

# *The Book of Jeremiah*

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**(1981–1983 and 1998–2004 Studies)**

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1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

# THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

(Studies led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1981-1983 and 1998-2004)

**Jer. 1:1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:**

As the son of Hilkiah, a priest, Jeremiah was in line for the priesthood like the Prophet Ezekiel. Located in the land of Benjamin, Anathoth was a suburb of Jerusalem, about 2 1/2 miles northeast of the city. Thus Anathoth was within walking distance of the capital, which was considered to be part of the tribe of Benjamin. Since Anathoth was situated on a hill, Jerusalem could be seen from there. Jeremiah's Grotto and the deed that he secreted are in the environs of Jerusalem, which were the prophet's home base.

**Jer. 1:2 To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.**

**Jer. 1:3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.**

King Josiah reigned for 31 years from 659 to 628 BC. Since Jeremiah began his ministry in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, the prophet was active for the 40 years prior to the defeat of Judah in 606 BC; that is, he prophesied not only during the last 18 years of Josiah's reign but also throughout the reigns of kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim (11 years), Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (11 years). And his ministry continued even beyond these reigns, as we will see. The reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin are omitted in the count because they were of such short duration, being only three months each. How outstanding is the fact that Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of *five* kings! Moreover, four prophets were contemporaneous with at least a portion of Jeremiah's ministry: Ezekiel, Daniel, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk. Obadiah may also have been a contemporary.

The number 40 is a symbol of testing or trial. Accordingly, Judah had 40 years to repent during Jeremiah's ministry.

**Jer. 1:4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**

"Then the word of the LORD came unto me." This was the first contact God had with Jeremiah regarding the commission for his public ministry, which began in the thirteenth year of King Josiah. The background for Jeremiah's ministry is given in 2 Chronicles 34:1-28. Starting in the twelfth year of his reign, King Josiah purged Israel of idols over a six-year period. In the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, Jeremiah began to prophesy. In the eighteenth year, Josiah gave orders to repair the Temple, and during the repairs, Hilkiah the priest found the "book of the law." When the Law was read to Josiah, he rent his clothes and asked Huldah the prophetess to inquire of the Lord, for he realized how evil and disobedient the people were. The Lord assured Josiah that because of his humility, he would die in peace, for the punishment would come later. (Incidentally, because Jeremiah was not well known at this time, inquiry was not made of him.) Josiah also renewed the sacrifices, and the nation had a Passover such as they had not had since the days of Samuel (about 500 years earlier). This Passover occurred five years after Jeremiah began his ministry.

**Jer. 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of**

**the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.**

Verse 5 gives us startling information; namely, God had intimate knowledge of Jeremiah *before he was even conceived*. We are reminded of Moses, Jesus, John the Baptist, and the Apostle Paul, all of whom were raised up at crucial points in history.

God informed Jeremiah about the circumstances of his birth: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee.” Prior to Jeremiah’s birth, God’s providence manipulated his progenitors. Even before the forming of Jeremiah in the belly—i.e., before the development period of the fetus—God overruled the genetic line. He made sure that the genetic factors of Jeremiah’s parents would produce a child with proclivities that were most conducive to the pronouncement of the future message to Israel. In other words, God had in mind what He would tell Israel, so he chose Jeremiah prior to birth by making sure that the right individuals were husband and wife and that the genes would produce a child with the needed characteristics. Hence the individual born would respond to God and be a very useful agent.

In the womb, one is not yet a viable being. Already at *conception*, all the characteristics of the genes for potential future development are implanted on the seed. Hence God could arrange for a certain man and woman to marry, knowing in advance what offspring they would produce.

“Before thou camest forth out of the womb I [God] sanctified thee [set you apart].” During the entire process leading up to Jeremiah’s birth, God’s providence superintended his formation. The Pastor wrote that during a particular short period of pregnancy, the genetic framework of the fetus is affected by the emotions, thoughts, and experiences of the mother. It is known, medically speaking, that for a very short period of the nine-month pregnancy, the mother is particularly sensitive to outward circumstances.

“Before thou camest forth out of the womb ... I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” The ten-tribe kingdom of Israel had already gone into captivity. Jeremiah was a prophet not only to Judah and Benjamin but also to other nations.

Lest there be a misunderstanding, the overruling of Jeremiah’s conception, fetal period, and birth was not predestination, for it did not determine his salvation. The thought is simply that God was involved in the significant aspects of the prophet’s birth. Along this line, the Apostle Paul mentioned that Timothy’s lineage began with his grandmother Lois and went through his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5).

God’s foreknowledge of Jeremiah’s ministry was being called to the prophet’s attention. The foreknowledge indicated the purpose of his ministry and helped to give him courage, as will be seen in the next few verses.

**Jer. 1:6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.**

When Jeremiah was an adult, the Lord told him, “I have selected you to be a prophet to Judah and the surrounding nations,” that is, to the then-known world, which was rather limited in scope. What was Jeremiah’s reply? He said, “I cannot speak: for I am a *child*.” In meekness and humility, he thought a mistake had been made.

Jeremiah was humble like Moses, but God would be with him, for the prophet would have a rough ministry, full of persecution, that would require much help from above. An example of the persecution is the death threat Jeremiah received if he prophesied (Jer. 11:21-23). The threat came from Anathoth, the small hometown of his own family and relatives. However, God

assured Jeremiah that those who threatened him would be punished. Jeremiah's persecution came from without and within.

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

Jehovah then said, "Say not, I am a child, for you shall go to all the nations where I send you, and whatsoever I command, you shall speak." God told Jeremiah in advance what his ministry would be. The prophet did not feel capable, but evidently, he had some unusual qualities. Even when we read the entire book, not all of the nuances are understood, but there are fragmentary clues.

**Jer. 1:8** Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

God continued to speak: "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver [or rescue] thee." Jeremiah would be threatened by his enemies and boldly opposed *face to face*. The expression on a person's face can be intimidating and create fear in the heart and mind of the one being opposed. Not only a person's countenance but also his position in life is often reflected in the face.

**Comment:** It is easy to take a strong stand in a letter or when speaking on the phone, but to talk face to face takes more courage.

**Jer. 1:9** Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

Verse 9 reminds us of Isaiah 6:5-8. After seeing an exalted vision, Isaiah said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Then a seraph flew to him, "having a live [burning] coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar." And the seraph laid the burning coal on Isaiah's mouth and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Then Isaiah heard God ask, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah responded, "Here am I; send me."

In a vision, God put forth His hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth and said, "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth." In other words, "Do not be afraid." Although a burning coal was put in Isaiah's mouth, Jeremiah's message was more fiery. Off and on, Isaiah spoke very scathingly, but in between, unlike the other major prophets, he uttered *many* wonderful prophecies of future blessings. According to tradition, a fiery message finally resulted in Isaiah's being "sawn asunder," but during his ministry, he spoke of many good things (Heb. 11:37). The circumstances of Jeremiah's death are unknown.

**Comment:** The experience of the feet members at the end of the age will be somewhat analogous to that of Jeremiah. Jesus said, "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12:11,12).

**Reply:** Yes, the principle applies. Latent energy is instilled into the consecrated, but it is not operative until the time comes for recall by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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

God continued to speak. Verse 10 is unusual in that Jeremiah was set to do a destructive work and then to plant and build up on a better foundation. For example, the prophet had the privilege of saying, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:31,33,34). Jeremiah’s mission was first to destroy and then to restore.

Verse 10 is used to show that the feet members will give a message and that the *repercussions* will be attributed to them, even though they do not literally participate in the destructive work. Jeremiah’s message did the same thing.

This verse does not prove that the Church is tearing down the nations at the present time with its message. However, the final message and the interpretation of the handwriting on the wall will accomplish the tearing down. Note: Jeremiah was not giving this message yet, for time had to pass. He gave the message toward the *end* of his ministry.

**Jer. 1:11** Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.

Jeremiah had two visions in the beginning of his ministry (verses 11 and 13). God asked Jeremiah, “What do you see?” Jeremiah replied, “I see a rod of an almond tree.” Thus the first vision was of a branch of an almond tree that had been whittled down into a rod. The rod gave a clue as to the nature of Jeremiah’s ministry. Expressed in brief form, it represented discipline but with beneficial fruitage; it was destructive yet constructive (or reconstructive).

The rod of an almond tree reminds us of Aaron’s rod that budded when it was laid before the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy. The budding indicated that Aaron was God’s elect. Here, however, the rod was unfavorable, for it was a sign of impending judgment.

**Q:** Does the “rod” also represent restoration?

**A:** As a symbol of authority, the rod pictured both discipline and fruitage. The discipline aspect is shown in the saying, “Spare the rod, and spoil the child.” Jeremiah’s rooting out and destroying was for the ultimate good of (1) the people who experienced the judgment and were later restored and (2) their character development.

**Jer. 1:12** Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

God next said to Jeremiah, “Thou hast well seen [a rod of an almond tree]: for I will *hasten* my word to perform it.” Since the judgment did not come for 40 years, we must check the context with regard to words like “sudden” and “hasten.” But what effect did seeing the rod in the vision and the word “hasten” have on Jeremiah? God was saying, “What you are about to prophesy will take place in a very short period of time.” This information would have been very encouraging to Jeremiah, for the prophets usually died before their prophecies were fulfilled. Jeremiah would live to see these events transpire. Either way the fulfillment is sure, for every word that goes out of the mouth of God will see its fruitage—but not necessarily contemporaneously with the prophet’s life.

Because Jeremiah's prophecies would be fulfilled in his lifetime, some feel he is a picture of the feet members in the end time of the Christian Church in the Gospel Age. That interpretation is true, but in reading the Book of Jeremiah, we first have to understand the historical account before trying to understand the spiritual connotation with clarity. If we do not have the natural picture clear to start with, then the antitypical significance we draw from it will also be foggy. Therefore, it is important to have some understanding of the situation that existed when Jeremiah was prophesying in the seventh century BC and the historical fulfillments of the distant past.

**Comment:** The RSV has, "You have seen well, for I am *watching* over my word to perform it." This is a play on words, for "almond tree" (Hebrew *shaqed*) and "watching" or "hasten" (Hebrew *shaqad*) have a similar root word.

**Jer. 1:13** And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north.

**Jer. 1:14** Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.

"The word of the LORD came unto me the second time." This second vision seems to have taken place at the same time as the first vision, that is, at the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry.

The second vision was of a seething pot, a *large cauldron*, probably made of cast iron. No doubt the contents of the cauldron were bubbling, having been brought to a furious boil over a fiery flame. The face of the pot is described as being "toward the north." However, this wording in the King James is wrong, as proven by the representation of the pot and its contents. The Revised Standard makes clear the direction of the pot. Jeremiah said, "I see a boiling pot, *facing away from the north*"; that is, the pot was facing *toward the south*. With the pot tilting away from the north, the angle indicated that the contents would spill out on the land of Israel and Jerusalem. In other words, *trouble was brewing*. The boiling cauldron showed that a condition of evil and trouble was coming from the north, from Babylon, or Chaldea.

Thus Jeremiah was in Jerusalem and looking at a seething pot (Babylon) to the north. For the trouble to "break forth upon *all the inhabitants of the land*" of Judah means that the cauldron was of *tremendous size* in the vision, with its contents seething and ready to destroy. Since the pot was tilted to the south, the portent was that Babylon would bring great destruction. To get the power of this vision, we have to empathetically enter the setting—as if we were Jeremiah and Jehovah was talking to us.

**Jer. 1:15** For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

**Jer. 1:16** And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

God was predicting the trouble that would develop 40 years later, in 606 BC. King Josiah died in battle, for he had entered willfully without inquiring of the Lord. Further information is found in 2 Chronicles 36:2-5. As soon as Josiah died, a judgment came upon Judah. The Pharaoh of Egypt removed Jehoahaz, Josiah's rightful successor, and put a vassal king, Jehoiakim, on the throne. Since this judgment came from the *south*, the great judgment from the *north* was yet future.

Verse 15 describes who would come out of the seething pot, namely, a *confederate* people, although Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, would be chiefly instrumental. The enemy, a *mixed* people, would come from the north against Jerusalem and “all the cities of Judah.” The account suggests a *siege* around the walls of Jerusalem. We should keep in mind that Jeremiah prophesied primarily during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. And part of the time, Jerusalem was under siege.

“For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD.” In the *natural* picture, not only did the trouble literally come from the north, but also “north” signified divine judgment. Accordingly, God called Nebuchadnezzar “my servant” (Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10).

**Comment:** The principle is the same with the Lord’s “great army,” which will be a “servant” that does not believe in the God of Israel (Joel 2:11).

In the *spiritual* picture, the fact that the enemy comes from the *north* indicates a judgment from God against nominal Christendom, which will not be saved and is very evil. In the Book of Jeremiah, the antitypical judgments will be on *nominal spiritual Israel*, or Christendom. Thus the destruction under King Nebuchadnezzar has many ramifications.

“They [the confederate army from the north] shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem.” In other words, the trouble would begin as a siege, not as an immediate attack. The destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple was preceded by a siege, with the enemy surrounding the city. When those comprising the enemy came down from the north, each one was assigned a position outside the city. The enemy was at the gates in two senses: (1) Jerusalem was surrounded, and (2) no one was allowed to exit the city. For each of the enemy to have “his throne” meant that a mastermind (Nebuchadnezzar) would appoint positions and set up a very orderly siege.

Although the seething pot was in the north in the vision, when the trouble actually occurred, it was right there at Jerusalem, imminent and threatening, ready to spill its boiling contents. This trouble from the north would come against “the gates of Jerusalem ... and against all the cities of Judah.” God would utter His “judgments against them touching all their wickedness,” for they had forsaken Him and “burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.” Not only was this wickedness in Jerusalem, but all the cities of Judah had this same disease and problem. Therefore, God’s judgment would be against the pride and joy of Judah—the Temple and the city of Jerusalem, the capital and center of government—and also against the cities round about. In other words, the land would be made desolate. With regard to worshipping the “works of their own hands,” some people were a god unto themselves and others worshipped false gods.

**Jer. 1:17** Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.

**Jer. 1:18** For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

**Jer. 1:19** And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jeremiah was given all this information on what God had planned for him. We are reminded of the words spoken to Ananias, who anointed Paul’s eyes



at the time of his conversion; namely, Paul would be the apostle of Gentiles, Jews, and kings, and his ministry would be effectual (Acts 9:15,16). Over the years, Paul periodically hearkened back to his original commission, using it as his authority as an apostle because Jesus had appeared to him in a visual form and spoken to him.

We know that the first chapter of Jeremiah was written after the fact, many years later, because verses 2 and 3 state that Jeremiah preached to multiple kings. Chapter 1 gives us a feel for what Jeremiah's ministry involved and tells that the Lord appeared to him personally and told him in advance what he was going to do. Jeremiah would prophesy against the leadership (kings of Judah, princes, and priests) and the people of the land. God was telling Jeremiah that he would have a most unpopular ministry and that he would not be received graciously. He would have all kinds of flack, from the highest leadership in Judah down to the common people, but God would strengthen him accordingly.

Jeremiah's own emotional feeling was that he was a child, but God said, "Be not dismayed at their faces, ... For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an *iron pillar* [inflexible and immovable], and brasen walls [bronze is very hard] against the whole land.... And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee ... to deliver thee."

**Comment:** Jeremiah was one man against the whole nation.

**Q:** In verse 17, what is the thought of "lest I confound thee before them"?

**A:** Jeremiah would need a lot of help from God because the *entire* nation, from the king on down, would oppose him. Therefore, God was saying, "If it were not for the fact that I will be with you, you would fail. You must realize that I have set you as an iron pillar and as brazen walls, so do not be confounded. Do not be dismayed at the reaction of the people because if you are, you will be left in a very embarrassing situation." After all, God had superintended the genetic matchmaking to start with, so Jeremiah would not be a failure in his ministry.

**Comment:** In its expectancy, Jeremiah's life was the same as that of a Christian. In principle, the Christian goes through the same type of experiences.

**Reply:** As each individual got his calling and made a commitment to God down through the Gospel Age, there was the realization that the way is narrow (Matt. 7:14). But Jesus promised to be with each of his followers, saying, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). Jesus encourages all who are weary and heavy-laden to come unto him (Matt. 11:28). The weak are called, but they have something in their character or makeup that God can fasten onto; they have *faith*. Some are poor in everything else—intelligence, wealth, physical stamina, etc.—but they are rich in natural faith. That richness in *natural* faith is to become *spiritual* faith, for to such, "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). Natural faith is blessed when it makes a commitment to God based on a belief that He is the rewarder of those who intelligently serve and cooperate with His desires on their behalf (Heb. 11:6).

In antitype, Jeremiah represents the feet members. They, too, will be made like iron pillars to withstand all levels of society when Satan deceives everyone but the Very Elect with his lying signs and wonders. *God* will have to provide the strength to give *strong* messages in the face of such *strong opposition*. Jeremiah took the initiative, and the feet members will have to do likewise. As the Apostle Peter said, we are to "gird up the loins" of our mind and not worry about the faces of those who oppose us at that time (1 Pet. 1:13). In proportion as Jeremiah would be fearful and not do what God said, he would experience loss—and so will the

consecrated in losing their crowns. Incidentally, of all the Old Testament prophets, Jeremiah gave the most detail on his *feelings*.

### Review

When God commissioned Jeremiah for a great work, the prophet's response was similar to that of Moses, who, after being in Sinai for 40 years, was meek, felt insecure, and feared that the Israelites would not receive him because of his lack of eloquency. But God gave Moses power, and from other standpoints, he was a great orator. Here, too, Jeremiah felt insecure and like "a child." However, God said He had purposed that Jeremiah should be His instrument and prophet "over kingdoms and nations." Jeremiah did not do anything politically or militarily to destroy nations; rather, he *prophesied* of coming trials and calamities. He was God's *spokesman*. When the calamities occurred, it seemed as if his very words had *caused* them to come to pass.

God made Jeremiah into a strong character through His power, or Holy Spirit. In fact, Jeremiah became so courageous that he was like brazen walls and an iron pillar in his faithfulness and inflexibility in declaring the Word of God. It is extremely difficult to get a strongly defended city to surrender. When God's Spirit came on Jeremiah to declare these prophecies, he was almost invincible in the power of his message and logic whether he spoke to the king or to the common person.

**Jer. 2:1** Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

**Jer. 2:2** Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

Jeremiah was to "go and cry in the ears [of the inhabitants] of Jerusalem." So that many could hear the message, we assume that he cried from an upper level of a gate—either on the wall of the Temple or on the wall near the most trafficked gate. Of course he would have cried in a *loud* voice.

Jeremiah proclaimed, "Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." Verse 2, which sounds very favorable, refers to the beginning of the wilderness wanderings when the Israelites gave liberally of their substance to build the Tabernacle. For instance, the women willingly gave their copper "mirrors" to make the Brazen Altar. In fact, so much was given by the people in their freewill offerings that Moses had to call a halt. However, at the same time, God gave ten punishments for the people's murmurings. How do we harmonize these facts? The Israelites' obedience at that time was *relatively good* compared to their obedience when they entered the land. In uttering a blessing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Balaam said there was no iniquity or perverseness in Israel, yet further on, in the *same* Book of Numbers, Israel was severely criticized (Num. 23:21; 24:2-9). It is important to remember that Israel was a *mixed* people, a people composed of different classes. Israel's good points were (1) generosity and (2) joy in leaving the slavery of Egypt. At times, the people were excused, and at other times, they were given stiff penalties. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, *all* the older generation died in the wilderness because of disobedience and lack of faith.

At a certain age, generally speaking, young people differ with their parents. For the younger generation to leave Egypt, where there was plenty of food, and go into a barren desert involved proper decision making, and it is remarkable that there is no record of their rebelling

against or disagreeing with their parents. Therefore, God spoke favorably here in verse 2 of a certain element in Israel at the time of the Exodus. They were born in a desert, and He washed and trained them in the wilderness. Because the younger generation were submissive, they entered the Promised Land 40 years later.

Thus “the kindness of thy youth” refers to the children who were spared. On the whole, God was pleased with as many Israelites as He was displeased with. Approximately 2 million died in the wilderness, and approximately 2 million entered the Promised Land. Here God referred to the *obedient* element. For example, in connection with the golden calf incident, the Levites, who were “on the LORD’S side,” killed the Israelites who were involved in making the calf *regardless of whether the disobedient were friends, kin, or others unknown to them* (Exod. 32:26).

“The love of thine espousals.” At the time of the giving of the Law Covenant, the entire nation responded favorably, saying, “All the words which the LORD hath said will we do” (Exod. 24:3).

The barren, scorching Wilderness of Sinai was “a land that was not sown.” However, Jehovah mercifully tempered the climate by providing a cloud that followed the whole nation and furnished shade in the daytime.

**Jer. 2:3** Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

**Comment:** Israel was promised, “Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exod. 19:6).

**Reply:** Had Israel, the younger generation and their offspring, continued in obedience, they would have comprised the spiritual priesthood when Jesus came at the First Advent. The term “firstfruits of his [God’s] increase” indicates the younger generation. Had they maintained their holiness, God said that He would bring “evil” on those who offended the Israelites. We are reminded of the promise to Abraham that those who bless Israel will be blessed themselves, and those who curse Israel will be cursed (Gen. 12:3).

**Jer. 2:4** Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel:

**Jer. 2:5** Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

What do verses 4 and 5 tell us not only behaviorally but also historically? About 19 chapters of the Book of Jeremiah were written later and put in the front of the book. The history of Israel is given during the days of the prophets. For example, Jeremiah preached for 18 years, starting in the thirteenth year of Josiah, who reigned for 31 years. When Jeremiah prophesied, he evidently talked about the experience of his forefathers and their not hearing the Lord. Also, he told of Josiah’s good deeds. Beginning at Jerusalem, the king took away all the idols and then went throughout Judah, trying to cleanse the people. Because of his aggressive leadership, he was temporarily successful, but as soon as he died, the people slipped back into their unfaithful ways.

Thus these verses continue to be introductory, telling that Jeremiah had to start pronouncing an unpopular message. A *Manna* text says that Elijah had to espouse unpopular doctrines and expose popular errors. Both Elijah and Jeremiah had negative experiences. Chapter 1 speaks of the miraculous powers God used in choosing the genetic background in connection with the

birth of Jeremiah. Even prior to his conception in the womb, God sorted out the family relationship that would produce a child with the traits needed for this period of time in Judah. Even with this rich background, Jeremiah said, "I am but a child," but in his character were elements that God could and would use. Therefore, God said, "I will be with you and make you an iron pillar and brazen walls. The people will give you hard looks, but you will be to them a stubborn, dangerous man when you speak a 'thus saith the LORD.'"

We can see the character of Jeremiah as well as the deplorable condition of the nation as a whole. The people walked after false gods and followed popular doctrines that catered to the flesh in one way or another. These early chapters mention no place or time because they are prefatory; the real warfare came later. Surely Jeremiah participated in Josiah's work of reform, especially since his ministry began in the thirteenth year of that reign and continued through the king's death and the reigns of subsequent kings.

In verse 4, Jeremiah addressed the "house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel," even though the nation was divided at the time of his ministry. Therefore, while the prophet was primarily addressing Judah and Jerusalem, the message was intended for the entire nation, for the *whole* people of Israel. His message was taken to Ezekiel and the ten tribes in Babylon.

Imagine! The *great Jehovah and Emperor of the universe* condescended to ask puny man, "What sin have you found in me?" How remarkable! "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" The nation was pleasing in the beginning but subsequently went astray. The people forsook God and disobeyed. They sought counsel of *others* and not of God.

**Jer. 2:6** Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

Jeremiah continued to review the history of Israel. God had done wondrous things for the Israelites, not only causing the ten plagues and opening the Red Sea but also providing daily manna in the desert to sustain the large host of 2 million people. He brought them through a land that was fraught with problems. Like the Israelites in the 40-year wilderness period, most people forget what God has done on their behalf (Psa. 78:11). However, the younger generation was responsive for a while. God bore them on eagles' wings through the barren desert. He led them "through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt." If obedient, the Israelites could have passed through Sinai and occupied the Promised Land in 40 days, but instead 40 years were required. The survivors then entered a land of plenty.

There are two types of character. Under hardship, persecution, and deprivation in a dry, barren land, some will prosper and grow, and others will fail. As with the Parable of the Sower, some people get discouraged with hardship, and another class fails because of wealth, luxury, ease, and pleasure (Matt. 13:18-23). The Christian needs both conditions (the north wind and the south wind, the winter of hardship and the summer of favor) as tests. To be faithful, we must continuously reflect on the Lord's leadings. Otherwise, our education and experiences will not benefit us in the final analysis. The criticism with Israel is that they forgot what God had done for them. Had they kept His blessings, providences, and leadings in mind, they would have grown in character.

**Comment:** God said of Israel, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" (Isa. 5:4).

**Reply:** God was looking for the proper fruitage, but instead “wild grapes” were produced. In the Gospel Age, God looks for Christian graces and character development. He was training Israel for a priesthood, but as a nation, they failed to obtain it.

In the Diaspora, the Jews were scattered into Europe and other nations. Ostensibly, the trials and tribulations were the same, but at that time, they did not have the Lord’s providence from the standpoint of individual attention. God turned His back on natural Israel for their good, for their training. Because of disobedience, the Jews did not prosper under God’s training in the homeland, but in the Diaspora, they felt lonely and ostracized. The lack of company and friendship, which human nature longs for, created a hunger and a desire for the promises of God to be fulfilled. In other words, God developed the Jews in the Diaspora in a way we are not fully aware of, but now, at the end of the age, we see their regathering to the land of Israel.

**Comment:** The Prophet Micah wrote, “Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD’S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam” (Micah 6:2-4). And Jesus said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matt. 23:37).

**Reply:** God has had a controversy with millions of professed Christians in the Gospel Age as well, but how many have responded favorably with sincerity and consecration unto death? Nominalism has been a problem with both Jews and Gentiles. However, there is always a remnant class, a favored minority, that is developing. Their very scarcity makes them more precious and valuable—like jewels—in God’s sight.

In review then, there were deserts, drought, pits, etc., in the Wilderness of Sinai. The younger generation fared better in this environment than the older generation because the older ones compared their material benefits in Egypt with the harshness of the wilderness. The young ones were more flexible and adaptable.

The Israelites had prime fertile land in Egypt, but that was not the case in Sinai. Death was always imminent in the wilderness. There the cloud protected them from sandstorms and flash floods, but just as with their shoes, which did not wear out, it took *time* for the Israelites to realize, appreciate, and be sure of the providence. Many of the people fell because although they heard the Word, they did not mix the Word *with faith*—they forgot!

The expression “a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt” refers to the harsh land in the wilderness. The Israelites passed through these severe places and camped in more favorable locations. Spiritually speaking, we, as Christians, have severe experiences in traveling from one place to another, but we get oases as well. We need both north and south wind experiences (Song 4:16). Those Israelites who rightly received their experiences got a great education in the wilderness, an education that prepared them for their destination: the Promised Land.

**Jer. 2:7** And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

At the end of the 40 years, God brought the Israelites into a “plentiful country.” This delightful land, with more rain and great forests, was much more desirable than the land of Israel today,

but the Israelites made God's "heritage an abomination." For proof of the lushness, the spies brought back a large cluster of grapes from the Hebron area (Num. 13:17-25).

God fed the Israelites in the wilderness and provided water in a barren land for 40 years. Then they entered the land of plenty and deteriorated. This principle shows that few will make the Little Flock. We must heed, reflect on, and consider the Lord's leadings and providences. The Christian faces the same danger that the nation of Israel encountered, for riches and plenty can make us drowsy and indifferent. How easy it is to forget how the Lord led us when we were in need!

Some Christians had a remarkable call out of difficult circumstances and weakness. God lifted them out and gave them strength. The danger is that they will forget how He helped them. Indeed the forgetting and the riches are a real danger in the Laodicean period of the Church.

**Comment:** With regard to the nation of Israel today, some in our midst feel that the majority of Jews will be spared in Jacob's Trouble. But clearly, the present state of the nation is as bad as, or even worse than, what it was in the days of the Tabernacle or the Temple.

**Reply:** Generally speaking, a remnant is a very, very small element both with the Christian in the Gospel Age and with the Jew in Israel today and elsewhere in the world.

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

The earlier condemnation was broad-based, being against the "house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel" (verse 4). Now Jeremiah was saying, "Not only are the people at fault, but also those in leadership positions—the priests, the prophets, and the princes—are corrupt." Isaiah 1:6 reads, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it [the nation of Israel]; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." From shortly after the Israelites entered the Promised Land until they were evicted, evil predominated.

"The priests said not, Where is the LORD?" The priests did not inquire of God; that is, they did not fulfill their responsibility. When an emergency arose, the high priest was supposed to go into the Most Holy to inquire of Jehovah through the Urim and the Thummim to change and rectify the situation. Instead the priests were indifferent. They used the priesthood as a means to sustain their needs and living requirements instead of sincerely serving God. Similarly in Christendom down through the Gospel Age, many became ministers and priests because it was a comfortable way of life that provided a secure income. They got a salary, they could read in the library, they led a life of ease, they counseled others at their convenience, etc. Today the ministry has become very profitable to some who have the wrong motive.

The priests did not inquire diligently and penitently. Moreover, those who handled the Law did not know God. The pastors also transgressed against Him, "and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that ... [did] not profit." Consider Daniel's exemplary character. He included himself in the prayer, pleading with God to carry out the 70-year liberation date: "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land" (Dan. 9:5,6).

Incidentally, pastors are shepherds of the flock. The words "pasture" and "pastor" are related

to “shepherds” and “sheep.” Israel’s prophets sought counsel from Baal, who is really Satan.

**Jer. 2:9** Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children’s children will I plead.

God was saying, “Wherefore I will yet plead with you—with your children and your children’s children. You are hopeless, but I am still the God of Israel, so I will plead with your children and the next generation, and thus not forsake the nation.”

**Comment:** Ezekiel 20:34,35 reads, “I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.”

**Reply:** That Ezekiel text describes the land of Israel as a wilderness. There God will plead with the Jews as He pleaded years earlier with their forefathers in the 40 years in the wilderness, when only the younger generation survived. The Ezekiel text is indicating that the Jews will be tried in the near future in Jacob’s Trouble. God will cause them “to pass under the rod,” and He will bring them “into the bond of the covenant” and purge out from among them “the rebels, and them that transgress” against Him (Ezek. 20:37,38). Only a small portion, the Holy Remnant, will come through the trouble securely.

In speaking to his generation, Jeremiah was saying that God would continue His faithfulness to Israel. The principle is the same with the Christian. Jesus said, “I will never forsake you, but if you forsake me, that is your problem.” God and Jesus are on hand, but the bottom line is that we work out our own salvation with reverential fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12).

God pleaded with Israel in the past, but during the Diaspora, He purposely turned His back. The Jews sensed their cast-off condition because although they had leaders they admired, they did not have the prophets of old.

Incidentally, there is a time for righteous explosion, and there is a time for controlled explosion. With God’s anger here, the die was cast, as will be seen later. God would temporarily cast off Israel for their dissoluteness, but He would not throw off the Jews permanently as a people because of His promise to Abraham. God exercises a selectivity that we have no right to question. With the gospel, many of the apostles were relatives of Jesus—some right in the family as well as in-laws.

**Comment:** The RSV reads, “Therefore I still contend with you, says the LORD, and with your children’s children I will contend.”

**Reply:** God continues to “contend,” for *some* will respond. The principle is, “Unto you, and to your children” (Acts 2:39). God favors not only an individual but also an individual’s posterity.

**Jer. 2:10** For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

**Jer. 2:11** Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

**Q:** Is Chittim the isle of Cyprus?

**A:** In Jeremiah’s day, Chittim was Cyprus and the nearby mainland (Macedonia), hence the

north west. Spiritually speaking, some of these nations take on another meaning, such as England (a mercantile power) or the Roman Empire. The interpretation depends on the particular prophet we are reading and the time frame. Kedar refers to the area in the east where Ishmael settled.

“Hath a nation changed their gods”? God was telling Israel to look to the west and to the east, and they would find that those peoples had worshipped the *same* false gods for centuries. In other words, He was asking, “Why do you change and leave me?” The Israelites had changed “their glory,” that is, Jehovah, to false gods.

What a scathing argument! The other nations did not cast their false gods aside; they were loyal to their misconceptions. However, Israel, who had the *true* God “changed their glory for that which doth not profit” and followed all kinds of gods such as Baal, Ashtoreth, and Molech. At least with the multiplicity of Roman, Grecian, and Egyptian gods, there was a consistent pattern. A current rebuke against Israel is that Muslims are more faithful in their false worship than the Jews are in their worship of Jehovah. In spite of their violence, the Muslims are obedient and orderly in their worship, whereas there is infighting among the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Jews. In addition, there is a secular element in Israel, with a considerable portion of the populace being agnostic.

**Comment:** God commended the Rechabites for being faithful to their vows (Jer. 35:1-10).

**Reply:** Yes, many generations later that family still maintained their faithfulness.

**Jer. 2:12** Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.

**Jer. 2:13** 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.

In addressing the “heavens,” the religious leaders, who were supposed to instruct the people in the proper worship and the Law, God was saying, “Be astonished at this, be afraid [shocked], and be very desolate [very mournful].” They were not teaching the people to concentrate on “the *fountain* of living waters,” that is, on God. Instead the people hewed out their own cisterns, “broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” God is the source of all true blessing, but His people, Israel, had committed two evils: (1) they had forsaken Jehovah, and (2) they had hewn out cisterns that held no water (truth). Feeling self-contained, they did not need God. In the antitype, this admonition applies to nominal spiritual Israel.

A cistern collects runoff water (rain). In the Middle East, cisterns were carved out of rock, especially limestone or sandstone, which sometimes cracked, allowing the water to seep out. But even if a cistern did not crack and thus held water, its capacity was *limited*. In contrast, God is a *continual* source of *ever-flowing* water.

How imbecilic and ludicrous to forsake God, a perfect source of supply, for something so undependable! Israel changed to false gods because man likes to invent and use his imagination. This trait is dangerous if it is exercised *independent of the Word*. Psalm 106 tells that God’s anger was kindled against Israel for going “a-whoring” after their inventions. “They provoked him to anger with their inventions.... Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a-whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance” (Psa. 106:29,39,40).

**Comment:** There is a contrast between the *living fountain* and *broken cisterns*, between God’s



truth and man's errors and creeds.

**Comment:** Just as the Israelites were not to use hewn stones for an altar, stones tooled by human hands, so they were not to use man-made cisterns.

**Reply:** In Old Testament times, altars were to be made of whole stones, and there were to be no steps. A gradation of earth was allowed but not steps made by man.

**Jer. 2:14** **Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled?**

“Is Israel [the ten-tribe kingdom] a servant?” Yes, for its cities had been laid waste and burned and were without inhabitant. The ten tribes went into captivity more than a century before Nebuchadnezzar defeated Judah and Benjamin and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. The king of Assyria took the ten tribes captive and despoiled and denuded their land. He also introduced a hybrid people from other lands into that territory.

Jeremiah's prophecy began in the days of Josiah and continued through and beyond Zedekiah, so the time setting was getting near the end of the 513-year period of the kings. Isaiah, the previous book, was written a hundred years earlier. Therefore, the ten tribes, were in bondage at this time.

“Is he [Israel] a homeborn slave?” No. “Why is he spoiled?” God was saying to the two-tribe kingdom, “Look at the ten tribes. You are very much like them.” God saw fit to empty the land of the ten-tribe kingdom and put a foreign people in their place. These foreigners subsequently became believers in the Jewish God. History is very odd.

**Q:** Were these “foreigners” the Samaritans?

**A:** We read about the Samaritans in Jesus' day. The foreigners put in the land by the king of Assyria were removed later when Nebuchadnezzar came down from the north. Eventually, he cleaned out Tyre, Sidon, and the whole land of Israel, so that the latter was without inhabitant for 70 years. But at the time Jeremiah wrote this chapter, only about half of the land of Israel had been captured, and others were brought in. Later, in 606 BC, the people of Judah were taken out, and the foreigners brought in by the king of Assyria were also removed. Still later, in 536 BC, after the 70 years of desolation, not only did Jews return to the homeland, but also other people went into the territory of the northern kingdom. Incidentally, not many of the ten-tribe kingdom returned to Israel in 536 BC. We believe they went up into Europe and other places instead. In other words, the bulk of the 50,000 Jews who went back to Israel in 536 BC were from Judah and Benjamin.

**Q:** With many of the ten tribes going into Europe, is that where the Anglo-Israelite theory comes from?

**A:** Yes.

From another standpoint, Israel was originally freeborn, or delivered, and thus the people were not slaves, yet they became slaves to false gods and were subject to unfavorable conditions. Their condition was not initially the result of God's punishment but the result of their forsaking Him.

**Jer. 2:15** **The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.**

The “young lions” were the Assyrians who “roared” upon the ten tribes, made their “land waste,” and burned their cities, leaving them without inhabitant. Prior to the Babylonian Empire, nations came up as world empires to a certain extent but, except for Egypt, were of short duration. Specifically, two “young lions” of Assyria were Tiglath-pileser and Sennacherib.

