

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.*

Their prayers would do no good. So then they will cry to their idol gods, *but they surely will not save them in the time of their disaster.*

APPLICATION—They “refused to hear My words ...” so God said, “... though they cry to Me, yet I will not listen to them.” Why should God listen to our words if we don’t listen to His Word?

Verses 14-17—God told Jeremiah:

1. God will not call off the judgment, no matter how much they or Jeremiah pray about it—*Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not listen when they call to Me.*
2. Evidently, some of the people in Judah went to the Temple to sacrifice, thinking that would prevent the judgment, but they didn’t turn from their evil deeds—*What right has My beloved in My house when she has done many vile deeds?*
3. God planted Israel a *green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form* but now *He has kindled a fire on it, i.e., brought judgment.* All because they were *offering up sacrifices to Baal.*

APPLICATION—Neither prayer, nor sacrifices, nor the fact that God Himself was the One who gave birth to Judah would keep God from bringing disaster upon her. Why? Because she “provoked Me” [God] by offering up sacrifices to Baal. James said, “*The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much*” (5:16). It’s no guarantee or a genie-in-a-bottle formula, but it doesn’t say the prayer of evil men can accomplish much.

Verses 18-20—The people responded to Jeremiah’s warning by plotting to kill him. There are 8 major trials for Jeremiah: (1) death threats—11:18-23; (2) isolation—15:17; (3) beaten and in stocks—20:2; (4) arrested—26:8; (5) scroll destroyed—36:1-32; (6) in dungeon—37:15; (7) starvation—38:1-6; and (8) put in chains—40:1.

At first, Jeremiah *did not know that they had devised plots against him.* They said, *Let us destroy the tree [Jeremiah] with its fruit [his prophecy messages], and let us cut him off from the land of the living [kill him].* But *the Lord made it known to me.* So Jeremiah prayed, *O Lord...let me see Thy vengeance on them. For to Thee have I committed my cause.*

Verses 21-23—God heard and answered Jeremiah’s prayer. Concerning the men of Anathoth (Jeremiah’s hometown—1:1), *who seek your life,* God said they would not succeed and, *I am about to punish them! ...I will bring disaster on the men of Anathoth and a remnant will not be left to them.*

Verses 12:1-6—Jeremiah acknowledges *righteous art Thou, O Lord,* but he has a question for God. *Why has the way of the wicked prospered* when God was angry with their sin? (see also Job 21:7; Psalm 73:3-5, 12; 94:3). It must be God’s sovereignty—*Thou has planted them, they have also taken root; they grow, they have even produced fruit* (materially). God is *near to their lips but far from their mind* (Matthew 7:23). In contrast, Jeremiah says that God knows him, sees him, and *dost examine my heart’s attitude toward Thee.* So Jeremiah wants God to *drag them off like sheep for the slaughter* (their having treated him *like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter*—11:19).

God had sent a famine on the land causing *the vegetation of the countryside to wither.* Both the righteous and the unrighteous suffered in this judgment. Yet even in this difficult time, the wicked seemed to do better than the righteous (12:1). Rather than repent, they claimed that God *will not see our latter ending.*

If Jeremiah thought the current drought situation was hard, how was he going to do when the Babylonians invaded? God gives two metaphors in response to Jeremiah’s question:

1. *If you have run with footmen [now] and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses [the future]?*
2. *If you fall down in a land of peace [now], how will you do in the thicket of the Jordan [future]?*

APPLICATION—Paul learned to rejoice, be content, not be anxious “in whatever circumstances I am” (Philippians 4:4-20). Whatever is in your life today, use it to learn and grow because tomorrow may be worse. If you get tired, lose faith, are anxious, etc. about today, what will you do if it gets really bad? Jeremiah was complaining about surviving today, and God said, “How will Jeremiah survive when the Babylonians invade and it gets really bad?”

Even Jeremiah’s own family *dealt treacherously with you*. They must have joined the men of Jeremiah’s hometown Anathoth (11:21). So God told Jeremiah, *Do not believe them, although they may say nice things to you*. Outward they were nice to him, but really they were against him.

APPLICATION—Don’t be deceived by those close to you just because they are close to you. You may think, “Cathy’s family and friends deceive her,” while thinking your family and friends don’t do that to you. Why do you think that? Because they are your family. Bad reason!

Verses 7-13—God resumes His announcement of judgment from 11:17, which was interrupted by His revealing the plot to kill Jeremiah in 11:18–12:6.

- *I have forsaken My house* [the Temple]
- *I have abandoned My inheritance* [the Land]
- *I have given the beloved of My soul* [the people of Judah]

Into the hand of her enemies. This was not from a hardened heart of a mean king. Judah was God’s *beloved*. But Judah became *like a lion...she has roared against Me* [with Baal worship]. *Therefore I have come to hate her*.

APPLICATION—This tells us a lot about God. God came to hate His own beloved people because they, like a lion, roared against God. Paul wrote, “*Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be!*” (Romans 6:1-2). John wrote, “*The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*” (1 John 2:4). Paul also wrote about an immoral man among the Corinthian believers, “*Remove the wicked man from among yourselves*” (1 Corinthians 5:13). Just because you are a professing believer doesn’t mean you can shake your fist at God and His commandments. For example, Paul wrote, “*... instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God ... abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God ... he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you*” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8). Don’t live your life in such a way that God comes to hate you!

Judah became like a *speckled bird of prey*, a mutated bird, which is surrounded by the other birds *against her on every side ... to devour*. God is bringing the other nations against her.

Many shepherds have ruined My vineyard—the priests and false prophets (5:31) have ruined Judah. *The sword of the Lord* (Babylonians) is coming to devour one end of the land to the other.

Verses 14-17—*Thus says the Lord concerning all My wicked neighbors who strike at the inheritance*. They uprooted Israel and Judah from its land, God will uproot His people from their land and return her to her own land (Millennial Kingdom). Then the nations who *learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name* will survive, *but if they will not listen, then I will uproot that nation, ... and destroy it*.

Message #5 Visual Aids—Chapter 13

The people are not responding to Jeremiah’s messages, so God has Jeremiah begin to use parables, which were designed to gain their curiosity and interest. Later Ezekiel was commanded to use a similar technique in his ministry in Babylon (Ezekiel 4:1—5:4).

Verses 1-7—Jeremiah was to buy and wear a linen waistband (belt). The fact that it was made of linen, the material used for the priestly raiment (Leviticus 6:4), would have held some significance to those observing it. [Remember, Jeremiah is from a family of priests living in Anathoth, a city given by Joshua to the Levitical priests—1:1; Joshua 21:18.] God told him, *do not put it in water*.

