

# PLAIN TALK ON JEREMIAH

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## Chapter 1 **The Importance Of The Old Testament**

In this study of Jeremiah we are seeking to set forth the teaching of the Scriptures with the thought in mind that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Our whole purpose is that the faith of believers in Christ might be nurtured by studying that which has been written in the Scriptures.

The name "Christian" is given to any person who becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ; and a person becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ by believing in Him. I know this word is often-times used to describe a certain kind of living so that we speak of a "Christian" way of doing things just as we use words like German or American when we refer to a characteristic way of doing and being – a way of life. But this use of the word "Christian" as an adjective when we speak of Christian conduct or of Christian ideas is actually secondary. There is an American way of life because there are Americans. If there were no Americans there would not be an American way of life. And so, if there were no Christians there would never have been a Christian way of life. It is somewhat like becoming a soldier. When I enlisted in the Canadian Army in World War I it took only a matter of minutes for me to become a soldier, yet I am sure any one of my officers would have told you it took a long time for me to become soldierly.

In the matter of becoming a Christian, one believes the Gospel. There is actually something to believe. As a Christian one grows, more and more one's way of life fits into the things that one believes. Believers begin to look and act like the thing they really believe to be true. That is expected. There are many people like myself who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: We are trusting in God through Jesus Christ, and we have one desire in our hearts; and that is to grow in grace and in knowledge of Him. I think this comes from the Scriptures. When we ask ourselves "What is the Gospel? What do I believe in order to become a Christian?" We turn to the Bible.

We shall now take a look at a book in the Old Testament; and I am raising the question, "What may we expect to find in this study?" In any study of the Old Testament we have a history of events in the life of the nation of Israel; but more than that is true. We have a record of events in the lives of certain persons: Abraham, Moses, Daniel et al. But there will be more than that.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Romans 15:4).

That is really what we have in mind; and the Scriptures include the Old Testament. Study of the Bible brings patience and hope: the more we believe in God, the more patience and hope we will have.

What will we find when we turn to the Old Testament? We could ask what life is? And, What is the universe? The Old Testament tells us, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." We ask ourselves as we look around where all of this came from. The Bible will tell us,

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Hebrews 11:3).

The Old Testament tells us that everything comes from God. Perhaps we may ask, "What is man?" The Old Testament will say, "In the image of God created he man." So when we want to know about life, we think back to creation. The New Testament refers to it; but it does not tell us. What about the nature of things? They are the way God made them. What about keeping things in their place? It is God who keeps them in their place. I am reminded of a little incident that happened in our family. One time when our children were very small I heard two of them through an open window; the little sister asked her brother, "What makes the leaves move?" And the boy, about a year and a half older, said, "The wind." After awhile I heard her voice, "What makes the wind blow?" And then the boy answered, "God." And I thought "What a complete and perfect answer." That young lad is now an electronics engineer and while he might give a more complicated answer now, I believe he would still say God makes these things go.

Where do we learn that man was made in the image of God and that he is not just a creature such as an animal? In the Old Testament. Where do I get the idea that man is responsible for his conduct, and that it makes a difference how he acts? Do I matter, anyway? The Old Testament will tell me that God has His eye on me. And if I wonder if I can do anything I want to do, the Old Testament will tell me that God is the Judge of all the earth. He watches over our loved ones; He is sovereign, in control of all things.

All these things we learn in the Old Testament. If we should ask if the Old Testament is true, Jesus of Nazareth held it to be. When we read the Old Testament we are reading the same Scriptures that He read.

## Chapter 2 The Message Of The Old Testament

We are living now almost 1900 years since any of the Bible was written. We are certainly on this side of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, with Calvary and Pentecost: we are living in New Testament times. Therefore, the question might well come to mind, Why would we study the Old Testament and what would we look for there? The Old Testament records that man was created in the image of God, but it tells us more about man. The Old Testament makes it clear that man is responsible for what he does. That word "responsible" means he is answerable; he can be called to account.

Every person feels in himself his own freedom. That is one of the things that gives us a sense of personal strength. There is a certain truth in the general idea that I can do as I please, but it is within limits. Almost everybody enjoys the power he has to choose; many things are controlled for us, but still we do have a certain amount of liberty. But can a man really do as he pleases without any sort of responsibility and can he use his time or money any way he wants to? When we look into the Old Testament we find it was revealed from the very beginning that man must answer to God. We recognize right away that is what our conscience would tell us. So it does make a difference what we do: our own thoughts accuse or excuse us.

What is the nature of that responsibility – to whom will I be responsible? The Old Testament will tell us that man is responsible to God – the One who made him and keeps him.

God, who has made man and made the world, is shown in the Old Testament to be a righteous God. He is intelligent: He knows what He is doing. He is benevolent: He does good. He is prudent: He acts wisely. He is diligent: He never slumbers nor sleeps. God is able; and out of His own nature comes what we call the Law of God, which is His will. The Old Testament shows that God is in control and that He

judges all things by Himself.

The Bible records at the beginning the story of the Garden of Eden, in which the whole truth about sin is brought out. God told man that he could have anything in the garden to eat, except the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When Adam and Eve partook of that tree it was God who judged them, and pronounced the curse upon them. God is kind and merciful, but He is fair. He sees us for what we are; He sees things about us that are not right. But that is not the whole story. Before the story of the Garden of Eden is finished, it records that God made skins of animals and covered Adam and Eve; so God becomes the Savior. In grace and mercy He helps man.

In the Old Testament we find one story after another about men; some individual cases, sometimes a nation as a whole. We learn that over and over again man does wrong. In the Old Testament we read that sin is natural to man. At the same time the Old Testament teaches that God is Savior, and will help man who is himself a sinner. The Old Testament also tells us about sin by showing us the Law of God. It tells us about trouble, and how man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. We learn about bondage in the Old Testament: man's bondage to sin. It also tells about evil: there are ways of doing things that hurt and destroy. The Old Testament reveals God will judge and destroy evil.

We rejoice that the Old Testament tells about deliverance. Adam and Eve did wrong but God covered them, and made them acceptable in His sight. In the time of Noah all men were doing wrong, and God sent a flood to destroy them; but He sent an ark to save Noah and his family. We think about the nation of Israel in Egypt, where they were slaves and in real trouble; but God sent Moses to bring them out. When David went forth against Goliath, God strengthened David and gave him the victory. When Daniel was confronted by the lions in the lions' den, God was with him and brought him through. All through the Old Testament, again and again in different ways, the truth is brought out that God will save those who put their trust in Him.

### Chapter 3

## **Deliverance Leads Into Better Things**

What will we find in the book of Jeremiah? We have already noted that in the Old Testament it is recorded that God created the heavens and the earth; and that He made man in His own image; and that He is the almighty and everlasting God, in control of all things. We have noted also that although God will destroy that which is sinful, He will save those who put their trust in Him. We will be learning that while the Old Testament shows the meaning of sin, the light that reveals is the light that heals.

What does the Old Testament tell us about how God effects salvation? We learn that deliverance is possible; and this is the part of revelation that is so gracious and wonderful in the Gospel. But the idea that God can overlook sin if He wants to is wrong. He has to be honest. Every wrong deed will bring an actual result, but believers can be spared the result. Sin can be forgiven on the basis of sacrifice; pardon is free: but it cost God.

The Bible tells us of a substitution being made, a sacrifice. We have a glimmer of this in parents who are willing to bear the results of their children's wrongdoing. So the great truth brought out in the Old Testament is that God forgives believers because Christ Jesus died for their sins.

Now, I want to draw your attention to something else that is found in the Old Testament: the matter of being saved and being delivered is not just a matter of being set free from evil consequences. The believer is not only delivered from death but is brought into life – a better life than he had before. The

Bible generally contrasts two ways of living by the terms natural and spiritual. The Old Testament indicates that when a man is naturally in his sin, this will bring upon him judgment of God. When he is saved he is not merely restored to the natural without anything against him, but he is brought to a higher level: to the spiritual. The new creation which is made available to the Lord Jesus Christ is a better way of living than the old creation ever was.

As a natural man I act as I want to, and I sin. There is in me tension and conflict and a sense of frustration in spite of my best efforts. Whereas in the natural I act as I want to, and in so doing sin; in the spiritual I act as I want to, but what I want now is well pleasing in the sight of God. It is true that in the natural we have the Law to guide us, but in the spiritual relationship with God I have a Person to guide me. I am not just given a road map to show me where to go, but I have a Companion and a Guide who will lead me where I am to go. In God's plan for the new creation there is a Comforter who will lead and who will dwell within, guiding and strengthening, keeping and blessing me.

Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob who was sold as a slave into the land of Egypt, was thrown into prison. When he came out of prison he became the head administrator in the entire empire of Egypt. He became the source of the salvation of the sons of Jacob because of his governmental affairs in a time of famine. The children of Israel were sojourners in Egypt, where they were made slaves. When they were delivered they were not delivered to be back to the level of being sojourners: they were brought into the land of Canaan where they were made citizens and owners. So God, when He saves, brings us into something better than we had before.

## Chapter 4 **Deliverance Is By The Grace Of God**

All the way through the Old Testament are the great facts that God created the heavens and the earth; that God is the Judge of all the world; that man is made in the image of God and is responsible to God; and that God will save man at His own cost. This is the wonderful background of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Regardless of what aspect of the Bible we study, one great thing we should keep in mind is that the Creator of the heavens and earth, who knows us altogether, is benevolent, and He wants to save us.

It was a relief to my own soul when I learned that the Gospel is not showing me how to run the fastest mile or climb the highest mountain. The wonderful thing about the Gospel is what God will do with human beings who put their trust in Him. God not only forgives sin: He cleanses from sin. God's forgiveness of sin involves something in the attitude of the human heart that we call repentance. A man must be willing to admit his sin and turn to God for help. I do not have a claim to be strong or good, but I have to be honest and sincere. Man's response to God's grace was set forth in the Old Testament in the ritual services of the temple. The worshipper brings a creature other than himself, and this creature dies so that the worshipper may go free. That was to be made real and vital on one basis: that the man honestly admit the truth about his waywardness. This mood of repentance is to be a continuing mood. This is not confined only to the beginning when the sinner turns to God and first calls upon Him. Having turned to God, having received from Him grace and mercy, it is important that the believer continue from day to day always to remember his natural weaknesses and his tendency to turn away. When he relaxes his attitude about himself he can easily take for granted that God will do things for him anyway. But God cannot tolerate a human being imposing upon His good grace.

This was seen in Israel over and over. When they became careless God withdrew His favor. When they were in trouble God sent judges who would show the people their wrong. When the people confessed their sins God would forgive and deliver them. So it was later in Israel during the time of the kings. In those days there were the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah and others. The Old Testament records there were people with different frames of mind. Some were sincere and spiritually minded, and God blessed them and delivered them. Some were worldly, superficial and God withdrew His favor and destroyed them.

As we study in Jeremiah we will see how God called His people always to turn and come to Him. If they would repent and turn to God, He would save them, because He loved them with an everlasting love.

## Chapter 5

### **The Meaning Of The Covenant**

Jeremiah as a prophet lived and served in Israel. To mention Israel in connection with the Bible one thinks of the people of God. To understand Jeremiah and his message it will be important to understand this. Almost all of the Old Testament deals with Israel as a nation, just as the New Testament, especially after the Gospels, deals with the church as a body of people. All men are the work of God's hands; God is the Creator of all men and all are responsible to Him. And the Law of God applies to all men. But in the Old Testament Israel is held up as the people of God; they are related to Him in a special way.

