

# Jeremiah

# INTRODUCTION

Jeremiah began his ministry in the reign of Josiah, a good king who temporarily delayed God's judgment promised because of the frightful rule of Manasseh (son of King Hezekiah, fourteenth king of Judah). Events were changing rapidly in the Near East. Josiah had begun a reform, which included destruction of pagan high places throughout Judah and Samaria. The reform, however, had little lasting effect on the people. Ashurbanipal, the last great Assyrian king, died in 627 B.C. Assyria was weakening, Josiah was expanding his territory to the north, and Babylon under Nabopolassar, and Egypt under Necho, were trying to assert their authority over Judah.

In 609 B.C., Josiah was killed at Megiddo when he attempted to prevent Pharaoh Necho from going to the aid of the Assyrian remnant. Three sons of Josiah (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah) and a grandson (Jehoiachin) followed him on the throne. Jeremiah saw the folly of the political policy of these kings and warned them of God's plan for Judah, but none of them heeded the warning. Jehoiakim was openly hostile to Jeremiah and destroyed one scroll sent by Jeremiah by cutting off a few columns at a time and throwing them into the fire. Zedekiah was a weak and vacillating ruler, at times seeking Jeremiah's advice, but at other times allowing Jeremiah's enemies to mistreat and imprison him.

The book consists mainly of a short introduction (1:1-3), a collection of oracles against Judah and Jerusalem which Jeremiah dictated to his scribe Baruch (1:4-20:18), oracles against foreign nations (25:15-38; chs. 46-51), events written about Jeremiah in the third person, probably by Baruch (chs. 26-45), and a historical appendix (ch. 52), which is almost identical to 2 Kings 24 and 25. The prophecies in the book are not in chronological order.

Jeremiah had a compassionate heart for his people and prayed for them even when the Lord told him not to do so. Yet he condemned the rulers, the priests, and false prophets for leading the people astray. He also attacked the people for their idolatry and proclaimed severe judgment unless the people repented. Because he knew God's intentions, he advocated surrender to the Babylonians and wrote to those already in exile to settle down and live normal lives. For his preaching he was branded a traitor by many. Jeremiah, however, had their best interest at heart. He knew that unless God's covenant was honored, the nation would be destroyed. God was also interested in individuals and their relationship to Him. Like Ezekiel, he stressed individual responsibility.

Jeremiah was just a youth when he was called to carry a severe message of doom to his people. He attempted to avoid this task but was unable to remain silent. The people had become so corrupt under Manasseh that God must bring an end to the nation. Defeated and taken into exile, they would reflect on what had happened to them and why. Then, after proper chastisement and repentance, God would bring a remnant back to Judah, punish the nations who had punished them, and fulfill His old covenants with Israel, David, and the Levites. And He would give them a new covenant and write His law on their hearts. David's throne would again be established, and faithful priests would serve them.

The oracles against foreign nations illustrate the sovereignty of God over the whole world. All nations belong to Him and all must answer to Him for their conduct.

(Spirit Filled Life Bible's Introduction to Jeremiah, Roy Edmund Hayden)

## Jeremiah 1:1-19

If the days of David and Solomon may be compared to spring and summer in the history of the Kingdom of Israel, it was late autumn when our story opens. The influence of the spiritual revival under Hezekiah and Isaiah, which had for a brief interval arrested the process of decline, had spent itself; and not even the reforms of the good king Josiah, which affected rather the surface than the heart of the people, would avail to avert inevitable judgment.

The northern tribes were captive on the plains of Mesopotamia, whence, in the dawn of history, their race had sprung. And Judah, unwarned by the fate of her sister Israel, was rapidly pursuing the same path, to be presently involved in a similar catastrophe. King and court, princes and people, prophets and priests, were infected with the abominable vices for which the Canaanites had been expelled from the Promised Land centuries before.

Every high hill had its thick grove of green trees, within whose shadow the idolatrous rites and abominable license of nature worship were freely practiced. The face of the country was thickly covered with temples erected for the worship of Baal and Astarte, and all the host of heaven, and with lewd idols. In the cities, the black-robed *chemarim*, the priests of these unhallowed practices, flitted to and fro in strange contrast to the white-stoled priests of Jehovah. The people were taught to consider vice as part of their religion, and to frequent houses dedicated to impurity. All kinds of evil thrived unchecked. The poor were plundered, the innocent falsely accused; wicked men lay in wait to catch men; theft and murder, adultery and idolatry, like spores of corruption, filled the fetid air and flourished on the tainted soil (2:20, 27, 34; 5:7-8, 26; 9:2).

But it was in Jerusalem that these evils came to a head. In the streets of the holy city, the children were taught to gather wood while the fathers kindled the fire and the women kneaded dough to make cakes for Astarte, "the queen of heaven," and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods. The temple, with so many sacred associations, was the headquarters of Baal worship; its courts were desecrated by monstrous images and symbols, and its precincts were the abode of infamous men and women. It seemed as though the king of Sodom had dispossessed Melchizedek in his ancient home. Below the Temple battlements, deep down in the valley of Hinnom, scenes were constantly witnessed that recalled the darkest cruelties of heathendom. There was the high place of Tophet, which derived its name from the clamor of the drums that drowned the cries of the babes flung into the fires. It was an awful combination. "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!" was the cry of the heartless formalist; while below the sacred shrine such scenes of devilry were rife. Ah me! Would that it had been the last time in the world's history when the profession of true religion had been accompanied by the license of vice and the service of the devil!

In such a Sodom, God's voice must be heard. The Judge of all the earth must warn the ungodly of a certain retribution—only to be averted by swift repentance. The Good Shepherd must seek his wayward sheep. Better believe that there is no God than think that he could be speechless in the presence of sins that frustrated his election and long education of Israel, and threatened to terminate its very existence as a people.

Yet if God speak, it must be through the yielded lips of man. For if his voice struck the ear of sinful man directly, it would either paralyze him with dread or seem indistinct, like the mutterings of thunder. Therefore in every age the Divine Spirit has gone through the world, seeking for the prepared lip of elect souls through which to utter himself. He seeks such today. Men are still the vehicles of his communications to men. To us, as to Ezekiel, the Divine Spirit says, "Son of man, thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me."

In the call of Jeremiah we may discover the sort of man whom God chooses as the medium for his speech. And our discovery will greatly startle us. We shall find the heavenly treasure in a simple earthen vessel. Not in the metropolis, but in the poor village of Anathoth, three miles to the north; not in an elder, but in a youth; not among the high and noble, but in the family of an undistinguished priest; not in a man mighty as Elijah, eloquent as Isaiah, or seraphic as Ezekiel; but in one who was timid and shrinking, conscious of his helplessness, yearning for a sympathy and love he was never to know—such was the chosen organ through which the word of the Lord came to that corrupt and degenerate age.

It is not to be expected that a superficial gaze will discern the special qualifications that attracted the divine choice to Jeremiah. But that is no wonder. The instruments of the divine purpose in all ages had not been such as man would have selected. God has always chosen "the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, yea, and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are; that no flesh should glory before God." Your family may be poor in Manasseh, and yourself the least in your father's house—nothing more than a cake of barley bread: yet if God lay hold of you, he will work a wonderful deliverance.

God vouchsafed a twofold vision to His child (vs. 11-16). On the one hand, the swift-blossoming almond tree assured him that God would watch over him and see to the swift performance of his predictions; on the other, the seething cauldron, turned towards the north, indicated the breaking out of evil. So the pendulum of life swings to and fro; now to light and then to dark. But happy is the man whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. He is hidden in the secret of God's pavilion from the strife of tongues; and abides in the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

**When was Jeremiah called to be a prophet?**

Jer 1:5 Rom 8:29-30 Acts 15:18

**How similar is the promise of God to Jeremiah when he was first commissioned by God and then in later times when he was full of discouragement?**

Jer. 1:18-19 Jer 15:20-21

**What other prophet shrank from the great commission that was entrusted to him like Jeremiah who said in Jer. 1:6 "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth."**

Ex. 4:10

**Was this lack of self confidence a good or bad trait?**

Isa. 6:7 Acts 6:10 1 Cor. 1:5 Eph. 6:19

**What was the great commission entrusted to Jeremiah and how was he encouraged to fulfill it?**

Jer. 1:17

**What are the consequences for Jeremiah if he does not do or say what God has commanded?**

Jer. 1:17

**Jeremiah 2:1-37**

There was probably little interval between Jeremiah's call and his entrance upon his sacred work. Once the Spirit of God has established a code of communications between himself and the soul whom he has selected to be his mouthpiece, he is likely to avail himself of it constantly. The difficulty is to lay down the wire through the ocean depths; but when it is there, the messages flash to and fro repeatedly. So we are told that to this young, ardent soul "the word of the Lord came" (2:1). Coming, it thrilled him.

He dwelt but lightly on the ominous mention of the inevitable conflict which the divine voice prognosticated. He did not stay to gauge the full pressure of opposition indicated in the celestial storm-signal. He had been told that kings and princes, priests and people, would fight against him; but in the first blush of his young faith he thought more of the presence of Jehovah, who had promised to make him "a defended city, an iron pillar and brazen walls against the whole land." How tenderly God veils our future and leads us forward step by step! But there is a difference between the elastic hopefulness of youth and the experience of manhood. The earlier chapters of Jeremiah differ from his Lamentations as does the first green of spring from the sere foliage of autumn.

As we study the words and deeds of this most human of prophets, let us pass through his plaintive cries and tears and prayers to that Divine Man, whose gentle spirit was so closely anticipated and reflected in that of his servant. In every age God is at work through his servants, striving against sin in every form, and seeking to set up his reign of righteousness, peace, and joy. In Jeremiah's words we have his vehement beseechings and remonstrances; in Jeremiah's prayers we have echoes of the unutterable intercessions of the Holy Spirit; in Jeremiah's conflicts we have the divine antagonism against flesh and blood, and the rulers of the darkness of this world; in Jeremiah's laments we have the divine grief over human willfulness. This priest and prophet of the Jerusalem of David and Solomon had a remarkable course to pursue in presenting, in the obscure mirror of his life, the cross and sorrow of the true Priest and Prophet of the restored Jerusalem.

When Jeremiah began his ministry, going from Anathoth to Jerusalem for that purpose (2:2), Josiah, though only twenty-one years of age, had been thirteen years on the throne. He was commencing those measures of reform which availed to postpone, though not avert, the doom of city and nation. His measures were as drastic as those of Cromwell and his soldiers in their determined effort to remove every vestige of popery from churches and public buildings. "They brake down the altars of the Baalim in his presence; and the sun-images, that were on high above them, he hewed down; and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 34:4-5, R.V.).

There must have been a great cawing among the rooks when the trees in which they had so long nested were felled. For seventy years the grossest forms of idolatry had held almost undisputed sway. The impious orgies and degrading rites, which licensed vice as a part of religion, were in harmony with the depraved tastes of the people. What, therefore, ecclesiastics and their flocks felt towards Henry VIII when he demolished the monasteries, and to the Protector when his officers pursued their work of devastation, must have found ready place in those early years of Josiah's reign.

The result was—first, that the work of reform was largely superficial; it did not strike beneath the surface, nor change the trend of national choice. And secondly, this policy compacted together a strong political party determined to promote

a closer alliance with Egypt which, under Psammetichus, had just asserted her independence against the king of Assyria. In these two directions the young prophet was called to make his influence felt.

*First, he protested against the prevalent sin around him.* The one thought of the people was to preserve the outward acknowledgment of Jehovah by the maintenance of the temple services and rites. If these were rigorously observed, they considered that there was no sufficient cause for charging them with the sin of apostasy. They insisted that they were not polluted (2:23); and reiterated with wearisome monotony, "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are these" (7:4).

It was Jeremiah's mission to show that mere outward observance was worse than useless, compatible with a real forsaking of God. Like the flush of hectic fever, it only concealed the corruption eating its way into the heart. Like the flowers on the edge of the precipice, it hid the fatal brink. Nominal profession is compatible with utter atheism; and with the worst form of atheism, because the heart parries every attack with the foil of apparent and avowed belief.

This will account for the plain denunciations of sin that came burning hot from the lips of the young prophet. He includes the priests and expounders of the law, pastors and prophets, in his scathing words (2:8). The valley of Hinnom, with its obscene and cruel rites, is quoted in evidence against them (v. 23). The blood of children flung into the fires is detected on their robes (v. 34); the trees of the groves whisper what they have witnessed beneath their shadow; and the jagged rocks tell stories they dare not conceal (20; 3:6). Every metaphor is adopted that human art can suggest to bring home to the people their infidelity to their great Lover and Redeemer, God (3:20).

*He also protested against the proposal to form an Egyptian alliance.* The little land of Canaan lay between the vast rival empires founded on the Nile and the Euphrates, much as Switzerland between France and Austria. Therefore, it was constantly exposed to the transit of immense armies, like locusts destroying everything, or to the hostile incursions of one or other of its belligerent neighbors. It had always been the policy of a considerable party at the court of Jerusalem to cultivate alliance with Egypt or Assyria. In Hezekiah's and Manasseh's time the tendency had been towards Assyria; now it was towards Egypt which had, in a remarkable way, thrown off the yoke which the great king Esarhaddon in three terrible campaigns had sought to rivet on its neck. The prophet strenuously opposed these overtures. Why should his people bind themselves to the fortunes of any heathen nation whatsoever? Was not God their King? Would not he succor them in times of overflowing calamity? Surely their true policy was to stand alone, untrammelled by foreign alliances, resting only on the mighty power of Jehovah, serving his purposes, true to his law, devoted to his will. "What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor [*i.e.*, the Black Nile]; or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?" (2:18, 36-37).

This, then, was Jeremiah's mission—to stand almost alone; to protest against the sins of the people which were covered by their boasted reverence to Jehovah, whom they worshiped as the tutelary deity of their land alongside many false gods—and to oppose the policy of the court, which sought to cultivate friendly relations with the one power that seemed able to render aid to his fatherland in the awful struggle with the northern kingdom which he saw to be imminent (1:15). And this ministry was exercised in the teeth of the most virulent opposition. Here was a priest denouncing the practices of priests, a prophet the lies of prophets. It was no light thing to expose the falsehoods alike of priest and prophet, and accuse them of healing the hurt of the daughter of his people slightly, saying, "Peace, peace," when there was no peace. Small wonder, therefore, that the most powerful parties in the state conspired against him, as in later days when Pilate and Herod would join hands against Christ.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

### **Why was Jeremiah being sent to Israel?**

**What were the two evils that Jeremiah charged the people of Israel with? Explain each.**

Jer. 2:13

### **Jeremiah 3:1–6:30**

We do not know how Jeremiah's first address was received. It was impossible for Jerusalem to have heard the eager pleadings of the young preacher, protesting so earnestly against the policy of its priests, without becoming aware that a new force had entered the arena of its public life. And from that moment, through the forty-four years that followed, the influence of his holy example and fervent words was destined to make itself mightily felt. One more star of hope shone over that hotbed of corruption, the very atmosphere of which was charged with symptoms of impending dissolution. Another voice was audible through which God could utter his pleadings and remonstrances.

In his second discourse, lasting from the third to the sixth chapters inclusive—and which perhaps is preserved as a specimen of Jeremiah's words at this period—there is an added power and pathos. The flame burns higher, the sword has a keener edge, yet the tone is more tremulous and tender. There is more than ever the spirit of Jesus, bewailing the blindness and obstinacy of men, as the vision of impending judgment looms clearer before the soul and the violence done to the redeeming love of God is more clearly apprehended. In his own touching words, Jeremiah was as a gentle lamb

led to the slaughter (11:19); but he was also strong as a lion in the vehemence with which he strove to avert the doom already gathering on the horizon and threatening to devastate his beloved fatherland. If any pure and holy soul could have saved Judah by its pleadings, tears, and warnings, Jeremiah would have done it.

But it was not to be. The poisonous weed had struck its roots too deeply; the ulcer was too inveterate. The evil that Manasseh had sown had too thickly impregnated the soil. However, this did not appear in those early days of Jeremiah's ministry and, with all the hopefulness of youth, he thought that he might yet avert the disaster. Surely a voice warning of the rocks that lay directly in the vessel's course, and a firm hand on the tiller, might yet steer the good ship into calm, deep water!

This discourse is occupied with a clear prevision of the Chaldean invasion, with plaintive expressions of pity and pain, and with eloquent assertions of the redeeming grace of God.

At the opening of Jeremiah's ministry, as we have seen, the land was rejoicing in a brief parenthesis of peace, like a glint of light on a mountainside in a cloudy and dark day. It was a welcome contrast to the experience of the previous centuries. And it appeared probable that it might last. The mighty empire of Assyria was weakened by internal dissension; Babylon was becoming a formidable rival of Nineveh; the Medes, under Cyaxares, were beginning to descend the western slopes of the Taurus; while in Egypt Psammetichus was too deeply engaged in expelling the Assyrian garrisons, consolidating his kingdom and founding his dynasty, to have leisure or desire to interfere with the tiny neighboring kingdom.

Thus Josiah was able to pursue his reforms in peace, and there was no war cloud on the horizon. It was on one of these days of Josiah the king (3:6) that the newly appointed prophet startled the men of Jerusalem and Judah as he made known what he had seen from his watchtower.

He had heard the trumpet summoning the peasantry from the open country to the fenced cities, leaving their crops at the mercy of the invader, to save their lives. He had descried the lion stealing up from his lair in the thicket to destroy the nations. He had caught the cries of the watchers from the northern heights of Dan to Ephraim, and so to Jerusalem, as they announced the advent of the invader. He had beheld the desolation of the land, the hurried retreat of the defenders of the holy city herself, some to thickets and others to holes in the jagged rocks. Yes, and he had seen the daughter of Zion gasping in the extreme of her anguish and crying, "Woe is me now!"

So real was the whole scene to him that we find him turning to his brother Benjamites, who had fled for shelter to the metropolis, bidding them flee still further south. He beholds the preparations for the siege and the chagrin of her assailants that the evening shadows of declining day interpose between them and her inevitable capture. He describes the invader as a mighty and ancient nation, gleaning Israel as men gather the last grapes into their basket—cruel and merciless as evening wolves. Their quiver a sepulchre; their sword a terror; their charging cry hoarse and deafening as the roar of the sea; their chariots and cavalry irresistible. The mere reports of their deeds were sufficient to induce in each hearer, as it were, the pangs of travail (1:15; 4:6-7, 16, 19; 6:9, 19, 21). And the words of the young prophet were as fire to wood (5:14).

It has been supposed that these words referred to the invasion of the Scythians, who about this time poured in countless hordes over Western Asia. The cities of Nineveh and Babylon alone, because of their great strength, escaped; the open country was swept utterly bare; all who could not escape were barbarously massacred or carried off as slaves; villages and towns were turned into charred and smoking ruins. But these barbarian hordes do not fulfill the entire scope of the prophet's words. They do not appear to have entered Palestine but to have passed down on the eastern or western frontier, skirting the territory of Josiah and driving the panic-stricken people to the shelter of the larger cities—from which the path of the invader could be traced by conflagrations kindled on their ruthless march. It is better, therefore, to refer these ominous words to the invasion of Judah by Babylon, which was to take place in thirty years, but of which the people were amply warned, that they might put away their abominations and return to the Fountain of Living Waters.

The tender heart of Jeremiah was filled with the utmost sorrow at the heavy tidings he was called to announce. Throughout the book we constantly encounter the expressions of his anguish. True patriot as he was, it was hard for him to contemplate the impending destruction of the holy city. The noblest traditions of his people were represented in those cries which, for a little, demand our consideration.

"The sword," he says, "reaches to the soul." And again, "My heart! My heart! I writhe in pain! The walls of my heart will break! My heart groans within me; I cannot keep it still" (4:19, free translation). He identifies himself with his land, and it seems as though the curtains of his own tents are being spoiled, even in a moment. He struggles against uttering his message of judgment until he can no longer contain himself and becomes weary with holding in (6:11). He addresses Jerusalem as the daughter of his people and bids her gird herself with sackcloth and sit in ashes, mourning as for an only son (6:26). He asks how he may comfort himself against sorrow, because his heart faints within him (8:18). He wishes that his head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people (9:1). He wanders alone over the mountains, weeping and wailing because the pasture lands are dry, because the lowing of the cattle and the song of the bird are hushed (9:10). "Woe is me!" he exclaims, "my wound is grievous."

He had no alternative but to announce the judgments which he saw upon their way; but there was a sob in the voice that predicted them. So far from desiring the evil day, very gladly would he have laid down his life to avert it. The chalice

of his life was full of that spirit which led the Master in later years to weep as he beheld the guilty and doomed city. Many a great preacher of repentance in all the centuries of church history has known something of this bewailing. Side by side with vehement denunciations of coming judgment, there have been the pitiful yearnings over lost men.

We need more of this. Nothing is so terrible as to utter God's threatenings against sin, which are predictions of its natural and inevitable outworking, with no sign of anguish or regret. If we are called to speak of judgment to come, it should be after hours of solitary prayer, weeping, and soul travail. It is only in proportion as we have felt for sinners that we can warn them. It is only in so far as we have known the Savior's pity that we can dare to take up the woes he pronounced against Pharisee and Sadducee, or threaten the fate which he so clearly and awfully denounced.

Our mistake is in dealing with generals and not with particulars; or in using terms which have passed from hand to hand until their inscription is worn away. We have not realized the loss of one soul, nor the unutterable woe of hell for one apostate, nor the meaning of the undying worm and the unquenched flame. And probably the best way of entering into the meaning of any of these terrible conceptions is to try and realize what they would mean for any one soul who was dear to us as life. Then from the one we may pass to the many; from the one lost soul we may understand the meaning of a lost world. Let us look at these things from the standpoint of the Savior, or of a parent's love, or of the soul itself; and when thoughts have saturated our hearts of the dishonor done to God, the loss sustained by Christ, the anguish wrought into the texture of one disobedient life—we shall be able to speak to men of the judgment to come, with streaming tears, tremulous voice, and breaking heart. Such preaching will always be a convincing and irresistible argument to turn sinners from the error of their ways. Nothing is more awful than to speak of the great mysteries of life and death, of heaven and hell, of the right and left of the Throne, without that compassion of heart which is borrowed from close communion with the Savior of the world.

Few of the sacred writers have had truer or deeper views of the love of God. It is to the earlier chapters of Jeremiah that backsliders must always turn for comfort and assurance of abundant pardon. The word *backslide* is characteristic of this prophet.

*To Jeremiah's thought, sin could not quench God's love.* It may come in between man and wife, severing the marriage tie and leading the husband to divorce her whom he had taken to be his other self; but though our sin be more inveterate and repeated than woman ever perpetrated against man, or man against woman, it cannot cut off that love which is from everlasting to everlasting. The clouds may dim, but they cannot extinguish the sun. Sin may hide the manifestation of the love of God, but can never make God abandon his love to us (Jer. 3:1).

*The love of God goes forth in forgiving mercy.* He only asks that the people should acknowledge their iniquity, and confess to having perverted their way and forgotten their God. It were enough that they should accept the terms of the confession which he himself suggested: "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God"; and he assures them that though their sin and iniquity were sought for, there should be none (4:1; 50:20). *The love of God does not deal with us after our sins.* He gives showers immediately on repentance. He does not keep his anger forever. He intervenes between us and trouble, as the soft sand between the homes of men and the yeasty foaming ocean. He waits to receive us back, saying, "If thou wilt return, O Israel, unto me, thou shalt return." Ours may be the pleasant land, ours the goodly heritage, ours the rest for the soul—all of which we had forfeited, but all of which are restored to us when we return.

What true and delightful conceptions of the love of God were vouchsafed to the young prophet! Many similarities between his expressions and those of Deuteronomy suggest that it was his favorite book—as, if we may venture to say so, it was our Lord's; and perhaps it was from that ancient writing, then newly discovered, that he derived his inspiration. But, in any case, his living spirit had drunk deep draughts of the everlasting, forgiving, pitiful love of God, revealed and given to men in Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, blessed love!—through which backsliding hearts may be admitted again to the inner circle, and have restored the years that the cankerworm has eaten.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

### **What was the root cause of Israel's problem?**

Jer. 3:25    Jer. 4:1    Jer 5:23-24

### **Is it suicidal folly for these Israelites as well as all others to remain in this self indulgent state when hell and destruction are close at hand?**

Jer. 6:27-30

### **What do the metals and the refining represent in Jeremiah 6:27-30 that Jeremiah is testing?**

### **Jeremiah 7:1-10:25**

We must read the records given in the Books of the Kings and Chronicles to understand the remarkable movement which was on foot during the time covered by the first twelve chapters of the Book of Jeremiah. In his collected words he scarcely refers to the great reforms being introduced by his friend, the king Josiah; and he is scarcely mentioned in the

historical records. But there is no doubt that he was in constant and close communication with the king and the little group of earnest reformers that clustered round his person, and which included Shaphan, Hilkiyah, the prophet Zephaniah, the prophetess Huldah, and his own friend, Baruch.

Josiah promoted measures of reform from the earliest years of his reign; but at first he was opposed by the dead weight of national apathy to the cause he espoused. The worship of idols—for which there are twenty different terms in the Hebrew language—had so many fascinations from the use of the peoples around, and from its appeals to sensual passion, that the mass of the people had no desire to revert to the more austere and purer worship of their forefathers. Besides, had not Solomon the magnificent, four hundred years before, erected on the southern slopes of Olivet shrines to Ashtoreth, the goddess of Sidon, and to Chemosh and Milcom, the national gods of Moab and Ammon? The rites of heathen superstition were also maintained by a vast herd of false prophets and priests, who, like parasites, lived in the corruption of their time. There was a fatal compact and collusion between the two groups which boded no good for the efforts of the zealous band of reformers who gathered round the king, because they appeared to give a divine sanction to the abominations that were being perpetrated. A wonderful and horrible thing had come to pass in the land. The prophets prophesied falsely, the priests ruled at their direction, and the people loved to have it so.

The cooperation of Zephaniah and Jeremiah was therefore exceedingly valuable. While Josiah wrought from without, pursuing a career of uncompromising iconoclasm (destruction of religious images or opposition to their veneration), they wrought from within, appealing to the conscience and heart—here pleading the claims of Jehovah on the thoughtless crowds, there taunting the idol worshipers with the futility of their reliance on the creations of their fancy, and again announcing the swift descent of national judgments on the national sins which were desolating the country.

