

APPLICATION—God rewards obedience! We don't obey just to obey. God will reward us some day for obeying Him (1 Corinthians 4:5). Jesus said, "*Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven...*" (Matthew 6:20). Obedience is stockpiling treasure for yourself when you get to heaven. So obedience is not only honoring God (which alone would be a good enough reason!), it is also for your benefit in your eternal future.

Jehoiakim's Scroll-Burning (chapter 36)

(1) The Writing of the Scroll (verses 1-7)

Verses 1-3—These events began *in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah (605-604)*

- God commanded Jeremiah, *take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you*
- *concerning Israel and concerning Judah, and concerning all the nations*
- *from the day I first spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day*
- Why write this down? *Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity which I plan to bring on them, in order that every man will turn from his evil way; then I will forgive their...sin.*

Verses 4-7—Jeremiah called for Baruch, his scribe (32:12-16; 36:26), *and Baruch wrote at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord, which He had spoken to him, on a scroll.*

- Jeremiah then instructed Baruch to read the scroll in the Temple (because Jeremiah was restricted, or barred, from there) in the presence of the people. He was to do it on a fast day. Before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., fast days were not specified but were called in times of emergency (36:9; 2 Chronicles 20:3; Joel 1:14; 2:15). After the fall of Jerusalem, regular fast days were instituted (Zechariah 7:3, 5; 8:19).
- Jeremiah's purpose was that *Perhaps their supplication will come before the Lord, and everyone will turn from his evil way, for great is the anger and the wrath that the Lord has pronounced against this people.*"
- *Baruch...did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading from the book the words of the Lord in the Lord's house.*

APPLICATION—We don't know whether Jeremiah dictated from memory or from notes he had made. We do know that what was written was superintended (controlled and directed) by God Himself (John 14:25-26). These are the words of God and no one is to add to them or take away from them (Revelation 22:18-19).

(2) The Reading of the Scroll (verses 8-19)

- On this particular fast day when all the people came from the cities into Jerusalem and to the Temple, *Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord...to all the people.*
- *When Micaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan*—These are men who supported Jeremiah (26:24—see the chart by that passage).
- Micaiah went to the officials (including his father Gemariah and the "bad guy" Elnathan—see 26:22) and reported Baruch's words. They sent for Baruch and asked him to read the scroll to them.
- When they heard the words of the scroll, they became afraid (probably because they realized they had to report this to the king, who reacted in anger) and asked if these words were at the dictation of Jeremiah. When Baruch said they were, the officials said, "*We will surely report all these words to the king.*" Meanwhile they told Baruch, "*Go, hide yourself, you and Jeremiah, and do not let anyone know where you are.*" Most likely this was based on Jehoiakim's reaction to Uriah the prophet, whom he had killed (26:20-23).

(3) The Burning of the Scroll (verses 20-26)

- Baruch's scroll was placed *in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and they reported all the words to the king. Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll.* He read it to the king while the officials watched. Because it was during the 9th month, the weather was cool, and the king was in his winter apartment, and he had a fire burning in the firepot, or brazier, to provide warmth.

- The writing was in vertical columns. After Jehudi would read 3 or 4 columns, the king would cut those columns off and burn them in the fire. He did this until the whole scroll was burned up. Instead of repenting like his godly father Josiah (2 Kings 22:11-13), ...*the king and all his servants who heard all these words were not afraid, nor did they rend their garments*. Instead, the king commanded...*to seize Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet, but the Lord hid them, so the king's men could not find them.*

(4) The Rewriting of the Scroll (verses 27-32)

- God told Jeremiah to “*take again another scroll and write on it all the former words that were on the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah burned*. This time he was to also include an additional word for Jehoiakim.
- Because he burned the scroll and refused to believe God’s warning *that the king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land*, God vowed to judge him.
 1. *He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David*—Although his son Jehoiachin did follow him to the throne (2 Kings 24:8-17), he was deposed by Nebuchadnezzar after a reign of only three months (the curse of Coniah in 22:30) and Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin’s uncle Zedekiah to the throne.
 2. *His dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night*—no kingly burial.
 3. His descendants would also be judged for their wickedness. God would bring on them *all the calamity that I have declared to them—but they did not listen*.
- Jeremiah obeyed God’s command and *took another scroll and gave it to Baruch...the scribe, and he wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them* (most likely, the contents of chapter 36, including the judgment on Jehoiakim).

APPLICATION—Man can burn a scroll, but he cannot destroy the Word of God! Peter said, “*All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord abides forever*” (1 Peter 1:24-25). Where’s Jehoiachin today? Dead and forgotten. Where is the glory of the kings of Judah today? Gone and forgotten. Where’s the Word of God today? “*For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart*” (Hebrews 4:12).

Present Catastrophe of Judah (chapters 34-45)

During the Fall to Babylon—Chapters 37-39

These chapters trace the life and ministry of Jeremiah during the final siege and fall of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah’s Message to Zedekiah (37:1-10)

Verses 1-2—Zedekiah was placed on the throne as a vassal king by Nebuchadnezzar. He *reigned as king in place of Coniah* and was Coniah’s (Jehoiachin’s) uncle. He was to give loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar in return for protection. Neither Zedekiah nor the people *listened to the words of the Lord ... through Jeremiah*.

Verses 3-10—Even though he didn’t listen to the words of God, *yet King Zedekiah* sent two priests to Jeremiah, saying, *Please pray to the Lord our God on our behalf*. At this point, Jeremiah was not yet in prison. The Egyptian army had set out from Egypt, so the Babylonians quit the siege of Jerusalem and went south to engage the Egyptian army. Perhaps Zedekiah thought Jeremiah’s prayers would persuade God to give the Egyptian army the victory and deliver Jerusalem from the Babylonians.

But God replied through Jeremiah to King Zedekiah that the Egyptian army would return home, and *the Chaldeans will also return and fight against this city, and they will capture it and burn it with fire*, as God has said they would. Then God said, *Do not deceive yourselves*, thinking the Babylonians were gone and they were safe. *Even if you had defeated the entire army of the Chaldeans ... and there were only wounded men left among them, ... they would rise up and burn this city with fire.*

APPLICATION—We can't change God's plan or His Word. For example, Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6). We can't think there is another way for "those who never heard." Events in the world are the birth pangs leading up to the Tribulation. We can't think we will change the world to be a better place. God's Word says the world will get worse, more evil.

Jeremiah's Imprisonment (37:11—38:28)

(1) *Verses 11-16*—Jeremiah's arrest and confinement in a dungeon—

- During the time the Babylonian army was off fighting the Egyptians, the siege was lifted against Jerusalem and it was a time of peace. So Jeremiah set out from Jerusalem to take care of some personal business in *the land of Benjamin*, where his hometown was located (just north of Jerusalem).
- The word take "possession" can also be translated "divide, share, apportion." So he was either buying some land or dividing up some land for sale to others. This would not be his purchase in chapter 32 because in chapter 32 he had already been arrested and confined to the courtyard of the guard (32:2). When he started out here in chapter 37, he had not yet been arrested. Therefore, this chapter 37 took place before chapter 32.
- Usually the gates in Jerusalem were (and still are) named for the direction to which the gate faces and where the road goes from the gate. So Jeremiah went out a north gate that faced Benjamin.
- A *captain of the guard* stopped Jeremiah and accused him, saying, *You are going over to the Chaldeans!* Jeremiah vehemently denied this accusation—*A lie! I am not going over to the Chaldeans.*
- But the guard would not believe Jeremiah. So he brought Jeremiah to the officials, who *beat him, and they put him in jail ... into the dungeon [cistern pit], that is, the vaulted cell; and Jeremiah stayed there many days.* Cisterns are huge underground rooms for the collection of water in the rainy season to use in the dry season. This cistern *they had made into the prison.*

APPLICATION—This would be a reasonable conclusion of the guard. Jeremiah had been telling the people to go over to the Babylonians to save their lives. He was leaving by the north gate, the direction of the coming invasion of the Babylonians. But the guard was wrong. That's the trouble with looking at circumstances to get direction. You can be completely wrong in your conclusions.

(2) *Verses 17-21*—Jeremiah's first meeting with Zedekiah and transfer to the courtyard of the guard—

- King Zedekiah secretly brought Jeremiah out of the cistern and to the palace and asked him, *Is there a word from the Lord?* Jeremiah answered, *There is! You will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon.*
- Jeremiah then used this opportunity to declare his innocence to the king. The false prophets said Babylon wouldn't attack, which turned out to be false, but they weren't in prison. Jeremiah told the truth, and he was in prison.
- Jeremiah asked that he not be returned to the cistern, *that I may not die there.* So the king *gave commandment, and they committed Jeremiah to the court of the guardhouse and gave him a loaf of bread daily ... until all the bread in the city was gone.* The cistern was dark and damp and cold. The guardhouse was above ground and dry.