When Paul was speaking on Mars Hill among the Athenians, none of whom were Christians, being people of the world, Paul told them: "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." The first thing we need to keep in mind when we try to understand about Israel, and about the whole matter of being a believer in God, is to remember that believers in Christ do not claim that God is only for them. They recognize that God is the God of the whole world. God made all men of all nations, and they are all responsible to Him. And God will deal with each one. The Lord Jesus Christ performed the will of God perfectly; God takes the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ and gives us the blessing. However, for the moment we will have in mind that this is offered to all men everywhere.

These promises of God, which we understand are in Christ Jesus, have been set forth throughout the Bible. They are implicit in a covenant arrangement. The word "covenant" is like the word "agreement" with us. The nearest thing I know to a covenant relationship that will be practical to use as an illustration is the matter of the marriage relationship where a man and woman come together and covenant with each other; they afterward belong together. God offers a covenant relationship to mankind. This was set out primarily with reference to Abraham. God would redeem and protect Abraham and make him fruitful. But Abraham was to obey Him. This response in obedience to the will of God is what we mean by the word "faith."

When we speak in terms of faith, do we mean believing in God? Actually believing in God is a case of yielding to do His will. This relationship with God that we call a covenant in which God promises that He will bless, and man's part is that he will receive the blessing by yielding to God, is a sort of fluid affair. It is not a fixed, static thing. When I yield myself to the Lord and start living in fellowship by obeying Him, life goes on from there. Faith is the same as willing obedience: obedience, but not obedience that is forced. Heartfelt obedience to the will of God will receive His blessing. Such a person will be able to live in victory. God will give him peace and power and plenty. Unbelief is a failure to willingly obey

God. God will allow chastening experiences, "whom He loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth," to bring the soul to consciousness of the things of God and to remind us of our need. Also, God will send servants to interpret this will of God. It is important for us to listen to Bible believing preachers and teachers who will help us to remember the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord will help us to live; but the preacher will help us to remember, to understand, and to obey that we might have the blessing of God.

## Chapter 6

### **Jeremiah Was A Prophet**

Jeremiah served as a prophet among the people of God who were at that time known as Israel. A prophet is primarily a preacher. A preacher's business is to take the things of the Lord Jesus Christ and show them unto others. He will show forth the right and the wrong; he will show forth what is the will of God.

Remember, God's people: Israel in the Old Testament, the Church of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, are related to God in a covenant arrangement. The simple form of this covenant arrangement was that if man would respond to God's will in obeying Him, God would bless that man. The response to God in obeying Him was to be an inward response that was in the heart. Nobody could see that; nobody would know whether or not I in my heart am willing to do the will of God. But God would know and if I were willing in my heart to obey the will of God it would show up in my life.

Since obedience to God is personal and individual, nobody else can do it for me. The prophets tried to get the people to do it, and this is what Jeremiah undertook to do. He tried to arouse the people by reviewing the covenant arrangement, reminding them over and over again that God would bless them if they would just walk in His way. Jeremiah also reviewed the Law, the Ten Commandments, as a pattern of acceptable obedience. If you want to know what obeying the Lord means, the Ten Commandments will give you an idea. When Jeremiah preached on that, showing them that they should not steal, they should not lie, and things of that nature, he was stirring their conscience; because they had those feelings within themselves and he brought them out.

Again, Jeremiah recalled their history. In days past God had blessed them. Great spiritual blessing had occurred because God had been gracious to them. That will continue to this day. The preacher recalls the history of Israel and of the church, when they obeyed God, and the way God blessed them. We recall how Abraham believed God and was blessed. Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David and Daniel all believed and trusted in God, and He blessed them. That is the kind of preaching that encourages us to walk with God and trusts in Him.

Jeremiah also, by way of enforcing all of this, gave certain warnings. He warned his people that if they persisted in their waywardness disaster could come; and he called on them to turn back to God. The prophet's call was, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts." The promise was that as surely as Israel would turn to God, He would bless them. These are some of the things we will find as we study Jeremiah.

## Chapter 7

### Jeremiah 1:1-19

When we study now the call of Jeremiah we may find a pattern to understand how God is going to lead us in His will. Jeremiah was prepared to obey the Lord. This first chapter of Jeremiah can be very meaningful to us if we will keep in mind that our place of service in the home or in the community is right where God would have us serve. We see how this unfolded with Jeremiah:

Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations (Jeremiah 1:4-5).

Here is an amazing truth immediately set before us. Before Jeremiah was born God had in mind how He would use him. Are you able to feel that your life right where you are is exactly what God wants you to do? In that situation you will have an opportunity to serve the Lord. Long before you were born, Almighty God, with His infinite knowledge, knew what your assignment would be. Notice what Jeremiah said:

Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child (Jeremiah 1:6).

Jeremiah felt young and inexperienced. You may be young or you may not be young, and you may be experienced or inexperienced, but this refers to all human limitations. Jeremiah felt unequal to the task set before him. Have you ever felt that way? Notice how God deals with this and how He prevails:

But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak (Jeremiah 1:7).

When Jeremiah opened his mouth to speak he did not undertake to tell the people what he personally thought; God gave him his message. We read:

Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 1:8).

Jeremiah was to have courage: "Be not afraid of their faces." But do not have courage because you are strong or smart: have courage because the Lord is with you. Your courage can be grounded in God and in His strength.

Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth (Jeremiah 1:9).

You can actually have your fitness prepared for you by God's personal endowment; He will endue you with power for the day in which you live for the work you have in your hand. The Lord gave Jeremiah this particular commission:

See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant (Jeremiah 1:10).

Jeremiah first had a wrecking job to do, then a building job. He first had to clear the ground, and then

he could plant the garden. Four of those verbs are destructive: root out, pull down, destroy and throw down. The last two are constructive: build and plant.

Most of us are moving in a world where people have lived before. You and I have lived before this day, and the people we come in contact with have lived before this day. On any given morning my mind is full of all kinds of thoughts; I am not usually ready to receive the mind of the Lord that day. The first thing I have to do is to clean it out. Jeremiah had to wreck the old, just like a builder. If you have lived in the country you know how it goes with the farmer: he plows the field, harrows and discs it, smooths it out; then he sows the seed. So it is in our lives. In verses 11 and 12 we see through the sign of the almond tree, the first tree of the East to blossom forth in the spring, when the time comes God will fulfill His purpose. Applying this to ourselves, the time has come for us to walk with God.

Jeremiah is warned in verses 13-16 that there will be an invasion from the north into his country that will shatter his country. What that will mean for us is: providence will prepare our situation. You and I have this day to live and remember: God knew about it yesterday and all the days before, and He is preparing and opening the way for you and for me to live. In verses 17-19 we find that Jeremiah is warned there will be a stern conflict. It will not be easy to do the will of God.

Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them . . . And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee (Jeremiah 1:17-19).

Have in mind today that you are where God wants you to be. You may "feel" inadequate and you may "be" inadequate, but God can make you strong enough for the work. You will have to repudiate what is unfitting. That is a case of repent, and then believe. When the time comes I must act. We can expect that God will prepare the situation in His providence. We may meet opposition, but we need not shrink from that. God will give us the victory. We learn this from the call of Jeremiah.

## Chapter 8

### **Jeremiah 2:1-37**

When we come to the second chapter of the book of Jeremiah we are given Jeremiah's first insight into the message he was to deliver. We shall see that he was given to understand that the big thing that was wrong with God's people was that they had turned away from God. In chapter two there is a call to repentance:

Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 2:2-3).

When they came out from Egypt as delivered slaves the people of Israel sought the Lord and He protected them, but later in Jeremiah's time they turned from God.

Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain (Jeremiah 2:5)?

Did they find anything wrong in me, asks God, that they are gone far from me, and walked after vanity and are become vain?

Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt . . . (Jeremiah 2:6)?

They did not remember how they were delivered.

The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit (Jeremiah 2:8).

Even the leaders did not make it a practice to seek the Lord. They did not understand the revelation of God's will in the law nor did they esteem His revelation. In our day that would mean preachers who do not preach from the Bible, who do not search the Bible for the truth. They do not even understand the Bible.

That is a case of preaching by turning to natural forces and processes to explain what is going to happen. "And walked after things that do not profit." Their leaders searched after things that in themselves did not have the power to help people.

In verses 9-11 the people were told that such turning away was unnatural. God said they could go forth over the islands of the sea and look around and "consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods?" The pagan people do not do it, "but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." They had abandoned that which would be glorious and taken up something that had no power in it. We have here the gist of this whole chapter:

Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:12-13).

We know that living waters are like springs, and cisterns are like big tanks that hold water. The difference between water that would come from a spring and water that would be found in a tank would be startling: the water that comes from a spring is fresh and the water that is found in a tank would be stagnant. We know what that would mean in our daily life: people who turn to God for help day by day are like the men who go to a mountain spring for water, clear and palatable; whereas those who seek help in natural processes are like men who go to a tank where the water is stagnant and find it harmful to drink.

There are people who know what it is to go to the Bible daily, and receive something fresh for their soul. There are others who try to remember what they read as children, or perhaps they go to church with the idea that something will come to them from the preaching; they will gather such ideas in their memory as a cistern, and that is what they will live on during the week. That is the illustration that God uses of people who turn away from Him in daily relationship.

Verses 14-37 describe living in apostasy, being a long series of defeats. Trying to live as people of God without daily fellowship with Him brings trouble. "Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? Why is he spoiled" (vs. 14)? There is no reason why God's people should be in bondage, but they will be. Verse 17, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" It is their own fault when these things happen. "See that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God" (vs. 19). It was obvious what they had done. "In vain have I smitten your children" (vs. 30). God had tried to chasten them, He

had tried to bring them back the way a parent brings back an unruly child. "They received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion."

When God did send messengers they were rejected. They were sent to serve as revival preachers but the people would not listen to them. The idea throughout this whole chapter is that Israel had turned away from God, and that is what Jeremiah will have to preach about in his book.

## Chapter 9 Jeremiah 3:1-4:2

Israel will be called a harlot again and again in chapters 3, 4 and 5; likened to a wife who is unfaithful. This ugly term is intended to refer to the disposition of Israel to turn away from God. Also, in chapter 3 we find a word that is familiar to us, when we speak of a person being a "Backslider." When this expression first occurs it pictures a "backsliding heifer." The reference is to a young cow being led, who is reluctant to go. Because she is reluctant to follow she pulls back on the rope by which she is being led. The oxen pulling the wagon will pull her along, too, but the young cow will stubbornly set her feet against it and she will be pulled along while sliding on the ground. Today we speak of a man dragging his feet when he is asked to share in something he does not want to share in. We read:

The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot (Jeremiah 3:6).

Israel has been reluctant to follow God and has pulled back:

Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 3:12).

Then in verse 22 we read, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding."

In this portion we have a picture of how backsliding looks to God. We should keep in mind that at this time God's people are divided into two groups: the northern kingdom of two tribes who went by the name of Israel, and the southern kingdom of two tribes who went by the name of Judah. The northern group, Israel, knew less about the Lord; and they would more openly turn to other sources for help. We can think of them as a type of our own contemporary worldly church members who say they belong to God and join the church; but their hearts are not really in it. The southern group would represent those church members who were better instructed in the Bible. They would know about the revelation of God in the Gospel. In Jeremiah's time Judah was even more deceitful than Israel, and most of Jeremiah's ministry was to Judah.

