

Exposition of Jeremiah

Chapters 1-2:

1:5a – “**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.**”

“I knew you” [yada] – to know relationally; **Script. Ref:** Gal. 1:15-16 – But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased [16] to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.

The word “foreknowledge” in the Greek literally means, “to know beforehand”. There is much controversy regarding the exact meaning of this word. Some say that the word “foreknowledge” relates to God’s ability in eternity past to look down the corridors of time and see who would exercise faith in the gospel message. Once the gospel was heard and believed, He would then choose them to be His own. This could be better defined as foresight. Others say that the word “foreknowledge” is based on God’s sovereign freedom, in accordance with His love, to select out of the race of humanity whomever He wants to save, which is not based on anything in the creature or anything that the creature does, but solely based on God’s sovereign grace to bestow favor on whomever He wants (Rom. 9:15). This understanding of foreknowledge can be understood as “fore approved” or “foreordained”.

The Scriptures are clear that “foreknowledge” means God’s sovereign freedom to select beforehand, those whom He wants to save. The eternal destiny of mankind is not determined ultimately by the decisions of man, but by God who chooses whom He wants to save (Jn. 6:37; 15:16; Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13). Arthur Pink writes, “The fact is that foreknowledge is never used in Scripture in connection with events or actions; instead, it always refers to persons. It is to persons God is said to “foreknow,” not to the actions of those persons” (Arthur Pink, *The Nature of God*, p. 30). In other words, it’s not the actual event (the time and place a person received Christ) or action (placing one’s trust in Christ) that God foreknows, but it is the person that God foreknows not what he or she does. He foreknew them unto salvation before they did anything good or bad (Rom. 9:10-13). (Here’s some Scriptures to prove this point – Acts 2:23 (this statement is made by the apostle Peter); Rom. 8:29, 30; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:20. God the Father is the One in Scripture who is primarily responsible for foreordaining those He wants to save.

Ministry responsibility flows from spiritual relationship. The purpose of election is to have a relationship with God (before I formed you I knew you). Before I brought you into existence I already determined to be in a relationship with you. Before I brought into being (personhood) I already purpose to know you (relationship). What’s the point? You were created to know Me.

What the Lord says of Jeremiah, He says of us: **Script. Ref:** John 17:1-3; Eph. 1:3-6

1:5b – “a prophet to the nations” – chaps. 2-45 [Judah]; chaps. 46-51 [Gentiles]; chap. 52 [fall of Jerusalem] – The gift of the office of a prophet is a revelatory/confirmatory gift – Jeremiah both forth-tells and foretells.

1:6-10 – Jeremiah’s hesitation, the Lord’s promise – [8] “For I am with you to deliver you”.

Scrip. Ref: Ex. 3:10-12; 4:10-12; Acts 18:9-10

*Wherever, whenever and whatever the Lord calls us to a difficult task, He will never leave us to do the work alone. The task may be hard but our God is great. **Quote:** Warren Wiersbe – “God commandments, are God’s enablements”.

1:11-19 – “a rod of an almond tree” [v. 11] – “The Hebrew word for “almond tree” is shaped from the word “to watch or to wake” [shoqed]. The almond tree was named the “awake tree” because in Palestine it is the first tree in the year to bud and bear fruit.” [Bible Knowledge Commentary] – The word of the Lord that will come through Jeremiah will perform its work because the Lord is watching over it. In other words, not one word which falls from the mouth of Jeremiah will fail.

The inspired, infallible, errant and authoritative word will always perform its work because God the Holy Spirit is empowering it: **Scrip. Ref:** Isa. 55:8-11 – “So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it” [v. 11]; 1 Cor. 3:6 – I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth; Acts 13:44-49; Acts 16:14; Heb. 4:12-13 – 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. [13] And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Heb. 4:12 – “judge” [Gr.] kritikos – decisive. English word “critical”. The word of God is a critic of our motives and affections. It cuts us open and exposes our true selves.

[chaps 2-45] – “This section begins with Jeremiah recording 13 oracles of divine judgment against the nation of Judah” [chaps. 2-25] [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

2:1-3 – “The love of your betrothals” [Heb.] “kel-oo-law” – bridehood [only in the plural]; espousal; “Your following after Me in the wilderness” – The Lord viewed His relationship with Israel as a marriage. He delivered them out of Egyptian bondage [Ex. 3-14]; entered into a marital covenant with them [Ex. 19-24]; and viewed their journey through the wilderness as their honeymoon [Ex. 33:1-11]; There was nowhere for Israel to go they had to follow the Lord. They needed the cloud for shade by day and the fire for warmth by night. Therefore they had to stay close to the Lord. The Lord led them through the wilderness in order to teach them dependence [Deut. 8:2-3]. The Lord views every wilderness experience He puts us in as a time of closeness and discovery. We are made to draw near to the Lord and discover how faithful, merciful, gracious and loving He is.