Then God came to him a second time and told him to *Take the waistband...which is around your waist, ...go to Parah and hide it there in a crevice of the rock.*

- “Parah” is usually translated “Euphrates,” and many feel that Jeremiah walked the 700 mile round trip to the Euphrates in Babylon to bury this belt. Then he was told “after many days” to go dig it up, which would be another 350 mile journey. Another problem is that this was to be a visual for the people. No one would see him do it if it was happening 350 miles away, in the land of the coming invaders.
- “Parah” is also a village about 3 miles northeast of Anathoth in the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:21, 23). A deep wadi (dry creek bed) in this area, known today as ‘Ain Ferah, fits the description of a place with crevices and rocks. The Hebrew spelling for “to Parah” and “to Euphrates” are identical. By using a location so close to home, the people were able to observe Jeremiah’s symbolic actions, and the similarity of name would remind the nation of the army from the Euphrates that was coming to destroy them.

Then *after many days*, God told Jeremiah to go get the waistband that was buried. He did, *and lo, the waistband was ruined, it was totally worthless.*

Verses 8-11—God interpreted Jeremiah’s symbolic actions. The message was one of judgment against *this wicked people, who refuse to listen to My words.* Obviously, the purpose of the waistband is it *clings to the waist of a man.* So God made Israel and Judah to *“cling to Me,” declares the Lord.* Just as Jeremiah’s waistband was taken off and ruined, so Israel and Judah were taken off God and ruined. God made them *that they may be for Me a people, ...but they did not listen.*

APPLICATION—Our attitude is often that God is here for us—it’s the opposite, we’re here for God.

Verses 12-14—The second visual of the full wine jars. He told the people that *every jug is to be filled with wine.* The people scoff that this was obvious (the visual worked because they listened and responded). Then God said that the people were like these jugs, and God is going to fill them with drunkenness and then *I will dash them against each other...I will not show pity nor be sorry nor have compassion.* Another illustration of the coming judgment.

Verses 15-17—Jeremiah tells the people, *“Do not be haughty.”* Repent, turn to God, before the *darkness* of judgment comes. *But if you will not listen...Jeremiah’s soul will sob in secret for such pride* and the *flock of the Lord* will be *taken captive.*

Verses 18-19—The king and queen mother are addressed. They are not identified here, but they are probably Jehoiachin (known as Jeconiah) and his mother Nehushta (the widow of Jehoiakim—see 2 Kings 24:8, 12, 15). They went into captivity after just 3 months on the throne (2 Kings 24:8), so this must have been during that time. Jeremiah talks of their pride, but they would be taken captive, and then the nation would be.

Verses 20-27—Jeremiah urged the king to lift up his eyes and *see those coming from the north.* “Where is the flock that was given you?” They’re gone into captivity. His pain will be like the pangs of a woman in childbirth. If he asks, *“Why have these things happened to me?”* It is *because of the magnitude of your iniquity.* Jeremiah asks, *“Can the Ethiopian [in Africa] change the color of his skin or the leopard change his spots?”* No. Neither can *those accustomed to doing evil* do good. *Therefore I will scatter them like drifting straw to the desert wind...because you have forgotten Me and trusted in falsehood.*

Message #6 The Drought and a Prayer for Mercy—Chapters 14–15

Verses 1-4—It's not clear whether Jeremiah means one major drought or a series of droughts that came during Judah's final years. *They have come to the cisterns and found no water.... the ground is cracked, for there has been no rain on the land.*

APPLICATION—An interesting visual punishment as in chapter 2:13 God said they rejected Him the fountain of living waters for these cisterns. Now they experience physically what they were doing spiritually in going to the idols—empty cisterns.

Verses 5-6—A drought is one of the most damaging disasters. It does the most long-term damage and it affects everyone—even those far away. The wild animals also suffer.

Verses 7-9—Because of the drought, the people plead with God. They seem to admit their guilt (*our iniquities...our apostasies...we have sinned against Thee*). They turn to God, *Thou Hope of Israel, its Savior....* Why doesn't God stop the drought? He's acting like either (1) He doesn't care—*like a stranger in the land*, who is passing through, or (2) He is powerless to do anything—*like a mighty man who cannot save*. They plead with God, "*Do not forsake us!*"

Verses 10-12— Their confession was superficial (he had already compared them to the impossibility of a leopard changing its spots—13:20-27). They claimed God as their Lord, but God said, "*they have loved to wander; they have not kept their feet in check. Therefore the Lord does not accept them; now He will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account.*"

God again told Jeremiah, who was a genuine follower of God, "*Do not pray for the welfare of this people*" (see 7:16; 11:14; and 15:1). They tried to manipulate God with their fasting and burnt offerings, but God will not be bought off. Judgment will come by sword, famine, and pestilence.

Verses 13-16—Jeremiah interrupted God by reminding Him that it was the false prophets who were telling the people that they would *not see the sword nor...famine, but they will have peace*. God replied,

- (1) *The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name*—Matthew 7:23
- (2) *I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them*
- (3) *They are prophesying to you a false vision*—Job 4:12-16
- (4) *Divination*—Deuteronomy 18:10-12—to predict the future using signs, etc.
- (5) *Futility*—ineffective
- (6) *The deception* [to convince yourself of something that is not true] *of their own minds*—17:8 *The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick*
- (7) *Prophets who are prophesying in My name, although it was not I who sent them*

APPLICATION—Today, there are many who claim to have a word from God, through visions and dreams. It's a dangerous thing to say they have a word from God, when God *neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them*.

God will judge these false prophets who said, "*no sword or famine*" —it will be *by sword and famine those prophets shall meet their end!* And the people who listened to them will also perish *because of the famine and the sword*. God *shall pour out their own wickedness on them*.

Verses 17-18—Jeremiah's *eyes flow down with tears night and day* (Lamentations 3:48-51) over the slaying of the judgment. The countryside is filled with those slain by the sword. The cities are filled with the *diseases of famine!* And the prophets and priests have been deported to Babylon.

Verses 19-22—The people ask God, "*Has Thou completely rejected Judah?*" Again (vv. 7-9) they admit their sin and ask God to help them based on God's character—(1) *for Thine own name's sake*, (2) *do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory*, and (3) *do not annul Thy covenant with us*. They are quick to remind God of His obligations to them, but they fail to remember their own obligations to Him. They fi-

nally admit, *Are there any among the idols...who give rain?* No. *Is it not Thou, O lord our God?* Yes. God is *the one who has done all these things*. God brings the drought and the rain. God brings the sword and peace. He does it all!

Verses 15:1-4—There should not be a chapter break here. Now is God’s answer to the people’s apparent “confession” of 14:19-22. The nation’s sin was so ingrained (13:23) that judgment was inevitable. *Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me*, their prayers would not stop God’s coming judgment. Moses had interceded for the nation before to turn away God’s wrath (Exodus 32:9-14; Numbers 14:11-20; Deuteronomy 9:18-20, 25-29), and Samuel had interceded to defeat the nation’s enemies and turn away God’s wrath (1 Samuel 7:5-11; 12:19-25). But now the fate of the people was sealed—there was no changing it.

APPLICATION—See 1 John 5:16 for a prayer we should not make.