And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 3:10).

Judah only pretended to turn unto God.

And the Lord said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah (Jeremiah 3:11).

Sometimes people who have a very little knowledge of the Bible and the ways of God actually are more ready to turn to God than others who are well instructed in the Bible and understand these matters quite well, but whose hearts have grown cold.

Through this entire portion there is a simple call:

Return . . . I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever . . . Only acknowledge thine iniquity (Jeremiah 3:12-13).

In the latter part of chapter 3 we find the words of the return of those people:

Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel (Jeremiah 3:22-23).

And now we read the promise:

If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shall thou not remove. And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory (Jeremiah 4:1-2).

God calls men to turn to Him even when they have been wayward. He will take care of them. The message is "Return." God will be merciful; He will not keep His anger forever. What a wonderful promise!

## Chapter 10 **Jeremiah 4:3-7**

When believers in Christ who know better neglect the things of the Lord it becomes a sad situation. This happens when they stop reading their Bible, and perhaps skip their praying habits. What a difference it would make in a church if the real believers in Christ stopped trying to bring others to church!

Perhaps this lay in the back of Jeremiah's mind when he was called to preach in Judah. We read what Jeremiah had to say to a nation that was like that:

For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns (Jeremiah 4:3).

If you are not familiar with the language of the farm let me explain that fallow ground is land on which no crop was raised that season. Sometimes farmers do that to rest the soil after they have been cropping it year after year. What that really refers to is a field that has not been plowed, land that has not been worked. When the prophet says "sow not among thorns" you and I would say "don't put your seed among weeds." This is what Jeremiah preached to Judah. He tells them in verse 4, "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord." And in verse 6 he says, "Set up the standard toward Zion." Aim at going toward the house of God. Zion is the place where God dwells, and it is like saying, "Get into your minds that you will attend public worship of God."

"Retire, stay not" – do not let anything hinder you He continues:

For I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way (Jeremiah 4:6-7).

And so the truth is emphasized and when real believers in Christ fail to attend church services, study the Bible and pray, there is real loss. There is a second truth we should have in mind: people can change. That does happen, and when people change God will change His attitude toward them. He is in that sense meek and lowly. He holds no grudge against us.

Let the wicket forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:7).

This is a marvelous truth.

## Chapter 11

### Jeremiah 4:8-31

Suppose members of your family or fellow members of your church neglect spiritual matters: what is the first thing you can do? We know what Jeremiah would do: he would lament. You, too, can grieve; you can feel sorrow and be burdened about the situation.

For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us (Jeremiah 4:8).

Someone will say that is a terrible way to live, but it is a terrible thing they are doing. If I see my fellow believer neglecting the things of the Lord and do not take it to heart, I am not any help to him. Nagging probably is not the answer. This was the way it was in Jeremiah's time:

And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the Lord, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princess, and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder (Jeremiah 4:9).

At present many church leaders gather together for the purpose of studying these trends because when people neglect the things of the Lord there is no peace in their heart. There is weakness of faith and weakness of virtue.

Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul (Jeremiah 4:10).

Jeremiah saw trouble coming. Though he had gracious promises of God, he saw trouble coming to the point he was in despair. One thing that we can do about conditions today is to confess our own sinfulness.

O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee (Jeremiah 4:14)?

This was the way Jeremiah felt about his city. It is the way we can feel about our church and our families. In verse 22 we can read what God thinks about these people, "For my people is foolish, they have not known me." The people had not recognized or appreciated Him. "They are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." This is a realistic look at the situation, and a genuine, honest admission that the only thing to be expected is great loss. We should be realistic enough to recognize these things, but we should also have in mind what Jeremiah would say over and over: cling to God's grace. We should remember to err is human but to forgive is divine. God will forgive and He would have us pray for this.

For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end (Jeremiah 4:27).

Think about that and take comfort in it. There will be loss and there will be barrenness, but there will be compensation. God will not actually cut us off, when we cling to His grace, and we stay close to His Word. Should you know of a group of people who gather for intercessory prayer, it would be helpful for you to become a part of that fellowship. God will hear your prayers.

## Chapter 12

### Jeremiah 5:1-18

The people in Jerusalem claimed that they knew the Lord. They claimed that He was their God but they did not mean it. Jeremiah thought that was the case.

Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God (Jeremiah 5:4).

Jeremiah was inclined to think it was just some people who were not interested. But was that the truth? This is what Jeremiah did: "I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them" (vs. 5). This was like a man saying, if he came to a church where the people did not have prayer meeting, "I will go to the elders of this church and talk to them; I will go to the leaders in the Bible class and talk to them." So Jeremiah went to the great men. Now the prophet had the shattering experience of finding out that the very people who knew the Lord to some extent were the very ones who were not turning to the Lord or seeking His Word. This dismayed him and made him tremble.

Jeremiah reports the Lord as saying,

Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this (Jeremiah 5:9)?

Strangely enough, these people claimed they were doing the will of God, and sought to bolster their assurance.

They have belied the Lord, and said. It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine (Jeremiah 5:12).

That was when they were neglecting everything, so Jeremiah would warn them. They thought disaster

would never happen to them inasmuch as they had things under control.

And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them (Jeremiah 5:13).

Preaching would be light and empty. In a congregation where the people do not study the Bible, many times preaching is just wind: it will be light and empty, and God's blessing is missing.

Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say (Jeremiah 5:15).

There will be strange foreign people who will come down upon them to rob them:

And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustest, with the sword (Jeremiah 5:17).

There will be forces from outside that will rob us of the things our children should have. In churches today where the Bible is not studied and where there is a rising tide of skeptical criticism about the Bible, our children are being deprived. They are the ones about whom we should be most concerned.

## Chapter 13

### Jeremiah 5:19-6:20

They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14).

These were the words Jeremiah cried out when he had seen the situation in his own city of Jerusalem; when he saw what had happened as a result of the work of the priests and the prophets of the day. One of the snares in a congregation is that because ten years ago it was a strong, spiritually minded congregation it is presumed it is one now. It does not always work out that way. Sometimes a congregation becomes proud, bitter and the worship services are cold. When Jeremiah saw this in his nation he knew that something had occurred in the life of that nation to cause such degeneration. He spoke of it in chapter 5:

A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof (Jeremiah 5:30-31)?

Jeremiah put his finger on the leadership, which had not been good. The prophets had prophesied falsely and the preachers preached insincerely.

Some years ago I talked with a young preacher who did not believe in the miracles in the Bible, and that Jesus Christ meant to say they were only a common saying but not what He really believed. I argued with him that when Jesus of Nazareth quoted a passage of Scripture He meant that it was authoritative. Several weeks later this young minister preached a sermon on Daniel in the lions' den, also

referring to the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. He had spent several hours arguing with me that we were not supposed to believe in miracles, yet he used this very material in the pulpit. That is what Jeremiah would call prophesying falsely, saying what the preacher did not really mean.

What this implies is that elders and deacons manage their work often times politically and ". . . my people love to have it so." The people are satisfied with what is going on. Such a congregation is in danger of losing its blessing. They will lose their commitment to the Lord and their life will become very worldly, and sometimes wicked. Jeremiah warned:

Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest they soul depart from thee (Jeremiah 6:8).

God was warning that unless they turned to Him, he would leave them. The light would go out, the pews would be empty and the doors would be closed, because God would have withdrawn from it.

Such a church can be helped by revival preaching and that would be expected, but in verse 10 Jeremiah raises the question, "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear?" Jeremiah would have loved to preach to them but,

Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it (Jeremiah 6:10).

This makes it even worse. It is bad enough for the congregational life to be cold and empty and formal, but when they do not even want to hear the Word of God they have almost cut themselves off from the only medicine that could cure them. This is the description that Jeremiah gives:

For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely (Jeremiah 6:13).

There is no sincerity.

They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying. Peace, peace; when there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14).

Today we hear a great deal of that sort of thing. There is much talk of accepting each other; we are supposed to overlook sin and think of it as forgiveness. There is little talk of repentance; no deep turning to God. It is common to just claim that God will say everything is all right. But Jeremiah tells them,

. . . Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me (Jeremiah 6:20).

When they come, God will not accept them because He is not satisfied with them. Trouble will surely come to a congregation like that.

## Chapter 14

### **Jeremiah 6:21-7:16**

In the midst of the discouragement Jeremiah felt when he saw the condition of his people this word came into his heart:

Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place (Jeremiah 7:3).

When you and I become aware of our shortcomings we need not stay away from God. We sometimes tell each other that the light that reveals is the light that heals. Just as surely as we see the truth of our relationship with God, just so surely can we come unto Him. We learned in chapter 6 that Jeremiah had noticed God's people had acted in such a way He did not want them to come before Him with their services; Jeremiah was then impressed with the thought that trouble would come from the outside and there would be the real danger:

... I will lay stumbling blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbor and his friend shall perish. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth (Jeremiah 6:21-22).

When believers in Christ are not faithful to God and do not live close to Him, things they cherish will be lost, because there is an active enemy who will rob them of that which they cherish. Jeremiah called upon his people to repent.

O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us (Jeremiah 6:26).

The word "spoiler" means robber, one who takes away all as loot. God's own people, being rejected, will be helpless before the enemy. Jeremiah continues his sermon:

Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say. Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these (Jeremiah 7:2-4).

Isn't that repetition, over and over again, interesting? This seems to imply that in that day there were people who kept claiming that their congregation was the house of God, but they did not expect to find God there and they did not really come to worship Him. We have here a wonderful promise of God:

For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever (Jeremiah 7:5-7).

But in verse 8 Jeremiah continues with his lament, "Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit." He then points out that they were sinning on the right hand and on the left hand, thinking they could get away with it.

Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations (Jeremiah 7:9-10)?

That may seem strange, yet there are people today who think that regardless of how they live everything is all right if they belong to the church. Many never read the Bible, or pray, or try to win anybody to the Lord: Jeremiah was shocked by this. He said, "Is this house, which is called by my

name, become a den of robbers in your eyes" (Jeremiah 7:11)? He said God holds it against them that He had sent revival preachers and they would not listen to them.

And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee (Jeremiah 7:13-16).

God seldom tells His people not to pray for others, but in this case Israel had not only committed sin but they thought they could get away with it; they fell into error and thought it was all right. What particularly bothered Jeremiah was that the people of Judah, who had the temple in their midst and the law of God in their hands, were even worse than Israel had been. In general they walked after the things which do not profit. And God could no longer tolerate their behavior.

## Chapter 15

### Jeremiah 7:17-34

As we think about the book of Jeremiah we are conscious of the fact that he is dealing with God's people, and this is for you and for me. God's people will mean the church that we know, people like us who have their trust in God. We will never be bothered with worshipping idols made of wood or stone or bow down to an image that is carved of gold or silver, but how many of us are prepared to recognize that in our daily life we fall into ways and habits of doing things that belong to the world and do not belong to the mind and will of God. That was what Jeremiah found.

Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger (Jeremiah 7:17-18).

That description of their activity had to do with something that was like the pagan people around them. How would that be with us today? God promises that we will have peace in mind and heart, quiet confidence in Him. So far as the world is concerned, when it seeks quiet confidence some try to have money. When the world wants to have peace, it tries to have things. Do we fall into this way of looking for things rather than looking for the favor of God? The average person tries to get ideas about living from newspapers and current literature. But what about God's word? Often, instead of studying the Scriptures we actually devote ourselves to studying other media of communication to find out what people think. As a believer in Christ should it not be important for me to wonder how I stand in the presence of God?