But, notwithstanding their united efforts, the cause of reform moved slowly, or might even have come to a standstill—as an express train when buried in an avalanche of soft snow—had not the discovery been made in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, giving a new and expected impetus to the ancient religion of Israel. And though it is not exactly an incident in the life of Jeremiah, he was so closely associated with the men who were principally concerned, and his third discourse *is* so evidently suggested by the reforms to which it led, we must briefly touch on it.

#### 1. The Finding of the Law.

At the time to which this incident must be referred, the Temple was under repair. It sadly needed it; for the lewd emblems of idolatry had been erected within its sacred precincts and, beside them, the dwellings of the wretched men and women associated with the impious rites permitted on the site where David worshiped and Solomon spread his hands in solemn dedicatory prayer. Probably also the fabric was showing signs of dilapidation and age, for two and a half centuries had elapsed since it had been completely restored by Joash.

The work was entrusted to the superintendence of Hilkiyah, the high priest, who was assisted by a little group of Levites; and the cost was contributed by the people who passed through the temple gates. On one occasion, the king sent Shaphan, his secretary and chancellor, who was the father of Gemariah and a good man—who afterwards defended Jeremiah (36:10-19, 25)—to take an account with Hilkiyah of the money which had been gathered by the doorkeepers. When they had attended to this important business and delivered the money into the hands of the workmen that had the oversight of the work, Hilkiyah, the high priest, informed Shaphan, the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord."

It was a very startling discovery. The rabbinical tradition states that it was discovered inside a heap of stones, where it was hidden when Ahaz destroyed all the other copies of the holy books. Or it may have been hidden away in the Ark, which Ahaz may have removed to one of the side rooms of the temple, where dust and lumber then concealed it.

Its discovery by Hilkiyah made as great a sensation as that of the Latin Bible by Luther in the library of the old Augustine monastery at Erfurt. Shaphan read parts of it before the king, among them probably chapter 28. "And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes." In hot haste he sent a deputation of his most trusted friends to one of the suburbs of the city, where the prophetess Huldah dwelt. Jeremiah may have been at this time at Anathoth; or he may have been too young in his work to be recognized as an authority in so grave a crisis. The question to be asked was whether the nation must expect to suffer all the awful curses which those words predicted; the answer was an uncompromising "Yes," though their infliction might be for a brief space postponed.

Forthwith the king summoned a mighty convocation of all the men of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets, and the people, both small and great; from a platform erected in the entrance of the inner court, he read aloud all the words of the book of the covenant, which had been found in the house of the Lord. Further, he solemnly renewed the covenant between Jehovah and the people—that they would walk after the Lord, and keep his commandments, testimonies, and statutes. Perhaps, as one commentator suggests, an ox was slain and the king and people passed between the severed halves in witness of their solemn resolve.

Then the work of reform broke out afresh. The tide of popular feeling rose high, and the reformers took it at its flow. The black-robed priests were suppressed; the emblems of idolatry were cast out of the temple, and burned outside the city; the dwellings of the miserable votaries of lust were destroyed, Tophet was defiled, and the high places leveled to the ground. Thus, outwardly at least, Israel became again true to its allegiance to the God of their fathers and free from the taint of idolatry.

## 2. The Divorce Between Religion and Morality.

The influence of the court, the finding and reading of the law, and splendid success of the great Passover which Josiah instituted—the glow of the crusade against the old idolatries—sufficed for a time to effect widespread reform. The fickle populace gave an outward adhesion, at least, to the service of Jehovah. The temple courts were thronged; the rites and forms of the Levitical code were rigorously maintained; every point of ceremonial allegiance to the institutions of Moses was punctiliously observed. But there was no real change in disposition. The reformation was entirely superficial. Beneath the fair exterior the grossest forms of evil were seething in hideous corruption, now and again breaking forth into the light of day, but awaiting the death of Josiah, when they once more asserted themselves.

Jeremiah was profoundly disappointed at the result of a movement which had promised so much. He detected its true character and sought an opportunity of showing its insufficiency to avert the wrath of God—which was gathering like a thundercloud upon the horizon. Taking up his position in the gate of the temple, on the occasion of some great festival when the people of Judah were gathered with the citizens of Jerusalem to worship Jehovah, he poured forth a torrent of remonstrance and appeal.

He was not unaware of the attention paid by the nation to outward ritual, which they mistook for religion. The incense of Sheba, and the costly fine-scented cane fetched from Arabia or India and burned for the sake of its rich perfume, stole through the temple precincts (6:20). They took care to speak of the temple as the house of God and to stand before him as his people (7:10). The burnt offering and other sacrifices were rigorously distinguished from one another, the priests and people feeding on those parts alone permitted by the Mosaic ritual (7:21). It was the boast of the people that the law of the Lord had been committed to their charge and that they had therefore special claim upon his forbearance (8:8). And against every accusation which the prophet laid at the nation's door, they pointed to the order and beauty of the restored ritual, to their splendid temple, to their privileged condition as the chosen of God—and cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are these!" (Jer. 7:4)

But alongside of this outward decorum, the grossest sins were permitted with unblushing shame. One of the charges that Jeremiah brings against his people is that they had lost the power of blushing (8:12). The shameful of their sin was apparent in their shamelessness. They oppressed the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. Theft, murder and adultery showed themselves in open day. So frequent and atrocious were their crimes of violence that they seemed transformed into a horde of robbers—the Temple their den; lies flew from their tongues like arrows from a bow; and while men spoke peaceably to their neighbors in their ears, they were lying in wait to betray them. Though idolatry had been overthrown in the high places of the land, it lingered in the houses of the great, who squandered their silver and their gold, their blue and purple, on the wood which they had shaped into the fashion of a god.

There was an evident divorce between religion and morals; and whenever that comes into the life of a nation or an individual, it is fatal! Satan himself has no objection to a religion which consists in postures, and ceremonies, and rites. Indeed he fosters it; for the soul of man demands God and craves religion, and it is the art of the great enemy of souls to substitute the counterfeit for reality in order to quiet the religious appetite with the shows and effigies of the Eternal and Divine—much as a man might satisfy his hunger with food that lacked the elements of nutrition while his strength and vigor were slowly ebbing away. It can never be too strongly emphasized that the soul of man cannot rest or be content without God; but it is too apt to be cajoled with that which is not bread and which does not satisfy.

## 3. The Excuses Beneath Which the Soul of Man Shelters Itself.

(a) *Ritualism* It was the old belief that God was bound to help a nation or person that steadfastly complied with the outward forms of religion, as if he had no alternative but to help his devoted worshiper. In one form or another this conception has appeared in every nation and age. "What more can God want," the heathen cries, "than that I should give burnt offerings and calves of a year old, thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil; my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" "What more can God want?" cries the formalist of our time. "I was received into the visible church as soon as I was born; I have complied with all her regulations; I do my best to maintain her institutions and services; in all weathers I am present when her doors are open; and there is no demand made by her representatives to which I do not comply to the best of my ability. What lack I yet?"

The incessant remonstrance of the Bible is against such protestations—whether expressed or understood—as these. "What doth the Lord require of thee," says Micah, "but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" saith the Lord, in one of Isaiah's earliest sentences; and he added, still speaking in the name of God, "Incense is an abomination to me." And here Jeremiah takes up the same strain. He says, in effect, "Put all your offerings together; abolish the sacerdotal (priestly) distinctions which Moses bade you observe; relinquish all ritual; end festival and fast alike." These things are comparatively indifferent to God when substituted for obedience and a holy walk (7:22).

Where the heart is right with God it will find fit and proper expression in the well-ordered worship of the sanctuary. It will find the outward ordinance a means of quickening the soul by the laws of association and expression; but the outward can never be a substitute for the inward. The soul must know God and worship him as a Spirit. There must be faith,

repentance, and inward grace. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Throughout the ages God has been seeking such to worship him.

(b) *Destiny*. Men often say, as the Jews did, "We are delivered to do all these abominations; we were made so. We are swept forward by an irresistible current which we cannot control" (7:10). How many a man lays the blame of his sin upon his Creator, alleging that it is only the outworking of the natural tendencies with which he was endowed! How many a woman has laid the blame of her unutterable fall upon the force of circumstances which held her in their grip! And there are some religious fatalists who have gone so far as to trace their sins to the elective decrees of the Almighty! Whatever truth there may be in the doctrine of predestination, it will not absolve you from sin in the sight of God and his angels. There is more than enough grace in God to counteract the drift of the current and the strength of passion.

(c) *Special privilege*. Many a soul has presumed on being a favorite of heaven. "I am wise; the law of the Lord is with me. He needs me for the preservation of his truth, the elaboration of his scheme. His cause is too deeply involved with me for him to allow me to be a castaway. I may do as I will and he will deliver." Ah, soul, beware! You are not indispensable to God. Before you were, he was well served; and if you fail him, he will call others to minister to him. See what God did to Shiloh (7:14) and to Jerusalem! How bare the site; how woeful the overthrow! "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also not spare you!" Take heed lest the kingdom of God be taken from you, and be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

### **In what way was Israel deluded?**

Jer. 7:8-11, 14, 19-23      Jer. 8:8, 12

In Jeremiah 8:18, 21 Jeremiah was in sorrow and his heart was faint. **Did Jesus lament for the same reasons Jeremiah did?**

Matt. 23:37      Luke 19:41-44

### **How does Jeremiah describe the folly of idolatry?**

Jer. 10:10-13

### **Jeremiah 11:1–12:17**

Between the incidents already described and the subject of the present chapter, a crushing calamity had befallen the kingdom of Judah. In the face of urgent remonstrances, addressed to him from all sides, Josiah, perhaps desirous of emulating the heroic faith of Hezekiah and Isaiah, led his little army down from the mountain strongholds to attack Pharaoh-Necho, who was marching up by the coast route to participate in the scramble for the spoils of Nineveh, then in her death throes. The two armies met at Megiddo, at the foot of Carmel, on the extreme border of the plain of Esdraelon, which has so often been a decisive battlefield. The issue was not long in suspense. Josiah's army was routed, and himself mortally wounded.

"Have me away, for I am sore wounded," said the dying monarch, and his servants bore him from his war chariot to another in reserve; but he died after a few miles drive, at Hadadrimmon. His death was the signal for such an outburst of grief throughout the land that it became in after-years the emblem of excessive sorrow. Zechariah could find no adequate expression for the anguish of Jerusalem when the people shall look on Christ whom they pierced and mourn, than that it should be like "the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon," when the land mourned, every family apart. It has been compared to the grief of Athens, when tidings came that Lysander had destroyed her fleet, and to that of Edinburgh on the evening of Flodden. Jeremiah composed an elegy on the death of his king and friend, which has not been preserved; and at once the fortunes of Judah were overcast with darkest gloom (2 Chron. 35:20-27; Zech. 12:11).

The next king, Josiah's son Jehoahaz, reigned but three months and then was led off with a ring in his nose, like some wild beast, to Egypt, where he died. Necho instituted his brother Jehoiakim in his stead as his nominee and tributary. But the four last kings of Judah reversed the policy of Josiah. They did evil in the sight of the Lord, and of Jehoiakim it is recorded that he wrought abomination (2 Chron. 36:1-8).

At the death of Josiah, the large party that favored idolatry again asserted itself. Of what use was a religion that had not saved its chief promoter from such a disaster? The reformation promoted by the good king had never struck its roots deeply in the land, and the vigor with which he had carried out his reforms now led to a corresponding reaction. The reformers fell under the popular hate, much as the Puritans did in the days of the Restoration; and Jeremiah especially came in for a large share of it. He had been the friend and adviser of the late king and had not scrupled to denounce, in the most scathing terms, the idolatry and licentiousness of his age. He had uttered terrible predictions of coming disaster, which were beginning to be fulfilled. Then arose the mutterings of a coming storm of hatred and murder. Unknown to him, his countrymen were devising plans against him, 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."

The symptoms of this rising storm were unlikely to reach him, because he had been commanded to itinerate among the cities of Judah, as well as the streets of Jerusalem; and he had probably started on a prolonged tour throughout the land, standing up in the principal market places, and announcing everywhere the inevitable retribution that must follow on the breach of the divine covenant (11:8). The result of that tour was profoundly disappointing. A conspiracy was found among the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers; each city had its tutelary deity, each street its altar to Baal. And the conviction was wrought into the prophet's heart that intercession itself was useless for a people so deeply and resolutely set on sin. They had sinned the sin unto death, for which prayer is in vain (11:14; 1 John 5:16).

Disappointed and heartsick, Jeremiah retired to his native place, Anathoth. He was unsuspecting of danger, as a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. Surely among his brethren, in the house of his father, he would be safe and able to find the sympathy and affection for which his sensitive heart hungered, but which evaded him everywhere else. It was not to be. In this also he was to be like the Lord Jesus—who came unto his own, but his own received him not, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. There was treachery in the little village.

The sacred tie of kindred was too weak to restrain the outbreak of fanatic hate. The priestly houses had winced beneath the vehement denunciations of their young relative and could bear it no longer. A plot was therefore set on foot and, under the show of fair words, they conspired to take the prophet's life. He had not known of his danger but for divine illumination: "The Lord gave me knowledge of it, and I knew it; then thou shewedst me their doings" (11:18, R.V.).

Stunned with the sudden discovery, Jeremiah turned to God with remonstrance and appeal. Conscious of his own rectitude and the rectitude of God, he was for a moment caught in the outer circles of the whirlpool of questioning, which has ever agitated the minds of God's oppressed ones, concerning the unequal distribution of earthly lots. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee. Yet would I reason the cause with thee: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they at ease that deal very treacherously?" 11:20; 12:1, R.V.).

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

**What meaning does the phrase "so be it, Lord" (Jer. 11:5) have on you?**

Rev. 15:3

**Where did Jeremiah go for answers when he was perplexed by the dealings of God in His providential government of this world?**

Jer. 11:20 Jer. 12:1

### **Jeremiah 13:1-27**

God had attached Israel as closely to Him as the linen girdle that Orientals wear. The law and the covenant which He gave them, and all the tokens of His favor towards them, were so many ties of intimate union between Him and them; but, by their idolatry and unfaithfulness, they had buried their privileges, like the one talent hidden in the earth by the unprofitable servant; they had mingled with the heathen nations around, and had utterly lost the purity of their high calling in moral filthiness, so as to be like "a marred girdle, profitable for nothing" (v. 7). Let us remember, in the possession of our higher spiritual privileges, that only in so far as we come out from the ungodly world in spirit, and be separate, so as not to touch the unclean thing (2 Cor. 6:17), do we fulfill the ends of our high calling in Christ, and are indeed that which God designed Israel to be, "a name of joy, a praise, and an honor unto the Lord," before all the world (v. 11; ch. 33:9). But if we bury our souls in earthly fashions, aims, and pleasures, we lose our distinctive character as the people of the Lord, and can only look for the doom of the unprofitable servant,—to be cast into outer darkness (Matt. 25:30). Just as salt which has lost its savor is thenceforth good for nothing but to be trodden under foot (Matt 5:13); so, if inconsistent and carnal while making a high profession, we shall be despised by the very men whose favor we have preferred to that of God, even as apostate Israel was punished by the very world-power for whose sake she had sacrificed the favor of God.

As the wine-bottle is adapted for being filled with wine (v. 12), so men's sins fit them, as vessels of wrath (Rom. 9:22), to be filled with "the wine of the wrath of God, poured out without mixture" of mercy (Rev. 14:10). As wine takes away the reason, so God's judgment reduces the reprobate to that state of impotent distraction that they are, like potter's vessels, "dashed one against another" (v. 14), to their mutual destruction.

Pride is the secret spring of the sinner's present obstinacy and ultimate ruin (vv. 15, 17). He is too proud to humble himself before God,—"give glory to the Lord" (v. 16),—by a penitent confession of sin, and a heartfelt repentance and supplication for mercy. Yet God lovingly still appeals to all such even now to turn to Him, while yet the day of grace lasts, and their feet have not yet stumbled into the bottomless abyss. Soon the darkness of eternal night shall close in over the lost: then shall they in vain "look for light," when God shall have turned it into "the shadow of death and gross darkness" (v. 16).

The sinner naturally has no more power to change his heart than the Ethiopian has power to change his skin, or the leopard his spots (v. 23). Sin is the spiritual blackness of the soul. Then habit or "custom" also confirms the wrong bias given by nature, binding the sinner in a twofold indissoluble bond. But almighty grace can effect for us what we cannot for ourselves. Moral blackness of nature, confirmed by lengthened habit, forms no insuperable obstacle to the all-conquering Spirit. He can and will make the sinner who seeks Him through Christ "whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7). Let none then despair. Let all repair to the "fountain opened for uncleanness."

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Jeremiah used symbolic acts to get peoples attention. **Show how Ezekiel used similar techniques?**

Ezek. 4:1-17      Ezek. 5:1-9

### **Jeremiah 14:1–15:21**

The reign of Jehoiakim was still young. Necho was back in Egypt; Nineveh was tottering to her fall; Babylon was slowly growing upon the horizon as the rival of each great empire, and as the future desolator of Judah. Meanwhile, the chosen people, like a tree whose heart is eaten away with insects, was corrupted by innumerable evils. As a premonition of coming destruction, and as though the Almighty would make one last effort to arouse them to the awfulness and imminence of their peril, a terrible drought cast its mantle over the land. It had often been predicted among the other results of disobedience, but probably never before had it fallen with such desolating effect (Lev. 26:20; Deut. 11:17; 28:23).

The whole land was filled with mourning. In the places of public concourse, where the people gathered in the burning sunshine, they sat in black garments upon the hard ground. Accustomed to rely upon the natural resources of the country, nourished by the rivers and streams that gushed from valley and hill, they were reduced to the dire extremities of famine. The vines on the terraced hills were withered, the wheatfields were covered with stubble, and the pasture on the plains was yellow and scorched. The very dew seemed to have forsaken the land; where the river had poured its full tide, there were only a few trickling drops. The beds of the watercourses were filled with stones. And the bitter cry of Jerusalem ascended, made up of the mingled anguish of men, women, and children, whose parched lips might not be moistened.

The description given by the prophet is very striking. Want is felt in the great houses of the nobles, who send their servants for water without avail. The ploughmen sit in their barns with covered heads; it is useless to think of driving their ploughs through the chapped soil. The doe, whose maternal love has passed into a proverb, is represented as forsaking her young, that she may seek for grass. The wild asses stand on the bare heights and eagerly snuff up what breeze may pass over the land in the evening, to relieve the agony of the fever of their thirst. All the land bakes like an oven; and the sun, as he passes daily through a brazen sky, looks down on scenes of unutterable horror.

What a picture is this of the desolation that sometimes overtakes a Christian community! Every faithful worker could tell of periods when it has seemed as though the cloud and dew of divine blessing had forsaken the plot on which he was engaged. There are no tears of penitence, no sighs of contrition, no blessed visitations of the dew of the Holy Ghost, no fresh young shoots of piety, no joy in the Lord, no fruits of the Spirit. Ah, then, work is hard and difficult, and the soul of the worker faints and is discouraged. Blessed is that church which has not known this time of drought, and which has not experienced in the spiritual sphere the counterpart of the utter failure of moisture in the natural.

It is at such times that the lover of his fellows gathers himself together to deal with the Almighty. You can see him entering the secret place of the Most High, prepared to speak with God and, if possible, secure a mitigation of the reign of the brazen sky and a return of those times of blessing that can only come from the presence of the Lord. His face is set with a resolute purpose. Through the weary eyes the fire of a mighty resolution is burning. With his two hands he is prepared to come to close dealings with God, as Jacob when he made supplication with the angel. Let us draw near, and overhear the colloquy between Jeremiah and the Almighty. It may be that we shall discover arguments that we may take upon our own lips when days of drought are visiting the church at large, or that sphere of work in which we are called specially to labor. It is thus that the soul discourses with God.

#### The Interceding Soul.

"Granted, great God, that you are just, and right—yet you can not utterly reject. Your smiting cannot be unto death. You must heal. You may cast away those with whom you have not entered into covenant relationship, or on whom your name has not been named, or among whom the throne of your glory has not been set up; but you cannot deal with us as with them. There is a tie between you and us which our sin cannot break. There are claims which we have on you as our Father which the far country wanderings of the prodigal cannot annul. There are interweavings of your character and prestige with our history which no stroke of your pen can dissolve. Remember the covenant; remember your promise to your Son; remember your bride, whom you cannot put away; remember that we have no help but in you; remember the

word on which you have caused us to hope—therefore we will still wait upon you. We are not worthy to be called yours, but we claim the kiss, the robe, the fatted calf (see 14:17-22).

*The answer of the Divine Spirit* It is as though the Lord said, "I am wearied with repenting. I have tried every means of restraining them and turning them to better things—now by winnowing out the chaff, and again by bereavement and sorrow, and again by the swift destruction of the sword. They have appeared to amend, but the improvement was only superficial. Now my mind is thoroughly made up. My methods must be more drastic, my discipline more searching and thorough. I will turn my hand upon my people, thoroughly purge away their dross, and take away all their sin; and I will restore their judges as at the first, and their counselors as at the beginning. Thus I will answer your pleadings on their behalf. The destruction of the city, the decimation of the people by sword and famine, the awful sorrows of captivity shall act as purging fires, through which they shall pass to a new and blessed life. Nothing else can now avail. Because of my love for them I cannot spare them. The prayers of my holiest cannot alter my determination, since only thus can my eternal purpose of redemption be realized" (see 15:1-9).

#### The Cry of the Intercessor.

Here the prophet falls into a muse, and as he foresees the misrepresentation of his motives, and the certain hate which his unflinching prediction of coming doom must excite, he wishes that he had never been born. So does the heart of the man of God fail; and if, like Jeremiah's, it is highly strung and keenly sensitive, it becomes the prey of the deepest anguish: "Why, O God, did you make me so gentle and sympathetic; so naturally weak and yielding; so incapable of looking calmly on pain? Would not some stronger, rougher nature have done your bidding better? Even now, have you not some man of ruder make to whom you can entrust this mission? There are skins more impervious to the scorching heat than mine; may they not go into these flames? Why this stammering lip, this faltering heart, this thorn in my flesh?" (see 15:10).

*The answer of the Divine Spirit.* "I will strengthen you for your good." It is as if God said, "My grace is sufficient for you. I have summoned you, with all your weaknesses, to perform my will, because my strength is only perfected thus. I need a low platform for the exhibition of my great power. To those who have no might I impart strength; in those who have no wisdom I unfold my deepest thoughts. The broken reed furnishes the pillar of my temple; smoking flax gives light to my beacon fires. Be content to be a threshold, over which the river passes; be satisfied to be a rod in my hand which shall achieve the deliverance of my people. O frail, weak soul, you are likeliest to be the channel and organ for the forthputting of my energy. Only yield yourself to me, and let me have my way through you, with you, in you; then you shall be as the northern iron and brass which man cannot break" (see 15:11-14).

#### The Response of the Soul.

"O Lord, you know. Things that my dearest cannot guess, which I cannot utter, which I am slow to admit even to myself: the hope that trembles like the first flush of dawn, and the fear that paralyzes; the conflict; the broken ideals; the unfinished sentences; the songs without words. You know. You are my all. Your smile strengthens me against reproach. Your words bring rifts of joy and rejoicing in my saddest hours. Your presence banishes loneliness when I sit alone. And yet sometimes a dark foreboding comes that you will be to me as a deceitful brook, whose intermittent waters fail, which is dry when most its flow is needed. I know it cannot be, since you are faithful; and yet what could I do if, after having made me what I am, you should leave me to myself?" (see 15:15-18).

*The answer of the Divine Spirit.* "Renounce your forebodings," God seems to say. "Come back from the far country of your despondency. I would have you stand face-to-face with me without a shadow of a cloud. Wait before me. Consider not your frailty, but my might—not your foes, but my deliverances. Put from you that which is vile; expose yourself to my refining fires, that all your dross may be expurgated. Divest yourself of all that is inconsistent with your high calling. Then you shall be as my mouth; you shall stand amidst the surging crowd as a fenced brazen wall; you shall be impregnable against the assault of fear; in the darkest hours, when floods of ungodliness might make you afraid, and the fury of hell be hurled against you, I will be with you to save and deliver. You may have neither wife nor child; but I will be to you more than they. And I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you out of the hand of the terrible" (see 15:19-21). "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (Isa. 54:17).

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

**Does the believer dread more when God departs from him or with some loss of worldly comfort? What about the unbeliever?**

**Why does God forbid Jeremiah to pray for His people in Jeremiah 14:11?**

1 Kings 22:6, 19-24 Jer. 7:16 Jer 11:14-18

**What is the "fan" spoken of in Jer. 15:7?**

## Jeremiah 16:1-21

Jeremiah was called upon to pay a heavy price because of his ministry as the Lord's spokesman to a rebellious people. We have noted his isolation from his fellows, 'all of them curse me' (Jer. 15:10), and loneliness, 'I sat alone' (15:17). We see now a progressive withdrawal from the various spheres of social life. First of all, Jeremiah was forbidden to marry (2); then he was commanded to take no part in any funeral rite (5), and finally, he was debarred from participating in any joyous occasion (8). What this meant to a heart as exquisitely tender as Jeremiah's can only be imagined. In the tightly-knit community of Judah it was tantamount to a self-imposed excommunication. When it is realized that these acts of sacrifice involved the whole of his ministry, then some conception of the spiritual agony that Jeremiah endured can be gained.

Jeremiah's apparently anti-social conduct was to be a witness to the devastation that was about to descend upon Judah, when all normal activities of a community would cease. The parable of his withdrawn, celibate life was to be supported by plain explanation (Jer. 16:10-13). The thoroughness of the impending calamity is shown in v. 16: the 'fishers' would first net the big haul, presumably a reference to deportation, to be followed by the 'hunters', who would ferret out the individual survivors. But the dark night was, illumined by the promise of a miracle, greater than the Exodus, in the return from captivity (14 f., cf. 23:7 f.). This, together with the divine strength noted in v. 19a, must have sustained our lonely prophet during his long, lone vigil.