Four options were selected by God:

- (1) *those destined for death* (probably by plague or pestilence—14:12)
- (2) *those destined for sword*
- (3) *those destined for famine*
- (4) and for those who didn’t die, *those destined for captivity*

Jeremiah pictures dogs, birds, and beasts devouring and destroying the bodies of those who had been slain (16:4).

Judah passed the point of no return in their evil—what *Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem*. See 2 Kings 21:1-18 and 2 Chronicles 33:1-20. He was so evil and polluted the land with so many idols (even putting idols in the Temple of God and making his son pass through fire). Even King Josiah’s reforms could only postpone the certain destruction (2 Kings 22:16-20).

APPLICATION—Even though Manasseh repented at the end of his life, he was still the most wicked king. He brought idols into the Temple of God. He led the nation into idol worship. Becoming a believer does not erase the consequences of a life of sin. Adultery, for example, and the effects on the children.

Verses 5-7—God asked Jerusalem, “*Who will have pity on you?*” God was the only one who ever cared for her. And now they *have forsaken Me... You keep going backward* (to the sins of Manasseh). So God said, “*I will...destroy you; I am tired of relenting!*” His patience and mercy had come to an end because *they did not repent of their ways*.

APPLICATION—The character of God is defined as something about God that never changes—His omnipotence, His holiness, His love, etc. The works of God are things that can and do end—His grace, His mercy.

Verses 8-9—There will be many widows. A mother of seven sons, normally secure, would die.

Verses 10-11—Jeremiah complained that, although he had neither lent nor borrowed, things which could cause tensions and conflicts, *yet everyone curses me*. God promised Jeremiah that *surely I will cause the enemy to make supplication to you in a time of disaster*, a prophecy fulfilled in the requests of King Zedekiah (Jeremiah 21:1-7; 37:1-10, 17-20; 38:14-18).

Verses 12-14—*Can anyone smash iron* with their bare hands? Neither will anyone be able to stop the Babylonians attacking Judah and bringing *your wealth and your treasures* back to Babylon. The reason? *For all your sins*. God’s anger is *a fire...it will burn upon you*.

Verses 15-18—Jeremiah’s prayer to God to *Remember me, take notice of me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors*. Jeremiah wanted the people to see that his prophecy was correct, that he was telling the truth. He lists 7 things indicative of his relationship with God:

- (1) *For Thy sake I endure reproach* (see Hebrews 12:1-3). The people curse him (15:10), they plotted to kill him (11:18-19).
- (2) *Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts*
- (3) *I did not sit in the circle of merry-makers* (who denied the attack was coming)
- (4) *Nor did I exult because of Thy hand upon me*—Not proud because God chose him to be a prophet
- (5) *I sat alone* (as Noah, Job, Elijah...)
- (6) *Thou didst fill me with indignation* (righteous anger)
- (7) *Why has my pain been perpetual...my wound incurable?* Is God to Jeremiah *like a deceptive stream with water that is unreliable?* Is He the God of living water (2:13)?

APPLICATION—*If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied* (1 Corinthians 15:19). We often stand alone. We give up the pleasures (the “merry-makers”) of this world.

Verses 19-21—God’s answer to Jeremiah’s prayer is 3 conditions for Jeremiah and then God’s promise:

- (1) *If you return, then I will restore you—before Me you will stand*—First Jeremiah needed to repent of his doubt and self-pity and return to God. It is God before we stand, not man.

APPLICATION—Jeremiah was to be humble and repentant before God. In Galatians 1:10 Paul said, *“If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ*. Don’t forget—it is God before we stand, not man (1 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

- (2) *If you extract the precious [words] from the worthless [words]*—One problem the people had was that they believed the false prophets’ words instead of believing Jeremiah’s words from God.

APPLICATION—Discernment is very important. You’re making life choices based on your discernment of what true. One area today where there is a great lack of discernment is in accepting paraphrases, such as “The Message,” as being the Word of God and following Christian “fad” books.

- (3) *They...may turn to you, but as for you, you must not turn to them*. If someone was to move, it was to be the people, not Jeremiah!

APPLICATION—Paul said in Ephesians 6:10-41, *“Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil ... that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore ...*

Then, God restates the promises He made when He commissioned Jeremiah (1:7-8, 18-19):

- (1) *You will become My spokesman*
- (2) *I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze*
- (3) *And though they fight against you, they will not prevail over you; for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the Lord.*

APPLICATION—We are God’s spokesmen today in the world and He promised to be with us (Matthew 28:19-20), but we do not have the promise that they will not prevail over us. In fact, Jesus said if the world hated Him, it will hate us and if they persecuted Jesus, they will persecute us (John 15:18, 20) and in the world we will have tribulation (John 16:33).

Message #7 Jeremiah’s Restrictions and Judah’s Sin—Chapters 16–17:18

Jeremiah's Restrictions (16:1-9)

Verses 1-4—Jeremiah's **first restriction** was that he *shall not take a wife for yourself nor have sons or daughters*. Why? Because the people of Judah *will die of deadly diseases...and come to an end by sword and famine*. God was using Jeremiah as an example that all the normal relationships in Judah that were cherished would be disrupted by the coming catastrophe. There would be so much death from deadly diseases, sword, and famine, that the dead would not even be mourned but their *carcasses will become food for the birds...and...the beasts*.

Verses 5-7—The **second restriction** for Jeremiah was that he was not to enter a house of mourning for someone who had died for two reasons:

1. To show that God has *withdrawn My peace from this people, ...My lovingkindness and compassion*.
2. As a reminder that those who die during the siege *will not be buried, they will not be lamented*

Verses 8-9—Jeremiah's **third restriction** was *you shall not go into a house of feasting to sit with them to eat and drink*. This showed that times of feasting and happiness would soon cease.

APPLICATION—There are different reasons for restrictions. For example, (1) Just because God said so; (2) for our own (physical and/or eternal) safety; (3) to demonstrate a lifestyle to others (2 Corinthians 2:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

Judah's Sin (16:10—17:18)

Verses 10-13—When the people ask “Why?” they have this *great calamity* and *What is our sin?* Jeremiah was to answer (1) “*because your forefathers have forsaken Me,*” declares the Lord, “*and have followed other gods*” and (2) “*You too have done evil, even more than your forefathers...you are each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart, without listening to Me*. Their fathers were evil—they are even more evil!

APPLICATION—The consequences of the sins (and the sins themselves) of the fathers often follow them into the next generation. You don't sin in a vacuum.

Therefore, *I will hurl you out of this land into the land which you have not known*—To “hurl” means to violently thrust (1 Samuel 18:11; 22:33). *There you will serve other gods...I shall grant you no favor* (compared to when the 70 years were over and Persia conquered Babylon and God had the Persians grant favor to the Judeans—Nehemiah 2:8).

Verses 14-18—First God assured them of their final restoration to the land in the Millennial Kingdom. Then He returned to the invading Babylonians, whom He compared to *fishermen* and *hunters*. No one will escape or hide because God's *eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes*. God will *doubly repay their sin* because they filled *My inheritance* (God's Land) with their *detestable idols and with their abominations*.

