

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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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

refused to repent. But in chapters 26–29, Jeremiah zeroed in on the people’s response to his message. Both he and his message were rejected by the leaders and the people.

## Conflict with the People—Chapter 26

### Jeremiah’s Message (26:1-6)

*Verses 1-3—This message was delivered in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah—*Since Jehoiakim ascended to the throne in 609 B.C., the date for this event is probably 609-608 (about 20 years before the final deportation to Babylon). *Stand in the court of the Lord’s house and speak—*It is most likely connected with the “Temple address” of chapters 7–10, where Jeremiah focused on the content of the message. Here he focused on the response to the message. God told Jeremiah to speak to all *who have come to worship in the Lord’s house*. And he was to speak *all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. Do not omit a word!*

**APPLICATION**—Notice God’s emphasis on every single word. See Revelation 22:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; and 1 Corinthians 4:6.

God’s message was for the people to “turn” from their *evil way*, so that God could “turn” from *the calamity which I am planning to do to them because of their evil deeds*.

*Verses 4-6—*God said, *If ...*

- *If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law, which I have set before you—the written Word of God*
- *If you will not listen to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I have been sending to you again and again—the verbal Word of God*

*Then ...*

- *I will make this house (the Temple where Jeremiah was standing and giving this message) like Shiloh (see 7:14—the ruins of the former Tabernacle)*
- *I will make this city [Jerusalem] a curse to all the nations of the earth*

### Jeremiah’s Arrest and Trial (26:7-15)

*Verses 7-11—*In chapters 7–10, Jeremiah did not record the response of the crowds to his message. Now we read, *the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, “You must die!”* Their charges were that he *prophesied in the name of the Lord that the Temple will be like Shiloh and Jerusalem will be desolate, without inhabitant*. Obviously, they believed that such a prophecy could never come from God.

When they heard what was happening, the *princes of Judah...came up from the king’s house to the house of the Lord*. They *sat in the entrance of the New Gate of the Lord’s house* (Deuteronomy 21:18-19; Ruth 4:1-11). The *priests and the prophets* charged, *“A death sentence for this man!”* The reason? *“For he has prophesied against this city...”*

*Verses 12-15—*Jeremiah gave a threefold defense on his own behalf:

- (1) *The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that you have heard.*
- (2) *His message was conditional. Amend your ways and...deeds, and obey the voice of the Lord ...and the Lord will change His mind about the misfortune which He has pronounced against you.*

- (3) Jeremiah warned them that if they put him to death, they would bring *innocent blood on yourselves and this city and on its inhabitants*. They would be guilty in God’s sight of murdering an innocent man.

**Jeremiah’s Deliverance (26:16-24)**

*Verses 16-19*—After hearing the case, *the officials and all the people* sided with Jeremiah against the religious establishment (*the priests and the prophets*). They said, “*No death sentence for this man! For he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.*” This verdict was supported by some *elders* who quoted from Micah 3:12, a similar prophecy to what Jeremiah was saying about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple given by the prophet Micah about 70 years earlier. Yet instead of seeking to put Micah to death, King Hezekiah listened to Micah’s words. *Did he not fear the Lord and entreat the favor of the Lord, and the Lord changed His mind about the misfortune which He had pronounced against them*. If Judah does not now follow Hezekiah’s example, *we are committing a great evil against ourselves*.

**APPLICATION**—We are to learn from the examples of others and be examples ourselves. Part of the function of the Bible is to relate examples from which we can learn. “*For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope*” (Romans 15:4). “*Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps...*” (1 Peter 2:21; John 13:15). Paul told Timothy, “*...show yourself an example of those who believe*” (1 Timothy 4:12). The elders among us are “*...to be examples to the flock*” (1 Peter 5:3).

*Verses 20-23*—Although Jeremiah was spared, *there was also a man who prophesied in the name of the Lord, Uriah*. Nothing is known about this man except for his father *Shemaiah*, that he was from *Kiriath-jearim* (about 5 miles west of Jerusalem), and his message was—*He prophesied against this city... words similar to all those of Jeremiah*. When King Jehoiakim heard his words, he wanted to kill Uriah, who heard about the death threat and escaped to Egypt. But the king sent men to Egypt. The delegation was led by *Elnathan son of Achbor*. He was one of the officials who heard the reading of Jeremiah’s scroll (36:11-12). His father Achbor may be the Achbor who heard the reading of the lost scroll of the Law with King Josiah (2 Kings 22:3-13). The men brought Uriah back to Jerusalem and the king killed him, and *cast his body into the burial place of the common people*. So Uriah was killed and dishonored in his burial, yet he became part of God’s great hall of fame...*men of whom the world was not worthy...* (Hebrews 11:38).

*Verse 24*—God had promised Jeremiah that “*...they will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,*” *declares the Lord* (1:19). *But the hand of Anikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that he was not given into the hands of the people to put him to death*. The family of Shaphan played an important part in the final years of Judah. Shaphan was King Josiah’s secretary who reported finding the Law to Josiah (2 Kings 22:3-13). He knew the Law was something the king needed to read and know about. Shaphan had at least four sons, three of whom were mentioned in a positive way by Jeremiah (Ahikam, Gemariah, and Elasah). The fourth son, Jaazaniah, was the “black sheep” of the family, and his presence among the idol-worshippers in the Temple caught Ezekiel by surprise (Ezekiel 8:11). Ahikam’s son, Gedaliah, was appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. He was then assassinated.

	<p><b>SHAPHAN</b>          Found “the Book of the Law” in Josiah’s time (2 Kings 22:3-13)</p>			

<p><b>AHIKAM</b> Sent by Josiah to Huldah the prophetess to verify the scroll (2 Kings 22:12-20). Protected Jeremiah from being condemned to death (Jeremiah 26:24).</p>	<p><b>GEMARIAH</b> Urged Jehoiakim not to destroy Jeremiah's scroll (Jeremiah 36:12, 25).</p>	<p><b>ELASAH</b> Took Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:1-3).</p>	<p><b>JAAZANIAH</b> Participated in idol worship in the Temple (Ezekiel 8:11-12)</p>
<p><b>GEDALIAH</b> Was appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 39:14; 40:5).</p>	<p><b>MICAHIAH</b> Told the court officials that Jeremiah's scroll was read by Baruch (Jeremiah 36:11-25).</p>		

**APPLICATION**—Here are 3 generations of a godly family—yet they have one person who is not godly. As a parent, be a godly example, teach the Bible, and pray, but there are no guarantees. On the one hand, you are not responsible for a bad child any more than you can take credit for a good child. Each person makes his or her own choices. On the other hand, both fathers, Shaphan and Achbor, heard the reading of the lost copy of the Law with King Josiah. Yet Shapan's family chose to follow God, and all we know of Achbor is that his son was involved in killing one of God's prophets (Jeremiah 26:22) whereas Shaphan's son saved one of God's prophets (26:24). It seems the father's decision regarding God's Law is evidently reflected in what their sons did. As a parent, you give your children (and grandchildren) an opportunity to choose God.