APPLICATION—Jeremiah's message was unaffected by his imprisonment. He faithfully proclaimed the Word of God no matter what his circumstances were.

(3) *Verses 38:1-6*—Jeremiah’s confinement in a cistern—By being confined in the courtyard of the guard, Jeremiah had some freedom to meet with people (see 32:1-2, 6). He also used this opportunity to deliver God’s message to any who would listen. His message was heard by four powerful officials.

- Jeremiah’s message was the same as before in 21:3-10—*he who stays in this city will die ... but he who goes out to the Chaldeans will ... stay alive.*
- The officials went to the king and said, “*let this man be put to death ... he is discouraging the men of war ... and all the people.*”
- They thought Jeremiah was *not seeking the well-being of this people, but rather their harm.* But the exact opposite was true. Jeremiah was trying to save some of the people alive (v. 2).
- King Zedekiah (who had earlier said he would protect Jeremiah—37:18-21) now handed Jeremiah over to the officials and said, “*for the king can do nothing against you [officials].*” One might ask, “Aren’t you the king?!” Zedekiah was a political puppet, incapable of making strong, independent decisions. He was controlled by either Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:17) or by the city officials who urged him to rebel against Babylon and then influenced his decisions (27:12-15; 38:5, 19, 24-28).
- So the officials took Jeremiah and let him down on a rope into a large cistern, in which *there was no water but only mud, and Jeremiah sank into the mud.*

APPLICATION—The guards saw Jeremiah’s message as discouraging to the people, seeking their harm. It didn’t matter to them whether the message was the truth or not. It was the response of the people that mattered. Paul told Timothy that “*the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths*” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

(4) *Verses 7-13*—Jeremiah’s rescue from the cistern—

- The only official to intercede on Jeremiah’s behalf was *Ebed-Melech* (lit. “servant of the king”) who was an *Ethiopian* (from northern Africa). He was a *eunuch* (a Hebrew word that is sometimes also translated simply as “official”) *in the king’s palace*. We don’t know exactly what he did, but he had access to the king.
- *Ebed-Melech went out from the king’s palace and spoke to the king, ... who was sitting in the Gate of Benjamin.* He reported to the king that the other officials *had acted wickedly in all that they have done to Jeremiah ... whom they have cast into the cistern; and he will die right where he is because of the famine, for there is no more bread in the city.*
- So the king commanded Ebed-melech to *take thirty men ... and bring up Jeremiah ... from the cistern before he dies.* He was to take 30 men with him to pull Jeremiah up, plus protect them all from the officials.
- So Ebed-melech went to a storeroom and *took from there worn-out clothes and ... rags and let them down by ropes into the cistern.* He told Jeremiah to *put the rags under your armpits under the ropes* and then they *lifted him out of the cistern.* Then Jeremiah *stayed in the court of the guardhouse.*

APPLICATION—Ebed-Melech was willing to lay his life on the line to rescue Jeremiah. God rewards him. When the invasion occurred, Ebed-Melech’s life was spared (39:15-18). You must decide—whose side are you on? Who will be the victor? Your eternal destiny depends on making the right choice!

(5) *Verses 14-28*—Jeremiah’s second meeting with Zedekiah—

- King Zedekiah again met Jeremiah secretly. This *third entrance* may have been somehow connecting the king’s palace with the Temple. It’s not mentioned elsewhere. The king said, “*I’m going to ask you something; do not hide anything from me.*”
- Jeremiah had two objections to answering the king’s inquiry:
 - (1) *If I tell you, will you not certainly put me to death?*

(2) *Besides, if I give you advice, you will not listen to me.*

- Zedekiah answered the first objection but not the second. He swore to Jeremiah in secret, saying, *“As the Lord lives, who made this life for us, surely I will not put you to death nor will I give you over to the hand of these men who are seeking your life.”*
- Jeremiah’s message was the same as before (21:1-10; 37:17; 38:1-3). If Zedekiah surrendered to the Babylonians, *then you will live, this city will not be burned with fire, and you and your household will survive.*
- But if Zedekiah will not go out to the Babylonians, *then this city ... will burn ... and you yourself will not escape from their hand.*
- Zedekiah was in *dread of the Jews who have gone over to the Chaldeans, lest they give me over into their hand and they abuse me*—he thought the Babylonians would hand him over to the Jews who had surrendered to the Babylonians, and those Jews would then abuse Zedekiah for his past acts of cruelty to them. Jeremiah tried to assure Zedekiah that this would not happen.
- Jeremiah pled with Zedekiah to obey God. *“Please obey the Lord in what I am saying to you, that it may go well with you and you may live.”*
- *But if you keep refusing to go out, ... then ... all of the women ... are going to be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon.* And these women will scoff at Zedekiah. They will sing a song that *Your close friends have misled and overpowered you ...*
- If Zedekiah refused to surrender to Babylon, *they will also bring out all your wives and your sons to the Chaldeans, and you yourself will not escape from their hand ... and this city will be burned ...*
- Zedekiah then told Jeremiah to *let no man know about these words and you will not die.* He told him if the officials questioned Jeremiah about their conversation, he was to say that he petitioned Zedekiah to not send him back to the cistern to die (which he did ask of Zedekiah earlier in 37:20). The officials did questions Jeremiah, and Jeremiah did as Zedekiah had instructed him. *So Jeremiah stayed in the court of the guardhouse until the day that Jerusalem was captured.*

APPLICATION—Ebed-Melech chose God’s side. Zedekiah did not, and he will suffer the consequences. He was a weak king. He was even afraid of the officials and how they would respond to his talking to Jeremiah. But Zedekiah was even more responsible for obeying God’s Word—he was privately confronted with the truth and Jeremiah pleaded with him to obey the truth. But he refused. Each person has the choice.

Jerusalem’s Destruction (chapter 39)

(1) *Verses 1-10*—The fate of the Jews—

- God brought about Jerusalem’s destruction, just as He had predicted it. The final conflict began *in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month.* This event is recorded three other times in the Old Testament, even noting the day of the month (2 Kings 25:1; Jeremiah 52:4; Ezekiel 24:1-2).
- The siege began on January 15, 588 B.C. and lasted until *the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month.* Using the method for reckoning dates employed by the Hebrews, the siege lasted 30 months, from January 15, 588, to July 18, 586 B.C.
- After the 30-month long siege, *the city wall was breached.*
- *Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came in and sat down at the Middle Gate* (probably on the north side, where they breached the walls). They sat down to establish their control over the city and to judge those taken captive.
- *Nergal-sar-ezer* was Nebuchadnezzar’s son-in-law, who ascended Babylon’s throne in 560, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar’s son, Evil-Merodach (see 52:31). Nothing is known of the other officials.
- *When Zedekiah...and all the men of war saw them, that they fled and went out of the city at night by way of the king’s garden ... out toward the Arabah*—This would be escaping the city out the

south side (Nehemiah 3:15), hoping to cross the Jordan River into the territory of their allies the Ammonites.

- *But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, just before the Jordan River.*
- *They seized him [Zedekiah] and brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar, who set up headquarters at Riblah in the land of Hamath, north of Damascus.*
- *There, Nebuchadnezzar passed sentence on Zedekiah for rebellion. [Zedekiah had been appointed as a vassal king of Babylon.]*
- *Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and he also slew all the nobles of Judah.*
- *He then blinded Zedekiah's eyes and bound him in fetters of bronze to bring him to Babylon.*
- *The Chaldeans also burned with fire the king's palace and the houses of the people, and they broke down the walls of Jerusalem [leaving the city defenseless]. And as for the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had gone over to him...they carried them into exile in Babylon.*
- *But some of the poorest people who had nothing, Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard [lit. "chief of the slaughterers"] left behind in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields. He probably thought these individuals would be grateful for their newfound prosperity and would be unlikely to rebel. In return, Babylon would receive income in the form of taxation on the produce of the land.*

APPLICATION—There is a point when there is no more choice. Time has run out, as it did for Zedekiah. All that's left is the expectation of judgment and destruction.

(2) *Verses 11-18*—The fate of Jeremiah—

- Evidently, Nebuchadnezzar had heard of Jeremiah—possibly through the letters the prophet had sent to Babylon (chapter 29) or through the testimony of those who had defected to the Babylonians (21:8-9; 38:1-3).
- *Nebuchadnezzar ... gave orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan ... saying, "Take him and look after him, and do nothing harmful to him; but rather deal with him just as he tells you."*
- *So Nebuzaradan ... sent and took Jeremiah out of the court of the guardhouse and entrusted him to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to take him home. So he stayed among the people. [See the chart on the line of Shaphan near 26:24.] Gedaliah was appointed as governor of those who remained in the land (40:7).*
- This does not contradict 40:1. Jeremiah had been rounded up with the other survivors of Jerusalem and taken 5 miles north to Ramah for processing. It was there the prophet was identified and released (40:4-5).
- While Jeremiah was in the guardhouse waiting for Jerusalem to fall, God's word came to him in a prophecy about *Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian*. God would rescue him and he would not be executed along with the other officials "*... because you have trusted in Me,*" declares the Lord, by helping Jeremiah (38:7-13).