The Old Covenant is best described not as a covenant based on Law-keeping but based on love expressing itself in Law-keeping [Deut. 6:4-9; 20-25; 10:12-16; 19; 11:1; 18-22; 13:3]. The Lord never wanted external observance of the Law apart from internal devotion towards Him [Isa.

1:11-17]. If the heart is turned away from God, it is because it has turned towards something else [idol].

How can you discern if your heart has turned away from the Lord? There are two ways to discern if you have drifted spiritually away from the Lord: 1] Your heart does not heed God's commandment to love Him with all your heart, mind, soul and strength; 2] Your heart does not heed God's commandment to love your fellow man.

“Jeremiah contrasted Judah's former devotion [vv. 1-3] with her present departure from God” [vv. 4-3:5] [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

2:4-13 – “foundation of living waters” - spiritual nourishment always leads to spreading the news of personal satisfaction in God. But Israel spreads the news of broken cisterns that cannot hold water - idols that thrill the senses for a short time but dull the life; you can only have a sip which ruins and keeps you desperate; yet you boast about that. That's the second evil. It's evil because God is a jealous God and it's dishonoring because what you thirst after cannot satisfy like He can.

“Broken cisterns” – “cisterns were large pits dug into the rock and covered with plaster. These pits were used to gather rainwater. This water was brackish (distasteful); and if the rains were below normal, it could run out. Worse yet, if a cistern developed a crack it would not hold the water. To turn from a dependable, pure stream of running water to a broken, brackish cistern was idiotic”. [Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 1132]

Broken Cisterns – **money** [Psalm 49; Prov. 18:11; 23:4-5]; **alcohol & drugs** [Prov. 23:20-35]; **sexual immorality** [Prov. 5]; **idolatrous human relationships** (codependency) – excessive emotional and psychological reliance on a partner or organization [Jer. 17:5-6]; **the idolatry of self-esteem** or **racial pride** [Jer. 10:23]; **the idolatry of vain imaginations** – spending your time imagining a different life from reality [Psalm 73:7-9; 18-20]; **the idolatry of a false god** – either the acknowledge of the true God of the Christian faith but worshiped based on false premises or the worship of a false god.

2:20-23 – Judah's spiritual apostasy is illustrated under four pictures: [v. 20] a harlot; [v. 21] a wild vine; [v. 22] a stain that cannot be removed; [vv. 23-24] a wild donkey in heat.

Quote: The God of the Bible is too lovely to abandon for lesser pursuits.

[3:6-6:30] God calls for Repentance as He promises judgment for violating the Covenant

3:1-5 – Judah's covenantal devotion to the Lord brought the blessings upon the land [Deut. 28:1-14] – [v. 1] **God says, “If a husband divorces his wife, And she goes from him, And belongs to another man, Will he still return to her? Will not that land be completely polluted? But you are a harlot with many lovers; Yet you turn to Me” declares the Lord.**

In other words, Judah cannot commit spiritual adultery against the Lord and expect to receive the blessings of the covenant. But Judah thought they could have relationship with idols but turn back to the Lord for blessings. “But you are a harlot with many lovers; Yet you turn to Me”.

What matters most to you will determine your motives for seeking the Lord. Is it devotional relationship with the Lord or receiving His blessings? Judah prayed to the Lord for blessings but was unrepentant about her spiritual harlotry.

3:6-11 – The Lord compares the spiritual adultery of Israel [Northern Kingdom] to Judah [Southern Kingdom], in that though Israel worshiped false gods and suffered the consequences of being exiled [spiritual divorce] by Assyria in 722 BC. Judah did not learn from Israel’s consequences almost a hundred years earlier but committed the same sins. Yet faithless Israel was more righteous than Judah [or less sinful in comparison], because at least they did not pretend to love the Lord at the same time.

If you are going turn away from the Lord don’t insult Him by pretending that you still love Him. False worship is evil. But pretending to worship the Lord while committing false worship on the side is worst in the eyes of God. The most striking denunciations Jesus made was against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees [Matt. 23]. He hated that they pretended to love God and keep His law while in reality they loved themselves and violated the Law.