### **Conflict with the False Prophets in Jerusalem—Chapters 27–28**

Most manuscripts (and therefore, some translations) name *Jehoiakim* as king in verse 1. However, internal evidence indicates that the chapter was written during the time of *Zedekiah* instead of Jehoiakim. Zedekiah is named as king of Judah in verses 3 and 12, and 28:1 says *in the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah*. It was either a scribal error or on purpose that 27:1 was changed to match 26:1. The Septuagint (Greek copy of the Hebrew Old Testament, translated in the 200s B.C.) omits 27:1.

### **Jeremiah's Prophecy (chapter 27)**

#### **(1) The message to the ambassadors (27:1-11)**

*Verses 1-7—In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah*—This is 593 B.C., about 16 years after chapter 26, making Jeremiah about 54 years old. This is also after the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> deportations of Jews to Babylon (Daniel is already there, for example) and about 7 years before the final fall of Jerusalem.

God told Jeremiah to make *bonds and yokes and put them on your neck*. Yokes are used to hitch together teams of oxen. Then he was to send word to the envoys in Jerusalem from the countries of *Edom* (S.E.), *Moab* (S.E.), *Ammon* (East), *Tyre, and Sidon* (Phoenician cities to the north). Perhaps they were in Jerusalem to discuss uniting together in a revolt against Babylon. This meeting occurred sometime between May and August of 593 (see 28:1). They were to return to the masters of their countries and say:

*Thus says the Lord...the God of Israel... , "I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power...and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight."* God is the Creator and the Distributor.

*Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant...and all the nations shall serve him...until...many nations...will make him their servant*—These nations may have thought they could unite and have success in revolting against Babylon—but all the nations are in God's hands, *There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God* (Romans 13:1; see also Isaiah 40:23; 2 Chronicles 21:18; 22:7; Romans 9:17; and Daniel 2:21).

**APPLICATION**—We are to exercise our free will decision to vote in this country, but it is God who establishes and takes down kings. And He does it according to His plan of moving the world toward the time of the Tribulation and the rule of the most evil king, the antichrist, in order to judge evil at His own Second Coming as “*King of King and Lord of Lords*” (Revelation 19:18).

*Verses 8-11*—Because God was speaking to these foreign nations, whose ambassadors had gathered in Jerusalem, He told them, *do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you saying, “You shall not serve the king of Babylon.” For they prophesy a lie to you.* God then says if their country will put their necks under the Babylonian rule, they will be preserved. But if not, they will die *with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence.*

**APPLICATION**—It doesn’t matter what the wisdom or religions of the world say—God is in charge, and the world will operate according to His Word. Anything else is a lie, from the father of lies (John 8:44).

## **(2) The message to Zedekiah (27:12-15)**

Two parts to Jeremiah’s message: (1) The same command God gave the other nations, He also gave Zedekiah and Judah—“*Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people and live.*” If they don’t, *you will die, you and your people, by the sword, famine, and pestilence.* (2) “*Do not listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you for they prophesy a lie to you; for I have not sent them,*” declares the Lord.

*“but they [false prophets] prophesy falsely in My name, in order that I may drive you out, and that you may perish, you and the prophets who prophesy to you”*—As we have already seen in Jeremiah, the false prophets’ message is in the name of God to deceive the people so that they will turn away from God and His true Word *in order that* God can judge them for the evil they have done against Him.

**APPLICATION**—Here again we see that God is carrying out His plan of judgment against Judah. In order to drive out the evil people and the false prophets, they believe a lie. The reason, I believe, is the same reason it will be in the Tribulation, “*For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness*” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

## **(3) The message to the priests and people (27:16-22)**

Jeremiah again cautioned the priests and people to not listen to the false prophets, *for they are prophesying a lie to you. Do not listen to them.* Jeremiah said, *serve the king of Babylon and live!* The issue is the vessels of the Temple.

- Some were already taken to Babylon in the first deportation (when Daniel was taken), and the false prophets said they *will now shortly be brought again from Babylon.*
- Furthermore, the *vessels that are left in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah, ...they shall be carried to Babylon.*

*“They will be there until the day I visit them,” declares the Lord. “Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.”*

**APPLICATION**—Deception, by its vary nature, is hard to detect. These false prophets were saying that God would not allow anything to happen to “*His house, the Temple.*” On the surface, it would appear that the false prophets were the ones telling the truth and Jeremiah was the one prophesying against Judah and the Temple. How to know which one is telling the truth? Examine their fruit. The false prophets were evil and greedy, they were not living according to the Law, even though their words seemed like it was of the Law. Just make sure the “*fruit*” is actually what God said to do and not what religious organizations say is “*fruit.*”

## **Hananiah’s Opposition (chapter 28)**

### **(1) Jeremiah’s conflict with Hananiah (28:1-11)**

*Verses 1-4*—The specific time is given, *about in the same year* (as 27:1), *in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah..., in the 4<sup>th</sup> year, in the 5<sup>th</sup> month,* that is, between May and August, 593 B.C.

*Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet, who was from Gibeon*—Perhaps he was a brother of “Jaazaniah son of Azzur” who was denounced by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 11:1-3). Gibeon was about 6 miles NW of Jerusalem. It was another town Joshua assigned to the priests (Joshua 21:17-18), so perhaps Hananiah, like Jeremiah, was from a priestly family. They were *in the house of the Lord and in the presence of the priests and all the people*.

Hananiah’s message directly contradicted Jeremiah’s prophecy. He claimed [God said], *Thus said the Lord*—

- “*I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon*”
- “*Within 2 years I am going to bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord’s house*”
- “*I am also going to bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim*”
- “*and all the exiles of Judah who went to Babylon*”

*Verses 5-11*—Both prophets had made conflicting claims, each one attributing his message to God. Jeremiah wanted Hananiah’s prophecy to be true. “*Amen. May the Lord do so; may the Lord confirm your words which you have prophesied...*” Yet—Hananiah’s prophecy was false. The ultimate test for prophets was whether their prophecies were fulfilled. *...when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then that prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent* (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). Time would tell whether Jeremiah or Hananiah was the false prophet.

As if to convince the people he was right, Hananiah went up to Jeremiah and took the yoke from around his neck (which God had told him to put on—27:1-2) *and broke it*. Then he stated again that in 2 years God would break the yoke of the Babylonians *from the neck of all the nations*.

Rather than opposing this open insult from Hananiah, *the prophet Jeremiah went his way*.

## **(2) Jeremiah’s message to Hananiah (28:12-17)**

*Verses 12-14*—The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah *after Hananiah...had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah*. God’s message used Hananiah’s actions to show the harshness of the coming judgment. *Go and speak to Hananiah, saying, “Thus says the Lord, ‘You have broken the yokes of wood’ but God would replace it with a yoke of iron that could not be broken. This iron yoke, figuratively speaking, will be on the neck of all these nations* (that had gathered in Jerusalem to possibly plot a rebellion against Babylon—27:3). *They shall serve him* (Nebuchadnezzar).