APPLICATION—God kept His word:

- (1) Jerusalem was destroyed
- (2) Jeremiah was saved
- (3) Ebed-Melech was spared

After the Fall to Babylon—Chapters 40-45

By recording the events after the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, Jeremiah showed that the hearts of the people who remained in the land did not change. They still refused to trust in God or to submit to Babylon.

Jeremiah's Ministry to the Remnant in Palestine (chapters 40-42)

(1) The Governorship of Gedaliah (40:1-12)

Verses 1-6—Nebuzaradan...had taken him [Jeremiah] bound in chains, among all the exiles to Ramah (about 5 miles north of Jerusalem). Then he released Jeremiah and said, "The Lord your God promised this calamity against this place; and the Lord has brought it on and done just as He promised. Because you people sinned against the Lord and did not listen to His voice, therefore this thing has happened to you. When he set Jeremiah free, he gave him the choice to go to Babylon, where Nebuzaradan said, "I will look after you" or to stay in Judea, where "the whole land is before you; go wherever it seems good and right for you to go." Jeremiah decided to stay in the land, and Nebuzaradan suggested he go live with Gedaliah, who was appointed over the cities of Judah as governor. Then Nebuzaradan gave him a ration and a gift and let him go. Jeremiah went to Mizpah [about 3 miles away] to Gedaliah...and stayed with him among the people who were left in the land. Mizpah [about 2 miles north of Jerusalem] had become the new headquarters in the land after Jerusalem was destroyed.

APPLICATION—It's interesting that God's own people tried to kill Jeremiah but here is a Babylonian man whose name means "chief of the slaughterers" who knows God's message to the Judeans and who frees Jeremiah and gives him a gift! Just as God used the Babylonians to judge the Judeans, He used Nebuzaradan to protect Jeremiah. Just because God uses you, don't think that He approves of you. God uses any thing and any one to carry out His plan. That doesn't mean He approves of them or who they are or what they do.

Verses 7-12—There were some Judean commanders of the army left in the field who heard that Gedaliah was put in charge of the poorest of the land who had not been exiled to Babylon, so they came to Gedaliah. Important to the story are two men in particular: Ishmael the son of Nethaniah [of the royal family (of David) and one of the chief officers of the king (41:1)] and Johanan [nothing is known about him].

- Gedaliah urged the men to *stay in the land and serve the king of Babylon, that it may go well with you. Gedaliah would stand for you before the Chaldeans who come to us. While they should gather in wine and summer fruit and oil, and put them in your storage vessels, and live in your cities.*
- Meanwhile, other Jews scattered in *Moab, ... Ammon, and in Edom [areas east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea], and who were in all the other countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant for Judah and that he had appointed over them Gedaliah. ... Then all the Jews returned from all the places to which they had been driven away. They, too, gathered in wine and summer fruit in great abundance.*

APPLICATION—It's surprising to me that after several years of war, having a foreign army invade their land, and there being a famine in Jerusalem for months, that now they gather "*fruit in great abundance.*" The judgment was over and now the land returned to the abundance God intended for it to be. And the people there returned to the opportunity to again choose whether to obey God or not.

(2) The Assassination of Gedaliah (40:13-41:15)

Verses 13-16—Judah's future looked bright. Peace and stability were returning to the land. Men laid down their arms, refugees returned. But below the surface, trouble brewed. The first sign of danger was a report from Johanan. He and the commanders of the forces that were in the field came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. He said that Baalis the king of the sons of Ammon (on the east side of the northern end of the Dead Sea) has sent Ishmael ... to take your life.

Why would the king of Ammon want Gedaliah dead? We know that Ammon participated in a secret meeting of nations in 593 to talk about uniting in rebellion against Babylon (27:1-11). In 588, Egypt's new Pharaoh (Hophra) persuaded Judah, Ammon, and Tyre to revolt against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar decided to attack Judah first (Ezekiel 21:18-23). After Jerusalem fell, Nebuchadnezzar installed Gedaliah as governor. He was pro-Babylon, which meant that Babylon would soon attack Ammon. But if Gedaliah was removed and an anti-Babylonian leader like Ishmael (from the royal family—who probably thought he should be king) were in place, Judah would be destabilized and would force Nebuchad-

nezzar to commit large numbers of troops there to maintain order, which would improve Ammon's chances of survival.

But Gedaliah...did not believe them. Then Johanan...spoke secretly to Gedaliah,...saying, "Let me go and kill Ishmael...and not a man will know! He thought this would be in the best interest of Judah. If Gedaliah was killed, then...all the Jews who are gathered to you should be scattered and the remnant of Judah perish. However, Gedaliah ordered Johanan, "Do not do this thing, for you are telling a lie about Ishmael." Gedaliah was an honorable man who made a fatal mistake when he misjudged Ishmael's character.

Verses 1-3— in the seventh month—but we don't know what year. It was probably several years after the deportation of 586, after the Babylonians deported the people, established a government, allotted the land to the poor, and withdrew their forces. Ishmael...of the royal family, and one of the chief officers of the king (Zedekiah, who was now deported), along with ten men, came to Mizpah to Gedaliah. ...While they were eating bread together, ...Ishmael...and the ten men...arose and struck down Gedaliah...with the sword and put to death the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land. Ishmael also struck down all the Jews who were with him, ...and the Chaldeans who were found there, the men of war.

Verses 4-9—The killing was done so secretly, on the next day, still no one knew about it. Then 80 men came from the northern kingdom of Israel territory (Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria). They were in mourning, bringing grain offerings and incense in their hands to bring to the house of the Lord. Though the Temple was destroyed, people still worshipped at its site. These men were probably coming to Jerusalem to celebrate one of the three feasts held during the seventh month (Leviticus 23:23-44). They passed through Mizpah, on the road going south to Jerusalem. Ishmael...went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went (pretending to mourn). He invited them to "Come to Gedaliah." An invitation to meet the governor could not be refused. So they went with him. ...as soon as they came inside the city, Ishmael...slaughtered [70 of] them, and cast them into the cistern. He probably intended to plunder his victims and seize their provisions. A caravan of 80 pilgrims would carry quite a bit of food and money. Ten of the 80 said, "Do not put us to death; for we have stores of wheat, barley, oil and honey hidden in the field." So he did not put them to death.

As a parenthesis, Jeremiah explained the historical significance of the site where the slaughter occurred. The cistern where the bodies of the 70 had been cast had been constructed nearly 200 years earlier by King Asa as part of his defense against Baasha, the king of Israel (1 Kings 15:16-22). The cistern that had once helped preserve life was now filled...with the slain.

Verses 10-15—Then Ishmael took captive all the remnant of the people...and proceeded to cross over [the Jordan River to the East] to the sons of Ammon—who had been an ally of Judah in revolt against the Babylonians and who had now sent Ishmael to kill Gedaliah (41:14). Jeremiah was probably one of these captives (40:6). Somehow Johanan...and all the commanders of the forces that were with him heard of all the evil that Ishmael...had done. So they chased after Ishmael. They found him by the great pool that is in Gibeon (see 2 Samuel 2:12-16). Those taken captive were glad to see Johanan, and they escaped to him. But Ishmael...escaped from Johanan with 8 men [2 of his 10 men (41:2) captured or killed?] and went to the sons of Ammon.

APPLICATION—Gedaliah was a good and honorable man throughout his life. And he raised sons who helped Jeremiah. But maybe he was too trusting. He didn't want to believe anything bad about Ishmael. He had to make a choice between two men—Johanan or Ishmael. We don't know anything about these men up to this time. Sometimes we're faced with the same decision—which person will we believe? And there may be a lot riding on that choice. For Gedaliah, he paid for his decision with his life. In your choice you should consider the person's character in general and your past experience with them, and ask, "What's their agenda?" For Gedaliah, Johanan's agenda was to save Gedaliah's life and concern for the people left in the land. We know Jeremiah was in Gedaliah's household, he should have asked Jeremiah to ask God about it, too (42:2).

(3) The Leadership of Johanan (41:16–42:22)

Verses 16-18—Johanan took the captives (including soldiers, women, children, and eunuch), whom he had saved from Ishmael, and they journeyed about 13 miles south to the Bethlehem area (about 5 miles south of Jerusalem), in order to proceed into Egypt because of the Chaldeans; for they were afraid of them, since Ishmael...had struck down Gedaliah...whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land.

Verses 1-6—Johanan and the people approached Jeremiah and asked, “Please let our petition come before you, and pray for us to the Lord your God...that the Lord your God may tell us the way in which we should walk and the thing that we should do.” Jeremiah agreed to pray and said, “... the whole message which the Lord will answer you I will tell you. I will not keep back a word from you.” The people responded, “May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us, if we do not act in accordance with the whole message with which the Lord your God will send you to us. Whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, we will listen to the voice of the Lord our God...”