(Daily Devotional Bible Commentary, Arthur E. Cundall)

**If Jeremiah was comfortable living in the Jewish society how effective would his message be? How does Jeremiah's verbal message backed up by his lifestyle speak to us as Christians living in this present world?**

If Israel had a true knowledge of themselves they would realize the Lord was punishing them. **What would make them so blind to ask: "Why has the LORD pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?" (Jer. 16:10)**

**Are there any words of comfort given in this chapter?**

Jer. 16:15, 21

## Jeremiah 17:1-27

The people had asked (Jer. 16:10), *What wrong have we done, and what sin have we committed?*

The indictment is fully proved to the prisoners, both the fact and the fault. They cannot plead *Not guilty*, for their sins are on record in their own conscience; and they are obvious to the word, Jer. 17:1, 2. They are *engraved* before God in the most legible and indelible characters, Deut. 32:34. They are written there with *an iron tool and with a flint point*; what is so written will not be worn out by time. The sin of sinners is never forgotten until it is forgiven. *It is engraven on the tablet of their heart.* What is *engraved on the heart* cannot be erased. We need go no further, for proof of the charge, than *the horns of their altars*, on which the blood of their idolatrous sacrifices was sprinkled. Their neighbors will witness against them, and their own children shall *remember their altars and Asherah poles* to which their parents took them when they were little, v. 2. The bias of their minds is still as strong as ever towards their idols, and they are not influenced either by the word or rod of God to abate their affection to them. It is written *on the horns of their altars*, for they have given up their names to their idols and have bound themselves, as with cords.

(NIV Matthew Henry Commentary, Matthew Henry)

**How are they described in Jeremiah 17:8 who make God their confidence?**

"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind." (Jer. 17:9-10a) **How can a desperately wicked heart and a fleshly mind be made acceptable to God and can it be changed?**

The unbeliever may mockingly ask now, "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now" (Jer. 17:15). **Are they fulfilling any of the signs that characterize "the last days"?**

2 Pet. 3:3-4

## Jeremiah 18:1-23

One day, beneath the impulse of the Divine Spirit, Jeremiah went beyond the city precincts to the Valley of Hinnom, on the outskirts of Jerusalem where, in a little hut, he found a potter busily engaged at his handicraft. "Behold, he wrought work on the wheels." Amid the many improvements of the present day, the art of pottery remains almost as it was as many centuries before Christ as we live after.

As the prophet stood quietly beside the potter, he saw him take a piece of clay from the mass that lay beside his hand and, having kneaded it to rid it of the bubbles, place it on the wheel, rapidly revolving horizontally at the motion of his foot driving the treadle. From that moment his hands were at work, within and without, shaping the vessel with his deft touch—here widening, there leading it up into a more slender form, and again opening out the lip. So that from the shapeless clay there emerged a fair and beautiful vessel, fit for the temple court or the royal palace. When it was nearly complete, and the next step would have been to remove it, to await the kiln, through a flaw in the material it fell into a shapeless ruin, some broken pieces upon the wheel, and others upon the floor of the house.

The prophet naturally expected that the potter would immediately take another piece of clay and produce in its yielding substance the ideal which had been so hopelessly marred under his hand. Instead of this, however, to his astonishment and keenly excited interest, the potter with scrupulous care gathered up the broken pieces of the clay, pressed them together as at the first, placed the clay again where it had lain before, and *made it again* into another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Perhaps this second vessel was not quite so fair as the first might have been; still, it was beautiful and useful. It was a memorial of the potter's patience and long-suffering, of his careful use of material, and of his power of repairing loss and making something out of failure and disappointment.

O vision of the long-suffering patience of God! O bright anticipation of God's redemptive work! O parable of remade characters, lives and hopes! To us, as to Jeremiah, the divine thought is flashed, "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 my hand, O house of Israel."

The purport of this vision seems to have been to give his people hope that even though they had marred God's fair ideal, yet a glorious and blessed future was within reach; and that if only they would yield themselves to the touch of the Great Potter, he would undo the results of years of disobedience which had marred and spoiled his fair purpose, and would make the chosen people a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use.

The same thought may apply to us all. Who is there that is not conscious of having marred and resisted the touch of God's molding hands? Who is there that does not lament opportunities of saintliness which were lost through the stubbornness of the will and the hardness of the heart? Who is there that would not like to be made again as seems good to the Potter? "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our Potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity forever" (Isa. 64:8-9).

#### 1. The Divine Making of Men.

(a) *The Potter has an ideal.* Floating through his fancy there is the vessel that is to be. He already sees it hidden in the shapeless clay, waiting for his call to evoke. His hands achieve so far as they may the embodiment of the fair conception of his thought. Before the woman applies scissors to the silk, she has conceived the pattern of her dress; before the spade cleaves the sod, the architect has conceived the plan of the building to be erected there.

So of God in nature. The pattern of this round world and of her sister spheres lay in his creative thought before the first beam of light streamed across the abyss. All that exists embodies with more or less exactness the divine ideal—sin alone excepted. So of the mystical body of Christ, the Church, his bride. In his book all its members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them. So, also, of the possibilities of each human life. I know not if we shall ever be permitted, amid the archives of heaven, to see the transcript of God's original thought of what our life might have been had we only yielded ourselves to the hands that reach down from heaven molding men; but sure it is that God foreordained and predestinated us, each in his own measure and degree, to be conformed to the image his Son.

See that mother bending over the cradle where her firstborn baby son lies sleeping! Mark that smile which goes and comes over her face, like a breath of wind on calm summer's day! Why does she smile? Ah, she is dreaming, and in her dreams is building castles of the future eminence of this child—in the pulpit or the senate in war or art. If only she might have her way, he should be foremost in happiness, renowned in the service of men. But no mother ever wished so much for her child as God for us, when first cradled at the foot of the cross. To be like Christ, the type of perfect manhood; to be as much to Christ as he was to his Father; to reflect the face of Christ on men, as he the face of God; to fulfill the commission of redemption; to take up the cross; to be crucified with Christ; to rise and reign with him; all this is God's ideal.

(b) *The Potter achieves his purpose by means of the wheel* In the discipline of human life this surely represents the revolution of daily circumstance; often monotonous, commonplace, trivial enough, and yet intending to effect, if it may, ends on which God has set his heart.

Many, on entering the life of full consecration and devotion, are eager to change the circumstances of their lives for those in which they suppose that they will more readily attain a fully developed character—hence, much of the restlessness and fever, the disappointment and willfulness of the early days of Christian experience. Such have yet to

learn that out of myriads of circumstances God has chosen the lot of each as being specially adapted to develop the hidden qualities and idiosyncrasies of the soul he loves. Anything else than the life which you are called to live would fail in giving scope for the evolution of properties of your nature, which are known only to God, as the colors and fragrance which lie enfolded in some tropical seed. Believe that all has been ordered or permitted, because of that which lay entombed within you waiting for his call, "Come forth!"

Do not, therefore, seek to change, by some rash and willful act, the setting and environment of your life. Stay where you are until God as evidently calls you elsewhere as he put you where you are. Abide for the present in the calling wherein you were called. Throw upon him the responsibility of indicating to you a change when it is necessary for your further development. In the meanwhile, look deep into the heart of every circumstance for its special message, lesson, or discipline. Upon the way in which you accept or reject these will depend the achievement or marring of the divine purpose.

You complain of the monotony of your life. "Day in, day out, the same round. Year after year, the same path trodden to and fro, no horizon, no space or width, only the same lane of sky between the high houses on either side. What scope is there here for the evolution of noble character? What opportunity to meditate and achieve great deeds?" Yet remember that the passive virtues are even dearer to God than the active ones. They take the longest to learn and are the last learned. They consist in patience, submission, endurance, long-suffering, persistence in well-doing. They need more courage and evince greater heroism than those qualities which the world admires most. But they can only be acquired in just that monotonous and narrow round of which many complain as offering so scant a chance of acquiring saintliness.

(c) *The bulk of the work is done by the Potter's fingers.* How delicate their touch! How fine their sensibility! It would almost seem as though they were endowed with intellect instead of being the instruments by which the brain is executing its purpose. And, in the nurture of the soul, these represent the touch of the Spirit of God working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. He is in us all, his one purpose being to infill us with himself, and to fulfill through us "all the good pleasure of his goodness, and every work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in us, and we in him."

But we are too busy, too absorbed in many things, to heed the gentle touch. Sometimes, when we are aware of it, we resent it, or stubbornly refuse to yield to it. Hence the necessity of setting apart a portion of every day, or a season in the course of the week, in which to seclude ourselves from every other influence and expose the entire range of our being to divine influences only.

The wheel and the hand worked together; often their motion was in opposite directions, but their object was one. So all things work together for good to them that love God. God's touch and voice give the meaning of his providences; and his providences enforce the lesson that his tender monitions might not be strong enough to teach. Whenever, therefore, you are in doubt as to the meaning of certain circumstances through which you are called to pass, and which are strange and inexplicable, be still; refrain from murmuring or repining; hush the many voices that would speak within; listen until there is borne in on your soul a persuasion of God's purpose; and let his Spirit within cooperate with the circumstance without. It is in the equal working of these two—the circumstance supplying the occasion for manifesting a certain grace, and the Holy Ghost supplying the grace to be manifested—that the spirit soars, as the bird by the even motion of its two wings.

## 2. God's Remaking of Men.

"He made it again." The potter could not make what he might have wished; but he did his best with his materials. So God is ever trying to do his best for us. If we refuse the best, he gives the next best. If we will not be gold, we may be silver; and if not silver, there are still the earthen and the wood. How often he has to make us again!

He made Jacob again, when he met him at the Jabbok ford—finding him a supplanter and a cheat, but after a long wrestle, leaving him a prince with God. He made Simon again, on the resurrection morning, when he found him somewhere near the open grave, the son of a dove—for so his old name Bar-jonas signifies—and left him Peter, the man of the rock, the apostle of Pentecost. He made Mark again, between his impulsive leaving of Paul and Barnabas, as though frightened by the first touch of seasickness, and the times when Peter spoke of him as his son, and Paul from the Mamertine prison described him as being profitable.

I have been told of a gifted son, who, when night has fallen and his old father has gone to the early couch of age, comes into the studio where the old man's hands had been busily engaged all day modeling clay, not without some fear that they are losing their skill, and removes all trace of senility or decay. So does God come to our work, when we have done our best and failed, and when men have turned from us with disappointment. He perfects that which concerns us, because his mercy endures forever, and he cannot forsake the work of his own hands.

Are you conscious of having marred God's early plan for yourself? His ideal of a life of earnest devotion to his cause has been so miserably lost sight of! Your career, as parent or child, as friend or Christian worker, has been such a failure! The grand chord struck in your early vows, at the marriage altar, or on the day of ordination, has been lost beyond recall; and the whole music has been so halting and feeble! For such, science and the competition of modern life have little

encouragement. There seems no alternative but to go off into the rear and let others carry away the prizes that come so easily to them. While into the soul the conviction is burned: "I had my chance, and missed it; it will never come to me again. The survival of the fittest leaves no place for the unfit. They must be flung amid the waste which is ever accumulating around the furnaces of human life." It is here that the gospel comes in with its gentle words for the outcast and lost. The bruised reed is made again into a pillar for the temple of God. The feebly smoking flax is kindled to a flame. The waste products are shown to be of extraordinary value, yielding the fairest colors, or providing the elementary principles of life.

### 3. Our Attitude Toward's the Great Potter.

Yield to him! Each particle in the clay seems to say "Yes" to wheel and hand. And in proportion as this is the case, the work goes merrily on. If there be rebellion and resistance, the work of the potter is marred. Let God have his way with you. Let his will be done in you as in heaven. Bear it, even when you cannot do it. Be sure to say "Yes." There are times when we are not conscious that he is doing right. Life is often like the gray aspect of nature in February, when spring waits just outside the portal, longing to touch all things with her magic wand. It seems as if no one is concerned about "all the miles of unsprung wheat," or responsible for leaf or bud. Yet in myriads upon myriads of graves where seeds lie buried, God's angels are busily at work, rolling away stones, and ushering in the new heaven and the new earth of spring. So when we have once committed ourselves to God, we must believe that he does not lose a single moment but is ever hurrying forward the consummation of his ideal.

We cannot always understand his dealings, because we do not know what his purpose is. We fail to recognize the design, the position which we are being trained to fill, the ministry we are to exercise. What wonder, then, that we get puzzled and perplexed! We strive with our Maker, saying, What are you making? or, He has no hands. Yet surely it is enough to know our Guide, even if we do not know which point he is aiming for in the long chain of hills. He knows all the mountain passes and will take the easiest. There is special comfort in these thoughts for the middle-aged and old. Do not look regretfully back on the wasted springtime and summer, gone beyond recall; though it be autumn, there is yet chance for you to bear some fruit, under the care of the great Gardener. In all, he inspires hope. He can turn the battle from the gate; make the lost iron swim; replenish the empty pitchers with new good wine; restore the years the cankerworm has eaten; and make failures into victories. He who was able to transform the cross from a badge of shame into the sign of victory and glory must surely be able to take the most hopeless, disreputable, and abandoned lives, and make them bloom with flowers heavy with fragrance and full of blessed promise. Only let him have a free hand. Whatsoever he says, do it, or suffer it to be done. Seek forgiveness for the past, then restoration and remaking at his hand. Reckon on God and, according to your faith, it shall be done unto you.

When the clay has received its final shape from the potter's hands, it must be baked in the kiln to keep it; and even then its discipline is not complete, for whatever colors are laid on must be rendered permanent by fire. It is said that what is to become gold in the finished article is a smudge of dark liquid before the fire is applied, and that the first two or three applications of heat obliterate all trace of color, which has to be again and again renewed. So in God's dealings with his people. The molding Hand has no sooner finished its work than it plunges the clay into the fiery trial of pain or temptation. But let patience have her perfect work. Be still, and know that he is God. You shall be compensated when the Master counts you fair and meet for his use.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

### **What can the potter do with a people, represented as clay in the potter's hand, that follow their deceitful and desperately wicked heart?**

Lam. 2:15    Jer. 2:10-11    Jer. 4:11-12    Jer. 6:16    Jer. 13:20-24    Jer. 18:11-17    Jer. 19:8

### **Is the example of the potter and the clay in these verses similar to the example mentioned in Romans 11:1-27 of the vine and branches and if so why? Are there any warnings given in the Romans account?**

#### **Jeremiah 19:1-20:18**

Jeremiah's nature reminds us of the Aeolian harp, which is so sensitive to the passing breeze—now wailing with sorrow, now jubilant with song; so delicately strung, so sympathetic, so easily affected by every passing circumstance was the soul of the prophet. The whole book mirrors the changefulness of his mood as the ocean, the perpetual heavens outspread above it—now blue as the azure sky, and again dark with the brooding storm.

There are many indications of this in the chapters before us. For instance, there is the exclamation: "Cursed be the day wherein I was born; cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee. . . . Wherefore was I born to see labor and sorrow?" (20:14-18). But in the same breath there is the heroic outburst, "The Lord is with me as a mighty one and a terrible; therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and shall not prevail" (20:11, R.V.). How great the contrast between these moods! In the first, he is traversing the valley of the shadow, where the dark trees

shut out the sky, and the swollen torrent rushes turbidly through the gorge; in the second, he stands upon the heights where the sun shines and the landscape lies outspread to the far horizon, its wheatfields goldening in the summer sun.

The same contrast appears in Jeremiah 20:9. There we find the half-formed resolution to make no further mention of God and to speak no more in his name. Then he is instantly aware of his inability to control the passionate outbursts of the Spirit within. "There is in mine heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain" (20:9, R.V.). Oh, wonderful heart of man! Who can understand you? Who can estimate the heights to which you can rise or the depths to which you can sink? What an infinitude of bliss and of sorrow is within your compass! How radiant your heavens, how dark your abyss! It is well for us when we learn to distinguish between the life of our emotions and that of our will, and resolve to live no more in mood or emotion but to build the edifice of our life upon the granite of the obedient will.

Jeremiah's half-formed resolution was "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name." (Jer. 20:9) Not improbably by this time Nineveh had fallen. For six hundred years she had ruled surrounding nations with a rod of iron tyranny, exerting an imperial sway with merciless cruelty. At last her time had come. A vast host gathered from Asia Minor as far as the shores of the Black Sea, from the entire valley of the Tigris, from Armenia, Media, and the wandering tribes of the desert, and settled down on her as swarms of hornets on a putrid carcass. After a three-month siege the great city fell to a coalition of the Medes and Babylonians led by Nabopolassar, whose son, Nebuchadnezzar, was destined to be the "hammer of God." Rumors of this catastrophe were spreading through the world, carrying everywhere a sense of relief and foreboding—relief that the tyrant was down, foreboding as to who would take his place.

At this time Egypt was at the zenith of her power. Because of the decrepitude of Nineveh, Pharaoh had seized the opportunity of extending his empire to the banks of the Tigris. The kingdom of Judah, like all neighboring nations, owned, at least nominally, the king of Egypt as suzerain (controlling nation). Confidence in the proximity and prowess of his great ally encouraged Jehoiakim in his career of shameless idolatry and sin. The whole land, as we have seen, was corrupt.

Jeremiah, the foremost of the little band that remained true to the best traditions of the past, never lost an opportunity of lodging his complaint or striving to resist the downward progress of his people. In doing this, he aroused an ever-growing weight of opposition. The plot of his native town of Anathoth was the first volcanic outburst, to be followed by a long series of plots, and snares, and manifestations of hatred on the part of those for whom he would have gladly given his life as he daily gave his prayers. He sat alone, cast out by prophet and priest, by court and people.

"Come," they said on one occasion, "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" (18:18). He was a laughingstock all the day. Everyone mocked him. The word of the Lord was made to be a reproach to him and a cause for derision continually. His associates and those with whom he came in contact watched for him to stumble and whispered that perhaps he would be enticed, so that they could prevail against him and take their revenge on him.

Matters culminated finally in the episode of chapters 19 and 20. Under a divine impulse he procured a common earthen bottle and gathered together a number of the elders, leading them forth into the valley of Hinnom beside the gate of the potsherd. On this spot the refuse of the city was perpetually exposed to the foul birds and the wild dogs. It was a place of abhorring and loathsomeness. There he uttered a long and terrible indictment of the sins of his people, accompanying it with predictions of the certain and irrevocable doom to which they were hurrying. The men of Jerusalem would fall there by the sword before their enemies; in the confinement of the siege they would eat the flesh of their sons and daughters. The city itself would fall into ruins of blackened stones, and the surrounding valley be filled with the carcasses of the slain making banquet for the fowls of the heaven and the beasts of the earth. To emphasize his words he broke the potter's vessel, pouring forth its contents in token that the blood of his countrymen would be shed to bedew and saturate the soil.

Not satisfied with this, he returned from Tophet and stood in the court of the temple, perhaps on the steps that led up to the court of the priests. Crowds of people were engaged in some sacred rite; it may have been the time of one of the great feasts. When his voice was heard, a vast concourse must have gathered, whose angry faces and vehement gestures indicated the intensity of their dislike to the man who cast the shadow of impending destruction over their happiest hours. The endurance, of one of them at least, had at last reached its limit. Pashur, the chief governor of the temple, to whose jurisdiction its order was entrusted, gathered a band of Levites, or temple servants, seized the prophet, threw him on the pavement, scourged him after the Eastern fashion, and finally thrust him into the stocks, leaving him there the whole night, to the ridicule and hatred of the populace, to the cold night and the prowling dogs.

In the morning Pashur appeared to have repented of his harsh treatment; he released the prophet, whose strong spirit was not for a moment cowed by the indignity and torture to which he had been exposed. Turning on his persecutor, Jeremiah told him that he would live to be a terror to himself and all his friends. He then predicted that all Judah would be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, now mentioned for the first time; the people would be carried as captives to Babylon, and slain there with the sword; and all the riches and gains of the city, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the king of Judah, would be given into the hand of their enemies to carry to Babylon. And he declared that Pashur himself, with all his family, would be exiled to Babylon and would die there. It is this fourfold mention of Babylon that gives color to the suggestion that Nineveh had fallen. The strong hand of Nabopolassar and his son was

beginning to show itself and to wield the scepter which was falling from the faltering grasp of one of the oldest and greatest empires of antiquity.

Set free, Jeremiah went to his home and there poured forth that marvelous combination of heroic faith and wailing grief which is recorded for us that we may know the weakness of his nature and learn how earthen was the vessel in which God had placed his heavenly treasure. No brazen wall was he, but a reed shaken by the wind; no wise strong hero, but a child. What he did and said when face to face with his contemporaries was due to no native strength or heroism; as he says himself, his was "the soul of the needy" (20:13, R.V.).

What a tale could be told by the walls of the secret chambers of God's greatest saints! What litanies of tears and sighs and broken sentences have beaten against them in successive billows of heart-rending sorrow! Take, for instance, that outburst of Luther on the eve of his appearance before the Diet of Worms. Those who have seemed strongest and most rocklike in the presence of their fellows have sunk most helplessly on the ground in solitude, confessing that none were so weak and helpless as they.

Our prophet seems to have gone even further. Then came a suggestion to his heart that he should relinquish his labors and renounce public for private life. Why struggle any more against the inevitable? Why set himself to convince those who would not be convinced and who repaid his love with hate? Why surrender name, comfort, and human love for the thankless task of endeavoring to stem his people's career? He came to the point of saying, "Send whom you will send; entrust your commission to some stronger soul, cast in a more heroic mold; let me go back to the seclusion and humble toils of my village home."

Not dissimilar have been the appeals of God's servants in every age, when they have measured their weakness against the strength of the evils they have combated and have marked their limited success: the handfuls of seed wasted upon barren soil; the word spoken in the ear of the wind; the futility of opposing an Ahab or a Jezebel; the ingratitude of those whom they would have gladly saved. They have been disposed to cry, with the greatest of the prophets, "It is enough, let me die!"

"There is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing and cannot contain" (20:9, R.V.) "O Lord, you are stronger than I, and have prevailed." Three things arrest us here.

(a) *The prophet's habit of turning from man to God.* Throughout the book there are so many indications of the close fellowship in which Jeremiah lived with Jehovah. God seemed always nigh at hand. His ear always bent down to the least whisper of his servant's need. Compelled to live much alone, this much-suffering man acquired habit of counting on the companionship of God as one of the undoubted facts of his life. He poured into the ear of God every thought as it passed through his soul. He spread forth his roots by the river of God, which is full of water. There was no fear therefore that his leaf would become sere in the summer heat, or that he would cease from yielding fruit in the year of drought. The Lord was his strength, his stronghold, and his refuge in the day of affliction; and to God he opened his cause. "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise, . . . Let me not be dismayed or ashamed" (17:14-18).

Let us seek this attitude of soul which easily turns from man to God, not foregoing the hours of prolonged fellowship; in addition, let us acquire the habit of talking over our life with One who does not need to be informed of what transpires, but waits with infinite desire to receive the confidence of his children. Talk over each detail of your life with God, telling him all things and finding the myriad needs of the soul satisfied in him.

(b) *The burning fire.* We have sometimes seen a little steamer, like *The Maid of the Mist* at the foot of the Falls of Niagara, resisting and gaining upon a stormy torrent madly rushing past her. Slowly she has worked her way through the mad rush of waters, defying their attempt to bear her back, calmly and serenely pursuing her onward course, without being turned aside, or driven back, or dismayed. And why? Because a burning fire is shut up in her heart and her engines cannot stay, impelled in their strong and regular motion. Similarly, within Jeremiah's heart a fire had been lit from the heart of God and was kept aflame by the continual fuel heaped on it. Therefore, the difficulty with him was, not in speaking, but in keeping silent—not in acting, but in refraining.

This sheds some light upon the prophetic impulse, and helps us to understand what the Apostle Peter meant when he said, "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It was as though the current of thought and feeling came mightily from without and, passing through them, swept them forward irresistibly. In this way it often happened that the prophets did not understand words which were put into their hearts by the Spirit of God. and of whose full meaning they were ignorant.

But, after all, our main desire is to know how we may have this heart on fire. We are tired of a cold heart toward God. We complain because of our sense of effort in Christian life and duty; we would gladly learn the secret of being so possessed by the Spirit and thought of God that we might not be daunted by opposition, nor abashed by fear. The source of the inward fire is the love of God, shed abroad by the Holy Ghost—not primarily our love to God, but our sense of his love to us. The coals of juniper that gave so fierce a heat to the heart of a Rutherford were brought from the altar of the heart of God. If we set ourselves with open face towards the cross—which, like a burning lens, focuses the love of God—and if, at the same time, we reckon upon the Holy Spirit—well called "the Spirit of Burning"—to do his usual office, we

shall find the ice that cakes the surface of our heart dissolving in tears of penitence; and presently the sacred fire will begin to glow. Then the love of Christ will constrain us; whether we be beside ourselves, or be sober, will not be the subject of our consideration, but his Almighty Spirit, the thought of what he desires, the passion of fulfilling his will, shall destroy the fire of self-esteem and replace it with the sacred fire of passionate devotion.

When that love has once begun to burn within the soul and the baptism of fire has set us aglow, the sins and sorrows of men—their impieties and blasphemies, their disregard of God, of his service and of his day, their blind courting of danger, their dalliance with evil—will only incite in us a more ardent spirit. To see the multitudes rushing to destruction, to hear the boast of the blasphemer, the taunt of the infidel, the cry of the oppressed, the ribald mirth of the profane, the desecration of all that is holiest and best in man; to think of the grief caused to the Spirit of God, the dishonor done to him; to anticipate the outer darkness, the undying worm, the bottomless pit—surely, these will be enough to fan the smoldering embers of one's emotions into open flame, as when Jeremiah said that to restrain an inner impulse was a weariness, and to refrain from obeying it was a sin.

(c) *The prophet's safety.* "The Lord is with me as a mighty one and terrible; therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail" (20:11, R.V.). The presence of God is salvation. When Ezekiel describes the plot of Edom to take possession of the land of the chosen people, he indicates by a single phrase the futility of the attempt, saying significantly, "Whereas the Lord was there" (Ezek. 35:10). It was enough, though Israel was in exile, that God's Spirit was brooding over their desolate land.

Thus Jeremiah felt. He might be the weakest of the weak, having neither might, nor wisdom, nor power of speech, and apparently the easy prey of Pashur and Jehoiakim; but since God was with him, casting the mantle of his protection around his servant, and pledging himself to be Jeremiah's stronghold and house of defense, Jeremiah was invulnerable.

O weak and trembling soul, if you are true to God, God is with you, besetting you behind and before, and covering you with the shadow of his wing. You shall be like the city of the great King—the kings may assemble, but as soon as they see you they shall be stricken with terror and pass away; while you shall be a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our Guide even for evermore" (Ps. 48:14, R.V. marg.).