**Jer. 2:16** Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head.

Now Egypt is brought into the picture in regard to the two tribes. Noph (Memphis) and Tahapanes, two cities, broke the “crown” of Israel’s head. The breaking of the crown (the skull) results in death.

Verse 16 has a double meaning. (1) King Jehoahaz, who had the literal crown of Judah, was removed from the throne, humiliated, and taken to Egypt. (2) Later, when the two tribes went into Babylonian captivity in 606 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar left Gedaliah in Israel with a few vinedressers. Shortly thereafter they rebelled, killed Gedaliah, and fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. When they ended up in Tahapanes, Jeremiah hid a stone there to show that these vinedressers would be hunted down and punished by Nebuchadnezzar.

**Comment:** Josiah died when Egypt invaded Assyria. The king of Egypt told Josiah not to go to the battle, but Josiah did and was killed.

**Reply:** Therefore, Egypt was involved as late as part of Jeremiah’s ministry, which covered the last 18 years of Josiah’s reign. Now Jeremiah was writing a little later, saying that Israel had been despoiled in the north and also in the south, especially along the coastline. In other words, at the time setting here in verse 16, the name Tahapanes showed that Egypt had visited judgments upon Israel. Thus Israel had a past history of problems not only with Assyria from the north but also with Egypt from the south. The “children of Noph and Tahapanes” had “broken the crown” of Israel’s head, for Israel had been humiliated by foreign nations that did not know God. Incidentally, today Noph is swampy and is infested with vipers and insects.

**Jer. 2:17** Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?

God’s message to Israel was, “The problems are your own fault because you have forsaken me. That is why you have been humiliated and your crown of pride has been shattered. Your ego was inflated many years earlier under King Solomon.” God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness and to Canaan, yet they forsook Him *after He had actively helped them*. Therefore, “Be astonished, O ye heavens” (verse 12).

If the stiff-necked quality is properly schooled, the result is a strong character for the Lord. We, too, were stiff-necked before consecration. As Jews, the apostles were also stiff-necked, but after consecration and the coming of the Holy Spirit, they became exemplars. Thus, if a Jew is converted, that very characteristic can become like a rock for the Lord. Peter was unstable initially, but when he was really converted, he became a rock (Luke 22:32). When harnessed, onerous qualities are wonderful. When broken, a wild, spirited horse is tenfold better than a domesticated horse that is used for plowing. However, in the final analysis, only a minority truly respond favorably enough to get the chief positions in God’s Kingdom.

**Jer. 2:18** And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

“What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor [the Nile]? or ... in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river [Euphrates]?” Verse 18 is a play on words. The

Israelites drank the waters of the Nile in Egypt and the Euphrates in Assyria instead of God's fountain of living waters. In other words, Israel's relationship with Egypt and Assyria resulted in contamination. In going to other nations for political and military allies, in drinking the waters of these two nations, Israel imbibed some of their practices and became contaminated through false religion and intermarriage. How true is the statement (1 Cor. 15:33) that evil communications corrupt good conduct!

Israel sought out Egypt for a military alliance, and Josiah was slain when he went into battle without God's sanction. Although Josiah's impulsiveness was good for getting rid of idols, it caused his death in this instance. On the whole, however, his reign was considered good.

A lesson was being drawn with the "waters." "Water" is sometimes a symbol of pure doctrines of truth, but there are also polluted waters (or doctrines). As the "fountain of living waters," God's "waters" are *true* doctrines, but Israel forsook God and partook of the tainted waters (verse 13).

**Jer. 2:19** **Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.**

In what sense would Israel's "own wickedness" be a correction and the "backslidings" be a reproof?

**Comment:** Israel received retribution, the principle being, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

**Reply:** When the development of wickedness becomes a character trait, it reaps its own reward.

**Comment:** The principle is the same as the Great Company's having to wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb in the great tribulation (Rev. 7:14). Negligence with their covenant, their vow, will come back to them.

**Reply:** Eventually, the Israelites' own wickedness would awaken and correct (chasten) them. The principle is the same with a backsliding Christian. The Second Death class will not repent and return, but the coming tribulation will wake up the Great Company to correct their ways. For part of verse 19, the Revised Standard has, "Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God."

The word "backslidings" indicates that at one time, the Israelites were more or less on the right path. Their behavior was acceptable at first, but their sliding back into wickedness brought problems that would eventually be in the nature of correction and a reproof. Although at this time, there were some effects of their wickedness, the Israelites did not feel they were being reproofed. Jeremiah had to be strong in his opposition because even with idols to false gods on the hills and lewd practices in the valleys, the people were obstinate in thinking they were innocent. The Israelites were oblivious to their own situation.

Israel's wickedness would get so bad that the right-hearted would have a rude awakening and experience shame. The "bitter" experience of finding other counsel vain and suffering much trouble made the right-hearted element repent. Thus Jeremiah's ministry was successful to a minority, but the great majority had lost their reverence for God, their holy "fear."

Jeremiah was now speaking after a lapse of time. Roughly 18 years after the start of his

ministry, he used what had happened in that interim period to show that there was a problem. When Josiah got into power, he instituted reforms, smashing idols in the hills around Jerusalem and sending emissaries to other parts of the kingdom to search out and destroy the idols to false gods. But the false worship was like a drug habit in that the people liked their heathen practices. While Josiah was on the throne, he curbed that influence, but even his noble efforts could not eliminate the false worship on a permanent basis. The Word of God was not successful back there, and we can be sure that Jeremiah was prophesying during this period of time. However, not much detail is given until about the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim. From the nineteenth year of Jeremiah's ministry on, the events are documented sequentially, telling what the prophet did after Josiah's decease.

“Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.” With such strong talk, we can see why Jeremiah was not popular. The Israelites resented his telling them what their true condition was.

**Jer. 2:20** For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

“For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands.” Israel's extreme servitude in Egypt is described as an “iron furnace,” a prison, but God broke that yoke of bondage (Deut. 4:20). When the Law Covenant was given at Mount Sinai, the Israelites had promised not to transgress (Exod. 24:3). But as time went on, they wandered “upon every high hill and under every green tree ... playing the harlot.” Not only were statues of various false gods on the hills, but in connection with that worship, places of harlotry were out in the country. The shade and secrecy of a luxuriant tree were used as a canopy or room in which to perform the illicit relationships. Usually a statue of the god being worshipped was nearby, so the Israelites saw no inconsistency in their conduct. The heathen religions did not frown on such behavior.

**Comment:** Deuteronomy 12:2,3 reads, “Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.”

**Jer. 2:21** Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

God planted Israel “a noble vine, wholly a right seed” at Mount Sinai. From another standpoint, Israel was planted as a noble vine in the days of Abraham. The degeneration into a wild vine started to seep in during the period of Jacob. Marital relations with people of a mixed foreign origin, who brought in their false beliefs, are associated with the degeneration.

**Q:** Was that in connection with Jacob's being called an Amorite? Ezekiel 16:2,3 states, “Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father [Jacob] was an Amorite, and thy mother [Rachel] an Hittite.”

**A:** Yes.

“How then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?”

**Comment:** Exodus 15:16,17 reads, “Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established.”

**Reply:** That text is a prophecy of the planting that occurred when the younger generation of Israelites entered the Promised Land under Joshua. We will digress for a moment.

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land through Jericho, “fear and dread” fell upon the Jerichoites. Joshua, Moses’ successor, was a worthy and influential selection. In connection with conquering Jericho, the Israelites marched around the city once each day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. During that time, the people were not to have any idle conversation or gossip of any kind. Yes, the horns were blowing, but the people were to be quiet. The circumspect obedience of the younger generation was admirable, for it showed their respect for leadership and moral authority. Even during the last days of Moses, which was just before entry into Israel, more Israelites were weeded out for committing immoralities with the daughters of Moab (Num. 25:1-9). The point is that the element who went into the Promised Land was relatively obedient, but the obedience soon degenerated, especially after Joshua died. For six years, the Israelites were involved in the dividing of the land, and then began a history of many derelictions, which is called the Period of the Judges. Over and over the cycle kept repeating: the Israelites were corrected under a judge, they repented, they disobeyed and degenerated again, a period of judgment and punishment followed, etc., etc.

**Jer. 2:22** For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.

With regard to “nitre,” when a baby is born, silver nitrate is put in the eyes as an antiseptic. Fuller’s soap, nitre, and lye are all used as strong cleansing agents. As a youth, I was in a farm school that took care of animals—geese, sheep, cows, horses, etc. A Scotch family was in charge, and I was intrigued when soap was made from lye. The right mixture had to be used so that the lye would not be overpowering. Fat was the offsetting or ameliorating factor so that the lye did not damage what was to be cleaned. Thus lye was also sort of an antiseptic.

“Thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.” Nitre and much soap, which are *external* applications, may clean a person’s garment or hands, but they do not clean the soul, which is *internal*. An external ablution does not cleanse from sin. Such was the condition of Israel in Jeremiah’s day, yet God would forgive them *if* they would change their ways. The principle was expressed through the prophet in Isaiah 1:16-19, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.*” God was ready and willing to forgive, but first, the Israelites had to change their conduct.

**Q:** What specifically was “nitre”?

**A:** We do not want to be too technical because “nitre” is an English translation of a Hebrew word. The lesson was that although one used strong cleaning agents for tough stains, they were only external cleansers, whereas internal cleansing was needed.

**Comment:** Before the Muslims pray, they symbolically wash their hands, head, mouth, ears,

nose, feet, and the back of their head with water.

**Reply:** The symbolism is good because, for instance, the head would be the thoughts and the feet picture conduct. When we were in Israel, a sincere Orthodox Jew who had visited us previously in the United States lamented the fact that although the Orthodox Jews of his day certainly try to follow the Word of God more than the Conservative and the Reform Jews, they do not have the zeal of the Muslims, whose obedience is an example.

**Jer. 2:23** How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways;

**Jer. 2:24** A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her.

The question was, “How can you say that you are not polluted and that you have not gone after Baalim? Look at your way in the valley; know what you have done.” The Israelites could not see the degree of their guilt and thought that Jeremiah was overreacting. When the people replied that they had not gone after “Baalim” (idolatrous practices), he turned and pointed to the Valley of Hinnom, where Molech was worshipped, children were passed through the fire, and sex orgies took place. These practices were Satan’s ancient way of teaching the concept of hellfire and purgatory. The fact that the idols were not only made but also *retained* shows that the nation as a whole was guilty.

Then began an illustration of a wild dromedary (a camel) and a wild ass, both females, during “heat.” At this time, an otherwise obedient animal is practically uncontrollable because the desire to mate supersedes fear of its master. Jeremiah was likening the normal behavior of the people to animals when these periods of waywardness occur and passion takes over so that it is almost impossible to control them. Such was the iniquity that existed in the society of the prophet’s day. Thus Jeremiah used the example of these two animals in heat to *bluntly* point out Israel’s fault. He spoke *loudly* to all segments and levels of society, but Israel could not be turned away from the idols.

**Comment:** Part of verses 23 and 24 reads as follows in the NIV: “You are a swift she-camel running here and there, a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving—in her heat who can restrain her? Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves; at mating time they will find her.”

**Reply:** The NIV takes certain liberties that are helpful in understanding why Jeremiah used those two creatures as an illustration. Succeeding verses will identify what the problem was.

**Jer. 2:25** Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

“Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst.” Being “shod” is being under God’s control and depending on and trusting in Him. Therefore, Jeremiah was saying, “Keep the feet shod and the throat from thirst. Stay under God’s control.” What was natural Israel’s response to this advice? “It’s no use! I love foreign gods, and I must go after them” (NIV). The Israelites liked the worship of foreign gods because of the liberality.

**Comment:** The Amplified has, “Cease from your mad running after idols, from which you get nothing but bitter injury. Keep your feet from being unshod and your throat from thirst.”

**Reply:** The Israelites had wandered off the beaten path and were suffering the resultant fruits.

The people criticized Jehovah's religion by saying, "There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." The heathen religions gave satisfaction in the present life, whereas the Law seemed too strict. For example, today many like the idea of going to the Confessional. They confess their sins before the priest in a little booth, he gives absolution, and they feel refreshed and free of any guilt, but the problem is that they go right out and start to sin willfully all over again. Instead the Christian is warned not to put himself in an unfavorable condition or environment and not to have undesirable lusts, for sin will surely follow disobedience. The Christian's hope and reward are so superlative that we should be willing to count everything as "loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:8).

The people of Jeremiah's day used their own reasoning instead of God's instruction, and that is happening today with regard to homosexuality, for example. The people were bold in their sins, which were along the lines of satisfying the flesh.

**Jer. 2:26** As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets,

**Jer. 2:27** Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

How wonderful it is that God told Jeremiah what to say and that the words were so strong! Just as a *caught* thief is ashamed, so the leaders of the nation would be ashamed. All strata of society are included in the criticism: kings, princes, priests, prophets, and the common people. The Israelites did not like to hear (even though they had to admit) that a dumb idol could not speak or walk. Jeremiah was telling the situation as it really was. We can see how precious the faith remnant has been and what strong characters they were.

"Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth." Symbols of fertility were used in connection with false gods, a tree being a symbol of the male and a stone being a symbol of the female. Israel did all of these things in spite of how God dealt with them and the *wonderful* Law He gave them.

"But in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us." The people were double-minded. Superficially they acknowledged God, but their actions betrayed their heart interest in the idols and false gods—until trouble overwhelmed them. Then they turned back to God.

**Jer. 2:28** But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

Jeremiah used irony and sarcasm: "Let your man-made gods arise and save you—if they can!" Judah's gods were so numerous that they were as many as the number of their cities. False gods were seemingly everywhere. Jews today are unaware of their own history and thus do not realize that conditions were so bad. Because of this ignorance, they cannot see that their sufferings are punishments for iniquity. When Josiah found the Law, he knew that conditions were dreadful, so he repented in sackcloth and ashes and ordered the altars to the false gods to be destroyed. With the evidence gone, our only knowledge of these altars comes from Scripture. Similarly with the nominal Church systems of our day, their past history is forgotten, and the people cannot see why the systems should be destroyed.

One lesson here is not to exaggerate or overevaluate *insignificant* happenings in our own lifetime versus great events of the past. For example, an *isolated* lying wonder to bolster a false god or religion back there became more important than God's opening the Red Sea and working other mighty miracles earlier in Israel's history.

**Comment:** Jeremiah was taunting the people almost the way Elijah taunted the false prophets of Baal at the time of the contest. "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked" (1 Kings 18:27).

**Jer. 2:29** Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD.

God continued to show the inconsistency of the people's waywardness with idols, for when they were in need, they cried to Him for help.

**Jer. 2:30** In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

Israel's *own* sword devoured the true prophets. Stephen said just before his death, "Which of the [true] prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" (Acts 7:52). The nation devoured their prophets "like a destroying lion." Lions and tigers are ferocious when on the hunt; they have terrified whole villages, even carrying off children. When one of the Lord's prophets spoke out, the nation was unified in trying to belittle his influence and persecute him.

Of course Satan is *the* "destroying lion." As the Apostle Peter said, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring *lion*, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

**Comment:** 2 Chronicles 36:16 reads, "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

**Jer. 2:31** O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

"O generation" is a reminder of Jesus' words: "O generation of vipers" (Matt. 12:34). Jeremiah and Jesus spoke similarly at times. Jesus *hated iniquity*, but that conviction is usually not emphasized.

God asked Judah, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" The answer was no, for He had done many things on their behalf and had sent prophets to enlighten them.

But the people said, "We are lords; we will come no more unto thee." They did not appreciate the counsel and instruction that God had given them. Claiming to be independent, they said, "We are our *own* lords and no longer need your counsel." As a result, their reasoning got perverted. When the prophets pointed out their wrong course, the people were insulted and said, "Why do you come to us? We have done no wrong."

**Comment:** Instead of "We are lords," the NIV has, "We are free to roam." The people used their own imaginations and set their own standards. Feeling self-sufficient, they did not submit to God's authority.



**Reply:** God has given free moral agency to His people. Therefore, He instructs and reasons with us, and as a Father, He commands and admonishes us as His children. Even those who are not in sonship relationship, the unconsecrated, have an obligation to the Creator, the unseen God. However, the people of Judah wanted to exercise their prerogative of free moral agency.

As Christians, we are beheaded for the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 20:4). Theoretically, we have no minds or wills of our own but have taken on the mind of Christ, which is synonymous with the mind, or thinking, of God. However, those in Judah resented being instructed. When Jeremiah harangued them, the danger was in their viewing him as an individual, for then they did not see that *God* was speaking through him, and they missed the point. They thought, "Jeremiah is an individual, and so am I. He has an opinion, and so do I." In other words, they viewed him as just another human being and not as a prophet. They got tired of his instruction and went where conditions were more pleasing to the flesh.

"Itching ears" are also a danger (2 Tim. 4:3). The people wanted to hear pleasant and "smooth" things, and the false prophets catered to their itching ears (Isa. 30:9,10). Generally speaking, the majority of both the hearers and the speakers have this unfavorable trait. Accordingly, those of Judah failed to reason on the stupidity of their thinking. Feeling there was no hope in listening to Jehovah, they were not ashamed to go where nice things were spoken.

**Jer. 2:32** Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

God was asking a rhetorical question to which the answer was no. To forget such items is contrary to the natural instinct of the fallen man or woman. The Israelites were careful in regard to their temporal needs, but they were not careful about God. The situation should have been the reverse. God's people forgot Him "days without number."

**Q:** Can verse 32 also be considered from the standpoint that God had married the nation of Israel? In Ezekiel 16:10-13, God said, "I clothed thee also with brodered work, ... and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; ... thou wast exceeding beautiful." But the Israelites turned their backs on God's provisions.

**A:** Yes, that slant is a good thought, for God does liken Himself to the husband of Israel. Both slants are profitable to consider. God had ornamented Israel with various promises, favors, and providences, as well as demonstrations of His concern.

**Q:** Did a maid use ornaments to attract a husband?

**A:** Yes, that is another nuance. From this standpoint, the maid progressed to a bride. The maiden suggests virginity, purity, and innocence, and the bride indicates acceptance, for Israel was chosen *as a nation* (not as individuals) by the Heavenly Father. Israel was a *collective* bride.

**Jer. 2:33** Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways.

**Comment:** The Revised Standard reads, "How well you direct your course to seek lovers!"

**Reply:** The Israelites decorated, or ornamented, themselves to be attractive. Spiritually speaking, the nominal Church has dancing, gambling, fashion shows, rock music, carnivals, etc.

A bad example adversely influences others and lowers the standard.

As wicked as the other nations were, Israel was even worse because the people spurned God's instruction. Israel's example encouraged other nations to be even more wicked. Jesus spoke the principle: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matt. 23:15). The words of Jesus and Jeremiah to natural Israel also apply to nominal spiritual Israel.

**Jer. 2:34 Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.**

"The blood of the souls of the poor innocents" refers to Israel's practice of sacrificing live children to Molech, the fire god. The Israelites copied their neighbors, thinking that taking a sinless, innocent infant and killing it in sacrifice would pacify a wrathful god with regard to their own sins.

Israel's sins were so flagrant and openly manifest that God did not have to search out or uncover secret sins. At this point, Jeremiah may have pointed to the Valley of Hinnom and to the groves on the hills around Jerusalem.

From another standpoint, the "poor innocents" could be the true prophets, who were persecuted and put to death. Revelation 17:6 expresses the principle: "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and [even] with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

**Jer. 2:35 Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.**

A "plea" is usually a formal declaration or document either good or bad. Jeremiah said he would make a formal declaration to the people of Israel. Somewhat like a lawyer's speaking before a jury, the prophet was pleading his case of scathing denunciation and guilt before the people. The right-hearted recognized the airtight case of guilt, but the majority said, "We are innocent!" Papacy has done likewise.

**Comment:** That is the attitude of society today. Many people do not feel the guilt of sin.

**Reply:** Down through the Gospel Age, the Israelites have proclaimed their innocence, feeling that they were the scapegoats of the Gentiles. Because of their lack of familiarity with Scripture, they have failed to see that much of their experience is due to their rejection of Messiah. The attitude at the time of the Crucifixion was, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). The same thing happened in the Christian religion when the eye was winked at the atrocities of the Holocaust. Revealed documents have shown an anti-Semitic attitude in the Roman Catholic Church.

In Jeremiah's day, the people did not feel they merited judgments. God told Israel in the days of Moses that if they obeyed, they would be blessed, and if they disobeyed, they would be punished. Therefore, the people should have gotten the point and not felt that the punishment and judgments were unjust.

**Jer. 2:36 Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria.**

"Thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria." Judah made a

military pact with Egypt, but there was no security in this. In the future, Judah would be defeated just as had happened earlier in regard to Assyria and the ten tribes. The ten tribes had been confederate with Assyria in an effort to attack and defeat the two tribes. However, not only was this effort thwarted, but also many captives were taken from the ten tribes under Tiglath-pileser (see 2 Kings 16). Israel's mistake was putting its trust in fallible man and false gods. The nation of Israel continues to make the same error today in going to other nations for help instead of looking to the Lord.

**Jer. 2:37** Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

“Yea, thou shalt go forth from him [Egypt], and thine hands [will be] upon thine head [in humiliation].” In addition to Egypt's utter defeat by King Nebuchadnezzar in this future battle at Tahapanes, Jeremiah prophesied that Judah would be defeated and made to surrender with their hands on their heads. (Sometimes the elbows of captives were bent way up in back and tied.) It was also customary to further humiliate the captives, especially if they were princes or nobles, by confiscating their clothing and just giving them a little loincloth to wear.

“The LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.” God would not listen to Judah's pleas, for the people needed a lesson.

Jeremiah had great courage to speak like this for *many* years with hardly anyone listening to him. Later in life, he had two loyal supporters, who must have been a great comfort, but for the most part, his words fell on deaf ears.

**Jer. 3:1** They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.

These words, addressed to natural Israel in Jeremiah's day, are also applicable to mystic Babylon in our day. “They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again?” According to the Law, the answer to this rhetorical question is no. “Shall not that land be greatly polluted?” Yes. “But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.” If the latter clause is a statement, then verse 1 shows how merciful God is with regard to Israel's dereliction. If Judah returned to Him with their whole heart, contrite and wanting to walk in accordance with His commandment, He would receive them. However, the latter clause may be a question, as rendered in the NIV: “‘But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers—would you now return to me?’ declares the LORD.” At any rate, God was leaving the door open for Judah's repentance, as will be seen as we proceed.

The pertinent law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 reads, “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”

While the man seems to be favored in that he made the decision as to whether there would be a divorce, and he gave the bill of divorcement, there was some protection for the woman;

namely, the husband had to find a legitimate reason for the divorce (an “uncleanness,” or nakedness). If the uncleanness were adultery on the part of the wife, it seems strange that she would be given a divorce and be allowed to remarry. The account would just state there would be a bill of divorcement so that the man could be freed from his obligations. Under the Law, an unfaithful woman was put to death. Therefore, this “uncleanness” does not refer to adultery.

It is hard to say what this “uncleanness” consisted of, but here is a suggestion. After a man married a woman, he might find out subsequently that she was not a virgin—and thus that fornication had occurred prior to their marriage. Normally in the Old Testament, the proof of virginity pertained to blood, the breaking of the hymen of the woman. But this could happen in different ways such as rape, an accidental rupturing, or illicit sexual intercourse—all occurring before the marriage. In these cases, the woman could still marry, but if and when the husband discovered the “unclean” condition later, he had cause to divorce his wife. (Of course the woman could inform him prior to the marriage, and he could forgive her and marry her anyway.) A strict Orthodox Jew might, in his uncertainty about his wife’s degree of guilt, decide to divorce her.

In the case of remarriage, if the next husband also divorced her for the same reason, or if he died, she was free to be married again—but *not to the first husband* because she was defiled. Actually, each case could have been a *legitimate* situation. Several points should be kept in mind about the Law given to Israel. For one thing, it was *typical*. Antotypically, who would the second husband be?

We will digress for a moment. In regard to plowing, Paul said that an ox should not be unequally yoked to a horse because of their difference in strength and tread. Although this feature of the Law showed God’s compassion for the animals, the *primary* reason for the Law was to instruct the Church. The Law also said not to muzzle the ox while plowing but to allow it to eat as it chose. This is a benevolent rule, but Paul gave the spiritual application the *priority* (1 Cor. 9:8-10). Therefore, we can conclude that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is also typical.

What, then, is the higher lesson? There were two husbands. If divorced from the second husband or separated from him by death, the woman could not return to her first husband. The principle is shown that if a person puts his hand to the plow, he cannot turn back. The former estate, once lost, cannot be regained. (However, this does not mean that the backsliding Christian cannot be recovered.) The Law can be considered as follows. An Adamic covenant is implied in Scripture. If one has left father Adam’s house (or the covenant relationship of Adam) and is found to be “unclean,” he cannot return to his former condition. Thus the second husband would be Christ.

All are sinners, some more and some less. Therefore, in a natural sense, sin (uncleanness) can be found in each of us, for we were all born in Adamic weakness. If we get a release from this bond by accepting Christ as our Savior and have a new relationship, we can no longer return to our former status and receive the benefits that will accrue to Adam (restitution to perfect life on earth). If a Christian goes back to the world, he pollutes, or “defiles,” the land.

Our covenant relationship to Christ is a *freewill* offering, a voluntary contract. If we renounce or forsake the Lord, we will lose life correspondingly. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the man was given the prerogative because Christ has the prerogative in the Church and is the Head.

In the New Testament, Jesus said that God permitted the decree of divorcement under the Law because of the Israelites’ hardness of heart (Matt. 19:8). In other words, some who married made no allowance for *prior* indiscretions. However, just as God forgives our past sins when we accept Christ, so sins prior to marriage should be forgiven. Some individuals are so upset

that, unfortunately, the marriage is destroyed. Therefore, God gave liberty to the Israelite man to divorce the woman for “some uncleanness.” But Jesus said the Christian should not dissolve a marriage except for fornication or death (Matt. 5:32). A tenderhearted husband should forgive his wife for past sins just as God forgives us when we come to Christ.

Incidentally, the reason Jews were forbidden to eat “unclean” animals was primarily for the spiritual lessons and secondarily for the inherent dangers of improperly prepared meat. One confirmation of this reasoning is the fact that unclean animals are nutritional to eat.

General rules are laid down in Scripture, but that does not mean there cannot be exceptions. However, the exception *must have* a basis. For example, the law of gravity, which pulls all objects toward the earth, can be superseded by another law called centrifugal force. The law of gravity is not violated—it still operates—but it is superseded by a higher law. Since *God* makes the laws, He can also make exceptions where He sees fit to do so. And here is an astounding exception. God made the law that a woman could not return to her former husband, yet here He said the nation of Israel could return to Him, even though they had deflected. In this case, the first husband was God.

Jesus will marry the Church, yet Jehovah, who is *greater* than Jesus, married the nation of Israel. On the surface, it would *seem* that God’s marriage is greater than Jesus’, but God’s marriage was to a *nation*, whereas Jesus marries *individuals* in a *personalized relationship*. Therefore, the retrieval of Israel was on a *national* basis. Jesus said, “Be faithful [as an *individual*] unto death, and I will give you [as an *individual*] the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

Israel did not go to another man (singular) but went as a “harlot” to “*many* lovers,” yet God said, “Return again to me.” Thus He pointed out the contradiction to His own Law, but he was speaking to the nation as a whole. Did the Israelites heed Him? No, and they will not do so until Jacob’s Trouble. The *New Covenant* will be the *recovery*—a *new relationship*.

The problem Jeremiah had was that the Israelites were not ashamed of their sin. They thought the prophet was exaggerating, and so do the Jews today. They think they have been unfairly persecuted by Gentiles and do not see their experience as just retribution for their sins and disobedience. The doctrine of repentance is startlingly absent in Jewish religious writings. To the Jew, repentance is weakness, yet repentance is the very thing the Lord is looking for.

**Jer. 3:2 Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lain with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.**

For verse 2, the NIV has, “Look up to the barren heights and see. Is there any place where you have not been ravished? By the roadside you sat waiting for lovers, sat like a nomad in the desert. You have defiled the land with your prostitution and wickedness.” Harlotry occurred in the high places both literally and spiritually. God was saying, “Look all around you, and see the statues and idols to foreign gods. The spiritual fornication is everywhere apparent.” Down through history, certain heathen religions sanctioned prostitution in connection with their religious practices. Money received by the prostitutes for their services was put into the temple coffers. The immoral practices of the young women were not considered evil but a *sacrifice*. Virginity was sacrificed in honor of the deity of the temple. In Ephesus and other places in Asia Minor, the daughters of some of the highest nobles took a year of service before they married. Condescending to this level was considered a very honorable thing to do. Being surrounded by people who practiced these abominations, the Israelites came to view the acts as not so evil; that is, they were indoctrinated by the practices of their neighbors so that their standards fell.

In Jeremiah's day, if a person traveled up a pathway to any mountaintop, he would find the "red light" district of Israel. Fornication was practiced under the trees, in the seclusion of the boughs. Not only were statues to heathen gods everywhere apparent, but the people were evil even in their everyday life. Jeremiah was trying to awaken them to see how far they had departed from God and get them to repent.

Even the "land" was polluted by the public practice and encouragement of wrongdoing. Leaven leavens not just the sinner but also those around him. If Israel had obeyed God, they would have been blessed with abundant food and a minimum of thorns and thistles. Disobedience curtailed their crops.

In some translations, the thought is that the Arabian was accustomed to robbing caravans. The Arabs, who had no place to hide, looked for the opportunity to attack. Their technique was to watch for dust in the distance, which indicated camels walking along and stirring up the sand. Thus the Arabs were aware of their victims long in advance. Accordingly, as individuals, they separated a certain distance from their camp. As the unaware travelers neared the camp, the Arabs came seemingly out of nowhere and attacked. Such was the method of the Arabs who plotted and looked for opportunities to entrap others and rob them in the desert.

**Jer. 3:3 Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.**

Based on a calendar year starting in the spring, the "latter" rain fell in the fall. Not until the Babylonian captivity, which had not yet occurred, did the Israelites observe October as the beginning of the year. In other words, to have Rosh Hashanah in the fall was a change that took place after the Jews went into Babylonian captivity. Moses indicated the beginning of the year when he said, "This month [Abib] shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Exod. 12:2; 13:4; Deut. 16:1).

Rain in the fall prepared the ground for tillage, and spring rain caused the crops to sprout. In between, that is, during the summer months, there was no rain. Thus the Israelites depended on the two seasonal rains, for they knew there would be a relatively dry period for five or six months.

The RSV and the NIV use the term "spring rain" instead of "latter rain," but we think the reference is to the fall rain. Regardless of which thought was intended, the rain was withheld because of Israel's disobedience and unfaithfulness. God had said through Moses, "If you do not hearken to my commandments, not only will you be defeated in warfare and have a lot of stillborns, but the land will not be productive in bringing forth fruitage." The Israelites enjoyed their waywardness and then blamed the lack of rain on nature or God, but they were the cause of the problem and had been forewarned. The things that were happening should have alerted the people as to the real cause of the problem. Now, in addition, God had sent the Prophet Jeremiah, but the nation had a "whore's forehead" and refused to be ashamed. That was the problem back there, and it is the problem today.

Spiritually speaking, the Roman Catholic Church, the "mother of harlots," refuses to be ashamed, and the name is right on her forehead: "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Rev. 17:5). In contrast, the true Church is a virgin. Being political and mixing with the nations constitutes spiritual harlotry, for "friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4).

**Jer. 3:4 Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?**

As expressed in the NIV, the thought is as follows. Pretending to want forgiveness, Israel said to God in effect, “Haven’t we served thee from our youth?” They spoke endearingly to God, calling Him “My father”—a most unusual expression in the Old Testament. But the nation refused to be ashamed, feeling that God would be unjust not to forgive them. They did not see that they had done the wrong.

**Jer. 3:5 Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst.**

Jeremiah asked, “Will God reserve His anger forever and keep it to the end?” Israel thought God’s anger and displeasure would soften or disappear in time, but He replied, “Behold, you have spoken and done evil as you could.” Israel gave lip service, but their hearts were far from Him.

God was saying, “You have the forehead of a whore, and you do evil, yet you have the nerve to call me ‘Father’! Your works are not in harmony with your profession.” Even Daniel did not dare to call God “Father.”

The Israelites thought God’s anger would pass in time. Similarly, some people presume on goodness and good-natured people. They may deliberately do something to provoke an individual, knowing that in time, the person’s anger will cease. The Israelites were treating God this way. They thought, “God was merciful in the past, so He will calm down after He vents His displeasure.” Accordingly, they considered Jeremiah’s strong words to be out of order. The prophet was saying they had the wrong attitude, but they thought he was exaggerating.

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

**Jer. 3:7 And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.**

**Jer. 3:8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.**

**Comment:** God was saying to Judah, “Look what happened to the ten tribes. Are you going to learn the lesson?”

**Reply:** Yes. In this allegory, Israel and Judah were likened to sisters, and God was the husband. He had already put *Israel* away for committing adultery “and given her a bill of divorce,” but *Judah* had not yet gone into captivity. The “treacherous sister Judah” saw the divorce—she saw Israel’s captivity—but did not fear. Although Judah had seen Israel’s deflection and subsequent punishment, she did not learn the lesson. The “divorce” was Israel’s displacement from the land; God permitted the separation. He did not want to divorce Israel, but Israel provoked Him through disobedience. Jeremiah was trying to awaken Judah, who was inclined toward the same disobedient and wayward direction, and would reap the same fruits of punishment if she did not repent.

**Comment:** Ezekiel 23 reiterates the lessons of this scenario. There Israel and Judah are again likened to two sisters, their names being Aholah and Aholibah, respectively.

**Comment:** Even after Judah’s *continued* disobedience, God turned and pleaded, “Turn thou unto

me.” But instead of repenting, Judah “went and played the harlot also.”

**Reply:** Yes, Judah should have taken the lesson to heart. Jeremiah had given this message in the days of King Josiah, the implication being that Josiah was now deceased. Jeremiah was saying, “The LORD [had] said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king.” Therefore, these verses are telling what Jeremiah had previously preached and was now committing to writing in the hope that the words would have a deterrent effect on Judah’s disobedience.

**Comment:** Isaiah 50:1 reads, “Thus saith the LORD [to Israel], Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.”

**Reply:** At that time, Isaiah was nearing the end of his ministry, and he was prophesying during the reign of Hezekiah.

**Jer. 3:9** **And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.**

**Comment:** The NIV has, “Because Israel’s immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood.” If sin is not recognized as sin, what chance is there of repentance?

In what manner did Israel commit adultery with “stones” and “stocks”? In heathen religions, “stones” were masonry images of the female organs, and stocks, or trees, were wooden images of the male organs. These practices were *highly immoral*. Jews living today would deny that these acts were part of their history.

Even at the present time, the male organ is very prominent in Cappadocia. On the tour, we purposely did not mention this fact lest the minds of the brethren become distracted from the Christian history in that area. Similarly, Satan introduced the bull from the standpoint of virility instead of from the Biblical perspective of strength and righteousness in the Hebrew sacrifices. Satan takes the imagery that God uses and gives it a perverted connotation, playing on man’s base instincts. The Adversary watches everything God does and immediately tries to misconstrue the true meaning and significance.

**Jer. 3:10** **And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD.**

Judah did not turn to God “with her whole heart.” The turning was done in a feigned manner; it was a pretense. Again Judah is called a “treacherous sister.” Imagine Jeremiah’s speaking this way on behalf of the Lord! How popular would a true prophet have been?

**Jer. 3:11** **And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.**

Verse 11 starts another message from Jeremiah.

**Comment:** The NIV reads, “The LORD said to me, ‘Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah.’”

**Q:** Did Judah have greater responsibility because additional time had gone by, giving her opportunity to learn the lesson?



**A:** Yes. Both Israel and Judah had instruction, but Judah also had the example of what had happened to the ten tribes. Therefore, Judah was more culpable. We are reminded of Jesus' words: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11:21-24).

**Comment:** The principle is that unto whomsoever much is given, much shall be required (Luke 12:48). On the one hand, the more we understand, the greater the responsibility. On the other hand, to be willingly ignorant is displeasing to the Lord (2 Pet. 3:5).

**Reply:** Retribution falls more heavily in proportion to knowledge. In regard to the nation of Israel, God said, "I did not choose you because of your righteousness but because of Abraham" (Rom. 11:28 paraphrase). In other words, God said of the nation of Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," but He dealt particularly with the faithful few such as Moses, the prophets, and a handful of kings (Amos 3:2).

**Jer. 3:12** Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.

**Jer. 3:13** Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD.

More than 100 years after the ten tribes went into captivity in the north, Jeremiah was told to proclaim this repentance message. The fulfillment was twofold, the primary emphasis being on the second, yet future fulfillment. The first fulfillment occurred when the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity. The bulk of the 50,000 returning Jews were from Judah. The priesthood returned, as well as some from Benjamin and a very few from the ten tribes. The priesthood returned because they served in Jerusalem, which was between Judah and Benjamin.