Verses 19-21—Jeremiah affirms that God is *my strength...my stronghold...my refuge*. He looks toward the day when the Gentile nations will realize *can a man make gods for himself? Yet they are not gods!* In the end times, God will *make them know My power and My might; and they shall know that My name is the Lord*.

APPLICATION—People come to know God through judgment (the Flood, Sodom, the Tribulation). “*For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.’ So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God*” (Romans 14:10-12).

Verses 17:1-4—The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus...with a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart. These were hard instruments used to chisel words, etc. onto stone. It also showed up *on the horns of their altars*—There was a horn (a projection) on each of the 4 corners of the altars.

The same love and affection they would give their children, they gave also to their idols and Asherim (wooden female fertility idols). An Asherim had been placed in God's Temple by King Manasseh (2 Kings 21:7), though he later removed it (2 Chronicles 33:13, 15). It was put back into the Temple after he died because King Josiah took it out during his reforms and burned it in the Kidron Valley outside the city (2 Kings 23:6). After Josiah's death, the people resumed their idolatry (Ezekiel 8:10).

God will give the Judah and its wealth to its *enemies in the land which you do not know; for you have kindled a fire in My anger...*

Verses 5-8—A short poem contrasting the way of the wicked (v. 5-6) with the way of the righteous (v. 7-9). Cursed is the man who (1) trusts in mankind and (2) makes flesh his strength, and (3) whose heart turns away from the Lord. For he will be...

- *Like a bush—short-term*
- *In the desert—where no one sees it or cares for it*
- *Will not see when prosperity comes*
- *But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness*
- *a land of salt*
- *without inhabitant*

Blessed is the man who (1) trusts in the Lord and (2) whose trust is the Lord. For he will be...

- *like a tree—long-term*
- *planted by the water—desired, planted and cared for*
- *that extends its roots by a stream—watering the roots gives health to the tree and fruit*
- *and will not fear when the heat comes—because the roots are still getting water*
- *but its leaves will be green—indicating a healthy tree*
- *and will not be anxious in a year of drought—which effects the surface*
- *nor cease to yield fruit—for the benefit of others*

APPLICATION—The key is in the roots, the depth, not the fruit. There can be no fruit without good roots. Grow in your knowledge and understanding of the Word of God and your relationship with Him, and you will produce the fruit of the Spirit.

Verses 9-13—The ways of blessing are clear (verses 5-8), so why would anyone choose the path of sin? Because the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick. Jeremiah even wondered, Who can understand it? God answered, I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind. Therefore, only God can give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds. Nothing is hidden from Him, so He is the proper One to judge.

As a partridge hatches eggs which are not her own, whose offspring will desert her, so riches will flee from those who gain them unjustly.

Jeremiah focuses on the *Lord, the hope of Israel*. He's the judge, but He's also the hope. *Those who turn away, on earth [in dust] will be written down—because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, even the Lord.* It seems to me to be a sort of comparison—in 17:1 the sin of Judah is engraved with a diamond point on the stone tablet of their heart. Those people's names are written in dust—when the

wind comes, they will be blown away. Why? Because of this sin in their hardened hearts and their rejection of God.

APPLICATION—Our names are written in the Book of Life, where they will never be erased (Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).

Verses 14-18—Jeremiah turns in prayer to God... *For Thou art my praise.* The people say to Jeremiah, “*Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now!*” As the people have attacked Jeremiah, he now understands how God feels about the people, who have turned away from Him to serve idols. Now Jeremiah’s prayer is, “*crush them with twofold destruction!*”

APPLICATION—Similar to what they say to Peter about the End Times (2 Peter 3:4).

Message #8 Keeping the Sabbath—Chapter 17:19-27

Verses 19-22—God told Jeremiah to “*Go and stand in the...gates of Jerusalem, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord, ‘...do not carry any load on the Sabbath day...keep the Sabbath day holy’*”” This was a visible test which exposed their lack of faithfulness to God’s covenant.

Verse 23—*Yet they did not listen or incline their ears, but stiffened their necks...*

Verses 24-26—“*If you listen attentively to Me,*” declares the Lord, “*...to keep the Sabbath day holy...then there will come through the gates...kings and princes sitting on the throne of David...and this city will be inhabited forever.*” Obedience resulted in the blessing described in the Mosaic Covenant of Deuteronomy 28-30.

Verses 27—“*But if you do not listen to Me to keep the Sabbath day holy...then I will kindle a fire in its gates and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem and not be quenched.*” Disobedience resulted in the curses described in the Mosaic Covenant of Deuteronomy 28–30.

Message #9 The Potter and the Broken Jar—Chapters 18–20

Chapter 18 is a parable about a potter. As the potter, it demonstrates God’s sovereign dealings with Judah, the potter’s jar of clay. Chapter 19 follows with a symbolic breaking of a purchased earthenware jar to show God’s impending judgment. Chapter 20 is a pivot point in the book. It is connected chronologically to chapter 19, but it begins the open opposition to Jeremiah and his prophecies of the coming judgment.

The Message at the Potter’s House (chapter 18)

Verses 1-4—The visual lesson—God told Jeremiah to go to a potter’s house and observe—*he was making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled...so he remade it into another vessel.* The point is not the vessel but the potter, who did with the vessel *as it pleased the potter.*

APPLICATION—Romans 9:6-24

Verses 5-12—The interpretation of the visual—God is like the potter and *like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.* God can build up or destroy Israel, depending on whether they are pleasing to Him or whether they are evil and have turned away from Him. God said, “*I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you,*” to Judah. But He pleads, “*Oh turn back each of you from his evil way and reform your ways.*” But they refuse and say, “*We are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.*”

Verses 13-17—The application of the visual—*Therefore thus says the Lord...Israel has done a most appalling [worse than expected] thing.* The snow from Mt. Hermon in Lebanon (9,000 feet) and its cold water runoff are more dependable than God's people. *For My people have forgotten Me.* They worship *worthless idols, and they have stumbled from their ways, from the ancient paths* [see 6:16—the ancient paths of obedience to God]. God is going to make their land a desolation, people who see it will be astonished, He will scatter the people. *God will show them My back and not My face.* God is going to turn His back to Judah.

Verse 18—The people plan to attack Jeremiah and ignore what He said. They put confidence in their priests, sages, and own prophets—all who are false and out for their own greedy gain.

Verses 19-23—Jeremiah's prayer to God—Jeremiah reacted to these threats by asking God to listen to what they were saying and planning to do to Jeremiah. Up to now, God has been saying how terrible it is what the people are doing to Him by rejecting Him and worshipping the idols, and Jeremiah has actually been interceding on their behalf (7:16; 8:20-22; 18:20). But now the people turn against Jeremiah, and he now knows what God has been feeling. He says, "*Do not forgive their iniquity or blot out their sin from Thy sight. But may they be overthrown before Thee; deal with them in the time of Thine anger!*"

The Message of the Broken Jar (chapter 19)

Verses 1-2—God told Jeremiah to *Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar*—probably a narrow-necked pottery flask used for carrying water because the Hebrew word is *baqbuq*, a word suggesting the sound water made as it was poured out. Next he was to take *some of the elders and some of the senior priests* and go to the *valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the potsherd gate.* The Hinnom Valley ran along the south and west of the city and served as Jerusalem's community dump. The Potsherd Gate is where the people carried their potsherds (broken pieces of pottery) and other refuse through to throw it in the Hinnom Valley.