Verses 7-12—After 10 days, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, and he told the people the promise of blessing for obedience, “If you will indeed stay in this land [and not go to Egypt, as they were intending (41:17)], then I will build you up and not tear you down, ...for I shall relent concerning the calamity that I have inflicted on you. Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you are now fearing; ...for I am with you to save you and deliver you from his hand. I will also show you compassion, so that he will have compassion on you and restore you to your own soil.

Verses 13-18—Much like the blessings and cursings of Deuteronomy 28, Jeremiah followed his list of blessings for obedience with a list of judgments for disobedience—The Lord said, “But if you are going to say, ‘We will not stay in this land,’ so as not to listen to the voice of the Lord your God, then in that case... , if you really set your mind to enter Egypt, and go and reside there, then ... all the men who set their mind to go to Egypt to reside there will die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, and they will have no survivors or refugees from the calamity that I am going to bring on them.” For thus says the Lord of hosts,... “As my anger and wrath have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so My wrath will be poured out on you when you enter Egypt...”

Verses 19-22—The choice is theirs. The Lord has spoken to you, O remnant of Judah—

- (1) *“Do not go into Egypt!”*
- (2) *You should clearly understand that today I have testified against you. For you have deceived yourselves; for it is you who sent me to the Lord your God, saying, “Pray for us ...*
- (3) *and whatever the Lord our God says, tell us so, and we will do it”*
- (4) *So, I have told you today*
- (5) *But you have not obeyed the Lord your God, even in whatever He has sent me to tell you*
- (6) *Therefore you should now clearly understand that you will die ... in the place where you wish to go to reside*

APPLICATION—Here is a decision reminiscent of the decision at Kadesh-barnea one year after they came out of Egypt (about 1000 years before this time), when God told them to go in and take the land, and they refused to obey, so God judged them and told them not to go into the land, but they went in anyway, and many died. Here, God first told them to go over to the Babylonians and be taken captive to Babylon in order to live. But now He told the remnant to not go to Egypt but to stay in the land and not fear the Babylonians because God would make Nebuchadnezzar have compassion on them. The group that was killed in Jerusalem refused to obey, and now we see the remnant left in the land also refuse to obey. Why? Because they are “arrogant men” (43:2). We read God’s Word but, when we don’t like what it says, our pride and deceitful heart says our way is better than God’s way. So we don’t obey God’s Word. For example, God says, “Encourage one another, and build up one another...in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. ...examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” (2 Thessalonians 5:11-22). Do we build up others or tear

down others? Do we give thanks or do we complain? Do we examine carefully everything we read and hear and hold to the good that conforms to God's Word or do we follow every fad in Christianity, without even knowing what it says? Do we abstain from every form of evil? Not obeying God's Word is a form of evil!!

Jeremiah's Ministry to the Remnant in Egypt (chapters 43-45)

(1) The Remnant's flight to Egypt (43:1-7)

Verses 1-3—Johanan and the other arrogant men of the remnant said to Jeremiah, "You are telling a lie!" They accuse Jeremiah of joining with his scribe Baruch to turn them all over to the Babylonians, so they may put us to death or exile us to Babylon.

Verses 4-7—So Johanan ... and all the commanders of the forces, and all the people, did not obey the voice of the Lord, so as to stay in the land of Judah. They gathered and took the entire remnant of Judah ... every person that Nabuzaradan ... had left with Gedaliah ... together with Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch ... and they entered the land of Egypt (for they did not obey the voice of the Lord) and went in as far as Tahpanhes (a fortress city on the border of lower northern Egypt).

APPLICATION—Once again, we see the people need to decide who is telling the truth. Jeremiah has a history of some 60 years of telling the truth—his prophecies have happened exactly as he said they would. The people even seemed to approach him as a man of God with a word from God. But as God said way back in 3:10, "... Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception." If you want to feel good staying in your sin, don't read the Bible! God wants obedience—not tolerance, not fuzzy warm feelings, not empty religious liturgies, not your wisdom or the wisdom of the world ... God said, "To this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My Word" (Isaiah 66:2).

(2) The Prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's Invasion (43:8-13)

As the Jews watched, Jeremiah performed another symbolic act to gain their attention. God told Jeremiah to *take some large stones ... and hide them in the mortar in the brick terrace which is at the entrance of Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes in the sight of some Jews.* The message? *Thus says ... the God of Israel, "I am going to send and get Nebuchadnezzar ... My servant, and I am going to set his throne right over these stones that I have hidden. Nebuchadnezzar will set fire to the temples of the gods of Egypt. He will wrap himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd wraps himself with his garment, and he will depart from there safely.* This city of "refuge" for the Jews will be demolished and they will be killed or exiled.

APPLICATION—In Ezekiel 29:13-21, God talks about this. (Remember, Ezekiel is a Jewish prophet in Babylon during the exile.) God speaks of the destruction of Egypt. *"It will never again lift itself up above the nations. And I shall make them so small that they will not rule over the nations. And it will never again be the confidence of the house of Israel, bringing to mind the iniquity of their having turned to Egypt."* Then God says that Babylon fought against many nations with no "wages." So *"I shall give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar ... and he will carry off her wealth ... and it will be wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labor which he performed, because they acted for Me," declares the Lord God.* After the Babylonian Empire, there was the Persian, the Greek, and then the Roman. Never again were the Egyptians a super-power. Therefore, the nation of Israel was never again tempted to turn to them for protection. If you can't say "no" to temptation, remove the temptation! Also, there is no hiding from God or His power! And no escaping judgment for sin.

After the Fall to Babylon—Chapters 44-45

By recording the events after the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, Jeremiah showed that the hearts of the people who remained in the land did not change. They still refused to trust in God or to submit to Babylon.

The Warning of God's Judgment—Chapter 44

Verses 1-10— The Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time in Egypt with a message to *all the Jews living in the land of Egypt.* Besides the refugees who just arrived with Jeremiah to Tahpanhes, there are others who lived in other cities who had probably escaped there over the several years of the Babylonian invasion.

- God reminded the Jews, *You yourselves have seen all the calamity that I have brought on Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah This day they are in ruins ... because of their wickedness ... to burn sacrifices and to serve other gods.*
- Though God repeatedly warned them when He *sent you all My servants the prophets, again and again, saying, “Oh, do not do this abominable thing which I hate.”*
- *But they did not listen ... to turn from their wickedness, so as to not burn sacrifices to other gods.*
- *Therefore, My wrath and My anger were poured out and burned in the cities of Judah and ... Jerusalem, so they have become a ruin ... as it is this day*
- *Now [in Egypt] Why are you doing great harm to yourselves, ... leaving yourselves without remnant, provoking Me to anger ... burning sacrifices to other gods in the land of Egypt ...?*
- *Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers ... and your own wickedness ... which they committed in the land of Judah ...? But they have not become contrite ... nor have they walked in My law ... which I set before you and before your fathers.*

APPLICATION—Learn from the past. *“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).*

Verses 11-14—Therefore, ... I will take away the remnant of Judah who have set their mind on entering the land of Egypt to reside there ... Both small and great will die by the sword and famine ... and I will punish those who live in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem ... none will return [to Judah] except a few refugees.

APPLICATION—Does God’s law change when you move to another location? I don’t think so!!! What about the poor people in the foreign land who have never heard ...? Does that change God’s law that no one can come to the Father except through Jesus and Jesus alone (John 14:6)? If God’s law is true, then it is true absolutely—for every person, in every place, and at all times.

Verses 15-19—Then all the men who were aware that their wives were burning sacrifices to other gods, along with all the women ...—The men were aware that the women were burning sacrifices to other gods and did nothing to stop them.

- *responded to Jeremiah, saying, “As for the message that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we are not going to listen to you!”*
- *But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths, by burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her*
- *Just as we ourselves, our forefathers, our kings, and our princes did in the cities of Judah and ... Jerusalem*
- *For then we had plenty of food, and were well off, and saw no misfortune. But since we stopped burning sacrifice to the queen of heaven ... we have lacked everything and have met our end by the sword and by famine.* In an ironic reversal of the truth, the people blamed their difficulties on their failure to continue these pagan rituals. They failed to remember that just the opposite was true in their history. Faithfulness to God is what brought blessing, and disobedience to God brought cursing (Deuteronomy 28).
- *“And,” said the women, “when we were burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven ... was it without our husbands? The husbands were fully aware of and gave approval of what the women were doing (v. 15).*

APPLICATION—As in the time of the Judges, when *“everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).* And in Romans 1:25, *“For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator.”* And in 1 Timothy 4:3-4, *“... wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth.”*

- *The women seemed to believe if the husbands approved of it, that made it right to do. Today we have the same thinking. Christians think that if the “elders” in their church or a particular teacher or*

pastor says something is right, then it is right in God's sight. Truth is only in God's Word, not in peoples' words.