As we study the prophecy, we will see that the primary application is down here at the end of the Gospel Age. At the present time, we cannot distinguish the ten- and the two-tribe kingdoms. The two "sticks" were put together, and that is the situation today (Ezek. 37:19). Therefore, God's promise is still applicable in a more realistic sense in the near future to the Holy Remnant. God said He would retrieve and forgive Israel *if* they would acknowledge their iniquity, their transgressions against Him, and their refusal to obey His voice, and that will be the reaction of the Holy Remnant.

In regard to the first fulfillment, we can see why Daniel prayed, for he "understood by books" what Jeremiah had written—that after 70 years, the Lord would return favor to His people (Dan. 9:1-19). Daniel was a remarkable exception to the iniquitous nation. He prayed three times a day, ate "clean" food, received knowledge and understanding from God, interpreted dreams, etc. Not only did he understand from Jeremiah's writings (chapter 25) that the captivity would last for 70 years, but also he saw the need for repentance and acknowledgment of iniquity. The hope of Israel's forgiveness and return to their land was based on repentance. Thus Daniel *publicly* acknowledged and confessed his prayer in order to stir up the people to a right heart condition of desiring to return to God.

**Jer. 3:14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:**

The response to the cry for repentance was “one of a city, and two of a family.” What is the thought here?

**Comment:** God promised that the survivors would be handpicked.

**Reply:** Yes. The “family” was a “tribe,” which was larger in number than the population of a city. For instance, the tribe of Judah had many cities. Therefore, “one of a city, and two of a tribe” meant there would be few survivors—a very small remnant.

“And I will bring you to Zion.” Jeremiah would have applied this promise to the return from Babylon, but it refers to the return at the end of the age in Jacob’s Trouble, when the Holy Remnant will cry to God for forgiveness and He will hearken to them and deliver them. Those who flee to the mountains as mourning doves will be delivered (Dan. 12:1). The wrong-hearted element will also cry but will not be delivered. Relatively speaking, the Holy Remnant will not be large.

**Jer. 3:15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.**

Verse 15 is still a prophecy of the future, basically speaking, although it had a partial application when Judah returned from Babylonian captivity. However, the past application does not fulfill all the details, especially in verse 16, for the practice of the Ark of the Covenant was restored at that time.

Who, then, are the “pastors according to mine [God’s] heart”? Primarily, they are the Ancient Worthies, for after Jacob’s Trouble, God will give the Holy Remnant “pastors,” who will feed them with “knowledge and understanding.” While The Christ will be reigning, they will be in the spirit, so the administration of the Kingdom will be largely in the hands of human representatives, the Ancient Worthies, who will be “princes in all the earth” (Psa. 45:16). As the communicating element, they will be dispersed throughout the world to do their work.

**Comment:** Isaiah 1:26 reads, “And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

**Reply:** That is a good companion text.

**Comment:** Jeremiah 23:3,4 is another companion text about the Holy Remnant: “And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.”

**Reply:** Yes, the “shepherds” are the Ancient Worthies, who will feed with true knowledge and understanding, “for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3). The “word” of instruction from The Christ will be carried down to a human level through the Ancient Worthies. The earth will be flooded with truth.

**Jer. 3:16 And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither**

**shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.**

In the Kingdom, “they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.” How emphatic! The point of verse 16 is that the time will come when the Ark of the Covenant will not even be considered. No more will rituals be performed on behalf of the nation of Israel where blood was put on the Ark in the Most Holy. A confirmation is the fact that there will be no Ark in the Third Temple.

The Ark will no longer be necessary because the high calling will be complete. The type will have been fulfilled. As beautifully expressed in *Tabernacle Shadows*, the Ark represents The Christ, Head and body—and even God as regards the Shekinah light. The propitiatory lid of the Ark pictures Jesus, and the coffer (or box) below, which is incomplete without the lid, represents the body of Christ in glory. The ceremony in the Third Temple chapters of the Book of Ezekiel mentions nothing about blood being taken into the Most Holy. In fact, only one article of furniture, a table, will be in the Temple of the next age. The table will be somewhat comparable to the Golden Incense Altar, although there is no mention of incense in the Most Holy. The suggestion is that Zadok will go into the Most Holy for information. The ritual of the application of the blood will take place outside in the Court.

It is almost Satanic that Hollywood scenarios show individuals searching for the Ark in Ethiopia, Australia, and other places. Some even say the Ark is in Israel. Probably it is, but it *will not be found* because the calling for the world of mankind in the Kingdom Age will be different.

No one knows exactly when the Ark of the Covenant disappeared. In 606 BC, King Zedekiah was dethroned, Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple were destroyed, and the Ark was not mentioned again, not even in connection with Zerubbabel’s (Herod’s) Temple. We do not know if the Ark disappeared in 606 BC or in AD 70, when the Romans destroyed Herod’s Temple.

The Holy Remnant exists today, but they will be developed *later*. They are already on the scene, although their identity as individuals will not be known until their deliverance out of Jacob’s Trouble. Both the Church and the Great Company will somehow be involved in waking up this remnant. Once their eyes are opened, they will be very startled. Currently the Orthodox Jew understands certain things about the Old Testament, so if some with this background get the spark of understanding, they will develop quickly. The “key” is what they need to unlock their Bible background. The Pastor expected that the Holy Remnant would comprise mostly Orthodox Jews. At present, they are very biased—some even think they are doing God a service when they spit at the name of Jesus—but when the understanding comes that Jesus is their true Messiah, they will be terribly frightened and appalled at their attitude.

Orthodox Jews believe the Messiah is a composite body of *Jews*, but depending on context and circumstance, Messiah is Jesus, an *individual*, as well as a composite body of *Jews and Gentiles*. Generally speaking, the Hasidic Jews are disturbed by the present Israeli government, and they look forward to the coming of a personal Messiah. The Reform, Conservative, and some Hasidic Jews see the *nation* as the Messiah.

**Jer. 3:17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.**

Verse 17 proves that the context is after Jacob’s Trouble. It is true that Jeremiah spoke about

both returns of the nation of Israel: (1) after the 70 years in Babylon and (2) after Jacob's Trouble. However, here he was talking about the future, for in 536 BC, all nations were not gathered to Jerusalem and the city was not called the "throne of the LORD." Nevertheless, these words gave comfort to those who returned after the 70 years, the number of whom was only 50,000 out of millions.

**Comment:** The thought of a future literal Temple being in Jerusalem is sensible and reasonable.

**Reply:** Yes, the nations have to be gathered to a place and a situation that is conducive to a religious ceremony and instruction. Certainly a building is the logical answer, as opposed to just open-air meetings in the streets of Jerusalem.

**Comment:** All nations will be gathered to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16).

**Reply:** The Feast of Tabernacles will be mandatory as a time when the nations give general recognition by sending representatives, or delegates.

"Neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart." Jesus will rule with a rod of iron; evil will not be tolerated. Pastors and instructors will be provided, and there will be enforcement. Every knee will have to bow and "confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10,11). Obedience will be required.

We know, based on Scripture, that a tremendous multitude of people will be cut off in the Kingdom Age as not being worthy of everlasting life. How can that be? We have suggested that at the end of his reign, Christ will withdraw himself in the test of the "little season," and many will follow Satan, the number being "as the sand of the sea" (Rev. 20:3,7-9). Thus there will be an insurrection and a cutting off.

Since prior to the Little Season, Christ will actively enforce his reign and not brook interference, his withdrawal will be mistaken to signify that the reign has ended. When different Scriptures are harmonized, we almost have to come to that conclusion. Satan will first be bound, but when he is released, he will continue to work his evil, proving that he is incorrigible. However, in that work, he will seem to be confident in what he is doing and not be in fear. Under that circumstance, Jesus will not be "present," for otherwise, he could not tolerate Satan's actions. (For Jesus to allow such evil in his presence would be inconsistent with his righteous character.) Therefore, a withdrawal will take place, and during that vacuum, it will be thought that the reign is over when it is not. During the Little Season, those who follow Satan will again "walk ... after the imagination of their evil heart." Then Christ will come back and destroy the evildoers. At that point, the Kingdom will be handed over to the Father with a perfected human race remaining. Those on earth will be raised not merely to human physical perfection but also to moral perfection because God will be "all in all" at that time in everyone who truly inherits everlasting life (1 Cor. 15:28). Only then will the Lord's Prayer be answered with God's will being done on earth as it is done in heaven. All enemies, including Satan and death, will then have been put under the feet of Christ (1 Cor. 15:24-27). Satan is the next-to-last enemy to be destroyed, and death is the last enemy.

As the Pastor said, it must not be understood that when Christ reigns, there will be no evil. Righteousness will flourish, but there will be evil. During the present age, righteousness is the minority, and evil is the vast majority. In the Kingdom Age, the vast majority will be righteous in the sense that they are obeying the laws. At the same time, there will be some evil, but it will not be tolerated. The evil has to be manifested to indicate the justice of God's cutting off the evildoers. Otherwise, if God just cut off everyone He did not deem fit, His righteousness would not be seen. Therefore, in the Kingdom Age, mankind will be allowed to manifest their lack of

worthiness to obtain everlasting life. At the end of the Kingdom Age, the nations will be gathered like sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-34). The goats will be destroyed, and the sheep will be told, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

**Comment:** People will come forth from the tomb with the same characters they had when they died, so there will be evil.

**Reply:** As a tree falleth, so shall it lie (Eccl. 11:3). Therefore, the same individual who went into the tomb will come forth. Instruction and cleansing will be needed.

When Christ is visually reigning through his ministers, lasting evil will not be tolerated. For instance, Malachi 3:15 mentions that evildoers grow and prosper and even lead long lives in the present life, but in the Kingdom Age, conditions will be different. When evil occurs, it will be nipped in the bud. Those who do not bow the knee to “that Prophet” will be cut off (Acts 3:23).

Incidentally, even in the Little Season, the Third Temple will not be violated, for “in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 14:21). We know of no Scripture to the contrary.

**Jer. 3:18** In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

Israel and Judah will “come together out of the land of the north.” This prophecy is only partially fulfilled at the present time. Many fail to see that there are two regatherings to Israel, one before and one after the Kingdom is inaugurated; that is, Jews go back to their homeland both before and after Jacob’s Trouble. The fulfillment takes place in two different time periods, in two different dispensations. The putting of the two together—the house of Judah and the house of Israel—is occurring now. The first regathering has been partly the result of persecutions in Russia. However, the Jews do not know their lineage; they know they are Jews, but they would like to know to what tribe they belong. There is even a problem with the priesthood, for the Jews do not know whether they are Levites, generally speaking, or priests in their lineage. Those with the name Cohen and other phonetically similar names are more likely to be related to the priesthood, but no one has a register as proof.

Therefore, even the Jews who have gone back to Israel and lived there for a while do not know which tribe they are of. The joining together of the ten and the two tribes is described in Ezekiel 37:16-28, as follows:

“Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:

“And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

“And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these?

“Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

“And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

“And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

“And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

“Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

“And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

“And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.

“Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

“My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

“And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.”

This chapter in the Book of Ezekiel immediately precedes the Gog and Magog chapters of 38 and 39, which are end-of-the-age settings. The first regathering is taking place, but to date, the nation has not really repented. In fact, the current rabbinical thinking is that the Jews have been unjustly treated by the Gentiles. They do not see their own sins. It is true that the Gentiles have committed many sins, but their culpability is only part of the problem.

Jeremiah was emphasizing to Judah, “Look what God did to the ten-tribe kingdom. The cities are uninhabited, and the people have been dispersed into foreign nations. God will do the same to you because you are committing the same sins. In addition, your Temple and the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed.” In due time, both kingdoms were absorbed into captivity. When the Babylonian captivity ended in 536 BC, only about 50,000 Jews returned to the homeland, and most of them were from Judah and Levi. However, the coming together of the two “sticks” has been taking place in the Jews’ homogenization in Europe, so that they do not know which Jews are of the ten tribes and which ones are of the two tribes. The distinction in the tribes will be seen in the future, for the Jews will be apprised of their tribal lineage in the Kingdom. We are living in the time of the end, and we see the Time of Trouble coming like a cloud in the distance. The real trouble will not start until the Church is complete.

Where is the “land of the north”? From an aerial view, or a spherical standpoint, Europe is to the north of Israel on a world map. In the future, after Jacob’s Trouble, a number of Jews will return to Israel from Europe.

**Jer. 3:19** But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

**Jer. 3:20 Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD.**

God asked, “How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations [plural]?” In other words, “How can I put a stiff-necked people, who have not been observing me, in a holy seed?” Many Gentiles think the Jews are forever lost for crucifying and refusing to accept Christ. Anti-Semitic feelings exist even among Protestants. Some in the Christian world are sympathetic to Israel because they think Messiah will come when Israel wakes up. They are looking for a man of sin, a Jew, to sit in the Temple of God. Meanwhile, the Jews are happy to get money and support from churches, even though many of the Gentiles have ulterior motives. Consider the United States, which is interested in Israel for political reasons and because that nation is a bastion of Western civilization. Those who sincerely believe the promise to Abraham are relatively few. In the promise, God said, “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).

**Q:** Is the fulfillment of the last part of verse 19 future? “Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.”

**A:** Yes. A regathering to Israel is taking place now, but a *physical* regathering is only part of the solution. The real “regathering” is an *inner* going back, a *heart* return, such as the Zionists, who are *religiously* motivated. Many others go to Israel just for survival purposes.

**Q:** Is calling God “My father” a *sincere* expression here, as opposed to the *hypocritical* sense in verse 4?

**A:** Yes. The Jews who survive Jacob’s Trouble will turn to God in a very intimate sense. Verses 19 and 20 are a play on words. When Jews come from the north in the future in the second regathering, they will call Him “Father” in *sincerity*. In addition, they will recognize Jesus as the age-lasting Father.

**Jer. 3:21 A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God.**

The fulfillment of the weeping, an expression of Israel’s contrition for sin, will take place at the end of Jacob’s Trouble. At the height of the trouble, the Ancient Worthies will be raised, and the nation will quickly hear the news.

The “voice” will be on the “bare heights” (RSV). Each of the Holy Remnant will separate from others and mourn personally and individually, spontaneously and simultaneously. A companion text is Zechariah 12:10-12, “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart.” Each of the handpicked survivors will want to be undistracted in his mourning. One who desires to pray without distraction needs to be alone and often goes to a high place, where he feels closer to God and farther from the earth. Thus the Holy Remnant will truly repent and see the vanity of their former ways. Kingdom instruction will then begin through the Ancient Worthies.

**Jer. 3:22 Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.**

God gave an open door for Israel to return in Jeremiah's day, but the conditions were (and are) contrition and repentance. The Revised Standard reads, "Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness."

"Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God." This will be the sentiment of the Holy Remnant. Psalm 121:1 reads, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." Real help comes from God, who dwells on high.

**Jer. 3:23 Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.**

"Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and ... mountains [from other nations and governments such as England and the United States]."

**Comment:** Two Scriptures are pertinent. "Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up" (Hos. 6:1). "I [God] will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him [Israel]" (Hos. 14:4).

We believe this information will come from the Bible Student movement, particularly from the Great Company. The feet members will give a message first, but when the Great Company subsequently continues with the work, the message will make real inroads with the Holy Remnant just before Jacob's Trouble. Armed with this instruction, the Holy Remnant will obey. However, the majority of Jews will not hearken and will die in the trouble.

In regard to Jeremiah's day, the reference seems to be to human and animal sacrifices offered to false gods supposedly to appease their anger. The RSV has, "Truly the hills are a delusion, the orgies on the mountains." In the live human and animal sacrifices of the heathen religions, cries of pain were part of the ritual. In contrast, under the Law, the animals were killed painlessly and roasted after they were dead. Jehovah wanted repentance. The sacrifices pointed forward to the Redeemer and showed the people's need for a single Redeemer.

Heathen sacrifices were especially abhorrent to the women. They did not like human sacrifices and cannibalism, but the men made the decisions. The men howled and danced, whereas the women, being more tenderhearted, cried and mourned.

Statues and idols were erected in the literal hills and mountains of Israel and Judah so that they would be conspicuous. There the people looked to their false gods to help them in their personal lives. Moreover, the "houses" of ill repute were nearby in the trees.

**Jer. 3:24 For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.**

Verses 22b-25 are all one unit expressing the shame of the Holy Remnant for having sinned. These verses explain the weeping and mourning to be that of contrition and repentance. The Holy Remnant will acknowledge that the Holocaust and other persecutions happened because God was spanking and instructing them like a Father; He gave them a thrashing like a good Father to wake them up. However, many people become resentful, and thus the difficult experiences harden their thinking toward God. They think of Him as being cruel, whereas they should introspectively examine their own heart and conduct.

The true conversion of an unbeliever who has radically changed his life touches us deeply. And so the Gentiles who survive Jacob's Trouble will be drawn to the Holy Remnant, for they will



recognize that God is responsible for the change.

**Jer. 3:25** We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

“Even unto *this day*” (that is, “even up to the *present time*,” the *future* time when the mourning will occur), the Holy Remnant will admit their sinfulness. They will want to “lie down” (prostrate themselves) because of their shame and dishonor (“confusion”).

**Jer. 4:1** If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

The theme of repentance continues from chapter 3. Verses 1 and 2 pertain to Israel, even though the ten tribes had already gone into captivity. Then, starting with verse 3, Jeremiah addressed Judah. In other words, in urging repentance, Jeremiah was speaking not merely to Judah alone but also to the ten tribes, who were in dispersion. In addition, Jeremiah was a prophet to the surrounding nations, giving instruction and judgment messages, as we will see.

Generally speaking, the earlier part of the Book of Jeremiah pertained to the imminent threat of a Babylonian captivity, to the threat of an enemy coming down to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple and then taking people of Judah captive. With the ten tribes, the threat was Assyria; with Judah, the alien power was Babylon. The latter part of the Book of Jeremiah speaks particularly of a future remnant, that is, the Holy Remnant in our day.

**Comment:** In the NIV, verse 1 continues into verse 2 as follows: “If you put your detestable idols out of my sight and no longer go astray, and if in a truthful, just and righteous way you swear, ‘As surely as the LORD lives,’ then the nations will be blessed by him and in him they will glory.” The Revised Standard is similar.

**Jer. 4:2** And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

If Israel would respond and repent and remove their abominations, then God would prove to them that He could bring forth victory out of judgment. The same premise of repentance applies to the future. Back there Israel did not respond, but in the future, in Jacob’s Trouble, the Holy Remnant will repent. Then “the nations shall bless themselves in him [God].” God’s mercy toward Israel will be a blessing not only to that nation but also to the other nations who come to Israel.

We are again reminded of the Abrahamic promise: “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:2,3). In the Hebrew is the thought that the nations shall bless themselves by coming to God through Israel. By the nations’ not believing in God down through history, the opposite has occurred; they have had problem after problem.

“And in him [God] shall they glory.” Psalm 110:3 reads, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” When the Kingdom Age comes, there will be great hope for this element; they will really prosper. Others may temporarily prosper but not in the long term. And so when individuals swear truthfully in the Lord—when their profession, deeds, and works are in conformity with their confession—they bless themselves by recognizing Jehovah.

**Jer. 4:3 For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.**

“Break up your fallow ground.” The reference was to the *hearts* of the men of Judah and Jerusalem. “Fallow [idle, uncultivated] ground” is *hard* and *stony*, but if it is plowed and broken, then crops can be grown. The same is true of the heart. If it is broken, then the individual can be dealt with.

“Sow not among thorns.” A second problem is sowing among thorns. We are reminded of the Parable of the Sower, in which seed was sown in various types of ground, picturing various heart conditions (Matt. 13:3-9,18-23). The Great Company class is pictured by the seed that was sown among “thorns,” that is, the cares of this life.

The same principle was in operation in Jeremiah’s day among those who professed to believe in Jehovah. The same conditions were expected with the Jew as are now expected with the Christian; that is, in harmony with one’s profession, substantive works should be brought forth. Thorns survive and grow in hard ground, but edible crops require the breaking up of the hard ground (of the heart).

**Jer. 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.**

Verse 4 is strong language. Elsewhere the King James translators evaded the strong language of the Hebrew by using softer words. They wanted to make the Scriptures more palatable to the reader and believer, but here they were forced to follow the original thought. Those of Judah were told to circumcise *themselves*, whereas the normal procedure is for others to do the circumcising.

“Take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Imagine someone giving a public discourse and speaking to the audience like that! Jeremiah’s criticism would have seemed like a holier-than-thou attitude, but what he said was the *truth*. Many people do not like strong language because they feel it is too crude and blunt, but God had selected Jeremiah from the womb and prepared him for the necessary role of giving such instruction to His professed people. He had said to Jeremiah, “You are the man. I know you are very emotional in many ways, but I will make you like a brass wall to others for the work you are to do.” Jeremiah had to be an iron pillar in order to confront and not fear the hard faces of the people (Jer. 1:8,17-19). God promised to be with Jeremiah and to provide the necessary strength.

If those of Judah did not circumcise themselves and take away the foreskins of their heart, God’s “fury [would] come forth like fire, and burn [so] that none ... [could] quench it” because of their evil doings. The remnant that would be saved by Jeremiah’s preaching was pitifully few in number, but if his message had been softer, we wonder if there would have been any remnant. Judgment was threatening like the sword of Damocles, which dangled by a thread.

Circumcision is related to consecration. If Judah returned to God on the proper conditions, He would bless them. But a time would come when God would no longer issue the invitation to repent. At that “point of no return,” His wrath would destroy them.

**Jer. 4:5 Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities.**

**Jer. 4:6 Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.**

**Jer. 4:7 The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.**

**Jer. 4:8 For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us.**

The message continued to be very strong. Verses 5 and 6 read as follows in the RSV: “Declare in Judah, and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say, ‘Blow the trumpet through the land; cry aloud and say, “Assemble, and let us go into the fortified cities!” Raise a standard toward Zion, flee for safety, stay not, for I bring evil from the north, and great destruction.’” What was this proclamation saying?

**Comment:** Trouble was imminent. King Nebuchadnezzar, the “lion,” was starting out from his thicket; he was on his way.

Jeremiah enacted this message in pantomime. For example, while saying, “Blow the trumpet,” he waved his arms. He preached as if he were seeing the reality: “The king of Babylon is on his way down here. Get into the fortified cities and protect yourselves.” However, his warning was to no avail. The implication is that if the people changed their ways, if they broke up the fallow ground, if they repented and said in truth, “I love God,” the trouble would not be necessary. Jeremiah made sure that the people heard his message.

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah all dramatized their messages. For instance, Isaiah had to walk naked, using only a loincloth with his buttocks exposed. He enacted what would happen to the ten tribes, whereas Jeremiah used even stronger language to speak to the two tribes. Jeremiah was like an orator; his words, which were powerful in the Hebrew, painted a lurid picture that was dramatic in its effect. We believe that he gesticulated as he spoke. In other words, he did not just speak peacefully with tempered zeal in a stoic fashion. When Jeremiah was mad, he was really mad, and when he was sympathetic, he was moved to tears. The prophet was emotional by nature, but God gave him the necessary rigidity to counterbalance that side of his character. Jeremiah’s emotionalism and normal disposition are especially seen in the Book of Lamentations. He had such empathy that he almost destroyed himself with his grief and pain for Israel. These characteristics show that Jeremiah was a very worthy person, and God specially protected him, Baruch, and a eunuch (Jer. 36:26; 52:25).

Nebuchadnezzar, the “lion,” had a reputation and a string of victories in his record. He became the “destroyer of the Gentiles” by conquering them. In 606 BC, he would turn his attention to Judah and make the land of Israel desolate and its cities a “waste, without an inhabitant.” Hence Jeremiah told Judah to “lament and howl” and hope that the Lord would remove the judgment (but that did not happen).

Jeremiah continued to speak as if the coming trouble were an irrepressible conflict. In the prophetic pantomime, the people heard that Nebuchadnezzar was already on the way. Earlier they had hoped God’s anger would abate, but at this point, they knew the trouble was truly coming. Meanwhile, false prophets mocked Jeremiah and said that God would give Judah the victory. However, in telling the people to put on sackcloth and lament and howl, Jeremiah also prophesied that they would say, “The fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us.” The listeners could almost hear the threatening lion growling as he was temporarily held

in abeyance. Jeremiah was saying, “The trouble is a sure thing, so why can’t you repent and change your ways?”

In the dramatization, Jeremiah spoke of things to come as if they were already occurring. “The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.” Jeremiah’s purpose was to wake up the people to see the reality of the situation so that the salvable element could be rescued. Only a pitiful few responded to his message—a total of 4,600 persons out of millions from all three captivities of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:30).

For the cities (plural) of Judah to be laid waste and the whole land to be “desolate” was strong language. When the ten tribes were taken into captivity earlier, foreigners were brought into that land, but when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Judah and Jerusalem, he removed all of the inhabitants from the land, including the non-Jews in the territory of the ten tribes. Thus when Jerusalem and the Temple were laid waste and Judah was without inhabitant, so was Israel.

**Jer. 4:9 And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.**

The prophecy was that the “heart of the king [Zedekiah] shall perish.”

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

Here we get an insight into Jeremiah’s character. We know he had a strong character because he gave a strong message, but his words indicate that he needed development. The Apostle Peter comes to mind, for he also meant well but had to be developed and fashioned. Experiences—even failures—resulted in his being rightly exercised.

But why did Jeremiah say with great emotion, “Ah, Lord GOD! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people”? In chapter 3, he gave a Kingdom picture, saying that Jerusalem would be called the “throne of the LORD” and that the people would not “walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.” No doubt too, Jeremiah had read the writings of prophets such as Isaiah, whose latter chapters were especially encouraging. Therefore, he felt God was deceiving the people to now say, in a scathing message, that irrevocable trouble was coming. Like other prophets, Jeremiah had to develop and mature. Feeling that the messages did not harmonize, he questioned how God could speak peace one minute (“Ye shall have peace”) and trouble the next (“the sword reacheth unto the soul”). He was puzzled.

Jeremiah was emotionally involved in his message, and he thought about how others would receive it. He used the expression “Ah, Lord GOD!” several times (Jer. 1:6; 4:10; 14:13; 32:17). Here “Ah, Lord GOD” was said with *great sorrow*. Jeremiah was remorseful that after having predicted such wonderful blessings, he now had to speak of imminent trouble. This was an honest confession of how he felt. Jonah is another prophet who needed development in his experiences. We would understand Jonah better if we read that book with the right expressions and intonations.

The fact the account speaks in such a condemnatory way of the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem shows that the great majority of the people enjoyed their sins and the good life above hearkening to God. Proof is how few were deemed worthy of preservation for captivity instead of being killed.

**Jer. 4:11 At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse,**

A “dry wind,” a scorching and debilitating wind called the sirocco, destroys by evaporating moisture and damaging the verdure; moreover, it sucks strength out of the human frame. Jeremiah prophesied that such a wind would adversely affect the people of Judah. This dry wind, which would come from the “bare heights” in the desert, would not fan (“winnow”) or cleanse (see the RSV). Usually wind is desirable in hot weather, for a nice, cool breeze is delightful. However, this type of desert wind would be devastating, as if a blast of hot air were coming into the land from an oven.

**Jer. 4:12 Even a full wind from those places shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them.**

As the God of Israel, Jehovah was summoning, or beckoning, this devastating wind to come. This dry wind was a symbol of the Babylonian armed forces that were about to invade the land of Judah.

**Jer. 4:13 Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.**

Jeremiah prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would come with multitudes of forces like “clouds” and with chariots like a “whirlwind.” When people panic, their minds exaggerate a situation, and thus the Israelites would regard the chariots as tanks. Fear enlarges the perspective so that the enemy seems formidable and impregnable. Jeremiah dramatized what the reaction of the Israelites would be: “Woe to us, for we are ruined!” (RSV). On the other hand, with faith and courage, one can meet seemingly insurmountable odds.

In other words, this dry wind was the destruction that would accompany Nebuchadnezzar. The king would burn perishable goods, slay most of the people, and take relatively few captives to Babylon as servants.

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

Jeremiah pleaded with the people to repent from their wickedness. Their evil imaginations were indeed vain. Of course the false prophets gave them a false sense of confidence. Individuals who responded to Jeremiah’s message would be taken to Babylon in safety; their lives would be spared.

**Jer. 4:15 For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim.**

Why would a loud proclamation be made from Dan? As the northern extremity, or border, of the combined kingdom of Israel and Judah, the territory of the tribe of Dan would be the enemy’s point of entry into the land. Mount Ephraim, which was part of the ten tribes and already under subjugation, was just a little north of Judah. Mount Ephraim would be like a lookout from which an announcement of the invaders would come.

Jeremiah probably gave this message with eloquence and great animation. He had such empathy for this coming situation that he felt it deeply. For instance, when he said, “Woe unto us! for we are spoiled,” he enacted the drama with grief and emotion (verse 13). If those who heard and saw Jeremiah preach had had a proper heart condition toward God, they would have grasped the gravity of the situation. Jeremiah was truly concerned for the welfare of his

people, whereas the false prophets were braggadocios and spoke smooth things. For the majority of the people not to respond indicates their hard-heartedness. Moreover, they ridiculed and persecuted Jeremiah, putting him in stocks and in a large, dark cistern with deep mud. For his faithfulness, he will be wonderfully blessed in the Kingdom.

**Jer. 4:16 Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah.**

The “watchers” (“besiegers”—RSV) from a far country (Babylon) were those who would come with war implements, that is, the enemy. An earlier example of a “watcher” occurred in the days of Hezekiah. Rab-shakeh, the Assyrian general, preached *in Hebrew*, in the ears of the people, of a coming judgment. He was there not to do the actual destroying but to announce a coming catastrophe if the Jews did not surrender unconditionally. Through Isaiah, God strengthened Hezekiah, and a destroying angel slew 185,000 of the Assyrian army in one night.

**Jer. 4:17 As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD.**

“As keepers of a field, are they against her round about.” When farmers had to exterminate a pest, they circled the field and marched across it arm to arm so that nothing could escape. That is how Nebuchadnezzar approached Jerusalem. A cordon and barricades were set up around the city for a siege.

**Jer. 4:18 Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.**

The coming trouble was retribution. Jeremiah was saying, “This problem is not the Lord’s doing; *you* and *your* heart condition are the problem. These things have come upon you because of your hard-heartedness and your self-confidence in your own righteousness. Your way and your doings have procured this judgment.” The people were more interested in other gods and idols of wood and stone than in worshipping and serving the great Jehovah, the God of Israel.

If we spoke this way today, we would be considered anti-Semitic. But the Lord meant these criticisms for good. He wounds to heal; He punishes to show that He wants to instruct in righteousness. Thank God, future conditions will mellow Israel, producing a Holy Remnant that will be an example to the Gentiles to submit to the God of Israel.

We are all lopsided in our thinking and in need of help. Thankfully, we are in the Lord’s family, for we need this instruction in righteousness in order to get the principles instilled in our own characters as much as possible, by His grace.

**Jer. 4:19 My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.**

**Jer. 4:20 Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.**

Jeremiah was very responsive and emotional, and he wrote just the way he spoke. His heart beat wildly; he writhed in pain. For verse 19, the RSV has, “My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh, the walls of my heart! My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent; for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.”

When several of the Old Testament prophets including Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied, much of their message, when it pertained to feelings, was expressed in poetic or ode form. They may have even used an instrument of one to three strings as they prophesied. This was especially true in the Hebrew, but the translators had difficulty converting the odes into English. Words were chosen that would rhyme, whereas in about 50 percent of the cases, another word would have better conveyed the sense. Similarly in the newer Bibles, such as the NIV, the translators took the liberty of ad-libbing. The original Revised Standard Version ad-libbed only minimally and only when the translators felt it was absolutely necessary. This method is helpful when it is correct, for the language is understandable, but unfortunately, liberty sometimes leads away from the proper thought. Yes, the newer translations are helpful, but they have to be examined in a guarded fashion.

Jeremiah's anguish was his real temperament. Being very concerned for his people, Israel, he got emotionally involved. However, in listening to the prophet speak, the people saw his other side. Seeing only the criticisms, the warnings, and the judgments, they viewed him as having no love or mercy. The few places where his emotionalism came out are rather rare compared to what the Lord instructed him to do under normal circumstances. As God had said, the message was hard.

"I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war." This statement reminds us of what Jeremiah said later: "Then I said, I will not make mention of him [God], nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:9). Jeremiah could not keep quiet. He became weary with forbearing and just had to burst out with the words. Thus not only was he very emotional, but he gave a message that was not in conformity with his normal temperament. If we understand the matter correctly, God used Jeremiah because his emotionalism gave more *oomph* to his words, but in addition, this balance in his character was his salvation, for it kept him from becoming overly critical. In other words, it is one thing to give constructive criticism, but if we do this continually, we are apt to become hypercritical.

Jeremiah was emotionally involved because he understood that doomsday was approaching from the distance. He wanted his people to wake up to the situation.

**Q:** Was Jeremiah having a realistic vision that he was describing?

**A:** He had a series of visions, and now, after 18 years of his ministry, he started to write. In other words, he prophesied during the last 18 years of King Josiah's reign but wrote nothing during that time. Now, after the fact, he was recording a summation of those visions, the portent of which was that a doomsday was coming. Unless Judah changed its course, the judgment would be irrevocable like that which had already come upon the ten-tribe kingdom.

**Comment:** Verses 23-26 all begin with the words "I beheld," indicating that Jeremiah saw a series of visions.

**Reply:** Yes, but he did not state *when* he saw the series of visions, which had an underlying tone of a coming doomsday. As a result, he was very concerned.

**Jer. 4:21** How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?

"How long shall I see the standard [of armies on the march]...?" For example, when the Roman army was on the march, insignias identified different parts of the regiment. Here the

“standard” indicated that the enemy was coming. However, the large “standard,” which was harder to discern, was what Jeremiah wanted the Jews to see; namely, there was danger in continuing to pursue their evil course, and a change was necessary in order to escape this ruination.

“How long shall I ... hear the sound of the [enemy’s] trumpet?” Judah was not prepared, for their false prophets were saying, “You do not have to worry.”

**Jer. 4:22 For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.**

Jeremiah continued to speak, as proven by the context, for verse 26 puts God as the third person. The prophet was worried about his people, but *God* had declared this depressing scene. For “sottish,” the NIV has “senseless,” and Young’s *Analytical Concordance* has “thick-headed.” Similarly, Isaiah said the people were like dumb animals. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider” (Isa. 1:3). With God’s strength and grace, Jeremiah was obviously the right person for the ministry that was required at that time.

“They [the people] have not known me.” Jeremiah’s people did not understand what he was trying to do—that he was preaching the *Lord’s* word.

**Jer. 4:23 I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.**

In verses 23-26, Jeremiah recorded what he had seen in a series of visions, which showed Judah’s being laid waste and desolate by King Nebuchadnezzar with no inhabitants left in the land. The heavens were dark and foreboding, and the earth was desolate. These verses tell what would happen, using figurative language. Approximately the first half of the Book of Jeremiah is primarily historical. Then the book begins to turn to our day, and some of the same expressions the prophet applied earlier to the small remnant that returned from Babylon he applied to the Holy Remnant of the near future.

**Jer. 4:24 I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly.**

The stronger mountains were shaking and trembling, whereas the smaller hills moved slightly and slid off their base a little.

**Jer. 4:25 I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.**

“There was no man” because Judah and Benjamin would be made desolate. What is the thought of “all the birds of the heavens were fled”? Birds are attracted by food, so if crops are not grown for them to feed on, they move to more fertile ground. Jeremiah saw the land barren and empty of inhabitants. To Jeremiah, a true Israelite who was concerned for the people, the visions were depressing.

**Jer. 4:26 I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger.**

In the vision, Jeremiah saw that there was no fruitful place; the land was barren without activity. Both man and the fruits of his efforts were absent; there were no crops. “The fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the



LORD, and by his fierce anger.” This condition was the net result of *God’s anger*.

**Jer. 4:27** For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.

**Q:** Was Jeremiah talking about Jacob’s Trouble here?

**A:** No. Verse 27 describes the land being left desolate in 606 BC. We are to stay with the historical past in this verse, for God has His own method of teaching. Most people hop, skip, and jump, wanting to be advanced. But we need to start with the ABC’s and let God teach us His vocabulary before we spiritualize Scriptures. Only *after* we get a very specific, concrete picture will we understand—and much more powerfully—those verses that are intended to be spiritual. Unfortunately, many want to write books on the Bible in their early years in the truth. Several have even wanted to write on the Book of Revelation, but the efforts were lead balloons because the foundation of scriptural understanding was obviously lacking.

**Comment:** “Yet will I not make a full end” was an encouragement.

**Reply:** Yes. God was saying to Jeremiah, “Even though I have told you these things and want you to deliver this strong message to my people, there is a silver lining, for I will not make a *full end*.” The trouble would come, Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the Temple would be leveled, but there would be a remnant of survivors. Here we are learning God’s vocabulary so that when we go to the end of the book and read about 4,600 survivors, we will understand that the remnant for the Babylonian captivity was very small.