The average person thinks in terms of establishing himself or herself. Is it not far more likely that we seek to gain contact and favor with people in the community whom we think are important, than it is to seek the presence of God in prayer? Suppose a person has money and time, and would like to do something satisfying, it is not true that he would usually devote himself and his resources to activities of pleasure, rather than devoting the same to helping other people?

When those people back in the days of Jeremiah were gathering wood to build their fires, and the women were baking their bread and making cakes to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings unto other gods, they were doing the popular thing of the day. All the time they knew better; they knew how to approach God by the way of sacrifices. Jeremiah recognized this sad state of Israel's disobedience, and how they did these things.

Do they provoke me to anger? saith the Lord: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces (Jeremiah 7:19)?

The sad truth is that when we fall in line with these various temptations of the world we are never really satisfied. God never demanded that Israel should carry out formal ritual practices. While God told them about their sacrifices and burnt and peace offerings, that was not really what He wanted them to do.

But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you (Jeremiah 7:23).

God has always wanted personal, individual obedience. He wanted to guide these people every step of the way.

But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward (Jeremiah 7:24).

So instead of following the revelation of God's will in His word, the people thought things out and did the things that seemed good to themselves. They ignored the word of God the way people today will ignore the Bible.

Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them, but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth (Jeremiah 7:26- 28).

And so, this is the great message that comes from Jeremiah to us at this time. God wants His people to listen to Him. Whenever a group of believers in Christ come together, whether it is in conference or whether it is in preaching, one can tell whether the conclusions are of the Lord if they become aware of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. That is what will happen if the Holy Spirit is there. He will make them conscious of these things.

In the latter part of this chapter we learn that the only thing left is to lament because God will certainly judge His people for waywardly turning away from Him.

## Chapter 16

### **Jeremiah 8:1-22**

As we continue our study in the book of Jeremiah we come, in chapter 8, to something that is very sobering. Jeremiah learned as he watched his people that they were not only going the wrong way but

they intended to do it.

The Christian church has a great heritage. We can go back all the way to the Apostle Paul, who came to know the Lord Jesus Christ and preached the Gospel with such force. Perhaps we think of men like Luther and Calvin, who were able to take the Word of God, and show it to the people in a way that brought great blessing. Some of us have had people in our own family whose names remain great in our hearts and minds, and who are a blessing to us to this day. One would think that with all the help that has come in the past the church would not go wrong now. But here is a strange thing: people can get into the habit of doing things differently, and feel that the new way is right. In Jeremiah's time this is brought out in a striking way.

At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: and they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshiped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth (Jeremiah 8:1-2).

What that means is this: in that day the people apparently dug up the graves of their ancestors, and exposed them before the new interests which they had when they worshipped the sun, moon, stars and the hosts of heaven. In our day we have people who show great interest and respect for science and for scientific insight: the power of the atom and all the various radar and electronic activities which we have in mind today. Some are inclined to think that so far as the destinies of life are concerned they are tied up with people who can manage these natural processes. Tradition is flaunted and the past discredited or ignored, as we give ourselves wholly to that which commends itself to the world. That is the way it was then. This caused Jeremiah to raise a question:

Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord (Jeremiah 8:4-7).

This brings to our minds something like this: there is on the part of God's people a tendency to show a stubborn persistence even when they are on the wrong course. "They hold fast deceit." No man repenteth; they are not doing the right thing, but they refuse to admit they are wrong. They do not recognize God's disfavor. The birds can tell when it is time to fly this way or that way, but God's people do not seem to know. This is what the prophet pointed out as being so serious because it showed that they deliberately chose to go in a certain direction, and then they alibied themselves all the way along the line. Jeremiah asked them, "How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us" (vs.8)?

Although these people followed worldly ways, they claimed to be doing right. They actually claimed that the law of the Lord was with them. Jeremiah said: ". . . the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord" (vs. 8-9). Then he said:

". . . every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely" (Jeremiah 8:10).

Jeremiah repeated this several times so that we can know the people were given over to covetousness and self-interest. The leaders, the prophets and the priests, were given over to dealing falsely. Then Jeremiah repeated the statement he had made previously.

For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace (Jeremiah 8:11).

Jeremiah went on to report:

I will surely consume them, saith the Lord . . . and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them (Jeremiah 8:13).

What would that mean today? It could result in the loss of a certain freedom of religion, which has happened in various parts of the world. In addition, men could lose their faith in God and confidence in the Bible, and in the power of prayer. Jeremiah asked "Why do we sit still?" Then he answered his own question, "Because we have sinned against the, Lord. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble" (Jeremiah 8:14-15)!

God told them He would send serpents and they would bite them. So, at the end of this chapter we find Jeremiah burdened with grief for his people.

When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me (Jeremiah 8:18).

As we think on these things let us humbly commit ourselves to the Lord in our spirits, asking Him to speak to us and draw us near to Him.

## Chapter 17

### **Jeremiah 9:1-10:25**

As believers in Christ, the particular church that we belong to and the community in which we live, have a definite relation to our spiritual experience and eternal destiny. The kind of spiritual life that prevails in the church we attend makes a difference. We read about what happened in the time of Jeremiah with much interest. We feel a great sympathy for Jeremiah when we read:

Oh that my heart were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people (Jeremiah 9:1)!

Jeremiah is sometimes called "the weeping prophet." Every now and again someone implies that he was a pessimist, a man who looked on the dark side of things. I have come to believe that the reason for this was that Jeremiah lived in a day when weeping was the only proper response. Jeremiah loved Jerusalem. It was his task to preach the Gospel at a time when the whole nation of people were wandering away from God. It made him feel sad.

Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go

from them! for they be all adulterers, as assembly of treacherous men (Jeremiah 9:2).

He continues to describe them in their spiritual degeneration:

And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 9:3).

Jeremiah accused his people of a lack of integrity:

Take ye heed every one of his neighbor, and trust ye not in any brother, for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slanders. And they will deceive everyone his neighbor, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves, to commit iniquity. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit, through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 9:4-6).

The word "know" in the Bible always had more in it than just intellectual acquaintance with an idea. It has in it the idea of appreciation, knowing the importance of, in that sense. "Esteeming" is the meaning. These people did not esteem the Lord, they really did not want to appreciate Him. Their hearts and minds were filled with deceit. There was in that day a lack of integrity in what was spoken publicly.

In verses 9-16 Jeremiah presents the idea that God will surely judge and chastise them. When the Word of God is "And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons;" that is a way of saying God will bring ruin to Jerusalem. Jeremiah goes on to report God as saying, "And I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant."

And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim . . . Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink (Jeremiah 9:13-15).

Jeremiah continues to express his lamentation:

For dead is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets (Jeremiah 9:21).

That is one of the sad aspects about this whole situation. When church people are not faithful to God the effect upon the children and young people is drastic. The next generation will not be inclined toward God. Jeremiah continues:

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

In what do we put our confidence? What are we impressed with in other people? Are we impressed with education and position, or with this, that they know the Lord and put their trust in Him?

In chapter 10 we are told simply that it is foolish to put our trust in idols which men build.

Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven (Jeremiah 10:2).

Jeremiah emphasized that the Lord is the true, living God; the One in Whom we can put our trust. We can encourage one another about that.

Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it . . . My children are gone forth of me, and they are not (Jeremiah 10:19-20).

Jeremiah closes this chapter with the prayer:

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate (Jeremiah 10:23-25).

We can all join in that prayer! God be merciful to us.

## Chapter 18

### Jeremiah 11:1-12:12

All sins are not alike. In the New Testament we read of the unpardonable sin, and I am sure many have wondered about that. We are told this is the sin against the Holy Spirit. The unpardonable sin is significant in the New Testament because the New Testament is grounded on the work of the Holy Spirit. In the last analysis everything we have in the Gospel can be understood as the way God will work in us to will and to do His good pleasure. We expect Him to help us day by day. Now this is done by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart. If we do not let the Holy Spirit have His way we are doing the one thing the grace of God cannot overcome.

When we study the book of Jeremiah we come to something similar. Jeremiah pointed out that the one basis of the covenant with God in the Old Testament was obedience: one thing God's forgiveness could not overcome was disobedience. This idea was stressed:

And say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God: that I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O Lord (Jeremiah 11:3-5).

The expression "so be it" means "Amen." Jeremiah was told when he heard that word to step forth and tell the people that the man who did not obey God would be cursed, and he said "Amen." Jeremiah pointed out that despite urgent preaching they reacted as follows:

For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. But they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not (Jeremiah 11:7-8).

Despite the urgent preaching of the prophets, Judah failed to obey. It is a simple issue after all: either

I do what I want to do, or I do what He wants me to do. If I do what He wants me to do I have all the promises of God that are included in the covenant: failing to do what He wants me to do will bring judgment.

Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape (Jeremiah 11:11).

While Jeremiah had been preaching, a plot had developed against him.

But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered (Jeremiah 11:19).

One of the ways God had of bring trouble upon His people was to give their enemies an advantage over them. So it developed that God's people were in trouble and the people of the world seemed to have success. This troubled Jeremiah.

Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously (Jeremiah 12:1)?

Then the truth is brought out, God has forsaken His people.

I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it. Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness (Jeremiah 12:7-10).

The Word of God revealed:

They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit (Jeremiah 12:13).

This is because of the fierce anger of the Lord. This is their last chance, but if they should turn now things would still be all right.

And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The Lord liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 12:15-17).

How necessary is it for us to understand today that God will deal with His people in faithfulness; and He will chasten them! He will urge them to turn unto Him. This is what He is doing with us in our day and time. He speaks to the churches and calls the churches to Himself. The basis on which He will deal with us is belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, whatsoever is not of faith is sin. God is not mocked, and He will not endorse a situation that does not honor His Son.

## Chapter 19

### Jeremiah 13:1-15:21

Believers in Christ are inclined to intercede on behalf of anyone who is erring or sinning. They are encouraged to do this.

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it (1 John 5:16).

The second part of that verse brings to our consciousness a truth that can be bitter to the soul. I suspect most of us would rather never face the question of what kind of sin it is that we should not pray for. Jesus of Nazareth spoke of an unpardonable sin.

We rejoice in the assurance that forgiveness is available, but the Scriptures tell us that God resisteth the proud. In our desire to show how gracious and merciful God is we are in danger of giving a wrong impression about Him. There are those who teach that one does not have to do anything to be forgiven; that everybody is forgiven everything. The Bible teaches:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

But that does not say He forgives the sin of those who fail to confess. Jesus of Nazareth told people "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

Jeremiah was shown this truth by certain object lessons. In chapter 13 God told Jeremiah to take a linen cloak, a girdle, and put it on and wear it. This he did. Then God told him to bury it under a rock by the river Euphrates, and he did. After many days God told him to take this garment and wear it. When he put it on, it was useless, "The girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing" (vs. 7). I learned from my wife that any kind of cloth, if buried in the ground for a length of time, would fall apart.

What Jeremiah was given to understand was that no piece of cloth, that has been lying in the ground long enough to rot, can be patched.

Thus saith the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle which is good for nothing (Jeremiah 13:9-10).

That is the way it was with the disobedient people of God, and will be with a disobedient congregation. In verses 12-14 Jeremiah took wineskins and showed how they were smashed. Once a wineskin is burst it is utterly useless.