Scrip. Ref: Mark 7:6-7 – And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. [7] But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’

If you were to ask the question – where is the worst sin being committed in our world today? It would shock you to know that the worse sin is not being committed by unbelieving sinners but by those who claim to know God but live scandalous lives [Matt. 23:15; Lk. 12:47-48; Rom. 2:8-9; 11-12; Heb. 10:26-31; 2 Pet. 2:20-21]

3:12-18 – The Lord promises Israel [Northern Kingdom] that if they repent of their sins and return to Him: 1] He will guide them by sending shepherds after His own heart [v. 15]; He will multiply their depleted population due to the judgment in exile [v. 16]; they will dwell permanently in the land under the reign of the Messiah and shall never turn away from Him again (New Covenant) [vv.17-18].

3:19-4:2 – How will the Lord regather Israel? He will regenerate their hearts by the gospel so that they will address Him as Father [v. 19] and will bemoan the sin they once loved, idolatry [vv. 20-25]. When will this take place? After the church age during the Tribulation period [Rev. 7:1-8; 12]

4:3-4 – **“Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns. [4] “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My wrath go forth like fire and burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds.**

Jeremiah uses two metaphors to convey what radical repentance should look like in Judah: 1] Farming metaphor – **“Break up your fallow ground”** – The Lord pictures Judah’s heart like unplowed dirt. In order to soften the ground you got to break it up and grind the dirt into small particles. If you want to experience spiritual fruitfulness in your life. If you want to awaken an

insatiable thirst in your heart for God who is the fountain of living waters. You must first break up the unplowed ground of your heart. How? 1] Confess sins of indifference, hypocrisy and pride in not desiring God in your heart; 2] Turn from these sinful attitudes by asking God to bring about a re-softening of your heart towards Him. We must plead for God to awaken God-centered affections in us. Only God can give us a love for Him [Jer. 32:39; Psalm 86:11; 2 Thess. 3:5]; 3] Meditate on the Word until you become a doer of the Word [Psalm 1:2-3]; **Scrip. Ref:** Psalm 119:2 – How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart – We seek an intimate relationship with the Lord when we observe or keep His testimonies; 4] Surround yourself with godly people who delight in the Lord [Psalm 1:1; 133; 1 Cor. 15:33]; 5] Pray daily not to return to those old sinful habits [Psalm 18:23; 19:12-14; Matt. 6:13; 1 Pet. 1:14-15]; 6] Watch your thought life for temptations towards new sins [Prov. 4:23]; 7] Live a life of repentance before the Lord. If we maintain short accounts before the Lord, we will keep ourselves from drifting away from the Lord [Job 1:5; 31; 1 John 1:9]

2] Circumcision metaphor – “**Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskins of your heart**”. The first metaphor deals with confronting our sins in order to produce a softening of a heart towards the Lord by confession and repentance. The second metaphor entails a radical cutting away of the sin in our hearts and casting it from us as unclean. We must break up and throw away. But in this metaphor Judah is challenged to prove they are in the Abrahamic covenant, not by physical circumcision but by spiritual circumcision. If there is no change on the inside, the outside sign is useless. Again the Lord wants to turn Judah away from pride in externalism when there is no heart change.

For us, it is good to publicly identify ourselves as Christians by church membership and baptism. But assurance of salvation is not based on church membership and baptism but a transformed life [Rom. 8:12-16; 2 Pet. 1:5-11]

4:5-18 – No radical repentance will lead to devastating destruction. Always remember that the consequences of sin will always lead to some form of death whether temporal or eternal – 1] death of spiritual fruitfulness; 2] death of joy in one’s life [Psalm 51:12]; 3] death of peace – a guilty conscience; 4] death of God’s support in your life [1 Pet. 5:5]; In the case of Judah, the Lord was going to raise up an enemy against His people.

4:19-21 – Jeremiah responds to the Lord’s prophecy with deep anguish in his heart.

4:22-31 – The Lord gives His reason – “**For My people are foolish, They know Me not; They are stupid children, And they have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, But to do good they do not know.**” – “stupid” [saka pronounced saw-kawl – silly; foolish]; Basically Judah is an unsaved nation who will be made to pay the covenant consequences for not loving the Lord with all their heart, mind, soul and strength [Deut. 6:4-5].