The understanding of truth does not come right away, but we can get it quickly depending on our zeal, hunger, humility, and honesty. The vocabulary, the meaning of words, and the way God speaks become very important so that when He talks about future things in symbolic language, we will begin to understand a little deeper than otherwise.

**Comment:** The thought of not making “a full end” is like a refrain that is sprinkled throughout the Book of Jeremiah (4:27; 5:10,18; 30:11; 46:28).

**Reply:** Chapters 4 and 5 pertain to the Babylonian captivity. Chapters 30 and 46 apply to the end of the Gospel Age and Jacob’s Trouble.

**Comment:** God was saying that He would not exterminate the Jews as a people.

**Reply:** The trouble was determined, but a remnant would survive.

The Pastor spoke about Babylon’s confusion: national, financial, political, and ecclesiastical. That type of vocabulary is important. What he saw prematurely at the beginning of the Harvest about the collapse of Christendom is what will happen down here in our day. We have the advantage of the Pastor’s writings in that they make us more alert. When prophetic interpretations fizzle, some people drop them, not realizing their value. It was suggested that the 1914 hopes of the Pastor be removed from the *Volumes*, but we advised leaving them there, just as the author wrote them. To doctor what someone else said is not fair to the individual. The 1914 predictions had their value, for some people were turned off and others were turned on. The very fact that approximately one third of the Bible is prophecy indicates its importance in Christian knowledge and development.

**Jer. 4:28** For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

Jeremiah now explained that the scene he beheld in verse 23 was figurative: “I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.” It emblemized what would happen to Judah. God purposed this destruction, in which even nature seemed dark; the “heavens above” were black.

The blackness is like what happened to a person who deflected from the truth for a number of years. The experience was sorrowful, so he brought the matter to the Lord. Later he testified that a wall seemed to be holding the prayer back, and that feeling made him even more desperate to communicate with God, for he wanted his prayer to be answered. Eventually it was, and he came back to the truth. From that time forward, he was a changed personality, being very zealous for the Lord and doing everything he could for the brethren.

Therefore, the heavens being black means the communication and close rapport that had existed between the God of Israel and His people as in the days of Moses had figuratively darkened. There was a lack of communication and enlightenment. The earth mourned.

“For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; ... the earth [shall] mourn, and the heavens above [shall] be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.” In verses 27 and 28, Jeremiah interrupted his recording of the vision to tell what God had said.

**Jer. 4:29 The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.**

Jeremiah prophesied that the people would flee and try to hide in bushes and caves and behind rocks from individuals coming after them with a sword. If we lived 30 miles from Jerusalem back there and heard that Nebuchadnezzar had captured the city, we, too, would flee and try to hide. Earlier some had sought refuge in Jerusalem, thinking they would be safe, but Ezekiel said those in the city were like stew meat for the Babylonians (Ezek. 24:1-14). The land was left desolate except for a few vinedressers, who remained for only a very short while. The rest of the people were killed except for the cream of the crop, who were taken to Babylon.

The vividness of the historical account is interesting. When the magnitude of the host was seen, Judah’s lack of preparedness both literally and morally unnerved them. Meanwhile, the Edomites and the Moabites were on surrounding hills, watching the Jews flee and pointing out their hiding places to the Babylonians. God said that judgment would come on Edom and Moab for laughing at the pitiful destruction of Jerusalem and the glorious Temple. They had no compassion because their animosity for the Jew was so strong.

This was the dark foreboding scene that Jeremiah had seen in vision. No inhabitants were left in the land, and every city was forsaken.

**Jer. 4:30 And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life.**

**Jer. 4:31 For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers.**

We are beginning to get acquainted with the motivation of nominal spiritual Israel by seeing that natural Israel painted her face. Judah first tried to make friends with Egypt; then Judah tried to be friends with Babylon. But the two major “lovers,” or powers, became disenchanting, and Judah could no longer play the role of a buffer state. Judah’s lovers despised her and even sought her life.

The enemy was not refined in any way. The core of the army was Chaldean, a people who had very crude ways and speech. They had no qualms about bashing the heads of infants against stone walls. The Jews were hunted down like animals, but the ones who submitted, hearkening to Jeremiah’s advice from the Lord, survived.

“For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child.” How dramatic! Just as Jeremiah saw the heavens being blackened, the mountains trembling, and the hills skipping lightly, so he also saw a woman (Judah) in great pain, about to give birth. We can be sure that Jeremiah spoke with real feeling when he uttered the words of the woman: “Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers.” His enactments enhanced the message so that it got to the ones for whom it was intended. No doubt too, Jeremiah repeated the message and dramatizations. As word spread of this unusual prophet, people went to hear him.

Consider Isaiah as an example. The Israelites would have said to one another, “Do you know about Isaiah, that serene and noble man? He is naked, wearing only a loincloth.” The people would have run down to see him, and in seeing him, they would have heard the message. In those days, God used this method to advertise His message. Some who were initially attracted by inquisitiveness and a superficial attitude then changed to a deep commitment.

Sometimes the Lord scares people into consecration. For instance, Peter Waldo was talking to a business associate and close friend in France who suddenly dropped dead. As a result, Waldo reflected on the brevity of life and wanted to know about the Creator, what man was doing here, etc. From that moment on, he became serious in his desire to serve God. The point is that the Lord uses different methods and techniques to attract. Some are startling, and some are so humble and reasonable that little by little, a person is weaned away from the world.

Normally a woman who is bringing forth her first child is not worried about murderers. Therefore, Jeremiah was saying that this woman represented Judah, and the murderers would come down from Babylon and inflict pain on the nation.

The abrupt thought interjected about Judah’s painting her face hints that there is an antitype in regard to the destruction of mystic Babylon and Jezebel’s painting her face (2 Kings 9:30). In a *general* sense only (not in all of the details), verses 30 and 31 indicate that the nominal Church will be destroyed as Israel was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Both natural Israel and mystic Babylon are the professed people of God. Both are likened to a woman in travail for her first child. She would be frightened at the new experience and yell louder, for the pain would be greater. The comparison is with the *noise* (the *voice* of a woman in travail) and the *anguish*. Her “soul is wearied because of murderers.”

Part of verse 30 in the RSV reads, “And you, O desolate one, what do you mean that you dress in scarlet, that you deck yourself with ornaments of gold, that you enlarge your eyes with paint [she tried to appear more attractive]?”

**Jer. 5:1** Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.

In obedience to God's command, Jeremiah literally ran through the streets of Jerusalem, crying out, "Is there anyone here who executes judgment and desires truth?" What is startling is that Jerusalem was the capital, the seat of government, with the intelligentsia, priests, the king, and princes. Of course there were some righteous—a handful, as it were—who escaped being put to death by the king of Babylon when he came down. The three captivities are enumerated at the end of this book, telling that out of millions of people who resided in Judah, the lives of only 4,600 were spared (Jer. 52:28-30).

**Jer. 5:2 And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely.**

God was saying that some professed to follow Him, but their professions were not sincere.

**Jer. 5:3 O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.**

Now Jeremiah responded. We do not think the beginning of verse 3 should be a question, for Jeremiah had had enough experience to know that the inhabitants of the city were not sincerely religious and that, consequently, searching in the streets of Jerusalem was a waste of time. He could testify as to the condition of the people and agreed wholeheartedly with what God had just said in verse 2. Therefore, he was saying, "O LORD, your eyes are upon the truth. Whatever punishment you decree will be a just judgment because the people are not amenable to instruction. They are using your name in vain." The people did not grieve when they should have grieved, and they refused to receive correction, even though they were punished. Judah and Benjamin should have learned a lesson from the captivity of the ten-tribe kingdom, which had occurred because of hardness of heart. Instead the two tribes manifested the same symptoms of sin and disobedience—a sickness that indicated approaching doom, or death. When their crops failed and there were other punishments for their waywardness, the people found fault with God and sought solace from false gods. They felt that Jehovah was too harsh and judgmental and did not realize they themselves were the problem.

Jeremiah replied to God, "They have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return [to repent and turn to you]." When the people manifested their hard countenances, it was obvious they would not listen.

**Comment:** Knowing the end from the beginning, God said in the first chapter that He would prepare Jeremiah for the hard faces of the people.

**Reply:** Yes, He made Jeremiah an "iron pillar" and a "defenced city" (Jer. 1:17,18). The prophet was strengthened so that he could *ignore* the people's facial expressions and continue with God's message. Jeremiah had to be stronger than the people.

**Jer. 5:4 Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, nor the judgment of their God.**

**Jer. 5:5 I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.**

Here is an insight into Jeremiah's thinking. He reasoned, "It is more understandable that the common people would not listen because of their lack of religious and moral instruction. I will get a better response from the educated leaders." But what was the result? He found out that

the “great men” had “*altogether* broken the yoke [the Law Covenant], and burst the bonds.” Thus the people, great and small, had no inhibitions. Both as a nation and as individuals, they had broken the Law Covenant.

Jeremiah needed firsthand experience with the elite element of the government. Later we will read that he was even brought into the presence of the king, but the same condition existed there.

**Jer. 5:6** Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.

Verse 6 mentions a lion, a wolf, and a leopard. The “lion” was King Nebuchadnezzar, who came “out of the forest” from the north. The statement “a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities” describes the nature of the visitation that would come upon Judah. For instance, if a person hears a pack of howling wolves in the forest at night, the first thing he does is to light as large a fire as possible to keep them away. The howling is an ominous sound that portends doom. A leopard sneaks up on its prey, not wasting any effort.

Verse 6 reminds us of Habakkuk 1:6-8, which describes the Chaldeans, who would accompany Nebuchadnezzar along with other peoples. “For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses [doctrines] also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.” Because the people of Judah had “broken the yoke,” God would permit the “lion,” Nebuchadnezzar, to punish His *professed people* (Jer. 4:7; 5:5). The mention of wolves and leopards indicates brutality.

The point of verse 6 is that *only by staying within the Lord’s arrangement* would any be safe. Even if Judah as a whole did not respond, individuals could repent.

**Jer. 5:7** How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses.

The state of society was so bad in Jeremiah’s day that the people not only sinned secretly but also *openly*. From the national standpoint, “adultery” was going to other gods. From the individual standpoint, there was literal harlotry. Being fed to the full, the people of Judah should have exercised their hearts to match their knowledge. In other words, knowledge is a blessing *if used properly*, for with each item of truth and knowledge comes responsibility. Those who are rightly exercised develop character fruits through adversity. Then when periods of sunshine come, they have opportunity to do the King’s (God’s) business.

Verse 7 also describes the affluent society in the day in which we are living. The wealth, liberty, and leisure time in the United States are a breeding ground for philandering and immorality. Those who worked under harsh conditions for their daily living of the most meager provisions did not have time to get involved in these sinful activities.

Judah’s inhabitants “assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses.” They waited on a long line outside the harlots’ houses for their turn. Because this sin was symptomatic of conditions in Jeremiah’s day, some think he represents the responsibilities of those who are the

Lord's mouthpieces today. The problem is that much of the religious leadership winks the eye at sin, saying that God is merciful. Instead of curing the malady, they put an ointment over the disease. Leaders who stand up for righteousness are to be commended.

**Jer. 5:8 They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife.**

What a description of Judah! Every male was lusting after his neighbor's wife.

**Comment:** The RSV reads, "They were well-fed lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife."

**Reply:** The first thing horses want is food. Once they feel this security, they have time for idle play, and by their very nature, stallions look for female horses, neighing with an appealing sound.

**Jer. 5:9 Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?**

Those of Judah were God's people—they were named after Him—yet they did everything except what He told them to do. By their conduct, they were asking for punishment and retribution. God reasoned from a common-sense standpoint: "Shall I not visit for these things? Am I going to be silent when you are committing such iniquity?"

**Comment:** The question "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" indicates that Jehovah has a soul.

**Jer. 5:10 Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the LORD'S.**

God commissioned Jeremiah, "Your responsibility is to go up on Judah's walls and point out her sins. Select locations in prominent places where you will reach the most ears, and then castigate the people. Tell them what their problem is." Frequently in the Old Testament, the prophet had to visually demonstrate his message in some way in order to get the lesson across.

We can picture Jeremiah climbing to the top of the walls of Jerusalem, kicking off loose stones as he walked along, and saying, "These walls mean nothing. God will destroy and punish you for your sins." No doubt the people made jokes about Jeremiah, and the false prophets contradicted his words. (Note: Those who mock the true children of God will have to pay for their attitude; their words will not be forgotten.) As Jeremiah acted out his words in pantomime, he asked, "What good are these walls if you do not obey the Lord? These walls are *man-made*; they were not *God's* battlements." In other words, the battlements represented Judah's self-confidence that God was with them. The people felt that God would not allow Jerusalem and the Temple to be destroyed. Their self-righteous, overconfident attitude was, "We are the Lord's people."

Moreover, when Nebuchadnezzar came down, the people of Judah hid; they climbed up into inaccessible places and hid in the woods but to no avail, for they were searched out, apprehended, and slain. Edomites and Moabites, who occupied nearby hills, aided the enemy by pointing out the fleeing and hiding Jews.

What is the thought of the word "destroy"? God instructed Jeremiah, "Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy." When basic moral truths are proclaimed, the hearers become either

hardened or softened depending on their heart condition. Those with hard hearts got mad and rebellious, so that in their resentment, their conduct was even worse. They demeaned their own characters through an angry and murderous spirit, adultery, etc. As they became bolder in their sin, they went deeper and deeper into the mud.

Then the statement was added, “But make not a full end.” In other words, there would be a remnant in Jeremiah’s day. God was saying, “There is hope, for the Babylonian invasion will not make a full end of Judah.” Some of the people were taken to Babylon during three captivities, leaving a seed. In the Jehoiachin captivity, for example, the princes, their wives, and certain other individuals of the prominent king’s seed were among the captives. A captivity also occurred when Zedekiah was dethroned.

The indication was that the people of Judah would not be amenable to Jeremiah’s message. Similarly, if a hard message is given today, the reaction is, “You do not have a Christlike spirit. Where is your love?” If Jeremiah or Paul were alive at the present time, we can imagine how their messages would be received. The Lord is patient, for in time, He will manifest who are His. None of us should ever be too confident as to where we stand with the Lord. We need to keep the armor on until the end of our earthly course. Otherwise, we would have a “once saved, always saved” attitude. Our hope is to be of the Little Flock, and we should live with this hope—but only time will reveal our destiny. On the one hand, confidence can be dangerous, but on the other hand, if we are right in standing up for certain truths—when a sinful condition exists, for example—we can be confident of the Lord’s will based on Scripture. The sum total of life’s experiences are either developing, pruning, and exercising us to make our calling and election sure, or we are missing opportunities to be properly schooled. We want to have both perfect hatred and perfect love, so that one will balance the other (Psa. 139:22).

**Comment:** God would be avenged on Judah for their sinful actions because they were *His* people. He would take away their battlements because they claimed to be His yet were grossly disobeying. They even worshipped other gods. The same is true today. Those who claim the name of Christ have a greater responsibility for moral uprightness. Otherwise, they bring a reproach on Jesus and the Heavenly Father.

**Jer. 5:11** For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD.

**Comment:** The NIV has, “[For] The house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly unfaithful to me,’ declares the LORD.” There was a previous relationship, but Israel and Judah were unfaithful to God.

**Jer. 5:12** They have belied the LORD, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine:

The people “belied the LORD”; that is, they made Him a liar. They did not say directly, “God is a liar,” but their comments had this effect.

**Comment:** A marginal reference is 2 Chronicles 36:16, “But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.”

**Comment:** The people may have accused Jeremiah: “You are lying. God did not say these things.”

**Reply:** Yes. The people believed *their* understanding of God and His operations, rather than

the words of the prophet. Jeremiah had said, “If you continue your present course of conduct and do not repent, then the Temple, the city of Jerusalem, and you yourselves will be destroyed, leaving only a small remnant.”

Moreover, the people hearkened to false prophets, whose understanding of God’s prophecies was quite different from Jeremiah’s. The false prophets spoke peace, saying that neither evil nor sword or famine would come upon Judah. Later we will find out the identity of some of these false prophets. Certain ones boldly contradicted Jeremiah to his face. The false prophets claimed to be true prophets and gave supposed pronouncements from the Lord. The people regarded Jeremiah as the doomsday prophet.

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

“The [false] prophets shall become wind.” The prophets the people listened to spoke peace instead of judgment. Jeremiah’s words show the responsibility that was incurred for speaking falsely on prophetic matters. There is a *strong spiritual antitype*; namely, the unclean spirits from the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet will say to *unite for peace*. A caution for us is not to speak above that which we know and have proved from the Scriptures.

A person who utters strong assertions that do not make sense is called a “windbag.” He talks and talks with nothing substantive being said, particularly from God’s standpoint.

**Comment:** In the Book of Jude, false teachers are called “clouds ... without water” (Jude 12).

“The word is not in them: thus shall it [destruction and judgment] be done unto them.” The strong assertions of the false prophets would bounce back on them when the prophecies were fulfilled as spoken by Jeremiah. Then it would be seen who the false prophets were.

Another way to view verse 13 is that there was a contest between the false prophets and Jeremiah, the one true prophet in Judah. Jeremiah’s words would counteract and be more powerful than the words of the false prophets.

**Jer. 5:14 Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.**

How forceful! Jeremiah’s words became like “fire,” whereas the words of the false prophets were like kindling “wood” that would be burned up. Even though the false prophets were brazen and flint-faced, God would make Jeremiah so powerful in the manner of his delivery that his words would devour the false words ultimately. Moreover, Jeremiah stood in conspicuous spots to deliver his message—on top of a wall, in a gate, or on a second level in the Temple. Unable to stop Jeremiah, the people hated him.

The people would not be able to shut Jeremiah up. If a message of enlightenment falls on deaf ears, the tendency is for the speaker to get discouraged. Hence God supplied Jeremiah with energy because of the people’s response. Generally speaking, the Lord’s counsel is, “He that hath an ear, let him hear” (Rev. 2:7). If individuals do not have a hearing ear, the general advice is to desist from trying to talk to them. Therefore, Jeremiah’s experience was not only unusual but also dispensational, for God wanted him to keep preaching a judgment message to Judah, even though only a relative handful of people would survive. Thus there are circumstances where a general law or attitude (for example, being peaceful and accommodating and trying to reason) is changed. Here God wanted Jeremiah to give an even stronger message. Later we will read about Jeremiah’s discouragement and desire to stop preaching, but the message kept



building up inside him until it just had to come out.

Jeremiah's discouragement was a natural reaction, but because of the urgency of the message and the coming doom, God did not want him to cease preaching to the apathetic hearers. Hence the prophet was given special instruction. Despite his emotionalism, Jeremiah had to be a strong character for the requirements of his ministry.

God said, "Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire"; that is, "Jeremiah, I am using you as an instrument." Thus Jeremiah would be able to outlast the false prophets with his fiery message. As a result, they backed off for a while.

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

Jeremiah prophesied that God would bring a "mighty nation," the Chaldeans, the fiercest of the Babylonian people, against Israel. The prophet's words sound like Habakkuk's reference to the Chaldeans: "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs" (Hab. 1:6). Like the Persians later, the Chaldeans were a most cruel people. For example, they had no qualms about taking an infant by his two legs and bashing his head against a wall. The language of the Chaldeans, which matched their temperament and deeds, was hard and stern and not given to benevolence.

The people refused to listen to Jeremiah when they *could have understood his words*. Therefore, retribution would come by the Chaldeans, whose language they *could not understand*. The Chaldeans were extremely violent, and pleading for mercy would do no good because of the language barrier. Jeremiah was regarded as a prophet of doom.

This "mighty nation" is also called an "ancient nation." The magi of Babylon were an older generation. The Scriptures do not speak in a particular way of earlier or ancient Babylon, which was more Sumerian. The historical Biblical record of the new Babylon starts with the father of Nebuchadnezzar, a later generation. However, resident in that same geographic area was the more ancient and cruel Chaldean element.

**Jer. 5:16** Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men.

To the besieged and fearful Jews, the Chaldeans would all appear to be *mighty*. Their bag of arrows ("quiver") would be like an endless tomb, for every arrow would seem to find its mark. As a bottomless pit filled with arrows, the quiver was a bag of *death and destruction*.

The Scriptures speak of the grave, the "sepulchre," as having an appetite that is never satisfied. As the population increases, the dead increase. Stated another way, no matter how much the population burgeons, the tomb accommodates them. It figuratively opens its mouth wider and takes in the increase, so that all die and go into the tomb.

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

Jeremiah predicted that the Chaldeans would impoverish Judah from various standpoints. Crops would be eaten, flocks would be taken, the land would be spoiled, and the cities would

be emptied. The large host that would come down from the north would comprise not only Babylon but also other countries to the north.

**Jer. 5:18 Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you.**

**Jer. 5:19 And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.**

A little comfort was again given, namely, that God would not make a “full end” of Judah. A *few* of the people would go into captivity in a land of “strangers” (Babylon) with “strange gods.” In the antitype, although the religious systems will go into permanent extinction, there will be individuals who live through the trouble. We should keep in mind that the second half of the Book of Jeremiah is mostly prophetic, whereas the first half is mostly historical with just a little prophecy here and there. Generally speaking, we have to tread softly with prophecy in the first half of the book lest we vitiate the literal account.

God was saying to Judah, “If you worship foreign heathen gods in your own land, then I will accommodate you by making sure you get into the land whose gods you serve.”

**Jer. 5:20 Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying,**

God instructed Jeremiah to proclaim this message to both the two tribes and the ten tribes, for the entire nation followed the same sinful course. As a result of past conduct, the ten tribes had already gone into captivity, where they needed to be reminded of the reason for their judgment. The Assyrians had conquered the parents, and now this information was necessary for the second and third generations. The two tribes were being told that they would have the same experience as the ten tribes more than a century earlier.

**Jer. 5:21 Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:**

The people were called “foolish” and “without understanding,” for they neither “see” nor “hear.” The message was plain and blunt enough, but they refused to obey. Jeremiah’s words were strong regarding their stubborn hearts.

**Jer. 5:22 Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?**

God asked, “Don’t you fear me when I have ordered nature with *great power*?” The ocean has bounds, and waves surge with power. The beach of sand is reasonably level, yet the surging and powerful waves cannot pass that barrier. Moreover, the sand does not wash away. God’s power is *tremendous*! He effectually stops the great waves with *porous* material.

Those who do not appreciate God’s decrees will search high and low for the exception, trying to contradict what should not be contradicted. If the waves overflow during a hurricane, they return to their allotted ocean bed, which is fixed. Thus the seas reside in the pockets that were prepared during the Creative Days, when the surface of the earth underwent various changes.

**Jer. 5:23 But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.**

The people “are revolted [turned aside] and gone [away, continuing to digress more and more].” Their reaction shows the deflecting and contaminating influence of sin and their advanced rebellious attitude, which could go to the point of no return. The word “revolt” is like “revolution.” Like society in our day, the people of Judah did not want moral and judicial constraints on their conduct.

**Jer. 5:24** Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

God’s grace in giving moisture for the growth of crops and dryness at harvest time was also ignored. The people did not consider how marvelously He has provided the seasons for man’s benefit. The former and the latter rains were given “in his season”; i.e., they were boxed in and fixed. Also, God “reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.” He superintended the seasons for His people, natural Israel.

People generally do not think much along scientific lines. The giving of “the former and the latter” rain contains a lot of wisdom. For instance, why was the religious year of the Jews only seven months long? They could not go to the Temple and sit out in the open when it was cold, raining, and snowing. God made the seasons, and He accommodated the Jewish calendar to allow seven months in which they could harvest their crops and attend the three major religious feasts in favorable weather. However, very few people reason on God’s goodness along this line. Instead people take the weather and the seasons for granted. They do not see the wisdom of the oceans’ being set in their beds or the wisdom of the early and the latter rain, particularly in Israel, yet in Egypt, the next-door neighbor, there was a period of 45 years without rain. Incidentally, starting in 1874, there have been favorable climate changes in Israel.

Thus God set the calendar and the environment to favor the growth and the prosperity of the Israelites. When they look back, they cannot blame Him, for He did everything for them. God set the table, sent the prophets, gave them the Law, etc., so all mouths will be shut in the future.

**Comment:** Psalm 147:7,8 reads, “Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.”

**Jer. 5:25** Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.

Disobedience to the Law brought a corresponding deprivation of temporal blessings and crops. Jeremiah’s preaching annoyed the people. Not only did they feel that he continually harped on these themes, but also they esteemed the illicit pleasures more highly than the pleasures of an upright life.

**Jer. 5:26** For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

How did wicked men lay snares to trap and catch men? All the people were obdurate to receiving instruction, but among them was an exceedingly wicked element that plotted and laid plans to benefit themselves at the expense of others. In other words, the whole nation was iniquitous, but some individuals were more guilty in that they deliberately *practiced* deceit and the oppression of their fellow man with, for example, financial schemes and fraud and/or dishonest weights and measures.

**Jer. 5:27** As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

**Jer. 5:28** They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

What does the clause “as a cage is full of birds” indicate? As cages would be full of excrement, so the houses of the wicked were “full of deceit,” for they continually tried to trap the people. In the antitype, mystic Babylon “is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird [with the excrement that ensues from habitation in the nominal system]” (Rev. 18:2). The nominal Church uses *fear* to get people to join and then *exploits* them like slaves. In contrast, the Christian should *willingly* serve God and *gladly* be a bondservant of Christ. Numbers, riches, and size are not proper motives as a basis of operation. The object should be to make our calling and election sure and not to ensnare and use others.

Not only are those wrong who try to get people into a system and then exploit them, but those who allow themselves to be ensnared contribute to the unclean condition, for they are not truly desirous of serving the Lord on proper grounds. The upper strata of exploiters (the governing body, kings, the wealthy, etc.) “are become great, and waxen rich”; they get “fat” and “shine” (gain) through their snares and traps. In principle, they make the shekel great and the ephah small (Amos 8:5).

In regard to the word “shine,” as the very wealthy increase in body weight, there is a sheen to their face or skin that becomes very noticeable. Similarly, the harlot’s brow is noticeable. With one who is habitually given to fornication or adultery, the demeanor of the face, especially the forehead, changes.

“They [the wicked] judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper.” Because judgment did not come upon the wicked immediately, they did not consider the time of Jeremiah’s ministry to be a period of leniency on God’s part that allowed them to reform but, rather, just continued in their iniquitous conduct and prospered. In the Kingdom, this condition will be radically reversed, so that those who attempt such wicked deeds will receive swift judgment and be stopped in their tracks (Mal. 4:1).

“They overpass the deeds of the wicked.” The schemers and ringleaders were even guiltier, for they surpassed in evil and iniquity the wicked deeds of the general populace. Neither the “fatherless” nor the “needy” were considered. In the antitype, financial pledges are customary in the denominations. There is an emphasis on monetary contributions without regard to the financial condition of the individual. It is wrong to insist that pledges be kept regardless of circumstances of poverty. Mercy should be used in solicitation. Jesus criticized the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees for saying, regardless of circumstances, “It is Corban” (Mark 7:11). Jeremiah was saying that politically, morally, physically, financially, and in every way possible, a deterioration was setting in on Judah.

**Jer. 5:29** Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

“Shall not this nation be punished for mistreating their fellow man?” asked the Lord. Verse 29 is a repeat of verse 9.

**Jer. 5:30 A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;**

Judah's iniquity and deceit were appalling and horrible. It was (and is) astonishing that such things could happen. The King James margin has, "Astonishment and filthiness are committed in the land." To look at the people of Judah was like looking at dead men walking, for their days were numbered; death was near at hand. Although rendered "wonderful," the Hebrew root word means "desolation." In other words, God's appraisal in looking down at the nation in this condition spelled judgment. Truly the deeds were "horrible," but there was a specter of imminent death and doom.

**Jer. 5:31 The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?**

The prophets spoke peace falsely, and the priests supported the false preaching because of mutual benefit. *Loving* this condition, the people *refused* to repent. Hence reform was hopeless, and destruction must needs come.

Imagine how the false prophets felt when Jeremiah gave this message. Their reaction would have been, "Who does he think he is? Let us get rid of him." The prophets and the priests were in league with each other; they justified and gave a helping hand to one another. But the astonishing statement is, "My people love to have it so." If a poll had been taken, the populace would have been in favor of the present government. Conditions are the same today. People prefer the evil as long as they have the riches and the goodies, that is, the illicit gain.

"What will ye do in the end thereof?" The situation was hopeless as far as expecting a change. The hymn "Praise Our King" speaks of God's mercy.

Father-like, He proves yet spares us,  
Well our feeble frame He knows;  
In His hands He gently bears us,  
Rescues us from all our foes.

The same hymn speaks of the fathers of the past and how generously God dealt with them, exercising patience and showing that He is a God of mercy. Thus the whole blame is with us as individuals if we do not respond properly to His providences.

Praise Him for His grace and favor  
To our fathers in distress;  
Praise Him, still the same as ever,  
Slow to chide, and swift to bless.

**Jer. 6:1 O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.**

Chapter 6 ties in with chapter 5. In centering his comments on the capital, Jeremiah included the Benjaminites in this prophecy as sharing the same guilt as Judah, which was an area almost as large as the territory of the ten tribes. The tribes of Benjamin and Judah both flanked Jerusalem, but Benjamin had a greater influence over the city. (The city was supposed to be neutral, but this administrative influence existed.)

"O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem." Jeremiah advised the children of Benjamin to flee, for when the large host came down from Babylon, the chief prize would be the capture of the capital. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar and his host would

concentrate their energy on destroying Jerusalem.

At that time, when the Jews would actually see the enemy coming, *fear* would take hold of them. They would then assemble as families to flee out of the city.

“Blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem.” Tekoa and Beth-haccerem were towns on the hills south of Jerusalem that were visible to the inhabitants of the city. (Tekoa was six miles southeast of Bethlehem.) The “sign” was a “signal”; hence a signal fire, which was comparable to Indian smoke signals, was to be given on the top of these hills. Warnings were also to be proclaimed in Dan, the northernmost point in Israel, and from Mount Ephraim in the middle of the nation (Jer. 4:15). Sentinels were to be placed because evil was coming from the north(east). The people were being advised to *flee for their lives*.

We have a suspicion that Tekoa is a conical hill south of Jerusalem toward Hebron now known as the Herodian hill. It is bare except for a citadel on the top. Of course Herod did not come along until long after the Book of Jeremiah was written, so we think the original name was obscured by a more modern name. The same is true of Beth-haccerem.

“For evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.” Jeremiah was envisioning that which had not yet taken place. The scene was so vivid in his mind that he dramatized it with words, and he was excited, being under the influence of the Holy Spirit. With power and strength, he would have looked toward the south as he instructed the people of Judah to blow the trumpet and flee out of Jerusalem. Then he would have turned around and looked toward the north as he said, “An enemy is coming and great destruction.” His *actions*, accompanied with *powerful words*, attracted attention. As more and more people heard, they, in turn, spoke to others. Thus Jeremiah’s actions helped to circulate his message outside of just the immediate hearers and, accordingly, advertise it to the two-tribe kingdom.

In the past, we gave a little discourse on the format of the early chapters of Jeremiah. Some of the prophecies happened during the reign of King Josiah. Years later, when Jeremiah wrote this summary of what he had done back there, his messages were still apropos, for the impending destruction was yet to come from Babylon. He envisioned the situation as if the destruction were imminent. In other words, he demonstrated a future event as if it were already a reality, using the information supplied by God to instruct the people of Judah.

**Q:** Since the enemy was coming from the north, why did the Lord select two cities (Tekoa and Beth-haccerem) that were south of Jerusalem?

**A:** The people in Tekoa and Beth-haccerem would look to the north and see the enemy coming, whereas the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be unaware. Those of Tekoa and Beth-haccerem knew that smoke signals were to be sent only when an enemy was coming.

For the inhabitants of Jerusalem to obey Jeremiah’s advice to flee would require *faith* and a struggle against the desires of the flesh to stay and keep their means of earning a livelihood. The prophet’s message was thoroughly unpopular.

**Jer. 6:2** I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.

How does verse 2 relate to verses 1 and 3? Jeremiah often used the term “daughter of Zion” for Jerusalem, and here he likened the capital to a beautiful and delicate woman. “Delicate” suggests weakness. Just as Ezekiel warned that the people will seem to be safe but that their “cattle and goods” will become a booty to Gog, so Jerusalem in Jeremiah’s day, just prior to 606 BC, was a desirable booty for King Nebuchadnezzar, especially since the city was weak and

unable to defend itself (Ezek. 38:11,12).

Not only were the people of Jerusalem soft, self-indulgent, and satisfied with conditions, but also they thought that God would never allow *His* Temple to be destroyed. Thus they were so unprepared for the brutality of war that they were like a “comely and delicate woman,” who is more interested in cosmetics and beautifying herself than in getting ready for war. Jeremiah used sarcasm here. He was saying that of all places, the capital, the information center of the two tribes, should be prepared.

**Jer. 6:3** The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place.

Jeremiah prophesied that the invading armies, like shepherds with “flocks” of men, would encircle Jerusalem and take booty; that is, there would be a siege, and God would not defend the city. Without His help, which the people of Judah would get only if they hearkened to Jeremiah’s advice, they were truly defenseless.

Since Jerusalem was naturally fortified, the siege lasted a long time. From a military standpoint, the north was the only weak point. Therefore, the enemy simply surrounded the city and fed off the land and environs of Jerusalem. Other Scriptures tell that the Babylonians entered local houses and plundered goods and raped the women. Babies, particularly the males, were slain. In other words, this time the objective of Nebuchadnezzar was to utterly destroy Jerusalem.

The plundering took place in a leisurely fashion because the Babylonians wanted to smother Jerusalem. Jews inside the city were hungry, and not knowing what to do, they experienced confusion, fear, and tumult. Jeremiah had told them *in advance* that if they repented, God would be with them, the enemy would be stayed, and these things would not happen. But the people would not listen.

Later, way down the road, when the people passed the point of no return, Jeremiah’s message changed from “repent” to “submit.” He then told the people not to fight but to go out and surrender. They were to go peacefully to Babylon and build houses, for they would be there for 70 years. But at this earlier date, Jeremiah was saying, “If you repent now, the threat from the north will be removed entirely, and God will be with you.” However, the people’s attitude, encouraged by the false prophets, was, “God is already with us. There will be peace.”

**Jer. 6:4** Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.

Speaking through Jeremiah, God was telling the Chaldean army to “prepare” for war. The enemy would respond, “Arise, and let us go up at noon.” Back in Judah, the people would say, “Woe unto us! for the daylight is fading, and the shadows of evening lengthen.” In other words, the enemy would attack at night. The prophet was like a narrator, envisioning this scene of the future and making it as dramatic as possible.

**Jer. 6:5** Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces.

At night, the enemy would pull the siege towers up to the city walls and attack. The enemy would say, “Let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces.” Nebuchadnezzar’s armies would let nothing distract them. They were saying, “We will not deviate from our initial intent to destroy Jerusalem. Let us concentrate our energies and get this over with, even if the battle goes into the evening hours.” Usually armies rested and regrouped at night, but this attack would be relentless, coming night and day in the form of a ferocious siege. The earlier

reference to a lion, a wolf, and a leopard also shows the night aspect of the attack (Jer. 5:6). The term “palaces” referred to the Temple and ornate residences and buildings. All would be burned and destroyed.

It was as if God were encouraging the attackers. In directing the warfare, He was on the side of the enemy. The antitype is the Lord’s Great Army, who will speak a hard language and plunder and destroy Christendom (Joel 2:11).

Incidentally, Isaiah spoke of the *restoration* of Jerusalem and Israel, whereas Jeremiah was speaking of the *destruction*, saying that the only survivors would flee from the city and submit to the enemy.

**Jer. 6:6 For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her.**

Jeremiah continued the dramatization, telling the enemy what to do: “Prepare for war, set a siege, plunder the land, attack at night.” In trying to stir up the nation, he used a form of sarcasm. Now he added another instruction: “Hew ye down trees.” The land was denuded not only of agricultural produce and wealth but also of trees. The enemy took their time while they prepared for a sudden, concentrated assault. Deforestation was taking place for an initial attack on the city with wooden siege towers and battering rams to flatten the city gates. In other words, this work was preparatory for the coming assault.

Jeremiah’s dramatization took perhaps a half hour. First, he acted out the preparation. The sudden attack followed. For the prophet to do this enactment, God had to supply all the information. Usually the prophets heard a voice in their inner ear, telling them what to do, but in this case, the Lord may have given Jeremiah an audiovisual representation. Having seen this with his own eyes, the prophet was struck with such horror over what would happen to the Holy City that his subsequent dramatization and message were done very effectively. He saw the siege towers being constructed and the battering rams being prepared, and he heard the Babylonian forces talking and engaged in teamwork. Even though a mixed company came down from Babylon, they were organized in their hatred of the common enemy, Judah.