And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them . . . This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the Lord, because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood (Jeremiah 13:14,25).

In chapter 14 we find that this judgment came in the form of a great drought that struck Judah. Jeremiah prays for them, humbly and urgently.

Our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee . . . yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not (Jeremiah 14:7, 9).

But God would not heed the prayers.

When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offerings and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence (Jeremiah 14:12).

Jeremiah blames the false prophets:

The prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place (Jeremiah 14:13).

It is a sober truth that some who preach are not always preaching the truth. Because some preacher said that no matter what you do, you will be forgiven, it is not always true. Being deceived is no excuse. Jeremiah wept, but it was to no avail:

Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease . . . We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee (Jeremiah 14:17, 20).

In chapter 15, the Word of God revealed that if Moses and Samuel stood before God, His mind could not be toward this people. Jerusalem is incorrigible and God will destroy them. Jeremiah was rejected by his people because he preached the truth. If you feel that your church or family need to come to God, call upon Him in prayer as Jeremiah did for his people.

## Chapter 20

### Jeremiah 16:1-17, 17

In the 16th chapter of Jeremiah the record shows how God led him along a line of action which was to show the people that God meant what He said. Jeremiah was told not to get married.

Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place (Jeremiah 16:2).

The reason was that this would demonstrate to the people how bad matters would be; the children would face ruin. Furthermore Jeremiah was instructed:

For thus saith the Lord, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the Lord, even loving-kindness and mercies (Jeremiah 16:5).

God did not intend to bless them.

Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink (Jeremiah 16:8).

The prophet was not to participate in any kind of celebration. This shows what a life Jeremiah must

have led. So the people asked him,

Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God? Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshiped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; and ye have done worse than your fathers (Jeremiah 16:10-12).

Are you able to see how that could be true with us? Suppose, several generations ago, those who belonged to a church believed in the Bible. Some in the church began to criticize the Bible, embracing strange interpretations. Today people in that church probably do not read it. God will judge those who neglect Him. Whereas once upon a time God was known as the God who brought them out of Egypt, now He would be known as the God who would bring them back after they were scattered. This shows what God will do for a believer. God will regenerate him and give him new life. God will revive His people because that is what will be needed.

And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double (Jeremiah 16:18).

There will be a period of chastening and of judgment from God. Jeremiah was disturbed:

O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit (Jeremiah 16:19).

Jeremiah feared that if God judged His people there would be those who would think God does not amount to anything. God answered him:

Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The Lord (Jeremiah 16:21).

In chapter 17 the Word of God revealed to the people the sin of Judah was written with a pen of iron. That was like saying when God's people neglect His Word and fail to pray, that is a sin written with a pen of iron. It will bring consequences. Jeremiah showed it was not complicated to decide what a person should do about God:

Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord . . . Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is (Jeremiah 17:5-7).

Jeremiah wrote a comment that has been often quoted:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

As he thought on these things Jeremiah turned to God for help:

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise (Jeremiah 17:14).

That is the message Jeremiah preached in his day and time. It is truth we should keep in mind. Let us turn to God and He will bless us.

## Chapter 21

### Jeremiah 18:1-23

Whenever the Gospel is presented there is the implication that God the Creator and the Judge is sovereign. He is in control. What evidence do we have that God really is in control? This could have been Jeremiah's problem when he preached. He lived in a time when the people outwardly worshipped God but inwardly they did not care. They went through the exercise of the religious services but they did not turn their hearts to God. Jeremiah knew that God would judge the people, and he tried to tell them this.

A famous incident occurs in chapter 18.

The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words (Jeremiah 18:1-2).

That phrase "hear my words" actually means "understand my message; I will show you the truth there." As you know, a potter is one who makes vessels of clay on a potter's wheel.

Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels (Jeremiah 18:3).

After the clay is made into a vessel it is baked in an oven until it gets hard, after which it is glazed.

And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it (Jeremiah 18:4).

Jeremiah watched as the potter made the vessels, and saw that he was in charge of the operation. He could make that vessel just the way he wanted it to be. This was the truth which he was shown:

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel (Jeremiah 18:5-6).

There is displayed the whole truth of God as the Creator, of God as the Maker. He can and will do as He pleases. This is the gist of the truth not only in the book of Jeremiah but in the whole Gospel of God. In the following verses He says:

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them (Jeremiah 18:7-10).

Just as the potter decides while he has the clay in his hands, whether it is good enough, so God, having us in His hands, will decide about us. He has us in His hands. In the light of this truth Jeremiah was told to go and preach. This is what he was to say,

Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good (Jeremiah 18:11).

Change your ways and come to God; He can change His ways.

If I have not been reading the Bible and praying, seeking God's face the way in which I could, my future prospect is judgment. I should make no mistake – God is not mocked. So let us turn to God. If we turn to Him, He will change His ways. He is not committed to something He has to go through with: He can do as He will. We can still turn to God.

In Jeremiah's time the people were incorrigible, so their doom was inevitable. We read that the people would not turn in spite of everything Jeremiah showed them, and so God said:

I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity (Jeremiah 18:17).

In the later part of that chapter a plot was promoted to thwart Jeremiah. People who were confident they had the truth were opposed to him.

Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue and let us not give heed to any of his words (Jeremiah 18:18).

So Jeremiah was moved to pray for their destruction:

Yet, Lord, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal thus with them in the time of thine anger (Jeremiah 18:23).

We should take this earnestly to heart. If we will turn to God, He will turn to us.

## Chapter 22

### Jeremiah 19:1-15

Of all the popular notions that are abroad about the Gospel and about the truth of God as it is in the Bible, perhaps there is none more dangerous than the benign assurance that God will never hurt anybody or anything. That is not true.

As a young lad, before I became a Christian, I heard people say sometimes there is no hell: God would not destroy anybody. And even after I became a believer and when I was called into the ministry, responsible preachers would say, “The Old Testament must be wrong. God would not make men and then destroy them.” Teachers would say a Christian should be joyful and never speak of sorrow. I would think about Paul, who wanted to be a partaker of His sufferings that he might be made conformable unto His death, and of how Jesus wept over Jerusalem and at the grave of Lazarus. One of the most moving things we know about Jesus is that little children always wanted to come to Him.

The truth is that God will judge and it was shown to Jeremiah in a graphic way.

Thus saith the Lord, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests; and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east

gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee . . . I will bring evil upon this place . . . because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods . . . Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives . . . And I will make this city desolate . . . every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one of the flesh of his friends in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they seek their lives, shall straiten them (Jeremiah 19:1-9).

All these are hard words; God is saying He will bring judgment upon this place. After Jeremiah had preached this message to Judah we read:

Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee (Jeremiah 19:10).

Jeremiah had a jug filled with water which he set before them. Then he talked to the people, after which he smashed the jug.

And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury (Jeremiah 19:11).

That was the point Jeremiah wanted to make: the potter's vessel was smashed beyond repair. This was the story, and this was what he was to preach. This is what we are to preach today. We are to say our only hope is in the Lord. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven: there is only one way into the presence of God, and that is to die in human nature. We are to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him.

Jeremiah announced the coming tragic judgment of God.

The miserable consequences of their turning away from God would be unavoidable. We should be instructed by this. We are face to face today with a situation in many instances that is displeasing to God. Unless we turn to Him, judgment will surely come upon us.

## Chapter 23

### Jeremiah 20:1-18

When Jeremiah had told the people that trouble was coming because God would judge them, the chief governor in the house of the Lord, Pashur, heard that Jeremiah had prophesied these things:

Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord (Jeremiah 20:2).

Pashur actually put Jeremiah in jail and fastened him up, as it were, hands and feet in wooden contraptions that would hold him as if he were under chains and bound.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magormissabib (Jeremiah 2:3).

It was as though he brought Jeremiah into court. Then Jeremiah told him forthrightly:

For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labors thereof . . . And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies (Jeremiah 20:4-6).

We are reminded that when John the Baptist was thrown into prison by Herod he told Herod point-blank that he was wrong in having his brother Philip's wife. If your pastor is faithful in telling his congregation that the spiritual condition is such they need to repent and turn to God, he will be criticized. Jeremiah meant no one harm. When he told the people those things he had no pleasure in it. It is when a preacher is constrained by the love of Christ that he sounds the warning. In our day we do not put our preachers under lock and key; we do not put them with their hands and feet in wooden barriers such as was Jeremiah. But we criticize them so they suffer even as Jeremiah suffered because of the opposition to him.

O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceive: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name (Jeremiah 20:7-9).

Many times, perhaps, in your own home you have told your children what was right and what was wrong. Then when they did wrong you warned them they would have trouble, for which they criticized you. You will appreciate what Jeremiah said:

. . . But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one (Jeremiah 20:9-11).

The word "terrible" means "wonderful and impressive."

There may be those perhaps like a faithful wife, who will watch over her husband and when she sees him slipping she speaks out to him. He may not like it. Yet because she loves him she must try to do something about it. That is the way our pastors watch over their congregations and make intercession for them.

In verses 14-18 we see that Jeremiah was filled with despair. He reminds us of Job, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born." Many times when we are trying to serve, and not meaning to do anybody any harm, yet because what we say disturbs people we have to endure their criticism and opposition. If that should happen to you, you can remember how it was with Jeremiah. But he remained faithful. No matter how sorrowful or regretful we may be, we should turn ourselves over to God. If you have a faithful pastor, now is the time to pray for him.

## Chapter 24

### Jeremiah 21:1-22:30

Some years ago when I was pastor in Dallas I was called to the hospital to visit a man who was seriously ill. The man and his wife were strangers in town, whom I had never met. The man was expected to die. When I looked at him I knew this to be true. I led in prayer at his bedside. When his wife and I went into the hall I was shocked that the woman suddenly turned on me violently. "You did not pray that he would get well," she complained. I had had no such guidance, and when I tried to explain to her how it was, she was inconsolable. People who ordinarily do not pray, seem to feel that we who believe should ask for what we want. Nothing in the Bible teaches that. Those of us who seek to exercise ourselves in prayer learn to say, "Not my will but Thine be done."

After Jeremiah had been preaching for some time, the king sent to him and asked Jeremiah to pray for him.

The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying, Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the Lord will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us (Jeremiah 21:1-2).

There was no word about repentance or about yielding into the will of God. We note Jeremiah's answer with interest.

Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands . . . And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence. And afterward, saith the Lord, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy (Jeremiah 21:3-7).

It was Jeremiah's responsibility to inform Judah they would reap the consequences of disobeying God.

And unto this people thou shall say, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the Lord: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the Lord; O house of David, thus saith the Lord . . . Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the Lord; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations? But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the Lord: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it (Jeremiah 21:8-14).

In chapter 22 the call is given again – a call to repent and turn to God.

Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger . . . For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of his house kings sitting upon the throne of David . . . But if ye will not hear these words, I swear

by myself, saith the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation . . . I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited. And I will prepare destroyers against thee . . . Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and worshiped other gods, and served them (Jeremiah 22:3-9).

This is the very spiritual situation that existed all the way through Jeremiah's message. The present situation called for the judgment of God, but if they would turn to God and call upon Him for blessing, He would surely be merciful. But God showed no sorrow for incorrigibles:

Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country . . . Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness . . . Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thy self in cedar (Jeremiah 22:10-15)?

The implication is that although the king had very fine buildings and surroundings of wealth and affluence, he would not reign. God would judge him. The king had neglected the good example of his father:

Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord (Jeremiah 22:15-16).