- *See the supplemental material on "Queen of Heaven."*

Verse 20-23—Jeremiah says their conclusion is wrong. They thought disaster came when they did not sacrifice to the idols. Jeremiah says disaster came because they did sacrifice to the idols. In Judah, the Lord was no longer able to endure it, because of the evil of your deeds ... because you have burned sacrifices and have sinned against the Lord and not obeyed the voice of the Lord or walked in His law ... therefore this calamity has befallen you."

APPLICATION—Events do not come with interpretations. The Judeans brought the wrong interpretation to their situation. They and God thought the exact opposite of their situation. We must seek to make judgments based on the Word of God. For example, Jesus said the "great and foremost commandment" is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart; and with all your soul, and with all your mind." "The second is ..., 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:37-39). Yet most people make decisions just the opposite—they put love of people first and love of God second. A Christian parent may accept an adult child's behavior in order to "keep the relationship," even though the behavior is contrary to the Word of God, such as homosexuality or fornication.

Verses 24-28—God told the people, "Go ahead and confirm your vows, and certainly perform your vows!" But just know that God is "... watching over them for harm and not for good, and all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt will meet their end ... until they are completely gone" (that is, until those destined for death, die—see 43:11). Only a few will return to Judah. Then they "will know whose word will stand, Mine or theirs."

APPLICATION—When unbelievers have met their end, then they'll **know** whose word will stand—God's or theirs. "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 29-30—God then gave a sign to validate the truth of His prophecy. The fulfillment of this sign would prove that God is against the idolatrous Jews in Egypt. The sign was that Pharaoh Hophra would be handed over to his enemies just as Zedekiah was handed over to the Babylonians. According to the historian Herodotus, Hophra lost his throne in 570 B.C. He sent Amasis, one of his generals, to quell a revolt among his army; but the army united behind Amasis and made him Pharaoh. Amasis defeated Hophra in battle and imprisoned him. Sometime later, Amasis handed Hophra over to the Egyptians who were clamoring for Hophra's death, and they strangled him (Herodotus 2, 161-3, 169).

APPLICATION—A sign is good if we know the correct interpretation of the sign. Here God tells the Judeans that Hophra's being handed over to his enemies is a sign "so that you may know that My words will surely stand against you for harm." But Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign" (Matthew 12:39). Why? Signs need interpretation. In this passage, the scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, "We want to see a sign from You," even though Jesus had been doing all kinds of miracles. They did not see those things as signs He was God—they misinterpreted the signs. Revelation tells us that Satan and his men the antichrist and false prophet will do all kinds of signs during the Tribulation to "prove" the antichrist is god. Many Christians today believe anything supernatural is a "sign" of God. This is an unbiblical belief. Or they think large numbers of people in our meetings is a "sign" of God's "blessing" or approval.

Jeremiah's Ministry to Baruch—Chapter 45

Verses 1-3—This chapter was written in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605-604 B.C.) when he had written down these words in a book at Jeremiah's dictation (recorded in 36:1-8). Evidently Baruch was discouraged because of the content of the message. He said, "Woe to me! For the Lord has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning and have found no rest."

Verses 4-5—God Said, "... what I have built I am about to tear down." God would carry out the judgment He had promised. Baruch's discouragement came because the realities of the judgment clashed with his personal aspirations of greatness. God said, "But you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them." Rather than being sad because God did not provide all he wanted, Baruch should

have been thankful that God spared him. God promised, *“I will give your life to you as booty.”* God expected of Baruch the response of his contemporary, Habakkuk (see Habakkuk 3:16-19). The hope of a godly person in the midst of national judgment was to be fixed firmly on God. This chapter is perhaps placed here in the book to emphasize the response that God wanted from godly Jews during the Exile.

APPLICATION—It’s up to God whether you are honored or not. You are not to seek honor. And if God does or does not honor you, it has to do with His purpose and plan, not your purpose and plan. Wherever we are or whenever we live, our responsibility is to be faithfully obedient to God. As Jesus said to pray, *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10).

Prophecies Concerning the Nations (chapters 46-51)

In Jeremiah 1:5, God told Jeremiah, ... *I have appointed you a prophet to the nations* ... Jeremiah grouped his prophecies concerning the nation of Judah first (chapters 2—45) because Judah was God’s covenant nation and she made up the largest amount of prophecy. In chapters 46—51, God’s judgment shifted from Judah to her heathen neighbors. If God would judge His own covenant people for their sin, how could the heathen nations around Judah hope to escape?

Prophecy against Egypt—Chapter 46

Egypt was Judah’s ally and encouraged her revolt against Babylon. But when it came time to protect Judah from the Babylonians, Egypt could not do it (37:4-10; Ezekiel 29:6-7). Jeremiah’s message was directed against the army of Pharaoh Neco, who had killed King Josiah of Judah in 609 B.C. (2 Kings 23:29). The prophecy was written after the army of Egypt was defeated at Carchemish, a city on the Euphrates River, where Nebuchadnezzar had a major victory against the Egyptians. That battle was in 605 B.C., in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim (who had replaced his father Josiah as king of Judah).

God said Egypt thought it was like the surging Nile River, and it said, *“I will rise and cover that land.”* But God said, *“that day belongs to the Lord God of hosts. A day of vengeance, so as to avenge Himself on His foes ... there will be a slaughter for the Lord God of hosts (v. 10). And in vain have you multiplied remedies; there is no healing for you (v. 11). Why have your mighty ones become prostrate? They do not stand because the Lord has thrust them down (v. 15). Pharaoh made bold claims about defeating the Babylonians, but the people cried, “Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a big noise ...” (v. 17).*

The God of Israel, says, “Behold, I am going to punish Amon of Thebes [the chief Egyptian god], and Pharaoh, and Egypt along with her gods and her kings, even Pharaoh and those who trust in him. And I shall give them over ... into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verses 27-28—In contrast to Egypt, God told the Jews, “do not fear, nor be dismayed, O Israel! For, see, I am going to save you from afar. ... I shall make a full end of all the nations where I have driven you, yet I shall not make a full end of you.” However, *God shall correct you properly and by no means leave you unpunished.*

APPLICATION—From man’s perspective, it looks like Egypt and Judah suffered the same fate—both defeated by the Babylonians. But from God’s perspective—Egypt is completely destroyed. Judah is loved by God, and though punished for her disobedience, she *“shall return and be ... secure”* (v. 27). If you look at circumstances or experiences, you will come to a conclusion from man’s perspective. You must know God’s Word to know God’s perspective!

Prophecy against Philistia—Chapter 47

The Philistines were *the remnant of the coastland of Caphtor* (v. 4), that is, the island of Crete (Amos 9:7; Zephaniah 2:5). They were a group of sea people who settled on the coast of Palestine (in the modern Gaza area). They had five cities often mentioned in the Bible: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath (1 Samuel 6:18). They had been a thorn in Israel’s side since the day she entered the land (Judges

3:1-4). Whenever the Philistines were strong, they tried to expand into the hill country of Judah. These attempts were opposed by the judges Shamgar (Judges 3:31), Samson (Judges 13–16), Samuel (1 Samuel 7:2-17), and kings Saul (1 Samuel 13:1–14:23; 28:1-4; 29:1-2, 11; 31:1-10), and David (2 Samuel 5:17-25). David was finally able to subdue the Philistines (2 Samuel 8:1), and they remained a vassal of Israel through the reign of Solomon. The balance of power shifted back and forth during the time of the divided monarchy.

This prophecy occurred *before Pharaoh conquered Gaza*. This was most likely in 609 B.C. when Pharaoh Neco marched north through Palestine to meet the Babylonians (2 Kings 23:29-30), and killed King Josiah on the way. The Babylonians are pictured as *waters are going to rise from the north and become an overflowing torrent, and overflow the land and all its fullness ...* The people would be so overcome with fear that *the fathers have not turned back for their children*, to save them. The Philistines would be caught in the middle of the struggle between Babylon and Egypt and would be destroyed. So they were to mourn (v. 5).

God's judgment is pictured as the *sword of the Lord*. And the question is asked, *How long will you not be quiet? Withdraw into your sheath; be at rest and stay still*. But God's judgment must go forth. *How can it be quiet, when the Lord has given it an order?* And the order for God's sword, His judgment, is *against Ashkelon and against the seacoast—there He has assigned it*.

APPLICATION—In Revelation 19:15 we also see God with a sword. At the Second Coming of Jesus, *from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; ... and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty*. Then the nations of the world will be the assignment, and *when the Lord has given it* [His sword of judgment] *an order*, there will be no stopping it. Where are the Philistines today? Gone—a distant memory. Fulfilled prophecy in the past—fulfilled prophecy in the future. Same God—same sword—same pagan nations, fighting against God and His people—same judgment of destruction.