Although Jeremiah warned about the trouble *in advance*, giving many details, the people chose to listen to the false prophets, who spoke *peace*. The city, being “wholly [given to] oppression,” was not amenable to change.

As a loner, Jeremiah was one individual delivering this *powerful* message. The Lord empowered him with a gifted ability to appeal to the people, but except for a handful of individuals, they were unregenerate. Self-indulgence was a way of life for the people.

**Jer. 6:7 As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds.**

Jerusalem was *internally* wicked. A spring is usually desirable for continuously spreading blessing and benefaction, but instead Jerusalem was like an abominable, ever-flowing spring of evil and wickedness. Bad water was continually being emitted. Moreover, “grief and wounds” (running sores) were continuous. In other words, the disease, or wickedness, was not skin-deep but was terminal and hopeless. Hence *destruction* was in order.

What came out of Jerusalem, the “fountain,” looked and flowed like water, but it smelled like sewage. Corruption came forth. “Violence and spoil is heard in her.” Jeremiah may have heard screams of violence as, for instance, when priests deprived widows of goods and property.



“Before me continually is grief and wounds.” The sobbing, the crying, could be heard. With regard to the “wounds,” the morally sick people were filled with infection.

No wonder God had to strengthen Jeremiah to give such messages and to make him tougher than the people! The messages were so powerful that they countermanded the people’s enmity toward him. With God’s help, Jeremiah was not afraid. Many do not speak unpopular truths because they fear what will happen to them. Their mouths are stopped because they fear loss of property, goods, life, reputation, etc. Therefore, when the people rose up against Jeremiah as a prophet, his words had to be dynamic. Later they called him a traitor to the nation.

**Jer. 6:8 Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.**

Here was the emotional side of Jeremiah. First, he dramatized the horror, and then he appealed to them like a father. “Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee.” In his enactment, Jeremiah was a mouthpiece for God.

The message continued, “Be instructed, or else God will give you up to destruction and death. He will make you desolate, a land not inhabited.” There was still opportunity for the people to repent, but there would come a point of no return. The same is true with us. If we depart from the Lord, He will do things to try to wake us up to the error of our way, but if we do not heed the providences, there will come a time when He gives up on us.

With nominal Christians, God sometimes grants opportunity to make progress. If they fail to develop, they will not be able to say at a later date, “If only I had known.” Likewise, Judah could not say, “We did not know.” Jeremiah faithfully discharged his responsibility to warn. God said, “My prophets have risen up day after day, warning, warning, warning,” but the people had dull ears.

If we spoke these words, we would be accused of being anti-Semitic. Martin Luther was accused of anti-Semitism, but we do not view him in that light. As a student of Latin, we read his works and did not get that impression. As a Christian trying to edify his hearers, Luther talked about the past history of Israel. Jeremiah’s writings have a value in instructing Christians of the distinction between right and wrong.

**Jer. 6:9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thine hand as a grapegatherer into the baskets.**

Gleaning is done after the major harvest, when workers go through the vineyard, taking clusters of grapes. What is missed initially or what grows larger subsequently is picked in the gleaning, which is like a second harvest. Stated another way, the gleaning is a different phase of the harvest when what is left is picked. Jeremiah envisioned that after the enemy destroyed the city and killed the people, and others died from hunger and for various reasons, the few who were left would be like grapes being put in baskets during the gleaning period. In the major harvest, some clusters are so large that one cluster can fill a basket. They grow almost like banana bunches, with several clusters together. Jeremiah was saying that the enemy would go through the desolated city and take the various individuals who remained and figuratively put them in a basket to carry back to Babylon. These individuals comprised the “remnant.”

Jeremiah would have dramatized this event, going through a vineyard looking for grapes in the gleaning harvest. The time was getting closer to when individuals would be taken captive to Babylon.

Incidentally, unless there was obedience, even the remnant of vinedressers left in Judah after Nebuchadnezzar's attack would be killed—and that is what happened in a second attack. The vine of wrath ripened even further in iniquity.

**Jer. 6:10 To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.**

Jeremiah was frustrated: “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? ... behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.” The “word of the LORD” was not a “delight” to the people of Judah, who would not listen. Jeremiah was speaking in broad terms, for some individuals were rescued—but very, very few.

**Jer. 6:11 Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days.**

Nevertheless, Jeremiah felt the matter of speaking out to be urgent—*he could not hold back!* He would pour out the message (“the fury of the LORD”) on different classes and age groups: (1) children (not babies) “in the street” (RSV), (2) teenagers, (3) younger marrieds, and (4) older (mature) men and women. All would be capable of understanding *if they chose to listen*. The “aged” ones, who were experienced and should have listened, incurred the most responsibility.

Especially in his earlier years, Jeremiah mixed what the Lord said and what he himself said. Therefore, it is a little difficult sometimes, except on the basis of context and reasoning, to determine who is saying what or who is being addressed. The reason for this problem is that Jeremiah was writing after the fact; that is, he was reviewing the first 18 years of his ministry when he prophesied during the reign of King Josiah. Jeremiah wrote down messages he had previously declared in the name of the Lord, and in writing from a historical standpoint, he brought himself into many of these matters. Hence we have to carefully sort out the messages. This writing was done during the reign of Jehoiakim.

Jeremiah's saying, “I am weary with holding in,” reminds us of Jeremiah 20:9, “I will not make mention of him [God], nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” The Lord's message had been shut up in his bones, and now he would let it out to whomever it pertained.

“For even the husband with the wife shall be taken.” This was a reference to the impending captivity in 606 BC. Jeremiah was speaking during the reign of Jehoiakim, but there were at least two earlier small captivities, which are described as the taking of hostages. The slaying of the populace was not mentioned until the 606 BC captivity, at which time many were killed, many starved to death, the city was leveled, the Temple was destroyed, and the balance of survivors was taken to Babylon. Thus there was a radical difference with the 606 BC captivity, when Zedekiah, the last king of Israel, was removed.

**Jer. 6:12 And their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD.**

In 606 BC, the invaders would despoil the land, plunder valuables in the houses, and make slaves of the people. Stabilized society in Judah and Benjamin would end. The houses were not only looted but also destroyed. At that time, there would be wholesale destruction with an indiscriminate rendering of wrath from the Lord. The implication is that there would be no

distinctions of mercy.

**Comment:** 2 Kings 21:12,13 also refers to 606 BC. “I [the LORD God of Israel] am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.”

**Reply:** Yes, that was a prophecy of the same time period.

Judah was a big area, almost as large as the ten-tribe kingdom to the north. It included thousands of villages, and of course much of Judah was desert. The ten tribes were taken into captivity between the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah. A foreign element was then brought into that territory. However, in 606 BC, the strangers occupying the houses in northern Israel, as well as the home-born Israelites of Judah, were taken into captivity, and the land was left completely desolate except for a few vinedressers temporarily. We get this history by piecing together bits of information in various historical accounts in the Old Testament.

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

What a dark and grim appraisal of the situation! Verse 13 is a summary of the degree of responsibility in all classes (from the youngest to the older ones). The prophets and the priests could have been of various ages, but their responsibility was great because of their office. With the exception of a very few individuals, everyone dealt falsely. Therefore, from a broad-brush standpoint, the two-tribe kingdom was wholly corrupt.

**Comment:** Deuteronomy 28:15-68 describes the long list of “curses” that would come on Israel for disobedience.

**Reply:** Yes, that pertinent listing reiterates what Moses said in Leviticus 26:14-39. In the Book of Deuteronomy, at age 120, Moses gave his last speech, which lasted for hours. Just before he went up into Mount Pisgah, he wrapped up his whole life’s ministry and what he had been trying to teach Israel (Deut. 34:1,5).

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

“They [the false prophets and priests] have healed also the hurt ... of my people slightly.” Their saying, “Peace, peace,” when there was no peace was like putting a Band-Aid® on an incurable cancer.

The prophets and the priests spoke *falsely of peace*. The NIV has, “They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious.” (The supplied words “of the daughter” in the King James are incorrect.) In contrast, the true message of Jeremiah was that punishment and retribution would come.

A repetition of these words in Jeremiah 8:11 shows their significance. Ezekiel 13:1-16, which is directed against the lying prophets, gives a similar message. The false prophets built a (figurative) wall to give Israel a sense of security; that is, they prophesied peace and said God would defend the nation. The wall was defective and weak, for it was built of untempered mortar, but whitewash (paint mixed with water) made it look good.

The same false sense of security occurred when the Ark of the Covenant was taken into battle

(1 Sam. 4:3-11). In both cases, the false prophets thought the Lord was with them. Ezekiel appropriately likened them to “foxes”—sneaky animals that nibble, dart in and out, and are sensitive to danger (Ezek. 13:4). And what did the false prophets do? They were cowards who practiced backbiting and did nothing constructive. Instead of being willing to sacrifice their own lives to inform the people of their responsibilities, the false prophets refused to confront the enemy head-on and man the gaps in the hedge.

In Ezekiel 13:17-23, the prophet was told to set his face against the “daughters” who prophesied out of their own imagination. At the time of the Exodus, Miriam was a “daughter,” a prophetess. (A prophet or prophetess is one who speaks in the name of the Lord.) As a female prophet, she was a helper of Moses and Aaron. Her singing was prophetic. Just as there was a school of the prophets, so there was a school of the prophetesses. Deborah, who assisted Barak, was a prophetess, as was Huldah in Jeremiah’s day. Hence the Lord occasionally used women in a public role—that is, if a capable man was not available. Anna was a prophetess in the New Testament, and Philip the evangelist had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8,9). The service of a prophetess was not prolonged teaching but the foretelling of future events.

Ezekiel pointed out the evil of the *whole* nation but ended up with the false prophets and prophetesses. A counterpart of sewing “pillows to all armholes” occurs in the nominal system, for scapulars are made and sold for money. Back there women used superstitious magic charms made out of wood, metal, etc., and sewed them into sacks to make money. In assisting the false prophets and promoting their false ideas with these wrong practices, the prophetesses were encouraging the people that all would be well and peaceful, but the nation was afflicted with a deadly cancer and could not be cured.

Jeremiah directed his remarks especially to Jerusalem. The city would be leveled because of years and years of not heeding the Lord’s advice. Jeremiah in Judah and Ezekiel in Babylon gave the same message.

The false prophets dressed the wounds of the people only “slightly” and were not ashamed of saying, “Peace, peace,” when the message was false. Two besiegings of Jerusalem had already occurred, and although Jeremiah said the third attack would be *devastating* if they did not repent, the people thought they would be safe because they had survived the previous attacks. However, the people preferred the message of the false prophets and thus ignored the impending disaster, feeling a false sense of security—just as in the Belshazzar’s feast picture. In the antitype, the Roman Catholic Church, Jezebel, falsely calls herself a prophetess. The cry of “peace” in the near future will be followed by “sudden destruction” (1 Thess. 5:3). The hour of power will be the future “wall” of security, bringing a seeming peace for a while (Rev. 17:12).

“Brotherly unity” is a *dangerous* slogan. Unity is the wall, but it will be destroyed utterly. Those who build it with their false declarations will be exposed and killed. In the type, the names of the false prophets were erased from the land of Israel, meaning they died in the trouble. In the antitype, the matter is more serious. A false message of peace will be given by the nominal religious leaders, the “they” class of false, pretending Christians. Stated another way, the “they” class are an element of professed Christians who assume a leading role of instruction. Since the leaders are more responsible, their names will be erased, in addition to their suffering defeat, in that they will not get a future inheritance in the land, as it were. To speak and claim a “thus saith the LORD” incurs *great* responsibility. Hear what Ezekiel said on behalf of Almighty God: “And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD” (Ezek. 13:9).

It is helpful to compare Jeremiah 6:24, which speaks of the *fear* of the coming destruction, with 1 Thessalonians 5:3, which emphasizes the speed, the *suddenness*, of the coming destruction. “We have heard the fame [report(s)—see RSV and NIV] thereof: our hands wax feeble: *anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as of a woman in travail*” (Jer. 6:24). “For when they shall say, **Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail [the birth pang (singular)] upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape**” (1 Thess 5:3). Jeremiah 6:24 talks of the anxiety and emotion, which will be of longer duration, whereas 1 Thessalonians 5:3 says the destruction will come suddenly. When Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall, fear overcame King Belshazzar. Prior to that, the king had boasted in seeming safety and confidence, mocking the Lord’s vessels in drunkenness. But when Daniel spoke *directly* to the king about the meaning of the handwriting, the words struck home. The king realized that Daniel meant business and that the judgment was *irrevocable*. Thus, in the near future, the feet members will be asked by the “king” the meaning of transpiring events. The interpretation of the handwriting constitutes the use of the penny (Daniel 5; Matt. 20:1-16). At that time, the “false prophets” will be giving a message of false security. Corresponding to the hour of power, false groups (the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet) will be united and flushed with temporary victory (Rev. 17:12).

When the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet, in union, tell the people to put a lid, or clamp, on the anarchistic condition, they will feel successful for a little while. The three will say, “In the interest of the commonweal and the public, we are temporarily suppressing the rights of man during this troublesome period.” But their real nature will be disclosed when anyone differs with them and their true character is seen.

A psychological factor is involved. When success comes in numbers, the motives of a little group (the feet members) will be impugned by the powers that be. Thinking the majority are in harmony with the Word of God, they will find the stand of the feet members disturbing. In the type, instead of just quietly killing the three Hebrews, Nebuchadnezzar tried to *force* them to recant and join the millions. When the situation occurs in the antitype, a safeguard will be to ask, “What will *God* think?”—not “What will the brethren think?”

The duplication in Scripture about the coming false “peace” message in Christendom indicates the severity of the trial. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, 1 Thessalonians, and other Scriptures provide important details about the future.

**Q:** Will natural Israel also have a false sense of security?

**A:** Yes. Because of great success in warfare that eliminates the Arab threat of their surrounding neighbors, the Israelis will feel so wonderful during this false peace that they will see no need for walled villages (Ezek. 38:11). They will not realize that Jacob’s Trouble is yet to come, and the last thing they will want to hear is that another holocaust is coming.

**Jer. 6:15** **Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.**

For individuals who heard Jeremiah’s words, the test was whether to heed them or to ignore them as everyone else was doing, as well as mocking and persecuting him. The handful who were righteously inclined admitted their guilt and repented. The people should have blushed, been ashamed, repented, and said, “Tell us more. What should we do?” With John the Baptist, the soldiers and others properly asked what they should do in view of the coming time of trouble. John gave them common-sense advice, which in effect was, “Do not get in the way of the Lord’s steamroller. Stay out of the way, and straighten out your own affairs. Do not oppress your neighbor.” However, his real message was to the godly element.

In the antitype at the end of the age, there will be a ministry along this line too. The people may not want to consecrate, but they will seek advice. The Lord's people should be able to give an appropriate response.

The general condition in Jeremiah's day was deplorable. "At the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD." Cumulative guilt meant irrevocable judgment.

**Jer. 6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.**

Through Jeremiah, God gave advice on what to do, but the people said, "We are not interested in the advice. We will not walk therein." Those who heard the prophet pronounce this message of condemnation were told to seek advice and to ask for the "old paths" (or ways, i.e., for the truth). Their response should have been, "How can we amend our ways? Yes, we are guilty of these things, so please tell us what to do. Give us some direction. What should we do to get back to the old paths?"

Although addressed to natural Israel, the advice to "ask for the old paths" also applies to spiritual Israel. Natural Israel was to seek the Law, and Christians are to heed Jesus' example and the apostles' teachings. To obey is to "find rest for your souls." Natural Israel would have received God's favor, temporal blessings, and the satisfaction of doing what was right.

**Comment:** Verse 16 is good advice for any of God's people who have strayed from the way. The Lord was giving a formula for returning. "If you have lost your way, look for the old path, on which you originally started. If you walk on it, you will get comfort and find rest." When one is out of the path, there is no rest or peace.

**Reply:** Moses drew a line for the sons of Levi and asked, "Who is on Jehovah's side?" When the Levites came over, Moses gave them instructions on hard things to do. The principle was the same with Jeremiah, who said in effect, "If you want to follow the Lord's advice, cross over and continue to ask." Later Jeremiah gave advice for which he was called a traitor; namely, "Submit to the enemy. If you are a willing prey, you will be taken captive and not be slain. When you get to Babylon, build houses, for you will be there for 70 years." At the end of the Gospel Age, the faithful Christian will likewise be considered a traitor.

**Jer. 6:17 Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.**

God sets "watchmen" over His people; that is, He gave the prophets to natural Israel and the seven messengers to the Church. There is a responsibility to "hearken to the sound of the trumpet," the message for the hour. When a pronouncement was to be made to the Israelites in Sinai, two silver trumpets, picturing the Old and New Testaments, were blown to assemble the people to hear the message (Num. 10:2).

The purpose of the trumpet was to sound an alarm, a warning, of impending trouble. But the people were so confident that they were not ready to fight. Feeling that Jeremiah's talk of coming trouble was false, they did not heed the "watchman" and the alarm that he sounded. The people's attitude and continual refusal to hearken were discouraging for the prophet.

**Jer. 6:18 Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them.**

**Jer. 6:19** Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.

“Hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation [Israel], what is among them. Hear, O earth.” God gave a warning to “earth,” society, the populace dwelling on the land, to hearken.

“Behold, I [God] will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their [evil] thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.” God’s wrath was stirred up because of the people’s stubborn refusal to receive instruction. They had the fruit of their own thinking and were enjoying the good life. At this time, they did not fear Jeremiah and his message. Retribution would come if they continued to harbor evil thoughts.

God could have destroyed Judah right away, but had He done so, the only ones who would have appreciated His justice would have been the holy angels, who were looking down. The very fact God gave the people of Judah warnings showed His mercy and also His justice in using wrath on Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

**Jer. 6:20** To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.

The people did not listen to God’s instruction, yet they went through the ceremonies. It is like a person’s going to the Confessional but not changing his sinful conduct. The religious services were performed perfunctorily with the feeling, “We have done our part.”

“Incense from Sheba” was imported and, therefore, costly. Hence the frankincense was a sacrifice, but it was not acceptable because of a wrong heart condition. Rather than pleasing the Lord, these freewill individual offerings were a stench. Repugnant and hypocritical, they were not “sweet cane” in His nostrils. Incidentally, this Sheba was probably in Saudi Arabia, and the inhabitants were called Sabeans.

**Jer. 6:21** Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish.

God said He would lay “stumblingblocks” before those who made unacceptable offerings. The stumbling blocks were the true prophets whom God gave to the nation of Israel. When the prophets were beaten and persecuted, the people incurred responsibility. Fathers, sons, neighbors, and friends (all contemporaries) fell on Jeremiah, the stumbling block in this case.

To a certain extent, even the false prophets were stumbling blocks. For example, when King Nebuchadnezzar was in a dilemma as to whom to destroy first—Ammon and Moab or Judah and Jerusalem—he used necromantic methods; that is, he cut open an animal and studied its liver, etc., looking for signs. Every time he wanted to follow his emotions and go to Ammon and Moab, the sign indicated the opposite. Finally, he acquiesced to the signs and went down to Jerusalem. Subsequently he turned his attention to Ammon, Moab, and Lebanon.

God purposed that the great majority of the Jews would perish at that time. However, as promised earlier, He would not make a full end of Judah—a small remnant would survive.

**Jer. 6:22** Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth.

A “great nation,” a people from the north—that is, Babylon, the primary power, plus auxiliary

forces—would be raised up “from the sides of the earth” to conquer Judah. Babylon is east of Jerusalem, but Nebuchadnezzar had to go north and then come down the Fertile Crescent. Hence his army came from both the north and the east. Although this event was still some years away, the pressure was ominous.

During the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar had come down, but at that time, he took only a few captives. Then, during the three-month reign of Jehoiachin, the king of Babylon came down a second time, again taking only a few captives. Although he also removed vessels from the Temple, he did not destroy Jerusalem. When Nebuchadnezzar came down the third time, the city and Temple were destroyed, and the people were massacred and died of starvation and pestilence. It was as though the Lord, in His mercy, gave Judah opportunity to repent, but each respite between captivities did not effect much change. Jeremiah was now warning of the threat pertaining to 606 BC, when the focus of destruction would be Jerusalem.

In the antitype, a great army will come upon Christendom. A “great nation,” or element, will judge nominal spiritual Israel. Babylon, a heathen power back there, represents a godless power in the future. This is a general picture regarding the whole Christendom setup. “North” indicates a judgment from God’s throne, and the Lord’s Great Army will be part of this element to come against Christendom (Joel 2:11).

Note: Some of the symbols are used differently in part of the Book of Jeremiah, for “Israel” represents nominal spiritual Israel, and “Babylon” pictures a godless heathen power. Christendom will be destroyed by the Lord’s Great Army (Babylon). In other words, the Assyrian in the Book of Isaiah is equivalent to Babylon in the Book of Jeremiah and Gog from the land of Magog in the Book of Ezekiel. However, at the end of Jeremiah, “Babylon” reverts back to its usual symbolism. The *context* determines who is who.

**Jer. 6:23** They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion.

The Babylonian army would be “cruel, and have no mercy” (see also Hab. 1:6-9). They would come in roaring like the sea, yelling with bloodthirsty enthusiasm and *terrifying* the people of Judah. (A roar by the charging offensive enemy has the effect of strengthening them and weakening the victim.) The Babylonian army would keep coming in and in and in, just like ocean waves. In the antitype, the “sea” is a reference to the anarchistic masses.

This cruel enemy host would come down to butcher the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Showing no mercy, they would slaughter women, babies, old men, etc., as well as the men of war. Having come down twice before, the Babylonians were fed up, and the third time their purpose was to lay waste the land.

“They ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion.” Under the Law, Israel was forbidden to import horses (Deut. 17:16). Therefore, when the people of Judah saw the thundering horses coming and heard the beat of their hooves and the men with bows and spears shouting, the scene was awesomely frightening. Jeremiah was telling Judah in advance what would happen. In other words, “Wake up! Change your course, or this will happen to you.” To be “set in array” shows that the horses and their riders were lined up with no spaces in between, coming in a phalanx as “men of war.”

**Jer. 6:24** We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as of a woman in travail.



“We have heard the fame thereof.” What is different about verse 24 from the previous three verses, which were predictions from the Lord? With the pronoun “we,” verse 24 is giving the people’s response of *fear*, whereas previously the focus of attention was on the enemy, the Lord’s information on the appearance of the enemy, and how the attack would come. Now Jeremiah was predicting what the inhabitants of Jerusalem would say and the fear that would take hold of them. When there is real fear, the first parts of the body to be affected are the hands and the knees, which become weak. The body mechanism seems to fall apart.

Israel had heard of Babylon’s reputation, and particularly that of the fierce Chaldeans, for conquering and crushing those they attacked. Thus there was the pain of *anticipation* as to what would happen—pain as of a woman in labor. A recent documentary was on mummies that were found on one of the highest peaks of the Andes Mountains. When a male child realized he was being prepared as a sacrifice to the supposed god of the mountain, he vomited and had diarrhea. That is how the child reacted to fear. The expression of fear could even be seen on the mummy’s face. Thus fear or any extreme emotional trauma affects the bowels, among other things. Sometimes in our Christian walk, we get a small taste of fear with a corresponding reaction, so we can imagine what the people of Jerusalem experienced, for they knew that the presence of the Babylonian army meant a violent death was coming.

**Jer. 6:25** Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and fear is on every side.

At that time, it would be fruitless to “go ... forth into the field” or to “walk by the way,” for the “sword of the enemy and fear” would be on every side. Not only would the Babylonians come down in battle array, but also they would establish a cordon around the city so that no one could escape.

As it was in the 606 BC destruction, so it will be in the future Time of Trouble. If city dwellers think they can run to the country for safety (and vice versa), they are wrong, for there will be no safety. All segments of society will be affected, sellers and buyers alike.

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

Verse 26 is a break in thought, although the same context and theme continue—about a visitation of trouble coming from the north, the enemy’s character, and the experience of the victims. In the ongoing prophecy, a climactic point had come, with the northern invader now actually entering Jerusalem, the peripheral defense force having been penetrated. In fact, it was almost as if the defeat had already occurred. Jeremiah was speaking to the remnant that was saved for captivity: “O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and ... ashes: ... [mourn] as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler [Babylon] shall suddenly come upon us.” The anguish that would come upon the surviving remnant would be almost unbearable, as in the loss of an only son.

The “daughter of my people” was natural Israel back there and the nominal systems in our day. The fact they would mourn as for an only son, with *bitter* lamentation, indicates that some of their choicest possessions would be taken, including children. Moreover, the Holy Remnant, who survive Jacob’s Trouble, will also mourn as for an only son and as in the days of Josiah (Zech. 12:10,11). However, the cause of their trauma will be the realization that Jesus truly was the Messiah. That understanding will supersede any other experience and be the focus of the mourning.

**Comment:** Normally, the people just rubbed ashes into the hair, so Jeremiah's instruction to "gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes" was more extreme. The NIV and the RSV use the word "roll" instead of "wallow."

**Reply:** In connection with an ordinary person's death or loss, the women sometimes dusted their hair, their glory, with ashes. But Jeremiah's words were more traumatic. The coming trouble of 606 BC was much more serious than just a particular person's emotions; it was viewed as a national catastrophe. Therefore, the whole body was to wallow in the ashes.

"O daughter of my people." In a talk given at the recent International Convention entitled "Our Heavenly Father's Love," several verses were used of which verse 26 was one, and it was given a different application, as follows. "When we consider God's love for Israel, even while He was punishing her, we should cherish God's love for us, even during periods of chastening. Listen to the parental sorrow of God for Israel in Jeremiah 6:26." Then the verse was quoted from the New Revised Standard Version.

It is important to realize that the original Revised Standard Version was good, but subsequent revisions allow for homosexuality and make no distinction between male and female gender. Also, these revisions, which include the New King James Version and were done by a different batch of scholars, teach God's love is so great that He forgives everybody. They all have a strange view of love, and homosexuality comes into the picture with God's supposed love and forgiveness. Thus the New Revised Standard Version is translated as follows: "Thus says the LORD, O my poor people, put on sackcloth." In no way can "daughter" be accurately translated as "poor," even if different vowels are used. As far as we know, no other version of the Bible has the word "poor" here. "O daughter of my people" is the proper thought, so right away the NRSV contains a fudging. Jeremiah was referring to the day of God's vengeance in 606 BC, and the explanation is given that this is like a father spanking a child for its good, with love being very manifest.

And there is another point. With the term "O daughter of my people," *Jeremiah* is the speaker. In fact, this expression is peculiar to him, and he was a very emotional person. Just like the variance in temperament as exemplified in the jewels on the high priest's breastplate, so there are different types of temperament. Being emotional, Jeremiah needed to be steeled from his more natural proclivities, which were good to have but needed tempering and balancing. God told Jeremiah, "I brought you up from the womb, and I am going to strengthen you to be my representative. I will help you, for a mighty task is outlined before you."

When we look up the various places in the Book of Jeremiah where the term "O daughter of my people" is used, it is sometimes very difficult to see whether the pronoun "my" refers to God or to Jeremiah, so we will treat the repeated expression as we come to it in context. At the present time, we just want to give a little idea of how this expression was peculiar to Jeremiah. We all know some personalities who do or say certain things frequently as a characteristic, and that was the situation with Jeremiah, as will be seen in the following examples.

In many Bibles, the Book of Lamentations is called "The Lamentations of Jeremiah." Jeremiah talked constantly throughout the book, speaking about the "daughter of my people." Lamentations 2:11 reads, "Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the *daughter of my people*." Lamentations 3:48 has, "Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the *daughter of my people*." Again Jeremiah was speaking about the "daughter of my people." Because we are cultured in a Western civilization, the expression sounds sort of strange to us. We would be more inclined to just say "my people." In reading the Book of Jeremiah, most would conclude that God was speaking when this term was used, but the expression "my people" is used in various ways.

**Comment:** Two verses earlier (Lam. 3:46), Jeremiah wrote, “All *our* enemies have opened their mouths against *us*,” so he was clearly still talking in verse 48. That is true of Jeremiah 6:26 as well, which ends with, “The spoiler shall suddenly come upon *us*.” Obviously, Jeremiah was including himself.

**Reply:** That is correct. We are purposely not going into the context at this time, but if we do so at our leisure, Jeremiah will be seen as the speaker.

However, there are still other difficulties. For one thing, we do not personally feel that God weeps with tears. Oh, yes, He is very sensitive about His people, for if anyone speaks or does something against them, it is like putting a finger in His eye (Zech. 2:8). Even though such experiences are necessary for the development of His children, who are the apple of His eye, He does not weep, for weeping indicates a principle; namely, if we knew the end from the beginning *without any question whatsoever*, we would not weep copiously, like “rivers of water” (Jer. 9:1; Lam. 1:16; 3:48). To do so would indicate there was no hope. *Only God* knows the end from the beginning, not even Jesus (Isa. 46:10). God sees the end as though it is the present. Only He has that capability. What God will give to Jesus and the Church when they have the divine nature is His business, for they will be “in the family,” having the divine nature and immortality. One can have intuitive sense in knowing what is current. For instance, when Jesus spoke to the scribes and Pharisees at his First Advent, he knew what was in their hearts. But that intuition is a little different from the type of intuition that can see events and individuals a thousand years down the road. Thus being sensitive and feeling joy and sorrow at certain experiences is one thing, but for God to weep with tears day and night does not make sense.

Lamentations 4:3,6,10 has, “Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the *daughter of my people* is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.... For the punishment of the iniquity of the *daughter of my people* is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.... The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the *daughter of my people*.” Jeremiah used this expression five times in Lamentations.

**Comment:** The next verse, Lamentations 4:11, proves that Jeremiah was speaking earlier. “The LORD hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.”

**Reply:** We are trying to show that without question, Jeremiah used the expression “daughter of my people.”

**Q:** Was this a term of endearment?

**A:** Yes. Jeremiah frequently used this term to express his empathy. Similarly, the Apostle Paul characteristically said, “I would not, brethren, that ye be ignorant.” Jesus often said, “Verily, verily.” The Apostle John copied Jesus’ tender expression at the Memorial: “little children.” He was so deeply impressed by Jesus’ last moments that the expression became seared in his memory. The realization that Jeremiah used the term “daughter of my people” gives us a little better focus in relationship to God’s emotions.

**Jer. 6:27** I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.

Jeremiah was the “tower” and the “fortress” in the midst of Israel, a bastion of strength, in that he stood up for the truth. He faithfully declared what God instructed him to say. If any were

salvable in Judah, his advice helped them know how to please God under that circumstance. Of those who heard his instruction, *very few* listened. The people should have realized they had sinned.

Jeremiah was a *lone* voice in the nation. In addition to his being called a tower and a fortress, God likened him to a “defenced city” and an “iron pillar”: “For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land” (Jer. 1:18). It was prophesied that the multitude would try to browbeat Jeremiah, but if he stood fast, God would make him STRONG.

God made Jeremiah a tower so that he would “know and try” the ways of the people; that is, by their refusing to hearken, he would see their unfitness to be spared the coming trouble. Jeremiah was a volatile person—emotional and compassionate at times and angry at other times. He could see beyond a doubt that the judgment was necessary.

The name Babylon means “house [or gate] of God,” but depending on the pronunciation and inflection of the voice, it can mean “confusion.” Similarly, the words “tower” and “fortress” can be inflected to mean something else; that is, while Jeremiah was standing for truth and righteousness, God also used him with regard to the subject matter of verse 28.

**Comment:** The NIV reads, “I have made you a tester of metals and my people the ore, that you may observe and test their ways.” The RSV has, “I have made you an assayer and tester among my people, that you may know and assay their ways.”

**Reply:** Basically the words mean “tower” and “fortress,” but by the inflection of the voice, they can have other meanings. The context shows that Jeremiah was put there as an assayer or refiner of silver.

**Jer. 6:28** They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters.

The word “all” indicates the general condition of the populace; they were revolters, slanderers, and corrupters. Those who would not hearken were like “brass and iron.” The word “brazen” comes from “brass,” signifying that the people were so hardened with their own opinions in doing wrong that they were impervious to any instruction from God through the mouth of Jeremiah. “Iron” indicates inflexibility. In other words, the people were so corrupted by sin that they could not be reasoned with or persuaded.

In the good sense, when Jesus rules with a rod of iron in the Kingdom, he will not tolerate any insurrection. As a dictator, he will not allow any debate as to the rights and merits of what he is doing. He will reason with the sinner who is in a repentant mode but not with the stubborn sinner, which is quite different. In Jeremiah’s day, the people were not given to reason.

**Jer. 6:29** The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away.

**Jer. 6:30** Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.

Ezekiel 22:18-22 reads, “Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and

tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.”

Spiritually speaking, “tin,” which is known for its noise, signifies that the people were shallow and empty-headed in their thinking and reasoning. If a sheet of tin is walloped, the sound reverberates. Thus the fool is a loud talker whose words lack substance. He consumes time and the attention of others with trivia. We have a saying, “Empty barrels make the loudest noises.” Although the people made loud noises, they had tin ears; that is, they were dumb with regard to instruction. There was no rationale; they could not put two and two together until the enemy arrived on the scene. “Lead” indicates that one is not responsive because he is dense, dull of hearing, apathetic, and lethargic.

Ezekiel called brass, iron, tin, and lead the “dross of silver.” When silver is mined, lead is most frequently mixed into the basic ore, but all of these materials are considered impurities.

A bellows fans the flame, providing oxygen so that the fire gets hotter. If the village smith gets fatigued, the nose of the bellows dips into the fire. Then, instead of supplying oxygen to increase the intensity of the heat, the bellows gets burned. Verse 29 shows Jeremiah’s frustration at the lack of results. In spite of all the energy he expended in heating the bellows, etc., he got nowhere, for the people were “reprobate silver.” They could not be refined—they were valueless—regardless of how much they were heated.

“The lead is consumed of the fire.” Lead and silver are often found together. Lead serves a purpose because when silver is being refined with supplied oxygen, the lead has a lower melting point than silver. Therefore, the intensity of the heat removes the dross. When the lead melts with its crust, it generally takes the other impurities with it, leaving the silver. The refiner keeps blowing on the silver to make it hotter. As the silver becomes purer, the ideal is to get it to shine in the molten state so that the refiner can see the reflection of his face in it. Lead is “consumed” in the sense that its composition changes and it loses its normal properties. (Similarly, fire changes wood, paper, rags, etc., into ash.) The purpose of the lead is that it has an affinity for other impurities, but in the process, it seems to lose its power and is not effectual in the cleansing work. The change in the lead results in a new compound that sticks to the silver. Like a new substance, what is left is called “reprobate silver,” that is, a silver that cannot be refined because of the impurities that stick to it. Reprobate silver corresponds to an incorrigible sinner—a sinner who cannot change his ways.

“The founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away.” The “founder” is the one who does the refining, but here he was not getting the desired results. In other words, the wicked were not plucked away to leave behind pure silver. Hence the silver was considered to be refuse, or reprobate silver, rejected by the Lord. Incidentally, the world has condemned the Jews, calling them “reprobate silver,” as it were, down through the Gospel Age.

Now we can consider verse 27 again. “I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.” With the inflections, God was saying to Jeremiah, “I have made you like a refiner of silver. You are my instrument and representative; you are the founder. I have set you to speak my words, but they are not producing the desired results.” Jeremiah was discouraged at the lack of results, but a faithful remnant girded themselves in sackcloth and wallowed in ashes. Feeling his ministry was a miserable failure, Jeremiah wrote the Book of Lamentations. But, actually, some were spared, even though the number was pitifully small (Jer. 52:28-30).

**Comment:** It seems to be a principle that in the history of the human race, when any of God's true people are speaking, very few respond and discouragement can set in.

**Reply:** The principle will come to a climax. Jesus asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find [the] faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

When Jeremiah went into the city, he looked around in the open squares but could find no one who was faithful. The few who were later found mourned privately. Individuals were spared for a particular purpose. One purpose of the earlier captivities was to provide a lineage for Messiah. Hence Daniel, the three Hebrew children, Ezekiel, and Jeconiah were among the captives. (Jeconiah was strongly reprimanded, but later God used him.) Jeremiah thought he was a failure, but even in showing the unfitness of the people, his ministry had a purpose.

**Jer. 7:1** The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

**Jer. 7:2** Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD.

God told Jeremiah to stand in the "gate" of Solomon's Temple, but there were inner and outer gates, so which gate? The prophet would have chosen the gate where the most people would hear him, namely, the east gate. Since the people entered either the north or the south gate, they all had to pass the east gate. This gate was on the inside of the Temple, where the acoustics were better. Since Jeremiah was not singling out any individual, he had to lift his voice to address all of Judah. A great concourse of people were present with no intention of going to see Jeremiah, so he would have chosen a time when this instruction would get into the ears of the greatest number of people. Then the instruction would be circulated as they returned to their homes. Jeremiah had to raise his voice considerably: "Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD."