*Verses 15-17*—Now Jeremiah attacked Hananiah’s credentials as a prophet:

- *The Lord has not sent you*
- *You have made this people trust in a lie*

*Therefore, thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This year you are going to die, because you have counseled rebellion against the Lord.*

It is already the 5<sup>th</sup> month (28:1), so within the next 7 months, Hananiah would die. This was why Jeremiah took special care to state the exact month in verse 1. God fulfilled His word. *So Hananiah the prophet died in the same year in the seventh month*. God showed that Jeremiah was His true prophet (his near prophecy happened exactly) and judged the false prophet, Hananiah.

## **Conflict with the False Prophets in Exile—Chapter 29**

### **Jeremiah’s First Letter to the Exiles (29:1-23)**

#### **(1) Introduction (29:1-3)**

Jeremiah wrote to *all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon*. There were 3 deportations altogether. He identifies this one as *after King Jeconiah...had departed from*

*Jerusalem to Babylon* (2 Kings 24:8-17; Jeremiah 13:18; 22:24-27; Daniel 1:1-2). This deportation occurred in 597 B.C., so this letter must have been written after that date.

This letter was *sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan* (see notes on 26:24).

**APPLICATION**—When you are away from someone, or they are away from you, letters are extremely valuable. Paul wrote letters to the believers in other cities.

## **(2) The announcement of a long exile (29:4-14)**

*Verses 4-9*—Jeremiah’s advice for living in exile in Babylon:

- *Build houses and live in them*
- *Plant gardens, and eat their produce*
- *Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, have your children marry and have children, ...multiply there and do not decrease*
- *Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile [Babylon] and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will have welfare*
- *“Do not let your prophets who are in your midst...deceive you...for they prophesy false to you in My name; I have not sent them,” declares the Lord.* The false prophets evidently would say that they would only be in Babylon a short time. But Jeremiah says it will be 70 years, according to God’s Word, so they should live normally—in homes, plant gardens, marry, etc.

**APPLICATION**—You might think because the false prophets were wrong and Jeremiah was right, they would be more wise about who they listened to. But no—they took the false prophets with them to Babylon and continued to believe them, even though their very existence in Babylon was proof Jeremiah was right!

*Verses 10-14*—God again gives the exact timeframe: *When 70 years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.*

- Again, we see the timing is completely in God’s hands, and it’s according to His Word (25:11). 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).
- Seventy years is specifically because of the number of years they did not give the land its Sabbath rests. Therefore, God gave the land its rest (2 Chronicles 36:21).
- God’s plans for Judah were *plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.*
- The judgment would prompt the people to seek God (Daniel 9:2-3, 15-19). *Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.*
- *And I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile* (Deuteronomy 30:1-10), the nations of Babylon and Persia (who conquered Babylon).

**APPLICATION**—God keeps His word literally. Those who followed God did, too. Like Daniel over in Babylon 70 years later: *“in the first year of his reign [Persian King Darius] I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications... “O Lord, listen and take action!”* (Daniel 9:2-19).

## **(3) The warning against false prophets (29:15-23)**

*Verses 15-19*—The message of the false prophets in Babylon contradicted Jeremiah’s message (v. 9). They were proclaiming the safety of Jerusalem and the soon return of those in captivity (28:2-4). But Jeremiah said that for *your brothers who did not go with you into exile—thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, I am sending upon them the sword, famine, and pestilence.”* God will make them like *split-open figs that cannot be eaten due to rottenness.* Why? *“Because they have not listened to My words,” declared the Lord, “which I sent to them again and again by My servants the prophets; but you did not listen.”*

*Verses 20-23*—Jeremiah singled out two men, who evidently were the heads of the false prophets. Their names were Ahab and Zedekiah. Only two things are known about them: (1) *who are prophesying to you falsely in My name* and (2) *have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives*. God delivered them over to Nebuchadnezzar, *and he shall slay them before your eyes*. Their slaying actually becomes a curse repeated by the people: “*May the Lord make you like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire.*” This was a punishment often used in Babylon (Daniel 3:6-23).

## **Jeremiah's Second Letter to the Exiles (29:24-32)**

### **(1) The report of Shemaiah's letter to Jerusalem (29:24-29)**

Shemaiah was another false prophet in Babylon. He sent a letter back to Jerusalem in his *own name*, to the priest Zephaniah. [Possibly this Zephaniah was the brother of the cursed false prophet Zedekiah in Babylon if their fathers are the same Maaseiah (v. 21, 25)] He exhorted Zephaniah that, as priest, he was *the overseer in the house of the Lord over every madman who prophesies, to put him in the stocks*. So he wants to know why Zephaniah has not done that to Jeremiah because, quoting Jeremiah's first letter to the exiles, Jeremiah has said the exile will be a long time.

But instead of putting Jeremiah in stocks, *Zephaniah the priest read this letter to Jeremiah the prophet*. Zephaniah consulted Jeremiah two other times, on behalf of King Zedekiah (21:1; 37:3). Zephaniah was captured and killed by Nebuchadnezzar after the fall of Jerusalem (52:24-27).

### **(2) The condemnation of Shemaiah (29:30-32)**

Jeremiah sent a second message to the exiles. This letter contained God's judgment against Shemaiah *because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, although I [God] did not send him, and he has made you trust in a lie*. God would *punish Shemaiah...and his descendants...he shall not see the good that I am about to do My people*. This “good” is described in chapters 30-33. Shemaiah would not take part in these good things because by urging those in Jerusalem to oppose Jeremiah, he had *preached rebellion against the Lord*.

**APPLICATION**—When speaking to some Jews, Jesus said, “*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar, and the father of lies*” (John 8:44).

## **Future Comfort for Israel and Judah (chapters 30–33)**

### **The Restoration of Israel and Judah Declared—Chapters 30–31**

God had threatened Judah with judgment for her disobedience, but still the nation did not turn back to Him. But before this suffering began, God instructed Jeremiah to write in a book prophecies of hope. They looked forward to a time when Israel and Judah would re-unite in the Promised Land and be restored to their God.

### **The Nation's Physical Deliverance (30:1-11)**

#### **(1) The nation's restoration to the land (30:1-3)**

God instructed Jeremiah to write these words of comfort and hope in a book that would be available to the exiles after Jerusalem fell. Jeremiah used the words “the days” in two different ways in his book. First is the day of destruction when God would judge Judah for her sin (5:18; 7:32; 9:25; 19:6). This day was fulfilled when Judah fell to Babylon.

The second “day” was the day of restoration when God would bring the nations of Israel and Judah together into a new relationship with Him and He will deal with the Gentile nations (3:16, 18; 16:14; 23:5, 7, 20; 30:3, 24; 31:27, 29, 31, 33, 38; 33:14-16; 48:12, 47; 49:2, 39; 50:4, 20; 51:47, 52). In this day, God will fulfill the blessings He promised in Deuteronomy 30:1-10.