Scrip. Ref: Deut. 28:47-48 – “Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; [48] therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord shall send against, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness[s, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you”. [Loving the Lord is not optional]

[Chapter 5 – The Lord Gives His Reason for Sending Judgment]

5:1 – The Lord gives Jeremiah a command to go through the city of Jerusalem to see if he could find any man [Heb. eesh – male person] who “**does justice, who seeks truth**”. And if Jeremiah could find such a man the Lord would “**pardon**” Judah’s sin – “Pardon” [Heb. “salach” pronounced ‘saw-lakh’ – to spare, to forgive].

Scrip. Ref: Gen. 18:32 – The Lord was willing to spare Sodom and Gomorrah if He had found 10 righteous people.

This commission by God was for Jeremiah to discover for himself what the Lord already knew, that the entire nation from the king, to the priests, to the prophets, to the rich and to the poor were all spiritually depraved.

5:2 – Even though the people swore by the Lord’s name as a people committed to Him, they were swearing falsely. They honored Him with their lips but their hearts were far from Him.

5:3 – Jeremiah discovered the truth that the people had indeed rebelled against the Lord and that no matter how many painful consequences the Lord brought upon them because of their sin – “**They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to repent**”.

5:4-5 – Even though Jeremiah did not find one righteous person in the entire city, he tries his best to give an excuse as to why the poor of the land have sinned – “**They are foolish; For they do not know the way of the Lord**”. In other words, the poor rely upon the elders, the priests and the prophets to teach them the word of God. But since the ones charged with teaching the Word have failed in their duty the sinful conduct of the poor is more out of ignorance of the truth than willful disobedience to it.

As Jeremiah continues his search through the city he goes to the great, the leaders in the nation – “**But they too, with one accord have broken the yoke and burst the bonds**” of their responsibility to Old Covenant that kept them in the blessings of God. As the saying goes, “Obedience brings blessings”. But also, God’s restraints as revealed in the “shall not” commands keeps us in the blessings: 1] You shall have no other gods before Me; 2] You shall not make for yourself an idol; 3] You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; 4] You shall not murder; 5] You shall not commit adultery; 6] You shall not steal; 7] You shall not bear false witness; 8] You shall not covet; 8 out of the 10 commandments are “shall not commandments”.

If we as believers would receive God’s “shall not commands” as gracious restraints of keeping us from destroying ourselves we would have a different perspective when it comes to being tempted in these areas. If I obey the “shall not command of idolatry” I will be kept from falling away from God and living an empty life. If I obey the “shall not command” of not murdering, committing adultery, bearing false witness and coveting I will be kept from a guilty conscience and suffering painful consequences. If Adam and Eve had seen “the shall not command” of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a restraint of keeping them in life, as opposed to a restraint to keep them from being more like God, they would not have brought death upon

themselves and the world. The “shall not commands” of Scripture are meant to keep us in the blessings not keep the blessings from coming to us.

5:6 – Judgment for Disobedience – The Lord will raise up Babylon, who is described as a lion, wolf and leopard, who will tear the nation of Judah into pieces – the sword, famine and pestilence.

5:7-9 – “**Why should I pardon you?**” – God’s forgiveness of sin is a gift not an obligation. God doesn’t have to forgive anyone for the evils they commit, but He is obligated to bring judgment against sin because He is a just God. Judah had committed the two sins of forsaking the Lord and worshiping false gods.

Vertical sins of irreverence towards God and exchanging Him for idols, always leads to horizontal sins against neighbor [Rom. 1:18-2:3]

5:10-13 – Despite Jeremiah’s prophecy of the coming judgment. Judah doesn’t believe the Lord will send it.

5:14-17 – The Lord tells Jeremiah to prophecy Judah’s judgment. In other words, the Lord will make His words through Jeremiah like “**fire**”. Judah will become bothered by Jeremiah’s prophecy because it will upset the false peace the prophets are seeking to comfort Judah with.

5:18-19 – Since Judah served foreign gods in their land, they will serve a foreign nation in its land. The Lord will cause the punishment to fit the crime. Yet the Lord will not bring a complete destruction upon the nation.

5:20-25 – Jeremiah declares to “the house of Jacob” on behalf of God of how senseless and foolish the people of Judah have become. He illustrates this by comparing Judah to the waves of the sea – the ocean waves obey her boundary of not crossing over and inundating the land. But Judah have cross over the moral boundaries of the covenant and have turned away from the Lord. Even despite the fact the Lord blessed them with fruitful seasons.

