

## 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 status 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/just 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”.

**7:12-15 – “But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. [13] “And now, because you have done all these things,” declares the Lord, “and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer, [14] therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. [15] “And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, all the offspring of Ephraim.**

**Quote:** George Santayana – “Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Those who do not remember their past are condemned to repeat their mistakes.

Judah felt secured in their sins because of their confidence that the temple of the Lord would deliver them from the consequences of their sins. But the Lord wanted to remind them that such a notion was baseless in light of their history. According to Joshua 18:1, when the nation of Israel settled in the land of Canaan they set up the tent of meeting at Shiloh, thirty miles north of Jerusalem. It remained there throughout the times of the Judges until the time of Samuel. In 1 Samuel 4, Israel was defeated before the Philistines and when they returned to the camp they asked a question, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?” [1 Sam. 4:3] Instead of humbling themselves before the Lord in confession of their sin. They arrogantly assumed they could force God’s hand by taking the Ark of the Covenant from Shiloh. But to their surprise the Lord allowed the Philistines to defeat them and take the Ark of the Covenant back to their land.

When the news reached Eli, the high priest, he fell off his seat backwards and broke his neck. His daughter-in-law, who was pregnant, went into labor as a result of the news. And as she was dying she named her son, Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel.” [1 Sam 4:21].

The Lord wants Judah to remember that the reason why He abandoned Shiloh was because Israel was living in the sin of idolatry [1 Sam. 7:3]. And if He abandoned Shiloh because of their sin, He will also abandon the temple in Jerusalem because of Judah’s sin.

The lesson we learn from history is: the Lord will never respond to our disobedience with blessings, always with discipline [1 Cor. 10:1-12; Heb. 12:7-11]: **Scrip. Ref:** 1 Cor. 10:12 – Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

**7:16 – “As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you.**

Jeremiah is commanded by the Lord not to pray for Judah to be delivered from the coming judgment. Can you imagine sinning against the Lord to a point that He won’t hear any pleas for mercy? This is the first of three times the Lord instructs Jeremiah not to pray for Judah:

**Scrip. Ref:** Jer. 11:14 - “Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not listen when they call to Me because of their disaster.

Jer. 14:11 – So the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for the welfare of this people.”

And keep in mind, the issue was not that Jeremiah wasn't respected by the Lord as a great intercessor. It did not matter if Judah had the greatest prayer warriors in its history God was not going to spare them from judgment: **Scrip. Ref:** Jer. 15:1 – Then the Lord said to me, “Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me, My heart would not be with this people; send them away from My presence and let them go!

Always remember saints, that even forgiven sins can carry painful consequences in this life.

**7:17-18 – “Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? [18] “The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out libations to other gods in order to spite Me.**

The sins of a nation always begins in the homes of its people. The children, fathers and women were working in concert to worship “**the queen of heaven**” [probably Ishtar (Venus), the Babylonian goddess of love and fertility.] The epithet “of heaven” alludes to her elevated character. Special cakes were baked to this goddess, which were symbolic representations of the goddess. Her worship belonged chiefly to the women (Jer. 44:17) [New Unger’s Bible Dictionary]

“**they pour out libations to other gods in order to spite Me**” – “**libations**” [Heb. neh-sek – a masculine singular noun meaning drinking offering] ; “**spite**” [Heb. kaw-as – to trouble; to grieve, to provoke to anger]; The nation of Judah knew that such false idolatry was a violation of God’s first and second commandments: “You shall have no other gods before Me” [Ex. 20:3] and “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, [Ex. 20:5]. But little did they know that though their sins provoked God to anger, their sins did not harm to His character. It only provided the opportunity to put His glory on display.

**7:19-20 – “Do they spite Me?” declares the Lord. “Is it not themselves they spite, to their own shame?” [20] Therefore thus says the Lord God, “Behold, My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and on beast and on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground; and it will burn and not be quenched.”**

Sin never hurts God; it never diminishes His glory or make Him like bad. God will always show Himself glorious, even when evil is being committed against His name. For in the end, God will get the glory and the sinner will suffer the shame. Theologians refer to this as the impassibility of God – that God does not experience pain or pleasure from the actions of another being. In other words, God doesn’t have mood swings like human beings. We can’t make God angry or control His emotions by our actions. He chooses to respond to our sins in various ways for His glory – sometimes with patience, other times by showing mercy or by demonstrating His wrath. If the intentions of Judah was to cause God to act out of character, they failed. It only provided an opportunity by God’s sovereign design to showcase His holiness in judging them.



**7:21-26** – The Lord reminds Judah that He always required obedience from them never sacrifices.

**7:27-34** – [31] **they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind.**

“Valley of Ben Hinnom [2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chron. 33:6; Jer. 19:5]... “Topheth” possibly came from a word for “cook-stove” or “oven”... In Greek the Valley of Hinnom [Heb. ge-hinnom] became known as Gehenna [geenna] to picture the fiery corruption of hell [Matt. 5:22, 29-30; 2 Pet. 2:4] [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

**Chapter 8** – **Key verse:** Jer. 8:9 – Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord, And what kind of wisdom do they have?

[8:1-7] **Theme:** Judah says, “We have fallen and we will not get back up”

**8:1-2** – “**At that time,**” declares the Lord, “**they will bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of its princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem from their graves. [2] “And they will spread them out to the sun, the moon, and to all the host of heaven, which they have loved, and which they had served, and which they have gone after and which they have sought, and which they have worshiped. They will not be gathered or buried; they will be as dung on the face of the ground.**

What makes the judgment of God so frightening is – He is all powerful so that none can escape Him. And He is all knowing so that He forgets not one sin committed against Him. In these verses the judgment of God upon Judah is traced back to the rulers and religious leaders who led the nation into idolatry in previous generations. And even though, they have since died, the Lord will use the Babylonians to dig up their bodies and expose them on the ground before “**the sun, moon, and all the host of heaven**” whom they worshiped. They would not remain in proper burial. This was to teach the people of Judah that those who turn from the Lord to the sin of idolatry will not receive a blessing from the Lord in life or in death – “**they will be as dung on the face of the ground**”

**8:4-7** – “**And you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Do men fall and not get up again? Does one turn away and not repent [lit. turn back]?’**

Common sense living should translate into common sense spiritual living – The Lord asks a question – “**Do men fall and not get up again?** The answer is no. When we fall down accidentally, we always seek to get back up on our feet don’t we not? When we turn down the wrong street, don’t we seek to turn back around? Yes. Spiritually speaking: [5] “**Why then has this people, Jerusalem, Turned away in continual apostasy?** “apostasy” [mesh-oo-baw – backsliding, turning away] **They hold fast to deceit, They refuse to return.** Judah has fallen spiritually but refused to get back up. They have turned away from the Lord and are going in the wrong direction, and they keep going.

**[8:6] “I have listened and heard, They have spoken what is not right; No man repented of his wickedness, Saying, ‘What have I done?’ Everyone turned to his course, Like a horse charging to the battle.**

The Lord testifies against Judah what He has heard and seen for Himself – they know they are doing wrong but refuse to repent. Judah was much like people today, who charge into sin like a horse charging into battle not knowing how deadly of a situation they are about to get into.

**[8:7] “Even the stork in the sky Knows her seasons; And the turtledove and the swift and the thrush Observe the time of their migration. But My people do not know.**

Birds have more sense than Judah because they are able to discern the seasons and respond accordingly. But Judah cannot discern their season of judgment in order to turn back to the Lord.

**[8:8-12] – “How can you say, ‘We are wise, And the law of the Lord is with us’? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes Has made it into a lie. [9] “They wise men are put to shame, They are dismayed and caught; Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord, And what kind of wisdom do they have?**

**Quote:** R.C. Sproul – “It’s not how much you know the Bible, it’s how much you live the Bible.”

Instead of Judah trusting in the Lord for salvation, they trusted in the symbols of the covenant – circumcision, the temple and the Law. The symbols became dead rituals because Judah had no relationship with the Lord. They were believing “**the lying pen of the scribes**”.

**Quote:** Warren Wiersbe - What happens to the Lord’s people largely depends on the leaders they follow.

**[8:13-17] – “I will surely snatch them away,” declares the Lord; “There will be no grapes on the vine, And no figs on the fig tree, And the leaf shall wither; And what I have given them shall pass away.””**

All blessings that Judah once enjoyed in the land will be removed from them. This is exactly what the Lord predicted the Babylonians would do through the prophesy of Habakkuk: 3:17-18 – **Though the fig tree should not blossom, And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail, And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls, [18] Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.**

Habakkuk believed that the Lord would be with His people in exile and bring them back to the land. But despite the promise of future restoration, Judah refused to repent, but decided to trust in themselves for deliverance – **[14] Why are we sitting still? Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fortified cities, And let us perish there, Because the Lord our God has doomed us And given us poisoned water to drink, For we have sinned against the Lord.** But they would not escape – **[17] “For behold, I am sending serpents against you, Adders, for which there is**

**no charm, And they will bite you,” declares the Lord.** Judah will not be able to charm their way out of judgment.

**[8:18-22]** – Jeremiah, the weeping prophet – **My sorrow is beyond healing, My heart is faint within me! [19] Behold, listen! I cry of the daughter of my people from a distant land: “Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King not within her?” “Why have they provoked Me with their graven images, with foreign idols?”** When adversity comes our way, when times get really dark, we often find ourselves asking, “Where is the Lord?” Jeremiah’s cry of lament is at the thought of God’s abandonment of His people, but in reality the Lord had not left Judah, Judah left the Lord.