**Jer. 7:3** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

Verse 3 starts the instruction, which began very simply: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place." The indication is that the people were aware of what Jeremiah had previously said; namely, if they did not change their ways, the city and the Temple were doomed to destruction. A *complete* new leaf was required if the people were to truly amend their ways.

At this point in time, there was still hope if Judah repented, for then Jerusalem and the Temple would not be destroyed. Jeremiah's posture in the east gate was like a posture in the outer gate of the city, where judges sat. The gate was a place of making known judgments. Incidentally, in the Kingdom, many will not reform, for the human heart is very deceitful. We all need the Lord's help and must be humble and meek.

**Jer. 7:4** Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.

What was wrong with saying, "The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD"? The Temple was like a talisman. Even though the people were wicked, they felt secure as long as the Temple was in their midst. Hence they had a "form of godliness" but denied "the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5). Their words were *perfunctory*; it was like saying "God bless you" for every little thing or overusing "Amen." The words were *vain* repetition. A

spiritual counterpart would be reciting the Hail Mary. Some erroneously think that the repetitious pronouncing of certain words will have a mysterious protective effect.

**Comment:** The people felt that since it was God's Temple, He would not permit its destruction. They had a superstitious and hypocritical reverence for it.

**Reply:** In other words, if God was responsible for the erection of the Temple, then for Jeremiah to speak about the destruction of both Jerusalem and the Temple contradicted what they assumed was divine protection. However, the people's hope that the Temple would not be destroyed was false. "The temple of the LORD" was a popular phrase, and the people probably used it to counteract Jeremiah's words each time he spoke of the enemy host coming down to destroy. They treated him like a false prophet and listened to the *real* false prophets.

**Jer. 7:5** For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour;

Jeremiah enthusiastically embraced what God instructed him to say. He spoke not only with a loud voice but also with emphasis: "If ye *thoroughly* amend your ways and your doings; if ye *thoroughly* execute judgment." True repentance and reform come from thorough conviction of the wrongs being done. Is there any difference between "ways" and "doings" (actions)?

**Comment:** A person can think something but not necessarily carry out the thought.

**Reply:** A person can think but not say; he can think but not do. Therefore, "doings" are the result of personal conduct or verbal expressions.

The clause "if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour" went a step further, for it was particularly addressed to those in leadership and teaching positions, both civil and religious. The word "execute" suggests an application to people in responsible positions. Therefore, the clause pertained to decision making in regard to other people by those with a measure of authority. The *principle* also applied to ordinary people, who often reiterated what others had said and then made judgments between two individuals based on hearsay evidence. To properly execute judgment, a judge needs to know something of the facts, something about the two parties in dispute. Opinions are often expressed by people who do not have sufficient knowledge of the situation, and such opinions can, like a match, set a forest on fire (James 3:5,6). Thus all have some influence for good or evil.

**Comment:** Whoever the individuals were, each person was concerned only about his own welfare and not for an equitable decision.

**Reply:** Yes. The clause "if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings" was more personal, whereas judgment involved another party. Both approval and disapproval should be based on justice. To be just, one has to really study a situation and usually be very closemouthed based on the principle "let thy words be few" (Eccl. 5:2).

Since we learned earlier that God had something to do with the prenatal development of Jeremiah as a prophet, the one chosen for that service needed to have the same empathy that God has. For example, Martin Luther, the messenger whom God chose for the Reformation period, was very blunt. Thus for that time period, he was the most fitting individual on the scene, yet historically, many find fault with him. We like the French writer D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century*, which puts a completely different connotation on certain statements of Luther. The nuances were rather unique, and of course D'Aubigne lived considerably closer to Luther's day. Now, several hundred years later, the focus becomes a

little dimmer with regard to past notable personages.

As an illustration, many years ago Billy Graham gave a talk to a full stadium in Korea or Japan. He was speaking in English and had an interpreter with him. After Billy Graham spoke a sentence or two, the interpreter repeated them, mimicking the actions and enthusiasm. And so it becomes very apparent in Jeremiah's writings that he entered emotionally into the message. Depending on what he was saying, he became indignant, sorrowful, empathetic, etc. That emotion was needed to attract the attention of a dissolute populace.

**Jer. 7:6** If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt:

How were "the stranger, the fatherless [orphans], and the widow" oppressed? These were examples of not executing judgment between a man and his neighbor (verse 5). One way was to take advantage of and profit financially from their emotions by seizing goods or property. In their dire situation, orphans utterly depended on others, and the unscrupulous could easily take advantage of them, especially through covetousness. For instance, they might be the sole heir of some property, and the one who took custody could swindle the orphans out of all their goods. With the widow, her deceased husband may have handled all business arrangements and temporal affairs. Now she was left alone, not having managerial experience. Thus she, too, was easy prey to a dishonest person who wanted to take advantage of her confused state.

In our day, many types of scams are perpetrated on the elderly, and the surprise element often enters in. For example, when widows and the elderly are emotionally distraught, a paper is handed to them to sign.

**Comment:** Deuteronomy 24:19 reads, "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands."

**Reply:** That text carries the principle right to the core of the matter. Verse 6 discusses the more obvious grievances, whereas Moses talked about forgetting to help strangers, the fatherless, and widows. For example, if a person who owned a harvested field but had forgotten a sheaf wanted to obey Jehovah, he would say in his heart, "Maybe it was providential that we overlooked the sheaf." In addition, a law required that the corners of a field be left unharvested for the poor. The forgotten sheaf was to be left for the less fortunate as if it were in the corner of the field.

"Shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt." Jeremiah would have used stern talk for these admonitions. The people needed to be hit over the head, figuratively speaking, to get the point. Hence the manner of delivery would have been forceful to convince the people of their need for repentance.

**Jer. 7:7** Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

If Judah sought God with *all their heart*, God would delay, or forestall, the judgment, although it became irrevocable in time. The same was true of Christendom up to 1878. During a 360-year period, from 1157 until 1517, the judgment on Papacy could have been reversed, but in 1517, the year Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, the judgment became irrevocable (Rev. 2:21).



God was offering Judah a way out, but repentance had to be *sincere* and *thorough*, with *amends* being made wherever possible, in order for the judgment to be delayed. Just saying, “I’m sorry,” was not enough. If the people truly repented, they would not oppress the stranger, etc. An example of such wrong conduct was being unjust to slaves or heckling strangers.

Jeremiah was rebuking the people, and *if* they repented, God would forgive them. Jesus enunciated this same principle when he said, “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3). The standard is the same in both the Old and the New Testaments.

**Comment:** God’s long-suffering and patience can be seen here.

**Reply:** It is true that Jehovah is the God of all patience, but forgiveness is conditional—until the point of no return (Rom. 15:5). He does give opportunity for change.

“Then will I cause you to dwell ... in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.” God will keep His promise, but with regard to the phrase “for ever and ever,” He allowed a hiatus to occur when the Jews were put out of their land. Down the road, He will bring them back into harmony with the “*sure mercies of David*” (Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:34). The *sure mercies of David* exist, but to come into alignment with them, the Jews have to take certain steps.

**Jer. 7:8** Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.

The people trusted in the “lying words” of the false prophets. Another example of lying words was their vain repetition of “The temple of the LORD” (verse 4).

**Jer. 7:9** Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;

**Jer. 7:10** And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

The people were worshipping Baal and other gods, yet they wanted reconciliation and blessing from God. Let us consider the situation from a personal standpoint. Suppose we had done a great deal for someone, but that person gravitated toward others who had done nothing for him. That is how the people acted toward Jehovah versus the false gods and graven images and idols. Their worship of Almighty God was promiscuous, for they put Him on a level with the false gods—He was just one of many. What an insult to the Emperor of the universe!

Even the people’s posture was arrogant. They *stood* hypocritically before God in the Temple and did not kneel, prostrate themselves, or at least bow their heads. One who habitually does such things as a practice of life sears his conscience. When we get a literal burn, first a scab forms and then a scar, with the flesh becoming a little hard and losing its sensitivity. Spiritually speaking, the individual becomes insensitive.

**Comment:** Jeremiah was going through the Ten Commandments, one after another. The people’s worst sin was walking after other gods.

**Reply:** Yes, it was like having one foot in heaven and the other foot on earth. “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). We have to feed the new creature in us and put the old creature to death. Each pleads its case; the flesh and the spirit cry out for the respective demands. Unfortunately, many want to have both in the present life—insurance for the next life and something for the here and now.

**Comment:** The atmosphere today is similar to what Jeremiah was saying. Not everyone was committing every sin, but the people had an attitude of *acceptance* of sin.

The people entered the house of God and stood, and then they went to the house of Baal and burned incense there. Having a foot in two religions was real diplomacy, for if one gave way, the other remained as an alternative.

How bold the people were to say, “We are delivered to do all these abominations”! The NIV reads, “Will you steal and murder [etc.] ... and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, ‘We are safe’—safe to do all these detestable things?”

**Jer. 7:11** Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

We will read verse 11 in some of the other versions because sometimes the Hebrew is not too clear in regard to interrogative and affirmative statements. “Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, says the LORD” (RSV). “Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD” (NIV). “Is this house whereupon my name is called become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, *even I*, have seen it, saith the LORD” (Masoretic). The Masoretic puts the emphasis on the second half of the verse. Certainly the Temple had become a den of robbers, and God was taking note of the situation.

This expression about God’s house being “a den of robbers” was used by Jesus in chasing out the money changers. “And [he] said unto them, It is written [in the Book of Jeremiah], My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matt. 21:13). The priests and Pharisees stole from the poor and made the house of prayer a noisy place of merchandise. Jehovah could see these practices going on day after day. Nothing escapes His attention, true or false. Incidentally, when in an irreverent atmosphere, even a sincere worshipper is adversely affected.

**Comment:** Isaiah 56:7 has, “Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer [the Third Temple]: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

**Reply:** Isaiah and Jeremiah made several references to a literal house (or Temple) of prayer.

Jesus chased out the money changers with indignation because business transactions were being conducted right in the sacred precincts of the Temple complex. As people came in the doorway, particularly the Sheep Gate, the tables of the money changers were right there to either exchange money or convert it into an animal to be offered as a sacrifice. In addition to wrongly doing business there, the money changers no doubt were a little shady in their dealings. Also, in carrying water for the ordinary affairs of everyday life, women profaned the Temple by taking a shortcut through its precincts.

**Comment:** In verse 4, the people were saying, “The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD,” indicating that it was so holy, but here God said, “Look what you have done. You have profaned the Temple and made it a den of robbers.”

**Comment:** Some judgments were instantaneous, such as with Nadab and Abihu, whereas God permitted the deterioration of the Temple over a long period of time.

**Reply:** The Israelites did things contrary to the tenor of Scripture, which taught that business was not to be mixed with the worship of God. In our day, the separation of church and state is being eroded in the United States, and as a result, the concept has changed considerably from what the Constitution intended. The Israelites said, “The Temple of the LORD,” but the clause was used superficially with no depth of reverence.

**Jer. 7:12** But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.

**Comment:** Joshua 18:1 tells that God set His name at Shiloh: “And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there.”

**Reply:** After the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the Tabernacle was in Shiloh for 500 years. Today Shiloh is barren with no one living there; it is a lasting reminder of Israel’s unfaithfulness.

However, verse 12 is not referring to the initial setting up of the Tabernacle in Shiloh. Rather, the reference is to the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines. The elders of Israel thought that if the Ark was taken into battle, God would fight for them and give them the victory (1 Sam. 4:3,4). Although the Ark was eventually returned, the Israelites were severely rebuked for having removed the Ark, and eventually their conduct got so bad that the ten tribes were dispersed into captivity; that is, they were punished for their irreverence. Now the Israelites had a Temple, which they considered permanent, but the two tribes were committing the same sins that the ten tribes were guilty of. Therefore, a judgment would come on the two tribes for their wickedness as it had already come on the ten tribes. For God to say, “Where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel,” was like His saying, “Consider what happened to the ten tribes because of their wickedness.”

**Jer. 7:13** And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not;

“Because ye have done all these [wicked] works” refers to the listing in verse 9: stealing, murder, adultery, swearing falsely, burning incense unto Baal, and walking after other gods.

“I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not.” God spoke to Israel persistently and consistently through judges, prophets, etc., ever since the Exodus, but any repentance was short-lived (see Jer. 11:7). He raised up faithful individuals who pointed out the errors of the nation, but the people did not listen. According to Paul, the announcement of the day of salvation began way back in the wilderness when God said, “If you will obey me, you will be blessed and live.” That “day” is still open.

**Jer. 7:14** Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

Shiloh became desolate without a single inhabitant, and God would likewise make Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple desolate.

**Comment:** Psalm 78:58-60 reads, “For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men.”

When the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the Temple Mount in David's day, we do not hear of the other appurtenances, such as the Laver and the Court curtains. We hear only that the Ark was saved and ultimately placed in Solomon's Temple.

**Jer. 7:15** And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

The same thing would happen to Judah that had happened to Ephraim (the ten tribes). Joseph's two sons were Ephraim and Manasseh, the firstborn. Ephraim multiplied faster and carried much weight in the ten tribes because of a double vote (Manasseh was included).

**Jer. 7:16** Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.

God told Jeremiah not to pray for the wicked people of Judah. This instruction indicates that the prophet was emotional, somewhat impulsive, and very much involved in the situation, much like Moses, who said, "Blot me out, but spare the people." God's instruction also shows that Jeremiah was inclined to pray for the people of Judah, but the judgment was *deserved*. The lesson is that we should not let emotions sway our judgment.

**Comment:** In verse 3, God gave the people opportunity to repent. Now He was saying the situation was hopeless. Even though the principle of repentance still applied, Jeremiah was not to pray for the people.

**Reply:** God would not change the impending judgment because of any intercession on Jeremiah's part. As a true servant, he desired the welfare of the nation, but he was not to "lift up cry nor prayer for them."

**Q:** Is verse 16 the turning point in the Book of Jeremiah, where there was no longer an opportunity to repent?

**A:** Yes and no, for the Book of Jeremiah is not entirely sequential. Not until many years later did Ezra collate, revise, and arrange the book in the form we have today.

**Jer. 7:17** Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

**Jer. 7:18** The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

The *Creator Himself* was giving a tongue-lashing to the adopted race and lineage that professedly He was dealing with. These verses would be considered anti-Semitic if we said them, but *the Lord* was criticizing His own people with *their welfare* in mind. God addressed Jeremiah, "Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?" The prophet had the true spirit of an intercessor, with a very noble character something like that of Samuel.

Verse 18 shows the culpability of the people, from the lowest to the highest, from the children to the adults. To show that *all* were responsible for the wickedness in worshipping Ashtoreth, the queen of heaven, Jeremiah used the family relationship. The children gathered the wood, the fathers kindled the fire, and the women kneaded the bread. The antitype is the worship of Mary, who is venerated by Roman Catholicism.

**Comment:** One of Mary's titles is even "Queen of heaven."

**Reply:** At the same time, the practitioners of that faith worship the Lord Jesus Christ and God. We would think they would be conscious of this incongruity, but sometimes contradictions exist not only in human society but also among ourselves.

**Jer. 7:19** Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?

God concluded verse 18 with the words "they ... provoke me to anger." Then He added, "Do they provoke me to anger? ... do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?" In other words, this mixture, this incongruity of supposedly worshipping God and also worshipping the queen of heaven, was "confusion," or *Babylon*. The principles that were involved are a picture of nominal spiritual Israel. Catholicism is more blatant because of the use of candles, statues, incense, etc.

**Comment:** The NIV reads, "Are they not rather harming themselves, to their own shame?"

**Reply:** We prefer the wording of the King James, for the mixture was *confusion*, and it was out of place. People can get blinded on some of the most common-sense subjects.

**Jer. 7:20** Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

Those of Judah were provoking God to anger, and there would be a repercussion on them, a penalty. A price would be paid for their misconduct. What He had done to Shiloh, He would do to Jerusalem (verse 12). God's anger would be poured on man, beast, trees, and fruit (and vegetables) in Jerusalem. Israel would become *sterile*, for even the vinedressers that Nebuchadnezzar left were removed. God's anger would "burn, and ... not be quenched" until the judgments were fulfilled.

Sometimes those who are the object of anger feel, "What have I done that is wrong?" Here the people preferred to look to the more lenient religion—with liberal interpretations of worship, with money purchasing forgiveness, etc. They did not see the disharmony of this reasoning.

The penalty would be severe; the people would lose their material possessions and either die or go into captivity as servants for 70 years. The yoke would be harsh in a strange land with strange habits and foods. The object of the long captivity was to wake up the people to recognize their wickedness. Previous shorter captivities did not interfere with the Jubilee cycle, but that was not true of the Babylonian captivity.

The appeasement of God's anger would entail not only the despoiling of the city of Jerusalem and the leveling of the Temple but also the uprooting of the people. In addition, this disruption would adversely affect the land, which would not be tilled for 70 years. Vines would grow randomly, and deserted land and vacant buildings would deteriorate and affect people's emotions—just as our emotions would be affected if God turned His favor from us. A natural deterioration would follow.

**Jer. 7:21** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

**Jer. 7:22** For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought

**them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:**

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

The lesson of verses 21-23 was that obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22). Verse 21 is sarcasm about adding burnt offerings to sacrifices and eating the flesh, for *no burnt offerings were ever to be eaten by the people*. They were to be fully consumed by fire except for the hide and the dung. (It is true that certain parts went to the priest, but the rest of the animal was burned.) Hence God was saying, “Keep your offerings, you hypocrites! I do not want them.” He would not be bribed by hypocritical offerings.

The primacy here was the Decalogue, not the ceremonies and services. The Israelites were to love the LORD their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and their neighbor as themselves. They were not to kill, steal, etc. (Exod. 20:1-17). Although both the moral code and the ceremonial law were important because both were ordered by God, the moral code superseded the ceremonial aspect. Similarly, we are to rightly divide the Word of truth and not merely study Scripture from a dispensational standpoint or in the drawing of types, for example, for the moral code of worshipping God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength is the bottom line.

“For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.” The initial covenant God made with the Israelites at the time of Passover was that if they obeyed, they would be blessed. The offerings and sacrifices were not commanded until later. At first, all offerings were freewill and voluntary and were to be done on an *individual* basis. Moreover, there were few offerings during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings. The offerings started in number when they entered the Promised Land.

From the time the Israelites left Rameses at Passover, it took 50 days (or until Pentecost) for them to get to Mount Sinai when God appeared. During that time, we do not read of any sacrificial offerings. Therefore, verses 22 and 23 are focusing in on a particular time period. Of course a slain lamb at Passover introduced the Exodus, but henceforth until God gave specific orders, there were no sacrifices. The people were to eat the unleavened dough that the women brought out of Egypt in their aprons, and God provided manna (Exod. 16:13-15).

Even when instructions for the sacrifices were given, the Israelites did not perform them because, first, there had to be a Tabernacle. A year elapsed before that structure was completed and the priesthood was consecrated. Then the sacrifices began. The point is that here God was zeroing in on the initial circumstance. In the antitype, we are responsible for our consecration. When we first gave our heart to the Lord, that was the meaningful start of our spiritual life, and we need to be reminded again and again of what we said and what our intentions were at that time—and that the commitment is a lifelong responsibility.

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

**Jer. 7:25** Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them:

**Jer. 7:26** Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck:

**they did worse than their fathers.**

The Israelites did not make progress. In fact, they went “backward” and also stiffened their necks like a bull in stubbornness. (The King James margin has “stubbornness” as an alternate translation instead of “imagination” in verse 24.) This deterioration occurred despite the fact that God led them out of Egypt and persistently sent prophets.

In verse 25, God was saying that from the Exodus up until the days of Jeconiah, He never left the Israelites without a prophet or some kind of messenger. By extension, the same God has operated similarly with Christians during the Gospel Age, for if Jehovah provided prophets continuously for His typical people and in the development of the Ancient Worthies, then certainly there has always been a representative in the Gospel Age. Someone has always been on hand to voice God’s thoughts from Pentecost to the consummation of the Gospel Age.

Even though God sent prophets, the Israelites did not hearken to Him “but hardened their neck [in stubbornness] ... [and] did worse than their fathers.”

**Comment:** Just like the end of the Gospel Age, conditions did not stay the same but got worse. The professed people of God were worse than their fathers.

**Reply:** That was especially true both then and now because of the increased responsibility and knowledge.

**Jer. 7:27** Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.

**Jer. 7:28** But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

God continued to speak to Jeremiah, telling him to utter “all these words,” even though the people would not listen. God called, but they ignored Him; they would not respond.

God instructed Jeremiah to say, “This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.” Imagine stating such strong words *publicly!* Jeremiah would have made this pronouncement in a prominent place when there was a concourse of people so that as many as possible would hear him, but only an individual here or there responded. He probably spoke at the Temple because a later account tells what part of the Temple he was in—what tier, balcony, and room—when he made pronouncements. Because the nation did not accept discipline, the truth perished.

**Jer. 7:29** Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

“O Jerusalem” was supplied by the translators and should be omitted. Jeremiah had to literally cut off his hair to symbolize the humility that would subsequently come on the people of Judah. With his bald head, he went up on “bare heights,” or “high places,” that is, on the hills and mountains, and cried out in lamentation (compare the RSV). As in the Samson picture, hair is a symbol of strength. Therefore, Jeremiah’s cutting off his hair prophetically represented Judah’s loss of strength at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

“The LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.” God’s feelings were now surfacing. Just as Ezekiel 38:18 states that His “fury” will come up into His face at the time of Jacob’s Trouble and be manifested by a judgmental action, so here His wrath was building up.

We can see what God's attitude was toward His people. His patience is shown by the fact that He always gave them a way out if they would, *from the heart*, truly repent. But without such repentance, impending judgment was coming.

**Jer. 7:30** For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

**Jer. 7:31** And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.

**Jer. 7:32** Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.

Tophet, located in the Valley of Hinnom (Hebrew), also called the Valley of Gehenna (Greek), was where Molech, the fire god, stood. The huge statue had a furnace in its stomach. A *live* firstborn child, either male or female, was cast into the furnace and roasted and sometimes eaten. With all of God's thinking, such a thought never entered His mind (Jer. 7:31; 19:5). Of course He *foresaw* that such practices would occur, but in no way could they be traced back to Him. Therefore, the concept of the torture of hellfire is man's thought.

When we consider the persecutions of the Dark Ages—for example, putting to death inch by inch some who would not recant—we are appalled. It is hard to imagine how one human could do that to another human, yet the doctrine of hellfire is just as appalling.

Some people think the God of the Old Testament was cruel, but they forget that the animals offered were *previously* slain. They died painlessly when the jugular vein in their throats was slit, so in only a matter of seconds, consciousness ceased and weakness set in. Thus *dead* animals were offered on the altar of God, but people have a hard time making a distinction between a *live* offering and a *dead* offering. With Molech worship, *live* children were sacrificed.

Verse 32 was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 606 BC. Those who were slaughtered were thrown into the Valley of Hinnom in a mass burial, and their corpses were burned to avoid disease.

**Jer. 7:33** And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away.

Vultures would rip apart and eat the corpses, and beasts would eat them too. The people would be killed so fast that the enemy could not properly dispose of the corpses. War would be a HORROR.

Normally, if we saw an animal eating a corpse, our natural instinct would be to chase the animal away. But in the coming trouble of 606 BC, the corpses would be so numerous that chasing away the fowls and the beasts would be a hopeless task.

**Jer. 7:34** Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

The prophecy continued. God would cause mirth, gladness, joy, and the voice of the bride and bridegroom to cease from Jerusalem and Judah. The wording is similar to Revelation 18:22,23



in regard to the future destruction of mystic Babylon, when there will be no more churches. The people will curse their false gods and kings and look up to God in that day (Isa. 8:21).

Jeremiah was referring to the time when Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city and the Temple and even remove the vinedressers—hence all people. Thus we know that Revelation 18 is talking about the *destruction* of mystic Babylon when *no worshippers* will remain there.

In 1878, the call went forth to “Come out of her, my people” (Rev. 18:4). That call is still going on, and it will continue until the system literally falls. Some of God’s people will be in Babylon right up to the time of its destruction. Further chapters of Jeremiah are very enlightening as to when *no more* of God’s people will be in the systems.

Here in chapter 7, Jerusalem pictures mystic Babylon. Judah and Jerusalem represent nominal Christendom, which is doomed to extinction as a *system* (not as individuals). In other words, the trouble of 606 BC was a picture of a greater Time of Trouble at the end of the Gospel Age, when the voice of the Bridegroom (Jesus) and the bride (the Little Flock) will cease. However, the voice of the bridesmaids (the Great Company) will continue for a while.

Babylon has been a “golden cup” in the hand of the Lord (Jer. 51:7). To a certain extent, the nominal Church has been favored in that the Bridegroom’s voice was heard there in the past, but since 1878, his voice has been on the outside, calling to his people still inside the institution to come out. In the near future, there will come a soul-searching time when a person has to make a decision either for the Lord (the Great Company) or for the world (the tares or Second Death). The tares will be consumed in that they will no longer profess to be the Lord’s people, and God will send His angels to yank the Lot class out of the system just before its collapse. Under that condition, the miraculous sparing of the Lot class will help them to wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb in the “great tribulation” (Rev. 7:14).

**Jer. 8:1 At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves:**

Kings, princes, priests, prophets, and the inhabitants of Judah are listed. Their bones would be brought out of the grave “at that time.” Progression is shown in the strata of society, from top to bottom, from positions of civil and religious authority down to the common people.

Unlike Isaiah, Jeremiah reversed pictures back and forth. Judah sometimes represented natural Israel and its future restoration, and sometimes it symbolized mystic Babylon, which will be utterly destroyed.

The phrase “at that time” refers back to Jeremiah 7:34, the last verse of the previous chapter, when the voice of the bridegroom would be heard no more in Jerusalem and the land would be left desolate and without inhabitant. Those who attacked Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC literally brought the bones out of the graves. His general ordered that all the tombs of the prophets, etc., be emptied, and the bones were spread out for public display, along with the corpses of those who were in Jerusalem at the time of the besieging, so that the birds and the animals could feed upon them. That event was soon to occur, for Jeremiah was speaking about a decade in advance of the actual destruction.

Those of us who have gone into the tombs of the kings of Judah north of Calvary on Mount Moriah observed that not one bone remains. Although we did not search all of the tombs and recesses, the easily accessible ones are empty. Every one of the kings lived prior to 606 BC. The Period of the Kings lasted for 513 years, and during that time, kings were buried when they

died.

**Jer. 8:2** And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.

Verses 1 and 2 are a startling bit of history that is not recorded anywhere else. The Bible is a remarkable book that gives us an in-depth understanding of a considerable portion of history.

Prior to 606 BC, the Israelites, especially around Jerusalem in Tophet and the Valley of Hinnom, loved and worshipped the sun, the moon, and all the host of heaven. They *openly* practiced this false worship in the valley, copying the heathen nations. The worship went on for some time. As worshippers died, they were buried, from kings on down to the common people. In 606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar captured the city and emptied the tombs for treasure and also out of disdain and sacrilege, for he had no respect for the Israelites. The bones were dug up, spread out under “the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven” and searched for valuables. How ghoulish! Just as the Israelites had formerly spread out their arms to worship the heavens, so now their bones were spread out in retribution. Thus God used cynicism to show the sins of the current generation of Israelites. Moreover, the bones were not reburied, for no one could tell whose bones were whose. The tombs of the kings were desecrated at this time.

What did the Babylonians accomplish? They destroyed the Temple, which was the glory of the whole earth, and also Jerusalem, which, from the standpoint of a natural fortification, was almost impregnable except from the north. And then they defiled the tombs of the prophets, kings, and others of this rebellious nation that resisted Babylon’s authority.

**Jer. 8:3** And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

“Death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family.” Evil would ensue upon the survivors in the places where they ended up in captivity, and many would live in misery. Being despondent in their scattered condition and longing for the homeland, they would choose “death ... rather than life”; that is, they would wish to die. Psalm 137:1-6 speaks of the mourners in exile. “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” Similar sentiments are also expressed in the Book of Lamentations, which follows the Book of Jeremiah and was written by the same prophet.

Of the survivors of the Jewish nation—those who “remain[ed] of this evil family ... in all the places whither I [God] have driven them”—some later returned to Israel when Cyrus issued his decree, but many stayed in Babylon out of greed. It was proper to return to Israel, but since faith and sacrifice were required to leave the homes they had in Babylon, only those in the right heart condition went back.

**Jer. 8:4** Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?

**Jer. 8:5** Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

“Moreover thou [Jeremiah] shalt say unto them [those of Judah], Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise?... Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?” Verse 4 presents a line of reasoning. “If a man is lost, doesn’t he retrace his steps? If he falls down, doesn’t he get up again?” Verse 5 extends the reasoning to the Israelites. “Then why do the Israelites continue in a stubborn, backsliding condition and not repent and inquire what they have done wrong?” The people held fast to deceit and refused to give up their evil ways, admit they were wrong, and return to the Lord.

The people were incorrigible sinners, for they had passed the point of no return and repentance was impossible for them. Despite all of Jeremiah’s predictions, they did not pay any attention to his words. He was urgently trying to get across the warnings: “Don’t you know what will happen if you do not repent? Your actions are suicidal.” This book, especially the earlier chapters, is difficult to understand from a prophetic standpoint because Jeremiah entered the situation with empathy. If quotation marks had been inserted, we could tell more easily who was talking. In other words, was God speaking, was Jeremiah voicing his own emotions, was the prophet quoting what God said *in principle*, or was he quoting God’s *exact* words? Because of these variations, Jeremiah wrote differently than any of the other Old Testament prophets; the others wrote in a more limited and precise manner. When God chose to give a particular message at a particular time, He chose a prophet according to character and natural temperament and frame.

**Jer. 8:6** I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

Jeremiah strained his ears to hear whether there would be cries for help or repentance. But no one asked, “What have I done?” The people continued in their evil as a fearless horse that rushes into battle in the midst of excitement. If properly trained, the horse would even run into a stone wall in perfect obedience to the rider’s command. In this same undeviating manner, the people rushed on in evil and senselessness without thinking; they hastened on in their evil, going faster and faster.

As described in *The Keys of Revelation*, pages 641-642, a warhorse loves to go into battle. The horse even prances when it senses a battle, being eager for the charge.

Jeremiah interjected himself into this reasoning. With his whole heart, soul, and power, he was doing what God said, but the desired results were not forthcoming. Understanding this nuance helps us to more fully appreciate Jeremiah as a prophet and the situation that existed in his day.

**Q:** Could God be speaking in verse 6?

**A:** That could be, but we think Jeremiah was the speaker.

**Jer. 8:7** Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.

Jeremiah was saying that the stork, turtledove, crane, and swallow all know their “appointed times” and “observe the time of their coming,” but even though 606 BC was only a few years away, his people did not want to know that the time was coming for “the judgment of the

LORD.” Birds have a built-in sense of when to migrate and *return*, and this sense preserves them as a species. By *instinct*, they have more sense than the Israelites, who knew not that they should *repent* and return to the ways of the Lord. The Prophet Isaiah spoke similarly, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward” (Isa. 1:3,4).

This willing ignorance is the history of the fallen human race as well. Most people are not really interested in God and His Word. They delude themselves with a little “insurance” by going to church or to the Confessional occasionally.

**Jer. 8:8** How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.

The scribes were supposed to be very wise and educated. They *interpreted* the Law but did this *falsely*. They should have known better, for instead of being proper teachers, they negated the Law. It would have been better if they had just copied the Law and kept quiet, for they made the Law of none effect—they made it null and void—through traditions of men (Mark 7:13).

Verse 8 can be considered from the standpoint of a principle. In Romans 2:17, Paul said that the Jews felt superior to the Gentiles because of the Law. As a group, we feel that we have “the truth.” But the Laodicean message warns against this dangerous attitude: “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17).

Here again Jeremiah was speaking, although the end of the verse, “Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain,” can be taken three different ways. The Law was “in vain” in that the Jews did not heed the advice given to them. God repeatedly warned of the coming judgment and so did Jeremiah, but the people ignored the warnings. Whatever way the verse is read, it is profitable for showing the deplorable condition of the recipients of the Lord’s message, Jeremiah’s frustration, or God’s desire that people would repent and live. Stated another way, it shows the attitude of the ones to whom the message was addressed, the excellent character of the messenger, or the intent of the Author of the message in trying to change the people’s evil course so that no one in the future could say, “If only we had known.”

The story of Israel is the story of the human race. Therefore, when God chooses Israel in the future, the rest of mankind cannot say, “We would have been different.” (The only exception is Nineveh, but there is a reason for that exception, which we will not discuss at this time.) Therefore, the lesson is to consider the character of God, namely, that He is slow to put anyone in Second Death. He wants to give everyone the opportunity for life, and those who succeed will be able to say of those who fail utterly, “God did His part, and thus He is to be most honored and revered as a loving Creator.”

**Jer. 8:9** The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?

The “wise men” had no true wisdom. The RSV uses future tense: “The wise men shall be put to shame, they shall be dismayed and taken.” False prophets contradicted Jeremiah’s predictions. One such prophet said that Nebuchadnezzar would change his mind in two years and return to Babylon. When that did not happen, he was ashamed of his prediction.

“Lo, they [the false prophets] have rejected the [true] word of the LORD” as spoken by

Jeremiah. Both the false prophets and Jeremiah used a “thus saith the LORD,” so how would the people of Judah know whom to believe? They should have weighed the words. As Jesus said years later, “Wisdom [the final result] is justified of her children” (Matt. 11:19).

When Jeremiah uttered his message, the people should have *analyzed* it, asking, “Is it true?” If he was speaking the truth, he should have been admired for the stand he was taking and been regarded as a true messenger. But the people preferred the false message of peace—no trouble, no rocking of the boat—that said they could continue their way of life. In addition, the false prophets said God would not destroy *His* Temple. Those with the wrong heart condition justified themselves in their misconduct.

**Jer. 8:10** Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

“Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit.” (The second “them” was supplied by the translators and should be omitted.) The land was left desolate for 70 years, so the thought is that the conquerors would inherit the wives, not the land. (The scholars interpreted words without necessarily knowing the testimony of Scripture.) The wives of all classes of Israelites would be given to the conquerors. In the antitype, the “wives” (churches) will be destroyed. There will be no more respect for sacred institutions.

“For every one from the least even unto the greatest [from the common people to the princes] is given to covetousness.” We are reminded of 1 Timothy 6:10, “For the love of money is the root of all [much] evil.” Whether one is poor or rich, the love of money leads to covetousness. The rich want more and more money, and the poor would like to have money.

“From the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.” There were hundreds or thousands of false prophets compared to only three to five true prophets at any one time in Israel’s history. (Note: There were a few true prophets other than the ones who wrote books of the Bible, so the mention of three to five true prophets would include contemporaries.)

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

**Jer. 8:12** Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

The false prophets and priests gave messages of “Peace, peace.” They did not heal the deadly wound but pacified the people with promises of peace and gave them a placebo instead of real medicine.

This strange statement appears to have been artificially inserted, even though it is talking about the message of the false prophets, who were trying to undercut Jeremiah’s predictions of coming trouble. From their perspective, Jeremiah was a traitor. The Pastor gave this statement an end-time application. Up to this point, we had some reserve in trying to draw an antitype because of certain details in the actual historical record. However, to isolate a certain statement or portion of what happened back in the type and give an antitypical application is another matter, for very often the Holy Spirit used this method to hide valuable information until the due time. Of course verse 11 is similar to Jeremiah 6:14. In what way are these verses an end-time prophecy applicable to the nominal system?

**Comment:** The Apostle Paul spoke of our day: “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thess. 5:3). A message of “Peace and safety” will be proclaimed in the church-state hour of power.

**Reply:** The cry of “Peace, peace” went forth in nominal natural Israel in Jeremiah’s day, and in parallel types, Israel sometimes pictures nominal Christendom.

Of verse 11, the Pastor said in the *Third Volume*, page 157, that the term “daughter of my people” refers to “nominal Zion, [mystic] Babylon.” It is interesting that the Septuagint version of the Old Testament omits this verse because it seems out of place. However, we believe it does refer to nominal spiritual Zion, indicating that any so-called “doomsday” message of a prophetic nature will be discounted and opposed. We believe that as events develop, those who are watching and praying will see, with increasing clarity, the *closeness* of the coming trouble, which will cover a period of 3 1/2 to 4 years. Perceiving the significance of the events, they will become emboldened to speak publicly. The very fulfillment of events will encourage them to tell what is happening.

**Comment:** The attitude of the nominal Church leaders will be similar to that of the false prophets in Jeremiah’s day. They will speak peace and smooth things instead of warning of impending trouble.

**Comment:** For “slightly,” Young’s *Analytical Concordance* has “superficially.”

**Reply:** Yes, it was like giving a Band-Aid® solution to a serious medical problem.

**Comment:** Ezekiel 13:10 reads, “They have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar.”

**Reply:** A contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel was among the exiles in Babylon. The time setting of this eighth chapter of Jeremiah was about 11 years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

“In the time of their [future] visitation,” the leaders would fall with the common people. There would be no favoritism.