When we sin against the Lord: 1] The creation itself, which God has place underneath our feet, demonstrates more sense by obeying the boundaries God has placed over it than us; 2] The goodness of the Lord upon us reveals how ungrateful of a people we are. Every time we sin, we are sinning while God is granting mercy and grace upon our lives.

5:26-29 – Jeremiah describes what type of people his discovered as he went throughout the city of Jerusalem: ‘**For wicked men are found among My people, They watch like fowlers lying in wait; they set a trap, They catch men. [27] Like a cage full of birds, So their houses are full of deceit; Therefore they have become great and rich. [28] ‘They are fat, they are sleek, They also excel [lit. pass over] in deeds of wickedness; They do not plead the cause, The cause of the orphan, that they may prosper; And they do not defend the rights of the poor. [29] “Shall I not punish these people? Declares the Lord, ‘On a nation such as this Shall I not avenge Myself?’**

5:30-31 – An appalling and horrible thing Has happened in the land: [31] The prophets prophecy falsely, And the priests rule on their own authority; And My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?

It is one thing for unbelievers to listen to false prophets and false teachers but it is indeed an appalling and horrible thing to see those who profess to know the Lord sitting up under false teachers. And it is an appalling and horrible thing to see professing Christians remaining in churches where unqualified pastors rule over them by their own authority. And it is an appalling and horrible thing to hear professing believers talk about how anointed their false shepherd is and hear them defend their false shepherd against the truth. It is an appalling and horrible thing that is still happening today in our churches.

[Chapter 6 – God Declares War Against Judah]

6:1-3 – Jeremiah begins his oracle of coming doom by warning those who resided in his hometown Anathoth, which was in the territory of the “**sons of Benjamin**,” to flee from the midst of Jerusalem... “**Now blow a trumpet in Tekoa**” – the blowing of the trumpet was typically used to assemble Israel for a holy convocation or to warn the people of a military invasion. “**Tekoa**” was 11 miles southeast of Jerusalem [Amos 1:1]. Another means of warning of the people was by signal fires on the high places – “**And raise a signal over Beth-haccerem**” [house of vineyard] – the message that was communicated by the trumpet and single fire was – “**For evil looks down from the north, And a great destruction**” – The Babylonians/Chaldeans are about to invade Jerusalem. In Jeremiah chapters 3-4, the Lord calls on Judah to repent. Chapter 5, the Lord gives reasons for sending judgment upon Judah, because there was not one righteous person in all of Judah aside from Jeremiah [5:1-2]. Chapter 6, the Lord sends judgment... **[3]** The Lord will bring such ruin upon the city of Jerusalem that it will become a pasture land for shepherds and their flock.

6:4-5 – Like Elisha [2 Kings 6:8-12], Jeremiah prophesies the exact plans of the Babylonians’ invasion into Jerusalem, from the time of their invasion – “**let us attack at noon**” to the what they will seek to do when they arrive – “**And destroy her palaces**”. But unlike Elisha who warned the king of Israel of the plans of the Arameans in order to counter their attack. The people of Judah will not be able to counter the attack of the Babylonians, even though they are being told of their plans in advance. There are two reasons for this: 1] When the Lord opposes the proud there is nothing he can do to escape it:

6:6-9 – Notice the title the Lord gives Himself in this declaration of war against Judah – “**For thus says the Lord of hosts**” [tsaw-baw – an army; organized for war; battle; soldiers; servants] The Lord has an army in heaven – the angelic hosts [2 Kings 6:17; Psa. 67:18; 89:5-8; 104:2-4; Matt. 26:52-53]; all of creation is a servant to the Lord [Josh. 10:12-14; Job 37:12-13; 38:22-30]; the devil and his angels unknowingly serve His purposes [1 Kings 22:19-23] and sinful man serve His purposes without knowing it [Prov. 16:4]. Though the servants of evil are allowed to do evil according to God’s secret decree, yet He holds them accountable for the evil He allows them to do. In this instance the Lord gives the devil permission to arouse the hearts of the Babylonians to bring destruction according to His will.

If the Lord gives the devil permission to come after you, there is nothing you can do to escape [Luke 22:31; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20]. In other words, sometimes the Lord will allow the evil one to bring evil upon you, for the evil you committed against Him.