Although Jeremiah saw these events as one continuous series, they were fulfilled over a long period, even with gaps of time. (For example, Paul described his preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles—and the church age—as new revelation given to him from God, not known to other men—Galatians 1:12.) So Jeremiah saw the restoration of Judah after the Babylonian captivity and the still-future restoration of Judah as the same thing in some passages. Context is everything! By looking at the immediate context, we can discover if he’s talking about the near or far future. Also, because we can look at what happened in history, we can discover that some of these things have not yet happened, therefore, they would be far prophecy.

Jeremiah’s first prophecy was that God said, *I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah and I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers, and they shall possess it* (Deuteronomy 30:3-5). This gave hope to those who would soon be taken out of the land to Babylon.

## **(2) The nation’s distress (30:4-7)**

*These are the words which the Lord spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah—The return of these two nations is preceded by a the time of Jacob’s distress and there is none like it.* Because He is talking about the distress to **both** of these nations, He must be referring to the future Tribulation time, when both nations will receive unparalleled persecution (Daniel 9:27; 12:1; Matthew 24:15-22). That time will end when Christ appears to rescue His elect and establish His kingdom (Matthew 24:30-31; 25:31-46; Revelation 19:11-21; 20:4-6).

## **(3) The Lord’s deliverance (30:8-11)**

Things promised about the future restoration in the Millennial Kingdom:

- (a) *I will break his yoke...strangers shall no longer make them their slaves*
- (b) *They shall serve the Lord their God*
- (c) *And David their king, whom I will raise up for them* (see Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5)
- (d) *I will save you from affliction, and your offspring from the land of their captivity*
- (e) *Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, and no one shall make him afraid*
- (f) *I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you*
- (g) *I will not destroy you completely. But I will chasten you justly, and will by no means leave you unpunished* (for their sins against God)

## **The Nation’s Spiritual Healing (30:12-17)**

### **(1) Israel’s sin caused her wounds (30:12-15)**

- *Your wound is incurable, and your injury is serious... There is no one to plead your cause...no recovery for you...all your lovers have forgotten you—The idols and other nations cannot help them.*
- *God has wounded you...with the punishment of a cruel one, because your iniquity is great and your sins are numerous.*
- *God’s sovereignty—I have done these things to you—Don’t doubt it—God’s in charge and control!!*

### **(2) God would heal Israel’s wounds (30:16-17)**

- (h) *“For I will restore you to health and I will heal you of your wounds,” declares the Lord.*

## **The Nation's Material Blessing (30:18-22)**

- (i) *The city [Jerusalem] shall be rebuilt on its ruin, and the palace shall stand on its rightful place*
- (j) *From them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of those who make merry*
- (k) *I will multiply them...I will also honor them*
- (l) *Their leader shall be one of them [a Jew, not a Gentile ruler such as Nebuchadnezzar or Herod] and I will bring him near, and he shall approach Me*
- (m) *You shall be My people, and I will be your God* (see Leviticus 26:12; Deuteronomy 7:6; 26:16-19; Jeremiah 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 31:1, 33; Ezekiel 11:20; 14:11; 34:30; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Hosea 2:23; Zechariah 8:8; 13:9).

## **The Judgment on the Wicked (30:23-31:1)**

- (n) *The tempest of the Lord! Wrath...will burst on the head of the wicked*—Before God's blessing can be experienced, He must judge sin. These words are about the same words Jeremiah wrote in 23:19-20, where he was referring to the false prophets. Here he might also mean God's judgment on the wicked nations who opposed Israel (see 30:16). Judgment for sin must come before blessing.

*Verses 31:1*—This verse links these two sections. God promised that when He will judge the world for its sins He will also restore *all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people* (see 30:22).

## **God's National Restoration (31:2-40)**

### **(1) The national restoration of Israel (31:2-22)**

*Verses 2-6*—*At that time*—when? After God has *accomplished the intent of His heart* in His wrath against wickedness (30:24), what Jesus called the “Great Tribulation” (Matthew 24:21).

- *all the families of Israel...shall be My people*. Why? Because of God's *grace, His everlasting love, and His lovingkindness (hesed = agape)*, undeserved by them.
- Three word pictures that will characterize God's restoration of Israel:
  1. *You shall take up your tambourines...* Times of sadness will end with the Captivity ending
  2. *You shall plant...and shall enjoy them*—A time of peace and prosperity.
  3. *There shall be a day when... “let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God”*—renewed commitment to God.

*Verses 7-9*—A time of joy. No one will be too far away. God *will gather them from the remote parts of the earth*. No one will have obstacles to keep them from coming. God *will make them walk by streams of waters, on a straight [level] path in which they shall not stumble*. Why? *For I am a father to Israel*.

*Verses 10-14*—*He who scattered Israel will gather him*. They *shall come and shout for joy...they shall be radiant over the bounty of the Lord*. God *will turn their mourning into joy*. And “*My people shall be satisfied with My goodness,*” declares the Lord.

*Verses 15-20*—*A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more*.

- Ramah was a town 5 miles north of Jerusalem.
- Rachel was Joseph and Benjamin's mother.
- Joseph was the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, who became the two major tribes in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- Jeremiah pictures the weeping of the women of the Northern Kingdom as they watched their children being carried into exile in 722 B.C.

In what sense was Herod's slaughter of the babies (Matthew 2:17-18) a “fulfillment” of Jeremiah 31:15?

- Matthew used the word “fulfill” to record an actual fulfillment of an Old Testament prediction (see Matthew 21:4-5 and Zechariah 9:9).
- Matthew also used the word to indicate that the full potential of something in the Old Testament had been realized (see Matthew 3:15; 5:17) but with no prophetic significance.
- It’s in this second sense that Matthew used the word in 2:17-18 to explain the sadness of the mothers of Bethlehem. The pain of those mothers in Ramah who watched their sons being carried into exile found its full potential in the cries of the mothers of Bethlehem who cradled their sons’ lifeless bodies in their arms.

Israel strayed into sin, was *chastised*, and repented and turned back to God. Therefore, “*I will surely have mercy on him,*” declares the Lord.

*Verses 21-22*—They were to set up *roadmarks...guideposts...direct your mind to the highway, the way by which you went*, so they could *return*. It will be a remarkable time. *For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth*. He’s leading into the information about the New Covenant in verse 27. [*A woman will encompass a man*—Have no idea what that means.]

## **(2) The national restoration of Judah (31:23-26)**

When God restores the nation of Israel, He will also restore the fortune of Judah. There will again be a blessing on Jerusalem and Zion (*holy hill*). The land will be repopulated and God will *satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes*. Jeremiah then awakes. Instead of the weeping as he has been doing over the coming destruction, at news of the restoration, *my sleep was pleasant to me*.