The children of Israel really had in David the example of a man who walked in godliness and honesty, and in charity; but now, because they had turned away they were going to be brought under judgment. The remainder of chapter 22 points out that the leaders had been incorrigible, so that the only possible outcome was death. The only hope for any one of us is in the grace of God. We have nothing in ourselves to encourage us, but we do have it in the grace of God. This was Jeremiah's heavy message in his day. It is the message that should come in our day and time. God calls on us to give up so far as nature is concerned and turn to Him.

## Chapter 25

### Jeremiah 23:1-40

A Christian must be conscious of certain invisible realities. He must become aware of God though he has never seen Him. The believer must also become aware of Jesus Christ, whom he has never seen. He needs to learn about things he does not know naturally. This is not natural for us; we were not born with such knowledge. People living in the world who have not heard the Gospel do not know about these things. They must learn from someone who knows. Ordinarily speaking, we depend on preachers to tell us about God.

We need to be aware that God permits Satan to test Christians. Satan's specialty is to offer a substitute program. The Spirit of God may indicate "this is the way, walk ye in it," but Satan may be allowed to say, "Here is a better way and it will get you there sooner." The classic example of such deception was in the Garden of Eden, where Satan offered something else than what God had said; thereby testing Eve and afterwards Adam. When we attend church what do we expect the preacher to tell us? Do we not expect God's Word to be preached? The preacher may know what is in the Bible but sometimes he may think he can make an improvement. Invariably his substitute is offered as something better. This was true in Jeremiah's day. He called such preachers false prophets. Jeremiah pointed out

that in the ministry of these false teachers, they claimed everything was all right, and that there would not be any judgment. They claimed God was kind and the people would be forgiven.

Jeremiah announced that God would certainly judge those prophets.

Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord (Jeremiah 23:1).

God would, however, call His people back and give them a real leader. Then Jeremiah gave a wonderful description of the Messiah as the real Pastor who will be given to lead them in the will of God.

Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 23:2).

These leaders had no personal interest in the spiritual welfare of the people.

For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth (Jeremiah 23:10).

The swearing referred to insincere religious practices. In verse 11 Jeremiah said that both prophet and priest were profane. This does not mean that they used profane words; it means they made spiritual things common. They dealt with the things of God and of eternity as if they were ordinary everyday matters.

And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah (Jeremiah 23:13-14).

Prophesying in Baal meant preaching natural ideas, using natural principles to interpret things. This led the people astray. No one turned from his wickedness. That meant there were no cases of conversion.

They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord (Jeremiah 23:16).

It is always disastrous when a preacher tells something he thought of, rather than a message from the Bible.

They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you (Jeremiah 23:17).

That was a false message. Not only was it preached in Jeremiah's day, but so often in ours also.

But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings (Jeremiah 23:22).

Jeremiah made the claim that if they had preached the Word of God there would have been changes in the lives of the people. People would have turned to God.

## Chapter 26

### Jeremiah 24:1-25:38

In chapter 24 Jeremiah was given a very simple object lesson:

The Lord showed me, and behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the Lord, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah . . . One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. Then said the Lord unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good . . . And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the Lord, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land of Egypt: and I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them (Jeremiah 24:1-9).

That is as simple as it sounds. There were good figs and bad figs. In the spiritual world there are some people who yield to the will of God, and there are some who will not yield to the will of God. Those good figs were the people of whom God said: "I will give them a heart to know me." And the other figs were people of whom God said: "I will deliver them to be removed for their hurt." In all this God is not arbitrary. This can be seen in the next chapter. God had something to say through Jeremiah to the people:

I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking, but ye have not hearkened. And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: and go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the Lord; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations (Jeremiah 25:3-9).

Now what can that mean for us in our time? It is as though God were saying He had sent preachers and evangelists to the churches but the members have not paid attention to them. Their message has been; "Turn to God, come to Him; turn away from the ways of the world."

For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved . . . Then took I the cup at the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to drink (Jeremiah 25:15-17).

Jeremiah then listed from verse 18 through verse 26 names of all the different people to whom he had preached. What could that mean to us today? The whole world could become aware of this great truth: where spiritual practices in a church are being neglected, the blessing of God is not upon it. God revealed there will be that which is acceptable, and that which is not acceptable to Him; there are in His sight good figs and bad figs. This difference is not in the individual people as such. No one person in the sight

of God is better than another. God is no respecter of persons. The truth is those who believe in Him will be blessed, and those who do not believe will not be blessed.

## Chapter 27

### Jeremiah 26:1-24

Have you ever felt a sense of security because you go to church? We are inclined to dismiss all concern we may have in the false assurance that at least we go to church, read the Bible, and give. Sometimes when we have done something we ought not to have done, our conscience may bother us, and we promise we will be sure to go to church on Sunday. I do not find anything wrong about that, but it is going to take more than that. It is true that going to church should be an occasion of worshipping God, but one "could" go to church without doing that. It is also true that reading the Bible is a source of real blessing when you listen to God as you read, but the Bible "can" be read as a matter of reading a book. The Lord would know.

Jeremiah was commissioned to warn Judah:

Thus saith the Lord; Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word: If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I send unto you . . . then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth (Jeremiah 26:2-6).

Jeremiah emphasized that if they were sincere God would be kind and gracious; if they were not sincere God would certainly know about it, and would not bless them. This did not please the people.

So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die (Jeremiah 26:7-8).

That was what they did in Jeremiah's time. Today, there may be other ways of getting rid of faithful preachers. Opposition may make a minister leave his pastorate or leave the church. Opposers may slander them in many ways. That is what was done in Jeremiah's day.

When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the Lord, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears (Jeremiah 26:10-11).

That was the indictment against Jeremiah, and this was his defense:

Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you (Jeremiah 26:12-13).

Jeremiah did not change his message. He simply said:

As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears (Jeremiah 26:14-15).

Faithful ministers have much to learn here. If a preacher declares the Word of God and tries to bring to his people the truth of God, and they resent it, he should have the grace in his heart to let them do as they please. There is nothing he can do about that. Jeremiah's words are spoken with the confidence and assurance of a man who declares the Word of God, trusting in God.

Then came an interesting development.

Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls (Jeremiah 26:16-19).

The leaders gave attention to the fact that in a former generation Micah had preached to Jerusalem, warning the people of trouble; Hezekiah had listened and change his ways. The whole nation changed their ways in a great revival, and the threat and peril did not materialize.

What that can mean to us in our time is this: if the Word of God is preached to our hearts so that we are made to feel that we have not been what we should have been, we should turn to God now. We should start reading our Bibles, praying, observing the Sabbath Day, and giving to the Lord's work. We should make our response real. God could spare us from the very thing that was on its way to happen to us. Jeremiah would say, "Turn to God, call upon Him, He will forgive you. And you can be blessed."

## Chapter 28

### **Jeremiah 27:1-28:17**

No one likes to hear about judgment to come. I suspect there is not one of us who would like the idea of someone appraising his work, especially if there is a chance his work would be rejected. People generally hope nothing will ever happen that will be disheartening, and in that connection preachers who say to the people that they should prepare to meet their God are usually unpopular. There seems to be a widespread feeling that is against what people call "hell-fire preaching." Yet, what is the prospect so far as human nature is concerned, isn't it true that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God? The Scripture makes it plain, and the Gospel message has always emphasized, "You must be born again." A person must confess sin and turn to God.

Jeremiah employed what we would call object lessons, when he made yokes of wood. The yoke was a collar made of wood that was put on the neck of an ox, so that as he pressed into it he could pull the load. It served something like a bridle on a horse, or a leash on a dog. In general the sight of a yoke to the people would mean a sense of being under bondage. Jeremiah put this yoke on his own neck as indication

of bondage. He also sent yokes to Edom, to Moab and to Ammon, to Tyre and to Sidon. What was the significant of all this? It was a dramatic way of saying, "You are facing certain death, get wise and repent."

Jeremiah sent one to king Zedekiah with this message;

Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine and by the pestilence (Jeremiah 27:12-13).

And he warned the people:

Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon for they prophesy a lie unto you. Hearken not unto them, serve the king of Babylon, and live (Jeremiah 27:14, 17).

In Jeremiah's time there were preachers who were telling the people they could escape: they would not have to repent, or admit they would have to be dependent on the mercy of God. Jeremiah challenged such preachers:

But if they be prophets, and if the word of the Lord be with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon (Jeremiah 27:18).

In our own time we need to be aware of what preachers are doing, who preach that we do not need to be born again; who say all we need to do is to trust in God, who will be good to us. Godly living is no longer emphasized in some churches today. As a result we are in danger: Bible reading and praying are no longer encouraged. Family life and personal life are endangered. Jeremiah grieved that the nation had already lost some of their treasures, and wondered whether or not they could save the rest of what they had.

A false prophet by the name of Haniah came forward to oppose Jeremiah. Speaking in the presence of the priests and all of the people this false prophet challenged Jeremiah:

Thus saith the Lord; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years (Jeremiah 28:11).

This contradicted everything Jeremiah had been saying. Then Hananiah made this prediction, "Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house," saying in effect that God would change everything and restore all things that had been there. This was an open contradiction of Jeremiah's preaching. In fact, Hananiah forcibly took the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and broke it. Thus it looked as if he had gained the victory. But Jeremiah spoke the Word of God:

Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also (Jeremiah 28:13-14).

Hananiah had lied in his preaching and would be destroyed. But Israel had been affected by it and would suffer loss. That is always the tragedy of that kind of preaching.

## Chapter 29

### Jeremiah 29:1-32

The Bible tells us plainly, "You must be born again." The Word is clear: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." There certainly need be no doubt as to what the Bible message is. Yet in churches across the land we hear "everyone is a child of God." We hear that education is what is needed. There is no need to talk about sin: sin is just imperfection.

All of this was experienced in Jeremiah's time. The specific question was whether they should yield to Babylon. Jeremiah preached that if they yielded they would be set free. They should give in to inevitable judgment, and God would bring them to Himself. This means to us that if a person wants to get right with God, the one thing to do is to confess his sins. He should yield himself to the judgment of God. Strangely enough, it is when the person is willing to die that God can raise him from the dead, so that he will actually live. In this way he can be made righteous.

In Jeremiah's time some had already been carried away into Babylon, when Jeremiah sent them a message that this would be a long captivity. Other preachers taught the captives would soon be free. In this they deceived the people. These were the words of Jeremiah:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you . . . And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive (Jeremiah 29:11-14).

All the promises of God were available to the people who would humble themselves, and yield themselves to the will of God. But false prophets were active even among those people in Babylon, telling them that everything was going to be all right. They would not have to stay in captivity long. Jeremiah told the captives God did not send those preachers and warned them not to believe them.

The Scripture records about a certain false prophet by the name of Shemaiah who recommended himself as the true successor of Jehoiada:

Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying, The Lord hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the Lord . . . Now therefore why has thou not reprov'd Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you? For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long: build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie: therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord, because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord (Jeremiah 29:25-32).

That was the situation in the time of Jeremiah. Shemaiah set himself up against Jeremiah, and claimed he was speaking the Word of the Lord, contradicting what Jeremiah was saying. Similar situations prevail today. Faithful ministers may preach the truth, while over against them is spread the preaching that says because a person is a human being, he is already a child of God, he is all right That is the way conditions are often with us, and that is the way it was in the time of Jeremiah. God's blessing was upon Jeremiah,

and His blessing is upon His Word amongst us to this day.