6:6-7 – Listen to the Lord’s command to Babylon against Judah – **“Cut down her trees, And cast up a siege against Jerusalem. This is the city to be punished, In whose midst there is only oppression. [7] “As a well keeps its waters fresh, So she keeps fresh [lit. keeps cold] her wickedness. Violence and destruction are heard in her; Sickness and wounds are ever before Me.** The sins of Judah were not only persistent but well-preserved like a well keeping its waters cold. In other words, Judah sought to preserve her sin by electing corrupt spiritual leaders [5:30-31] that would endorse their sinful way of life. This is almost like a country that enacts laws in order to preserve the rights of the citizens to continue in their sinful way of living without repercussions. This led to **“violence and destruction”** throughout the Southern Kingdom.

6:9-10 – The second reason why Judah will not be able to counter the attack of the Babylonians even though they are being warned in advance of their invasion is because they despise the warnings of Scripture. If we don’t heed the warnings of Scripture, we will not escape from the dangers it warned us about: **[9] Thus says the Lord of hosts, “They will thoroughly glean as the vine the remnant of Israel; Pass your hand again like a grape gatherer Over the branches.” [10] To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed [lit. uncircumcised], And they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the Lord has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it.** “reproach” [Heb. kher-paw] a feminine noun meaning scorn, taunt, a shame, a disgrace; “delight” [khaw-fates] a verb meaning to have pleasure in, to be pleased; a primitive root – “to incline to”.

Judah had no love for the Word of God – no love for its commands, warnings or promises. They were offended by the Word because the Word did not give them a license to live the way they wanted to live. Our attitude towards the Scripture is an indicator of our attitude towards God. If we despise the Word, we despise God Himself: **Scrip. Ref:** 2 Sam. 12:9-10 – Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? [10] Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me

6:11-15 – Jeremiah cannot hold this message of God’s wrath upon Judah in himself. Even though Judah will despise hearing it, Jeremiah has to proclaim it because it’s wearing him out. A true prophet and preacher cannot withhold God’s warnings from His people regardless if the congregation likes it or not. The preacher has a calling on his life and if he does not fulfill it, he will have no peace: **“Pour it out on the children in the street, And on the gathering of young men together; For both husband and wife shall be taken, The aged and the very old. [12] And their houses shall be turned over to others, Their fields and their wives together; For I will stretch out My hand Against the inhabitants of the land,” declares the Lord. [13] For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is greedy for gain, And from the prophet even to the priest Everyone deals falsely.** “greedy” [Heb. baw-tsake] – plunder; covetousness, dishonest gain, profit. This was the sin of every citizen in Judah. This is the original sin of our country.

Greed is when you refuse to be content with what the Lord has given you that you trespass His commandments in order to fulfill your lusts. When you are greedy for money you will use anyone to get it. When you are greedy for power you will break laws in order to achieve it and retain it. When you are greedy with lust you will violate marriage vows. When you are greedy for possessions you will steal. When you are greedy for success you will be willing to lie and destroy others if necessary. Fulfillment and satisfaction in life comes from being content with what the Lord has given you [Phil. 4:11-13]. Wanting more only brings frustration. It is the law of diminishing returns – the more you have, the less satisfied you become.

6:14-15 – And they have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ But there is no peace.

Quote: John Newton – Everything is needful that He sends. Nothing is needful that He withholds.

6:15 – “Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? Were the false prophets and priests ashamed in misleading Judah into sin? They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush.

I have heard of spiritual leaders/pastors giving advice to young leaders on how to swindle church members out of their money. They do not blush about it because they believe they are entitled to receive as much money as they want. But the Lord will judge such charlatans:

6:15c – Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down,” says the Lord. The office of prophet and priest doesn’t exempt one from being judged for sin: **Scrip. Ref:** James 3:1 – Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.

6:16 – The only hope for peace in this life is to walk in the path of obedience: Thus says the Lord, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you shall find rest for your souls.

Quote: One commentator wrote: “The phrase “ask for the old paths” is a favorite of people who oppose changes in the church and want to maintain a sterile and boring statue quo. But the “old ways” refer to God’s truth as revealed in His Word, not to methods of ministry... We stand on His truth in order to make progress in His work. The old Youth for Christ slogan comes to mind: “Geared to the times but anchored to the Rock.”

The phrase “**And you shall find rest for your souls**” should sound familiar to us. Our Lord quoted this verse in His call for sinners to turn from the false religious system of Israel and come to Him: **Scrip. Ref:** Matt. 10:28-30 – “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest. [29] “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light”. “easy” [Gr. chrestos] better, good, gracious, kind. Profitable, fit, good for any use. “**The ancient paths**” and “**the good way**” leads to Christ.