## **(3) The establishment of a new relationship with Israel and Judah (31:27-40)**

*Verses 27-30*—God now vowed to provide a new beginning for His covenant people. In 1:10 God had said Jeremiah would be like a farmer, his message would uproot (announce judgment) and plant (announce blessing). The first part of the book was the uprooting judgment. Now God says, “*I will watch over them to build and to plant.*”

This will silence a proverb, evidently common in that day, “*The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children’s teeth are set on edge,*” that is, the fathers sinned, but the children suffered the consequences of it. This was a false proverb. It implied that God was unjust. As with all false doctrines, a kernel of truth in the teaching made it seem plausible. In the Ten Commandments, God said, *I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me* (Exodus 20:5). But the point is that the *effects* of sin are serious and long-lasting, not that God impulsively punishes the innocent for their ancestors’ evil ways.

But when God establishes the New Covenant, they would see that God’s justice will guarantee that *everyone will die for his own iniquity*. They will no longer say the old proverb.

*Verses 31-37*—This New Covenant will be *with the house of Israel* (the Northern Kingdom) *and with the house of Judah* (the Southern Kingdom). It will not be like the first covenant God *made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt*. That covenant was the Mosaic Covenant in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Twice in that covenant God announced a series of punishments or “curses” on those who violated His Law (Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28), which the people did. Therefore, they were physically deported from the land of Israel to the land of Babylon and Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C.

God’s New Covenant will be an internalization of His Law.

- God will *put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it*, not just on stones (Exodus 34:1).
- *They shall not teach again, each man his neighbor..., saying, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know Me* (see Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14).

- Ezekiel 36:24-32 indicates that this change is the result of the Holy Spirit indwelling all believers. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit did not indwell all believers.
- Under the old Mosaic Covenant, the sins of the people resulted in the curses. But under the New Covenant, God *will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more*. How? God cannot simply overlook sin. Isaiah 53:4-6 says that the penalty of that sin will be paid by a Substitute. In the Upper Room, Jesus announced that the New Covenant was to be inaugurated through the shedding of His blood (Matthew 26:27-28; Luke 22:20).

The permanence of Israel is compared to the moon and the stars. *“If this fixed order departs from before Me,” declares the Lord, “Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever.”* The power God displayed in creating the universe is the power that He uses in preserving Israel as a nation. No one can destroy the people of Israel—though many have tried to do so.

**APPLICATION**—How is the church related to the New Covenant? Ultimately the New Covenant will be fulfilled during the Millennial Kingdom when Israel is restored to her God. The New Covenant was made with Israel (Jeremiah 31:31, 33), just as the Mosaic Covenant had been (v. 32). However, we in the church age are benefiting from some of that covenant. It was inaugurated at Christ’s death (Matthew 26:27-28; Luke 22:20), so by our union with Christ, we share in some of the spiritual benefits of this New Covenant (such as the forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit). But that does **not** mean that spiritual and physical blessings will not be realized by Israel. That still awaits the day when Israel will acknowledge her sin and turn to the Messiah for forgiveness (Zechariah 12:10–13:1).

*Verses 38-40*—And then God will establish a new city of Jerusalem for His people. God gives the exact boundaries of this city (see also Nehemiah 3:1; 12:39; Zechariah 14:10; 2 Kings 14:13; 2 Chronicles 26:9). It’s bigger than the city at Jeremiah’s time that was destroyed by the Babylonians and is bigger than the “Old City” of today. In addition to the dimensions, God gives two characteristics of the city:

1. *It shall be holy to the Lord*—The city and its inhabitants will be set apart to God who will dwell in her midst (Ezekiel 48:35; Zechariah 14:20-21).
2. *It shall not be plucked up, or overthrown anymore forever*—No more war.

These characteristics will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom.

## **The Restoration of Israel and Judah Illustrated—Chapters 32**

### **1. The Illustration (verses 1-12)**

*Verses 1-2*—The specific time is given when Zedekiah was king in Judah and Nebuchadnezzar was king in Babylon, which is sometime between April 23 and October 17 of 587 B.C. During this time, *Babylon was besieging Jerusalem*. This siege lasted from January 15, 588, until July 18, 586, and *Jeremiah... was shut up in the court of the guard, which was in the house of the king of Judah*.

*Verses 3-5*—Jeremiah had been imprisoned by Zedekiah because of his prophecies. He predicted the capture of both Jerusalem and Zedekiah and that Zedekiah would be taken captive to Babylon. Jeremiah told Zedekiah, *“If you fight against the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed.”*

*Verses 6-9*—God told Jeremiah that his cousin Hanamel would visit him in prison and ask Jeremiah to buy Hanamel’s field in Anathoth (Jeremiah’s hometown, north of Jerusalem). Hanamel was following the Mosaic Law which called for a person to redeem (purchase) the property of a relative who was forced to sell so that it would not leave the family (Leviticus 25:25-28; Ruth 4:1-6). So Hanamel told Jeremiah *you have the right of possession and the redemption is yours*. Anathoth was already under Babylonian control, so this purchase would seem foolish. Who would buy land that had already fallen into the enemy’s hands? Because of this seeming foolishness, God told Jeremiah in advance that Hanamel would come so Jeremiah would recognize God’s hand in the request—*Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord*.

*Verses 10-12*—Following the legal customs of the day, Jeremiah *signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses, and weighed out the silver on the scales*. Two copies of the deed were made. One was sealed by being tied with a piece of string or cord and then having Jeremiah’s official seal stamped into a lump of clay placed over the string. The other copy remained unsealed so it could later be examined. Jeremiah handed both copies of the deed to Baruch, Jeremiah’s scribe and friend (see Jeremiah 36:4, 8, 26).

**APPLICATION**—God used visuals to communicate His truth from the Word of God. Use visuals, photos, events happening around you, illustrations, “flannelgraphs,” PowerPoints, physical objects, as Jesus used parables, etc. to help communicate God’s Word. For example, I got 5,000 pennys from the bank to help communicate to my grandchildren how many people Jesus fed when He fed the 5,000.

## **2. The Explanation (verses 13-15)**

Jeremiah instructed Baruch to take both copies of the deed and *put them in an earthenware jar, that they may last a long time* (like the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran). It would be many years before the people would return from the captivity and claim their land. Yet Jeremiah’s purpose in buying the land and preserving the deeds was to show that *houses and fields and vineyard shall again be bought in this land*.

## **3. The Prayer of Jeremiah (verses 16-25)**

*Verses 16-19*—In Jeremiah’s praise for God’s greatness, he began by focusing on God’s character. As the Creator, *nothing is too difficult for Thee*. He is omnipotent, omniscient, loving, and just. Therefore, He punishes sin and also gives *to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds*.

*Verses 20-23*—God’s character was seen in His deeds throughout Israel’s history. God brought Israel out of Egypt with mighty *signs and wonders, and with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terror*. And God brought them into *this land, which Thou did swear to their forefathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey*—until the Israelites got there. They *came in and took possession of it, but they did not obey Thy voice or walk in Thy law. ...Therefore Thou hast made all this calamity come upon them*.