**Quote:** Steve Smith – “God had a favorite people and they had a favorite sin, idolatry. God was exclusive, they were inclusive. He loved them, they loved to displace Him. What God wanted was their affection [Jer. 9:23-24], but they loved other things”.

**[8:20] “Harvest is past, summer is ended, And we are not saved”** – The opportunity for Judah to repent and receive the blessings of the Lord has ended. Now there is nothing but judgment.

**[8:21-22]** Jeremiah weeps – **“For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken; I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me. [22] Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has not the health of the daughter of my people been restored?”**

Gilead, east of the Jordan River, was famous for its healing balm [Gen. 37:25] [Bible Knowledge Commentary]. Jeremiah would find no healing balm for Judah’s sin on earth. It must come down from heaven: **Scrip. Ref:** Matt. 9:12 – But when He heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. [13] “But go and learn what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Isa. 53:5 – But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. Jesus is the Balm in Gilead.

**Chapter 9 – Key Verse:** 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 exercise lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.

**[9:1-6] Theme** – Lies Prevail in the Land

**9:1-2** – Jeremiah acknowledges that he doesn’t have enough tears to convey the deep pain and agony over Judah’s judgment – **Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!** The pain of seeing how low God’s people had sunk in sin was too much for Jeremiah that he wished that he **“had in the desert A wayfarers’ lodging place; That I might leave my people, And go from them! For all of them are adulterers, An assembly of treacherous men”** – **“treacherous”** [Heb. baw-gad – to be traitorous, to act unfaithfully, to betray]; Judah violated

her spiritual wedding vows by having affections for false gods [Jer. 2:1-2]. And since all non-existence objects of worship are demonically influenced [1 Cor. 10:14-20], the people of God came under the influence of the father of lies, the devil himself. Worship and behavior are inextricably linked:

**9:3-6 – “And they bend their tongue like their bow; Lies and not truth prevail in the land; For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me,” declares the Lord. [4] “Let everyone be on guard against his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; Because every brother deals craftily [lit. like Jacob], And every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. [5] “And everyone deceives his neighbor, And does not speak the truth, They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves committing iniquity. [6] “Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me,” declares the Lord.**

Every sin we commit is always preceded by belief in lies [Heb. 3:12-13]. Spiritual adultery, spiritual unfaithfulness, slander against one’s neighbor and the committing of iniquity are done not because Judah was ignorant but because Judah believed lies instead of the truth.

There are a number of reasons why deceit and lies can catch us unawares: 1] Lies can contain some truth. But remember some truth is still a whole lie [Matt. 4:6-7]; 2] Lies appeal to our egos, our desire to think highly of ourselves. The devil loves to flatter us with lies. [Gen. 3:4-5]; 3] Lies tempt our own lusts. Lies don’t just come from outside of us, but also resides inside of us [Jer. 17:9; Jas. 1:13-16]; 4] Lies always hide the painful consequences of sin [Jer. 5:12]

**9:7-9 – Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, I will refine them and assay them; For what else can I do, because of the daughter of My people? [8] “Their tongue is a deadly arrow; It speaks deceit; With his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor, But inwardly he sets an ambush for him. [9] “Shall I not punish them for these things?” declares the Lord. “On a nation such as this Shall I not avenge Myself?”**

The Lord will refine Judah with judgment because they love to lie.

**9:10-22 – The land should wail and the professional mourners should teach the nation to wail because of the sword the Lord will bring upon the nation – [21] For death has come up through our windows; It has entered our palaces To cut off the children from the streets, The young men from the town squares. [22] Speak, “Thus declares the Lord, ‘The corpses of men will fall like dung on the open field, And like the sheaf after the reaper, But no one will gather them.’”**

**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; - “boast” [haw-lal – to commend; to shine; to glory; to celebrate] When God brings judgment against a nation, it is foolish for that nation to boast about its wealth, educational system and military power. No matter how affluent of a nation might be, if the Lord stands against it, its boasts are meaningless.**

**[24] but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercise lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.** – “**understands**” [Heb. saw-kal – a verb meaning to act with insight; to be prudent; to consider; to ponder]; “**and knows Me**” – if there should be any cause to boast, celebrate or glory in anything. It should be that God by His grace has granted sinners the privilege of knowing Him in salvation and understanding Him in illumination. Boast that you are in an eternal relationship with the true and living God. To understand and know the Lord entails intellectual understanding of who He is as revealed in His word and practical living in accordance with His commandments; “**that I am the LORD**” – “LORD” [Yahweh – the everlasting, faithful, covenant-keeping God who redeems His people for Himself – Exodus 6:2-8]; “**who exercises**” [aw-saw – to accomplish] “**lovingkindness**” [Heb. hesed – love, grace, mercy and kindness; loyal love; covenant love], “**justice**” [Heb. mish-pawt – judgment; a legal case; rectitude] “**and righteousness**” [Heb. tsed-aw-kaw – rightness; The noun describes justice, right actions] “**delight**” [Heb. khaw-fates – a verb meaning to have pleasure in, to be pleased with]; It is a blessing to be in a relationship with a God who loves to dispense grace and mercy and love upon His own and who will accomplish justice and righteousness against every evil that has ever happened in this world. And we have the assurance that He will continue to shower us in His grace and love, as well as bring about justice and righteousness because He delights or finds pleasure in these things. Boast that your God delights in loving you despite your sinfulness.

**9:25-26** – The Lord will bring judgment against all nations who don’t worship Him – **[26] Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the sons of Ammon, and Moab, and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart.”**

**Chapter 10 – Key Verse** – 10:23 – I know, O LORD, that a man’s way is not in himself; Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.

**10:1-10 – Theme:** The Folly of Worshiping Idols

10:1-5 – **[1] Hear the word which the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel. [2] Thus says the LORD, “Do not learn the way of the nations, And do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens Although the nations are terrified by them; [3] For the customs of the peoples are delusion; Because it is wood cut from the forest, The work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool.**

Verses 1-16 are parenthetical, as Jeremiah briefly compares the emptiness of idols to the greatness of the Lord, before he continues his temple address of judgment against the nation. This address is given to both Israel [Northern Kingdom] and Judah [Southern Kingdom] – “**Do not learn the ways of the nations**” – “**learn**” [Heb. law-mad – a verb meaning to study, to be taught]; Don’t learn the superstitions of the nations. Don’t allow yourself to be intrigued by their folklore, myths and false legends – “**And do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens Although the nations are terrified by them**” – Israel was not to be drawn into the lies of astrology as the pagan nations falsely interrupted the occurrences in the heavens as demonstrations of their gods’ power over nature [eclipses, comets, shooting stars, thunderstorms

etc...] Their false gods were **“wood cut from the forest, The work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. [4] They decorate it with silver and with gold; They fasten it with nails and with hammers So that it will not totter. [5] “Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, For they can do no harm, Nor can they do any good.”**

These idols were crafted by man. Therefore, they have no life. They must be carried. Therefore, they have no power. They cannot speak. Therefore, they are without intelligence. They are just as harmless as “a scarecrow” in a field, a mannequin in a department store. Statues of the Virgin Mary or Buddha may be regarded by these religions as sacred but in reality they are empty symbols. We should never bow down to them nor pray to them because they are lifeless statues made by sinful man. Only the Lord is worthy of our worship and devotion:

**10:6-7 – There is none like Thee, O LORD; Thou art great, and great is Thy name in might. [7] Who would not fear Thee, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Thy due! For among all the wise men of the nations, And in all their kingdoms, There is none like Thee.**

Human imagination could not come close to the greatness of the Lord. He is unique and infinitely superior to all of the false gods of human imagination. And because He is the Creator of the human race, every nation is under His rule and will have to give an account for not honoring Him in worship [Acts 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18-3:9]

**10:8-10 – For worshipping the creature rather than the Creator all of the nations have become “stupid and foolish. In their discipline of delusion their idol is wood!” – “delusion”** [Heb. hebel, breath; vanity; worthless – Eccl. 1:2]; All of their religious rituals and sacrifices are empty because the object of their worship doesn’t exist.

**10:11 – Thus you shall say to them, “The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.”**

Jeremiah 10:11 is the only verse in this book written in Aramaic instead of Hebrew. Aramaic was the trade language of the day. Probably this verse is in Aramaic because it was directed to the pagan idolaters surrounding Israel. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

**10:12-13 – The Lord alone “made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens. [13] When He utters His voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain, And brings out the wind from His storehouses.**

Natural revelation is meant to testify to the attributes of God’s power and wisdom in creation so that man might glorify Him and give thanks [Rom. 1:20-21]. As believers God’s present involvement in the weather each and every day is meant for us to reverence Him. We are not witnessing Mother Nature, she does not exist, we are witnessing our great God demonstrating His sovereign rule over all things in the world. **“Do not learn the way of the nations”** [v. 1]

If you want a visible demonstration that God is a caring God – **“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”** [Matt. 6:26] It is God’s constant care over the things that are less important than you that is meant to encourage you not to worry about your needs being met. Creation is a visible demonstration of the glory of God.

**10:14-15** – The sin of idolatry blinds sinful man to the glory of God in creation and makes them **“stupid, devoid of knowledge”**.