Prophecy against Moab—Chapter 48

The next two countries are descendants of Lot and the result of his incest with his two daughters (Genesis 19:30-38). They are the territory east of the Dead Sea in what is today the country of Jordan. Moab was separated from Ammon on the north by the Arnon River and Edom on the south by the Zered River.

Moab will be judged *because of your trust in your own achievements and treasures*. Moab ... *will be captured; and Chemosh* [their primary god] *will go off into exile together with his priests and his princes* (v. 7). God was so determined to assure Moab's destruction that He said, *Cursed be the one who does the Lord's work negligently, and cursed be the one who restrains his sword from blood* (v. 10). Moab was destroyed by nomadic desert tribesmen from the East (Ezekiel 25:10).

Moab's history was one of relative peace. *Moab has been at ease since his youth ... therefore he retains his flavor, and his aroma has not changed* (v. 11). But God was sending judgment, and Moab would be ashamed of their god Chemosh, *as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence* (v. 13). Bethel was where one of the two golden calves was set up in the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12:26-30). Israel found out too late that her trust in the false god at Bethel would not save her from destruction and deportation. Moab would learn the same lesson regarding her god.

Moab has *become arrogant toward the Lord* (v. 26). In Ezekiel 25:8, Moab said, *the house of Judah is like all the nations, i.e., Judah is not the people of the Living God*. So they became arrogant against God. *We have heard of the pride of Moab—he is very proud—of his haughtiness, his pride, his arrogance and his self-exaltation* (v. 29). Moab's physical security and history of relative peace had fed her arrogance.

But *“I shall make an end of Moab,” declares the Lord, “for I have broken Moab like an undesirable vessel,” declares the Lord, “... and Moab will be destroyed from being a people because he has become arrogant toward the Lord”* (vv. 35, 38, 42).

“Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days,” declares the Lord (v. 47). The use of “latter days” implies that this restoration will occur during the millennial reign of Christ (Deuteronomy 4:30; Jeremiah 49:39; Daniel 2:28; 10:14).

APPLICATION—Many parents, especially Christian parents, try to protect their children from harm or from “bad” situations. Yet if a youth remains at ease, has no suffering, has no discipline, has no learning experiences, they retain their flavor, their aroma will not change—they will not grow. And if they stink—they will continue to stink the rest of their lives. As a parent, look at your children, how do they smell? Ask yourself how you can change their flavor and smell, so they have “... *the fragrance of Christ ...*” (2 Corinthians 2:15).

Also, it seems like God does not like negligence [to fail to give the proper or required care and attention to somebody or something] when it comes to judgment of evil. If behavior is wrong or arrogant against God’s character, restrain it. Don’t let it go. Give it the proper care and attention (Matthew 18:15f; 1 Corinthians 5).

Prophecy against Ammon—Chapter 49:1-6

A country whose people are descendants of Lot and the result of his incest with his two daughters (Genesis 19:30-38), it is located just east of the Jordan River and north of Moab, separated from Moab by the Arnon River, in what is today the country of Jordan. They were allied with Judah against Babylon during Judah’s final revolt, but throughout their history, they had been in conflict. It was Baalis the king of Ammon who sent Ishmael to assassinate Gedaliah, the governor of the remnant left in Judah by the Babylonians.

God begins with some questions. Evidently, because the Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken away to captivity, Ammon acted like there were no heirs, so they took possession of that land (Gad), and the Ammonites settled in the cities of Israel.

Ammon, “*How boastful you are about the valleys! ... who trusts in her treasures, saying, “Who will come against me?”*” (v. 4), also, like Moab, has a problem with pride. It’s boastful, it thinks its money will deliver it from any problem, and it feels secure, so no one can come against it.

However, “*Behold, I am going to bring terror upon you,*” declares the Lord God of hosts, “*from all directions around you ...*” But as with Moab, God in His grace and mercy said, “*But afterward I will restore the fortunes of the sons of Ammon ...*” As with Moab (48:47), it’s probably in the “latter days,” i.e., the millennial kingdom, that they will be restored.

APPLICATION—It’s true that money solves a lot of problems. Therefore, you begin to think that it will solve all your problems. But remember, money will only solve a problem if God causes the money to solve the problem (see Ecclesiastes 3:13)—it’s a gift from Him, and you should thank Him. You could have lots of money and it not solve your problem at all. If you start putting your faith in the money, you’re in trouble!

Prophecy against Edom—Chapter 49:7-22

The Edomites are descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau (from whom Jacob stole the birthright). The country was located south of Moab (and the Zered River) and east of the Dead Sea. It had a history of conflict with Judah and came to symbolize all the heathen nations that sought Jacob’s harm (see Ezekiel 35; 36:5; Obadiah 15-16). Much of the imagery Jeremiah used to describe Edom is similar to Obadiah (the date of Obadiah is not known for sure—whether it is before or after Jeremiah). Judgment against Edom is mentioned in more Old Testament books than it is against any other foreign nation.

Teman was known for its wise men (such as Eliphaz the Temanite in Job 2:11). God will *strip Esau bare...like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah ... no one will live there* (vv. 10, 18). Sodom and Gomorrah were at the south end of the Dead Sea, near the northern border of Edom, so a very real visual for them.

Again, their problem is pride. “*The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, O you who live in the clefts of the rock [like, and near, Petra], ... I will bring you down from there,*” declares the Lord (v. 16). “*Therefore hear the plan of the Lord which He has planned against Edom, and His purposes which He has purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: surely they will drag them off ... surely He will make their pasture desolate because of them*” (v. 20).

APPLICATION—It’s interesting today that people quote Jeremiah 29:11, “*I know the plans that I have for you ... plans for welfare and not calamity,*” but not Jeremiah 49:20, “*hear the plan of the Lord which He has planned against ...*” Why can we claim a promise made to Israel (29:11) but ignore 49:20 because it’s plans against Edom? Because, of course, we want to believe God has good plans for us that include good things. No one wants to hear about judgment for the sin of trusting in our treasures and the sin of the arrogance in our heart.

Prophecy against Damascus—Chapter 49:23-27

This is an ancient city, the capitol of Syria (even today), north of Israel and east of the Sea of Galilee. Amos 1:3-5 gives us some more information about the sin of Damascus. God said, “*I will not revoke its punishment, because they threshed Gilead with implements of sharp iron.*” These implements of sharp iron are boards used in threshing that are bent upward at the front and studded with iron prongs or knives. They were pulled over the grain, thus cutting and separating the grain from the husks. God said they did this to Gilead, the area south of Damascus and southeast of the Sea of Galilee (east of the Jordan River), settled by the tribes of Reuben and Gad, before the Israelites crossed the Jordan and attacked Jericho, during the time of Moses (Deuteronomy 3:16-17). This could refer to a method of torturing prisoners or a way of describing a harsh and thorough conquest (see Isaiah 41:15; Micah 4:13; Habakkuk 3:12). Syria’s armies had raked across Gilead, slicing and crushing it as though it were grain on a threshing floor. Now Damascus would experience the invasion of the Babylonians from the north as a judgment from God. *Damascus has become helpless ... distress and pangs have taken hold of her like a woman in childbirth ... her young men will fall in her streets, and all the men of war will be silenced ...*

APPLICATION—God doesn’t like torture or excessive brutality.

Prophecy against Kedar and Hazor—Chapter 49:28-33

Kedar was a nomadic tribe of Ishmaelites (Genesis 25:13) in the Arabian desert known for her skills in archery (Isaiah 21:16-17), her flocks of sheep (Isaiah 60:7; Jeremiah 49:28-29), her extensive trade (Ezekiel 27:21), and her warlike nature (Psalm 120:5-6). It’s commonly believed that Hazor is an area in the Arabian Desert (unknown today), in or near Kedar (and not the city north of the Sea of Galilee).

These were nomadic tribes, living in tents. They were ... *at ease ... which lives securely ... it has no gates or bars.* Perhaps they thought they were safe because they were in the desert, far away, they didn’t even need walls or gates or houses. Just tents with curtains (v. 29, 31). But God would *scatter to all the winds ... He will ... bring their disaster from every side.* Hazor will become *a desolation forever; no one will live there.* It’s true—we don’t even know where it was. It’s gone. It’s history.

APPLICATION—Two other times Jeremiah refers to the judgments against the Gentile nations (9:26; 25:23). The people of the world were to know there is a Living God (Romans 1:18f). They are also to come to Israel to know special revelation from God. But these Gentile nations made idols and they came against Israel. They turned their backs on God to serve the works of their hands. It’s common today to hear people ask, “What about those who have never heard?” We can see from God’s judgments of these Gentile nations that God holds unbelievers responsible for what they do with the knowledge they have—general revelation from nature and God’s special revelation revealed in His Word and through the lives of His people. The hostility of the Gentiles will culminate in the rule of the Antichrist during the Tribulation, and he will be judged and his kingdom will be destroyed, just as these Gentile nations were destroyed.