## Chapter 30 **Jeremiah 30:1-31:40**

When we open the Bible and read about judgment, we know that the Word is true. That is what we deserve. On the other hand, the Bible is the source of more comfort than any other book in the world. More strength for the human spirit is derived from the Bible than from any other book that has ever been in print. In it are gracious promises of wonderful mercy and comfort, available to men through the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can see this in the book of Jeremiah. Our hearts have been saddened and alarmed by the exposure of the false prophets. They seemed to complicate the prospect and problems for mankind so much in addition to man's own waywardness and foolishness. Even when man wants to know the truth and turn to God, there is always the danger that he could be misled by preachers who will give him wrong ideas.

After reading chapters 23 to 29 it is like coming out of a long dark tunnel into the bright sunshine of midday, when we come to chapters 30 and 31.

Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it (Jeremiah 30:2-3).

Israel was to be delivered from bondage.

For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them (Jeremiah 30:8-9).

God would set His people free. As we read the Scripture speaking of "David their king" we know that the son of David is none other than Messiah, Jesus Christ. So we have here the promise that God will deliver people so that they can serve the Lord Jesus Christ. There is recognition of Israel's sin but God will bless.

Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee (Jeremiah 30:10-11).

When God brings blessing it does not mean that He wipes out the past as with a wave of the hand to say "everything is all right." God said through Jeremiah,

... I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished (Jeremiah 30:11).

And again,

I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy because thy sins were increased (Jeremiah 30:14).

And then we read:

... I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord ... Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places (Jeremiah 30:17-18).

And God says with reference to His people:

And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them (Jeremiah 30:19-20).

In verse 22 we read the wonderful promise, "And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." These are wonderful biblical words; this is what God will do: He will save His people.

This line of truth continues in chapter 31.

Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee (Jeremiah 31:3).

We should note the aspect of truth here: "I have drawn thee" and "I will build thee" and again "I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble." It may be true that when today God has been punishing, tomorrow He will save, but something happens between today and tomorrow. For a time God brought judgment to bear upon Israel; and then God called Israel to Himself. But something happened to Israel in the meanwhile. God had brought about a change in them and we read:

I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God (Jeremiah 31:18).

God will accomplish His purpose in His people.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31).

This saving work of God is more fully described:

I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people ... for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

This great blessing that God would bring to His people in saving them was to be linked up with something God would do in their hearts. He would change their inward attitudes and move them toward Himself.

## Chapter 31

### Jeremiah 32:1-33:26

The most important message of God to the world is "Repent." God made the world and He made the people in the world. He knows what they are doing: their downsitting and their uprising, and their going out and their coming in, and He would say to them: "Repent." The Apostle Paul, standing on Mars Hill, announced to the Athenians, "But now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts 17:30). When we have repented and confessed our sins, the next word is "Believe and thou shalt be saved." The believer will receive the blessing of God. This truth is brought out in Jeremiah 32 and 33.

Jeremiah was told in a dream that a kinsman would come to him with news that certain property that belonged to his family would be sold for taxes, and that it was Jeremiah's right to redeem it.

And I bought the field of Hanameel . . . And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open: and I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah . . . and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison (Jeremiah 32:9-12).

Jeremiah was in jail because of his preaching; the whole nation was faced with destruction, but what do we see him doing? He bought a piece of property for his family, so that they could enjoy it after God had brought judgment to bear upon the pagans, and had restored Israel in His favor. Those who call Jeremiah a pessimist must pause at this point. In His judgment God would destroy but He would turn His people back to Himself. Jeremiah's family would actually have this property afterwards. The days of peace were coming.

. . . Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land (Jeremiah 32:15).

After he had made this public demonstration, Jeremiah now turned to God in prayer.

Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch, the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: thou showest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, in his name, great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine Eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings (Jeremiah 32:16-19).

Then Jeremiah remembered how God had brought out His people from the land of Egypt with wonders and strong hand, and with stretched out arm, and had given them this land.

And they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandest them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them (Jeremiah 32:23).

So in prayer Jeremiah remembered that God had brought judgment upon His people, but now God had told him to buy this field.

And thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans (Jeremiah 32:25).

Those who have had personal experience with God can understand this. To the world believers boast that God will take care of them. Privately they call upon Him, "Oh Lord, do take care of us." This is not improper.

God's response shows that God knows what is going on.

Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me (Jeremiah 32:26-27)?

Then God reiterates what He purposes to do:

For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth . . . For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day . . . because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger . . . And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction (Jeremiah 32:30-33).

In the following verses God speaks of His intentions. He assures Jeremiah He will carry out His Word and we then get this great word:

Thus saith the Lord the maker thereof, the Lord that formed it, to establish it; the Lord is his name; Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not (Jeremiah 33:2-3).

God gives Jeremiah this overwhelming assurance that He will perform that which He has promised.

## Chapter 32

### Jeremiah 34:1-35:19

An incident was reported in chapter 34 which showed the lack of integrity in Judah. Jeremiah had announced to king Zedekiah that God would destroy Jerusalem although He would spare Zedekiah. In verses 8-10 Zedekiah took action to correct a wrong in the life of the city when he heard what God would do: it was the matter of slaves. There had been a ruling from the time of Moses that when a Hebrew was slave to another Hebrew (when he would be obliged to work because of borrowed money he owed), at the end of seven years he would be released. This was pleasing to God.

This rule for a long time had been forgotten. Slaves were being kept long after the seven years were up. When Zedekiah heard that God intended to destroy Jerusalem, he appeared to repent. He proclaimed all Hebrew slaves to be free. But the prominent people in the nation did not support this action.

But afterward they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids (Jeremiah 34:11).

Thus the princes and all the people caused the freed servants to return to bondage. That was shocking. Such reversion to this form of evil was very displeasing to God. So the course of events moved to the

final judgment of God: the total destruction of the nation.

In chapter 35 is the record of how Jeremiah was shown a positive example of what true integrity looks like. It concerned a family called Rechabites, who had a certain service to render in connection with the care of the tabernacle. Their duty required fidelity and faithfulness. These people put themselves under strict discipline, in order that they would not make mistakes. One of the requirements was that they would drink no wine. There had been an incident in the Old Testament, when Nadab and Abihu evidently had been drunken with wine. Coming into the presence of God they had offered strange fire upon the altar. Both were killed in judgment of God. From that time forth the ruling had gone out that no one coming into the presence of God should have been drinking wine.

Inasmuch as they dealt with the sacred things of the inner temple, the Rechabites had made a rule among themselves that they would drink no wine. Jeremiah was told to offer them wine, which he apparently did. He found to his astonishment and pleasure, that they refused to drink the wine. There are people today who are that way about the use of liquor. Nothing in the Bible specifically prohibits it, but they just do not drink.

God took note of these Rechabites who kept their own ground rules. Jeremiah was given this as an object lesson. He told the people in Jerusalem about it. They had known God's favor in the past. God had set up certain requirements, but they had failed to follow through. They said they would be faithful, but they were not; whereas by contrast, the record qualified the Rechabites for favor.

## Chapter 33 **Jeremiah 36:1-32**

It is popular today to hold that parts of the Bible are not true. The idea is abroad that some parts probably do not mean what they say. This is the consequence of certain criticism that has become widespread. Every now and again someone will say that certain verses in the text do not belong. Others will say the Old Testament records are not always valid. In many instances the miracles are discounted and the very existence of the devil is questioned.

What is surprising to many is that this is not new. This has been repeated century after century. It happened in Jeremiah's day. In chapter 36 an incident is recorded as a graphic story. This one tells about a literal criticism of the Bible. In the first eight verses of the chapter is the record of how God told Jeremiah to write His words down. Jeremiah commissioned an assistant by the name of Baruch to write down what God revealed. Baruch was told to go to the temple and read the words he had recorded to the people. Jeremiah said, "It may be they will pray and return to God."

When Baruch read these words of Jeremiah there was a man there by the name of Michaiah, who heard and reported it to the princes, to the scribes and to the scholars. Then Jehudi requested Baruch to read the Word of God that he had written. The people said they would tell the king about any pertinent information. When they questioned Baruch, he told them Jeremiah had dictated it; and he had written it just as it was dictated. So they wisely told Baruch that he and Jeremiah should hide themselves, while they took the scroll into the king's presence.

Some of the words recorded by Baruch were very pertinent to the king. So the king asked that the book be read to him.

And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth (Jeremiah 36:23).

There was general indifference. The people did not seem to care one way or another.

Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words (Jeremiah 36:24).

As the people generally did not believe what Baruch had written, there were only a few protests. It was even as today when there is some protest against dismissing the Bible, but not much.

When all of this had happened the king wanted to know where the man was who wrote it. The king sent for Jeremiah and Baruch but the Lord had hid them. Then something happened that comes to our hearts with much significance. God sees what is done with His Word which He had revealed to His servants.

Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying. Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast burned this roll, saying. Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not (Jeremiah 36:27-31).

Such handling of the Word of God, of the revealed truth as set forth by God's servants in what we call the Word of God, does not go unnoticed. God sees it and He judges the people involved. It was the end for Jehoiakim and his family. Then God spoke to Jeremiah again.

Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words (Jeremiah 36:32).

This has been a graphic illustration of how people can handle the written Word of God. It shows how men can, in their own self confidence, repudiate and set aside the revealed Word of God.

## Chapter 34

### **Jeremiah 37:1-38:28**

Have you ever stopped to think how the public feels towards a preacher who says things they do not like? The reaction is usually very severe. In the days of Babylon, when a man said something that was not agreeable to the king, he was put to death. The people did not like Jeremiah's message, and so he was thrown into prison.

At that time a certain crisis appeared. The armies of the Chaldeans of Babylon moved down toward Jerusalem from the north, threatening the city. The army of the Egyptians came up from the south and

confronted the Chaldean army of the north, and Jerusalem was the prize that lay between them. So the city was in danger. The movement of troops and military power made things very dangerous for Jerusalem. The king sent for Jeremiah and asked him to pray to God, to find out what the king should do. Jeremiah did this, and then told the king what would happen. Babylon would win and the king should not put any trust in Egypt: Babylon would control the city. The wise thing to do was to yield to Babylon.

Jeremiah was apparently disheartened, and he left the city to go to the tribe of Benjamin. But he was imprisoned as a subversive. The king would not identify himself with this discredited preacher, but he still appreciated Jeremiah. The king sent for him secretly, and Jeremiah told him his fate. Jerusalem would be destroyed and the king would be taken prisoner. King Zedekiah, realizing the injustice of Jeremiah's arrest, modified the sentence to what we call house arrest, or protective custody. The enemies of Jeremiah began to accuse him of preaching that the thing for them to do was to yield to Babylon. Jerusalem had earned the judgment of God and this was their fate. In the furor Jeremiah was arrested again, and put into a pit where he was expected to die.

There was a captain of the king's hosts by the name of Ebedmelech, an Ethiopian. He was a black man. This captain, when he heard what had been done to Jeremiah, protested. So the king instructed him to rescue Jeremiah and bring him to the king. What the captain did is a touching story. He let down ropes around which he had wound what was called clouts of old cloths so that they would not cut Jeremiah. The prophet was brought before the king, where he repeated his warning about yielding to Babylon, stating that otherwise all would be lost. Jeremiah remained in the palace until the Babylonians captured the city.

This is a demonstration of ill will from people against a man who told the truth. If there is in your pulpit a man who preaches the truth, and you feel he really knows the Lord and wants to preach the Gospel, pray for him.