**10:16** – **The portion of Jacob is not like these; For the Maker of all is He, And Israel is the tribe of His inheritance; The LORD of hosts is His name.**

**“The portion of Jacob”** – **“portion”** [heleq, “share”] usually referred to something allotted to an individual; Psa. 16:5; 73:26; 119:57; Lam. 3:24]. The Lord sovereignly allotted Himself to Israel. In other words, the Lord belongs to Israel and Israel belongs to the Lord. In the New Covenant, Jesus was elected by the Father to be our portion and we were elected by the Father to be Jesus’ portion: **Scrip. Ref:** 1 Pet. 1:20 – For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you; John 17:9 – “I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine;

**10:17-22** – **My tent is destroyed, And all my ropes are broken; My sons have gone from me and are no more. There is no one to stretch out my tent again Or to set up my curtains** – Jeremiah sympathizes with his nation as the “tent,” which represents the temple will be destroyed and the sons of Judah will be spiritually displaced – **For the shepherds have become stupid And have not sought the Lord; Therefore they have not prospered, And all their flock is scattered** [21]

**10:23-25** – **I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself; Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps** – Jeremiah acknowledges to the Lord in prayer that Judah’s future doesn’t not lay in their own decisions and plans but in the Lord alone. In other words, if Judah doesn’t agree with the Lord’s plans to send them into captivity there is nothing they can do about it. Because **“a man’s way is not in himself”** – no human being has freedom to decide his own destiny. This truth is contrary to the statement William Ernest Henley, in his poem “Invictus” wrote – **“I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul”**.

Though the Lord grants human beings the ability to make decisions, yet we can never act upon them unless the Lord grants permission: **Scrip. Ref:** Prov. 16:1&9 – The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord; [9] The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps; Prov. 19:21 – Many are the plans in a man’s heart, But the counsel of the Lord, it will stand – **“Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps”** – Judah refuses to heed Jeremiah’s prophecy, but it doesn’t matter because they have no authority to direct their own future. So Jeremiah pleads with the Lord in prayer – **“Correct me, O Lord, but with justice; Not with Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing. [25] Pour out Thy wrath on the nations that do not know Thee, And on the families that do not call Thy name; For**

**they have devoured Jacob; They have devoured him and consumed him, And have laid waste his habitation.**

Chapter 11 – **Key Verse:** 11:14 – “Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not listen when they call to Me because of their disaster.

Chapter 11 – **Theme:** Judah Violated the Mosaic Covenant

**11:1-13 – The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, [2] “Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; [3] and say to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “Cursed is the man who does not heed the words of this covenant [4] which I commanded your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, ‘Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God,’**

When the Jews referred to the OT as a whole, they usually call it, “The Law and the Prophets” [Matt. 7:12; 22:40; Lk. 16:16]. This is meant to describe the two basic divisions of the OT: “The Law” gave comprehensive instructions for Israel’s spiritual, ceremonial and civic life. The Law [5 books of Moses] is the foundation of the OT. “The Prophets” [Joshua – Malachi] were meant to give commentary into Israel’s history and call them back to covenant faithfulness. In other words, the purpose for “the Prophets” was to help Israel view their circumstances in light of the Law. Chapter 11 is an example of the ministry of an OT prophet, calling Judah to realize their present state of affairs was not because their false gods over-promised and under-delivered, but because their failure to keep the Law caused them to be in the situation they were in.

### **MAJOR OLD TESTAMENT COVENANTS**

Abrahamic Covenant: An eternal, unconditional covenant made between God and Abraham in which God committed Himself to bless Abraham and to give his descendants a land, a posterity (offspring, descendants, children), and spiritual blessings. (Gen. 12, 15, 17)

Mosaic/Sinaitic Covenant: A temporal, conditional covenant made between God and Israel alone after their exodus out of Egypt that was composed of many and various types of laws. If Israel would obey God’s laws they would enjoy the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. (Ex. 20 – 24)

Davidic Covenant: An unconditional covenant made with King David that is an expansion of the “seed promises” given in the Abrahamic covenant in which God promised David a dynasty, throne, kingdom, and rule that will last forever. (2 Sam. 7)

New Covenant: An unconditional covenant, which is based on the death of Christ, in which God promises to bring salvation and the forgiveness of sins. This covenant will ultimately be fulfilled with Israel in the millennial kingdom. (Jer. 31:31-34)

Judah violated the Mosaic covenant, which was a bi-lateral covenant: **Scrip. Ref:** Ex. 19:5 – “Now then, **if you** will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, **then you** shall be My own



possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine.” As long as Israel kept the Law out of a love for the Lord they would experience the land blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. But once they violated this covenant in unrepentance, they would forfeit God’s blessings upon them: **Scrip. Ref:** Deut. 28:36-37 – “The Lord will bring you and your king, whom you shall set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone. [37]And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where the Lord will drive you.

This promise has already been enforced upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel in Assyrian captivity. Now it’s about to be fulfilled against the Southern Kingdom of Judah: **Jer. 11:11-12** – Therefore thus says the Lord, **“Behold, I am bringing disaster on them which they will not be able to escape; though they will cry to Me, yet I will not listen to them. [12] “Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they surely will not save them in the time of their disaster.**

**11:14-17** – Since Judah had violated the covenant there was no need to pray for escape from the consequences: **“Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not listen when they call to Me because of their disaster.” [14]**

**11:18-23** – Jeremiah obeyed the Lord’s command to relay this truth to Judah, and now the people of his hometown want him dead: **Scrip. Ref:** Luke 4:24 – And He [Jesus] said, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town.

A true prophet is not called by God to tell the people what they want to hear, even to the people of his hometown. Jeremiah anticipated that the people would be upset with him, but not that they would want to kill him: **11:18-19– Moreover, the Lord made it known to me and I knew it; Then Thou didst show me their deeds. [19] But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; And I did not know that they had devised plots against me, saying, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruits, And let us cut him off from the land of the living, That his name be remembered no more.”** The people thought if they cut down the tree [Jeremiah], they would destroy its fruit [his prophesying].

**11:20** – Jeremiah’s imprecatory prayer upon his own people: **But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, Who tries the feelings and the heart, Let me see Thy vengeance on them, For to Thee have I committed my cause.**

When you know you have done God’s will and people attack you for it, ask the Lord for vindication.

**11:21-23** – The **“men of Anathoth”** threatened Jeremiah by saying: **“Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, that you might not die at our hand.”** What should you do when someone threatens your life? Remember God’s promises to you: **Scrip. Ref:** Jer. 1:18-19 – “Now behold, I have made you today as a fortified city, and as a pillar of iron and as walls of bronze against the whole land, to the kings of Judah, to its princes, and its priests and to the people of the land. [19] “And they will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,” declares the Lord. **[22] therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, I am about to**

**punish them! The young men will die by the sword, their sons and daughters will die by famine; [23] and a remnant will not be left to them, for I will bring disaster on the men of Anathoth – the year of their punishment.”** **Scrip. Ref:** Luke 10:16 – “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me”. When you do God’s will those who fight against you are actually fighting against God. That’s why the Lord refers to Himself as “the Lord of hosts” [22]: **Scrip. Ref:** 2 Chronicles 20:15 – thus says the Lord to you, ‘Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God’s’. Always remember that physical attacks against you are actually spiritual attacks from the devil: **Scrip. Ref:** Eph. 6:12 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Chapter 12 – **Key Verse:** 12:5 – “If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, Then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?”

Chapter 12:1-13 – **Theme:** Jeremiah Prays and the Lord Answers

12:1-4 – **Righteous art Thou, O Lord, that I would plead my case with Thee; Indeed I would discuss matters of justice with Thee: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease? Thou has planted them, they have also taken root; They grow, they have even produced fruit. Thou art near to their lips But far from their mind. [3] But Thou knowest me, O Lord; Thou seest me; And Thou dost examine my heart’s attitude toward Thee. Drag them off like sheep for the slaughter And set them apart for a day of carnage!** The main concern of Jeremiah’s prayer is: Why does a righteous God allow the wicked to prosper and the righteous to suffer? This is not the first time such a question has been posed in Scripture: **Scrip. Ref:** Job 21:7-16 – “Why do the wicked still live, Continue on, also become very powerful?”

But at the heart of the question is a personal complaint not a matter of theology: The doctrine of theodicy: Definition: a response to the problem of evil in the world that attempts logically, relevantly and consistently to defend God as simultaneously omnipotent, all-loving and just despite the reality of evil. [v. 1] “**I would plead my case with Thee**” – What was Jeremiah’s case? Why has a righteous God providentially blessed the circumstances of the wicked while I have to suffer for doing Your will? – **Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease? Thou has planted them, they grow, they have even produced fruit. Thou art near to their lips But far from their mind [3] But Thou knowest me, O Lord; Thou seest me; And Thou dost examine my heart’s attitude toward Thee** – **Scrip. Ref:** Psalm 73:12-13 – Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased in wealth. [13] Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure And washed my hands in innocence; [14] For I have been stricken all day long, And chastened every morning.

But the one thing the psalmist had to learn, which Jeremiah will learn is that the prosperity of the wicked and the sufferings of the righteous is only part of the story not the end of the story: **Scrip. Ref:** Psalm 73:16-17 – When I pondered to understand this, It was troublesome in my sight [17]

Until I came into the sanctuary of God; Then I perceived their end. [18] Surely Thou dost set them in slippery places; Thou dost cast them down to destruction.