**APPLICATION**—What God gives us is good. We start good as believers—His bounty at salvation of love, grace, mercy, His Holy Spirit living in us, His Word to instruct us, fellow believers to encourage us, etc. But what do we do with it? Do we quench the Spirit, ignore His Word, ...If we turn our backs on God and what He’s given us at salvation, we invite calamity into our lives. We will lose His peace—it’s replaced with anxiety. We lose the direction of His Word—it’s replaced with chaos.

*Verses 24-25*—After reminding God of His mighty character and deeds, Jeremiah is still puzzled. In light of all he said in verses 17-23, it doesn’t seem like he doubts God’s ability to restore His people. It seems more likely he is wondering *how* God would accomplish this restoration rather than doubting *if* God would accomplish it. The *siege mounds have reached the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans*. Everything God has foretold through His prophets has happened. *What Thou hast spoken has come to pass*. Yet God commands Jeremiah at this moment to buy a field already under Babylonian control (vv. 6-12). Jeremiah did not understand how God’s promised restoration related to Judah’s present calamity.

## **4. The Answer of the Lord (verses 26-44)**

*Verses 26-29*—God answered Jeremiah’s prayer. Yes, Jeremiah was correct in verse 17. God is *the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?* Jeremiah could depend on God’s Word even if he did not understand how it would be accomplished. The Babylonians would destroy Jerusalem and burn it down because of the idolatry of the sons of Israel.

*Verses 30-35*—God would destroy Jerusalem because of the peoples’ sin:

1. All the people were involved in the sin—...*kings, ...leaders, ...priests, ...prophets, ...men of Judah, ...inhabitants of Jerusalem.*
2. *They have turned their back to Me [God], and not their face*
3. *Though I taught them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive instruction*
4. *They put their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it*
5. *They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom*
6. *They caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech*

*Verses 36-41*—God would restore Jerusalem because of His promise:

1. *I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them*
2. *I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety*
3. *I will be their God...and they shall be My people*
4. *I will make an everlasting covenant with them*
  - *I will not turn away from them, to do them good*
  - *I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me*
  - *I will rejoice over them to do them good*
  - *I will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul*

*Verses 42-44*—So just as God had been faithful to His Word in bringing *all this great disaster on this people* because of their sin (Deuteronomy 28:15-68), so He will also be faithful *to bring on them all the good that I am promising them* (Deuteronomy 30:1-10). So Jeremiah’s purchase of the field (32:1-15) was a symbolic act to show that “*men shall buy fields for money, sign and seal deed, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin...Jerusalem...Judah...for I will restore their fortunes,*” declares the Lord.

**APPLICATION**—Our faith in God’s promises for the future rest on His fulfillment of His Word in the past. He has kept His Word literally.

## **The Restoration of Israel and Judah Reaffirmed—Chapters 33**

In chapter 32, God reaffirmed both the coming destruction and the future restoration of Jerusalem. Now in chapter 33 God reaffirms His covenants with David and with the Levitical priests.

*Verses 1-3*—God comes to Jeremiah a second time, *while he was still confined in the court of the guard*—so this chapter is tied to chapter 32 (see verse 2). God identified Himself as the Creator and emphasized His covenant relationship to Israel (*the Lord [Yahweh] is His name*—see 32:18; Exodus 3:13-15). Jeremiah did not understand how God could restore a nation destined for doom. So God told Jeremiah to “*Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.*” “which you do not know” or “unsearchable things” in Hebrew means something that is made inaccessible by fortifying it or enclosing it. It is used to describe fortified cities (Numbers 13:28). God’s plans for the future are inaccessible to ordinary people. Only God can unlock the secrets of the future, and He offered this knowledge to Jeremiah. He would share with Jeremiah the things he did not know or understand about Israel’s future.

**APPLICATION**—The special revelation of God in His Word is information we would not be able to know if God had not chosen to reveal it to us. We can know some things about God as the Creator and His character from nature (Romans 1:19f), but we only know about Jesus from God’s special revelation in His Word.

### **The Coming Judgment and Future Restoration (verses 6-13)**

*Verses 4-5*—The first revelation from God to Jeremiah focused on Jerusalem’s fall. They were tearing down the houses and the royal palaces to provide wood and stone to strengthen the walls against the siege ramps, in a frantic attempt to prevent Babylon’s soldiers (*the sword*) from making a breach in the walls and entering the city. But it wouldn’t work. The partially dismantled houses would be filled *with*

*the corpses of men whom I have slain* by the Babylonians. God would hide His face from this city because of all their wickedness.

*Verses 6-9*—But the judgment would only be temporary. God will one day bring to it health and healing. There are three aspects of restoration:

1. A restoration to the land—God will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and I will rebuild them as they were at first
2. A restoration to the Lord—I will cleanse them...I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me
3. A restoration to a place of honor among the nations—it shall be to Me a name of joy, praise, and glory before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear of all the good that I do for them, and they shall fear and tremble because of all the good, and all the peace that I make for it.

**APPLICATION**—Just as Israel represents God to the world, so we, as believers in our time, represent God to the world. What do unbelievers think God is like based on what they observe about you?

*Verses 10-13*—God draws two pictures of the changes that would come in the restoration. Each picture begins with a similar phrase (vv. 10, 12). In each picture the scene in Jeremiah’s day was similar. Jerusalem is a waste, without man and with beast...

1. *The voice of joy...of gladness...of the bridegroom...of the bride...of those who say, “Give thanks to the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting [see Psalms 100:4-5; 106:1; 107:1; 136:1-30 ... and of those who bring a thank offering into the house of the Lord.*
2. The restoration will extend out from Jerusalem to *the cities of the hill country [east] ...the lowland [west] ...the Negev [south] in the land of Benjamin [north] ...in the cities of Judah.* “The flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who numbers them [to make sure they are all there and safe],” says the Lord. Possibly Jeremiah was using shepherd and sheep in a metaphorical sense to refer to the leaders of Israel and the people. He already compared the leaders to shepherds (3:15) and the restored nation was compared to a regathered flock (23:3; 31:10). Jeremiah also used this imagery to introduce his message on the righteous Branch from David (23:1-6), which is the subject of the next verses (33:14-26).