6:16d – But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’

6:17-21 – Since Judah refuses to heed the warnings of His watchmen [the prophets], nor listen to the sound of the trumpet [their message] He will bring judgment **“Because they have not listened to My words, And as for My law, they have rejected it also”**. And to add insult to injury the people of Judah still want to pretend they reverence the Lord through their ceremonial observances: **[20] For what purpose does frankincense come to Me from Sheba, And the sweet can from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, And your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me.**” When what we do for God replaces our love for God, [ministry replaces worship], when love of doctrine becomes the aim rather than love for the God of doctrine, or when ceremony takes precedence over relationship, the Lord is not offended by our religion [1 Sam. 15:22-23].

6:22-26 – It was Judah’s refusal to love the Lord by obeying His commandments that led to the Lord sending their enemies upon them.

6:27-30 – The Lord used the message of Jeremiah to the people of Judah to test the quality of their heart by their response to the Word: “I have made you an assayer and a tester among My people, That you may know and assay their way.” An assayer is a “tester” of metals. The result of the test was: **[28] All of them are stubbornly rebellious, Going about as a talebearer. They are bronze and iron, They, all of them, are corrupt.** Notice, the Lord doesn’t just say they are “rebellious” but they are “stubbornly rebellious”. It’s one thing to be rebellious, all of us have been rebellious at one time or another, but to be “stubbornly rebellious” is to continue in your rebellion despite the consequences you suffer. **[29] The bellows blow fiercely, The lead is consumed by the fire; In vain the refining goes on, But the wicked are not separated. [30] They call them rejected silver, Because the Lord has rejected them.** When the Lord brings the heat of painful consequences for sin and you still continue in it. There is nothing of value in your life by which God can be glorified but to reject you.

Quote: Thomas Jefferson – “Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever.” [Notes on the State of Virginia]

[Chapters 7-10] These chapters, often known as Jeremiah’s temple address... The people believed that God’s punishment would never extend to Jerusalem or to them [5:12-13] because of the presence of God’s temple and because of their outward display of religion [6:20]. [Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 1139]

Quote: Henry David Thoreau – “The more we know about the ancients, the more we find that they were like the moderns.”

7:1-4 – The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, **[2] “Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house and proclaim there this word, and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah, who enter by these gates to worship the Lord!’ [3] Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. [4] “Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, ‘This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.’**

According to Deut. 16:16, the people of Israel were to appear before the Lord at the tabernacle/temple three times a year to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread [Passover], the Feast of Weeks [Pentecost] and the Feast of Booths [Tabernacles]. The Lord's message to Jeremiah coincided with one of these feasts as Jeremiah took his stand at the entrance of the Lord's house as the people of Judah were arriving for worship.

The message is a call to repentance under the threat of judgment – **[3] Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel** – The Lord of judgment and the God who owns Israel - “Amend your ways and your deeds” – **“Amend”** [Heb. yaw-tab – a verb meaning to be good, to be well, to be pleasing. In the causative stem, it means to do good.] This command is a call to become good in one's person rather than to simply do good in one's actions. The Lord is calling for heart change. And then His blessings would remain on them – **“and I will let you dwell in this place.”**

The first step in heart change always begins with the need to stop believing lies – **[4] “Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, ‘This is the temple of the Lord’** – It is deceitful words that leads us into temptation and keeps us in bondage to our sins. **Quote:** Ed Welch – “All practice sins teaches us to believe lies”.

Judah believed the lie that by repeating the phrase **“the temple of the Lord”** three times would somehow protect them from the consequences of their sins. Judah moved from a nation called to submit to God's covenant to believing in superstitions. They believed they could live anyway they wanted and the temple, which represented God's presence, would absolve them of their sins.

It is the same superstition people have in a church building today. When people believe the building represents God's presence instead of the believing community indwelt by God. We hear statements like “going to church” while in fact, we don't go to church, we are the church. We go to worship. There are some well-known pastors who believe they cannot worship unless they are in a building and you find them with the hashtag – Church is essential. But the church is not a physical building it is a body of believers.

What we will see in these next verses is that the Lord is not impress by His people reciting their theology, if they have no intentions of applying their theology:

7:5-7 – “For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor, [6] if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin, [7] then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

“Anthropology is the study of humankind... Anthropology answers the ultimate question like, who am I? Why am I here? Why am I able to reason and feel? What is my purpose in life? Where am I headed?”