The prosperity of the wicked is only temporary but their suffering will be forever. While the suffering of the righteous is temporary, but their prosperity will be forever. That's why the psalmist writes: **Script. Ref:** Psalm 73:23-26 – Nevertheless I am continually with Thee; Thou hast taken hold of my right hand. [24] With Thy counsel Thou wilt guide me, And afterward receive me to glory. [25] Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. [26] My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

If we don't view our sufferings in light of God's promises and from an eternal perspective we will easily become discouraged every time a problem arises in our lives whether big or small. This is the Lord's answer to Jeremiah's prayer: **12:5** – **"If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, Then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?"** "footmen" are the men of Anathoth who threatened Jeremiah's life [11:18-23]; In other words, if the vain threat of the men of Anathoth has already gotten you tired out and questioning life: **Then how can you compete with horses?** How will you hold up when the Babylonians come and destroy the land? **If you fall down in a land of peace** – If you fall down in exhaustion when the threats of the men of Anathoth won't even come to past: **How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?** "Thickets" were the dense growth along the Jordan River [Bible Knowledge Commentary]; What is the point of these questions? Don't be so quick to give up in the Christian race when there are minor annoyances in life. If we have a difficult time trusting God's promises in times of peace, how will we fair in times of distress? Minor annoyances: 1] Worrying: when the issue that you are worrying about hasn't happened yet; 2] Slander: when someone lies on you or misrepresent you, you are ready to stop coming to church; 3] Disagreements: when we don't see eye to eye on an issue that doesn't concern an essential of the Christian faith. Let's not be so quick to give up on the relationship; 4] Inconveniences: Don't be so quick to stop trusting the Lord when you have to go through minor setbacks. **Quote:** Phillips Brooks said that, "The purpose of life is the building of character through truth, and you don't built character by being a spectator". Sometimes a helpful perspective when suffering comes is: "It could be worse. I can be going through this without the Lord's help": For the Lord was helping Jeremiah in the midst of his sufferings: **12:6** – **"For even your brothers and the household of your father, Even they have dealt treacherously with you, Even they have cried aloud after you. Do not believe them, although they may say nice things to you."** The response of the men of Anathoth against Jeremiah's prophecy was in effect Judah's overall attitude against Jeremiah's ministry, which in essence was their attitude against God. When you reject the word of the messenger, you are really rejecting the word of the Sender: **12:7-13** – **"I have forsaken My house, I have abandoned My inheritance; I have given the beloved of My soul Into the hand of her enemies. [8] "My inheritance has become to Me like a lion in the forest; She has roared against Me [lit. raised her voice]; Therefore I have come to hate her.** When Judah refused to heed the words of Jeremiah, they had raised their voice against God and invited His opposition against them.

A Word to the Enemies of Israel & Judah:

**12:14-17 – Thus says the Lord concerning all My wicked neighbors who strike at the inheritance with which I have endowed My people Israel, “Behold, I am about to uproot them from their land and will uproot the house of Judah from among them. [15] “And it will come about that after I have uprooted them, I will again have compassion on them; and I will bring them back, each one to his inheritance and each one to his land. [16] “Then it will come about that if they will really learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name, ‘As the Lord lives, even as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they will be built up in the midst of My people. [17] “But if they will not listen, then I will uproot that nation, uproot and destroy it,” declares the Lord.** The Gentile nations [Syria, Moab & Ammon], who attacked Israel and Judah in the past will also be uprooted from their land during the Babylonian invasion. But just as the Lord will show compassion to bring Israel and Judah back to the Promise Land, the Lord will do the same to these Gentile nations. And if these Gentile nations turn from their idols and false religion and learn “the ways of My people, to swear by My name, then they will be built up in the midst of My people” – This promise will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom when Jesus Christ returns: **Scrip. Ref:** Isa. 2:1-4; 60:1-9; 66:18-24

Chapter 13 – **Key Verse:** 13:23 – “Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.

Chapter 13 – **Theme:** Judah Has Become as Useless as a Waistband

**13:1-7 – Thus the Lord said to me, “Go and buy yourself a linen waistband, and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water.” [2] So I bought the waistband in accordance with the word of the Lord and put it around my waist. [3] Then the word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, [4] “Take the waistband that you have bought, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a crevice of the rock.” [5] So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord had commanded me. [6] And it came about after many days that the Lord said to me, “Arise, go to the Euphrates and take from there the waistband which I commanded you to hide there.” [7] Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the waistband from the place where I had hidden it; and lo, the waistband was ruined, it was totally worthless.** Up until this point the Lord had spoken through Jeremiah to Judah in both plain and metaphorical language. Now He calls on Jeremiah to give a visual symbolic demonstration of what Judah has become in His sight. Jeremiah was commanded to purchase **“a linen waistband”** – **“linen”** was the material used for priestly garments; **“waistband”** – was a sash or cloth tied around the waist. Jeremiah tied the waistband around his waist and wore it before Judah. Then the Lord commanded him to take the waistband and **“go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a crevice of the rock”** [4] – The NIV translates a different word in place of Euphrates – “Perath”. The spelling of both words are identical in the Hebrew. The reason for the difference is scholars debate whether Jeremiah traveled in a 700 mile round trip to Euphrates to bury the waistband or traveled three miles northeast from Anathoth to a village called “Parah” in the territory of Benjamin and buried the waistband in a crevice of a

rock [**Geographical Background**: A deep wadi in this area, known today as ‘Ain Farah, fits the description of a place with crevices and rocks. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]. I lean towards “Perath”.

“**after many days**” – the Lord commanded Jeremiah to return and retrieve the waistband. When Jeremiah found it after digging “**the waistband was ruined**” – “ruined” [Heb. shaw-khath – to decay; to spoil; to corrupt; to utterly waste]; The waistband had rotted and had become useless.

What’s the meaning of this symbol? 13:8-11 – **Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, [9] “Thus says the Lord, ‘Just so will I destroy the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. [10] ‘This wicked people, who refuse to listen to My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts and have gone after other gods to serve them and to bow down to them, let them be just like this waistband, which is totally worthless. [11] ‘For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me, declares the Lord, ‘that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise, and for glory, but they did not listen.’**

Judah, like the ruined waistband, had ruined themselves by refusing to listen to God’s words. God declares this act “**the pride of Judah**” and “**the great pride of Jerusalem**”. It is arrogant to reject God’s word over your life. The penalty for Judah was destruction. In other words, this generation had become useless to the point that the Lord has decided to throw them away because they “**walk in the stubbornness of their hearts and have gone after other gods to serve them and to bow down to them**” [10].

God’s intentions for creating the nation of Israel was so that they would cling to Him as a “**waistband clings to the waist of a man**”. They were to cling to God by loving Him, trusting in Him and obeying His commandments [Deut. 10:12; 20; 11:22; 13:4]. And notice God’s desired purpose if Israel and Judah had clung to Him [11] ‘**that they might be for Me a people, for renown [lit. a name], for praise, and for glory, but they did not listen.**’ Israel and Judah’s clinging to the Lord was not just for the Lord to get the glory but for them to be objects of renown, praise and glory before the nations. But instead “Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, and its kings and its princes, to make them a ruin, a horror, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day; [25:18]. When we love, trust and obey the Lord it is not only for His glory but also for our good. We put His glory on display before a lost world when we cling to Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength [Matt. 5:13-14; Eph. 5:7-11; 1 Pet. 2:9-10]

The effects of being taken into captivity will feel like drunkenness: 13:12-16 – “**Therefore you are to speak this word to them, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “Every jug is to be filled with wine.”’ And when they say to you, ‘Do we not very well know that every jug is to be filled with wine?’ [13] then say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Behold I am about to fill all the inhabitants of this land – the kings that sit for David on his throne, and the priests, the prophets and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem – with drunkenness! [14] “And I will dash them against each other, both the fathers and the sons together,” declares the Lord. “I will not show pity nor be sorry nor have compassion that I should not destroy them.”’**”

The spiritual dullness of Judah is seen in that the Lord commands Jeremiah to tell the people to fill every jug with wine. Instead of seeking to understand the spiritual meaning behind this request they responded sarcastically, **“Do we not very well know that every jug is to be filled with wine?”** [12]

Since they do not wish to understand why the Lord would tell a prophet what they thought they already knew. The Lord makes it plain for them, **“Behold I am about to fill all the inhabitants of this land – with drunkenness** – drunkenness is a symbol of judgment. Their reactions to the coming judgment will look like they are drunk [14] **“And I will dash them against each other, both the fathers and the sons together,” declares the Lord.**

Jeremiah pleads with Judah to heed this prophetic warning: **13:15-16 – Listen and give heed, do not be haughty, For the Lord has spoken. [16] Give glory to the Lord your God, Before He brings darkness And before your feet stumble On the dusky mountains, And while you are hoping for light He makes it into deep darkness, And turns it into gloom.** The statement **“Give glory to the Lord your God”** refers to confessing their sins and repenting: **Scrip. Ref:** Joshua 7:19 – Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I implore you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me how what you have done. Do not hide it from me.”

God is glorified when we confess our sins: 1] It proves that He is right and we are wrong; 2] It affirms that we hold to His standard of measure of what is right and wrong; and 3] It acknowledges that whatever consequences we receive God is just [Psalm 51:4]

As Jeremiah pleads with the nation to repent of its sins he says: **13:17 – But if you will not listen to it, My soul will sob in secret for such pride; And my eyes will bitterly weep And flow down with tears, Because of the flock of the Lord has been taken captive.** There are a couple of things we need to remember whenever we refuse to receive correction, examine ourselves, admit our sin and turn away from it: 1] God is dishonored; 2] You will regret having to suffer the consequences; and 3] You hurt others who love and care about you.