Prophecy against Elam—Chapter 49:34-39

Elam was east of Babylon in what is today the country of Iran. This prophecy was given *at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah*, about 597 B.C. God said He would *break the bow of Elam.* The Elamites were known for their archery skills (see Isaiah 22:6). Her invaders would come from all

directions, *from the four ends of heaven* and God shall shatter Elam before their enemies and scatter them to all these winds. Elam was conquered by Babylon and then became part of the Persian Empire. The Persian capitol of Susa was in Elam (Daniel 8:2). The Persian Empire was short-lived, a hundred years or so. Then it was conquered by Alexander the Great and became part of the Greek Empire. But *in the last days*, God shall restore the fortunes of Elam, maybe a reference to the Millennial Kingdom.

APPLICATION—These pagan Gentile powers spread in all directions, conquering everything in their path. Peter says Satan is like that. In 1 Peter 4:8-10 says, “*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls [to roam around an area stealthily in search of prey, food, or opportunity] about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour [to destroy something rapidly and completely]. But resist him [to oppose and stand firm against something or somebody, to remain unaltered by the damaging effect of something] firm [solid when pressed, fixed securely and unlikely to give way, showing certainty or determination] in your faith ...*” *The spiritual life is not neutral (like Switzerland). We are in a war. Satan is after you, like a roaring hungry lion. You must actively resist him.*

Then Peter continues, “*knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.*” The point is, Satan is trying to destroy you and your faith. God said to stand firm against Satan and be determined to be fixed securely in your faith. The result? You will suffer!! You are going against the flow of the worldly system run by Satan. It will be painful!! Peter does not say “if” you suffer, he says “after you have suffered.” But as the little saying goes, “No pain, no gain.” God will strengthen you, give you grace, and will bring you to maturity.

Prophecy against Babylon—Chapters 50-51

The Announcement of Judgment—Verses 1-10—Jeremiah was to announce to the nations the public humiliation of Babylon. Say, “*Babylon has been captured, her chief deity Bel (also known as) Marduk has been shattered. ... For a nation has come against her out of the north.*” This does not seem to be the fall of Babylon to Persia because:

- (1) The Persians are from the east of Babylon, not the north.
- (2) The Persians did not lay waste the land or destroy the city. The city was spared and made one of the ruling centers for the Persian Empire with Daniel serving there in an administrative position (Daniel 5:30; 6:1-3).
- (3) No one fled the city when it fell to Persia. In fact, Daniel, who had access to Jeremiah’s prophecies (Daniel 9:1-2) remained in the city during and after its fall.
- (4) *In those days and at that time,*” declares the Lord, “*the sons of Israel will come, both they and the sons of Judah as well ... turning their faces in its [Zion’s = Jerusalem] direction; ... they will join themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant.*” This was not fulfilled when Babylon fell to the Persians.

So Jeremiah must have looked beyond Babylon’s destruction in 539 to an eschatological destruction that will reverse the fortunes of Israel and Judah. Possibly this is a blending of near and far prophecy. That is, the fall of Babylon to Persia and the return of Ezra and Nehemiah merged in with the still future destruction of Babylon and the final restoration of Israel and Judah. The destruction of Babylon is the climax of God’s judgment on the Gentile powers who have oppressed His people (see also Zechariah 5:5-11 and Revelation 17–18). The city of Babylon will be rebuilt only to be destroyed at the end of the Tribulation before Christ returns to establish His millennial reign and fulfills His promises to a united Israel and Judah.

The Fall of Babylon—Verses 11-16—Babylon sinned in proudly destroying Judah. *Because you are glad, because you are jubilant, O you who pillage [using violence, especially in wartime] My heritage. Therefore draw up your battle lines against Babylon ... for she has sinned against the Lord. ... Her walls have been torn down. For this is the vengeance of the Lord ... as she has done to others, so do to her.* Again, this did not happen when Cyrus attacked Babylon in 539. It still waits future fulfillment.

APPLICATION—We see here that God holds the Babylonians responsible even for their attitudes (glad, jubilant pillaging) as well as what they actually did. Remember, when “... *the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the*

darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts ..." (1 Corinth-ians 4:5). God will also hold us responsible for our attitudes and motives as well as what we do.

The Restoration of Israel—Verses 17-20—*Israel (the united kingdom) is a scattered flock the lions have driven away. First the Northern Kingdom was devoured by the king of Assyria in 722 B.C. Then Judah was taken by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in 586 B.C. Therefore God is going to punish the king of Babylon and his land, just as I [God] punished the king of Assyria. [Babylon had conquered the Assyrian Empire.] God will bring Israel back to the land. And in those days [future fulfillment] their sins will not be found for I shall pardon those whom I leave as a remnant, i.e. referring to the New Covenant when sins will be forgiven (see 31:31-34).*

The Attack on Babylon—Verses 21-40—The Hebrew words here have a double meaning: *Merathaim*, the area where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers empty into the Persian Gulf, also means "double rebellion." *Pekod* a tribe on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, also means "punishment." Therefore, *God will slay and utterly destroy them ... because you have engaged in conflict with the Lord ... Babylon's destruction is a work of the Lord God of hosts.*

Babylon took them [God's people] captive and have held them fast, they have refused to let them go. But their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is His name (vv. 33-34). Then the sound of fugitives and refugees from the land of Babylon will declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God, vengeance for His Temple (v. 28).

Babylon will never again be inhabited, "As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbors," declares the Lord, "No man will live there" (vv. 39-40). This is still future fulfillment, after Christ destroys Babylon (Revelation 17–18) at His Second Coming, it will never be inhabited again (throughout the Millennial Kingdom). Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer (Revelation 18:21).

APPLICATION—Sin has held us fast, refusing to let us go. But Christ, our Redeemer is strong, and He has broken the chains of sin. He has set us free.

The Anguish of Babylon—Verses 41-46—Many kings, from the remote parts of the earth, are going to march against Babylon. *They are cruel and have no mercy, just as Babylon had been to those it conquered. They will attack swiftly, like a lion, in an instant. There will be no arguing with God's decision. God says, "Who is like Me, and who will summon Me into court? ... Therefore, hear the plan of the Lord which He has planned against Babylon, and His purposes which He has purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: surely they will drag them off ..."*

God's Vengeance Against Babylon—Verses 51:1-14—*Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I am going to arouse against Babylon ... the spirit of a destroyer.*

Neither Israel nor Judah has been forsaken by his God, ... although their land is full of guilt before the Holy One of Israel" (v. 5). God's people need to flee from the midst of Babylon, and each of you save his life! In Jeremiah's time, they were to flee Jerusalem to Babylon, but in the end, they need to flee Babylon, because God would destroy it (like the message to Lot in Genesis 19). God's people will come and let us recount in Zion the work of the Lord our God! (v. 10).

The Lord as aroused the spirit of the kings of the Medes [the Medo-Persian Empire], because His purpose is against Babylon to destroy it; for it is the vengeance of the Lord, vengeance for His Temple (v. 11). ... For the Lord has both purposed and performed what He spoke concerning the inhabitants of Babylon ... Your end has come ... (v. 12-14).

God's Sovereignty Over Babylon—Verses 15-26—Using language virtually synonymous with 10:12-16, Jeremiah stressed the sovereignty and power of the God who was guaranteeing Babylon's fall. God's *power* and *wisdom* are demonstrated in His creation, His control over a thunderstorm. In contrast, *all mankind is stupid, devoid of knowledge ... his molten images are deceitful, and there is no breath in them. They are worthless, a work of mockery; in the time of their punishment they will perish* (vv. 17-18).

The portion of Jacob is not like these; for the Maker of all is He, ... the Lord of hosts is His name. He says, "You [Babylon] are My war-club, My weapon of war; and with you I shatter nations, and with you I destroy kingdoms ..." ... "I will repay Babylon ... for all the evil that they have done in Zion" (v. 24).

APPLICATION—Again we see the sovereignty of God in that Babylon is His war-club to shatter other nations. Then we see the free will of man because God will judge Babylon and repay them for all the evil they have done in Zion. Both things are 100% true.

The Summons to the Nations Against Babylon—Verses 27-33—For the third time (50:2; 51:12), God summons *the nations against her* [Babylon]. In addition to the Medes, already mentioned, this invasion force will include the *kingdoms of Ararat* [Turkey area], *Minni* [western Iran] and *Ashkenaz* [between other two areas]. *The mighty men of Babylon have ceased fighting, they stay in the strongholds; their strength is exhausted.* Their houses were burned, the gates broken. *The men of war are terrified.* God says, "*Babylon is like a threshing floor.*"

God's Revenge on Babylon—Verses 34-44—The Jews' complaint against Babylon: *Babylon has devoured me ... crushed me ... set me down like an empty vessel ... swallowed me like a monster ... has washed me away.* Their prayer to God: *May the violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon ... and may my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea.* God replied, "*I am going to ... exact full vengeance for you.*"

Babylon will be a land *engulfed with its tumultuous waves* [like a tsunami overflowed it] and like a *parched land and a desert, a land in which no man lives.* And God will *make what he has swallowed come out of his mouth*, that is, the Jewish captives will be released.