Anthropology also entails asking questions as it relates to mankind as a whole: How should we relate to another? What is our responsibility before God in our interactions with one another? What is our purpose as the human race? How should we view our unique differences in gender, personality, physical features and roles within society?

From a biblical perspective we see how anthropology addresses the fallen world around us: 1] The role of male headship and female submission in the family and in formal worship settings was meant to undermine women's equality as image-bearers of God [1 Cor. 11:3-12; 1Tim. 2:9-15]; 2] cultural norms of marriage relationships [multiplying of wives and concubines] were clear violations of Scripture [Deut. 17:17; Mark 10:6-8]; 3] social class of rich and poor, though design by God, was never meant to be used as an ontological measure of hierarchy [the rich are inherently superior to the poor by nature] [Prov. 14:31; 22:2] . Nor were those placed in positions of power [government] to function on behalf of God were to view themselves as God [superior to those under their charge] [Psalm 82]; 4] levels of intellectual giftedness was not meant to be used as an ontological measure of importance above other human beings who are not as intelligent. 5] Physical differences were not given by God as a measure of superiority within the human race. Thus the survival of the fittest, Nazism, racism, abortion, euthanasia and genocide are abominations in the sight of God. In fact, God despises those who boast in themselves [Eccl. 9:11; Jer. 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 1:26-29].

Scrip. Ref: Jer. 9:23-24 – Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; [24] but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord.

In other words, distinctions in gender, marital roles, social class, people groups or levels of intellect were never meant to be used as a standard of ontological superiority within the human race. God designed these differences in order to hold mankind accountable as His vice-regents in displaying His character as a holy, compassionate, gracious, loving God who shows no partiality [Lev. 19:9-18; Deut. 10:17-21; Psa. 68:5-6]. In fact, on a number of occasions God reversed the social order in order to humble the proud and exalt the humble [1 Sam. 1-2:10; Psalm 113:5-9]. Therefore the study of anthropology must take into account how God holds man responsible for how he treats other image bearers of God [Job 31:1-23; Prov. 31:10-20]. For man was created to follow His example.

Therefore what the Lord calls for Judah to do in this section is not just isolated to Judah. This is a timeless commandment to all believers. For the Bible commands us to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves, especially the weak and vulnerable in society. [Jas. 1:26-27; 2:1-13; 5:1-6].

7:5-6 – The Lord commands the right treatment of one’s neighbor – justice – **“if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor”** – **“justice”** [Heb. mishpat (pronounced mish-pawt – a masculine noun meaning a judgment, a legal decision, a claim, proper, rectitude. Doing what is right and just in the Lord’s eyes was far more important than presenting sacrifices to Him].

The term **“social justice”** is used frequently today. Many argue in support of using this term to convey what the Lord says here and others are against it. I don’t have a particular position on this, I think we miss the spirit of the text when we get caught up in terms and gloss over what the Lord is saying to Judah and us. Let’s not get too caught up in terms that we neglect to do what God commands. I honestly think if the church was committed to **“justice”** as described here in this section, this would not be a controversial subject. Sometimes controversies are for the sake of the truth, other times for the sake of deflecting from the truth.

There were 4 neighbors Judah was called to treat right – 1] **“if you do not oppress the alien”** [Lev. 19:33-34]; 2] **the orphan** [Ps. 10:14]; 3] **the widow** [Ex. 22:21-24; Ps. 68:5; 146:9]; 4] **and do not shed innocent blood – the poor** [Jer. 2:34] and **children** [Jer. 19:4]; Innocent doesn’t mean sinless, it means not in violation of the civil aspects of the law. The poor and the children were being killed not for a crime committed under the Law but because the Judah’s pride of superiority and idolatry – **“nor walk after other gods to your own ruin”** – mistreatment of neighbor stems from the sin of idolatry.

Scrip. Ref: Deut. 10:18-19 – “He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. [19] “So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Scrip. Ref: James 1:27 – This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

7:8-11 – **“Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. [9] “Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal, and walk after other gods that you have not known, [10] then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’ – that you may do all these abominations? [11] “Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,” declares the Lord.**

Judah has believed the lie that they can disobey God’s Law and enter into the temple in order to escape the consequences. To the point, that the temple is no longer regarded as the house of the Lord but **“a den of robbers”**. A den of robbers is a place where robbers flee after they commit a crime.

Quote: Warren Wiersbe, “Any theology that minimizes God’s holiness and tolerates people’s deliberate sinfulness is a false theology”.