The most important sacrifice God wants us to make are not promises to do better, not be more active in Christian disciplines, but to first humble ourselves: **Scrip. Ref:** Psalm 51:16-17 – For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering. [17] The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise; Isa. 57:15 – For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, “I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite. Isa. 66:2b – “But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.” **“contrite”** – [Heb. naw-keh – maimed, dejected; lame; same Hebrew word used for Mephibosheth – “who is crippled in both feet” 2 Sam. 9:3]

And as a nation it was important that this humility be first demonstrated in the highest office in the land, because it is the character of rulers that influences the behavior of its citizens: **13:18-19** – **Say to the king and the queen mother, “Take a lowly seat, For your beautiful crown Has come down from your head.”** The king here is probably Jehoiachin [also known as Jeconiah] and the queen mother was Nehushta – the widow of Jehoiakim [2 Kings 24:1-8]

**13:20-27** – The nation was too steeped in sin to turn from its wickedness. Therefore the Babylonian invasion was about to come – **“Lift up your eyes and see Those coming from the north. Where is the flock that was given you, Your beautiful sheep? [21] What will you say when He appoints over you – And you yourself had taught them – Former companions to be head over you? Will not pangs take hold of you, Like a woman in childbirth? [22] And if you say in your heart, ‘Why have these things happened to me?’ Because of the magnitude of your iniquity Your skirts have been removed, And your heels have been exposed. [23] “Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.** The Lord promises to publicly humiliate them before the nations – like a woman whose dress is lifted up and publicly exposed. Though Judah will try to appease God with burnt offerings, prayers, vows and religious worship, yet like an Ethiopian who cannot change the pigmentation of his skin or a leopard remove his spots, so Judah may do some good on the outside, yet they are still depraved on the inside [Luke 11:13].

**13:26** – **“So I Myself have also stripped your skirts off over your face, That your shame may be seen. [27] “As for your adulteries and your lustful neighings, The lewdness of your prostitution On the hills in the field, I have seen your abominations. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will you remain unclean?** Though Judah is God’s people, and her actions had a negative effect on His reputation among the nations, yet God will work in such a way that Judah would be put to shame and He would be vindicated, so that in the end God would be seen as glorious: **Scrip. Ref:** Isa. 6:1 – In the year of King Uzziah’s death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple – lit. “flowing skirts filling the temple”. Judah’s sin will not cause the Lord’s flowing skirts to be lifted over His face, but He will lift their skirts over their faces. It is impossible to ever put God to shame.

Chapter 14 – **Key Verse** – 14:11 – So the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for the welfare of this people.”

Chapter 14 – Theme: Drought and Cries for Mercy

**14:1-9** – The land of Canaan unlike the land of Egypt did not have a river like the Nile to irrigate their land, the people of Israel had to depend upon the rains for their crops [Deut. 11:8-11]. This blessing was contingent upon Israel obeying the Lord’s commandments, but if they didn’t obey His Law, He promised to “shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit” [Deut. 11:13-17].

In this section Judah is suffering the consequences of violating the Mosaic Covenant: **[2] Judah mourns, And her gates languish; They sit on the ground in mourning, And the cry of Jerusalem has ascended.** This drought had become so severe that there were no water in the

cisterns, the ground was cracked, the farmers covered their heads in mourning, the doe [female deer] abandoned her young in desperation of survival and the jackals pant for air because there was no vegetation [14:3-6].

Since the Lord did not get their attention through the preaching of Jeremiah, He got their attention through the pestilence of the land. And as always when the proud refuses to humble themselves the Lord will use calamity to incline their hearts to seek Him – [7-9] **“Although our iniquities testify against us, O LORD, act for Thy name’s sake! Truly our apostasies have been many, We have sinned against Thee. [8] Thou Hope of Israel, Its Savior in time of distress, Why art Thou like a stranger in the land Or like a traveler who has pitched his tent for the night?** Though Judah admitted her sin, she still refused to repent of them but pleaded with God to relent of judgment for the sake of His name. Yet, they failed to realize that God’s reputation of being a holy God was much more important to Him than the reputation of Him being the God of Israel, Hope of Israel and its Savior. He would never help Israel at the expense of His holiness. This is why they felt as if He was **“a stranger in the land or like a traveler”** who was just passing through the land unconcerned about the welfare of its citizens.

**14:10-12 – Thus says the Lord to this people, “Even so they have loved to wander; they have not kept their feet in check. Therefore the Lord does not accept them; now He will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account.” [11] So the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for the welfare of this people. [12] “When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I am not going to accept them. Rather I am going to make an end of them by the sword, famine and pestilence.”** Please don’t ever forget that the Lord examines our motives before He decides to accept our worship. Judah was a nation that love to wander from the Lord into idolatry. Therefore their motives for praying was not to turn from sin but to escape consequences. They fasted not because their hearts were contrite but because they thought they could con their way out of their suffering. And they offered sacrifices not because they wanted to worship the Lord but because they wanted blessings to come down. Since their hearts wandered away from the Lord, He was determined to send them away in judgment.

**14:13-16 –** Jeremiah intercedes on behalf of Judah by claiming it is the fault of the false prophets that Judah has wandered away. They kept contradicting Jeremiah’s message by saying, **“You will not see the sword nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place.”** The Lord agrees with Jeremiah only as far as the prophets have prophesied falsehood [vv. 14-15]. But Judah was still responsible for listening because the Lord had commanded Israel in the Law to test the prophets before they believed their message: **Scrip. Ref:** Deut. 13:1-4 – “If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, [2] and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying ‘Let us go after other gods [whom you have not known] and let us serve them.’ [3] you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. [4] You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.



There is one simple reason why the people of God would follow false prophets or false teachers instead of the Word of God, because they don't love the Lord, they love themselves.

**Scrip. Ref:** Deut. 18:20-22 – But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' [21] "And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' [22] "When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

If a prophet is not 100% consistent in foretelling the future he or she has not received direct revelation from the Lord. Therefore, the people of God should not be afraid to oppose him or her.

**14:17-18** – Jeremiah, the weeping prophet begins to lament in anticipation of what was going to happen when judgment comes – **'Let my eyes flow down with tears night and day, And let them not cease; For the virgin daughter of my people has been crushed with a mighty blow, With a sorely infected wound.** The Babylonians were going to slay the people with the sword and the aftermath would leave diseases of famine throughout the land.

**14:19-22** – This level of devastation caused Jeremiah to question whether the Lord had completely rejected the nation. In this section Jeremiah prays in the first person plural as he associates himself with the nation – **Why hast Thou stricken us so that we are beyond healing? We waited for peace, but nothing good came; And for a time of healing, but behold, terror! [20] We know our wickedness, O Lord, The iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against Thee. [21] Do not despise us, for Thine own name's sake; Do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory; Remember and do not annul Thy covenant with us.**

When the Lord removes His blessings from His people, that His wayward people begin to acknowledge that the idols they sought after cannot do what the true God can do. **[22] Are there any among the idols of the nations who give rain? Or can the heavens grant showers? Is it not Thou, O Lord our God? Therefore we hope in Thee, For Thou art the one who hast done all these things.**

Chapter 15 – **Key Verse** – 15:1 – Then the Lord said to me, "Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me, My heart would not be with this people; send them away from My presence and let them go!

Chapter 15 – Theme – God Has Destined His People for Judgment

**15:1-4** – The judgment against Judah is well-deserved in light of the Lord's longsuffering with His people. Not even the greatest intercessors in Israel's history would be able to pray Judah out of her calamity – **"Even though Moses"** [Ex. 32:9-14] and **"Samuel were to stand before Me"** [1 Sam. 12:18-23], **"My heart would not be with this people; send them away from My presence and let them go!** This is the message the Lord wants Jeremiah to convey to the nation. And when they heard this message they responded, **"Where should we go?" then you are to tell them, 'Thus says the Lord: "Those destined for death, to death; And those destined for the**

**sword, to the sword; And those destined for famine, to famine; And those destined for captivity, to captivity.**” Not only is the day of our death determined by God, but also the means of our death are ordained by Him.

The purpose behind this judgment goes all the way back to the time of Manasseh’s reign over Judah: **Scrip. Ref:** 2 Kings 21:10-15 – Now the Lord spoke through His servants the prophets, saying, [11] “Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, having done wickedly more than all the Amorites did who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols; [12] therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am bringing such calamity on Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears shall tingle. [14] And I will abandon the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become as plunder and spoil to all their enemies;

Though the Lord may delay in fulfilling His word, yet He will always keep His word.

**15:5-9 – [5] “Indeed, who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem, Or who will mourn for you, Or who will turn aside to ask about your welfare?** In other words, if the Lord will not care for you, who will? Mothers will be bereaved of children [7] and wives will be bereaved of their husbands [8].

**15:10 – Jeremiah speaks – Woe to me, my mother, that you have borne me As a man of strife and a man of contention to all the land! I have neither lent, nor have men lent money to me, Yet everyone curses me.** It was the famous British preacher John Henry Jowett that said, “Preaching that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.” Jeremiah was preaching an unpopular message that had caused him to be regarded as a man of strife and a man of contention in the land. The pressure of being rejected by his own people caused Jeremiah to curse himself in light of the pain his ministry had caused his mother. Yet Jeremiah affirms that he is not a prophet for hire who has received money from people to speak what they wanted but a prophet of the Lord.