The wall of Babylon has fallen down! This is a huge work of God. The inner wall of Babylon, the Imgur-Bel (about 5 miles long), and the outer wall, the Nimitti-Bel (about 10 miles long), were to be made so strong that no force could impregnate the city. The compass of the walls was so vast that no single power [they thought] could bring the city to famine, due to the number of walls and environmental conditions that lay beyond the walls of the city. The walls were comprised of sun-dried and baked bricks and were of varying degrees of thickness. The inner wall also had at regular intervals towers, which may have been similar to those along the outer wall. A path served to separate the outer wall and the moat so that as Nebuchadnezzar himself says "...no pillaging robber might enter into this water sewer, with bright iron bars I closed the entrance to the river, in gratings of iron I set it and fastened it with hinges."

APPLICATION—Here we can see God answered their prayer, which is God keeping His promise to Abraham, "*The one who curses you I will curse*" (Genesis 12:3). So their prayer was in keeping with God's will for Israel. For us in the church age, we're told, "*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone ... Never take your own revenge ... for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink ... do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good* (Romans 12:19-21). So for us, pray that we can be obedient and overcome evil with good. Don't worry—God is the judge, and if there is to be vengeance someday, He'll take care of it.

The Warning to the Remnant in Babylon—Verses 45-48—God told the Jews living in Babylon, "*Come forth from her midst, My people, and each of you save yourselves from the fierce anger of the Lord.*" They are not to be afraid of reports of victory or violence in the land but be confident that God

will judge Babylon. *Then heaven and earth ... will shout for joy over Babylon, for the destroyers will come to her ...*

APPLICATION—The Rapture is not unusual. We have many examples of God removing His people before He acts in judgment: Noah, Lot, those with blood on the doorposts in Egypt, Rahab, Jews taken captive to Babylon, the Jews told to leave before God destroys Babylon, and those at the beginning of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:16-18).

The Certainty of Babylon's Fall—*Verses 49-53*—*Babylon is to fall for the slain of Israel.* Those escaping Babylon are to hurry, they are to *remember the Lord from afar, and let Jerusalem come to your mind. ... For aliens have entered the holy places of the Lord's house.* Reminiscent of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:4), *“Though Babylon should ascend to the heavens, and though she should fortify her lofty stronghold ... From Me destroyers will come to her,” declares the Lord.*

APPLICATION—From the beginning in the Garden of Eden, when the serpent told Eve, “Indeed, has God said ...” and “You surely shall not die!” (Genesis 3:1-4), Satan and his world system are convincing people that they are in control and stronger than God. Don't believe their lie!! From God, destroyers will come some day. And evil will be destroyed. God will be the victor!! Babylon was destroyed. It's walls gone. Today they are rebuilding Babylon, it will be the center of commerce during the Tribulation and the antichrist's reign, but God will destroy it again (Revelation 17-18), for the final time.

God's Repayment of Babylon—*Verses 54-58*—Repeating again the promised destruction of Babylon. *For God is a God of recompense, He will fully repay.*

APPLICATION—It's interesting that today people seem to want a God of love. Here God is described as a God of recompense (to reward or punish someone appropriately for an action). Their idea of love is to tolerate and not hold accountable. Do not have consequences for bad behavior. But love to God is to hold people accountable for what they do. The Tribulation martyrs in heaven call out to God, *“How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”* Today we are to do good to our enemies, because of our obedience to God who said to do that. But we are promised that He will one day judge our enemy [and us, by the way] appropriately.

Seraiah's Symbolic Mission—*Verses 59-64*—Finally, Jeremiah *commands Seraiah* (the brother of Jeremiah's scribe Baruch, see 32:12), when he went to Babylon with King Zedekiah in the fourth year of his reign (594-593 B.C.). Why did Zedekiah go there then? This might have been the gathering commanded by Nebuchadnezzar for the dedication of his image in Daniel 3. But whatever the cause, Zedekiah was forced to make an official trip to Babylon, and he brought with him Baruch's brother Seraiah.

Jeremiah wrote in a single scroll all the calamity which would come upon Babylon (most likely a copy of chapters 50-51). He gave the scroll to Seraiah and told him to *read all these words aloud* when he got to Babylon, thus declaring that Babylon would be cut off, *so that there will be nothing dwelling it, whether man or beast.* Then *as soon as you finish reading this scroll, you will tie a stone to it and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates, and say, “Just so shall Babylon sink down and not rise again.”* This will be finally fulfilled at the Second Coming of Christ (Revelation 17-18).

Conclusion—Chapter 52

Chapter 52 is nearly identical to 2 Kings 24:18-25:30 and was written sometime after 561 B.C. when King Jehoiachin was released from prison in Babylon (v. 31). This parallels the information recorded by Jeremiah in chapter 39. So why include this chapter? Possibly to show that Jeremiah's words of judgment against Jerusalem had been fulfilled and that his words about Judah's release from the Exile were about to be fulfilled. So this vindicated the prophet and encouraged the remnant still in captivity.

The Fall of Zedekiah—*Verses 1-11*, Zedekiah was 21 when he became king and he reigned 11 years. He rebelled against Babylon. After 18 months of siege, the food ran out, and there was severe famine. The Babylonians got through the city wall. Zedekiah fled out the south end of the city. The Babylonians

caught him by Jericho. They killed his sons in front of him, then put out his eyes. They took him to Babylon, where he died.

The Destruction of the City—*Verses 12-16*, 2 Kings 25:8 says Nebuzaradan *came* to Jerusalem on the 7th day, and here we learn he burned the houses in the city on the 10th day (August 17, 586 B.C.). Those who survived the siege were carried to Babylon as exiles. He *left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen*.

The Destruction of the Temple—*Verses 17-23*, Jeremiah had predicted that the furnishings still remaining in the Temple would be taken to Babylon (27:19-22). The false prophet Hananiah contradicted Jeremiah by promising that the furniture already taken to Babylon would be returned (28:3). Which prophet was correct? This chapter proves the truth of Jeremiah's prophecy. This was a huge undertaking—the immense size of the objects is even described. The Temple is stripped bare and then they *burned the house of the Lord* (v. 13).

The Fate of those in the City during its Fall—*Verses 24-27*, Many of the high ranking officials were taken to Riblah (north, near Galilee) and executed where the Babylonians had executed Zedekiah's sons.

The Fate of the Exiles—*Verses 28-30*, This section is not in 2 Kings 25. Here it shows that other groups of exiles were taken to Babylon. The 7th and 18th years of Nebuchadnezzar mentioned here are one year earlier than the years given in 2 Kings for the two major assaults on Jerusalem by Babylon (2 Kings 24:12-14 and 2 Kings 25:8-12). Also, 2 Kings 24:14 mentions 10,000 people taken and 2 Kings 25:11 says the rest were taken. Here Jeremiah mentions 3,023 and 832. So it seems like the exiles Jeremiah mentions here are minor exiles and not the major ones. The third one possibly corresponds with Nebuchadnezzar's return to the land after Gedaliah's assassination (chapter 41). The deportations mentioned here by Jeremiah are (a) Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year (598 B.C.), (b) his 18th year (587 B.C.), and (c) his 23rd year (582 B.C.).

The Fate of Jehoiachin—*Verses 31-34*, Evil-merodach was the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar. He seems to have reigned only two years. He was murdered by Nergal-sharezer, his brother-in-law, who succeeded him. After 37 years of exile, in the first year of the reign of Evil-merodach (lit. "man of Marduk") as king of Babylon, as part of the festivities at the end of his accession year, (possibly due to the influence of Daniel) he brought Jehoiachin out of prison and *set his throne above the thrones of the kings who were with him in Babylon*. He also *changed his prison clothes ... had his meals in the king's presence ... and had a regular allowance*. Jehoiachin's favor gave hope to the exiles that God's promised blessing and restoration would come.

APPLICATION—*Jeremiah was faithful to God and obedient to God's Word. He suffered rejection by his own family, he was cursed, he was thrown into a cistern and into a dungeon. He was mocked. No one listened to him. He was lonely—no wife or children. He suffered through famine, pestilence, and attacks by swords. He was grieved at the hardness of the people and their lack of repentance. He wept as they suffered and died. Then when the invasion was finally over, he was taken captive by people in direct disobedience to God and he died in Egypt. As the writer of Hebrews says, "... being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (of whom the world was not worthy) ... having gained approval through their faith ... Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surround us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 11:37-38; 12:1-3).*