Verses 3-6—The message of God to the kings and inhabitants of Jerusalem—"*I am about to bring a calamity upon this place.*" *Because ...*

- *They have forsaken Me*
- *They...have burned sacrifices in it to other gods*
- *They have filled this place with the blood of the innocent...to burn their sons in the first as burnt offerings to Baal*
- *They have built the high places to Baal*

Therefore...this place will no longer be...the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter, because of all the bodies that will fall there during the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (7:32-32).

Verses 7-9—Jeremiah elaborates on the coming catastrophe. God will *cause them to fall by the sword.* Their dead bodies will be *food for the birds...and beasts* (7:33; 16:4; 34:20). The famine will be so severe in Jerusalem (over 3 years), they will have to *eat the flesh of their sons and...daughters, and...one another's flesh in the siege* (Leviticus 26:27-29; Deuteronomy 28:53-57; Lamentations 2:20; 4:10).

Verses 10-13—To dramatize the message to his audience, God told Jeremiah to break the earthenware jar he had taken to the Ben-hinnom Valley. As the pottery jar was smashed, *which cannot again be repaired,* so will be the inhabitants of Jerusalem. As the valley was full of broken pottery, so Jerusalem will be filled with dead bodies. Because the people *burned sacrifices to all the heavenly hosts and poured out libations to other gods* on their housetops.

Verses 14-15—Then Jeremiah left the valley and returned to the *court of the Lord's house,* where he repeated the message *to all the people* that God will bring calamity against Jerusalem and all the towns around it *because they have stiffened their necks so as not to heed My words.*

Pashhur the Priest (20:1-6)

Verses 20:1-2—Pashhur was *the priest, ...the chief officer in the house of the Lord*. [By the way, this is not the same Pashhur as in 21:1.] Probably his job was to maintain order within the Temple area (see 29:26). He had *Jeremiah the prophet beaten, and put him in stocks* for public ridicule.

Verses 3-6—When Jeremiah was released the next day, he did not change his message. Instead, he changed Pashhur's name to God's new name for him, *Magor-missabib*, meaning "terror on every side." Because Pashhur refused to pay attention to God's message, *while your eyes look on*, Pashhur would see God's wrath. He would watch in terror as his own friends would fall to the sword. The wealth of the city would be taken by the Babylonians. Pashhur and his family would go into captivity to Babylon, where they will die. *Because you have falsely prophesied* (2:8; 10:21; 14:14-15; Lamentations 2:14).

The Complaint of Jeremiah (20:7-18)

Verses 7-10—Jeremiah opened up his heart to God. He felt God had *deceived* him by letting him be a *laughingstock* and *mocked* by the people for his message. He faithfully *proclaim[ed] violence and destruction*, but was reward by *reproach* and *derision*.

APPLICATION—God's message is Good News to us but to the world it is foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18) and it stinks (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). Jesus said that "*in the world you will have tribulation*" (John 16:33). Jesus also said, "*If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you*" (John 15:18-19).

Discouraged, Jeremiah considers withholding God's Word to avoid persecution. But when he did, *Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it*. To feel something in one's bones meant to feel it intensely (Job 30:17; 33:19).

He heard the mocking of his message "*Terror on every side!*" His *trusted friends* were *watching for his fall*. They wanted a false prediction so they could accuse him of being a false prophet and *take our revenge on him* (Deuteronomy 18:20).

APPLICATION—David also said, "*Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.*" But David's hope "*... Thou dost set me in Thy presence forever*" (Psalm 41:9, 12).

Verses 11-13—Though Jeremiah felt deceived because of his persecution, he still realized:

- That *the Lord is with me like a dread champion*. Since Jeremiah and God were on the same side, Jeremiah is confident *my persecutors will stumble and not prevail*.
- That God *dost test the righteous*. He *sees the mind and the heart* (17:10).

APPLICATION—God's motive in testing is your maturity (James 1:2-4).

- So his request is *let me see Thy vengeance on them* because *to Thee I have set forth my cause*. This perspective allowed Jeremiah to *sing to the Lord, praise the Lord!* He is confident God would deliver his soul *from the hand of evildoers*.

Verses 14-18—In a sudden change of emotion, Jeremiah again plunged from a height of confidence (v. 11-13) to the depths of despair. Perhaps he realized that the vindication which he desired could come only through the destruction of the city and nation which he dearly loved. Similar to Job, his agony made him wish that he had never been born (15:10; Job 3:1-19). He asks, *Why did I ever come forth from the womb to look on trouble and sorrow...?* His self-pity could not erase the fact that he had been selected by God while *in the womb* for the task he was performing (1:5).

APPLICATION—Jesus in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-45).

- (1) Suffering purifies faith—When God can see Christ in us, then the suffering has done its work. God chips away everything that’s not Christ.
- (2) Suffering focuses our faith on God and not on others.
- (3) Suffering clarifies our faith. We see God in a new light. God’s purposes are much deeper and His ways beyond our finding out.

Message #10 The Rebuke of the Kings—Chapters 21:1–23:8

The opposition of Pashhur (20:1-6) is a pivot point in the book. In the first 9 messages, Jeremiah had denounced Judah’s sin, threatened judgment, and offered hope if the people would repent. Though opposition had surfaced (11:18-23; 12:6; 15:10; 17:18; 18:19-23), he had not suffered any physical persecution. With the recording of Pashhur’s response, however, Jeremiah’s book took on a more personal note. His prophecies were now directed against specific individuals and groups, and Judah’s hope of repentance was replaced with the certainty of God’s judgment.

The first group singled out by Jeremiah was the kings—those appointed by God to be shepherds of the flock of Judah (see 2:8; 10:21; 23:1-8; Ezekiel 34:1-10). Jeremiah first rebuked the wicked kings who had ruled Judah (chapters 21–22) and then he offered hope in the righteous King who would come to restore Judah (23:1-8).

Jeremiah’s messages to the wicked kings were arranged in an unusual order. The first king listed was Zedekiah, who was the last king chronologically. The other kings were then arranged chronologically beginning with Shallum (Jehoahaz, 22:10-12), Jehoiakim (22:13-23), and ending with Coniah (Jehoiachin/Jeconiah, 22:24-30). Why this order? Perhaps for two reasons:

- (1) **Continuity**—By discussing Zedekiah at the beginning, Jeremiah was able to put the story of *Pashhur of Malkijah* (21:1) next to the story of *Pashhur son of Immer* (20:1). The fact that these two individuals had the same name provides continuity. The vindication Jeremiah sought because of Pashhur son of Immer’s ridicule was realized when Pashhur son of Malkijah was sent to Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord.
- (2) **Climax**—The accounts were arranged so that the prophecy against Coniah would climax God’s judgments against the kings. The line of the wicked kings would be cut off (22:30) because God would raise a righteous Branch to rule the nation (23:1-8).