## Chapter 35 **Jeremiah 39:1-43:13**

Have you ever tried to be faithful to someone who did not appreciate what you were doing? This can happen in the matter of you giving advice, only to discover that you are looked upon as a meddler. This was the experience of Jeremiah. During the time that he was under arrest and in prison, Babylon besieged Jerusalem. The siege lasted for eighteen months during which time the people inside Jerusalem began to suffer the pangs of famine.

King Zedekiah and some of his followers made special plans to escape. They went out a side entrance and tried to sneak out of the city. But the Babylonian soldiers caught them and brought Zedekiah in as prisoner before Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah was subjected to very rough treatment. His sons were killed, as were the leading nobles of his government. Zedekiah's eyes were put out and he was taken in chains as a captive to Babylon. This was what Jeremiah had warned him would happen.

At that time the Babylonians released Jeremiah from prison. They gave him an option as to his future: he could come to Babylon and live there as a free man, or he could stay in Jerusalem if he preferred. The Babylonian authorities set up a puppet government in Jerusalem under a governor by the name of Gedaliah, and allowed some of the Jews to stay behind to take care of the vineyards and pastures.

Jeremiah chose to stay with those who were left behind. While he was there a group of what we

would call guerilla fighters (those who had been out in the country at large, opposing the Babylonians) came to offer submission to the government. These joined up with Gedaliah.

One of them was called Ishmael. Another soldier by the name of Johanan warned Gedaliah that Ishmael was subversive, and that Ishmael would kill him. But Gedaliah did not believe it, and said that Johanan was speaking folly about Ishmael and no one should pay any attention to him. Ishmael gathered a group of men who tricked Gedaliah into their presence, and then killed him. So what Johanan had warned about actually came to pass. Johanan gathered his soldiers together, and led a counterrevolution against Ishmael, who had to flee to the country of Ammon. All of this is recorded as a matter of history in chapters 39, 40 and 41.

Johanan organized the Jews who were left in Judah to try to make a mass escape to Egypt. He asked Jeremiah for his support. Jeremiah told him not to do it. He told Johanan that the only hope the Jews had for security was to yield to Babylon. After Jeremiah gave them his advice, he was ignored. The Jews accused him of being an old fool, and they all went to Egypt as fugitives from Judah. Jeremiah went with them. Jeremiah felt that he might minister to the Jews, even though they had ignored his advice. I suspect many parents know what this is. Young people ask parents to approve what they do. The parents can see the foolishness of their ways, and may advise against their plans. But the young people may go ahead and follow their own plans anyway. The parents will go along with them. When the Jews reached Egypt Jeremiah made an oven and built a fire. He put rocks inside the oven, and then told the people to open the oven and take those rocks out. That was just the way Nebuchadnezzar would come to Egypt and smite the Jews.

Jeremiah had a thankless job. Persons who know the Lord and understand the Gospel try to persuade others to turn to God. They may urge them to accept the Lord Jesus Christ and to yield themselves over to Him, knowing the others will not heed. But what should they do? No doubt Jeremiah said nothing that the Lord did not lead him to say, but every now and again the Lord led him to speak out and let his judgment be known. We can let our position be known in faithfulness to those for whom we care. We need to be faithful to our testimony.

## Chapter 36

### Jeremiah 44:1-30

Have you ever seen someone in your family make a mistake that you recognized, yet you could not avoid it? This is what happened to Jeremiah when he went along with the Jews who fled into Egypt. Jeremiah undertook to talk those people out of what they were doing. They needed to go back to Judah, acknowledge the lordship of the king of Babylon, and yield to him. The destruction of Jerusalem should have made them realize that God would judge. Jeremiah told them about the prophets Amos, Micah, Hosea and Isaiah who had preached just before Jeremiah.

Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach (Jeremiah 44:11-12).

The people argued against what Jeremiah said. They pointed out that their forefathers in Jerusalem had worshiped the queen of heaven, a pagan goddess. They claimed that in those days when they worshipped the queen of heaven there was prosperity in the city of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah answered them in the only way he could. He asked them why they thought Jerusalem was destroyed and why they were now fugitives. This was the judgment of God. When Jeremiah pointed out to them the fact that God had brought judgment upon them, he had no sense of triumph in that statement. He preached the only message he could preach. That message was to warn them that they were going the wrong way, doing the wrong thing. What he encountered was the fact that the people argued they were right even when they were wrong. Jeremiah warned them God was aware of their attitude, and he had heard everything they had said.

There was a ray of hope like a star shining in the nighttime:

Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs (Jeremiah 45:28).

That was all Jeremiah could say. There was no way of proving it now. The results would have to show the truth. It must have been very discouraging. Yet even though the message was rejected a few people believed the truth. These would be restored as a remnant.

## Chapter 37

### Jeremiah 45:1-5

On a very dark night, how brilliant just a single shaft of light is! The whole earth may be dark, gloomy, mysterious, but the star twinkles on. God has not left Himself without witnesses. There are real believers scattered among the people. There is probably no church without some real believers in it. There are always some Christians who live day in and day out the faith that they have in the Lord Jesus Christ. The things of the Lord are very real to them.

Jeremiah had such a fellow believer in his time: the man Baruch. Chapter 45 records what Jeremiah had to say to Baruch. The story of this short chapter (only five verses) is very simple. Baruch was burdened with grief:

Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest (Jeremiah 45:3).

Jeremiah had a message for Baruch, and we should take this message to ourselves. It was no sugar coated pill. The message had three parts:

Thus shalt thou say unto him, The Lord saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whiter thou goest (Jeremiah 45:4-5).

The first two parts of this message were plain warning. There may be prosperity among the people of God: it would not last. There may be a certain interest in people coming to worship God: it would not

last. And Baruch's grief would not lessen. God did not say everything would turn out all right. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The person who does not sow to the Spirit will not reap of the Spirit. The person who sows neglect and carelessness will reap disaster.

"And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord." A believer should not try to make too much of himself, not even in spiritual matters; not even among God's people. There is no prospect for personal triumph for the believer. What shall he do then? He should trust in the Lord, not in himself. Baruch understood that, I am sure. His personal future with the Lord was secure. This then was the message: a very special word to a very special man.

As believers grow in grace and in knowledge, and draw nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ, they may feel burdened about things. The Lord would speak a straightforward word to them. Things will not get better. They will not get personal satisfaction out of anything they do. But they will have the Lord and He will be adequate.

## Chapter 38

### **Jeremiah 46:1-49:39**

What do you think believers should do with regard to the local community, and what do you think a real minister of the Gospel should preach? There are common truths for all men. We should bear in mind the law of God is for all men, and it should be preached. Not only is common honesty and common decency required, but social honesty and social decency should be promoted. But seldom are such messages of any value.

Public difficulties are usually problems of motivation: what do people actually want? The snare in trying to help people and in thinking of what believers should do, and in thinking of what the preacher should preach, is in supposing that we are doing something when we say so. In all the Bible there is no argument to prove that virtue is good. Everybody knows it.

A friend who was a missionary in Africa told of an experience he had. He had been working among a tribe when he found to his dismay they were planning to attack another tribe where he had also planned to go with the Gospel. And there was really nothing to fight about. So he went to the chief and argued against the plans that would result in war. The chief finally admitted that they were starting the war because the other tribe had sheep and they had none. They were going to war so they could take their sheep. The missionary tried to persuade the chief that taking the other man's sheep was stealing. He argued all day and finally wore the old chief down. Toward evening the old chief said something like this: "You mean to tell me it is wrong for us to take their sheep?" The missionary said "Yes." Whereupon the old chief said, "Well, don't you think I knew that all the time?" So with reference to issues that have to do with right and wrong, we do not have much to preach about. People know that.

Is there then no word for the public? We must say, "Yes, there is a word." We can turn to Jeremiah to find it. That word is one of warning that the wages of sin is death. One of the greatest perils today is that there is a tendency to intimate to people that God will bless all men regardless. That is not true. God commandeth all men everywhere to repent. That is the truth. And to promise the grace of God without repentance is wrong.

In chapters 46-49 nine different nations are named. This does not mean that Jeremiah preached on nine successive days. What we have is his notebook; a file of notes on messages he had given to pagan nations. The messages were similar. The first message was to Egypt. He preached that Egypt would be

utterly destroyed by other nations, yet in the plan of God, nothing will harm Israel. The word was, "Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord: for I am with thee." The word to the Philistines was that they would be totally destroyed. Moab was told they would be robbed, though there was a promise "Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord."

Every time the judgment of God is announced, with the flat prediction that there will be complete total destruction, we should keep in mind God knows how to deliver men out of destruction. He can actually save in judgment and "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Today the preacher of the Gospel proclaims that in Christ Jesus God can save. The message to Ammon is clear (49:1-6), and predicted doom. The word to Edom was "calamity": "Thy terribleness hath deceived thee." The word "terribleness" means his greatness, his magnificence has deceived him and his pride. To Damascus was predicted "feeble, anguish, sorrow." To Kedar the message was that their flocks would be robbed. To Hazer was predicted their camels would be a booty. Elam was told "I will bring evil upon them" and yet this word: "But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord."

Jeremiah spoke these message in his day. Today we proclaim that Christ Jesus died for sinners and He is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by Him.

## Chapter 39 **Jeremiah 50:1-51:64**

The whole study in the book of Jeremiah has brought to our minds vividly that the people of God, Israel, as centered in Jerusalem and in Judah, were confronted with the great peril of Babylon, who would move in and destroy their city and take them captive. It will be helpful if we will think of all the spiritual elements involved. The great conflict between the forces of nature and the forces of the spirit: the forces of this world and the forces of the world to come, is true of the whole Bible. It is typical of the general truth everywhere: it is always the natural against the spiritual. The natural is stronger in this world, while the spiritual is not so strong in this world. In the Old Testament we thought about Amalek who fought against Israel when Joshua was leading them. Prayer on the part of Moses, Aaron and Hur, gave Joshua the strength to overcome Amalek.

We could think of Ishmael and Isaac, the two sons of Abraham. Ishmael was a child of the flesh, Isaac was a child of promise. And Ishmael persecuted Isaac. If we bring that over to our day and time, when we contrast things of nature with things of the spirit, what does that mean? Often times we fail to get our priorities straight. When a man preaches, if he is God's spokesman, he will speak to our hearts and encourage us to put first things first.

Jeremiah told his people that Babylon would destroy Israel but that ultimately Babylon would be utterly destroyed; that Israel would be taken into bondage and captivity but would be restored and it would last forever. We read in chapter 50 with reference to Babylon, "the most proud shall stumble and fall." And again we read, "Every man is brutish by his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them" Jeremiah 51:17. That is the way he spoke about the natural.

Jeremiah also predicted about revival in Israel:

In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten (Jeremiah 50:4-5).

Just at the time that Babylon was being destroyed, Israel will be revived:

In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve (Jeremiah 50:20).

So Israel has the prospect of being completely pardoned, and we read:

For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel (Jeremiah 51:5).

They will be justified by the Lord.

Jeremiah preached to the people of Israel, who are the people of God; urging upon them this great truth: God is alive, God is available. God is merciful and gracious, but if men continue to turn away, He will bring them into judgment. However, He will restore those who are found faithful. The remnant will be saved.

I trust that having read this book of Jeremiah there may be the disposition in your heart to stay close to God, especially in these dark and troublesome times. Almighty God is available for each of us.