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

### **Why bring the word of the LORD, to the kings of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the "Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the Potsherd Gate" (Jer. 19:2)?**

Neh.2:13    Neh. 3:13-14    Jer 7:31-34

From the heights of praise, Jeremiah sinks to the depths of despair (Jer. 20:14-18). **How could he and we avoid much physical and mental suffering?**

Jer. 1:5    Luke 9:57-62    Eph. 1:3-6    1 Pet. 4:12-13

### **Jeremiah 21:1-14**

This chapter takes us forward, out of chronological sequence into the last years of the reign of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians (588-587 B.C.). Zedekiah was a weak, indecisive king, completely dominated by his nobles, who advocated a pro-Egyptian, anti-Babylonian policy. His authority was undermined by the fact that the Jews still regarded Jehoiachin, who had been taken captive in 597 B.C., as their rightful king, and looked forward to his speedy return from captivity to resume his reign (e.g. 28:4).

The king was really looking for a miracle to help him out of his predicament (2). God had worked wonders before, was there any chance that there might be a repeat performance? The truth was that neither Zedekiah, nor the nation, had any right to expect such an intervention. Jeremiah made it plain that the wrath of God was coming upon them for their social, moral and religious corruption (12, cf. 22:1-9). His forecast concerning Jerusalem's future was uncompromisingly pessimistic (3-7), for not only Nebuchadnezzar, but God Himself, was fighting against them. The only hope was to flee the doomed city before it fell and desert to the Babylonians (7-10). We can understand how Jeremiah's contemporaries would regard him as a traitor (cf.38:4). But he was not pro-Babylonian, he was pro-Yahweh, and he saw clearly that Jerusalem's only recourse was to submit to God's righteous chastisement. This the favored city would not do. Arrogantly secure in her own estimation, because of the great deliverance of 701 B.C., when Sennacherib's host was turned away (13), she was unaware that her conduct made it impossible for the Lord to deliver her on this occasion (14). Samson 'did not know that the Lord had left him' (Judg. 16:20); Jerusalem was equally unaware of this tragic fact (cf. Paul's deep concern 1 Cor. 9:27).

(Daily Devotional Bible Commentary, Arthur E. Cundall)

## **What was king Zedekiah looking for when he sent for Jeremiah? How does this account compare with the 5 foolish virgins of Matthew 25:1-13?**

### **Jeremiah 22:1-30**

This chapter contains a series of oracles, most of which directly concern the kings of Judah.

The first (1-8) is directed against the Davidic dynasty itself. We have already observed the conditional nature of the promises about the permanence of the royal line. Jeremiah was convinced, because of the sins of the ruling kings of his time, that the royal house was about to fall (5, 30). The reference to the shedding of innocent blood (3) suggests that this prophecy was delivered in the reign of Jehoiakim (cf. 17; 2 Kings 24:4).

The second (10 ff.) may be dated in the early months of Jehoiakim's reign (609-597 B.C.). Josiah, killed in a battle with the Egyptians at Megiddo in 609 B.C. (2 Kings 23:29), was 'him who is dead'. His son, Shallum, whose throne name was Jehoahaz, was the popular choice as his successor, but he was deposed by the Egyptians and taken captive after a three-month reign (2 Kings 23:30-33). Thus he was 'him who goes away'.

The third (13-19) concerns Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, the Egyptians placed on the throne in place of his brother Shallum. Faced with a crippling tax imposed by the Egyptians, he extracted this from his subjects by heavy taxation (2 Kings 23:33 ff.) and then embarked on a lavish palace-building scheme, forcing his subjects to work for nothing. This Jeremiah vigorously condemned (13 ff.). The reference to Josiah (15 f.) shows Jeremiah's great respect for this godly, reforming king. The oracle concerning Jehoiakim's fate (18 f., cf. 36:29 ff.) is the most outspoken against any ruling king. Was it literally fulfilled? 2 Kings 24:6 gives no hint of this, but Jehoiakim's death occurred while Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians because of his rebellion. There is plausible support for the view that there was a palace revolt, when the king was assassinated and his body cast over the wall, indicating to the Babylonians that Jerusalem dissociated itself from his rebellious policy. Certain it is that Jerusalem escaped relatively lightly when it eventually surrendered.

The fourth (20-23) personifies Jerusalem at this time of distress (597 B.C.).

The fifth (24-30) deals with Coniah, the shortened form of Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, who submitted to the Babylonians after a three-month reign. He was taken into captivity (2 Kings 24:12-15), never to return, in spite of popular prophecy to the contrary (Jer. 28:4, cf. 52:31-34). Although his grandson, Zerubbabel, became the governor of post-exilic Jerusalem (Ezra 3:2, 8; 4:2; 5:2), no descendant of Jehoiachin actually succeeded to the throne.

(Daily Devotional Bible Commentary, Arthur E. Cundall)

### **Contrast Johoiakim's life with that of his father, King Josiah.**

Jer. 22:15-17

### **Jeremiah 23:1-15**

Prophetic guilds were a feature of other nations long before they were introduced into Israel. Their first mention in the Bible is in connection with Samuel, who appears as their leader (1 Sam. 10:5; 19:20). Later on, the great prophets Elijah and Elisha, in the northern kingdom of Israel, had strong links with them (2 Kings 2; 4:1, 38-44; 6:1-7; 9:1). No doubt the members of these guilds, schooled under such godly leaders, acted as an extension of their ministry, broadcasting the true teaching concerning God and His moral and spiritual demands. But with the passing of the years the prophetic guilds had degenerated. Possibly under the influence of surrounding nations, they had attached themselves to the royal court, and their prophecies became allied to political factors (e.g. 1 Kings 22:5 f.). By the time of Jeremiah they were no more than time-servers (cf. Mic. 3:5), giving the kind of messages they felt that the king and people wanted. Yet Jeremiah, initially, regarded them as sincere, and attributed the difference between his message and theirs to the deception of the Lord (4:10). Later on (14:13-16) he realized his enormous mistake and discovered the true nature of this false prophecy. In our portion today (and tomorrow) he launches a full-scale assault on the false prophets, who were misleading the people and who were thus partially responsible for the calamities which awaited Judah. In vs. 1-4 other classes, including the priests, princes and probably the king himself, are included, but from v. 9 the main attack falls upon the prophets. The prophets of Samaria (i.e. Israel, 13) were bad enough, but their counterparts in Judah had exceeded them in their immorality (9-15). Their lives were a complete travesty of the prophetic office.

Jeremiah obviously felt a deep sympathy for the ordinary people of the land. Like the Savior, 'he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd' (Matt. 9:36). In faith he anticipated the day when the Lord would raise up true shepherds over His flock (3 f.). The return from Exile is clearly discernible in verses 7 f., but verses 5 f. go far beyond any application to a post-exilic leader. Zerubbabel was hailed in such language (e.g. Hag. 2:20-23; Zech. 3:8; 4:6-10; 6:12 f.), but the final fulfillment is in Christ, who is both the Good Shepherd (John 10:14) and the embodiment of the Messianic ideal (Isa. 9:6 f.; 11:1-9, etc.).

## What factors made Jeremiah's ministry so distressing to him personally?

Jer. 14:13-14

### Jeremiah 23:16-40

The prophet continues his scathing indictment of the popular cult-prophets. Added to the immorality of their lives (10-15) we may note the following characteristics:

1. A light view of sin (16 f., cf. 6:14). Instead of taking the people to task for their sin they proclaimed a glib message which condoned sin, thus giving a feeling of easy assurance (cf. 14).

2. Their message arose from a source no higher than their own hearts (16, 26). They had never been face to face with the Lord, receiving His word in personal encounter (18, 22), nor had they ever received His divine commission (21, 32). They showed a complete lack of originality, mouthing platitudes borrowed from others (30), or deriving their prophecies from their dreams (25-27).

By implication, the true prophet was a man whose character matched his calling and his words. A man commissioned, he has spent time in secret with the Lord that he might discern His will. His ministry, which will treat sin seriously, is directed to the end of turning men away from their ungodliness. The words of such, reinforced by the power of the Spirit of God, will be like a burning fire or a hammer-blow (29). These qualities are as vital in the Christian era as they were in the O.T. world. False prophets still abound, but they are as unlike the true as straw is to wheat (28). The Septuagint correctly renders v. 23 as a statement, not a question, 'I am a God at hand. ..' The false prophets could not hide from His penetrating gaze (24).

The final section (33-40) contains a long and involved play on the word 'burden'. This was normally a synonym for the prophetic oracle (e.g. Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1) as a weighty, divine pronouncement. Jeremiah had much to say of a serious nature, so much so that this expression had come to be a term of mocking contempt on the lips of those who greeted him with, 'What's the *heavy word* from the Lord today?' The prophetic oracles, God declares, would cease, and the people themselves, now become burdensome to the Lord, would be flung away from Him. A man dare not mock God.

(Daily Devotional Bible Commentary, Arthur E. Cundall)

## What is meant by the words in Jer. 23:29: "Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces?"

1 Cor. 3:10-15

## What may we learn from Jeremiah's exposure of false prophesy?

### Jeremiah 24:1-10

The opening verse enables us to date this incident soon after 597 B.C., when Jehoiachin and the leading citizens, the 'cream of the land', were deported. An understanding of this helps in the solving of one of the minor problems of the book of *Jeremiah*, viz. the princes, in ch. 26, which may be dated c. 608 B.C., treat Jeremiah fairly, whereas in ch. 23, which dates c. 587 B.C., the princes appear most vindictive towards him. The answer is that they are a completely different set of men, those remaining in the land after the deportation of 597 B.C., being markedly inferior, as this chapter suggests.

It may be that those who had escaped deportation were priding themselves on this fact, and perhaps ascribing it to their superior virtue. If so, God's word through Jeremiah quickly demolished their pretensions. The vision of Jeremiah may be compared with that of Amos (8:1-3) but the significance in the latter depends on word play (see RSV margin), whereas here the symbolism is visual and obvious. First-ripe figs, available about the end of June, were a much-prized delicacy. But fruit deteriorates very rapidly in the hot summer of Palestine, unless it is dried properly. The clear statement is that the hope for the future lay with the group who had gone into captivity. History shows the truth of this insight. The captives, augmented by further deportations in 587 and 582 B.C. (52:29 f.), turned to the Lord in repentance, and under Ezekiel's leadership, a new kind of faith, loyal to the covenant-relationship with God, was forged. Those who remained in the land became largely semi-heathen and a source of trouble to those who returned with Zerubbabel in 538 B.C.

*Note:* verse 8: 'those who dwell in the land of Egypt'. This may refer to those deported together with Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:31 ff.) but more likely, it refers to those who had fled to Egypt to escape the Babylonians.

(Daily Devotional Bible Commentary, Arthur E. Cundall)

## What is the interpretation of the vision of the two baskets of figs?

## Jeremiah 25:1-38

From 628 B.C. (the 'thirteenth year of Josiah', 3, cf. 1:2) until 605/604 B.C. (the 'fourth year of Jehoiakim', 1) Jeremiah had kept hammering away at his fellow-countrymen. His message was a consistent one: forsake idolatry; repent of sin; worship the Lord in purity and keep His commandments from the heart. Otherwise judgment would surely fall. He was to continue this warning, exhortatory ministry for a further eighteen years. But the people, with seared consciences and hardened hearts, paid as little attention to him as they had to the prophets who preceded him (4). God's long-suffering, which allowed Judah ample time for repentance, was about to give way to direct chastisement. Just a few months before this prophecy Egypt and Babylonia had clashed at Carchemish, a major ford at the River Euphrates, with Babylonia emerging as a decisive victor. Shortly after this Nebuchadnezzar succeeded to the throne. Jeremiah now hails this new world-power as the means by which God would chastise His people (8-11), with Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest man on earth, fulfilling the subordinate role of 'My servant' (cf. 27:6; 43:10). Historically, this prophecy was fulfilled when the Babylonians marched south and Judah passed under their control. According to Dan. 1:1-4 the temple treasures were seized and hostages were taken (the slight difference in date is caused by a different mode of reckoning).

The first half notes a judgment on the nations at the hand of Babylon, followed by the judgment of Babylon herself (9-12), a pattern repeated in the second half where Babylon (26, Sheshach, AV [KJV] is a Hebrew cipher for Babylon) is the last to drink the cup of the Lord's wrath. The imagery must not be pressed, and any suggestion that Jeremiah actually went to these nations and cities, or forced their representatives to drink, is unnecessary. Apart from this, the chapter is self-explanatory. It is never pleasant to read of destruction, but this is the corollary of the Lord's righteousness. It must also be remembered that it was anticipatory, and thus allowed the nations concerned time to repent. God is never arbitrary in His judgments nor hasty in His decisions.

(Daily Devotional Bible Commentary, Arthur E. Cundall)

Well might He say through Moses: "*Jehovah thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive trees and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness; thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig copper.*" (Deut. 8:7-9)

Palestine has for many centuries been thought and spoken of as "the land that is desolate," but it was not so originally, and is not so naturally. It *became* barren and desolate because of the sin of the people that dwelt therein, and it is now what it is in fulfillment of the word of God. (Deut. 29:22-29; Jer. 25:11; Mic. 7:13) There is a parallelism between creation as a whole as having been involved in the sin of Adam, and Palestine as being involved in the sin of Israel. When Adam sinned, God said: "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life, thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*"; and the same is true of Palestine. Because of the sin of Israel, a special curse descended also on the land which, during the whole period of Israel's dispersion and Gentile domination, has been given over, more or less, to misrule and neglect.

But even while still under the curse the land retains many traces of its ancient beauty and fertility, and is capable of being made very productive. In the course of my seven visits to Palestine at different intervals (before 1925), extending over a period of thirty-four years, I have myself witnessed wonderful changes taking place, and it is a striking fact that quite large districts which up to twenty or thirty years ago were, owing to the neglect of centuries and the blight of Turkish misrule—wilderness places, covered to a depth of sometimes several feet with the yellow sand of the desert which had been allowed to encroach—are transformed by the labors of enthusiastic colonists into fruitful fields and vineyards and orchards. And when at Israel's conversion the blight is removed and the finger of God once again touches the land, it will become manifest to the whole world that Palestine is not only a land of beauty, but a most fertile land, "flowing with milk and honey."

(Israel In The Plan Of God, David Baron)

### **Was the prophecy against Babylon fulfilled in the number of years stated in Jeremiah 25:11-12?**

Ezra 1:1-5

### **What does the "cup" signify in Jer. 25:15?**

Jer. 25:28 Jer. 49:12 Jer. 51:17 Ezek. 23:31-34 Rev. 14:10 Rev. 16:19

### **What is the "hissing" of Jer. 25:18**

1 Kings: 9:8 Jer. 19:8 Jer. 25:9 Jer. 51:37 Lam. 2:15 Mic. 6:16

### **Could the prophecy in Jeremiah 25:30-38 be speaking of the end time destruction when the Antichrist (Oppressor, Jer. 25:38) goes against Israel?**

## How far has the land of Palestine progressed since David Baron's writings of the early 1900's?

Isa. 27:6      Isa. 35:1-2

### Jeremiah 26:1-24

Jehoiakim was, perhaps, the most despicable of the kings of Judah. Josephus says that he was unjust in disposition, an evil-doer, neither pious towards God nor just towards men. Something of this may have been due to the influence of his wife Nehushta, whose father, Elnathan, was an accomplice in the royal murder of Urijah. "Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God." Such is the inspired epitaph by the chronicler.

Jeremiah appears to have been constantly in conflict with this king; and probably the earliest manifestation of the antagonism, that could not but subsist between two such men, occurred in connection with the building of Jehoiakim's palace. Though his kingdom was greatly impoverished with the heavy fine of many talents of silver and gold imposed by Pharaoh-Necho, after the defeat and death of Josiah, and though the times were dark with portents of approaching disaster, yet he began to rear a splendid palace for himself, with spacious chambers and large windows, floors of cedar and decorations of vermilion. As Elijah confronted Ahab, so did Jeremiah confront the young king with his terrible woes: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not his hire; . . . thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy dishonest gain, and for oppression, and for violence." He further reminded him that the stability of Josiah's throne depended not on the splendor of his palace, but upon the justice with which he judged the cause of the poor and needy (22:13, etc.).

Clearly such a monarch must have entertained a mortal hatred towards the man who dared to raise his voice in denunciation of his crimes; and, like Herod with John the Baptist, he would not have scrupled to quench in blood the light that cast such strong condemnation upon his oppressive and cruel actions. An example of this had been recently afforded in the death of Urijah, who had uttered solemn words against Jerusalem and its inhabitants in the same way that Jeremiah had done. Such fury had been excited by his words that he had been obliged to flee to Egypt, from whence the king had secured his extradition, that he might avenge his bold denunciation by the sword and fling his body into the graves of the common people. Small shrift, then, could be expected by Jeremiah, if the king dared to take measures against him. But it would appear that this time, at least, his safety was secured by the interposition of influential friends among the aristocracy, one of whom was Ahikam the son of Shaphan (26:20-24).

1. THE DIVINE COMMISSION. Under the divine impulse, Jeremiah went up to the court of the Lord's house and took his place on some great occasion when all the cities of Judah had poured their populations to worship there. Not one word was to be kept back. We are all more or less conscious of these inward impulses; and it often becomes a matter of considerable difficulty to distinguish whether they originate in the energy of our own nature or are the genuine outcome of the Spirit of Christ. It is only in the latter case that such service can be fruitful. And here for a moment we will turn aside to see how the heart of man may become the medium through which God can pour his thoughts on men, and the way by which we may recognize his inward prompting.

There is no greater enemy of the highest usefulness than the presence of the *flesh* in our activities. There is no department of life or service into which its subtle, deadly influence does not penetrate. We have to encounter it in our unregenerate life, when its passions reveal themselves, brooking no restraint. We meet it after we have entered upon the new life, striving against the Spirit and restraining his gracious energy. We are most baffled when we find it prompting to holy resolutions and efforts after a consecrated life. The Apostle Paul calls this the unequal marriage of the flesh, or self-life, with the holy law of God—a union which brings forth fruit unto death. And, lastly, it confronts us in Christian work because there is so much of it that in our quiet moments we are bound to trace to a desire for notoriety, to a passion to excel, and to the restlessness of a nature which evades questions in the deeper life by flinging itself into every avenue through which it may exert its activities.

There is only one solution to these difficulties. By the way of the cross and the grave we can alone become disentangled and discharged from the insidious domination of this evil principle, which is accursed by God and hurtful to holy living, as blight to the tender fruit. In the cross of Jesus, when he died in the likeness of sinful flesh, God wrote his curse upon every manifestation of selfish and fleshly energy; and now it remains for each of us to appropriate that cross, to accept the divine sentence, to lie in the grave where the voices of human ambition and adulation cannot follow us, to oppose the silence of death to the workings of our evil self. Not, however, to stay there, but to pass up by the grace of the Holy Ghost into the pure resurrection air and light where no face is visible but that of the risen Savior, where no voice is audible save his, and where in the hush of perfect fellowship the spirit becomes able to discern the wish of its Lord.

2. THE MESSAGE AND ITS RECEPTION. There was a twofold appeal in the words Jeremiah was commissioned to deliver on this great occasion, when the whole land stood intent to hear. On the one side, by his lips, God entreated his people to repent and turn from their evil ways; on the other, he bade them know that their obduracy would compel him to make their

great national shrine as complete a desolation as the site of Shiloh, which for five hundred years had been in ruins. It is impossible to realize the intensity of passion which such words evoked. They seemed to insinuate that Jehovah could not defend his own, or that their religion had become so heartless that he would not. Prophets and priests had assured the people that the very presence among them of Jehovah's temple was a guarantee of their safety; and to suggest that a fate might overtake them like that which in the days of Samuel made the ears of every listener to tingle seemed the height of impertinence. "So it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord commanded him to speak unto all the people," that he found himself suddenly in the vortex of a whirlpool of popular excitement. Thus it befell Paul in later days, when the presumption that he had defiled the holy place produced so intense a paroxysm of popular feeling that all the city was moved, and the people ran together, laid hold on him, and dragged him out of the temple—so that he was with difficulty rescued by a regiment of Roman soldiers, who bore him by main force from the violence of the crowd, the multitude following and crying out, "Away with him!" (Acts 21:27-36). There is little doubt that Jeremiah would have met his death in a similar riot, had it not been for the prompt interposition of the princes.

Such is always the reception given on the part of man to the words of God. We may gravely question how far our words are God's when people accept them quietly and as a matter of course. The Word of God to those that hug their sin can only be as fire, a hammer and a sharp two-edged sword. And here again is a certain test whether our message is the product of our own fancy or the burden of the Lord. That which men approve and applaud may lack the King's seal and be the substitution on the part of the messenger of tidings which he deems more palatable, and therefore more likely to secure for himself a larger welcome.

3. WELCOME INTERPOSITION. The princes were seated in the palace, and instantly on receiving tidings of the outbreak, came up to the Temple. Their presence stilled the excitement and prevented the infuriated people from carrying out their designs upon the life of the defenseless prophet. They hastily constituted themselves into a court of appeal, before which prophet and people were summoned. The priests and prophets acted as the exponents of the people's wish and demanded sentence of death, turning from the court to the people to ask their concurrence. Then Jeremiah stood on his defense. His plea was that he could not but utter the words with which the Lord had sent him, and that he was only reaffirming the predictions of Micah in the days of Hezekiah. He acknowledged that he was in their hands, but he warned them that innocent blood would bring its own nemesis upon them all; and at the close of his address he reaffirmed his certain embassy from Jehovah.

This bold and ingenuous defense seems to have turned the scale in his favor. The princes gave their verdict: "This man is not worthy of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God." And the fickle populace, swept hither and thither by the wind, appear to have passed over *en masse* to the same conclusion, so that princes and people stood confederate against the false prophets and priests. The conclusion thus gained was further confirmed by the voice of certain of the elders of the land, who had come from all the cities of Judah, and who reminded the people that the good king Hezekiah had acted very differently to the prophet Micah in listening to his remonstrances, entreating the favor of the Lord, and securing the reversal of the divine sentence.

Thus does God hide his faithful servants in the hollow of his hand. No weapon that is formed against them prospers. They are hidden in the secret of his pavilion from the strife of tongues.

#### Historical Connection

In his first invasion of Judah, the king of Babylon contented himself with binding Jehoiakim in fetters to carry him to Babylon, though he seems afterwards to have changed his intention and to have restored him to his throne as his vassal, taking his oath of allegiance (Ezek. 17:12-13). He stripped the temple of its precious vessels to enrich the house of his god at Babylon and carried into captivity several of the mighty of the land, among them Daniel and his three friends (Dan. 1:1-2). He then hastened back to Babylon, summoned in that direction by the tidings of the death of his father, Nabopolassar,

For three years Jehoiakim remained faithful to his oath (2 Kings 24:1); then he was deluded by the hope of independence, based on the hope of forming a confederation of neighboring peoples. Messengers went to and fro between himself and Pharaoh, negotiating for horses and much people, though all the while Ezekiel and Jeremiah protested that Jehovah would certainly punish him for violating his pledge to the king of Babylon. This was a time of unusual activity for the prophets of Jehovah, who strove their utmost to avert a political mistake, founded upon a moral obliquity, and sure to incur terrible vengeance (Ezek. 17:15-21).

It befell as they feared. Nebuchadnezzar, who was not prepared to brook such infidelity on the part of a subject king, soon put his forces in motion and prepared to advance across the desert to punish the weak and faithless Jehoiakim.

We have no certain clue to the prophet's history during these three or four years. His heart must have been filled with the patriot's anguish as he saw the coils of invasion drawn closer around the devoted city. To him, indeed, it was the year of drought, and there was no hope save in God; often upon his lips must have been words like those which the great Florentine (Girolamo Savonarola, 1452-1498) addressed to the city, which he loved with the passionate affection which the Jews always cherished towards Jerusalem, "Thy sins, O Florence, are the cause of these stripes. But now repent,

offer prayers, become united. I have wearied myself all the days of my life to make known to thee the truths of the faith, and of holy living; and I have had nothing but tribulations, derision, and reproach."

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

### **How was the apostles' and some of the saints preaching and suffering similar to that of Jeremiah's?**

Acts 6:8-7:60      Acts 21:27-36

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

The prophets were a large and influential class. Dating from the days of Samuel, their schools had poured forth a succession of men, who occupied a unique position in the land as the representatives of God. But in the degenerate days of which we are now writing, when the kingdom of Judah was rapidly tottering to its fall, they seem to have been deeply infected by the prevailing vices of their time. They were, as Isaiah says, "dumb dogs which could not bark." Greedy and drunken, lazy and dissolute, dreaming, lying down, and loving to slumber, they denied the Lord, and said, when Jeremiah spoke, "It is not he." They had become wind, and the word of God was not in them (Isa. 56:9-12; Jer. 5:12-13).

It must have been very painful for Jeremiah to oppose them, and counteract their influence on the people; but he had no alternative. His heart was broken, and his bones shook; he was in a stupor like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine had overcome, for both prophet and priest were profane; and in God's own house wickedness was rife. Listen to these terrible words, spoken in the name of Jehovah, "In the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies; they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness; they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah" (23:9-14).

Jeremiah entreated his people not to hearken to these men, who spoke the vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord. Their fatal crime was to live on the traditions of the past and to encourage even those who walked in the stubbornness of their hearts, by assuring them that no evil would come on them. They deliberately set themselves to lessen the power of Jeremiah's appeals and protestations by the promulgation of their own lying dreams, as though they, and not he, were party to Jehovah's secrets.

Matters came to pass shortly after the deportation of Jeconiah. Hananiah, of Gibeon, which was one of the priestly settlements, rose up and publicly contradicted Jeremiah when he was speaking in the temple, in the presence of the priests and of all the people. Using the holy name of Jehovah, he declared it had been divinely revealed to him that in two years Jeconiah, and all the captives, and all the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away, would come again. Instantly Jeremiah spoke up from amid the crowd. "Amen," he cried; "would that it might be so; would that Jehovah might bring again the captivity: but it shall not be; nay, it cannot be, without canceling words that have been uttered by him through the prophets before me, and of old."