The Message to King Zedekiah (21:1–22:9)

Verses 1-2—King **Zedekiah** was a son of King Josiah. He was appointed king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He was 21 years old when made king and reigned 11 years. He was evil in the sight of God and rebelled against Babylon. 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).

Pashhur the son of Malchijah was one of the king’s officials. Later he petitioned the king to execute Jeremiah for treason (38:1-4). **Zephaniah** the priest, the son of Maaseiah, succeeded Jehoiada (29:25-26) as a priest second in rank to the high priest, Seraiah (52:24). So Zephaniah was the second highest religious leader in Judah. Later, after the fall of Jerusalem (52:24-27), Zephaniah was executed by Nebuchadnezzar.

Zedekiah sent Pashhur and Zephaniah to ask Jeremiah to ask God to intervene and *deal with us according to all His wonderful acts, that the enemy may withdraw from us*.

Verses 3-7—Jeremiah answered them, *Thus says the Lord God of Israel—*

- Instead of rescuing Jerusalem, God would turn her own weapons of war against her.
- The Chaldeans who are now outside the walls will come into the center of the city.
- God Himself *shall war against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm.*
- Man and beast in the city will die of pestilence, the sword, and famine.
- Those who survive will be given over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, from whom they would receive no pity or compassion. *He will strike them down with the edge of the sword.*

*Verses 8-10—God set before you the way of life and the way of death—*Now the choice is—stay in the city and die or go out to the Chaldeans and live as a captive in Babylon. God will use the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and those in it. The response to Jeremiah’s message is in 38:1-4. They seek to put him to death because he was discouraging the men of war from fighting against the Babylonians.

*Verses 11-14—*Jeremiah focuses on the sin of *the household of the king of Judah.* The king did not administer justice and did not uphold the rights of the oppressed. Therefore, God said, *“I am against you.”* But the king saw no need to obey God. He felt secure in his well-protected city, so he boasted, *Who will enter into our habitations?”*

Because of the evil of their deeds and their pride (the results of your deeds), God shall punish you. God will kindle a fire of judgment that will not only devour Jerusalem but also all its environs.

*Verses 22:1-5—*God told Jeremiah to *go down to the house of the king of Judah.* God again gave the king a choice—

- *Do justice and righteousness...deliver the one who is oppressed.*
- *Do not mistreat...the stranger, the orphan, or the widow.*
- *Do not shed innocent blood* (child sacrifices to the idols).

If they obey God in this, then God will bless the king and the people.

If they *will not obey these words...this house will become a desolation.*

*Verses 6-9—*Both Lebanon and Gilead were known for their forests (Judges 9:15; 1 Kings 4:33; 2 Chronicles 2:8) and the royal palace in Jerusalem was known as the “Palace of the Forest of Lebanon” (1 Kings 7:2-5; Isaiah 22:8). But after God’s judgment, the palace would be as desolate as wilderness. The wood of the palace would be burned in a fire. When other nations saw the destruction, they would ask, *“Why has the Lord done thus to this great city?”* The answer, *Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord their God and bowed down to other gods and served them.* God had judged the people with His promised curses because of their disobedience.

The Message to King Shallum [Jehoahaz] (22:10–12)

Shallum was a *son of Josiah* and succeeded Josiah to the throne in 609 B.C. after Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Neco II (2 Kings 23:29-33) at Megiddo. After a reign of only 3 months, Shallum was deposed by Pharaoh Neco and taken captive to Egypt (2 Kings 23:34). Jeremiah predicted that Shallum would never return to Jerusalem. Instead he would die where he had been taken captive.

The Message to King Jehoiakim (22:13–23)

Also Josiah’s son, he was 25 years old when Pharaoh Neco appointed him king of Judah. He reigned 11 years. He was evil in the sight of God and was killed in Jerusalem by the Babylonians. He was a corrupt, petty king who built his palace at the expense of his subjects. They were forced to work with no pay. He is contrasted with his father King Josiah, who was righteous and obeyed God, and *it was well with him.* However, Jehoiakim inherited none of his father’s godly traits. Instead, he cared only for his *own dishonest gain, and on shedding innocent blood and on practicing oppression and extortion.* Therefore, the people would not mourn for him when he died. Instead, Jeremiah predicted Jehoiakim *will be buried*

with a donkey's burial, dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem. He died in late 598 as Nebuchadnezzar was advancing on Jerusalem to punish the city for rebellion.

Jeremiah called on Jerusalem to lament her fate. Her cry will be heard throughout the land, from the north (Lebanon) to the east (Bashan) to the south (Abarim/Moab—Numbers 27:12). God had warned Jerusalem of the consequences of disobedience when she felt secure, *in your prosperity*. But she said, *“I will not listen!”* (which *has been your practice from your youth, that you have not obeyed My voice*). So she will see her kings and leaders taken captive, and the pain of the coming disaster will be *pain like a woman in childbirth!* Because *of all your wickedness*.

The Message to King Coniah [Jehoiachin/Jeconiah] (22:24–30)

Jehoiachin followed his father Jehoiakim to the throne. After a 3-month reign, he surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and was deported to Babylon where he lived the rest of his life (52:31-34). God indicated that even if Jehoiachin were as valuable to Him as a signet ring, He would still pull him off because of his sins. A signet ring was most valuable because it was used to impress its owner's signature or seal on various documents. So even if Jehoiachin were this important to God (and the clear implication is that he was not), God would rather remove him than allow him to continue sinning.

God vowed to hand Jehoiachin and his mother over to the Babylonians, and they would be *hurled* into another country (Babylon), where they both would die. His mother was Nehushta, the widow of King Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:8). This is Jeremiah's second prediction of their deportation (13:18-19).

Is this man Coniah a despised, shattered jar...an undesirable vessel? No. The people did not despise Jehoiachin. Some even hoped he would be restored as king (28:1-4). Then *why have he and his descendants been hurled out and cast into a land that they had not known?*

The answer is that God was in control, and He was responsible for Jehoiachin's fall. God called on the *land* (repeated 3 times for emphasis) to *hear the word of the Lord!* Though King Jehoiachin did have children (22:28; 1 Chronicles 3:17), he was to be **considered** *childless* because *no one of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah.*

This prophecy had both immediate and long-range significance. No offspring of Jehoiachin followed him to the throne. His uncle, Zedekiah, who replaced Jehoiachin, was Judah's last king. God pruned away that portion of the line of David from the kingly line.

This prophecy helps explain the genealogies of Christ in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Matthew presented the legal line of Christ through his stepfather, Joseph. However, Joseph's line came through Shealtiel who was a son of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, Matthew 1:12; 1 Chronicles 3:17). Had Christ been a physical descendant of Joseph and not virgin-born, He would have been disqualified as Israel's King.

