was famous for its healing balm (Genesis 37:25; Jeremiah 46:11; 51:8; Ezekiel 27:17). Jeremiah’s response is:

1. *That my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*
2. *That I had in the desert a wayfarers’ lodging place; that I might leave my people and go from them!*

Verses 3-6—Ten things God says against Judah:

1. *They bend their tongue like a bow*—not straight arrow, which usually describes truth
2. *Lies and not truth prevail in the land*
3. *They proceed from evil to evil*
4. *“They do not know Me,” declares the Lord*
5. They cannot *trust any brother because every brother deals craftily* (lit. “like Jacob” —a play on words)
6. *Every neighbor goes about as a slanderer*
7. *Everyone deceives his neighbor and does not speak the truth*
8. *They have taught their tongue to speak lies*
9. *They weary themselves committing iniquity*
10. *“Through deceit they refuse to know me” declares the Lord*

Verses 7-9—Knowing Judah’s sin, God asks, “*What else can I do?*” ... “*Shall I not punish them for these things?*” ... “*On a nation such as this shall I not avenge Myself?*”

APPLICATION—Jesus speaks the truth and is the Truth (John 14:6). God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). Satan is the father of lies and deception (John 8:44). Deception is a theme we see over and over in Jeremiah. What makes a person be deceived? Not knowing God, speaking evil of your neighbor, greed, being satisfied with a superficial solution, a pattern of lying you teach yourself to do, it’s part of the path of evil to evil.

Message #4 Judah’s Broken Covenant with God—Chapters 11–12

This message is about 6 years after Jeremiah began his ministry, making him now 27 in 620 B.C. This was the year the Temple was repaired as part of King Josiah’s reforms, and a copy of the Law was discovered in the renovation (2 Chronicles 34:14-33). Jeremiah called upon the people to heed their covenant with God.

Verses 1-5—From the Mosaic Covenant God made with their *forefathers in the day that I brought them out of Egypt*, God mentioned, *Cursed is the man who does not heed the words of this covenant* (Deuteronomy 27). If the people would obey the commands from God, then He would *give them a land...* (Deuteronomy 28).

APPLICATION—From the Garden of Eden on, God has given man a choice to obey Him or not.

Verses 6-8—Jeremiah was to *proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem*. God warned the Israelites over and over to keep the covenant. Yet they did not obey but *walked, each one, in the stubbornness of his evil heart. Therefore, I brought on them all the words of this covenant*.

APPLICATION—God keeps His word literally!!

Verses 9-13—The people *have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors who refused to hear My words*. They broke God’s covenant. They went after other gods. Therefore, God was bringing disaster upon them. *They will not be able to escape. And though they will cry to Me, yet I will not listen to them.*