Not content, however, with his words, the false prophet snatched from Jeremiah's shoulders the wooden yoke which he carried for the purpose of perpetually reminding his people and the neighboring nations that they must serve the king of Babylon until the appointed time had gone. He broke it in two, saying that similarly God within two years would break Nebuchadnezzar's yoke. Jeremiah did not prolong the altercation, but privately told Hananiah that the yoke of wood would be replaced by one of iron, and that he was causing the people to trust a lie. "This year you shall die," he said, as he turned away; and two months later the false prophet was a corpse.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

Jeremiah suggests in Jer. 27:18-22 that if these so-called prophets were true prophets they should be able to intercede for Judah so the vessels still left would not be carried to Babylon. **On what ground would a prophet or any believer for that matter intercede or urge God to entreat with an urgent petition?**

Ex. 32:11-14

### **What is the test between a true prophet and a false prophet?**

Deut. 18:21-22

### **Jeremiah 29:1-32**

Jeremiah's two letters to the Jewish captives in Babylon were a pledge to assure them that, though chastised sorely, they were not utterly forsaken by the Lord, nor given over to death. Even in Babylon they may be comparatively happy (vv. 5, 6), if they be obedient to the Lord's will concerning them, and, instead of murmuring, make the best of existing circumstances. Fretfulness in trials only makes matters worse, whereas godly contentment can give cheerfulness amidst the most adverse circumstances. If things are not as favorable to us as we might wish, still they are better than we deserve, and not nearly so bad as they might be: above all, they are as God ordains them.

Religion teaches us to "pray for" the powers that be, as they are ordained of God (v. 7). God in His own good time will deliver His people from their oppressors. But meanwhile let not believers, by sedition, take their cause out of His hand, but pray for their enemies, and especially for those of them who are in rule and authority (Rom. 13:1; 1 Tim. 2:2).

Diviners misled the Jews in Babylon with prophecies, which they spake "in the name of the Lord" (v. 9), and as if by His commission, teaching a very different doctrine from that of Jeremiah, and promising the captives a speedy deliverance and restoration. But if the people themselves had not been predisposed to error there would have arisen no such deceivers. The people lent a ready ear to illusory dreams of restoration, "which they caused to be dreamed" themselves. The wish was parent of the thought. Instead of studying to be quiet, and "seeking the peace of the city whither God had caused them to be carried away captives" (v. 7), they gave way to a restless spirit, and so listened to every impostor whom their own credulity and discontent raised up. When once we substitute our own perverse will for the will of God, there are no bounds to the extravagances and miseries into which we may be carried.

On the other hand, "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." The believing Jews among the captives had a gracious promise to cheer them, in their patient waiting on and for the Lord. Though the captivity was to be long, it would cease after seventy years. The unbelieving Jews, from presumptuous confidence of a speedy restoration at first, passed at last to despair of a restoration at all. Both feelings alike flowed from unbelief of the "good word" and the goodwill of God (v. 10). Lest His people should be tempted to the same hard thoughts of God, He gives them, in order to sustain their faith and patience, a gracious promise resting on His gracious character—"I know the thoughts that I think towards you,—thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (v. 11). This promise was designed to quicken their prayers. It is a sure token that God is about to visit in mercy when He puts it into our hearts to pray for that mercy (v. 12). When such a spirit of prayer is poured upon us, we not merely seek the Lord, but we also "search for Him with all our heart" (v. 13); and then we are sure to find Him, for He is waiting to be gracious to us.

Not only were the captives at Babylon not to return to Jerusalem soon, as their false prophets, assured them, but their brethren, then free at Jerusalem, were soon to suffer all the horrors of the sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity. The false prophets would be made an especial example of; for they not only lied, which is bad enough of itself, but they also lied to "Israel," the people of the Lord, and, worst of all, they uttered their lies "in the name" of the God of truth (vv. 21-23). They who "teach rebellion against the Lord" shall be "punished" by the Lord: they and their seed can have no dwelling place among the people of God, nor shall they be permitted to "behold the good which God will do for His people" (v. 32). Be our prayer, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory in thine inheritance" (Ps. 106:5).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

### **How are you able to discern the truth from those who say they speak in the name of the Lord as Shemaiah did, causing "the people to trust in a lie" (Jer. 29:31)?**

Eph. 1:15-19 Jam. 1:5-6, 14-18

### **Jeremiah 30:1-24**

Though the Jews can claim no favor from God for their merits, yet God of His own grace promises to both Israel and Judah a complete deliverance and restoration (v. 3). But there shall come (vv. 5, 6), immediately before Messiah's final interposition in their behalf, a "time of trouble" to the people of Jacob, such that "none is like" it (v. 7). A promise is at the same time given that "he shall be saved out of it."

There is a wide difference between the "end" of the enemies of God and that of the people of God (v. 11). The former are given over to utter destruction; whereas the latter, when they have for a time backslidden, are "not left altogether unpunished," but are "chastised in measure;" and then, when chastising has worked its designed effect, by leading them to return to their God, they are restored to God's favor, and shall abide in His presence forever. Babylon, the once mighty city, has long since ceased to exist: the Jewish people, once subject to Babylon, still remain, and await the coming glory of their nation, when "Jacob shall be in rest and quiet, and none shall make him afraid" (v. 10).

The wound, political and spiritual, of Israel, was and is "incurable" by man (vv. 12, 15). But when "none can plead her cause" (v. 13), and she herself "has no healing medicines," the Lord will espouse her part, and "restore health unto her" (v. 17), and "heal her wounds" (v. 17). Our case spiritually is then, in the most favorable state when we have learned our own helplessness and inability to work the cure of our souls; for then we are constrained to cast ourselves unreservedly on our heavenly Advocate, to plead our cause, to heal our spiritual malady, and to impart His sanctifying Spirit.

Zion, heretofore an "Outcast, whom no man sought after" (v. 17), shall be, according to the sure word of prophecy, in the end, the *object of the Lord's delight*, and *sought out* by all men (Isa. 62:4, 12). Then shall her former oppressors be paid in kind (v. 16); her spoilers shall be spoiled, and her devourers shall be devoured; while out of her rebuilt habitation shall proceed joyful thanksgivings (v. 19); and sacrifices of praise shall be presented continually with acceptance before God, through her Divine King-Priest, the Son of David, sitting on the throne of David (v. 21).

The Father himself asks, in order to call forth the adoring admiration of all His creatures, "Who is this that engaged His heart to approach unto me?" (v. 21); and we, the redeemed, may echo the question. What an overwhelming responsibility to be surety and penally liable for the sins of the whole world! Who but the God-man, Christ Jesus, was competent to undertake such a task, to approach an infinitely holy God, after having become answerable for the sins of the whole human race, and to find acceptance not only for Himself but also for His people? Through Him all believers have access by one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18). Through Him "the fierce anger of the Lord, which shall fall upon the head of the wicked" (vv. 23, 24), is turned aside from us, and "we become His people, and He is our God" (v. 22).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

The following excerpt from 'The History of Israel' was written before 1926

The rapid increase of the Jews since the middle of the nineteenth century is one of the most striking and significant signs of the times.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century there were, according to high authorities, only about one million Jews left in the world after the continual dispersions, terrible sufferings, and almost wholesale massacres which they had to endure in the dark and middle ages.

With the Reformation there was a certain lessening of the oppression and persecution from which they had so long suffered, and in consequence they experienced a slight national revival.

But even at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Basnage published his *History of the Jews from Jesus Christ to the Present Time* (1708)—the first orderly and scientific account of the Jewish people which appeared in Europe—he estimated that there were not more than three millions of Jews in the world.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century there were said to be five million; at the end of another century—in 1896—the greatest living authority on Jewish statistics gave their number as eleven million; less than two decades later the fresh census taken in Russia (where nearly half the Jewish nation was located) and other countries revealed the fact that there were no less than thirteen million Jews in the world. And the surprising feature in connection with these figures is the officially authenticated fact that in the country where they were most persecuted (Russia) just there they increased most rapidly.

Within the past thirty-five years some three million Jews have been driven by persecution to emigrate from Russia, Galicia, etc., chiefly to the United States and Canada, yet the number of Jews in those countries has not become diminished, but has rather increased. The Slavic peoples are the most prolific among the European races, but the Jews increase four or five times as rapidly as the Slavs.

Within two years (in 1919 and 1920), 150,000 Jews were massacred in the Ukraine alone, and many scores of thousands perished during the war, and since by the sword, famine, and pestilence, and yet, according to the *Jewish Year-book* for 1923, the total number of Jews has increased to over 15,000,000 or, according to Davis Trietsch (a great authority on Jewish statistics), to over 19,000,000.

Truly, the old story of Israel in Egypt renews itself today: "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied, and the more they spread abroad."

And not only is it in point of numbers that God is again causing His people to "increase greatly," but by their superior wits and energy, and by their habits of frugality and thriftiness, He makes them "stronger than their enemies," so that in those regions where the bulk of the nation is to be found, wherever the Jew has a fair chance, he naturally places his Gentile neighbors in a less favorable position in the struggle for existence. The superior ability of the Jew is openly acknowledged by anti-Semites, and often appealed to as a ground for the restrictive and repressive laws, which until recently were in vogue against them in most countries.

The following is taken from a chapter in a work which summarizes "The Case for Russian anti-Semitism" before the war. "But there is still another element which the rulers of Russia are constrained to take into their consideration. The intellect of the Jew is masterful. His assiduity, his deadly resolve to get on, his self-denial and ambition surmount all natural obstacles. If all careers in the Russian Empire were thrown open to the Russian Jew, not a decade would go by before the whole Russian Administration from Port Arthur to Eytkuhnen, and from Archangel to Yalta, must pass into Hebraic hands. This is a sober statement of facts."

The same is true of other continental countries. The following is a passage from an apology for anti-Semitism in Austria, which, though somewhat exaggerated, is largely true:

"The Jews are all-powerfully represented in every walk of life that leads to influence and fortune. In the professions of law, medicine, and literature, their numbers are out of all proportion to their quota of the population. Finance and commerce are practically in their hands. The great business houses, the banks, the railways that do not belong to the State, are all controlled by them. The Produce Exchange, and, of course, the Bourse at Vienna, Prague, or Budapest are deserted on Jewish holidays. The Press, with the exception of the Czech organs, is almost exclusively in the hands of the Jews."

The proportion of Jews in the universities of Austria has been far in excess of what might be expected from their actual number in the country. In the particular year to which the writer of the above refers, the Vienna University was

attended by 6530 students, and of these 2500, or 40 percent., were Jews. Most of the great specialists, and the best known professors in Vienna, were Jews, or of Jewish origin. The faculty of law may almost be said to be a monopoly of the Jews in Austria, and also in Germany, where they form not only a large percentage of the attorneys, but also of the judges of the highest courts, and have, as in England and France, supplied from their ranks ministers of justice and judges of appeal. (Let it be noted that the statistics and what is here stated about Jewish influence in Russia, Germany, Austria, etc., refer to the condition of things as they existed before the War (First World War, the Great War, the War to End All Wars). A great change in their condition has taken place since, and for the time being their position in Austria, and particularly in Hungary, is a very precarious one.)

The next step in the old Jewish Question in Egypt was that "He turned their hearts (that is, of Egyptians) to hate His people, to deal subtly with His servants." This is how the Great God causes the wrath of man to praise Him, and when His purpose is accomplished, "restrains the remainder." Pharaoh and his counselors said, "Come on, let us deal wisely with them," and attempted to solve the Jewish Question in their own way, by persecution and extermination; but God turned the wisdom of the Egyptians into foolishness. "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Instead of succeeding in drowning them in the Nile, Pharaoh and his host were in the end drowned in the Red Sea.

But what is the meaning of God's "turning their heart to hate His people"? It had a double significance.

In relation to Israel it was (as we have seen) the means which God employed to stir up their nests and to make them willing to leave the land in which, until the persecutions broke out, they had been content to live for centuries. And this is true also today. The present condition of the Jews among the nations, and the mysterious antipathy which they encounter in practically all lands of their dispersion, cannot be accounted for merely by social, economical, or political reasons. The primary cause is to be found in their special relationship to God and His overruling providence, directed with a view to preserving them a separate nation.

Israel is God's national prodigal son, who, if he found things quite comfortable in the "far country" where he is now squandering his gifts and talents, and degrading himself with occupations for which he was never intended, would gladly settle down and become assimilated among the nations and forget his sin against his Father, and his home from which he has wandered. His nest must therefore be continually stirred up, that he may be reminded that the lands of the Gentiles are not his permanent resting-place.

The millions of the poor and less-cultured orthodox Talmudic Jews in Russia, Poland, Romania, etc., have long ago been convinced that these lands cannot much longer remain their resting-places, and that it is about time for them "to arise and depart" toward that land for which they have never ceased to cherish a yearning desire; hence the many colonizing schemes and the more than thirty Jewish colonies which existed in Palestine already before the War (WWI), consisting almost entirely of Russian and Romanian Jews.

The remarkable thing is that, as the result of the newest phases of the anti-Jewish movement on the Continent, the more cultured, wealthy, and rationalistic Jews are at last digesting the truth that it is not by the so-called "reform" movement, which aims at assimilation with the nations, that the Jewish Question will be solved; for, after all their efforts in this direction for more than half a century, and their desperate eagerness to strip themselves of all that is true and false in orthodox Judaism, as a kind of peace-offering to the mysterious, deep-seated antipathy of the Gentiles, they find that it is just against themselves, more even than against the less cultured of their brethren in Russia and Eastern Europe, that the bitterest animosity is manifested, and that Christendom, though it is itself for the most part apostate from the faith of Christ, is even less reconciled to the rationalism and neology of the modern cultivated "Israelite," than it is to the Talmudism of the more consistent, orthodox "Jew," who still wears his kaftan and peyoth.

What is this but a repetition of the warning words which God in His providence has so often spoken to Israel: "*And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all; in that ye say, We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries.*"

There was no other solution for the Jewish Question in Egypt than the exodus, and so also will there be no proper and *final* solution of the modern phase of this ancient question than in the restoration of the Jewish people to their own land, to be followed by their more glorious restoration to the favor of God, and their spiritual renewal in and through the grace of their Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Of this national restoration we may now see the *very beginnings* in the Zionist Movement, and the wonderful developments in relation to Palestine, and in the recognition on the part of the great powers of their right to a "national home" in their ancient fatherland.

And in relation to Egypt, their very hatred of the Jews was an evident token of perdition, and precursory of the plagues which came upon them. The judicial hardening of the heart of Pharaoh and the Egyptians was in itself part of the punishment of a righteous God upon a cruel nation, sinking lower and lower to the most contemptible depths of idolatry. God often chastises His own people "with the rod of man and with stripes of the children of man," but He has no pleasure in the scourge which He employs, and, as a rule, uses for the chastisement of His people, men or nations whom He designs to give up to destruction for their wickedness.

And this also is true in relation to the nations of Christendom. Anti-Semitism, which will culminate in the final confederacy of the nations against Jerusalem with the cry, "Come, let us destroy them from being a nation: that the name of Israel be no more in remembrance," is one of the manifest symptoms of the growing apostasy, and a sure omen of the

approaching judgment, with which, according to the testimony of all the prophets, the present dispensation is to close—for the ten plagues which were poured out on Egypt foreshadowed, and find their counterpart in the fearful plagues set forth in the Revelation—to be poured out on an anti-Christian apostate Christendom.

God's word still holds true, "I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse." (Gen. 12:3) *"Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that despoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey."* (Jer. 30:16)

(The History of Israel: Its Spiritual Significance, David Baron)

### **Comment on the expression found in Jer. 30:7: "the time of Jacob's trouble".**

Much has happened since David Baron wrote these words. Many of the people have returned to the promised land and Israel has become a nation once again. **Do we have any insight on what will happen next?**

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

The two great and blessed relationships into which God had entered with His People—that of a father to his son, and that of a husband to his wife. In both of these Israel has thus far proved unfaithful. As a Father, God has to complain of His disobedient and gainsaying people, that they are "children who have corrupted themselves": and as a Husband He has to pour out His heart's grief and pain ever so many times at Israel's spiritual adulteries, because she *"had played the harlot with many lovers."* (Jer. 3:1) But, blessed be His holy Name, He abides faithful and true, though all men prove false, "He will ever be mindful of *His covenant*" (Ps. 111:5); and in spite of all their disobedience and apostasy He has never ceased to be "a Father to Israel," or to call Ephraim His "first-born." (Jer. 31:19, 20) And in the end Israel will at last enter *experimentally* into the blessedness of both these relationships.

It is beautiful to note in that same third chapter of Jeremiah, where, in the second part, a glimpse is given us of the future—when Jerusalem shall be called the throne of Jehovah, to which all nations shall be gathered—we read, *"But I (Jehovah) said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a goodly heritage of the hosts of the nations? and I said, Ye shall call Me, Abhi ('my Father'), and shall not turn away from following Me."* (Jer. 3:17, 19)

*"And I said"*—it is His irrevocable purpose—*"ye shall call Me, Abhi"*—for He who has *called* them to be "His son, His first-born," will pour the spirit of adoption—the spirit of filial fear and of love, into their hearts, so that they shall be *obedient* children and shall *"no more turn away from following after Him."*

So also that other near and precious relationship of the bride to the bridegroom, or of the wife to the husband, to which Israel was called, shall yet become an actual experimental reality in their history for after Israel repents of her past unfaithfulness and returns to her "first (or lawful) husband" (Hos. 2), we read: *"Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called 'My Delight is in her,' and thy land 'Married'; for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy Builder marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee"* (Isa. 62:4, 5).

*"Yea, He loveth the people,"* exclaims Moses and His own words which He spoke to them later through Isaiah and Jeremiah have been true all along: *"I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee,"* or "therefore have I *drawn out, or extended* to the full length, My lovingkindness toward thee." "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, these may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (Jer. 31:3; Isa. 44:15) And it was this "Rock that begat them," to whom they owed their very existence as a nation, whom Israel in their sin and folly exchanged for idols; it was such tender love and faithfulness that they "provoked to jealousy" with vanities and abominations! Well may we apply the words in Jeremiah 2: *"Wherefore I will yet contend with you, saith Jehovah, and with your children's children will I contend. For pass over to the isles of Kittim and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently; and see if there hath been such a thing. Hath a nation changed its gods which yet are no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith Jehovah. 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."* (Jer. 2:9-13)

And gross idolatry marked only the culmination of the first stage in Israel's national apostasy. The climax was reached when, after a long process of disobedience and self-hardening, and because their hearts were already alienated from God, Israel turned their backs upon Him who is "the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person."

"The Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's time, and the majority of the Jews of the present day, would have us believe that they rejected Jesus of Nazareth because He sought to mislead and turn them away from God and His holy law. Many of them in their ignorance sincerely believed, and still believe, this to be the case. But, alas! this very ignorance is part of the awful consequences of Israel's prior alienation from their heavenly Father, and from the true spirit of Moses and the prophets. No: Israel rejected Christ, not because He went counter to, or sought in any way to lead them astray from, God, or because His teaching was contradictory to the law and to the testimony which was already in their hands, but

because, on the contrary, He sought to bring them back to God, and was Himself the very image of God, who, as the only true Israelite, not only bore witness to the law and the prophets, but Himself *magnified* the law and fulfilled and exemplified it in His own life."

Before passing on, which speaks of the punishment which was to befall Israel, I would pause for a moment to remind you once again, dear reader, that the history of Israel is in this respect typical of the history of the professing church, and that the apostasy of the Jewish nation is paralleled and exceeded by the apostasy of Christendom.

How beautiful was the Church in its first days—so long as it knew itself to consist of the poor of this world, but rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom—so long as it was lowly in mind, and walked in simplicity and in conscious dependence on her heavenly Bridegroom! But when world power began to smile upon her, and she became allied to ungodly kings and emperors who in process of time endowed her with temporal power, she too became proud and wanton in her worldly prosperity, and "waxed fat and kicked." And the idolatries and abominations, and the "shedding of blood," of which Christendom stands guilty, is not less, but more heinous in God's sight than that which is laid to the charge of Israel, because committed in fuller light, and in spite of the object lesson and warning supplied by the history of the Jews.

(Israel In The Plan Of God, David Baron)

Jeremiah continues his prophecy that he started in chapter 30 but he turns from describing a physical restoration to something much greater, a restoration of the heart of the people. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer. 31:33-34) **Will this spiritual restoration occur at the same time the physical restoration occurs at Jerusalem?**

Heb. 8:8-13 Heb. 10:12-28

### **Jeremiah 32:1-33:26**

While shut up in the court of the prison, perhaps fastened by a chain that restrained his liberty, Jeremiah received a divine intimation that his uncle would shortly come to him with a request for him to purchase the family property at Anathoth. This greatly startled him because he had so clear a conviction, which he cherished as divinely given, of the approaching overthrow of the kingdom and the consequent desolation of the land. It had been his one incessant message to his people for nearly forty years, that the land must keep her Sabbaths as a judgment for the sins of the people; and now it seemed conflicting and inconsistent to be told to purchase the field at Anathoth, as though it were needed for cultivation. The divine command quite staggered him, and may have made him for a moment question whether there had not been some mistake in the message he had so constantly reiterated in the ears of his people.

He gave, however, no outward sign of his perplexities; but when his uncle's son entered the courtyard with his request, the prophet at once assented to the proposal and purchased the property for seventeen shekels.

In addition to this, Jeremiah took care to have the purchase recorded and witnessed with the same elaborate pains as if he were at once to be entering on occupation. Not a single form was omitted or slurred over; and ultimately the two deeds of contract—the one sealed with the more private details of price, the other open and bearing the signatures of witnesses—were deposited in the charge of Baruch, with the injunction to put them in an earthen vessel and preserve them. They were probably not opened again until the return from the captivity, but we can well imagine how strong a rush of emotion and confidence must have been inspired as the men of that day perused the documents.

But Jeremiah was not a sharer in that glad scene. He did as God bade him, though the shadow of a great darkness lay upon his soul from which he could only find relief, as the Lord on the cross, in recourse to the Father. Indeed, at this point of his life, he resembled the hidden vessel which contained within it the charter of the nation's deliverance. He was an earthen vessel indeed, but he contained heavenly treasure. He fell into the ground to die, as the seed does which holds at its heart a principle of life that can only express itself through death and can only bless men when its sowing, amid the depression and decay of autumn, has been complete.

1. HOURS OF MIDNIGHT DARKNESS. It is only in service that anything reaches its fullest life. A bit of iron is condemned to solitude and uselessness until it becomes part of a great machine. A grain of wheat, hidden for three thousand years in a mummy case, abides alone and only learns the motive and glory of existence when, through death, it learns to weave the chemical juices of the earth, dews, sunbeams, and air, into the fabric of the golden grain. A man who lives a self-contained life, of which the gratification of his own ambition and self-hood is the supreme aim, never drinks the sweets of existence, nor attains his full development. It is only when we live for God, and in doing so, for man, that we are able to appropriate the rarest blessedness of which our nature is capable, or to unfold into all the proportions of full growth in Christ. In the deepest sense, therefore, Jeremiah could never regret that he had given the strength and measure of his

days to the service of others. If he had not done so, but had shrunk back from the high calling of his early life, his misery would have been in proportion to the royal quality of his nature and his power to enrich the life of man.

But none can give themselves to the service of others, except at bitter cost of much that this world holds dear. In the words of Christ, the grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die, if it is to bear much fruit. In the case of the wheatgrain, death is necessary to break up the case in which the principle of life lies imprisoned. And in the case of every true life, there must be death to the attractions and indulgences of the self-life, that the soul, being at leisure from itself, may go forth to seek its supplies from God and weave them into nourishing food for the lives of those around. This will explain the privations and sorrows to which Jeremiah was subjected. Death wrought in him, that life might work in Israel and in all who should read the book of his prophecy.

*He died to the decor ties of human love.* "You shall not take a wife, neither shall you have sons or daughters in this place," was early said to him. The men of Anathoth, of the house of his father, conspired against him. The friends with whom he took sweet counsel, and in whose company he walked to the house of God, betrayed him. What he held in his heart belonged to the race and might not be poured forth within the narrower circle of the home, of priestly temple-duty, or of the little village of Anathoth.

*He died to the good will of his fellows.* None can be indifferent to this. It is easy to do or suffer when the barque of life is wafted on its way by favoring breezes, or the air thrills with expressions of love and adulation. Then a man is nerved to dare to do his best. And a nature as sensitive as Jeremiah's is peculiarly susceptible to such impressions. But it was his bitter lot to encounter from the first an incessant stream of vituperation (harsh criticism) and dislike. We have no record of one voice being raised to thank or encourage him. "Woe is me, my mother," he cried sadly, "that you have borne me, a man of strife and contention to the whole earth! I have not lent on usury, neither have men lent to me on usury; yet every one of them curses me."

*He died to the pride of national patriotism.* No patriot allows himself to despair of his country. However dark the lowering storm clouds and strong the adverse current, he believes that the ship of state will weather the storm. He chokes back words of despondency and depression, lest they should breed dismay. He does not allow his heart to harbor the thoughts of despair that flit across it, and knock for entrance; he drives them away and treats them as traitors guilty of high treason. But Jeremiah was driven along an opposite course. A truer heart than his never beat in human breast. A loftier patriotism than his never hazarded itself in the last breach. His belief in Israel was part of his belief in God. But he found himself compelled to speak in such a fashion that the princes proposed, not without show or reason, to put him to death, because he weakened the hands of the men of war.

*He died to the sweets of personal liberty.* A large portion of his ministry was exerted from the precincts of a prison. Repeatedly we read of his being shut up and not able to go forth. His friend, Baruch, had constantly to act as his intermediary and interpreter. This, too, must have been bitter to him. His writings abound with references to nature and to natural processes; and the iron fetters of restraint must have eaten deeply into the tender flesh of his gentle heart.

*He died, also, to the meaning he had been apt to place on his own prophecies.* Up to the moment when Jehovah bade him purchase the property of Hanameel, he had never questioned the impending fate of Jerusalem. It was certainly and inevitably to be destroyed by sword, famine, pestilence, and fire. All that he had ever said in private or public was but the fresh assertion of this bitter fate, with some new touch of pathos, or turn of emphasis. But now the word of God, demanding an act of obedience, seemed to indicate that the land was to remain under the cultivation of the families that owned it.

2. JEREMIAH'S BEHAVIOR. To very few men has it been given so closely to walk along the path which the Redeemer walked during his early life. He was stripped of almost everything that men prize most. But amid it all, he derived solace and support in three main directions.