**15:15-18 – Jeremiah pleads with the Lord to punish his accusers who threaten his life. Because they have rejected the word of the Lord but Jeremiah has loved it – [16] Thy words were found and I ate them, And Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts.**

Though Jeremiah delighted in God’s word, yet he complained about having to suffer persecution for it – [17] **I did not sit in the circle of merrymakers, Nor did I exult. Because of Thy hand upon me I sat alone, For Thou didst fill me with indignation. [18] Why has my pain been perpetual And my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Wilt Thou indeed be to me like a deceptive stream With water that is unreliable?**

**15:19-21 – Serving the Lord is an amazing privilege, but complaining about having to suffer ridicule for doing His will is not going to garner any sympathy from Him. The Lord doesn’t coddle self-pity – [19] Therefore, thus says the Lord, ‘If you return, then I will restore you – Before Me you will stand; And if you extract the precious from the worthless, You will become My spokesman. They for their part may turn to you, But as for you, you must not turn to them. [20] “Then I will make you to this people A fortified wall of bronze; And**

**though they fight against you, They will not prevail over you; For I am with you to save you And deliver you,” declares the Lord. [21] “So I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked, And I will redeem you from the grasp of the violent.”** The Lord seeks to restore Jeremiah’s faith by reminding him of His promises [Jer. 1:17-19]

Chapter 16 – **Key Verse** – 16:2 – “You shall not take a wife for yourself nor have sons or daughters in this place

Chapter 16 – **Theme** – No Marrying, Mourning and Merrymaking

**16:1-2 – The word of the Lord also came to me saying, [2] “You shall not take a wife for yourself nor have sons or daughters in this place”** – Jeremiah’s personal life would become an example of God’s removal of the normal activities of life from Judah. The cultural norm for Jewish men was to be married by the age of twenty. In light of the coming invasion the Lord used Jeremiah’s life to communicate the ceasing of all such celebrations.

Since the Lord was bringing death, the sword, famine and captivity [15:2], who would want to marry and bring children into such a situation? Therefore, Jeremiah was to remain single: **Scrip. Ref:** 1 Cor. 7:25-26 – Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. [26] I think then that this is good in view of the present [lit. impending] distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

The responsibilities that come with caring for the needs of a family would be impossible for Jeremiah. There would be no provision [famine]. There would be no marital or family enjoyment [death]. And there would be no honeymoon [captivity].

**16:3-4 – For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bear them, and their fathers who beget them in this land: [4] “They will die of deadly diseases, they will not be lamented or buried; they will be as dung on the surface of the ground and come to an end by sword and famine, and their carcasses will become food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth.**

**16:5-7** – There will be no mourning for the death. Why? **[5c] for I have withdrawn My peace from this people,” declares the Lord, “My lovingkindness and compassion.** What is it like to have God withdrawn His grace, love, kindness and mercy from a people?

**16:6-9** – **“Both great men and small will die in this land; they will not be buried, they will not be lamented, nor will anyone gash himself or shave his head for them. [7] “Neither will men break bread in mourning for them, to comfort anyone for the dead, nor give them a cup of consolation to drink for anyone’s father or mother. [8] “Moreover you shall not go into a house of feasting to sit with them to eat and drink”** – How many of us fail to realize the grace, love, mercy and kindness of God at a funeral? As families grieve the death of a loved one it is the grace of God who draws those who care enough to comfort them with kind words and minister to them with a meal. This common grace will be removed from Judah.

**16:10-13** – “Now it will come about when you tell this people all these words that they will say to you, ‘For what reason has the Lord declared all this great calamity against us? And what is our iniquity, or what is our sin which we have committed against the Lord our God? Here is a sobering warning to us regarding false teaching: When you believe lies, you will have a difficult time accepting the truth: **Scrip. Ref:** Jer. 14:13 – But, “Ah, Lord God!” I said, “Look, the prophets are telling them, ‘You will not see the sword nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place.’”

The false teachers taught that Judah could expect blessings from the Lord but never taught that the Lord expected obedience from Judah. When you leave this important truth out of the equation it becomes confusing to hear a true prophet tell them that a great calamity is coming because of their sin: [11] **“Then you are to say to them, ‘It is because your forefathers have forsaken Me,’ declares the Lord, ‘and have followed other gods and served them and bowed down to them; but Me they have forsaken and have not kept My law. [12] ‘You too have done evil, even more than your forefathers; for behold, you are each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart, without listening to Me.**

How can you discern if your heart is stubborn against the Lord? Do you equally hold yourself responsible to obeying God’s commands as you expect others to do? Notice in verse 11, how the Lord mentions the sins of Judah’s forefathers – followed other gods, served them and have not kept My law. Judah would agree that their forefathers who were delivered from Egyptian bondage were wrong for disobeying the Lord in the wilderness. And they were wrong for opposing God’s prophet, Moses: **Scrip. Ref:** Matt. 23:29-31 – “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, [30] and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our father, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ [31] “Consequently you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

Because Judah’s heart was stubborn against the Lord: [13] **“So I will hurl you out of this land into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I shall grant you no favor.** A stubborn and unbelieving heart leads to God giving that person over to the power and painful consequences of that sin.

**16:14-15** – Though God would give Judah over, He promised that He would bring them back: [14] **“Therefore behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt.’ [15] but, ‘As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.’ For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers.** God hurling His people out of the land was for the purpose of purging them of their idolatry. So that in the second exodus the people would return to the land cured of that sin. I believe this second exodus will ultimately be fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

**16:16-18** – The Lord sandwiches hope in between the promise of sword, famine and death. These verses explain how the Lord will send the Babylonians in like fishermen, who will fish for Judah. And like a hunter who will track those down who try to escape. This calamity comes to “**doubly repay**” Judah for “**their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations.**” [18]

**16:19-20** – Jeremiah’s prayer is a prayer of faith in God’s care for him in light of the coming distress. And a prayer of agreement with God’s will in bringing this calamity – A prayer of faith: [19] **O LORD, my strength and my stronghold, And my refuge in the day of distress, - O LORD** [Yahweh = Redeeming, Delivering and Rescuing God for His people]; How does Jeremiah perceive of God as a God of deliverance in light of a distress he cannot escape? He does not perceive God as a God of deliverance from the coming trial, but as a God of deliverance through the trial. The Lord will deliver Jeremiah from weakness – **my strength**; from anxiety – **my stronghold**; and from fear – **my refuge**. The Lord is not only able to keep you from trouble. And to deliver out of trouble. But also, to keep you from being troubled in the midst of trouble.

**16:21** – The Lord speaks – “**Therefore behold, I am going to make them know – This time I will make them know My power and My might; And they shall know that My name is the Lord.**” Judah refused to believe the words of Jeremiah. But the Lord will “**make them know**” that He is serious. He has the power to bring them into captivity. And He has the might to bring them back into the land. “**And they shall know that My name is the Lord**”.

Chapter 17 – **Key Verse** – 17:9-10 – “The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? [10] “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.

Chapter 17 – **Theme** – The Five Sins of Judah

**17:1-4** – [Idolatry] **The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus; With a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of their altars,** - “The iron-engraving tool referred to here is used for etching permanent inscriptions on stone, while the ‘diamond point’ was used in engraving gems.” [Bible Background Commentary OT, p. 654]. The sins of Judah were permanently etched on their hearts. There was nothing that could be done on the outside that could remove the permanent inscription of sin on the inside. Judah, just like the human race as a whole was totally depraved.

When it came to the sin of idolatry, the Lord knew that the physical removal of Judah from the land would not keep Judah from this sin. This sin was so deeply ingrained within them that “**As they remember their children, So they remember their altars and their Asherim**” [2] Judah’s love for idols was as deep as their love for their children.

“**Asherim**” – a pagan goddess who is found in the Ras Shamra epic religious texts discovered at Ugarit in N. Syria [1929-37]. In the OT Asherah appears as a goddess by the side of Baal, whose consort she evidently came to be, at least among the Canaanites of the south... Frequently represented as a nude woman bestride a lion, with a lily in one hand and a serpent in the other,

and called Qudshu “the Holiness,” that is, “the Holy One’ in a perverted moral sense... Characteristically Canaanite, the lily symbolizes grace and sex appeal and the serpent fertility. [New Unger’s Bible Dictionary, p. 484]

**17:5-6** – [Unbelief] **Thus says the Lord, “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the Lord. [6] “For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant.** “Cursed” [Heb. pronounced aw-rar – a verb denoting to inflict with a curse]; The curse inflicted upon those who trust in themselves is spiritual barrenness, like a bush in the desert. When you place your confidence in people or yourself, you will always experience the curse of disappointment and desperation. Disappointment, when the one you trust in is removed, he or she can’t help you. Desperation, you will be looking for someone else to give you peace and hope.

**17:7-8** – [Faith in the Lord] **“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose trust is the Lord. [8] “For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by the stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit.** “Blessed” [Heb. pronounced – baw-rak – a primitive root; to kneel. The verb derives from the noun knee and perhaps suggests the bending of the knee in blessing.] If you want God to bless you, you have to humble yourself. You have to spiritually bend the knee of your heart in faith to God. And the results will be like **“a tree planted by the water”** – the tree represents the believer and the water is the Lord. As long as the believer trusts in the Lord his spiritual roots will extend by the stream **“and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green”**. Faith in the Lord is the remedy from the fear and anxiety that comes from all the threats you will face in life: **Scrip. Ref:** Psalm 1; 92:12-14

**17:9-10** – [Deceit] **“The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? [10] “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds”**. Why would a person choose to trust in idols and mankind, knowing the consequences as oppose to trusting in the Lord and being blessed? Because **“the heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick”** – **“heart”** [the inner person = mind, will and emotions]; **“deceitful”** [Heb. pronounced aw-kobe – fraudulent, crooked, polluted or insidious]. Man in his fallen state possesses a lying and misleading heart. Therefore, whatever feelings, impulses, passions, desires, thoughts and urges that arises within him are in essence deceitful, even though it might be believed to be a real and true description of self: **Scrip. Ref:** Prov. 28:26 – He who trusts in his own heart is a fool; Gen. 6:5 – Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; Eccl. 9:3 – the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives; Mark 7:20-23 – And He was saying, **“That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. [21] “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, [22] deeds of coveting and wickedness as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. [23] All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”**

**“Who can understand it?”** “No” is the answer because no human being can truly understand himself apart from divine revelation. [10] **“I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.”** – **“test”** [Heb. pronounced baw-khan – a verb meaning to examine, to try, to prove or to investigate.] The Lord tests the heart by allowing it to express itself in a man’s ways and deeds. In other words, the deceitful heart tells the truth about itself by its words and actions.