“Saith the LORD” at the end of verse 12 at first seems to indicate that God made the statement in verse 11, but we have tried to show that Jeremiah was speaking because the expression “daughter of my people” is peculiar to him. In other words, Jeremiah was saying, “I am telling you what *God had said*.” To our understanding, the expression “daughter of my people” is used only once in the entire Bible outside of Jeremiah (see Isa. 22:4). All other uses of the expression are in either the Book of Jeremiah or the Book of Lamentations, both of which were written by him (Jer. 4:11; 6:14,26; 8:11,19,21,22; 9:1,7; 14:17; Lam. 2:11; 3:48; 4:3,6,10). Also, peculiar to Jeremiah is the repeated use of the expression “daughter,” particularly “daughter of Zion,” “daughter of Judah,” and “daughter of Jerusalem” (Jer. 4:31; 6:2,23; 31:22; 49:4; Lam. 1:6,15; 2:1,2,4,5,8,10,13,15,18; 4:22).

There is no reason to digress along the following lines when we are trying to get a prophetic understanding, but Jeremiah can also be studied from the standpoint of his *character*, his *emotionalism*, and why God chose him *from the womb* to declare a message to the Jews so that later generations could never say, “We were not warned.” Jeremiah’s heart and soul were involved in trying to get his people to repent from their misbehavior, stubbornness, and lack of paying attention to God’s rule of authority.

We are reminded of *Jesus'* favoritism for the Apostle John because of his temperament (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7,20). Nevertheless, we believe *God* chose Peter as being superior to John in the ranking of the apostles. Among other reasons such as the characteristics of the 12 tribes, the chemical and physical properties of the jewels and their order in the high priest's breastplate bear out this sequence of preference. John's affinity for Jesus deeply affected him so that late in his ministry, he used the same fatherly expression "little children" again and again (John 13:33; 1 John 2:1,12,13,18,28; 3:18; 4:4; 5:21). In fact, he was so impressed with what Jesus said at the Memorial that he is the only apostle who discussed the topics of the evening. The other apostles discussed the emblems that were instituted and the dissension, whereas John focused on Jesus' long sermon on that occasion. Thus an empathy along the lines of temperament existed between John and Jesus.

Similarly, Jeremiah had great empathy for the people of Judah. Of course at one time, he had felt, like Moses, that he was not up to the task, but God replied, "I will make your forehead like a rock. If the people have hard faces, your face will become even harder in declaring my message." This insight into the character of Jeremiah shows his good qualities.

Therefore, we feel Jeremiah was saying the things that God had said to him *earlier*. The prophet put himself into the situation—as if he were saying, "Amen!" Imagine being in Jeremiah's place, doing the Lord's bidding and reaping *so little fruitage*. We are reminded of Noah, who was very zealous. For many years, he preached strongly with all his heart, but only his family and daughters-in-law responded favorably.

**Q:** Is the thought that the false prophets and priests were saying, "Peace, peace," and then Jeremiah commented on their false message by saying, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed," etc.?

**A:** Yes.

**Jer. 8:13** I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.

God had said, "I will surely consume them. There will be no grapes on the vine or figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade." This was a picture of desolation in the sense that God had warned back in Leviticus chapter 26, "I will punish you seven times if you keep disobeying. You will suffer temporally, you will be defeated in warfare, your crops will not produce, etc. These calamities will show my displeasure." In the Jewish Age, the evidence of the Lord's disfavor could be *seen* in a *material* sense, whereas in the Gospel Age, God's disfavor is *much harder to discern* because there is a *spiritual* withdrawal. The signs today are subtle, and only as one is in tune with the Lord's Spirit and principles can they be discerned to any real extent.

Calamities began to come on Israel during Jeremiah's ministry, so he told the people of Judah, "You are not following the Lord, so you will see this evidence of His disfavor. If you do not change your ways, great trouble will occur to wake you up." Thus the calamities of verse 13 indicated the beginning of the withdrawal of God's favor in Jeremiah's day.

Jesus drew on this lesson when he cursed the fig tree and it withered to represent the death of Israel's national hopes. This wording is strong; namely, there would be no grapes on the vine or figs on the tree. Even the leaves would wither. Hence there would be *no fruit*, that is, none righteous. In the antitype, there is a great dearth of real fruit in Christendom.

**Q:** Spiritually speaking, does the absence of grapes and figs have a correlation to the harvest of

the grapes of the “vine of the earth” in Revelation 14:18?

**A:** Yes. It is also related to Habakkuk 3:17, which expresses the sentiments of the Great Company just before Jacob’s Trouble. “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.” The Great Company will realize that the Little Flock has been separated from the earthly fold and thus is complete, but the Ancient Worthies, the “herd,” will not yet have been installed in office.

**Jer. 8:14** Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

**Jer. 8:15** We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!

**Jer. 8:16** The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.

**Jer. 8:17** For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.

Notice the *present* tense. Jeremiah prophesied the reaction and words of the people in 606 BC when news of the enemy’s entering the land from the north would reach them. King Nebuchadnezzar’s *huge* army would come down with the *murderous* intent of destroying the nation. “The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan [in the most northern part of Israel]: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come.” As Nebuchadnezzar crossed the border into Israel, news of his coming would spread rapidly throughout the land. Jeremiah vividly predicted the coming events.

“Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there.” Realizing the impending *great* trouble, the people would leave their homes and run into the nearest walled city for safety and be silent. Jerusalem was a natural fortress on three sides. With only a relatively small area on the north being vulnerable, the people would mass their defense there. Those who recognized retributive justice in the trouble would say, “The LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.” However, their recognition that they had sinned would come too late.

Verse 15 is good in the RSV: “We looked for peace, but no good came, for a time of healing, but behold, terror.” The people looked for peace and healing, but God would send an invading enemy. In addition, He would send serpents to bite the people.

Jeremiah would have used a falsetto tone in voicing what God told him the people would say in 606 BC. He was trying to wake up the people so that they would not listen to the false prophets. In Old Testament times, the people could generally tell when God was speaking because the Holy Spirit came on a prophet in an extraordinary way; that is, they saw that the Holy Spirit was operating through the prophet in a mechanical way. Accordingly, they knew that the words Jeremiah was speaking were from God.

The false prophets had been speaking, “Peace, peace,” but when Nebuchadnezzar’s army was really coming, it would dawn on the people that Jeremiah was a true and faithful prophet. Yet



even at that time, as we will find out later, one of the false prophets had the nerve to contradict Jeremiah and say that Nebuchadnezzar would turn around and go back to Babylon.

**Q:** Spiritually speaking, what would the “defenced walls” be?

**A:** In the end-time picture, as the Pastor said in the *Fourth Volume*, people will be looking for safety and security. For example, some will put their trust in stocks and bonds, some will look to the religious institutions, others will trust in the military, and still others will think safety lies in purchasing land in the country.

It is amazing that Jeremiah put his heart and soul into voicing God’s message, yet virtually no one paid attention. He even said, “At that time, you will have to admit that you have sinned, so why don’t you do so *now* and *stop* the impending catastrophe?”

“For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.” A “cockatrice” is a viper, an adder. The thought is that because the inhabitants of the land were willfully breaking God’s Law, even the poisonous creatures would seem to be against them. The people would not prosper in health, childbearing, and crops; rain would be withheld; insects and snakes would abound; etc. All of these conditions were designed to wake up the people, but strangely, they did not get the lesson. Their stubbornness shows that once the die is cast in decision making, a person can be hardened against changing his mind.

In that day, it was customary in Egypt to call on a charmer when a village was bothered by scorpions, for example. Charmers seemed to have the ability to control vipers and scorpions through incantations, but whatever the Israelites tried to do to overcome the problem would be to no avail.

**Jer. 8:18** When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.

Verse 18 is a break in thought with Jeremiah speaking. He sorrowed over the people’s hard-heartedness and refusal to repent and, hence, the necessity for the trouble to come. He manifested his concern by addressing them again and again. In his sorrow of heart, nothing could comfort him.

**Comment:** The RSV reads, “My grief is beyond healing, my heart is sick within me.”

**Jer. 8:19** Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?

Jeremiah continued to speak. The people of Judah were crying because of the coming enemy invasion from “a far country” (Babylon).

“Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her?” Jeremiah was saying to the people, “Don’t you have any God-given instincts as to what is happening? Why don’t you respond to the Lord? *You* are the problem.” He remonstrated with them, but instead of calling on the Lord and repenting, they ignored his repeated messages, even though they were suffering. If the king, as leader of the nation, had been God-fearing, he would have sided with Jeremiah. However, the people had no inclination to respond to God. When they wanted instruction, they inquired of Baal and other gods. Jeremiah’s grief was so overwhelming that he wondered about the physical condition of his heart. He was an unusual prophet in that he took to heart everything the Lord told him to do.

“Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?” God may be speaking here, although Jeremiah could still be the speaker because he took the people’s reactions personally.

Everything was topsy-turvy in the land, and the prophecies were of the enemy coming in. Both from without and from within, there was nothing but bad news. Meanwhile, Jeremiah was so emotionally overwrought that even his thinking was affected. He could not understand the people’s lack of response.

**Jer. 8:20** **The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.**

Bro. Russell excerpted this verse as being a very significant statement pertaining to the Great Company at a point in time yet future. Verse 20 can be coupled with Matthew 24:20,21, “Pray ... that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” Thus there is a parallel down here in our day with the debauchery that exists in Christendom. Conditions are becoming like those in Sodom and Gomorrah. Already homosexuals and lesbians are getting recognition, and laws are being passed to protect them. This debauchery will increase and increase until the minority viewpoint becomes the majority viewpoint. The laissez-faire attitude of the public toward moral issues allows this trend to grow. False prophets and indifferent leadership characterize our day. Isaiah 28:7,8 speaks of the confusion of the religious leaders: “But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.”

Israel was God’s professed people, some falsely so and some true but misguided. In the antitype, the Great Company, who are God’s people, do not obey and hence do not come out of Babylon until it is too late to be of the Little Flock. These consecrated individuals will suffer with the hypocrites (the tares of Matthew 13:40). Included among those who will suffer with the hypocrites are some who were God’s true people at one time but grew so cold they will go into Second Death.

Verse 20 shows that some of the Lord’s people will hope for the best but will be disobedient and weak in not coming out of Babylon. Their hope will be that the peace message prevails. This element reminds us of Lot. Out of the whole city, only Lot and his two daughters were rescued, for his wife turned back.

The pronoun “we” refers to an informed class who are repentant but too late. In sorrow, they will want to go to the “defenced cities” and be silent (verse 14). They will mourn and be distressed by conditions around them.

For the Pastor to take verse 20 out of context and expand it in the *Fourth Volume* as being applicable to the Great Company is remarkable. “Summer” is a picture of favor. “The harvest [of the Little Flock] is past, the summer [of favor] is ended, and we are not saved.” The harvest of the good will have been taken away. The people of Jeremiah’s day could make the same statement based on prevailing physical conditions; that is, “The good days when we prospered are gone.”

In the near future, those of the consecrated who remain behind and go into the Time of Trouble will recognize that they are not of the Very Elect. The signs of the times will be very apparent. In fact, the signs will be self-interpreting to those who are religiously instructed as to

what to watch for.

**Comment:** If “summer is ended,” then the “winter” Time of Trouble will have come, the time when no flesh will be saved unless those days are “shortened” by the elect (Matt. 24:20,22).

**Jer. 8:21** For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

Jeremiah uttered his feelings. His heart was wounded, and he was dismayed. He was “black,” that is, very discouraged, for his message was not heeded. The color black is usually associated with despair. Oddly, a sign of heart trouble is blue lips, and famine produces blackness. Here the blackness pertained to Jeremiah’s heart being faint, but later it pertained to the famine that occurred in Jerusalem (Jer. 14:2).

**Jer. 8:22** Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

The “balm” of Gilead was a soothing, healing ointment. Jeremiah was saying there was no physician in Gilead. Part of northern Israel at that time, Gilead was near Galilee but on the east side of the Jordan River. Not only was Gilead a very fruitful land, but also it had a healing salve that was appreciated by other nations, particularly Egypt. Hence many caravans from Gilead transported the medicinal salve down to Egypt.

“Is there no balm in Gilead?” The answer to this rhetorical question was no. In the antitype, the lack of balm in Gilead means there will be no healing in Christendom. The nominal Church will have no solution. Being in the dark with regard to the conditions that exist in the last days, the religious leaders will not be able to give instruction. When conditions get more and more troublesome and fractious, governments will look to the religious leadership, to the supposed moral leaders, to help hold society together. The beast, the dragon, and the false prophet will speak in unison, but they will not have the solution. “Is there no physician there [in Gilead, that is, in Christendom]?” Again the answer to the rhetorical question is no.

Jesus said, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Matt. 5:13). When salt loses its savor, when the Little Flock is removed from the earth, the saving influence will be gone because salt is a preservative. Verse 22 is along a more negative line in that when the people look for help, none will be forthcoming, and of course the removal of the salt of the earth will also be a problem. The Great Company will be on the scene for the antitypical fulfillment of verses 20 and 22.

Jeremiah was not blaming God. He was saying to the people, “As God’s messenger, I have faithfully transmitted to you what you are to do, but is there no one who can back me up?” Jeremiah was alone in the situation. “Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” Jeremiah knew the answer to his question; namely, the people did not repent and change their ways. They refused to recognize the answer to the problem. Again Jeremiah used the term “the daughter of my people.” Here he gave a solemn soliloquy, whereas later, in the Book of Lamentations, which followed the trouble of 606 BC, his words became a lamentation of the destruction.

### **Review of Chapter 8 from the Spiritual Standpoint**

*Verses 1 and 2:* “At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets,

and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.” Jeremiah said that the time would come when the bones of all segments of society would be exhumed by the king of the north, Nebuchadnezzar. A principle in Bible study is to know the type before we consider the antitype, for *God* laid down the picture, from which we get the antitype.

After removing the bones of the Israelites from the graves, Nebuchadnezzar strewed them around. This is a picture of the utter destruction of Jerusalem and hence, in antitype, of Papacy and all Catholic (Armenian, Coptic, Greek, etc.) and Protestant churches. In World War I in 1914, the Catholic system was destroyed for a time in Russia. Graves were opened, bones were scattered, saints were exposed as fakes, and so forth. Atheists thus shamed the Russian Orthodox Church, yet the system survived. Just as in Israel when heathen Nebuchadnezzar came down in 606 BC and caused desecration, so it happened in Russia and will happen again in mystic Babylon’s fall. Icons, buildings, honored clergy, and tombs of saints, among other things, will all be violated. The Russians will take valuable artifacts, all the time saying, “Where is your God?” They will mock and destroy.

Verse 3: “And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.” In the type, the “residue” of the people were those taken captive to Babylon. They chafed under the humiliating experience and wished they were dead. In the antitype, the experience will be the same. Spiritually speaking, “death” is dying to a former condition, but it can work in reverse order too. As a person got truth and left a denomination, the nominal system considered that individual dead, for he was a nonsupporter of the system. In the great Time of Trouble, many clergy will try to deny their background as in the French Revolution, when priests dressed as farmers and rubbed dirt into their hands (Zech. 13:4,5). The disguise did not work then, and it will not work in the future Time of Trouble. The clergy will want to “die” to their condition of being priests and thus escape persecution, but they will not escape—they will have to drink the cup (Rev. 18:6).

Verse 5: “Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.” The Israelites were guilty of a *perpetual* sliding back, a condition that existed before the trouble. They ignored opportunities to repent and listen to the Lord, so the experience of trouble was necessary.

Verse 7: “Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.” Storks, cranes, and swallows (the bird kingdom) seem to know the times and seasons, but those professing to be God’s people did not. Even worse, they said, “We are wise; we know the Lord.” The false *teachers* brag similarly today. Consider the pomposity of the pope and the messages of social justice by the Episcopal clergy, for example. All profess to be the moral conscience of the world, but friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). The best way to help poor people is to be the “broom” that sweeps away the wrongs. If faithful, we will be part of the Bride class and have this privilege. In the next age, Jesus and the Church will judge according to *God’s* wisdom.

Verse 10: “Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.” The “great” spiritual leaders of today will be debased, and their “wives” and “fields” will be given to others. The nominal

Church has been trying to reign over and convert the world ahead of time. In the Kingdom, the true Church will get this work to do in the "field."

A covenant is involved with a wife. The nominal systems apply the Old Testament covenant promises to themselves, thinking they will prosper temporally in the present life. The Sarah Covenant applies to us in the present age, and it is conditional upon our being faithful. We must sacrifice to get the honors and rewards. The various promises are the subdivisions in the covenant. The inheritance is obtained in the *next life*, whereas the nominal Church gets honor *now*: glorious robes, obeisance, titles, etc.

Verse 11: "For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." The professed religious leaders try to be friends of the people and of the world. That is a wrong principle.

Verse 15: "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!" When the Time of Trouble comes, the Great Company class, who will get some of the experiences of the nominal system, will realize they were not saved (see verse 20). They will receive judgment as part of the professed Church. Note: The Little Flock are part of the professed Church too, but the Great Company and the Little Flock are the *true* "church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23).

Verse 16: "The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein." Dan, the northernmost tribe of Israel, is related to the aged Daniel (a picture of the feet members), who interpreted the handwriting on the wall.

Verse 17: "For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD." Vipers "will not be charmed." It is known that snake charmers can play music and enthrall snakes to stand still by mystical powers. Whirling dervishes put poisonous scorpions in their mouths. In the antitype, monks and nuns have been respected and seemingly miraculously protected. Superstition and mesmerism have played a part, but these things are breaking down now. Nuns are raped, for example. Hence the charmed existence of the clergy will cease in regard to the fall of Babylon and the time of the burning of the tares. They will be considered enemies.

Verses 21 and 22: "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" These two verses should be considered with Jeremiah 9:1-3, the beginning of the next chapter. Although the five verses are related to previous verses, they are a separate thought. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD."

Jeremiah was speaking and interjecting his emotions, even though "saith the LORD" is included. God is aware of all that is happening. He knows the condition of His professed people; He knows the *whole* situation with the tares (professed Christians who are *not* wheat) plus the ripe, mature wheat (Little Flock) and the unripe wheat (Great Company). Called "*tribulation*" saints, the Great Company will have severe trials (Rev. 7:14). He is also aware of those whose destiny is Second Death, and He knows which professing Christians in the

nominal Church are true Christians, having made a bona fide consecration. The point is that God is sympathetic to and concerned about *all* who have made a *sincere consecration*. The high and lofty God dwells with the humble and the contrite; He condescends to and communicates with the lowly (Isa. 57:15). If only the Great Company would listen and obey earlier, they would be faithful and escape the trouble. He is also concerned about those who go into Second Death but were originally pure. However, despite this concern, He maintains His position as Emperor of the universe, on whose shoulders the fate of the whole world hangs. God is austere like a diamond and loving like a sard, but He cannot compromise either justice or love (Rev. 4:3). Therefore, because of the failure of the people, the judgment must come. The people reap their own destiny and reward. Incidentally, Jesus wept, and since he was God manifest in the flesh, we know that God experiences emotion, but that emotion is proper and controlled.

Therefore, Jeremiah was entering into the situation with his whole heart, and his emotions were affected. The *prophet's* head was like “waters,” and his “eyes [were] a fountain of tears.” Jeremiah wanted to “weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of ... [his] people!” He longed to go away and hide in the desert, to leave his people “and go from them!”

**Jer. 9:1** Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

Jeremiah continued to speak. He wrote similarly in Lamentations 3:48, “Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.” Notice the use of the term “daughter of my people” in both texts. His eyes ran like a fountain, or spring, with tears.

**Comment:** Jeremiah added emphatically, “Mine eye trickleth down [with tears], and ceaseth not, without any intermission” (Lam. 3:49).

**Reply:** Yes, he was very involved emotionally. Another prophet of the Lord, with a different temperament, would not react quite this way. God does not obliterate the personality of those He uses. Many have taught that God is looking for the image of Christ in every one of His people, and that is a correct statement. However, it is wrong to think of Christians who attain the Little Flock—all 144,000—as being cookie-cutter copies of each other, for individual personalities are not destroyed. In other words, God does not want robots to serve and please Him. The bottom line is that they all love God supremely, but in that love, with the Holy Spirit operating in their lives and Christ’s tutelage being a channel, they have responded and developed a crystallized character in line with their heart’s desire to such an extent that they are of the Little Flock. Similarly in nature, there are all kinds of beautiful flowers, but they are not all the same color, fragrance, or texture. Thus there is a variety in God’s choosing of His people, and that variety pertains to the unique personalities of individuals.

**Comment:** Jonah is a good example of a contrast with Jeremiah. Jonah was annoyed when the Ninevites repented, whereas Jeremiah longed for the repentance of the people of Judah.

**Reply:** Yes. Jonah thought that preaching to Nineveh was a waste of time because the people were so wicked. We do not believe Jeremiah would have responded the same way in that circumstance. The destruction of both Nineveh and Jerusalem (and the Temple) picture the destruction of Christendom at the end of the age.

“That I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” The destruction had not taken place yet, so here is another insight into Jeremiah. The prophet believed God to such an extent that the predictions were as good as the accomplished fact. Jeremiah was trying to wake up the people, yet he knew his ministry was doomed to failure. The people had passed

the point of no return by the time of Jehoiachin's reign.

**Comment:** The principle was the same with Jesus' weeping over Jerusalem. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" (Luke 19:41,42). He knew the trouble of AD 69-70 was coming, yet he wept for the dreadful destruction that had to come because of the hard hearts of the people. Jesus was emotionally involved.

Jeremiah wept for the "slain" of the daughter of his people. In a severe trial, we also have mixed emotions and could say that our head is like a watermelon. Here were the mixed emotions of taking a stand for judgment and seeing the necessity for the trouble, yet being sorry the trouble had to come. Because Jesus *loved* righteousness and *hated* iniquity, God has highly exalted him (Heb. 1:9). We are to do the same. All of us are unbalanced to begin with, but the Word will balance us if we properly apply the principles and do not compromise.

**Jer. 9:2 Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.**

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

In his sorrowful state, Jeremiah said, "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place [to hide in] ... for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." He used the word "all" in a broad-brush statement, for there had to be some individuals, even if few in number, who felt the same way. For instance, Baruch was a spokesman for the prophet in that he recorded statements, and Seraiah, the quiet prince, was another right-hearted individual.

In an unfavorable comparison, the people's tongues were bent like a bow for lies. First, the people thought of doing evil; then they bent the tongue, and it spit out slander and backbiting as it undermined principles of justice. The people professed to know God, but what did He say? "They know not me." Similarly, Jesus said, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find [the] faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). He was not referring to 1874 but to a later time, that is, when the feet members are taken.

In Psalm 45:5, the tongue (or mouth) is likened to a bow from a favorable standpoint. "Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."

**Jer. 9:4 Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.**

**Jer. 9:5 And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.**

"Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother." The "brother" Jeremiah was referring to was either a relative or a fellow Jew. If Jeremiah called the nation the "daughter of my people," he certainly felt that Israel was a covenanted people.

"For every brother will utterly supplant [take the place of, or rise above], and every neighbour will walk with slanders." Generally speaking, a "slander" is an untruth. Hypocrisy, lies, and evil speaking were the way of life.

"They will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth." To the contrary, the

royal law is to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39). Stated another way, we are to do unto others as we would like them to do unto us, even if the process is hurtful. Our interactions with others should be *constructive*, not destructive.

“They have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.” The people hypocritically pretended to be a friend of their neighbor but meditated evil. When the chips were down, the “friend” betrayed. There could not have been a stronger condemnation of the condition of the body politic of Jewry at that time, yet Jeremiah had nothing but love in his heart for his people. He was a patriot in the real sense of the word, and that was because God had instructed him in the ways of truth and righteousness. A person who is very disturbed about conditions in society may go into the wilderness or into a monastery, for example, to live a life of isolation. Jeremiah could have done likewise, but the Lord restricted him by training him as spokesman. Moreover, God promised to back up Jeremiah. God did the selecting, and truly Jeremiah was the right man for the job at that time.

Jeremiah’s words describe the conditions at the very end of an age—whether it was Sodom and Gomorrah, 606 BC, AD 70, or the end of the present age. Everyone spoke lies. No one could trust his neighbor. All were deceitful. Even a relative (a “brother”) could not be trusted.

In regard to the end of the Gospel Age, we must study *prophecy* in order to be *forewarned*. Prophecy is part of our armor. At the very end of the age, only a few of the Little Flock will be left. If meetings are banned and a house-by-house search is conducted for those who will not accept the Trinity, many will betray others. Even relatives or some of the consecrated, related to the Judas kiss, will do the betraying. Father will be against son, husband against wife, etc. *We must steel ourselves in advance* so that we will take a strong stand at that time, for the element of *surprise* greatly weakens one. In sequence, the betrayal will occur first to the feet members, next to the Great Company, and then to the tare element.

**Jer. 9:6 Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.**

The Israelites were professedly God’s people, but they did not know Him. Of course there were degrees of hearkening, but this class deceived *themselves* as well as others. It was like the blind leading the blind, yet they thought they knew God.

The attitude of *refusing* to know God is being *willingly ignorant* (2 Pet. 3:5). Today all classes of society are *willingly ignorant*, for they do not want to know about God. The teachers are even more responsible. We incur responsibility according to our influence on others.

**Jer. 9:7 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?**

**Jer. 9:8 Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.**

**Comment:** The last part of verse 7 belongs with verse 8, for Jeremiah seems to be speaking: “For how shall I do for the daughter of my people?”

“One speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.” One who lays “his wait” is setting an ambush to use the element of surprise.

**Jer. 9:9 Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?**



“Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” saith Jehovah. We are reminded of the souls of those under the fifth seal who were slain for the Word of God. They figuratively cried out for judgment: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev. 6:9,10). Conditions were getting so bad in Judah that something had to be done. *National* action of some kind was needed to effect a change. The process is like the refiner who is melting silver. The heat is increased so that the impurities will come to the surface to be skimmed off. In those cases, the metal is worth the effort, for it becomes more and more valuable. But with Judah, evil conditions had reached the point of reprobate silver, which cannot be purified and thus is worthless (Jer. 6:30).

**Jer. 9:10** For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone.

God was speaking. The topsoil of some grazing land is so thin and precarious that the animals are moved before they eat the grass down to the point where it dies and the land is worthless. Here the mountains and the wilderness, or land, were burned up in the sense that God had furnished food and care and was concerned for the people, but they abused His providences.

Verse 10 was a prophecy that in 606 BC, the land would be made desolate, but spiritually speaking, it was already burned up and desolate because the fabric of society was becoming worthless. Therefore, the best thing for the land was to remove the people, and Jeremiah appropriately prophesied about the 70 years of desolation, from 606 to 536 BC, so that the land could enjoy its sabbaths (2 Chron. 36:21). Not only was he preaching to the Jews, but even the land seemed to want to expel them, as prophesied in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 back in Moses' day. God predicted a lot of wailing and lamentation, some of which occurred when the majority died in the land, but even the survivors wept and lamented when they were taken captive to Babylon, for they were no longer in a favorable environment with God and His covenants.

“Neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone.” The cattle would not be able to graze, and the birds would have a problem finding pickings. It was as though all nature were crying, “Enough! Enough!”

At the time of the Exodus, Israel was described as a land of milk and honey (Exod. 3:8). But when a land is neglected, it suffers. When early settlers went to Palestine in the late 1870s, they comprised suicide squads, for they contracted malaria from mosquitoes as they drained the swamps. This effort was necessary because the land had been neglected for so long. The Arabs sold the land to the Jews, thinking it was worthless, but with perseverance, the land was reclaimed bit by bit.

Judah and Jerusalem—environs and capital—were like the United States and Washington, DC. Babylon was an empire, a province, and a city (the capital). In antitype, the empire of Babylon is Christendom, the province of Babylon (the country) is the nominal system, and the city of Babylon pictures the Vatican. In other words, the system in *all its parts* will be judged.

God does not interfere with the free moral agency of others, and neither should we. We can entreat and reason, but we should not browbeat others. To do so would be the wrong spirit of despotism.

**Jer. 9:11** And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities

**of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.**

What a powerful lesson for Jeremiah to speak to his fellow citizens in the land! In 606 BC, God made Jerusalem “heaps, and a den of dragons” (“a lair of jackals” in the RSV). In the antitype, this will happen to Christendom, especially to Papacy, in the near future. No inhabitant will be left in the professed Church in the Time of Trouble. When buildings are desecrated and desolate, wild beasts will use them for dens. In the antitype, the desolation will be perpetual; the nominal Church systems will go into the “lake of fire” (Rev. 19:20).

When the thoughts of verses 10 and 11 are combined, mountains and deserts would be made desolate, as well as cities and Judah itself. This description of Israel, the professed nation of God, refers to the systems of Christendom in the antitype. The tares will cease to be professed Christians, and thus no one will be left in the systems.

**Jer. 9:12 Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?**

“Who is the wise man, that may understand this?” Virtually no one. A paraphrase of verse 12 is as follows. “Isn’t there a person with any common sense who can see from what happened to the ten tribes that this will happen to Judah too if there is no repentance?” Leviticus 26 told that Israel would be punished for disobedience, but the people hearkened not. Now the land of the ten-tribe kingdom was like a wilderness. The judgments were designed to be corrective.

Judah was removed from the land in three captivities. The first two were partial and in the nature of warnings, with tribute and the taking of hostages. But the third captivity was total with Jerusalem and the Temple being destroyed.

**Jer. 9:13 And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;**

**Jer. 9:14 But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:**

Judgment would come because Judah forsook the Law and did not obey God’s voice. The people “walked after the imagination of their own heart,” for example, money or land—“idols.” To not walk after the imagination of our own heart can be difficult unless we are constantly on guard against wrong thoughts that may enter our mind. Practice, effort, and especially prayer are needed to counteract this influence and cast down evil imaginations. God said, “My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). If we admit we are weak and need God’s strength, His power will come into our life and assist us so that we can overcome. If we try to proceed with our own will alone, we are not strong enough. To ask for and admit our need for the Holy Spirit honors God by allowing power from without to come within.

**Comment:** Since the heart is desperately wicked, our own imaginations deceive us (Jer. 17:9).

The people also walked “after Baalim, which their fathers taught them.” “Baalim” was like a religious philosophy that was taught from parent to child to grandchild, showing that the environment we live in not only rubs off on the current generation but also is in the genes, making the children susceptible to the same sins and false concepts. “Baal” means “a false lord.” Sin, pictured by leaven, is contagious, so what one is taught from childhood is very difficult to eradicate, unless there is true repentance and consecration. Recognizing Jesus as the Savior and giving one’s heart to the Lord allows a miracle to be performed whereby a person

can turn around and buck not only the mainstream but also one's own basic instincts.

“Baalim” is the plural form of Baal, but when the article is used (“*the Baalim*”), it is singular. Similarly, “the *Elohim*” is singular, even though *elohim* is a plural form and can mean “gods.” Hence *Elohim*, when referring to God, has a singular verb and does not describe the Trinity; rather, it shows plurality of majesty, a fullness of power, and is not a proof of plural beings.

The Israelites worshipped Baalim (a false lord) at this time, yet they formally referred to Jehovah. They were following a *liberal* religion that was popular. The same is true of much of the populace today. True liberty is to become a slave of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the culture with many is one of license, which advocates violence without regard to the personal property of others. The bottom line is that people need guidance.

**Jer. 9:15 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.**

Jeremiah was primarily addressing Judah because the ten tribes were already in captivity. However, Jehovah was still “the God of Israel,” that is, the God of the whole nation. He would feed Judah “with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.” Also called hemlock, wormwood, which is a bitter purgative (like castor oil), was given as a strong medicine, as an emetic, to correct a sick condition. If taken in too large a quantity, it was a poison. For example, Socrates was forced to kill himself with hemlock. “Gall” in the Old Testament was like poisonous water. The purpose of gall was to increase one's agony, just as it was offered to Jesus when he was on the Cross (Matt. 27:34). Here the wormwood and the gall signified punishment and retribution whereby many would die. Jeremiah was present when the siege took place, and conditions were so extreme that some women even ate their own babies.

God was asking, “Isn't there a person among you with any sense? Can't you see?” The people would not let God help them, yet they thought they were wise. Jeremiah gave a helpful message, but none would listen. At the end of the book, the people asked Jeremiah what to do and promised to obey, but the very next day they refused and turned on him. This type is in harmony with the abrupt end of our Lord's popularity when the people yelled, “Crucify him!” The feet members will similarly be asked for counsel at the very end of the age, and then the mobs will turn against them.

**Jer. 9:16 I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them.**

The “scattering” eventuated in the Diaspora later, when the Jews were dispersed into Europe after AD 70. In addition, it was partially applicable to the 606 BC captivity, when the Jews were taken to Babylon and those who fled to Egypt and other places were hunted. God “consumed” the element that was especially displeasing to Him. Through Jeremiah, He had instructed the people to submit humbly, and those who disobeyed by fighting Nebuchadnezzar were killed. Incidentally, the wandering Jews in history are the ones who did not go back to Israel when Cyrus issued his decree for a return to the homeland.

“And I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them [as a nation and destroyed within them the hope of a return].” In the Diaspora, the Jews were forced from country to country. Eventually Jewry became a valley of dead bones, for their hope had indeed perished, that is, until much later in history when God raised up individuals like Herzl and Pastor Russell, who was very instrumental in helping Jews return to their homeland.

**Jer. 9:17 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that**

they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come:

**Jer. 9:18** And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.

**Jer. 9:19** For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out.

Verses 17-19 remind us of a funeral where the custom in both Israel and Egypt was to have professional mourners create the mood. In other words, in the events that would shortly take place, the people would have reason to mourn—and even in advance of the experience itself.

To dramatize the situation, God instructed Jeremiah to beckon “mourning women,” *literal* mourners, to come so that the people actually heard a great wailing from Zion. The women were called “cunning [or skilful—RSV]” because they were professionals who came with all the accoutrements. Jeremiah included himself with the people of Judah, sharing in their sorrow.

“Let them [the women mourners] make haste, and take up a wailing for us [for Jeremiah and his people].” Jeremiah was remarking about what God had said; that is, he was carrying the thought rather than giving an exact quote. The prophet was saying, “It behooves us, including myself, to take up this dirge so that our eyes will run down with tears and our eyelids will gush with waters.” To have water gush out of the eyes would be *genuine, deep* emotion. To see the women sobbing greatly would have a contagious effect upon the spectators, even if they did not know the reason for the wailing. However, they should have known the reason because Jeremiah had repeatedly preached about the coming trouble.

“For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion [natural Israel].” Then Jeremiah prophesied what the people would say when the trouble came. “How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out.” The people had disobeyed by not letting the land rest every seventh year, let alone for the years of Jubilee. When the destruction occurred in 606 BC, it was as if the land were vomiting out the people. Even the survivors were cast forth. The land itself seemed to be a personality that was expelling them, for it had to rest and keep the sabbaths.

**Jer. 9:20** Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation.

“Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his [Jehovah’s] mouth.” Jeremiah addressed the women because when an invasion took place, men were usually the special targets. In the coming trouble, the Babylonian army would come down from the north, despoiling the land and killing the men as it approached Jerusalem.

“Teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation.” In other words, “Tell your children what I am saying, for it will surely come to pass. Tell your neighbors also, those with whom you have associations.” Of those who were spared, the bulk were women, and for the sake of history, they would teach their children what happened in the invasion.

A principle is shown here regarding the antitype. As Christians with present truth, we have a responsibility to speak to those with whom we associate—family, neighbors, coworkers, etc. Those who know us should know of our hopes.

**Jer. 9:21** For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.

Jeremiah tried to portray that which was future as though it were imminent. The judgment *would come*, and it would come *shortly*. “Death is come up into our windows” meant the trouble, the destruction, was drawing so near that it was getting ready to come right into the houses and get the inhabitants. “Death ... is entered into our palaces.” A *flood* of death was being described. The trouble would come so suddenly that families would be unable to get together. Children would be separated from parents, husbands from wives, etc. These messages were vividly demonstrated, and much detail was given.

Jeremiah’s words should have startled the hearers, for he was telling a horror story, as it were. Considered a prophet of doom, he was preaching the message God had given him. His words had a beneficial effect on only a very small minority of the hearers.

**Jer. 9:22** **Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather them.**

Notice the emphasis on the men. Some would die on the battlefield, and many would die in the field in their daily agricultural pursuits. Bodies would be strewn about helter-skelter as useless chaff is scattered all over the ground after the reaper goes through. Just as the chaff was not gathered, so these bodies would not be buried, creating a real stench.

**Jer. 9:23** **Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:**

**Jer. 9:24** **But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.**

We are reminded of Zechariah 4:6, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” There would be no glory in worldly wisdom, might, or riches. Many lay up wealth for the future and diversify their assets, thinking they will be carried through trouble. Others trust in physical strength and still others in wisdom to get out of trouble, but all of these will fail.

**Comment:** Verses 23 and 24 sound like 1 Corinthians 1:27-29,31, “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his [own] presence.... He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

**Reply:** Yes, verse 23 mentions the “wise man,” the “mighty man,” and the “rich man,” who glory in themselves instead of glorying in understanding and knowing God.