## **The Covenants with David and the Levitical Priests (verses 14-26)**

### **1. The Covenants (verses 14-18)**

*Verses 14-16—days are coming*—Jeremiah used this phrase 16 times in his book. It is used for the coming destruction of Judah and the surrounding nations (7:32; 9:25; 19:6; 48:12; 49:1; 51:47, 52). It is used also to point to a future period of blessing for Israel:

- (a) when the nation will be restored from captivity (16:14-15; 23:7-8; 30:3)
- (b) when the righteous Branch of David will be ruling over a united monarchy (23:5-6; 33:14-15)
- (c) when the nation will be experiencing peace and prosperity in the land (31:27-28; 33:14, 16)
- (d) when the New Covenant with its cleansing from sin will be in effect (31:31-34)
- (e) when the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt as a Holy City that will never again be destroyed (31:38-40)

These promises have never been actualized. They will be fulfilled only in the Millennial Kingdom, when the kingdom of the Messiah will be established, *when I [God] will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah.*

First will be the restoration of the monarchy. *I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth.* This was a prophecy about Jesus Christ who descended from David and was promised a throne (Luke 1:31-33). Second will be the restoration of Jerusalem as God’s dwelling place. This verse is also found in 23:6, but here Jeremiah makes a significant change in the passage to give it new meaning. In 23:6 he pictured the safety of Israel and Judah through the ministry of the “The Lord Our Righteousness.” Here

he changes “Israel” to “Jerusalem” and changes the preposition from “He” to “it” [“she” NASB]. So Jeremiah made the title *the Lord is our righteousness* apply to the city of Jerusalem instead of to the Messiah. So the city itself will take on the same characteristics as the Lord, who will dwell within her (Ezekiel 48:35). Jeremiah points out the royal (v. 15) and the religious (v. 16) aspects of God’s restoration. Both are vital for Israel’s existence as God’s covenant community.

**APPLICATION**—This is a day we long for, when righteousness rules. Jesus wins! Evil is not destroyed—YET. But here again is the promise that evil will be destroyed and God’s righteousness will characterize the earth.

*Verses 17-18*—To emphasize the importance of both the royal and religious elements, God repeated His covenants with the line of David and with the Levitical priests:

- (1) God vowed, *David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel* (2 Samuel 7:8-16; 1 Chronicles 17:4-14). In 586 B.C., the throne did cease. But God did not promise an unbroken monarchy but an unbroken line of descendants from David who would be qualified to sit on that throne when it was reestablished. The genealogies of Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-31 show that this promise was fulfilled as Christ was able to trace both His legal line through Joseph and His physical line through Mary back to David.
- (2) God vowed, *and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, ...grain offerings, and ...sacrifices....* God was referring to His promise made to Phinehas (Numbers 25:12-13). Again, the sacrifices did cease in 586 B.C. and were resumed in 537 (Ezra 3:1-6). Then they ceased again in 70 A.D. when the Temple was destroyed. The promise was that the sacrifices would not be extinguished. The Levitical priests offering sacrifices will be reinstated in the Millennial Kingdom.

**APPLICATION**—Jesus said, “*Make no oath at all*” because we cannot control the future and keep our vows (Matthew 5:33-37). “*But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; and anything beyond these is of the evil one.*” God can make vows because He has the **power** to keep the vows, and He tells the truth, so He **will** keep His vows. We do not have the power to keep our vows, and we don’t always tell the truth. So don’t make “promises.”

## **2. The Confirmation (verses 19-26)**

God gave two assurances that He would keep His covenant promises. Each assurance began with the same introductory phrase *the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah* (vv. 19, 23). Each used God’s covenant of the day and night to illustrate the permanence of this covenant promises with David and the Levitical priests.

*Verses 19-22*—Only if you [man] can break My covenant for the day, and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed times...then My covenant may also be broken with David...and with the Levitical priests. “Covenant” means a treaty or agreement made between individuals or parties by which they bound themselves to a specific relationship or course of action. God promised to preserve the kingly line of David (2 Samuel 7:8-16) and the priestly line of Phinehas (Numbers 25:12-13).

*Verses 23-26*—A group of people (we don’t know who they were, possibly doubting Israelites or Israel’s heathen neighbors), were claiming that *the two families which the Lord chose [Israel and Judah], He has rejected them...no longer are they as a nation in their sight*. They felt that Israel’s and Judah’s sin had invalidated all God’s covenant promises so that He was no longer obligated to fulfill them.

**APPLICATION**—The world interprets God’s character from circumstances—therefore, usually not understanding His character at all. They thought God was rejecting His people, which He wasn’t doing at all. As believers we are not to try to understand God’s character from circumstances. We get our understanding of His character from His special revelation of Himself to us in the Word of God. For example, “*We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose...to become conformed to the image of His Son.*” How do we know that? Because He says so in His Word (Romans 8:28-29).

God responded to this argument by reaffirming His commitment to His covenant promises. The covenants with Abraham and David were not conditioned on the people's obedience but on God's character. They were as sure as *My covenant for day and night* and as unchanging as *the fixed patterns of heaven and earth*. Only if these natural laws could be undone would God reject Jacob's and David's descendants. God referring to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* would remind Jeremiah of God's covenant promise to these patriarchs when God chose them to be a nation (Genesis 15:7-21; 17:108; 26:1-6; 28:10-15). God was bound to His promises and *He will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them*.

**APPLICATION**—The greatest argument for the future restoration of Israel as a nation is the character of God. He made a series of covenants with the patriarchs, David, and the Levites. His character demands that He will ultimately fulfill these promises to their nation.

## **Present Catastrophe of Judah (chapters 34–45)**

After describing the future hope of Judah (chapters 30–33), Jeremiah returned to discuss their present judgment. The collapse he had been predicting (chapters 2–29) would now happen. The judgment was sure because the people had rejected God's word of warning.

### **Before the Fall to Babylon—Chapters 34–36** **The Inconsistency of the People (chapter 34)**

*Verses 1-3*—God sent a warning to King Zedekiah through Jeremiah, while *Nebuchadnezzar ... was fighting against Jerusalem*. The message was that Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon would not work. God said:

- (1) *I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire*
- (2) *You will not escape from his hand*
- (3) *You will surely be captured ... you will go to Babylon*

This was fulfilled exactly (39:4-7; 52:7-11).

*Verses 4-5*—*Yet...Zedekiah will not die by the sword. You will die in peace...they will burn spices for you* [king's funeral—2 Chronicles 16:14; 21:19]; *and they will lament for you*, in contrast to Jehoiakim (22:18-19).

*Verses 6-7*—Jeremiah delivered his message to King Zedekiah as Babylon continued its attack. Only *Jerusalem and Lachish and Azekah...remained as fortified cities among the cities of Judah*. The rest had all fallen to the Babylonians.

*Verses 8-11*—One evil thing that was practiced in Judah was making permanent slaves of fellow Judeans. This was strictly forbidden in the Mosaic Law (Exodus 21:2-11; Leviticus 25:39-55; Deuteronomy 15:12-18). While Babylon was about to capture the city, King Zedekiah proclaimed that *each man should set free his male servant and each man his female servant, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman; so that no one should keep them, a Jew his brother, in bondage. ...They obeyed, and set them free*. But then we read, *But afterward they turned around and took back the male servants and the female servants, whom they had set free, and brought them into subjection*. What happened? In verse 22, at the end of the chapter, we read that *God will bring them [the Babylonians] back to this city*. Where had the attacking Babylonians gone? In 37:4-13 we read that the Egyptians left Egypt to come to the assistance of the Judeans. So the Babylonians left Jerusalem to go fight the Egyptians. The Jews evidently thought the siege was over, so they took their slaves back into slavery. But God says, *the Chaldeans will return...and they will capture it [Jerusalem] and burn it with fire. ...do not deceive yourselves...even if you had defeated the entire army of Chaldeans...and there were only wounded men left...they would rise up and burn this city with fire* (37:8-10).