(a) *He prayed.* Take this extract from his own diary: "Now, after I had delivered the deed of the purchase to Baruch, the son of Neriah, I prayed to the Lord, saying, Ah, Lord God!" Yea, and he was encouraged in this holy exercise; shortly after this incident, when tidings came to him that the houses of the kings of Judah were being broken down to provide materials for the building of an inner line of defense, behind the shell of wall which was nearly demolished by the terrible battering rams, and when his heart was more than ever dismayed, the word of the Lord came to him, saying: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and will show thee great and difficult [or inaccessible] things, which thou knowest not" (33:1-5, R.V.).

There is no help to the troubled soul like that which comes through prayer. You may have no clear vision of God. You may be only able to grope your way in the direction where he sits, enshrouded from your view in the thick darkness. You may be able to do little more than recite things which God and you know perfectly well, ending your prayer, as Jeremiah did, with the words, "and behold, thou seest it" (32:24). Nevertheless, pray; pray on your knees; "in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God"; and the peace of God will settle down on and enwrap your weary, troubled soul.

(b) *He rested on the Word of God.* The soul of the prophet was nourished and fed by the divine word. "Your words were found," he cries, "and I did eat them: and your words were to me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart." It sounds but hard and cold advice to bid a man in sorrow to read his Bible, but it were impossible to give better. Because, behind the words is the Word; in this garden the Son of Man walks; in this tabernacle the Sun shines in whose beams are health and comfort. How often have God's people turned to the Bible, as the Savior did in the darkest hours that swept over his soul, and found in a psalm or a chapter the balm of Gilead, the tree of life with healing leaves!

(c) *He faithfully kept to the path of duty.* "And I bought the field." It does not always happen that our service to men will be met by rebuff, ill will, and hard treatment; but when it does, there should be no swerving, or flinching, or drawing back. God's sun shines on the evil as well as the good, and his rain descends on the fields of the thankless churl equally as on those of his children. The fierce snow-laden blast, driving straight in your teeth, is not as pleasant as the breath of summer, laden with the scent of the heather; but if you can see the track, you must follow it. To be anywhere off it, either right or left, would be dangerous in the extreme. And often when the lonely soul has reaped nothing but obloquy (disgrace) and opposition, has been borne to a cross and crucified as a malefactor, it has comforted itself with the prospects of the harvests of blessing which were to accrue to those who had rejected its appeals—just as Pentecost came to those who had been the murderers of Christ.

Such are the resorts of the soul in its seasons of anguish. It casts itself on the ground crying, "Father, Abba, Father"; it stays itself on the word of promise that comes to it in angel garb; it goes forth to yield itself to death, assured that life awaits it and the objects of its choice.

3. COMPENSATIONS. To all valleys there are mountains, to all depths heights; for all midnight hours there are hours of sunrise; for Gethsemane, an Olivet. We can never give up anything for God or man without discovering that, at the moment of surrender, God begins to repay as he foretold to the prophet: "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron." (Isa. 60:17) We do not make the surrender with any thought of profiting by it; but when we make it, with a single purpose and aim, we learn that when Christ lays a requisition on boat or sailor's time, he returns the boat laden with fish to the water's edge.

Nor does God keep these compensations for that new world, "where light and darkness fuse." It were long to wait, if that were so. But here and now we learn that there are compensations. It may seem a hardship to the man to leave his cell, where he has been immured so long that he dreads the light, the stare of strange eyes, the call for exertion; but when the first stiffness of the joints and novelty of his surroundings have passed off, will he not be compensated? The first movement from the selfish life may strain and try us, the indifference of our fellows be hard to bear; but God has such things to reveal and give as pass the wildest imaginings of the self-centered soul.

So Jeremiah found it. His compensations came. God became his Comforter and wiped away his tears; God opened to him the vista of the future, down whose long aisles he beheld his people planted again in their own land. He saw men buying fields for money, subscribing deeds and sealing them as he had done; he heard the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, and the voice of them that bring the sacrifices of joy into the Lord's house; he was assured of the advent of the Man, the branch from the root of David, who would sit upon his throne (chaps. 32-33). There was compensation also in the confidence with which Nebuchadnezzar treated him, and in the evident reliance which his decimated people placed in his intercessions, as we shall see. And if he could only know of the myriads who have been comforted by the story of his griefs and by the assurances of his prophecies—red juice pressed into the golden chalice of Scripture by the sorrows that crushed his heart—surely he would feel that his affliction was light and not worthy to be compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which it was working out.

So it will be with all who fall into the ground to die. God will not forget or forsake them. The grave may be dark and deep, the winter long, the frost keen and penetrating; but spring will come, and the stone be rolled away and the golden stalk shall wave in the sunshine, bearing its crown of fruit. Men shall thrive on the bread of our experience, the product of our tears, sufferings and prayers.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

**What is the meaning behind Jeremiah's transaction of buying the land and then selling it to Baruch (Jer. 32:6-15)?**

Duet. 30:3 Jer. 31:1-17 Jer. 33:11, 26 Ezek. 36:24-32 Ezek. 37:1-14

**Who is Baruch?**

Jer. 36:3-8 Jer. 43:3 Jer. 45:1

I will restore them to be "my people" in their own land, and "I will be their God" (32:44). **Will this be merely an external and political restoration or will they be spiritual restored as well?**

Jer. 32:39-40

The promises of future blessing, spiritual and temporal, to Jerusalem are inseparably connected with the future manifestation of Messiah, "the Branch of righteousness" who, springing from David, shall sit upon the throne of David forever (Jer. 33:15-17; Luke 1:32, 33). As His name or revealed character to Israel His people is (Jer. 23:6) "The Lord our Righteousness," so, by virtue of her mystical union with Him, she also shall be called "The Lord our Righteousness." How comforting to the Church, too, is this truth, which applies to her as really as it does to literal Israel, "because as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). His name is written on believers as "The Lord our Righteousness," being "of God made unto us righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Messiah's literal priesthood shall never fail: and therefore His people's spiritual priesthood also shall never cease (33:18): by Him, the grand Fulfiller of God's everlasting covenant with Levi, let all His people "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). The kingdom and the priesthood combined in the person of Messiah, about to be manifested on earth in the coming days, shall be the perpetual guarantee for the security and sanctity of Israel (Jer. 33:21, 22). The same functions, exercised invisibly but really now, are the pledge for the eternal salvation and purification of the Israel of God, the Church. They are at utter variance with the mind of God who "despise" the people of God, whether the Israel after the flesh or that after the Spirit (Jer. 33:24); for He who governs the world of nature, "day and night, heaven and earth," by fixed laws, is the same God who has made an everlasting covenant with His people (Jer. 33:25, 26). (A. R. Fausset) At times all seems to be lost for Israel and Judea; their nation, their priesthood, their alter, etc.. **What hope is given in Jeremiah 33 for a future Messiah to sit on David's throne?**

Jer. 33:14-16 Luke 1:31-33

### **Jeremiah 34:1-22**

We gain much information concerning the situation at Jerusalem during the reign of Zedekiah from the pages of Ezekiel—who, though resident in the land of the exile, faithfully reflected, and in prophetic vision anticipated, what was transpiring in the beloved city to which his thoughts were incessantly directed. His prophecies are most valuable and interesting when read in this light.

Zedekiah, as we have seen, on ascending the throne, bound himself under the most solemn sanctions to be loyal to the supremacy of Babylon; and there is no doubt that, at the time, he fully intended to be faithful, the more especially as, at Nebuchadnezzar's command, he took the oath of allegiance in the sacred name of Jehovah. But he was weak and young, and wholly in the hands of the strong court-party that favored an alliance with Egypt and the casting off of the Chaldean yoke.

Two years before the catastrophe befell, Ezekiel clearly foretold what was about to happen. He foresaw the embassy sent to Pharaoh requesting horses and people, and asked indignantly, "Shall he prosper? Shall he escape that doeth such things? Or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?" And he followed up his bitter remonstrances by the awful words, "As I live, saith the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die. Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company be a help to him in the war" (Ezek. 17:11-21).

Jeremiah, as we know, earnestly dissuaded both king and princes from entering into the alliance which was being advocated between Judah and the neighboring states; and he insisted, in the face of the false prophets, that the residue of the vessels left by Nebuchadnezzar in the temple certainly would be transported, as the rest had been, to Babylon, if they persisted in the mad project (chap. 27). Notwithstanding all these remonstrances, however, the confederacy was formed; and in a fatal moment Zedekiah renounced his allegiance to the king of Babylon.

Then it befell precisely as Ezekiel had foreseen. Stung to the quick by the perfidy and ingratitude of the Jews, who had so persistently and obstinately outraged him, Nebuchadnezzar gathered a vast army, having resolved to make a public example of them to surrounding peoples by the swiftness and mercilessness of his vengeance. "A sword, a sword, it is sharpened, and also furbished: it is sharpened that it may make a slaughter; it is furbished that it may be as lightning. Cry and howl, son of man: for it is upon my people, it is upon all the princes of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with my people: smite therefore upon thy thigh" (Ezek. 21:8-17, R.V.).

The king of Babylon comes to the junction of the ways—this to Jerusalem, that to Rabbah, the chief city of Ammon. He consults the usual signs of divination, which point him to the assault of Jerusalem, with battering rams, and mounts, and forts. And as he takes the road to the doomed city, the voice of Jehovah is heard bidding the prince of Israel, whose day is come, to remove the mitre and take off the crown because Jehovah was resolved to "overturn, overturn, and overturn." Then, as though to justify the awful sentence, there is given an enumeration of the crimes which were making the streets of Jerusalem red with blood and foul with impurity. It is altogether a terrible description of the state of things in the city during those last years of Zedekiah's reign. A bitter experience for Jeremiah, whose soul must have been sore vexed from day to day, in seeing and hearing their lawless deeds (Ezek. 21:18-27; 22:1-16).

At last, in December, 591 B.C., the siege began. On the approach of Nebuchadnezzar, the confederacy had melted away and Jerusalem was left alone, an island amid the roaring waves of Chaldean armies. But the citizens had laid in a

good store of provisions and were expecting daily the advance of Pharaoh-Hophra, with the cavalry of Egypt, to raise the siege.

At this juncture, Zedekiah sent two well-known men to Jeremiah, to ask whether Jehovah would not interpose for his people as he had done in the great days of the past; as, for instance, when he destroyed the host of Sennacherib in a single night. It must have been a trying ordeal to the prophet. One conciliatory word might have averted the dislike of princes and people, given a bright glint of popularity and hero worship, and obliterated the charges of mean-spiritedness and lack of patriotism that were freely leveled at him. Why should he not be the Isaiah of this new siege? Why not arouse and encourage his people to indomitable resistance and heroic faith? Why not blend his voice with those of the prophets that foretold a certain deliverance, and so acquire an influence over them, which might be used ultimately for their highest good?

It is not impossible that such considerations passed before his mind. But if so, they were immediately dismissed. Then said Jeremiah to them, Thus shall you say to Zedekiah: "Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, with which you fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will gather them into the midst of this city. 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, says the Lord, I will deliver Zedekiah, king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, even such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy." (Jer. 21:4-7)

He followed up these terrible words by saying that the only way of safety was to go forth to the Chaldeans, who were now investing the city on every side. All who stopped in the city would die of sword, pestilence or famine. They would be accounted as figs not fit to be eaten, and destined to be cast away as refuse. But those who went forth and surrendered themselves to the king of Babylon would save their lives.

Yet once again, when the siege of Jerusalem was in progress, and every day the air was full of the cries of the combatants, the heavy thud of the battering rams against the walls, and the cries of wounded men borne from the ramparts to the tendance of women—Jeremiah went fearlessly to Zedekiah with the heavy tidings that nothing could stay the sack and burning of the city, since God had given it into the hands of the king of Babylon; and that he would surely be taken and behold him face to face. "He shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon" (Jer. 34:1-7).

At the same time, rolling across the desert waste and reverberating like a funeral knell, came the terrible voice of Ezekiel: "Woe to the bloody city! Heap on the wood; make the fire hot; then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the rust of it may be consumed. I the Lord have spoken it. I will not go back, neither will I repent" (Ezek. 24:1-14).

It is not impossible that Jeremiah's vehement words of reproof aroused the deeply drugged conscience of his people; and they resolved, at the suggestion of Zedekiah, to make some reparation for their sins, and at the same time strengthen their garrison, by setting free their slaves. This was done at a solemn convocation, specially summoned in the temple; and the national resolve was ratified before God with the most sacred rites. A calf was cut in two and the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs and the priests, and all the principal people, passed between the parts of the calf, as much as to say, May God part us in two, as this beast is, if we turn back from our vow to emancipate our brethren and sisters, Hebrews and Hebrewesses, who are enslaved.

Great joy spread through hundreds of hearts—a body of stalwart defenders was raised for the beleaguered city. Best of all, the nation had done right in the eyes of the Lord. Two months or so passed when, to the unbounded joy of the citizens, the attacks of Nebuchadnezzar became less frequent; the lines of the besieging army thinned; and presently the tents were struck and the whole host moved off. How immense the relief when the crash of catapult and ram ceased and the population pent up so long within their walls could go freely forth! This diversion was caused by the approach of Pharaoh's army. The Jews thought that they would never see their foes again and must have derided Jeremiah mercilessly. They also repealed the edict of emancipation and caused the servants and handmaidens whom they had let go to return to their former condition.

In that tumult of national rejoicing, when the prophet's words seemed falsified, when the fear they had inspired turned to increased hatred against the man who had spoken them, and when he seemed cast off and disowned by Jehovah himself, it must have needed uncommon faith and courage to raise a bold and uncompromising protest. But he did not swerve by a hair-breadth from the path of duty. The infatuation of his people, their treachery to their plighted oath, the disappointment and sufferings of the enslaved, and the honor of Jehovah so ruthlessly contemned—all compelled him to speak out. "Behold, saith the Lord, I proclaim liberty to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant into the hand of their enemies, and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. And Zedekiah king of Judah, and his princes, will I give into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you. Behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant" (chap. 34).

It needed no common moral courage and sense of the presence of God to dare to speak such words; they must have brought down on the devoted head of the lonely prophet storms of abuse. How easy to ridicule him when it seemed so

sure that the false prophets were right, and he wrong! His opponents would be proportionately indignant as the voice of conscience, not yet quite silenced, protested that he was speaking the very word of Jehovah.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

### **Was the prophecy told to Zedekiah in Jer. 34:3 fulfilled?**

Jer. 39:4-7

The Jews, when under the terror of the Babylonian army brought by God against them, at the Command of the Lord by Jeremiah, liberated their Jewish bondservants. But when the terror passed away, the siege having been raised for a time through the diversion in the Jews' favor made by Pharaoh's army, they again enslaved their brethren whom they had just manumitted; and this in violation of their own solemn oath and covenant in the house of God (vv. 8-16). (A. R. Fausset)

**What covenant takes place "when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it—"? (Jer. 34:18)**

**Would those Jews holding slaves soon be slaves themselves?**

Gen. 15:1-21 Gen. 31:44-53 Jer. 34:8-17

### **Jeremiah 35:1-19**

Jonadab, the son of Rechab, three hundred years before the time of Jeremiah, had directed his sons to live a nomad life, dwelling in tents, not in fixed dwellings, in order to be ready at any moment to move whithersoever necessity might require. Though we are under no obligation to follow the letter of this rule, we are bound to follow the spirit of it. "We here have no continuing city;" and if we be true disciples of Jesus, "we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:14). Like the patriarchs who "sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, and looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," we should regard our present body as but a tent soon to be taken down, and we should be looking for the "building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1).

Moreover, Jonadab charged his descendants to drink no wine. It is often wise to deny ourselves lawful pleasures, if we thereby escape the danger of falling ourselves, or leading others by our example to fall into hurtful and unlawful indulgences. If, however, the believer, in the exercise of his Christian liberty, does not altogether abstain from such pleasures, he must take care, by a guarded and temperate use of them, to keep clear of sinful excess in lawful enjoyments. More are ruined by the unlawful use of lawful things than even by things absolutely unlawful; for the difficulty in the case of the former is to know where to draw the boundary line between the temperate and excessive use of them; whereas, in the case of the latter, there is no difficulty, as they are altogether forbidden. The young especially ought ever to remember St. Peter's warning, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11).

But the chief lesson designed by the Spirit that we should learn from the filial obedience and consequent reward of the Rechabites is this, If Jonadab' descendants obeyed their father's commands, on a point not morally obligatory in itself, were so scrupulously and universally kept by his children, how much more ought the eternally-obligatory and righteous, commands of the God and Father of Israel and of us all be implicitly obeyed! Yet Israel and Judah refused to hear God and His prophets, though "rising early and speaking to them." Therefore, as the promised good was to attend the obedient children of Jonadab, so should the threatened evil be brought upon the disobedient people of God (v. 17). Let us learn, since we recognize God as our Father, to give Him the honor which belongs to Him as such, rendering an immediate, unquestioning, and, as far as the Spirit enables us, a perfect and universal obedience, that so it may be well with us, not only during our short sojourn here, "in the land where we are strangers" (v. 7), but also, and chiefly, in the heavenly land, where we shall not be strangers, but at home forever in the blessed city of our Father and our God!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

### **Besides the commands Jonadab gave to his descendents what else do you know about him?**

2 Kings 10:23-27

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

We are admitted to the prophet's private chamber, where he is keeping close that he may not excite the acute animosity and hatred of the people. Baruch, his trusted friend, a man of rank and learning, sits writing with laborious care at the dictation of the prophet, whose soul is borne along by the impulse of the Divine Spirit. "Tell us," the princes said afterwards to Baruch, "how did you write all these words at his mouth?" Then Baruch answered them, "He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book."

When the scroll was filled, Jeremiah, not venturing to go into places of public concourse, entrusted it to Baruch and bade him read it to the assembled crowds. Jerusalem just then was unusually full. From all parts of Judah people had

come to observe the great fast which had been proclaimed in view of the approach of the Babylonian army. Adopting the cry which Jeremiah had so fervently deprecated, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these," and imagining that there was a special virtue in the temple precincts, the multitudes had crowded in that direction in an agony of fear, hoping by their black veils, covered lips, and heart-rending cries to propitiate the Almighty and avert the fate that seemed imminent.

Choosing a position in the upper court at the entry of the new gate to the Lord's house, Baruch commenced to read while the people stood densely massed around him. Amid the awestruck crowd was a young man, Micaiah, the grandson of Shaphan, who was so impressed and startled by what he heard that he hastened to acquaint the princes, then sitting in council in the chamber of the chief Secretary of State in the royal palace. They in turn were so aroused by what he told them that they sent him back to the temple and asked Baruch to come without delay and read the prophet's words to them. He came at their request and, sitting among them, commenced to read.

In the group of princes were several notable men: Elishama, the Secretary of State; Elnathan, the father-in-law of the king, who had brought the prophet Urijah back from Egypt to die; and others. A great fear fell upon them as they heard those ominous words, which were probably closely similar to those recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of this book. Though they had joined in the general hatred of the prophet, they were deeply sensible that there was everything to justify him in his prognostications of coming trouble; and it seemed their plain duty to acquaint the king with the contents of the scroll.

Before doing so, however, they counseled Baruch and Jeremiah to conceal themselves, for they well knew the despotic and passionate temper of Jehoiakim; and the scroll was left in the chamber of Elishama. It would appear that in the first instance they thought a verbal statement of the words they had heard would suffice.

This, however, would not satisfy the king, who bade Jehudi fetch the scroll itself. It was winter, the month of December; the king was occupying the winter quarters of his palace and a fire was burning brightly in the brazier. It is a vivid picture: the king was sitting before the fire; the princes standing around him; Jehudi reading the contents of the scroll; consternation and panic reigning throughout the city and darkening the faces of the prostrate crowds in the temple courts. As Jehudi began to read, the royal brow knit and symptoms of a tempest of anger showed themselves. After the scribe had read three or four columns, Jehoiakim snatched the scroll from his hand and, demanding the penknife which he carried as symbol and implement of his calling, began to cut the manuscript in pieces, which he flung contemptuously into the fire. The worst have some compunctions, and for the most passionate there are warning voices that remonstrate and plead. Not so with King Jehoiakim, Delaiah, Gemariah, and even Elnathan, tried to dissuade him from his purpose, but in vain. Nothing could stop him until the whole scroll was cut to pieces and every fragment consumed. Not content with this flagrant act of defiance, he gave orders for the immediate arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch, an order which his emissaries attempted to execute, but in vain.

The destruction of the scroll did not however cancel the terrible doom to which the ship of state was hurrying, under the orders of its passionate and wicked captain. On another scroll all the words of the book which he had burned were written again; and others were added foretelling the indignity and insult to which the dead body of the king would be exposed. "His dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost."

1. EYES OPENED TO SEE. There was a vast difference between Baruch, whose heart was in perfect sympathy with Jeremiah, and Jehudi or the princes. But there was almost as much between the faithful scribe and the heaven-illuminated prophet. The one could only write as the words streamed from those burning lips; he saw nothing, he realized nothing; to him the walls of the chamber were the utmost bound of vision: while the other beheld the whole landscape of truth outspread before him, the rocks and shoals on the margin of the ocean, the inrolling storm-billows tipped with angry foam, the gathering clouds, the ship, straining in every timber, and driving sheer on the shore. For Jeremiah the walls of the chamber where they sat together were as though they had become transparent; he looked through and beyond them, and read off his message from what he saw, as a man might read from a book.

This was the work of the Spirit who inspired him, and whose special function it was to open the eye of the seers of the old time to the great facts of the unseen and eternal world, which were shortly to be reduplicated in the world of the temporal and visible. They beheld visions of God: the sapphire throne upborne by the strong cherubim; the terrible wheels of providence; the rise and fall of mighty empires; sin and pain brought under control by the mighty sway of the coming One. To speak what he knew, and to testify what he had seen—such was the mission of the prophet.

In our case there is no likelihood of this. Yet men may be seers still. Two men may sit together side by side. The veil of sense may hang darkly before the one, while for the other it is rent in two from the top to the bottom. *There* no thought, no ambition, no desire for anything beyond the temporal and seen; but *here* the vision of the presence and care of God, of the principalities and powers in the heavenlies, of the ministry of angels and the opposition of fiends, of the chariots and horses of salvation, of the prize and crown, of the awards of Christ's judgment seat, and the home beyond the river. Flesh and blood do not reveal such things, but the Spirit of God. They are hidden from the wise and prudent but revealed to babes who love God. Happy are they, the eyes of whose heart are opened to know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power toward them that believe.

It is very important that all Christians should be alive to and possess this power of vision. It is deeper than intellectual, since it is spiritual; it is not the result of reasoning or learning, but of intuition; it cannot be acquired in the school of earthly science, but is the gift of Him who alone can open the eyes of the blind and remove the films of earthliness that shut out the eternal and unseen. If you lack it, seek it at the hands of Jesus; be willing to do his will, and you shall know. It is a thousand pities to be blind and not able to see afar off when all around stand the mountains of God in solemn majesty; as the Alps around the Swiss hostelry, where the traveler arrives after nightfall, to eat and drink and sleep, unconscious of the proximity of so much loveliness. It is related of Ampere, the electrician, who was shortsighted without being aware of it, that when he became conscious of his defective vision through the casual use of the eyeglass of a friend, he burst into tears as he realized how much he had missed throughout his life of the wonderful beauty and interest of the world around him. With more reason will many of us have to lament our untold loss through that spiritual near-sightedness of which the Holy Ghost speaks (2 Pet. 1:9, R.V.).

If, on the other hand, you have the opened eye, you will not need books of evidences to establish to your satisfaction the truth of our holy religion, the glory of the risen Lord, the world of the unseen. With the men of Samaria, you will say, "We have seen it for ourselves." No further proof will be needed than your own spiritual senses afford. And though a series of well-ordered arguments should be brought into array to assail your position as a believer, you would be bold to reply, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." The patriarchs of old who reached forth their hands to greet the vision of the City that hath foundations, the New Jerusalem—which all holy souls behold descending out of heaven from God—furnish the model for spiritual men of every age; and they who see these things are indifferent to the privations of the tent-life, or, as in Jeremiah's case, rise superior to the hatred of man and the terrors of a siege.

2. THE USE OF THE PENKNIFE. Men use the knife to the Bible in varied ways. Among these are *Systems of Priestcraft and Error*. They have done it. They will do it again. They are wise to do it—I mean, wise in their own interests. For when once the Bible is in the hands of the people, the false teacher, who has deluded them for selfish purposes, must pack. The long reign of the Roman Catholic church began to break as Tyndale, Erasmus, and Luther opened the Word of God, and the printing press scattered it over the world. It is not to be wondered at therefore, that, to stay the progress of the Reformation as long as possible, fires were lit for Bible burning in every chief city of Europe, and the knife was freely used to cut out whatever condemned the office of the Pope, or the system to which he belonged. The Vulgate, with its mutilations and excisions, is a standing evidence that Jehudi's penknife survived his age.

The next that follows Jehoiakim's practice is *the Infidel*, who uses the keen blade of bitter sarcasm and miscalled reason to destroy the Scriptures. The hostility that manifested itself in the winter palace among the princes of this world has wrought in the halls of earthly learning and science, instigating similar acts to theirs. The laboratory of the chemist, the hammer of the mineralogist, the pry of the geologist, the telescope of the astronomer, the calculation of the arithmetician and the explorations of the discoverer—have all been used in turn as the penknife of destruction. The Bible is cut up regularly once in each generation by men like these.

The next are the *Higher Critics* of our time, who surely have gone beyond the necessities of the case in their ruthless use of the knife. Some of them seem to delight in making havoc of the sacred writings, hacking at the Old Testament especially, and whittling away from the reputed work of a Moses, an Isaiah, or a Daniel. There is room for the honest examination of the fabric of sacred Scripture, its language, the evidence furnished in its texture of the successive hands which have reedited its most ancient documents; but this is altogether different to the ruthless vandalism that wantonly assigns large portions of the Pentateuch to the age of Ezra, and the Book of Daniel to the times of the Maccabees.

*We are all tempted to use Jehudi's penknife.* It is probable that no one is free from the almost unconscious habit of evading or toning down certain passages which conflict with the doctrinal or ecclesiastical position in which we were reared, or which we have assumed.