**17:11** [Unjust Gain] **“As a partridge that hatches eggs which it has not laid, So is he who makes a fortune, but unjustly; In the midst of his days it will forsake him, And in the end he will be a fool.** **“a partridge”** is a small game bird. Jeremiah compares the sins of gaining wealth unjustly to a partridge bird who hatches eggs which don’t belong to her. In the end, the birds will recognize that the partridge is not their mother and fly away. And so will the wealth that is gain unjustly.

**17:12-18** [Jeremiah’s Prayer for Vindication] Jeremiah’s petitions the Lord to put Judah to shame for their evils of forsaking the Lord and persecuting him.

**17:19-27** [Breaking the Sabbath] The Lord sends Jeremiah to stand in the public gates of the city of Jerusalem and confront the kings and inhabitants of Judah for failing to keep the Sabbath. The statement [21] **“do not carry any load on the sabbath day”** refers to agricultural products [Neh. 13:15]. If Judah will repent of her sins the Lord promises future blessings upon the nation [vv. 24-27]

Chapter 18 – **Key Verse** – 18:6 – “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.

Chapter 18 – **Theme** – The Potter and the Clay

**18:1-4** – **The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, [2] “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I shall announce My words to you.” [3] Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel** [lit. pair of stone discs]. **[4] But the vessel that he was making a clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.** “Jeremiah’s ninth message was a series of parables and events that climaxed the first section of the book. The Parable of the Potter [chap. 18] demonstrated God’s sovereign dealings with Judah” [Bible Knowledge Commentary]; “There were two kinds of potter’s wheel, a slow or hand-turned wheel, and the fast or kick wheel, which was rotated by foot. The potter shaped the clay vessel by hand on the smaller revolving stone that was on top. The lower stone provided the momentum and quickened the turning. The potter rotated the lower disk with his foot. This created a centrifugal force on the clay, which was shaped by the potter’s hands as he exerted force to shape it against its own force.” [Bible Background Commentary OT, p. 655] Jeremiah had witnessed the work of the potter in that day because the manufacturing of pottery was a major business in the ancient Near East. But on this day, the potter’s house would serve as a parable to Jeremiah of the Lord’s sovereign hand in shaping the nations for His glory.

**Quote:** J. Wilbur Chapman – “The clay is not attractive in itself, but when the hands of the potter touch it, and the thought of the potter is brought to bear upon it, and the plan of the potter is worked out in it and through it, then there is a real transformation”.

**18:4 – But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.** As Jeremiah observed the work of the potter he noticed that the vessel being shaped by the potter’s hand “**was spoiled**” [Heb. pronounced shaw-khath – a verb meaning to ruin, to pervert, to corrupt; a primitive root “to decay”]; The vessel was not conforming to the shape the potter desired from it. So the potter remade it into another vessel, as it pleased him – “**pleased**” [Heb. pronounced yaw-shar – a verb meaning to be pleasant or pleasing]; Right here, we come to understand the important relationship between the sovereignty of God and human responsibility, particularly as it relates to salvation: **Scrip. Ref:** 1 Tim. 2:4 – who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The Lord, by means of common grace, blesses all men with an evangelistic intent of drawing them to the gospel. This is why Paul can write in 1 Tim. 4:10 – God, who is the Savior of all men, especially believers. Every good and perfect gift comes from above to all sinners but instead of sinners thanking God for these gifts and worshiping Him, they keep suppressing the truth [Rom. 1:18] and as a result “think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance” [Rom. 2:4]. So in the end, sinners refuse to allow common grace to lead them to saving grace. And thus, they become like the religious leaders Stephen indicted before his death – “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did” [Acts 7:51]. So the Lord in His sovereignty determines not to overcome the resistance of many sinners because He did not chose them for salvation. This is the vessel that has become spoiled in the potter’s hand. So the Lord fashions that vessel into another vessel, a vessel of destruction: **Scrip. Ref:** Rom. 9:21-24 – Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use [lit. for dishonor]? [22] What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? [23] And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon the vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, [24] even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

In other words, the Lord took an already spoiled vessel and made into a vessel of honor. It pleased the Father to choose us out of every condemned sinner to be saved in Christ before we existed: **Scrip. Ref:** Eph. 1:4 – **just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love** “He chose us in Him” – “chose” [ek-lego – aorist indicative **middle voice**; 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular; lit. “to choose out of for Himself”]. When this word is used in the NT it always conveys a choice out of personal interest. But in this context, the personal interest is not in the objects of choice in and of themselves but because they were viewed as being united “in Him”. Which means in view of what Christ would one day



accomplish on our behalf through the cross the Father in great delight chose us for Himself. If we were not chosen in Him, the Father would have glorified Himself by sending us to hell.

Now think about this, when the Father chose you to be in Christ before the foundation of the world He already knew all the worse things about you before you even existed. And yet, the Father was happy to choose you anyway: **Quote:** A.W. Tozer – Jesus Christ knows the worst about you. Nonetheless, He is the One who loves you most.

**18:5-12 – Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, [6] “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O Israel. [7] “At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; [8] if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. [9] “Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; [10] if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.**

Now the Lord applies the parable of the potter and his clay to His sovereign right to deal with the nations according to how they respond to His judgments and promises. You can call this conditional threats of judgment or conditional promises of blessings – **“At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it”** [7]. An example of a nation God spoke of destroying was Nineveh [Jonah 3]. But when they responded to this conditional threat of judgment through Jonah’s preaching with repentance. The text says – “When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it” [Jonah 3:10].

**“Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it”** [vv. 9-10]. This is the conditional promise of blessings. The Lord promised to bless Judah with deliverance if they would repent of their national sins [Jer. 3:11-4:18]. But they have refused, therefore at this point, the Lord has thought better of the good with which He had promised to bless it – [11] **“So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.”’** – The Lord uses pottery language here: **“fashioning”** [Heb. yatsar = pronounced yaw-tsar – to mold into a form; especially as a potter; to determine; to shape or to devise]; **“devising”** [machashabah = pronounced makh-ash-aw-baw – a contrivance; a texture, machine, or intention, plan, a device or work. The feminine noun means a thought, a purpose, a device. Like the skillful inventions coming from the mind of an artist.] The sovereign hand of the Lord has devised a way to mold this nation by means of calamity. The only way to escape this is for Judah to **“turn back from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds”**. This is a national call for repentance.

When we yield ourselves to the will of God, without resistant and without complaint, He will mold our lives into a blessing. This is why the hymn writer pleaded, “Have Thine own way, Lord, Have Thine own way; Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. Mould me and make me After Thy will, While I am waiting, Yielded and still”.

Even though the Lord had given Judah this conditional promise of blessings He knew they would not yield to His will – [12] **“But they will say, ‘It’s hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’** The Lord is never ignorant to how man will respond to His revealed will.

**18:13-17** – **“Therefore thus says the Lord, ‘Ask now among the nations, Who ever heard the like of this? The virgin of Israel Has done a most appalling thing. [14] Does the snow of Lebanon forsake the rock of the open country? Or is the cold flowing water from a foreign land ever snatched away? The Lord was well aware of Judah’s stubbornness. Yet their rebellion against their own God was unheard of among the nations. All of the nations of the world relied heavily on their gods. But Judah had done the most appalling thing by rejecting their God. The snow on the mountaintop of Lebanon, and the cold flowing stream that came down from that mountain, demonstrated more dependence on the mountain than Judah had in her God – [15] For My people have forgotten Me, They burn incense to worthless gods And they have stumbled from their ways, From the ancient paths, To walk in bypaths, Not on a highway.** Judah stumbled away **“From the ancient paths”** of faith and obedience. The very paths of the patriarchs [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]. Every time a believer has stumbled into sin is because he decided to walk down the “bypaths” of worldliness, instead of committing himself to the ancient paths of faith in God and obedience to His word. There are no new ways to God only the old way. And since Judah has chosen to walk in the bypaths of disobedience. The Lord says [17] **‘Like an east wind I will scatter them Before the enemy; I will show them My back and not My face in the day of their calamity.’**” – **“My face”** speaks of God’s favor. His **“back”** speaks of His rejection.

**18:18** – **Then they said, “Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah. Surely the law is not going to be lost to the priest, nor counsel to the sage, nor the divine word to the prophet! Come on and let us strike at him with our tongue, and let us give no heed to any of his words.** The evidence of God turning His back on His people is seen in their refusal to receive Jeremiah’s words. They believe the false messages given by the priest, sage and prophet are true words from God. Therefore, they intend to persecute Jeremiah in order to silence him.

**18:19-23** – Jeremiah prays for the Lord to judge Judah for their threats against him [imprecatory prayer].

Chapter 19 – **Key Verse** – 19:10-11 – “Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you [11] and say to them, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Just so shall I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter’s vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial.

Chapter 19 – **Theme** – The Broken Jar

**19:1-15 – Thus says the Lord, “Go and buy a potter’s earthenware jar, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests.** The Lord again gives the leaders and people of Judah a parable concerning their future. Jeremiah is told to **“buy a potter’s earthenware jar”** which represents the nation and commands him to break it in their sight. The breaking of the jar represents Judah being broken before their enemies to such a degree that they can never be repaired [7] **“And I shall make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I shall cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I shall give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. [8] “I shall also make this city a desolation and an object of hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its disasters.** For the nations to “hiss” at Judah’s calamity conveys scorn at their destruction.