Luke presented the physical line of Christ through Mary, who was descended from David through the line of his son Nathan (Luke 3:31). In that way, Christ was not under the “curse” of Jehoiachin.

The Coming Messiah: the Righteous Branch (23:1–8)

Jeremiah summarized the unrighteous kings as *shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!* He says they have *driven them away* from God. Therefore, God is going to drive them away. *I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds.*

But if God removes them, who will tend His sheep and re-gather them? *Then I Myself shall gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries...and shall bring them back to their pasture. ...I shall raise up shepherds over them* who will care for the people the way God intended.

The branch of David through Jehoiachin had been cut off. But “*behold, the days are coming,*” declares the Lord, “*when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch,* that is, another member of the Davidic line. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of this prediction. As King, He will *act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land* (in contrast with God’s condemnation of Jehoiachin in 22:25). Although Jesus offered Himself as Israel’s Messiah at His First Coming, the final fulfillment of this prophecy awaits His Second Coming, immediately before His millennial reign. Then the two nations of Judah and Israel will be reunited as a single nation and will *dwell securely*.

And this is His name by which He will be called, “The Lord our righteousness.” This King will live up to His name as Israel’s righteous God.

This future restoration will be so dramatic that the people will no longer look back to God’s deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. They will no longer say, “*As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,*” but, “*As the Lord lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.*” This return from the north (Europe and Russia) began in 1948, when Israel became an independent country once again. Jews have returned from all 12 tribes. *Then they will live on their own soil.* They have begun to return to their own soil but they do not have peace. Peace and security will come with the reign of the Messiah/King in the future Millennial Kingdom.

APPLICATION—There is a future for the united 12 tribes of Israel, “living on their own soil” (the land of Israel) with Jesus, “the Lord our righteousness” as their Messiah/King!!

Message #11 The Rebuke of the False Prophets—Chapter 23:9-40

These false prophets opposed Jeremiah’s declaration of doom (6:13-14; 8:10-11; 14:14-16; 28:1-4, 10-11; 29:8-9, 20-23, 31-32) and offered in its place a promise of peace.

The Character of the False Prophets (23:9-15)

Verses 9-12—Jeremiah’s *heart is broken within me* and his body felt weak. Why? *Because of His holy words.* The land is full of spiritual adultery (rejecting God and worshipping idols). God sent a drought. But they continued in evil. “*Both prophet and priest are polluted [profane, disrespect for God]; even in My house [the Temple] I have found their wickedness,*” declares the Lord [“*they have set their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it,*” 7:30]. *Therefore...I shall bring calamity upon them.*

APPLICATION—We are God’s house (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). What detestable things are we bringing into it to defile it?

Verses 13-15—*Among the [false] prophets of Samaria [capital of Israel] I saw an offensive thing:*

- *They prophesied by Baal and*
- *Led My people Israel astray [from God’s Word]*

And what happened to the Northern Kingdom? God destroyed it in 722.

Also among the [false] prophets of Jerusalem [capitol of Judah] I have seen a horrible thing:

- *The committing of [spiritual] adultery [worshipping idols]*
- *Walking in falsehood*
- *They strengthen the hands of evildoers*
- *Result? No one has turned back from his wickedness [i.e., repented]*
- *Therefore, they became to God like Sodom and... Gomorrah*

And what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah? God destroyed them (Genesis 19:29)

Therefore thus says the Lord...concerning the prophets:

- *I am going to feed them wormwood [bitterness – Lamentations 3:15, 19]*
- *Make them drink poisonous water*

Because from the prophets...pollution has gone forth into all the land

The Message of the False Prophets (23:16-40)

Verses 16-22—Thus says the Lord...Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you:

- *They are leading you into futility [senselessness, uselessness, pointlessness]*
- *They speak a vision of their own imagination [...the deception of their own minds—14:14; the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick—17:9]*
- *Not from the mouth of the Lord [...prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them...—14:14]*

They keep saying to those who despise Me... [who don't live in obedience to God's Law]

- *The Lord has said, "You will have peace"*

For everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say...

- *Calamity will not come upon you [i.e., there are no consequences for not obeying God]*

But they have not stood in the council of the Lord to see...hear...given heed to His word. His Word is that His judgment is coming, *even a whirling tempest; it will swirl down on the head of the wicked. And the anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart.* That's the Word of God. *In the last days you will clearly understand it,* when God has finished His judgment. God's judgment of the Jews will end with the Second Coming of Christ.

*I did not send these prophets—but they ran
I did not speak to them—but they prophesied*

How can we tell if they are from God or not if they are speaking in His name? *if they had stood in My council:*

- *Then they would have announced My words [been consistent with God's words, i.e., the Mosaic Law, the Scriptures] to My people [God's message is for God's people, who believe in Him]*
- *And would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds—If these prophets were truly from God, they would have turned the people away from the idols [instead they strengthen the hands of evildoers and no one has turned back from his wickedness—v. 14]*

APPLICATION—The same is true today. The true teacher teaches the Bible is the sufficient and only Word of God, his or her message is for true believers in God, and the purpose is to turn them away from evil and toward God, that they *"be conformed to the image of His Son"* (Romans 8:28).

Verses 23-32—*"Can a man hide himself...so I do not see him?" declares the Lord. "I have heard..."*—A person cannot hide from God. God is listening to what they say. He is not some localized idol piece of carved wood that can't hear or speak. God in His omniscience *fills the heavens and the earth...I have heard*—God sees what we do and He hears what we say.

APPLICATION—See Concepts' brochure, "A Biblical Perspective of Secret Sins."

The prophets claimed that God had given them revelation in *a dream*, but their visions were only *the deception of their own heart*. These dreams were *intend[ed] to make My people forget My name, ...just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal*. Their dreams were as worthless for meeting spiritual needs as *straw* was for meeting physical hunger. Their words had no force, while God's Word is as pen-

etrating as *fire* and as effective as *a hammer which shatters a rock*. Nothing can prevent God's Word from being fulfilled.

Because God had not spoken to these false prophets, they would *steal "My" words from each other...and declare, "The Lord declares."*

God is *against those who prophesied false dreams...because they have led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting*. God says, *"I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit."*

Verses 33-40—When the people, prophet, or priest asks, *"What is the oracle of the Lord?"* An "oracle" is literally "burden" that someone had to carry, and the "burden of the Lord" is the message laid on his heart by God (Isaiah 13:1; 14:28; Nahum 1:1). When Jeremiah thought he would no longer say God's Word, *then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire...I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it* (20:9). The oracle Jeremiah (and most of the prophets of God) had was of judgment—the Lord declares, *"I shall abandon you."*

But these false prophets have ignored God's oracle *because every man's own word will become the oracle and you have perverted the words of the living God*. So they either completely ignore what God said and preach something they've made up in the deception of their own minds or they pervert God's Word.