In our private reading of the Scripture, we must beware of using the penknife. Whole books and tracts of truth are practically cut out of the Bible of some earnest Christians—passages referring to the Second Advent, with their summons to awake and gird on the armor of light; those that deal with the undying worm, the unquenched fire, and the inevitable doom of the ungodly; those that describe the types and shadows of the ancient law; or those that build up massive systems of truth and doctrine, as in the Epistles. But we can only eliminate these things at our peril. The Bible is like good wheat bread, which contains all the properties necessary to support life. And we cannot eliminate its starch or sugar, its nitrates or phosphates, without becoming enfeebled and unhealthy. It is a golden rule to read the Bible as a whole. Of course each will have his favorite passages, dark with tears and use—Psalm 23; Isaiah 53; John 14—but, beside these, there should be the loving and devout study of all Scripture, which is given by inspiration of God, and is therefore profitable, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.

3. THE INDESTRUCTIBLE WORD. Men may destroy the words and the fabric on which they are written, but not the Word itself. It is the incorruptible Word of God which lives and abides, though all flesh wither as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of the field. It must be sometimes an uncomfortable reflection to those who refuse the testimony of the Word of God, who to all intents and purposes destroy it and despise its remonstrances and warnings, that their attitude towards the message cannot affect the reality to which it bears witness.

Jeremiah wrote another scroll. The money spent in buying up copies of the Bible to burn at St. Paul's enabled Tyndale to reissue the Scriptures in a cheaper form and a better type. And perhaps the most remarkable fact in this connection is that, in spite of all that has been done to stamp out the Bible, it exists in millions of copies and is circulated among all the nations of the world—not a chapter effaced, not a parable dropped out, not a miracle injured, not a promise scarred. It has been declared over and over again to be a careless, unauthenticated collection of works of different periods, having no unity save that given by the bookbinder; yet it is with us today in unimpaired authority.

And the facts to which Jeremiah bore witness all came to pass. Neither knife nor fire could arrest the inevitable doom of the king, city, and people. The drunken captain may cut in pieces the chart that tells of the rocks in the vessel's course, and put in irons the sailor who calls his attention to it, but neither will avert the crash that must ensue unless the helm is turned. Let those beware who deny the testimony of Scripture to the retribution of sin and the wrath of God; these things are as true as the throne of God and the reward of the redeemed. You may tamper with and destroy the record, but the stubborn facts remain.

After Jehoiakim had deliberately cut in pieces the prophet's scroll, and so rejected his warnings and expostulations, and when in addition to this he had threatened the lives of God's faithful servants—it became clear that no further good could be gained by reiterating his messages. Thus the prophet's voice was hushed, apparently for the remainder of the reign of this bad and infatuated king. This is one of those principles of the divine government—which is as certain in its operation today as ever—that after a certain time the divine voice, being unheeded, ceases to speak; and those who will not retain God in their knowledge are given up to the workings of their corrupt minds, to work all uncleanness with greediness. We recall those ominous words, written as an epitaph on the grave of the first king of Israel: "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death," and the no less awful words of the apostle of love: "There is a sin unto death; not concerning this do I say that he should make request" (1 John 5:16, R.V.).

Into that new and splendid palace of Jehoiakim, whose spacious halls were ceiled with cedar from Lebanon, lighted by wide windows, and painted with bright colors, the one presence never entered which at that time would have saved the ship of state—as the timely arrival of a pilot may save an ocean steamer from the fatal ignorance of an incompetent captain. The false prophets might beguile the ears of king and people with predictions, bred in the falsehood of their own nature. The strong Egyptian partisans might urge on the king alliance with Pharaoh as the certain cure for the difficulties of their position. But Jeremiah's voice, during the dark and troublesome days that succeeded that scene in the palace, and until Jehoiakim's body was cast forth, unburied and unwept, was still. How did it fare with the prophet, and what engaged him during those eventful years?

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

**What symbolic gesture was king Johoiakim making when he cut and burned the prophetic writing of Jeremiah?**

**What would be two different reactions people would have when exposed to the word of God?**

Acts 7:54-59    2 Cor. 2:15-16

### **Jeremiah 37:1-21**

The City was delirious with joy. The Chaldeans had withdrawn; Pharaoh would prove more than a match for them; they would not return. The thunder cloud had broken—there was nothing to fear. But Jeremiah never changed his note. It seemed like a raven's croak amid the songs of spring birds. Very depressing! Very unpopular! Very likely to spread suspicion and panic! Only too gladly would he have yielded to the current flowing around him. But he dared not; and when the king sent another deputation to inquire through him of Jehovah, he returned this terrible reply: "Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire" (37:1-10).

God's prophets had too clear a vision of the issue of the duel between Chaldea and Egypt to be able to buoy up their people with hopes of deliverance. Jeremiah had already foreseen that the daughter of Egypt would be put to shame and delivered into the hand of the people of the north; he had even asked that the tidings of invasion might be published in her principal cities (46:13-28). Ezekiel was not less decisive: "Thus saith the Lord God, I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man" (Ezek. 30:24).

Shortly after this, the prophet resolved to take the opportunity, offered by the withdrawal of the Chaldeans, to visit his inheritance at Anathoth, for the purpose of receiving his portion there, perhaps of rent or of some division of tithes among the priestly families, of which he was a member. As he was passing out through the gate of Benjamin, he was recognized by a captain whose family had long been in antagonism with him; and he was not slow to turn the occasion to advantage by repaying a long-standing grudge (37:13). He therefore laid hold on the prophet, saying, "You fall away to the Chaldeans." It was an absurd charge; for the Chaldeans had raised the siege and it was supposed they would not return.

The pretext however was sufficient to serve Irijah's purpose and, though it was indignantly repudiated by Jeremiah, he was dragged with violence into the presence of the princes, who were as glad to have their intractable foe at their mercy as the priests to whom Judas offered to betray his Master.

After a while, Zedekiah, perhaps pricked by remorse or alarmed at the tidings which came from the frontier, sent for him—much as Herod desired to summon John the Baptist from his dungeon to converse with him in his palace halls above. "Is there any word from the Lord?" the king asked, anxiously.

What an opportunity was here for Jeremiah to trim his speech, to put velvet on his lips, and to mitigate the unwelcome truth! Thus he might curry the king's favor and secure for himself deliverance from his intolerable sufferings. But again there was no compromise. "And Jeremiah said, There is. He said also, you shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon."

He then pleaded with the royal clemency for a mitigation of the severity of his sentence, with such good success that he was committed, at the king's command, to the court of the guard, in the immediate vicinity of the palace; he was fed daily with a loaf of bread out of the baker's street, until all the bread in the city was spent. In the meanwhile the army of the Chaldeans, having defeated Pharaoh, returned and again formed their thick-set lines around the city, like a fence of iron, to be drawn closer and closer until Jerusalem fell, like a snared bird, into their grasp.

It is impossible to recite or read this story without admiration for the man who dared to stand alone with God against a nation in arms. It makes us think of Ziegenbalg, the first missionary to the East Indies, standing alone there against the whole force of the authorities, determined to crush his mission in the bud; of Judson, pursuing his work for the salvation of Burma amid the treachery and hostility of the king; of Moffat, going alone and unarmed into the territory of the terrible Africander; of John Hunt amid the ferocious cannibals of Fiji; of John G. Paton, who was preserved amid fifty attempts to take his life. Our sole duty is to see that we are on God's plan and doing his work, to wrap around our souls the sense of his presence, and to keep our ears open to the perpetual assurance, "I am with you, to deliver you." Then we shall leap barrier-walls, pass unscathed through troops of foes, and stand as pillars in his Temple, never to be removed.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

### **Describe Zedekiah's character. Is there any similarity between him and Herod (Matt. 14:9)?**

Matt. 14:9    Mark 6:20

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

In addition to the discomfort which he shared in common with the rest of the crowded populace, Jeremiah was exposed to aggravated sorrows. It would appear that he was constantly reiterating, in the ears of all who passed through the court of the palace, the message which he had previously delivered to the king: that to stay in the city was to incur death by sword, famine or pestilence, while to go forth to the lines of the Chaldeans was the one condition of life. He lost no opportunity of asserting that Jerusalem would surely be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and that the king would take it. As these words passed from lip to lip, they carried dismay throughout the city. Men repeated them as they did duty on the walls, met around the bivouac fires, or discussed the probable issues of the siege; and the fact that Jeremiah had so often spoken as the mouthpiece of Jehovah gave an added weight to his words.

It was quite natural, therefore, that the princes, who knew well enough the importance of keeping up the courage of the people, should demand the death of one who was not only weakening the hands of the people generally, but especially of the men of war. In some such way the drowsy sleeper, unwilling to be aroused by the barking of the watchdog, catches up his revolver to shoot him; or the crew, eager for carouse, murders the watchman who warns them off the white surf breaking along a ragged rock-bound shore. The young king was weak rather than wicked, a puppet and toy in the hands of his princes and court. He therefore yielded to their demand, saying, "Behold, he is in your hand—for the king is not he that can do anything against you."

Without delay Jeremiah was flung into one of those rock-hewn cisterns that abound in Jerusalem, the bottom of which, the water having been exhausted during the extremities of the siege, consisted of a deep sediment of mud, into which he sank. There was not a moment to be lost. The life of the faithful servant of God was not to end amid the damp darkness of that hideous sepulcher from which no cry could reach the upper air; and help was sent through a very unexpected channel. An Ethiopian eunuch—who is probably anonymous, since the name Ebed-melech simply means "the king's servant"—with a love for God's cause, sweetly prophetic of the way in which Gentile hearts would be opened to welcome and forward the gospel throughout the world, hastened to the king, then sitting to administer justice at one of the gates of the city. The eunuch remonstrated with him and urged him to take immediate steps to save the prophet from imminent death.

Always swayed by the last strong influence brought to bear on him, the king yielded as easily to his faithful servant, who was probably the custodian of his harem, as he had done to his lords; he bade the eunuch take a sufficient number of men to prevent interference, and at once extricate the prophet. There was great gentleness in the way this noble Ethiopian executed his purpose. He was not content with merely dragging Jeremiah from the pit's bottom, but placed

upon the ropes discarded old clothes and rotten rags, fetched hurriedly from the house of the king; thus the tender flesh of the prophet was neither cut nor chafed. It was an act of womanly tenderness, which makes it as fragrant as the breaking of the box over the person of the Lord. It is not enough to serve and help those who need assistance; we should do it with the sweetness and gentleness of Christ. It is not only what we do, but the way in which we do it, which most quickly indicates our real selves. Many a man might have hurried to the pit's mouth with ropes; only one of God's own gentlemen would have thought of the rags and old clothes. It is very quaint and beautiful, when so much is left untold, that a dozen lines in the Word of God should be given to this simple incident and the hurried advice thrown into the darkness of the lonely prophet by his kindhearted deliverer. "Then they drew up Jeremiah with the cords, and took him up out of the dungeon; and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard." From that moment until the city fell, the prophet remained in safe custody. On one memorable occasion the king sought his counsel, though in strict secrecy. Once more, and for the last time, those two men stood face to face: king and prophet; weakness and strength; representatives, the one of the fading glories of David's race, and the other of the imperishable splendor of truth and righteousness. Once more Zedekiah asked what the issue would be, and once more received the alternatives that appeared so foolish to the eye of sense—defeat and death by remaining in the city, liberty and life by going forth.

"Go forth?" said Zedekiah, in effect. "Never! It would be unworthy of one in whose veins flows the blood of kings. I would expose myself to the ridicule of all who have fled across to the Chaldean lines; for the Chaldeans themselves would deliver me into their hands."

"They shall not deliver you," said Jeremiah, and then began to plead with him, as a man might plead for himself. "Obey, I beseech you, the voice of the Lord, in that which I speak to you; so it shall be well with you, and your soul shall live." Finally, in graphic words he painted the picture of the certain doom the king would incur if he tarried until the city fell into the captor's hands. Instead of the derision of the few Jews that had fallen away, he would then be exposed to the taunts of his wives and children, who would by that time have become allotted to their captors and would seek to win the smiles of their new lords by taunting the fallen monarch in whose smiles they had formerly basked.

In this advice of Jeremiah we are reminded of words repeated by our Lord on five different occasions, and in which he tells us that those who keep their lives lose them, and that those who lose their lives find and keep them. Herein do we find the safe and blessed path: not in husbanding our strength, but in yielding it in service; not in burying our talents, but in administering them; not in hoarding our seed in the barn, but in scattering it; not in following an earthly human policy, but in surrendering ourselves to the will of God. The man of faith judges not after the sight of his eyes, or the judgment of sense; he strikes currents flowing unseen by the world, and acts on suggestions received by direct communication from the Spirit of God, though always through the Word of God and consistent with the loftiest dictates of sanctified common sense.

The weakness which was the ruin of Zedekiah is revealed in his request that Jeremiah would not inform the princes of the nature of their communications and would hide the truth beneath the semblance of truth. It is difficult to pronounce a judgment on the way in which the prophet veiled the purport of his conversation with Zedekiah from the inquisitive questions of the princes. There is an appearance of evasion in his reply, which seems a little inconsistent with the character of the prophet of Jehovah. At the same time, the princes had no right to interrogate him, and he was not obliged by his duty to them to tell the entire truth. We are under no obligation to gratify an impertinent curiosity; but we must be very careful to be transparent in speech and in act, and to be utterly true when we profess to be telling the whole truth to those who have a right to know. In the present case, the prophet shielded the king with a touch of chivalrous devotion and loyalty—which was probably the last act of devotion to the royal house—to save that for which he had poured out his heart's blood in tears and entreaties and sacrifices for nearly forty years.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

Jeremiah tells Zedekiah that if he refuses to surrender to the Chaldeans there will be catastrophic results. **What is the meaning of the poem in Jeremiah 38:22 that is directed toward Zedekiah?**

### **Jeremiah 39:1-18**

During those long dark months of siege, probably the only soul in all that crowded city which was in perfect peace, and free in its unrestrained liberty, was Jeremiah's. Tethered as he was by an iron chain to the wall of the court of the guard, he passed beyond the narrow confines of the enclosure to the great age that was to be—when Judah would be saved and Jerusalem would dwell safely and known by the name which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jer. 33:16) And amid the cries of the assailants and defenders, unbroken by the thud of the battering-rams, deep as the blue Syrian sky that looked down upon him, was the peace of God that passed the understanding of those that thronged in and out, to and fro, between the city and the royal palace.

The siege lasted in all for about eighteen months, with the one brief respite caused by the approach of Pharaoh's army; and it is impossible for us to estimate the amount of human anguish which was crowded into that fateful space. Some conception of the suffering may be gathered from the words with which Ezekiel anticipated it. As in a mirror,

coming events were forecast: the caldron, full of the choicest flesh, hanging over the swift fire until it was consumed; the vision of the iron pan encircling the sun-burnt brick, as the iron legions of Chaldea would engirdle the beleaguered city; the meager measure of wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt, dealt out in measure day by day, but barely sufficient for the prophet's sustenance. The barley cakes mingled with cow's dung, abhorrent to the taste, yet greedily devoured; the stealthy preparation of his household stuff for removal; and the stealing out at night from his house by a hole in the wall, with covered face and laden shoulder—all these spoke with a vividness, which no words could equal, of the horrors of that siege (Ezek. 4).

Imagine for a moment the overcrowded city into which had gathered, from all the country round, the peasantry and villagers who, with such of their valuables as they had been able hastily to collect and transport, had sought refuge, within the gray old walls of Zion, from the violence and outrage of the merciless troops. If wandering tribes, like the sons of Rechab, were induced for once to break the tradition of their nomad life, to shelter themselves within the city enclosure, how much more would the terrified populations scattered in slight habitations over the hill country count it politic to do the same! This mass of fugitives would greatly add to the difficulties of the defense by their demands upon the provisions which were laid up in anticipation of the siege and by overcrowding the thoroughfares and impeding the movements of the soldiery.

The incident referred to before, of the demolition of a portion of the royal palace to provide materials for an inner line of defense, is a specimen of many another episode in that intense effort of Zedekiah and his people to hurl back the tide of merciless hate and thirst for blood that broke day after day around the battlements—much as the long ocean wave sends its surges up against a reef of rock and casts its splintered forces high in air. Here there was a scaling party which must be flung back on their ladders; there, an attempt to run a mine which must be intercepted; now tidings came that a portion of the wall, which had been long exposed to the battering rams, showed signs of weakness and must be built up from within; and yet again precautions must be taken against fire flung in missiles, or flights of arrows or stones cast by catapults. For no single hour could the defenders relax their vigilance. A council of princes must have been in perpetual session, fertile in resource, swift to meet the craft or the courage of the foe. And all the time the stock of provisions was becoming less, and the store of water diminishing, as in the case of Malchiah's dungeon, leaving nothing but wet mud.

So much for the earlier months of the siege; but as the days passed on, darker shadows gathered. It was as though the very pit of hell added in human passion the last dread horrors of the scene. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, lay by scores in the recesses of the houses, broken like earthen pitchers, the work of the hand of the potter! The women became cruel, and refused to spare from their breast for their young the nutriment they needed for themselves. The tongues of the sucking babes became so dry and parched that they could no longer cry. Young children, whose weakness constituted a first claim, asked for bread and asked in vain. Highly nurtured maidens searched over the dung-heaps, in hope of finding something to stay the craving of hunger. The nobles lost their portly appearance and walked the streets like animated mummies. The sword of the invader without had fewer victims than that which hunger wielded within; and, as the climax of all, pitiful women murdered their own little babes and soddened them to make a meal. Finally, pestilence began its ravages; the foul stench of bodies that men had no time to bury, and that fell thick and fast each day in the streets of the city like autumn leaves, caused death, which mowed down those that had escaped the foe and privation. Ah, Jerusalem, who stones the prophets and sheds the blood of the just—this was the day of the overflowing wrath and fury of Jehovah! No human hand lit the flame; no mere human hate was accountable for sufferings so complex and so terrible. You, O God, have slain priest and prophet in your sanctuary; youth and age in the streets. You have slain them in the day of your anger; you have slaughtered and not pitied.

And as Jeremiah waited day after day, powerless to do other than listen to tidings of woe that converged to him from every side, he resembled the physician who, unable to stay the slow progress of some terrible form of paralysis in one he loves better than life, is compelled to listen to the tidings of its conquests, knowing surely that these are only stages in an assault which ultimately must capture the citadel of life—an assault which he can do nothing to stay.

At last a breach was made in the old fortifications and the troops began to rush in, like an angry sea which, after long chafing, has made for itself an entrance in the sea wall and pours in turbulent fury to carry desolation in its course. The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, could never have believed that the adversary and the enemy would enter into the gates of Jerusalem; yet so it befell. Then the terrified people fled from the lower into the upper city; as they did so, their homes were filled with the desolating terror of the merciless soldiery.

A hundred different forms of anguish gathered in that devoted city, like vultures to the dead camel of the desert. Woe, then, to the men who had fought for their very lives! But woe more utter and agonizing to the women and maidens, to the children and little babes! War is always terrible, but no hand of historian dare lift the veil and tell in unvarnished words all the horror of the sack of a city by such soldiery as Nebuchadnezzar and his generals led to war. The wolves of the Siberian forest are more merciful than they. "All the princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the middle gate," from which they gave directions for the immediate prosecution of their success upon the terrified people, who now crowded the upper city, prepared to make the last desperate stand.

Late that afternoon the old palace of David was filled with eager consultation. Everything must be done to preserve the royal house, "the breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord." Therefore, it was arranged that, as soon as night fell, Zedekiah and his harem should go forth under the protection of all the men of war, through a breach to be made in

the walls of the city to the south; and exactly as Ezekiel had foretold, so it came to pass. "The prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the dark, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face" (Ezek. 12:12, R.V.).

A long line of fugitives, each carrying valuables and essential items, stole silently through the king's private garden, and so towards the breach; and, like shadows of the night, they passed forth into the darkness between long lines of armed men, who held their breath. If only by dawn they could gain the plains of Jericho, they might hope to elude the fury of their pursuers. But all night Zedekiah must have remembered those last words of Jeremiah: "You shall not escape; but shall be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon." "Woe to him that strives with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth." This was not the first time, nor the last, that man has thought to elude the close meshes of the Word of God.

Somehow the tidings of the flight reached the Chaldeans. The whole army arose to pursue. "Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the heaven; they chased us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness; the anointed of the Lord was taken in their pits." That is the lament of Jeremiah; but Ezekiel gives an even deeper insight into the events of that memorable and terrible night. "My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will scatter toward every wind all that are round about him to help him, and all his bands" (Lam. 4:19-20; Ezek. 12:13-14).

What happened the next morning in Jerusalem, and what befell her a month after, when the upper city also fell into the hands of the conqueror, is told in the Book of Lamentations. The street and houses were filled with the bodies of the slain, after having been outraged with nameless atrocities; but happier they who perished than the thousands who were led off into exile, or sold into slavery, to suffer in life the horrors of death. Then the wild fury of fire engulfed temple and palace, public building and dwelling house, and blackened ruins covered the site of the holy and beautiful city which had been the joy of the whole earth; and the ear of the prophet heard the spirit of the fallen city crying:

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?

Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me,  
Wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger!

All who passed by clapped their hands at her; they hissed and wagged their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth? All her enemies opened their mouths wide against her; they hissed and gnashed their teeth; they said, We have swallowed her up. Certainly, this is the day that we looked for; we have found it; we have seen it. The Lord did that which He devised; He fulfilled His word. He threw down and did not pity; He caused the enemy to rejoice. Foxes walked upon the desolate mountain of Zion (Lam. 2 and 5).

As for Zedekiah, he was taken to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar was at this time, perhaps not expecting so speedy a downfall of the city. With barbarous cruelty he slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, that the last sight he beheld might be of their dying agony. He was also compelled to witness the slaughter of all his nobles. Then as a *coup de grace*, with his own hand probably, Nebuchadnezzar struck out Zedekiah's two eyes with his spear.

It was indeed a subject for an artist to depict, the long march of the exiles on the way to their distant home. Delicate women and little children forced to travel day after day, irrespective of fatigue and suffering; prophets and priests mingled together in the overthrow they had done so much to bring about; rich and poor marching side by side, manacled and urged forward by the spearpoint or scourge. All along the valley of the Jordan, past Damascus, and then for thirty days through the inhospitable wilderness, retraversing the route trodden in the dawn of history by Abraham their great progenitor, the friend of God, while all the nations round clapped their hands. In after years, the bitterest recollection of those days was in the exultation of the Edomites in the fall of their rival city. "Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom, the day of Jerusalem!" And the one warlike strain of the evangelical prophet is inspired by the hope that the Divine Conqueror would come knee-deep in Idumean blood (Isa. 63:1-6).

Thus God brought upon his people the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or ancient, but gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and his princes, he brought to Babylon. And they burned the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; and burned all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon and they were servants to him and his sons.

Years before in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, as his friend and amanuensis, Baruch, was lamenting the sore tribulation that befell him in executing Jehovah's commissions, Jeremiah had assured him that at least his life would be preserved in the midst of the final catastrophe. "Thus says the Lord: Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up; and this in the whole land. And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, says the Lord: but your life will I give to you for a prey in all places that you go." As Noah was saved from the waters of the flood, and Lot from the overthrow of Sodom, and the early Christians by their flight to Pella from the horrors of the last fall of Jerusalem, so did the faithful Baruch pass unscathed through

those awful scenes. The man with the inkhorn had marked him, and the six men with their slaughter weapons touched him not (chap. 45; Ezek. 9).

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

### **Give other accounts of this siege.**

2 Kings 25:1-15 Jer 52:4-11 Ezek. 24:1-2

### **How was Jeremiah dealt with after the siege was over?**

#### **Jeremiah 40:1-44:30**

What a flood of light is cast upon the desolate scene when Nebuzaradan had completed his work of destruction, and the long lines of captives were already far on their way to Babylon! How many went into exile we have no means of knowing; the number would probably amount to several thousands, principally of the wealthier classes. Only the poor of the people were left to cultivate the land, that it might not revert to an absolute desert. But the population would probably be very sparse—a few peasants scattered over the sites which had teemed with crowds.

The city sat solitary, which had been full of people. She had become as a widow. Night and day it seemed to the eye of her patriot lovers as though she was weeping sore, and her tears were upon her cheeks; the holy fire was extinct upon her altars; pilgrims no longer traversed the ways of Zion to attend the appointed feasts; her gates had sunk into the ground; and her habitations were pitilessly destroyed by fire. How often would Jeremiah pass mournfully amid the blackened ruins! Here was the site of the altar, there of the most holy place. That was the palace of David, this the new palace that Jehoiakim had made for himself, with its wide windows and heavy coatings of vermilion. Yonder was the court of the guard, where the prophet had suffered so many months of confinement, and there, again, was the place where he had so often stood to warn his people of their sins.

Above and around, nature preserved the unbroken round of her seasons and months, of day and night. The old mountains which had stood around the city in the days of David and Hezekiah glowed with the morning light, and softened in the darkening shadows of the night. The sun arose over Olivet and set in the western sea. The panorama of hill and valley, which lay around like the undulations of a sea of rock, spread itself in its accustomed strength and beauty; for Zion had always been beautiful in her situation. But upon the site of the virgin daughter of Zion the stillness of death had fallen, broken only by the cry of jackal and wild dog.

What all this meant to Jeremiah words fail to say. No truer heart ever beat in patriot's bosom. What Phocion felt for Athens, what Savonarola for Florence, what the elder Pitt for England, amid the catastrophes that darkened his latter days—that, in a concentrated form, Jeremiah must have felt and suffered, whose love for country was so intimately bound up with his religious life. Anticipating the words of One who in later days was to sit on the same mountain and look across the valley, he might have said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that kills the prophets, and stones them that are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!"

Nebuchadnezzar and his chiefs had evidently been kept closely informed of the state of parties during the siege of Jerusalem; and the king gave definite instructions to his chief officers to take special precautions for the safety of Jeremiah. When the upper city fell into their hands, they sent and took him out of the court of the guard; and he was brought in chains among the other captives to Ramah, about five miles north of Jerusalem.

In a remarkable address which the captain of the guard made to Jeremiah, he acknowledged the retributive justice of Jehovah—one of the many traces of the real religiousness that gave a tone and bearing to these men by which they are altogether removed from the category of ordinary heathen. "The Lord your God pronounced this evil upon this place, and the Lord has brought it, and done according as he spoke; because you have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you." (Jer. 40:3)

The chains were then struck from off his fettered hands, and liberty was given him either to accompany the rest of the people to Babylon or to go where he chose throughout the land. Ultimately, as he seemed to hesitate as to which direction to take, the Chaldean general urged him to make his home with Gedaliah, to strengthen his hands and give him the benefit of his counsel in the difficult task to which he had been appointed. Thus again he turned from rest and ease to take the rough path of duty.