Jeremiah gave this prophecy at the valley of Ben-hinnom or the Valley of Slaughter. In the NT it is referred to as Geheena, a place of fire. The reason is given in verses 4-5 – **“Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had ever known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent [5] and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind; This last statement “a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind”** proves that the Lord never approves of evil even though He allows it. He grants His creatures the opportunity to express their hearts while holding them accountable for their actions. In this case, the Lord was going to slaughter many of the people of Judah in recompense for slaughtering their own children.

Jeremiah leaves Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, and comes into the court of the Lord’s house and announces that this calamity will come upon the entire city of Jerusalem – **“because they have stiffened their necks so as not to heed My words.”** [15]

Chapter 20 – **Key Verse** – 20:9 – But if I say, “I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name,” Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it.

Chapter 20 – **Theme** – Pashhur the Priest Persecutes Jeremiah

**20:1-6 – When Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer, who was chief officer in the house of the Lord, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, [2] Pashhur had Jeremiah the prophet beaten, and put him in the stocks that were at the upper Benjamin Gate, which was by the house of the Lord. [3] Then it came about on the next day, when Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks, that Jeremiah said to him, “Pashhur is not the name the Lord has called you, but rather Magor-missabib.** In this chapter we get the first of several acts of persecution against Jeremiah. Pashhur the priest was in charge of maintaining order in the temple area, from which Jeremiah had just issued forth his prophesy [19:14-15]. Pashhur himself had been prophesying to the nation also, but his message was a pronouncement of blessing upon Judah not judgment [Jer. 14:13-16; 20:6]. So when he heard Jeremiah’s prophesy he decided to have **“Jeremiah the prophet beaten”** with 40 lashes [Deut. 25:2-3] and placed in stocks [20:2].

**On the next day, Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks** but instead changing his message Jeremiah, by the Holy Spirit, changed Pashhur's name to "**Magor-missabib**," which means "terror on every side". Pashhur would experience the judgment Jeremiah had prophesied about. He would witness the people of the nation fall by the sword and the rest taken into Babylonian captivity. And Pashhur would die in Babylon along with his friends to whom he had prophesied falsely [20:6]

**20:7-9** – [Jeremiah's Complaint to the Lord] **O Lord, Thou hast deceived me and I was deceived; Thou hast overcome me and prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; Everyone mocks me. [8] For each time I speak, I cry aloud; I proclaim violence and destruction, Because for me the word of the Lord has resulted In reproach and derision all day long.** Have you ever felt discouraged for doing what God commanded you to do because you expected that things would turn out better? A husband or wife who decided to surrender to God's will, but the relationship ended up in a divorce? A believer who refused to lie about the wrongdoing at his job and ends up fired? A person who sees his friend involved with drugs or in a destructive relationship and attempts to rescue him only to be slandered as an enemy? Jeremiah expected that his prophesying would lead to national repentance. But instead, Jeremiah had become "**a laughingstock all day long**". Technically, Jeremiah's discouragement was self-inflicted because the Lord had not promised him that the nation would respond favorably to his message. In fact, when the Lord called him into the ministry He promised him, "they will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you," declares the Lord [Jer. 1:19].

As Jeremiah contemplated leaving the ministry, he found it impossible to stop preaching God's word – **[9] But if I say, "I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name," Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it.** The Lord held such a grip on Jeremiah's heart that he could not leave the ministry. No matter how many times a true believer has felt disappointed with what God has purposed in his life, he has always found it impossible to turn away from the Lord. There is always that "**burning**" in the bosom if you will: **Script. Ref:** Psalm 73:13; 21-22; 25 – Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure, And washed my hands in innocence; [21] When my heart was embittered, And I was pierced within, [22] Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before Thee; [25] Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth.

**20:10-13** – **For I have heard the whispering of many, "Terror on every side! Denounce him; yes, let us denounce him!" All my trusted friends, Watching for my fall, say: "Perhaps he will be deceived, so that we may prevail against him And take our revenge on him."**

Jeremiah is listening to the whispering around town wishing for him to give a false prophesy so that they might put him to death. Charles Spurgeon, in his book "Lectures to My Students" has a chapter entitled "The Blind Eye and Deaf Ear". He says that a minister must have one blind eye and one deaf ear in ministry. In other words, be selective when it comes to the things you focus on and listen too. You don't always have to know what people think about you and you don't always need to see what other people are doing. Keep your good eye on the Lord and your good

ear listening to His will. This is what the Lord was teaching Jeremiah: **[11] But the Lord is with me like a dread champion; Therefore my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will be utterly ashamed, because they have failed, With an everlasting disgrace that will not be forgotten. [12] Yet, O Lord of hosts, Thou who dost test the righteous, Who seest the mind and the heart; Let me see Thy vengeance on them; For to Thee I have set forth my cause. [13] Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord! For He has delivered the soul of the needy one From the hand of evildoers.**

**20:14-18** – Jeremiah knows that the Lord will vindicate him against his enemies, but he realizes that when that day comes it will entail Jerusalem’s complete destruction. As he thinks about that his mood changes in verses 14-18: **Cursed be the day when I was born; Let the day not be blessed when my mother bore me! [15] Cursed be the man who brought the news To my father, saying, ‘A baby boy has been born to you!’ And made him very happy. [16] But let that man be like the cities Which the Lord overthrew without relenting, And let him hear an outcry in the morning And a shout of alarm at noon; [17] Because he did not kill me before birth, So that my mother would have been my grave, And her womb ever pregnant. [18] Why did I ever come forth from the womb To look on trouble and sorrow, So that my days have been spent in shame?** There are some tragedies in life you wish you were never born to witness. For Job it was the death of all his adult children in one day and the loss of all his possessions: **Scrip. Ref:** Job 3:1-3 – Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. [2] And Job said, [3] “Let the day perish on which I was to be born, And the night which said, ‘A boy is conceived.’

For Jeremiah it would be witnessing the sword, famine, pestilence and captivity against his own people. There are some experiences in life you would rather die than to have to live through.

Chapter 21 – **Key Verse** – 21:5 – “And I Myself shall war against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm even in anger and wrath and great indignation.”

Chapter 21 – **Theme** – When It’s Too Late to Ask for God’s Deliverance

**21:1-2** – **The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchijah, and Zephaniah the priest, and the son of Maaseiah, saying, [2] “Please inquire of the Lord on our behalf, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is warring against us; perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all His wonderful acts, that the enemy may withdraw from us.** From chapters 21-25, we have specific prophecies of judgment not against the nation but against individuals and groups in the nation. In chapters 21:1-23:8, we have prophecies of judgment against the kings of Judah. These were the leaders responsible before God to shepherd His people. It is to the last five kings of Judah that Jeremiah prophecies too. The first mentioned in chapter 21, happens to be the last of the five kings, Zedekiah. As one commentator wrote, “by discussing Zedekiah at the beginning he [Jeremiah] was able to put the story of “Pashhur son of Malchijah” [21:1] next to the story of “Pashhur son of Immer” [20:1]. The fact that these two individuals had the same name provides continuity.” [The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 1155].

Jeremiah prophesied that Pashhur, the son of Immer would have terror on every side. In this chapter that terror is none other than the Lord Himself.

Zedekiah was hoping that Jeremiah would prophesy deliverance like Isaiah the prophet did before Hezekiah [Isa. 36-37]. But that time was over, Judah had sinned beyond the limits of God's sovereign patience, now it was time for judgment. So when Zedekiah asked Jeremiah to **"inquire of the Lord on our behalf; perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all His wonderful acts [miracles] that the enemy may withdraw from us."** [21:2]. Jeremiah responds: [4] **"Thus says the Lord God of Israel, "Behold, I am about to turn back the weapons of war which are in your hands, with which you are warring against the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the wall; and I shall gather them into the center of this city. [5] And I Myself shall war against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm, even in anger and wrath and great indignation. [6] "I shall also strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they will die of a great pestilence. [7] "Then afterwards," declares the Lord, "I shall give over Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people, even those who survive in this city from the pestilence, the sword, and the famine, into the hand of their foes, and into the hand of those who seek their lives; and he will strike them down with the edge of the sword. He will not spare them nor have pity nor compassion."** This message was given some time between 588 BC and 586 BC, the last of three sieges against Jerusalem. The Lord refused to grant deliverance to Judah's king because he had failed to administer justice to the oppressed.

**21:11-12 – "Then say to the household of the king of Judah, 'Hear the word of the Lord, [12] O house of David, thus says the Lord: "Administer justice every morning ; And deliver the person who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor, That My wrath may not go forth like fire And burn with none to extinguish it, Because of the evil of their deeds.**

Here's the irony: Zedekiah wanted to Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord on his behalf for deliverance from his oppressors, the Babylonian, but refused to grant deliverance for those in his nation who were being oppressed. Zedekiah was reaping what he has sowed: **Scrip. Ref:** Prov. 21:7 – The violence of the wicked will drag them away, Because they refuse to act with justice.

But the Scriptures teach that the Lord blesses those who rescues the helpless: **Scrip. Ref:** Psalm 41:1-2 – How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble. [2] The Lord will protect him, and keep him alive, And he shall be called blessed upon the earth; And do not give him over to the desire of his enemies.

But Zedekiah believed that he could ignore God's commands with impunity because he felt no harm would befall him: [13] **"Behold, I am against you, O valley dweller, O rocky plain," declares the Lord, "You men who say, "Who will come down against us? Or who will enter into our habitations?" [14] "But I shall punish you according to the results of your deeds," declares the Lord, "And I shall kindle a fire in its forest That it may devour all its environs.""**