APPLICATION—Galatians 1:6-10

The result is that God will cast these false prophets *away from His presence, along with the city* (Jerusalem). They would have unending *reproach* and unending *humiliation* for their wicked words.

Message #12 The Two Baskets of Figs—Chapter 24

Verse 1—Time—*After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jechoniah...king of Judah, and the officials of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths from Jerusalem and had brought them to Babylon* (2 Kings 24:8-16). This was sometime in 597 B.C. at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah.

God showed Jeremiah *two baskets of figs set before the Temple of the Lord*, in Jerusalem.

Verses 2-3—*One basket had very good figs, like the first-ripe figs*—These would be the first fruits that were to be offered to God in the Feast of First fruits in a basket at the Temple (Deuteronomy 26:2; Isaiah 28:4; Hosea 9:10; and Micah 7:1).

APPLICATION—It's hard to imagine now because we can get fresh fruit and vegetables year-round. But remember the joy of the very first strawberry of the season or the first watermelon, or the first ear of corn. They were the best tasting because they were the first. That's what was to be given to God—the first and the best.

The other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten due to rottenness—These would represent an offering that was unacceptable to God. Malachi 1:6-9 describes a similar scene where the people gave lame and blind animals as sacrifices to God. And God told them to try to pay their taxes with those animals. Would the government accept them? No. Yet they wanted God to accept them.

Then God asks Jeremiah what he sees, and he describes the two baskets with good and bad figs.

Verses 4-7—The explanation of the good figs—The good figs are *the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans*. This is a surprising answer because the people believed that those sent into exile were those taken away from the Lord (Ezekiel 11:14-15). Men like Dan-

iel and Ezekiel. But God has *set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land.* They (the exiles) will come back to the land of Israel.

I will give them a heart to know Me, ...they will be My people and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart. Although there were a small number of people who did return to the land, and some whose heart was devoted to God, like Nehemiah and Ezra, this is a prophecy yet to be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom, when all the Jews will return to the land and have a heart devoted to God (31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-32; Matthew 24:29-31).

Verses 8-10—The explanation of the bad figs—These figs represent King Zedekiah (2 Chronicles 36:10-13), whom Nebuchadnezzar made king in place of Jehoniah, and the other survivors in the land (29:17-19), including those who fled to Egypt (43:4-7).

These people God will make *a terror...evil...reproach...a proverb...a taunt...a curse...I [God] will scatter them. I [God] will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence upon them until they are destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their forefathers.*

APPLICATION—Making judgments according to man's values will result in the opposite conclusion to God's values. For example, men think good works will get them to God. The Bible says man's righteousness (good works) are as filthy rags to God. Man says to work on your self-esteem. God says to deny yourself.

Message #13 The 70-year Captivity in Babylon—Chapter 25

These messages were arranged topically, not chronologically. Chapter 25 was placed last because it is the capstone for all of Jeremiah's previous messages.

Warnings Ignored (25:1-7)

Verses 1-3—the word [of the Lord] that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah. When? *In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon)*—In 605 B.C., when Jeremiah is 42 years old.

Jeremiah has been prophesying for 23 years—*from the 13th year of Josiah (1:2).* So far his ministry has spanned the reign of 3 kings: Josiah, Jehoahaz, and now Jehoiakim. God has given them plenty of time to respond and repent. Jeremiah has *spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.*

Verses 4-7—Not only the prophet Jeremiah, but also *the Lord has sent to you all His servants the prophets again and again, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear.* The message:

- Repent—*turn now everyone from his evil way*
- *Do not go after other gods to serve them and to worship them*
- *Do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands*

If they would have responded positively to this message, then God would *do you no harm.*

But, *“you have not listened to Me,” declares the Lord.* So they provoke[d] the Lord *to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm.*

APPLICATION—Consequences are the results of our own actions, no matter who or what else we blame. That's what free will is all about.

Judgment Described (25:8-14)

Verses 8-11—*Because you have not obeyed My words ...I will send Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land...and I will utterly destroy them*—Nebuchadnezzar is

God's servant in the sense that God is using him to accomplish God's purpose. The *voice of joy* will be gone from the land. Instead *the whole land shall be a desolation and horror*.

These nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years [605-536 B.C.]—God had decreed that every 7th year the land was to lie fallow, to have a “Sabbath rest” (Leviticus 25:3-5). The people were not to sow their fields or prune their vineyards. If the people would fail to follow this command, God would remove them from the Land to enforce this “Sabbath rest” (Leviticus 26:33-35). The writer of 2 Chronicles indicated that the 70-year Babylonian Captivity promised by Jeremiah allowed the land to enjoy its “Sabbath rest” (2 Chronicles 36:20-21). Therefore, the Captivity lasted 70 years because this was the number of Sabbath rests that had not been observed for the Land (one year in captivity for every 7th year when the land did not rest would mean they did not practice this law for 490 years [490 divided by 7 = 70]). The year 605 plus the 490 years they didn't practice the law, would be back to the year 1095, approximately the beginning of the times of the kings and the first king, Saul.

Verses 12-14—“when 70 years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,” declares the Lord, “for their iniquity. ...I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the work of their hands.”

APPLICATION—Both things are true. They are judged for their free will decisions and God sovereignly used them to punish Judah.

I will bring upon that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations—This is material in chapters 50-51, which evidently was written about the same time as chapter 25.

Wrath Promised (25:15-29)

Verses 15-26—God pictures His wrath as a *cup of the wine of wrath from My hand*. Jeremiah was to take the cup and cause *all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it*. Judgment starts with Jerusalem and Judah, then spreads south to Egypt, North to Syria and Northeast to Media (Persia) and east to Arabia and on to Babylon—all the nations surrounding Judah at that time.

Verses 27-29—God says to the nations, “*Drink, be drunk, vomit, fall, and rise no more because of the sword which I will send among you.*” They have no option. God says, “*I am beginning to work calamity in this city which is called by My name*” (Jerusalem). If God's city does not escape His punishment, then certainly the other nations will not escape His punishment. In fact, “*I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth,*” declares the Lord of hosts.

Universal Judgment Affirmed (25:30-38)

Verses 30-38—Switching from prose to poetry, Jeremiah continued the theme of God's judgment on the nations. *The Lord will roar from on high*, like a lion over its prey (Amos 1:2; 3:4, 8). *God will shout... against all the inhabitants of the earth. ...He is entering into judgment with all flesh*. Why? *Evil is going forth from nation to nation*. So God, like a *great storm*, is going forth. No one will escape, not even those *from the remotest parts of the earth. ...Those slain by the Lord on that day shall be from one end of the earth to the other*. Their corpses *shall be like dung*, lying everywhere, in the same way that Judah's dead had remained unburied (8:2; 14:16; 16:4-6).

Personal Conflict with Judah (chapters 26–29)

Though Jeremiah did record some opposition to his message (11:18-23; 15:10; 20:1-6), it was not his main point in chapters 1–25. The focus in those chapters was on God's coming judgment if the people