**APPLICATION**—The Judeans didn't obey, then they obeyed, then they didn't obey. Their obedience depended on their circumstances. If it was going well, they saw no reason to obey God. When they were attacked and it looked like they would lose, they chose to obey God. They used obedience to try to manipulate God. How we also try to manipulate God. For example, there are the "foxhole prayers"—"Lord, save me, and I will..." But when the danger passes, life goes back to the way it was. God is not the one who is deceived by their actions. They are the ones who are deceiving themselves (see 37:9).

*Verses 12-16—In the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, God made a covenant with Israel, saying, "At the end of seven years each of you shall set free his Hebrew brother." No Israelite was to be forced into permanent bondage again, as they were in Egypt. But your forefathers did not obey Me. They permanently enslaved their fellow Jews. Although recently you had turned and done what is right in My sight, each man proclaiming release to his neighbor, and you had made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name. So they made a covenant with God in the Temple that they would not permanently enslave their fellow Jews. But then each man took back his male servant and...female servant, whom you had set free...and brought them into subjection. This act profaned My [God's] name because it broke the Law and it broke the covenant this people made before God in His Holy Temple.*

*Verses 17-20—God's punishment matched their sin. They did not obey God in giving freedom to their slaves, so God would give "freedom" to them, a freedom to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine. When they made their covenant in the Temple, they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts. By walking through the parts of the animal, they were symbolizing the judgment that should befall them if they violated the agreement—they would be hacked to pieces like the calf. Significantly, when God made His covenant with Abraham, Abraham did not pass between the parts of the animal, only God did (symbolized by the blazing torch—Genesis 15:4-18). The Abrahamic Covenant rested on God's character, not on man's obedience. God will treat those who broke the covenant like the calf they had slaughtered. They will be handed over to their enemies, and like the parts of the calf, their dead bodies would lie on the ground as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.*

*Verses 21-22—The people, the leaders, and the king all turned away from God. Though the king of Babylon has gone away from you. ...I will bring them back to this city; and they shall...take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.*

## **The Consistency of the Recabites (chapter 35)**

### **(1) The Faithfulness of the Recabites (verses 1-11)**

*Verses 1-5*

- This prophecy was given *in the days of Johoiakim*—about 11 to 20 years earlier than chapter 34. It seems to be placed here to contrast the faithfulness of the Recabites with the unfaithfulness of Judah (chapter 34).
- Who are the Recabites? They are descended from *Jonadab the son of Rechab* (v. 6), who assisted Jehu in exterminating Baal worship from Israel (2 Kings 10:15-27). They were related to the Kenites (1 Chronicles 2:54-55) who descended from Moses' father-in-law, Jethro (Judges 1:16). Evidently Jonadab adopted the lifestyle of a Beduin, which was continued by his clan. They traveled the wilderness of the Negev (south) (Judges 1:16; 1 Samuel 15:6) but were forced to move to Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar threatened Judah in 598 B.C.
- God told Jeremiah to bring *into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers...the whole house of the Rechabites*.
- There in the house of the Lord, Jeremiah was to *give them wine to drink*.
- The rooms into which Jeremiah brought them surrounded the Temple court and were used for meetings, storage, and as priests' residences (1 Kings 6:5; 1 Chronicles 28:12; 2 Chronicles 31:11; Nehemiah 13:7-9). The rooms Jeremiah entered belonged to *the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the doorkeeper*. The room occupied a prominent position. Maaseiah was one of

three “doorkeepers” for the Temple. It was evidently a high position because the Babylonians judged them along with the chief priests (2 Kings 25:18-21; Jeremiah 52:24-27).

- So it’s before these important people, in this important place, that Jeremiah brings these rough Bedu- in Rachabites. Then Jeremiah said, *“Drink wine!”*

*Verses 6-11—*

- *But they said, “We will not drink wine.”*
- *Why? Because Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, “You shall not drink wine, you or your sons, forever.”*
- *Not only that, he had also forbidden them to build a house...sow seed...plant a vineyard...or own a vineyard; but in tents you shall dwell all your days.*
- *So the Rechabites have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all he commanded us*
- *But it came about, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, that we said, “Come and let us go to Jerusalem before the army of the Chaldeans...so we have dwelt in Jerusalem.*

**APPLICATION**—Remember, the Judeans were living under the Mosaic Law which said they could make vows, but they were to fulfill their vows. Earlier Jeremiah said, *“O Lord of hosts, Thou who dost test the righteous, Who seest the mind and the heart”* (20:12). Here God is testing the Rachabites (as He tested Job). God does not tempt. It has to do with motivation. God tests believers, *“knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”* (James 1:3-4). Temptation is when you are *“carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death”* (James 1:15-16). The situation may look the same, but God’s motivation is to test you in order to make you mature; Satan’s and your own sin nature’s purpose is to get you to lust and sin and stunt your spiritual growth.

## **(2) The Example of the Racabites (verses 12-17)**

- Then God told Jeremiah to say to the men of Judah, *“Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words?” declares the Lord. “...for they [the Racabites] have obeyed their father’s command. But I have spoken to you again and again; yet you have not listened to Me.”*
- *“Also I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending them again and again, saying: ‘Turn now every man from his evil way...do not go after other gods to worship them.’”*
- *“...then you shall dwell in the land which I have given to you...”*
- *“but you have not inclined your ear or listened to Me. Indeed, the son of Jonadab the son of Rechab have observed the command of their father which he commanded them, but this people has not listened to Me.”*
- *“Therefore, I am bringing on Judah...all the disaster that I have pronounced against them; because I spoke them but they did not listen...”*

**APPLICATION**—So the Racabites served as a visual reminder of Judah’s sin. Just as God warned Judah over and over through His prophets, He warns us over and over through His Word. God is looking for those who are willing to know His Word and obey it. The epistles are full of instructions to obey. For example, *“put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you...”* (Colossians 3:12 f). When you are not kind and compassionate, when you don’t humbly bear with someone or forgive them when you have a complaint, you are not obeying God’s Word. Instead you are elevating yourself, thinking that you, your opinion, your feelings, etc. are more important than obedience to God.

## **(3) The Reward of the Racabites (verses 18-19)**

God promised the Racabites, *Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, kept all his commands, and done according to all that he commanded you; therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, “Jonadab...shall not lack a man to stand before Me always.”* Their descendants will survive to be able to worship the Lord. They will not be destroyed in the coming invasion, for example.