Gedaliah was the grandson of Shaphan, King Josiah's secretary, and son of Ahikam, who had been sent to inquire of the prophetess Huldah concerning the newly found book of the law. On a former occasion the hand of Ahikam had rescued Jeremiah from the nobles. Evidently the whole family was bound by the strongest, tenderest ties to the servant of God, imbued with the spirit and governed by the policy which he enunciated. These principles Gedaliah had consistently followed; and they marked him out, in the judgment of Nebuchadnezzar, as the fittest to be entrusted with the reins of government and to exert some kind of authority over the scattered remnant. To him, therefore, Jeremiah came, with an allowance of victuals and other marks of the esteem in which the conquerors regarded him.

For a brief interval all went well. The new governor took up his residence at Mizpah, an old fort which Asa had erected three hundred years before, to check the invasion of Baasha. The town stood on a rocky eminence, but the castle was supplied with water from a deep well. Chaldean soldiers gave the show of authority and stability to Gedaliah's rule. The scattered remnant of the Jews began to look to Mizpah with hope. The captains of the forces which were in the fields still holding out, as roving bands, against the conqueror, hastened to swear allegiance to the representative of the Jewish state. The Jews who had fled to Moab, Edom, and other surrounding peoples, returned out of all places whither they had been driven, and they came to the land of Judah to Gedaliah unto Mizpah.

How glad must Jeremiah have been to see this nucleus of order spreading its influence through the surrounding chaos and confusion; and with what eagerness he must have used all the energy he possessed to aid in the establishment of Gedaliah's authority! The fair dream, however, was rudely dissipated by the treacherous murder of Gedaliah—who seems to have been eminently fitted for his post—by Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah. In the midst of a feast given by the unsuspecting governor, he was slain with the sword, together with all the Jews that were with him and the Chaldean garrison. On the second day after, the red-handed murderers, still thirsting for blood, slew seventy pilgrims who were on their way to weep amid the ruins of Jerusalem and lay offerings on the site of the ruined altar. The deep well of the keep was choked with bodies. Shortly afterwards, Ishmael carried off the king's daughters and all the people that had gathered around Gedaliah, and started with them for the court of Baalis, the king of the children of Ammon, who was an accomplice in the plot.

It was a bitter disappointment; and to none would the grief of it have been more poignant than to Jeremiah, who in the demolition of this last attempt to effect the peaceable settlement of his country saw the irreconcilable antagonism of his people against the reign of the king of Babylon. This he knew must last for at least seventy years. The people themselves appear to have lost heart—for though Johanan and other of the captains of roving bands pursued Ishmael, delivered from his hand all the captives he had taken and recovered the women and the children, yet none of them dared to return to Mizpah; rather, like shepherdless sheep, harried by dogs, driven, draggled, panting and terrified, they resolved to quit their land and retire southwards, with the intention of fleeing into the land of Egypt, with which they had maintained close relations during the later days of their national history.

They carried Jeremiah with them. They had confidence in his prayers and in his veracity, since his predictions had been verified so often by the event. They knew he stood high in the favor of the court of Babylon. They believed that his prayers prevailed with God. And, therefore, they regarded him as a shield and defense, a noble representative of the highest hopes and traditions of their people, one in whom the statesman, sage and prophet mingled in equal proportion.

Halting at the caravansery of Chimham, whose name recalls David's flight from and return to Jerusalem—the spot where travelers left the frontiers of Palestine for Egypt—the people earnestly debated whether they should go forward or return. They came also to Jeremiah, and asked him to give himself to prayer, that the Lord his God might show them the way wherein they should walk, and the thing they should do. They professed their willingness to be guided entirely by the voice of God, though in this they were probably not sincere. They dealt deceitfully against their own souls by appearing to desire only God's ways; while, in point of fact, they were determined to enter into Egypt.

For ten days Jeremiah gave himself to prayer. Then the word of the Lord came unto him, and he summoned the people around him to declare it. Speaking in the name of the Most High, he said: "If you will still abide in this land, there will he build you, and not pull you down; he will plant you and not pluck you up. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, for he is with you to save you, and to deliver you out of his hand." If, on the other hand, they persisted in going into the land of Egypt in the hope that they would see no more war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread, then they would be overtaken there by the sword, the famine and the pestilence; they would be an execration, an astonishment, a curse and a reproach; and they would never again see their native land. As he spoke, he seems to have been sadly aware that during the ten days devoted to intercession on their behalf the prepossession in favor of Egypt had been growing, and that his words would not avail to stay the strong current which was bearing them in that place.

So it befell. When he had made an end of speaking all the words wherewith the Lord had sent him to them, the chiefs accused him of speaking falsely and of misrepresenting the divine word. Not willing to accuse him flatly of treachery, they suggested that Baruch, who was still accompanying him as his faithful friend, had incited him to urge the return to Canaan with the view of betraying them into the hand of the Chaldeans for death or exile. So the terrified people pursued their way to Egypt and settled at Tahpanhes, which was ten miles across the frontier.

Almost the last ingredient of bitterness in Jeremiah's cup must have been furnished by this pertinacious obstinacy, which would not be controlled by his word, which resisted his entreaties, and suggested that his advice was tainted by treachery in their best interests. How terrible that they should malign and misunderstand the man who had spent forty years of consistent public ministry in efforts to save them from the effects of evil counsel, and to recall them to a simple and absolute faith in the God of their fathers!

His life of protest was not yet complete. No sooner had the people settled in their new home than he was led to take great stones in his hand and lay them beneath the mortar in some brickwork which was being laid down at the entry of Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes. "On these stones," he said, "the king of Babylon shall set his throne, and spread out his royal pavilion upon them. He shall smite the land of Egypt, kindle a fire in the houses of its gods, and array himself in her spoils, as easily as a shepherd throws his outer garment around his shoulders. The obelisks (stone pillar) of Heliopolis

will be also burned with fire. To have come here, therefore, is not to escape the dreaded foe, but to throw yourselves into his arms."

Some years must have followed of which we have no record, and during which the great king was engaged in the siege of Tyre, and therefore unable to pursue his plans against Pharaoh. During this time the Jews scattered over a wide extent of territory, so that colonies were formed in Upper as well as Lower Egypt, all of which became deeply infected with the prevailing idolatries and customs around them. Notwithstanding all the bitter experiences which had befallen them in consequence of their idol worship, they burned incense unto the gods of Egypt, and repeated the abominations which had brought such disaster and suffering upon their nation.

Taking advantage, therefore, of a great convocation at some idolatrous festival, Jeremiah warned them of the inevitable fate which must overtake them in Egypt, as it had befallen them in Jerusalem. "Behold," said the faithful prophet, "God will punish Jerusalem by sword, by famine and by pestilence, so that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape, or remain, or return to the land of Judah to dwell there."

A severe altercation then ensued. The men indignantly protested that they would still burn incense unto the queen of heaven as they had done in the streets of Jerusalem; and they even ascribed the evils that had befallen them to their discontinuance of this custom. Jeremiah, on the other hand, gray with age, his face marred with suffering, an old man now, did not hesitate to insist, in the name of the God he served so faithfully, that the sufferings of the people were due, not to their discontinuance of idolatry, but to their persistence in its unholy rites. "Because you have burned incense and sinned against the Lord and have not walked in his law, his statutes or his testimonies, therefore is this evil happened to you, as it is this day." He went on to predict the invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, which took place in the year B.C. 568, and which resulted, as Josephus tells us, in the carrying off to Babylon of the remnant of Jews who had, against Jeremiah's advice, fled there for refuge. So it was proved whose word should stand, God's or theirs.

Through all these dark and painful experiences, the soul of Jeremiah quieted itself as a weaned babe. When he said his strength was perished, still his expectation was from the Lord. When his soul remembered its wormwood and gall, he recalled to mind the covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; therefore he had hope. The Lord was his portion, and he hoped and quietly waited for the salvation of God. He knew that God would not cast off forever; but though God caused grief, yet he would have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. He knew that his Redeemer lived, who would arise for his cause, and render a recompense to his foes. He looked far away beyond the mist of years and saw the expiration of the sentence of captivity; the return of his people; the rebuilding of the city; the holy and blessed condition of its inhabitants; the glorious reign of the Branch, the scion (descendant) of David's stock; the new covenant, before which the old would vanish away. Probably, therefore, his days were not all dark, but aglow with the first rays of the Sun of Righteousness, smiting the Alpine peaks of his holy and loyal spirit. The Comforter must have come to him. God, who comforts those that are cast down, must have spoken words of balm and tender peace. Never yet in the history of the world has God permitted his servants to sink in unrelieved and hopeless midnight. Unto the upright there always arises light in the darkness. The gloomiest hours that ever brooded over the Son of Man broke up with the cry, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

If these words should be read by some whose life, like Jeremiah's, has been draped with curtains of somber hue, shutting out the glad light of day, who have trodden the path of sorrow and the valley of shadow, let them know that nothing brings men into such intimate relationship with the Spirit of God, and that to none does the Infinite One stoop so closely as to those that are sore broken on the wheel of affliction. It is only when we fall into the ground and die that we cease to abide alone and begin to bear much fruit. Do not try to feel resigned. *Will* resignation. Submit yourself under the mighty hand of God. If you can say nothing else, fill your nights and days with the cry or sob of "Father, not my will but yours be done." Never doubt the love of God. Never suppose for a moment that he has forgotten or forsaken. Never yield to the suggestion of the adversary that the harvests which you are to garner could have been procured at any less cost. As for God, his way is perfect and he makes our way perfect.

Scripture says nothing about the death of Jeremiah. Whether it took place, as Christian tradition affirms, by stoning in Egypt, or whether he breathed out his soul beneath the faithful tendance of Baruch, in some quiet chamber of death, we cannot tell. The Bible makes comparatively little of death scenes, that it may throw into greater prominence the prolonged narrative of the One Death, which has abolished death. God's chief interest is focused on the life and work of his servants. What they did, said, and suffered is more to him than how they surrendered their lives at his bidding. Indeed, to know how a man has lived is to make us largely indifferent of information regarding his last hours. The sculptured column projects its shaft in perfect symmetry upward from the earth, though we may not be able to follow it because the mass of waving verdure (lush) veils it from our gaze. But we know it is beautiful and in perfect harmony with all we behold.

(Jeremiah, F.B. Meyer)

### **Why would the king of Ammon conspire with Ishmael to kill Gedaliah (Jer. 40:11-14)?**

Jer.27:1-11    Jer. 41:10, 15    Jer. 49:1-6    Ezek. 21:18-23    Ezek. 25:1-7

Gadaliah was the last glimmer of hope for the nation Israel. **Why is it not surprising that his reign should end so soon?**

## How important is it for Israel and us “walk by faith, not by sight.”

Jer. 42:6-16

Because punishment does not immediately overtake the wicked in their evil doings, they say, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" The elders of the house of Israel who carried on in the dark—"every man in his chambers of imagery"—their defiling idolatrous practices, flattered themselves, saying, "*Jehovah seeth us not; Jehovah hath forsaken the earth*" But "Jehovah saw it," and knew it all, and in His book every step in the progressive apostasy, and every deed of evil, was written down. Great and marvellous was the patience and long-suffering which He exercised toward them: He sent messenger after messenger to remonstrate with and to warn them; He even condescended to *plead* with them, "*Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate . . . wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls?*" But in the end even the long-suffering of God was exhausted, and "*He abhorred them*"

And the anger of God, when roused, at last was all the greater because it was provoked by "*His sons and His daughters*"—those to whom He had shown such infinite grace by bringing them into such near relationship with Himself, and from whom He had every right to expect filial reverence and love, instead of persistent "provocation" and rebellion. This is the explanation of the "double" portion of punishment which came upon Israel, and of the fact that "under the whole heaven" there hath not been done to any other city "as it hath been done upon Jerusalem."

It is not that they were greater sinners than the other nations; no, their *guilt* was greater in that *they*, who stood so near to Him, and whom he had exalted to the position of "His sons and His daughters," mingled with the Gentiles, "and learned of their ways," and practiced the same sins and abominations. And from this we may learn, dear Christian reader, that sin on the part of God's professing people is more grievous in His sight, and more provocative to the eyes of His holiness, than the sins of those who stand in no relationship with Him. (David Baron) **What did the people believe was the reason for their present condition and how could they be so naive?**

Jer. 44:15-19

### Jeremiah 45:1-5

This chapter takes us back to 605 B.C. and connects with the events of ch. 36. It will be remembered that Jeremiah and Baruch were in great danger due to the vicious antagonism of King Jehoiakim. Baruch obviously did not take kindly to the universal opposition, spearheaded by the king himself, which seemed to be his lot as Jeremiah's scribe and companion. Notice the self-centeredness of his attitude indicated by the five personal pronouns in v. 3 (cf. the same number in the Pharisee's self-congratulatory prayer, Luke 18:11 f.). Baruch was positively wallowing in self-pity! We have noted frequently (e.g. 15:15-21) that Jeremiah was faced with the same problem. Baruch, like his master, doubtless loved his people and found the role of being in unyielding opposition to the popular opinions and standards extremely distasteful one. Jeremiah had a sharp lesson to learn (15:19) and so had Baruch, if he were to continue in the Lord's service.

The first lesson was that the heartache of Baruch was nothing when compared with the spiritual agony in the heart of God Himself (cf. Hos. 11:1-9). His judgement upon the nation involved the shattering of that which had been built and planted, laborious and lovingly, over centuries (4). Such demolition, inevitable because of Judah's sin, was none the less painful to Him; indeed, Baruch's suffering was infinitesimal in comparison.

The second lesson was that if Baruch were to be a true servant of the Lord, then self must be resolutely thrust into the background (5). Did he perhaps wish that he and Jeremiah could join the ranks of the professional prophets, whose crowd-pleasing oracles ensured for them the popular acclaim? To do this would mean the forfeiting of any right to represent God. He requires the surrender of self, that His will becomes our delight (cf. Psa. 40:8). Christ Himself is the supreme example of such selflessness. For Baruch the way ahead would be rough. Like Jeremiah he would be misrepresented (e.g. 43:3), persecuted (36:26) and eventually taken into Egypt against his will (43:6). Are we prepared to share likewise, in some small measure, in the suffering and rejection of our Master (cf. Luke 9:23-25; Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 2:19-23)?

(Daily Devotional Bible Commentary, Arthur E. Cundall)

**Do you think Baruch's problem was that God's pronounced judgment on Israel clashed with his personal aspiration for greatness? What practical lessons can we learn from the oracle to Baruch?**

### Jeremiah 46:1-28

Jeremiah was contemporary with four of the kings of Egypt Psammetichus I (663-609 B.C.), Neco II (609-593 B.C.), Psammetichus II (593-588 B.C.) and Hophra (588-569 B.C.), all of whom belonged to the XXVI Dynasty. When Assyrian power declined about the time of Jeremiah's call, Egypt was encouraged to contemplate a revival of her power over the

neighboring small kingdoms including Judah. It was to combat these plans that Josiah led his people against the Egyptians at Megiddo in 609 B.C., a battle in which he lost his life (2 Kings 23:29 f.). Thereafter, for four years Judah passed under direct Egyptian control. But the rising world-power was Babylonia, not Egypt, which was frequently torn by internal dissensions, and lacked sufficient power to maintain an empire. The battle at Carchemish (2) in 605 B.C. was decisive transferring the balance of power to Babylonia. Jeremiah ironically depicts the well-equipped (3 f.) and boastful, highly-skilled (7-9) forces of Egypt and contrasts this with the sequel of an overwhelming defeat and a shameful flight (5 f., 10 ff.). This episode, historically, was typical of Egypt, who promised so much and realized so little. So often she encouraged the smaller nations to rebel against their overlord, whether it was Assyria, or later on Babylonia, promising them help which was rarely forthcoming and never adequate. Instead of a staff which her allies could lean upon she proved to be no more than a broken reed (2 Kings 18:21; Ezek. 29:6 f.). Israel's prophets were discerning enough to observe this, and with their own assurance that the Lord Himself was able to preserve His own people, they roundly condemned alliances with Egypt (e.g. Hos. 7:11; 12:1; Isa. 30:1-5; 31:1 ff.).

(Daily Devotional Bible Commentary, Arthur E. Cundall)

### **Are God's words to the Egyptians in Jeremiah 46:3-4 meant to be sarcastic?**

Jer. 46:13-17

### **Jeremiah 47:1-7**

This chapter reads the Philistines their doom, as the former read the Egyptians theirs and by the same hand, that of Nebuchadnezzar. It is short, but terrible; and Tyre and Sidon come in sharers with them in the destruction.

I. It is foretold that forces should come from the north, verses 1-5.

II. That the war should continue long, and their endeavors to put an end to it should be in vain, verses 6-7.

(NIV Matthew Henry Commentary, Matthew Henry)

### **What is the "sword of the Lord" spoken of in Jeremiah 47:6?**

### **Jeremiah 48:1-47**

When judgment had begun with Israel, the house of God, it was sure soon to visit Moab, the heathen enemy of God and His people (1 Pet. 4:17).

Moab trusted in her "strong-holds" (v. 18) and fastnesses of stupendous rocks as securing her safety; but, so far from these saving her, they were the occasion of her being given by God to destruction, because she "trusted in her works and in her treasures" (v. 7), instead of turning humbly to the God of Israel. All creature confidences provoke the jealousy of the Creator, the only true object of trust; and so far are they from saving the sinner, that they actually bring down upon him the judgments of God.

Moab might save herself by night out of her cities into the solitary wilderness (vv. 6, 9); but what place shall unpardoned sinners flee for safety from the divine vengeance in the Day of Judgment? No "wings" (v. 9) can carry them out of the reach of Him of whom David saith, "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 139:9, 10).

So complete is the vengeance to be executed on Moab, that a curse is pronounced (v. 10) on whatever agent employed by God should fail to do his work of punishing her thoroughly; just as Saul was deprived of his kingdom for not having fulfilled to the letter God's command to destroy *utterly* the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15); and also as Ahab was condemned to judgment for having "let go out of his hand a man (the Syrian king) whom God appointed to utter destruction," his life being made by God the forfeit for the spared Syrian king's life, and Ahab's people for the people of the Syrian king (1 Ki. 20:42). The same principle holds good generally of all who exercise sacred functions. "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully" or "negligently." The Lord will not be served by halves; He demands whole-hearted obedience. Like Caleb, whosoever would be His servant must follow Him "fully" (Num. 14:24). He must spare no lust, which God condemns in himself, or in those over whom he is set by the Providence of God. Above all, the faithful minister must "not handle the Word of God *deceitfully*, but by manifestation of the truth must commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2).

Moab's pride of her strength had been in a great measure due to the long course of ease and undisturbed prosperity which she had enjoyed. Just as wine left long in the same position, so as to settle on its own lees (v. 11), retains its full and delicate flavor, which it would lose by being poured from vessel to vessel, so carnality, sensuality, and pride are often fostered by unsanctified prosperity. The Psalmist has well said (Ps. 55:19), "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." Where there are no changes in the outward circumstances of the flourishing sinner, he is likely himself to remain inwardly unchanged. But changes, though sometimes slow in coming, are sure to come at last. God

will sooner or later send His appointed instruments to "empty" all those who are full of themselves (v. 12; Luke 1:53). Earthly prosperity and enjoyments shall at last cover with the "shame" of disappointment those who have made them "their confidence" (v. 13). Then men's boasted "might" and "strength," like Moab's in her day of trial (v. 14), shall prove to be utter weakness.

The sin in Moab, which especially provoked God's displeasure, was that "he magnified himself against the Lord" (vv. 26, 42). God's great work in the moral government of the world is to glorify Himself in exalting the humble and abasing the "proud" (vv. 29). He especially visits with retribution in kind those who make His people a "derision" (v. 27), and who exult over their calamities. It is a mark of a spirit estranged from God to take pleasure in the misfortunes of others, and particularly in those of the children of God. However guilty the latter be in respect to God, who therefore chastises them, the worldly have no reason to pride themselves on their downfall; for "if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them who obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:18, 19). Men's pride, arrogancy, and haughtiness shall "not effect" the lofty aims which they contemplate (v. 30). No, on the contrary, their Babel tower of pride shall fall, and overwhelm its builders in its ruins. As they "derided" God's people, so "the Lord shall have them in everlasting derision" (vv. 20, 27; Ps. 2:4).

How marvelous are the unsearchable riches of God's mercy, that, after such fearful threatening of judgment on Moab, there should follow a promise of grace even to guilty Moab "in the latter days" (v. 47). Under Messiah, the "Light to lighten the Gentiles," even the descendants of doomed Moab, long after her national existence had ceased, are translated from the captivity of sin, darkness, and death, to the freedom of Gospel light, life, and holiness. For the sake of righteous Lot, God, who keeps mercy unto thousands of them that love Him (Exod. 20:6), has deliverance and peace in store for Moab in her latter end. Let us learn, from this prophetic announcement of God's dealings with Moab, to adore the infinite love of our covenant-keeping God, while we tremble at His judgments and fear His holy name! Let us seek not to be what Moab once was, "a vessel wherein is no pleasure" (v. 38), but "a vessel of mercy . . . prepared unto glory!" (Rom. 9:23).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

### **What sin of Moab especially provoked God?**

Jer. 48:26, 42

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

The cup of trembling still goes round, and the nations must all drink from it, Jeremiah 25:15. This chapter puts it into the hands,

- I. Of the Ammonites, verses 1-6.
- II. Of the Edomites, verses 7-22.
- III. Of the Arameans, verses 23-27.
- IV. Of the Kedarenes, and the kingdoms of Hazor, verses 28-33.
- V. Of the Elamites, verses 34-39.

(NIV Matthew Henry Commentary, Matthew Henry)

### **Tell something of the chief god of the Ammonites, Milcom (Molech).**

1 Kings 11:5, 7 Jer. 32:35 Jer. 49:1, 3

### **Besides Jeremiah, what other prophets spoke against the Ammonites?**

Ezek. 21:18-23 Ezek. 25:1-7 Amos 1:13-15 Zeph. 2:8-11

### **Give a short history of the Edomites.**

Ezek 35 Ezek. 36:5

### **Jeremiah 50:1-46**

In this chapter, and that which follows, we have the judgment of Babylon, which is put last of Jeremiah's prophecies against the Gentiles because it was last accomplished. Babylon was employed as the rod in God's hand for the chastising of all the other nations, and now at length that rod shall be thrown into the fire. The destruction of Babylon by Cyrus was foretold by Isaiah, and now again, when it has come to its height, by Jeremiah; for, though at this time he saw that kingdom flourishing "like a green bay tree," yet at the same time he foresaw it withered and cut down. And as Isaiah's prophecies of the destruction of Babylon and the deliverance of Israel seem intended to prefigure the evangelical triumphs of all believers over the powers of darkness, and the great salvation brought about by our Lord Jesus Christ, so Jeremiah's prophecies of the same events seem intended to point to the apocalyptic triumphs over the New Testament

Babylon. The kingdom of Babylon being much larger and stronger than any other of the kingdoms here prophesied against, its fall was the more considerable in itself; and what was foretold in general often before (ch. 25:12 and 27:7) is here more particularly described, and with a great deal of prophetic heat as well as light. Babylon was destroyed to make way for the turning again of the captivity of God's people. Here is, 1. The ruin of Babylon, ver. 1-3, and again ver. 9-16, and again ver. 21-22, and again ver. 35-46. 2. The redemption of God's people, ver. 4-8, and again ver. 17-20, and again ver. 33, 34.

(NIV Matthew Henry Commentary, Matthew Henry)

**Are there two different prophecies concerning the destruction of Babylon? Explain. When do they take place?**

Isa. 13:19 Isa. 21:9 Isa. 30:27 Jer. 50:1-5 Jer. 51:8, 30, 58 Rev. 18:9-20

**Tell something of the Babylonian god, Merodah, titled Bel.**

Isa. 46:1-2 Jer. 51:44

The "sword" in Jer. 50:35-37 was against the Chaldeans. **Who was the sword against in Ezek. 21?**

### **Jeremiah 51:1-64**

This prophet, in this chapter, goes on with the prediction of Babylon's fall, to which other prophets also bore witness. Here is,

1. The record of Babylon's doom, with the particulars of many aggravations of her fall, and great encouragements given from there to the Israel of God, which suffered such harsh things because of her, verses 1-58.
2. The representation and ratification of this by the throwing of a copy of this prophecy into the river Euphrates, verses 59-64.

(NIV Matthew Henry Commentary, Matthew Henry)

**In Jer. 51:15-19 how does Jeremiah describe God's visible image in contrast with the molded image of the metal smith?**

**Compare the following sets of verses:** Rev. 17:1-Jer. 51:13, Rev. 17:2-Jer. 51:7, Rev. 17:4-Jer. 51:7, Rev. 18:4-Jer. 51:45, Rev. 18:5-Jer. 51:9, Rev. 17:15-Jer. 51:13, Rev. 17:16 and Rev. 18:8-Jer. 51:58, Rev. 18:21-Jer. 51:63, 64, Rev. 18:24-Jer. 51:49

### **Jeremiah 52:1-34**

History is the best expositor of prophecy; and therefore, for the better understanding of the prophecies which relate to the destruction of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, we are here furnished with an account. It is much the same with the history in 2 Kings 24 and 25, but the matter is here repeated to give light to the book of the Lamentations.

1. The bad reign of Zedekiah, ver. 1-3.
2. The besieging and taking of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, ver. 4-7.
3. The severe treatment which Zedekiah and the officials met with, ver. 8-11.
4. The destruction of the temple and the city, ver. 12-14.
5. The captivity of the people (ver. 15, 16) and the numbers of those who were carried away into captivity, ver. 28-30.
6. The carrying off of the plunder of the temple, ver. 17-23.
7. The slaughter of the priests, and other great men, ver. 24-27.
8. The better days which king Jehoiachin lived to see in the latter end of his time, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 31-34.

(NIV Matthew Henry Commentary, Matthew Henry)

**Show how this historic account in Jeremiah 52 compares with 2 Kings 24:18-25:30.**

**How does the fate of Zedekiah contrast with that of Jehoiachin?**

Jer. 52:10-11, 31-34