After the preceding gory picture, God said He exercises “lovingkindness.” He did so by reasoning with and helping Israel time and time again, but they would not hearken. God exercises “lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness.” Those who are of the Little Flock will be able to say “Amen” to *any* judgment the Lord might levy, *no matter how great the suffering*.

**Jer. 9:25** **Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised;**

**Jer. 9:26** **Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are**

**in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.**

If the people of Judah did not properly react to the instruction from God as preached by Jeremiah, they would reap the reward of judgment. Verses 25 and 26 mention contemporary uncircumcised nations as well as Israel itself, which was circumcised *in the flesh*. However, *literal* circumcision was only a ritual, a ceremony, that had nothing to do with the condition of the *heart*. Therefore, the Jews were just as “uncircumcised” as the heathen nations, and *all* would be punished together. The *few* right-hearted individuals who were circumcised in heart, like Jeremiah, shared in the trouble, but they were protected.

**Jer. 10:1 Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel:**

**Jer. 10:2 Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.**

Jeremiah addressed the “house of Israel” with the words of Jehovah. Israel was not to be dismayed by the “signs of heaven” that troubled the heathen and portended evil to them. Examples of the “signs of heaven” were an unusual conjunction of planets, a comet, or a meteorite shower.

One lesson is not to put trust in the signs of the zodiac, for although some meaningful things are in the heavens, astrology is very unreliable. Genesis 1:14 states that God made the sun, moon, and stars for signs, but not all unusual occurrences in the heavens are symbolic. If they were all meant to be symbolic, either the prophets or another part of the Bible would so indicate, as it does in regard to literal signs in the heavens at the end of the age (Matt. 24:29).

The heathen religions reacted strongly to anything unusual in the heavens, but God’s words were, “Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven unless there is justification from me. Do not be dismayed just because there is an unusual phenomenon.”

**Jer. 10:3 For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.**

Customs in regard to making idols were vain, foolish, and false. Instead of worshipping the true and only God, the people of Judah were making idols. What a mockery! Even before an idol was sculpted, the people foolishly spent time looking for a tree with the right shape and height. The idol started with a crude instrument, an axe. The fine chiseling came later.

**Jer. 10:4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.**

To make an idol, a tree was stripped of its limbs and transported in an upright position for further workmanship. Hammers and nails were used to fasten it to a base to make sure it did not fall over and become damaged. How empty and meaningless! This work of *man* is a reminder of the image, also made by man, in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Only the stone that smote the image was made by God (Dan. 2:34).

**Jer. 10:5 They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.**

Verses 3-5 describe the making of a wooden statue that was decked with silver and gold. That

which was man-made could not speak or walk. Moreover, an idol was usually ugly because its makers considered their gods to be wrathful and cruel and in need of sacrifices to pacify them. Incidentally, Jeremiah was not describing a Christmas tree, as some think. One reason is that a Christmas tree was not prayed to. The silver and gold “decking” refers to overlays, not to ornaments.

Verse 5 is good in the RSV: “Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.” From *God’s* standpoint, no matter how skillfully the idol was made, it might as well have been a scarecrow in a cucumber field, even though it was decked with silver and gold. The statue was like a stuffed dummy! The King James gives the thought that statues were set “upright as the palm tree” to look stately, imposing, and noble.

What sarcasm! Dumb idols cannot speak. In addition, they cannot walk—they need to be borne. Jeremiah added (paraphrase), “If you use common sense, you will not be afraid of the idols. How can you worship what you make with your own hands?”

**Jer. 10:6 Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might.**

**Jer. 10:7 Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee.**

All the attention given to idols should have gone to Jehovah. In spite of the making and worshipping of idols, God had compassion for His people, but they needed a severe spanking. When those who died in 606 BC come forth from the tomb, they will remember the sequence of events that led up to their death. The lesson will be beneficial to those who are rightly exercised.

Jeremiah was speaking from his heart: “There is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might.” His personal comments were incorporated into Holy Writ. Thus, in dealing with His people, God does not expunge beneficial traits in order to attain one particular likeness. The mind, the will, and the heart are of primary importance, but the individuality of a person is not suppressed unless it becomes independent of God’s will. He wants those who worship Him to do so “in spirit and in truth,” or reality (John 4:24).

**Comment:** Moses’ heart was also with the Israelites, for he offered to have his own life blotted out if they could be spared after their great sin with the golden calf (Exod. 32:31,32).

**Reply:** Yes, he was a great statesman and a picture of the Messiah.

**Jer. 10:8 But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities.**

The idols were “brutish” in that they were crude and lacked refinement. Man has many refinements and delicate qualities, whereas idols had nothing by comparison—even if they were made in the likeness of man. Thus the wooden idols were “foolish.” Not man and not God, they were not alive; they were just dummies.

**Jer. 10:9 Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men.**

The silver came from Tarshish (North Africa or India), a distant place. The gold was brought from Uphaz (Ophir) in Turkey (see Gen. 2:11). The “founder” was the goldsmith, the one who refined the gold and the silver.

“Blue and purple is their clothing.” Sometimes the statue was actually clothed, and sometimes it was carved with clothing on it and then painted.

“They are all the work of cunning men.” From beginning to end, skilled craftsmen worked on the statues. Great effort was expended in trying to appease their imagined gods.

**Jer. 10:10** But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

Jeremiah continued to interject his own feelings, which were a proper recognition of Jehovah’s role as the true and living God, the King “of eternity” (see King James margin). At *His* wrath, the nations will tremble and “not be able to abide his indignation.” The false gods could not speak or walk, but when Jehovah speaks, He *shakes nations*. The comparison is between dumb statues and the *immortal King of nations!* Incidentally, based on context, the Hebrew *olam* can mean “eternal,” “eternity,” or “everlasting” in an *unlimited* sense.

**Jer. 10:11** Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

“Thus shall ye [Jeremiah] say unto them [the people of means and influence, as well as the common man of Israel, all of whom were worshipping false gods].” Certainly Jeremiah was not trying to curry favor with the people in proclaiming that their gods (plural)—the sun god, the fertility god, the harvest god, etc.—would perish from the earth and from under the heavens. Today’s politically correct philosophy is that we are not supposed to be against anything, but we are to faithfully declare the *whole* counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

**Jer. 10:12** He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

Jehovah “stretched out the heavens by his discretion.” In other words, God gave *much thought* to the creation of the heavens. Therefore, the heavenly bodies do not conflict with one another; there are no galactic collisions. When astronomers observe the heavens, they try to predict the future. However, the future cannot be predicted by looking at what happened in the *distant past*. In fact, what they see can be very deceptive, for it can be exactly the opposite of what is actually taking place at the present time.

**Comment:** Verses 12-16 are quoted almost verbatim in Jeremiah 51:15-19, which is in the context of God’s judgment against mystic Babylon. There the word “discretion” is rendered “understanding.” The repetition indicates the importance of these statements.

God “made the earth by his [attribute of] power” and “established the world by his [attribute of] wisdom.” The “earth” is the planet, and the “world” is everything on the surface of the planet—vegetation, man, beasts, birds, etc. The planet itself is in a fixed orbit. (The earth may tilt later on in the Kingdom Age to slightly change the 24-degree angle, but the orbit will remain the same.) However, the “world,” the arrangement, the habitable earth, is developing.

David was a thinker. Under the crude conditions of his day, he wrote a Psalm about animals that are active at night versus animals that are active during the day. The distinction in the



animals was only a small fragment of the wisdom God used in establishing the world, the system or arrangement.

**Jer. 10:13** When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

Jeremiah directed attention to Jehovah. God “causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth.” He arranged the vapors, the moisture, the rain, the water in the sea. He is responsible for the trade winds, the water cycle from the heavens to the seas, the evaporation process (an *invisible* water cycle), and occasional *dramatic* displays of lightning and thunder that give an indication of His power. His wisdom is shown in the endless cycles. For example, matter cannot be destroyed but, instead, is converted into another form of energy.

There is a *literal* aspect to God’s uttering His voice. We believe His power is such that He can even create planets with His voice. The mathematics, power, and code language are something He *alone* possesses as Emperor of the universe. As the God of eternity, He is unique. We marvel at His character and are thankful He is the God that He is. Just by saying the words, whatever He desires to do is accomplished in the manner and degree of speed He designed. There is no constriction on what He can do.

**Comment:** Psalm 29:3-10 reads, “The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.”

**Reply:** Yes, God has that authority as Emperor of the universe; He is King forever.

**Jer. 10:14** Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.

Compared to *man*, the dumb statue is brutish. But even man is brutish compared to *God*. The RSV has, “Every man is stupid and without knowledge.” In each case, there is a *tremendous gulf* between the two.

An obvious question is, How could man make something greater than himself? The obvious answer is that *he could not!* “His molten image is falsehood” in the sense that not only was the idol itself a misrepresentation, but the one who made it was practicing falsehood and deceit.

“There is no breath in them [the idols].” Whatever material idols were made of—gold, silver, wood, or iron—they were manufactured, or fashioned, with the hand. They were inanimate—they could not speak, walk, or think—yet men talked to the dumb idols and prayed to them for guidance. Indeed man was stupid to think he could get a reply.

**Jer. 10:15** They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

The statue, the one who made it, and those who worship it are all falsehood, vanity, and error. The whole business is foolishness.

“In the time of their visitation they shall perish.” In the Kingdom, there will be only one true religion, so the idols will cease to exist.

**Jer. 10:16 The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name.**

Jacob’s God, Israel’s God, is the true One. Israel is the rod of God’s inheritance. We are reminded of Aaron’s rod that budded. Just as Aaron’s rod pointed to the priesthood, so Israel will be the focal point in the Kingdom.

**Jer. 10:17 Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress.**

**Jer. 10:18 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find it so.**

Verses 17 and 18, which refer to the siege of 606 BC, are a change of subject. “Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress [Jerusalem].” Jeremiah advised the people of Jerusalem to submit to the captivity and to be prepared to go to Babylon. They were to gather up their wares and valuables and be prepared to go and not try to defend and stay in their houses, for such efforts would come to naught.

**Q:** In the King James margin, the Hebrew is “inhabitress” instead of “inhabitant.” Does that alternate translation emphasize weakness?

**A:** Yes. The feminine form, showing a position of weakness, was contrasted with the word “fortress,” which was a position of strength.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem were instructed to prepare *before* the siege came. Otherwise, God would sling them out of the land. Nebuchadnezzar was cruel to those who were captured, ordering most to be killed brutally. The clause “that they may find it so” indicates that when the siege actually occurred, the people finally realized Jeremiah was a true prophet.

**Jer. 10:19 Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it.**

Again Jeremiah’s emotional involvement was apparent. He was affected deeply, but the populace was indifferent to the reality of the coming trouble. Jeremiah grieved that it was necessary for the experience to come on the nation, but he said, “I must bear it.”

**Jer. 10:20 My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.**

Jeremiah emotionally entered the situation. “All my cords [reassurances, promises, and prophecies] are broken.” His temporary shelter had collapsed. As he uttered these words, it was as though the land were speaking. “My children are gone forth of me, and they are not [because they perished].” Jeremiah’s emotional dramatization portrayed the captivity as already occurring. Scarcely anything is recorded in secular history about Nebuchadnezzar, yet he was the *golden head* of the image (Dan. 2:38).

**Jer. 10:21 For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.**

The New American Standard reads, “For the shepherds have become stupid and have not sought the LORD.” In the antitype, the pastors are “brutish,” for they do not properly support the Church. When they all become false, the nominal Church will collapse. They do not instruct the people on how to become a real Christian, that is, to consecrate to sacrifice. In due time, the public will become aware of the false pretensions of nominal Christianity; the leaders will be seen as hypocritical bags of wind.

**Jer. 10:22 Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons.**

“Behold, the noise of the bruit [report] is come [regarding the imminent trouble].” Jeremiah was saying that before the cities were made desolate, the people would hear reports of the advancing enemy host as it came down from the north. God purposed to empty Judah of all its inhabitants. The cities would become a “den of dragons.” When a city was devoid of its former inhabitants, all kinds of undomesticated animals and birds of the night moved in and occupied it.

**Jer. 10:23 O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.**

It is not in man to direct his own steps. With regard to the Gospel Age, a man without Christ is without God. Man needs divine instruction.

**Jer. 10:24 O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.**

“O LORD, correct me, but with judgment.” Jeremiah recognized that even he needed corrective and disciplinary judgment. He was so sure of his prophecies that he wanted to be inspected himself and to be corrected. We are reminded of 2 Peter 3:11,12, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God...?”

The word “judgment” is a reminder of Psalm 96:10-13. “Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.” This type of judgment is a healing process. A person with good motives and intent will be submissive and receive the judgments and corrections of the Kingdom Age as blessings. Psalm 98 is also appropriate, as follows.

“O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

“The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shown in the sight of the heathen.

“He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

“Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

“Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.

“With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

“Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

“Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

“Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.”

**Jer. 10:25 Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.**

Much like Moses and Paul, Jeremiah was very patriotic. With wishful thinking, he was trying to steer the Lord’s displeasure in another direction.

**Comment:** It is easy to pass judgment on Israel for worshipping literal images when they had the Law and the prophets, but people today do the same thing in principle.

**Reply:** Yes. People like pleasure, and they worship movie stars, sports figures, political leaders, etc.—everybody but God. Generally speaking, every man is walking after the counsel of his own heart. Therefore, the great Time of Trouble is a necessary experience.

**Jer. 11:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,**

**Jer. 11:2 Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem;**

**Jer. 11:3 And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant,**

God instructed Jeremiah to repeat the portion of the Law Covenant about punishment coming for disobedience. The message was directed to Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. Therefore, Jeremiah gave this message in Jerusalem, for those of Judah came into the city periodically. Verse 6 shows that he also gave this message in other cities of Judah.

**Jer. 11:4 Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God:**

The Law Covenant, which technically began in Egypt with the Passover, is tied in with the Exodus. Two months later the principles of divine government were given to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. The Law was a conditional covenant of favor in that God made promises to Israel, and Israel promised to serve and obey Him.

The term “iron furnace” refers to the rigid taskmasters in Egypt, who, like iron, showed no flexibility. In fact, iron is so structured that it will break before it bends. The Israelites worked as slaves from dawn until dusk with no relief or sympathy. The furnace of affliction tried their mettle and humbled those who were rightly exercised. Similarly with the Christian, the trials of life before consecration should make us aware of our need for a Deliverer.

**Jer. 11:5 That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a**

land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD.

In the “land flowing with milk and honey,” the Israelites became wayward and departed from the Lord. “So be it” was Jeremiah’s acknowledgment of the need for judgment because the people would not repent. This form of “Amen” reminds us of the apostles Paul and John. In Jeremiah’s day, Israel was still a land of prosperity, but that is not true of Israel today, for much of the nation remains desolate. It will, however, be fruitful in the future.

**Jer. 11:6 Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.**

God said to Jeremiah, “Proclaim all these words in the cities [plural] of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. Tell them to hear the words of the Law Covenant, and obey them.” All of the current generation would have heard Jeremiah’s words. In spite of the people’s waywardness, if they sincerely repented, God would continue with His promises.

**Jer. 11:7 For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice.**

Through the prophets, God “solemnly warned” the Israelites to repent and obey (RSV). In other words, from the time of the Exodus to near the end of the Period of the Kings, God always had a prophet reminding the Israelites, reasoning with them, and exhorting each generation to amend their conduct. During the Period of the Judges, there were multiple spankings and limited captivities with a new judge being raised up each time there was repentance.

**Jer. 11:8 Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not.**

The people ignored Jeremiah and pretended not to see or hear him, for they considered him to be mentally unsound. Therefore, God would “bring upon them all the words of this covenant.” The “covenant” is probably a reference to Leviticus 26. Half of the chapter gives blessings for obedience, and the other half gives punishments for disobedience. Israel was told that if they did not heed the warnings, they would be sent into a more lasting captivity, that is, the “seven times” of punishment, which would cover most of the Gospel Age. First came the 70 years of desolation from 606 to 536 BC, and beyond that was the Diaspora, with the 2,520 years ending in 1914. Spiritual Israel has the same problems of disobedience that natural Israel had.

**Jer. 11:9 And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.**

The “conspiracy” in Judah was like a common agreement to refuse to hearken to Jeremiah, the true prophet. The principle for us is to *discriminate* among those who profess to be teachers of the Lord’s Word.

**Comment:** Ezekiel 22:25 reads, “There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravaging the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.”

A mixed element came out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus. Also, there was a rebellion under Korah (Numbers 16). The disobedience kept repeating and repeating.

We can picture Jeremiah expostulating and pleading, but what was the reaction of the people? They thought he was crazy, always ranting and raving, yet he used very sound reasoning and logic. Actually the condition of Israel is the condition of mankind worldwide. In whatever country, the people are not thinking about God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

**Jer. 11:10** They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

**Jer. 11:11** Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.

The people sinned like their fathers, refused to listen, and went after other gods. The ten tribes had already gone into captivity. Now Judah would also be taken. In the past through their judges, God hearkened to the Israelites' cries for deliverance, but now the 70 years of desolation would come to pass. God was saying, "I have reasoned with you, but you refused to listen. Therefore, I am forced to bring a judgment and make the land desolate." In time, the threatened seven times of punishment would also come to pass (Lev. 26:18,21,24,28).

**Jer. 11:12** Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble.

The people cried for help when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, but their false gods did "not save them *at all* in the time of their trouble." Only a relative handful of people escaped with their life. The same situation will prevail as mankind approaches the worldwide anarchy phase of the Time of Trouble. It will be natural for the populace to go to their respective religions, with the primary application being to the false gods, or creeds, of Christendom. There are different branches of both the Catholic and the Protestant churches, all having variations. They will look for relief and deliverance, but their prayers will receive no answer.

"Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the [false] gods [and idols] unto whom they offer incense." Instead of praying to Jehovah in the Temple, they went to the hills and open places to pray to man-made dumb idols.

In the antitype, when the stone smites the image, many countries and religions—Iran, Iraq, India, etc.—will be affected, that is, Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus, let alone nominal Christianity. The Time of Trouble will be upon the whole world, for it is at that time that the people shall "curse *their* king and *their* God, and look upward" to Jehovah alone (Isa. 8:21).

Verse 12 was a bleak message for Judah, yet there was a silver lining. If the people would just get down on their knees and look to Almighty God for salvation, the course could be changed. As the trouble got closer and closer, instead of listening more and more to Jeremiah, they looked increasingly to their false sources of deliverance.

**Jer. 11:13** For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal.

Judah had thousands of "cities" (approximately 10,000) with populations being as few as 100 people. Moreover, Judah had as many gods as cities—*thousands!* And there were as many altars to Baal as there were streets in Jerusalem.

**Comment:** To the credit of kings Hezekiah and Josiah, they tried to eradicate the problem of false worship, but these statistics indicate just how widespread the problem was.

**Reply:** If a person in a leadership position is thoroughly dedicated and has proper direction, he has a large influence on the people. When King Josiah died, there was a great mourning, but as soon as that leadership was removed, the people quickly degenerated and followed the whims of depraved leaders. Like sheep looking for leadership, the people follow a charismatic leader, whoever he might be, and absorb that influence—just as smoke gets into one’s clothing. With regard to the Kingdom Age, Psalm 110:3 states, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy [Jesus’] power.”

**Jer. 11:14** Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.

Jeremiah was inclined to pray for his people, but God said not to “lift up a cry or prayer for them,” for He would not hear their cry. Likewise, Samuel was told to cease mourning for Saul (1 Sam. 16:1). Even though Saul’s remarkable qualities turned negative, Samuel had an attachment for the king that had to be broken.

The King James margin has “evil” as an alternate rendering for “trouble.” In other words, the evil brought the trouble, especially under the Law Covenant. Obedience resulted in prosperity, and trouble followed disobedience.

**Q:** With regard to the Christian, 1 John 5:16 reads, “There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.” Will that principle apply to those of the consecrated who remain in the nominal system when Babylon falls? Will a point come when it is no longer possible to get life?

**A:** Yes, that would be true for those who have a sufficient understanding about Jesus. On the other hand, those who retain their integrity in the system but compromise by association and fellowship, or by silence when they should speak out, will have severe experiences to wake them up.

**Jer. 11:15** What hath my beloved to do in mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest.

In this imagery, Israel was likened to God’s “beloved,” to His betrothed woman, especially in the beginning when the Israelites were taken out of Egypt. The Revised Standard reads, “What right has my beloved in my house, when she has done vile deeds? Can vows and sacrificial flesh [sin and burnt offerings] avert your doom? Can you then exult?” No! A wrong spirit nullifies a sacrifice. The sacrifice should be a freewill offering; it should not be given reluctantly.

“The holy flesh [the original virginity] is passed from thee.” By her lewdness and trafficking with an ungodly element, the virgin became a harlot, figuratively speaking. “When thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest.” One in this condition not only rejoiced but also became bold in the evil. That which previously was a delicate, favorable situation became the opposite because of an illicit relationship with strangers. In the antitype, mystic Babylon is the whore whose name is on her forehead; that is, there is a hardening in sin (Rev. 17:5).

**Q:** Is there another application to the words “holy flesh”? The NIV uses the term “consecrated meat.” The Israelites’ sacrifices were no longer acceptable to the Lord because of disobedience.

**A:** That is true because they worshipped Baal and only perfunctorily used Jehovah’s name. It

was like people going to the nominal Church only on Easter Sunday and Christmas. At best, the Israelites' worship of God had become just ceremonial and superficial. For example, unless the best of the lambs were given to the Lord, the offering was a stench. A true consecrated attitude was missing. Incidentally, it is easier to commit suicide like the Muslim suicide bombers or to die suddenly and violently than to live a day-by-day consecrated life.

**Jer. 11:16 The LORD called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken.**

Verse 16 reminds us of Romans 11. Originally the tree, Israel, was fair and bore some good fruit. When green, the tree did not burn, but in a dried-out condition, it burned readily and mightily, like brambles and thorns. During the siege, Nebuchadnezzar had torches around the city at night to catch any Jews who went out for food. Many died of famine. Conditions were tumultuous.

“The branches of it are broken.” Examples of “branches” were a filial attachment to God as the great Creator, family ties, and loyalty to the nation. Thus the promising tree dried up in many ways. In AD 70, the branches of the beautiful tree (Israel) were broken and destroyed. The Temple was burned, and Jerusalem, which represented the nation, was destroyed.

**Jer. 11:17 For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal.**

The house of Israel and the house of Judah did evil “against themselves” to provoke God “to anger in offering incense unto Baal.” An example of a Christian’s “offering incense unto Baal” would be sacrificing principle or spending an inordinate amount of time in dedication to a secular job. Personal gain, pride, influence, and money are wrong motives, as well as the denigration of another employee in order to promote self.

**Comment:** For those in the nominal system, “offering incense unto Baal” would be kissing the pope’s ring, making confessions to a priest, and using the title “Father,” which belongs to God.

**Jer. 11:18 And the LORD hath given me knowledge of it, and I know it: then thou showedst me their doings.**

Jeremiah was speaking. Earlier he thought the people would repent. Also, he had felt inferior for the work. But now he said God had shown him the wickedness of the people, and he agreed that judgment was necessary. What is the principle? The more we know of the Lord’s Word, the more we are aware of iniquity. For example, the doctrine of hellfire is a reflection on God’s character.

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

Jeremiah was naive and childlike in not imputing evil motives to others, but the people were cruel to him. He “was like a [little trusting] lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter” in not realizing how vicious the people would be. They actually plotted to do away with him, and the leaders took counsel against him. Jeremiah’s experience is a picture of what will befall the feet members.

David was also childlike initially, and then he got so soured that he wrote, “I said in my haste,



All men are liars” (Psa. 116:11). In other words, he thought every man was a liar, but subsequently, he found that there were good people, that he was not the only one with right intentions. Of course he had sinned, but the Lord forgave him because of sincere repentance. Retribution came on him so that he could be favored greatly.

“Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof ... that his name may be no more remembered.” The picture changes from a lamb being led to the slaughter to Jeremiah’s being likened to a tree. The prophet was the preserving influence, the righteous element, as the Church is the salt of the earth. (Earlier Israel was called a tree, and Jeremiah was the preserving element of the nation.) The people wanted not only to kill him and destroy his works but also to permanently wipe out his name and memory—like Wycliffe’s bones being exhumed and cast into the water.

“Let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.” Just as Jesus was suddenly put to death and had no posterity, so the people wanted to do this to Jeremiah. The feet members will be similarly treated. In another illustration, the “stone” (The Christ, Head and body members, the “people of the saints of the most High” God, a multitudinous seed) will be entirely cut out of the “mountain,” or earth (Dan. 2:45; 7:27). The leadership wanted to kill Jeremiah and expunge his name from memory. He had *real* enemies.

**Q:** Does the “fruit” refer to everything Jeremiah was saying?

**A:** Yes. The people were sick and tired of hearing him speak and prophesy, so they wanted to completely eliminate him.

**Jer. 11:20** But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

God tries the reins and the heart. Jeremiah prayed to see righteous vengeance come on his enemies, and his prayer was answered. The prayer of the feet members will likewise be answered—from glory. David prayed for “perfect hatred” toward his enemies, for they opposed God’s word, which he was channeling to them (Psa. 139:19-22).

**Jer. 11:21** Therefore thus saith the LORD of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Prophecy not in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand:

**Jer. 11:22** Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will punish them: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine:

**Jer. 11:23** And there shall be no remnant of them: for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation.

Anathoth, a city of priests in the tribe of Benjamin, was Jeremiah’s birthplace. Anathoth was three miles north of Jerusalem, being approximately where the tombs of the kings of Judah were. In Jeremiah’s day, Jerusalem was at Ophel, the city of David, and the Temple was north of the Old City. Later Jeremiah got a deed from Anathoth. The deed was notarized and a duplicate copy made. One copy was hidden, probably somewhere near Jeremiah’s Grotto, which is on the hill where Jesus died; someday it will be found.

**Comment:** Verses 21 and 22 are a little clearer in the NIV: “Therefore this is what the LORD says about the men of Anathoth who are seeking your [Jeremiah’s] life and saying, ‘Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD or you will die by our hands’—therefore this is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘I will punish them. Their young men will die by the sword, their sons and daughters by famine.’”

Notice that *all* the priests of Anathoth would die—the young men in battle, the rest by famine. This would be retribution for their attitude and deeds toward Jeremiah. “There shall be no remnant of them: for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation.” The “year of their visitation” was 606 BC. The nation got retribution for what it did to Jesus, and the nominal Church will get retribution for what it does to the feet members.

The men of Anathoth considered Jeremiah a traitor. For him to be so prominent, talking in the Temple and the city gates, was regarded as bringing shame to their locale. Hence they manifested their attitude to both Jeremiah and the public. Faithfulness to God cost Jeremiah his reputation, among other things. It will be interesting to see what place this courageous prophet occupies in the Kingdom arrangement.

**Jer. 12:1 Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?**

Jeremiah pleaded his cause with the Lord concerning the judgment of the wicked. His primary question was, Why do the wicked in Judah prosper? “Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?”

Here we get an insight into Jeremiah’s character and his own personal thinking. He was questioning why God permits evil for such a long time and in such a fashion that the wicked grow in their prosperity. Instead of expected retribution, there seemed to be rewards. Almost automatically, we think of Malachi 3:15, “Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.” The permission of evil was not understood by the Old Testament saints, but what they did know about God through instruction was committed to their faith; that is, they knew God must have some valid reason for His own personal conduct and for what they could not fathom or understand.

Thus in verses 1-6, Jeremiah was not criticizing God but was trying to reason with Him to see if he could extract the information that was necessary in his own mind to solve this dilemma. In reading chapter 12, we see that Jeremiah was given to periods of soliloquy, rumination, and thinking on certain principles. Accordingly, this chapter is not a “thus saith the LORD,” for even though God is brought in, Jeremiah was recalling and trying to harmonize certain statements He had made. Here we begin to see how God tried the saints of old. Similar questioning is in the writings of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. The prophets *did not question God’s motives*; it was just that they could not square in their *own* minds what was happening. Indeed these were men of faith, and faith is trusting God in regard to both His character and His actions where they cannot be traced.

And so Jeremiah was trying to extract information as to why the wicked prospered. As for asking questions, God had said, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18). Jeremiah would have been familiar with the writings of Isaiah, the previous major prophet.

**Jer. 12:2 Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.**

“Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit.” Israel is likened to an olive tree in Romans 11, and the Hebrews’ going from Egypt into the Promised Land is likened to the planting of the Lord’s vineyard. God favored Israel as His people by delivering them from bondage, and they now occupied the land that was given to them. But Jeremiah found that the handiwork was being marred. From an initial good planting

and taking root, wickedness ensued. God Himself had planted the people, but they brought forth fruitage that was unripe (immature) and bitter. The question was, Why?

“Thou art near in their mouth, and [but] far from their reins [their innermost thoughts].” In other words, they honored the Lord with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. The “reins,” the kidneys, which are the innermost part of a being and thus represent the motives, the will, are even deeper than the heart, the seat of emotions. For that very reason, the kidneys were more meaningful than the heart in the offerings of the Israelites. The will, or the intent, is in back of the heart. Therefore, the bottom line with us as beings is the will; that is the determinant as to whether we are making progress, and prayer is needed.

Right away Jeremiah’s reasoning indicates that a similar parallel exists between Israel and Judah as the people of God in the Old Testament and Christians in the Gospel Age. Many professed Christians also have God “in their mouth” but not really in their inner being. Thus, although the experiences of natural Israel were profitable to the Jew, they are even more profitable for the Christian to study. God has nurtured His people in every age, clime, and condition, but there are different levels of development—the natural seed, the spiritual seed, etc. God’s *main* purpose, the *top* priority in His plan, is a divine family with Jesus as the centerpiece, or hub. In addition, God has a multitude of other ideas and thoughts.

The contradiction between profession and deeds was troubling Jeremiah. The prospering of evil seemed so incongruous. In the final analysis, the prophet was not given the full understanding, but his thinking and questions do give us insight into him as a person.

**Jer. 12:3** But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.

“But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me.” God knew Jeremiah even in the womb (Jer. 1:5). Jeremiah continued, “Thou hast ... tried mine heart toward thee.” Then he added, “Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.” Jeremiah wanted the wicked to be pulled out like sheep appointed for slaughter. He was very concerned about those who opposed the Lord, and he wished the particularly wicked element could be culled out. The previous chapter said that in Jeremiah’s hometown of Anathoth, a priestly city given to the Levites, all of the people were against him (Jer. 11:21-23).

Jeremiah was the type of individual that God seems to be calling in all ages, that is, those who both hate evil, even though they have a problem fighting it, and love good. Stated another way, they have righteous indignation. Jeremiah felt that God was very patient with the people, yet they were growing in iniquity. Although the Lord had told Jeremiah that eventually a day of reckoning would come, he could not understand the reason for the long delay. There is meaning and depth to the expression “the God of *patience*” (Rom. 15:5). Jeremiah wanted the wickedness to be brought to an end so that the righteous element would come to the fore. The Lord’s people in the Gospel Age have the same desire in wanting the Kingdom to come so that righteousness will flourish. From a pragmatic, visual sense at the present time, Satan seems to be the victor, but faith believes that God will rectify the matter. “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

**Q:** Formerly Jeremiah was very sympathetic toward his people. He cried for them and tried to get them to repent. Now, having found out about the plot against his life, he asked God to remove the wicked. Did God permit this plot in order to open the prophet’s eyes as to the *truly evil* condition of the people?

**A:** In the previous chapter, God forewarned Jeremiah that his own people would turn against

him. Therefore, the prophet knew that he would have such an experience and that, in addition, the nation would receive retribution in 606 BC. However, his question pertained to the waiting period. He was troubled by the long delay in judgment. Jeremiah did not really get the answer because the explanation of the permission of evil awaited the Harvest period of the Gospel Age. He could see that the wicked should be exterminated so that the righteous could flourish, but he did not see that delays in judgment were for the development of the Ancient Worthies, including himself. The permission of evil prepared them to be ministers on earth in the future Kingdom. Similarly, the reason for the delay in the Gospel Age is for the development of the 144,000 saints who will comprise the Bride of Christ.

**Comment:** It is interesting that Jeremiah talked about the development of wrong fruit here, and God gave the illustration of good figs versus bad figs to this same prophet in chapter 24.

**Jer. 12:4** How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end.

Here we see the tender, emotional side of Jeremiah. He wanted judgment against the wicked, yet he was saying in effect, “Not only human sentient beings but also animal and bird life are being affected by the evil and the degradation as the disease spreads. The beasts and the fowl are suffering because of what humans are doing—and even the inanimate earth.” Everything was negative because the people were not hearkening to the instruction of God, yet the startling situation was that they had God “in their mouth” (verse 2). The suffering came because of “the wickedness of them [the humans] that dwell” in the land. But what did the wicked inhabitants say? “He shall not see our last end”; that is, “God will not destroy us.” Thus the very longevity of the permission of evil brings about a false confidence in the evildoer.

According to the Law Covenant, if the nation obeyed, the people would be blessed personally (with their crops, in bearing children, etc.), but if they disobeyed, the opposite would be true; they would experience many calamities. Because of the people’s disobedience in Jeremiah’s day, the land mourned, the “herbs [crops] of every field” withered, and the animals and the birds suffered, for with sparse crops, they had less to eat. The life cycles of these creatures were adversely affected.

The people’s words, “He [God] shall not see our last end,” can be considered from another standpoint. There were two sides to the Israelites’ behavior: outward hypocritical behavior that *seemed* to be godly and inward *wrong* heart conditions. Hence the “last [or later] end” refers to the other side of their behavior. Outwardly they conformed to the Law but not inwardly. They were saying, “The Lord does not know what we are really doing.”

**Jer. 12:5** If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

Jeremiah continued to soliloquize in this comparison between the people of the land running a figurative race and other “footmen” (foot soldiers, infantry). In war in ancient times, footmen followed the chariots, but those of Judah could not keep up with the physically fit footmen. The Israelites’ weariness in running races indicated they were out of condition. In other words, their behavior in ordinary life and their ability to accept responsibility were lacking.

The picture then switches from footmen to horses. If a person trained long, hard, and diligently, he could keep up with the horses as they pulled the chariots. In warfare, a special elite guard ran right along with the chariots and horses of the king and his chief officers. If the

Israelites could not keep up with *ordinary* runners, the footmen, how could they keep up with the “superstars” of the nation, the *elite guard*, the cream of the crop? They could not! The Lord was looking for righteous leaders.

Jesus gave a similar analogy in his day. If the nation was misbehaving in a “green tree,” what would it do in a “dry” tree (Luke 23:31)? In the “green tree” of opportunity, the people were blessed to the extent that even Messiah was there. This period of testing when Jesus came to his own was a *very favorable time* for Israel as a people. If in this favorable period, Jesus could call the scribes and Pharisees whited sepulchers, condemning the leadership, then suppose there were no believers in the earth, no “salt.” Nothing of value would be left. And so the trouble came in AD 70. The faithful Jews had left Jerusalem in obedience to the message to flee when they saw the city encompassed, so only the wicked were left when the destruction came in the “dry” tree. The “green” had departed. *Figuratively*, then, verse 5 is saying that the people in Jeremiah’s day were unfit to meet the crisis when it came in 606 BC.

“If in the land of peace ... they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” This portion of verse 5 is a figurative statement similar to the “green tree” analogy. The thought is, “If they do not heed the counsel under conditions of level ground with no particular obstruction—when the way is made plain and the people are given advice through Jeremiah—then what will happen when the crisis comes?” The “swelling of Jordan” refers to the increased obstacles one encountered in approaching the Jordan River. For example, the enemy could hide in the densely thicketed forests, and lions and other wild animals were there. (The Revised Standard Version has “jungle of the Jordan.”) Another obstacle was flooding at a certain season of the year. At that time, wild animals left the forests and hunted man and domestic animals.

A powerful orator, Jeremiah predicted dire things to come, but the people felt that peace breeds peace; that is, they did not believe their peace would end with the calamities that were prophesied. However, if those of Judah could not keep up with the footmen, then what would they do when the horses came? If they were weary in the normal tranquil time of year when the Jordan was within its banks, what would they do when the river flooded? In other words, the king of Babylon would come down like a *flood* over the land of Judah in 606 BC. Although not specifically stated as such, Jeremiah was likening the swelling of Jordan to the Euphrates River. From that source would come a force that would inundate Judah.

**Jer. 12:6** For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

“For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee.” Jeremiah was not aware of this treachery until the Lord revealed it to him. Even his own immediate family was against him: his brothers and his father. Jeremiah was a strong and courageous character. Therefore, his family spoke “fair [good] words” in his presence, but when he left, they devised all kinds of mischief. They were polite to his face but treacherous behind his back. Because they *hated* his preaching of *righteousness*, they were his enemies and wanted to get him off the scene. They felt he discredited them.

Fellow priests in Jeremiah’s hometown and in his own family were against him. Jesus said that a man’s enemies can be those of his own household, implying there was a problem with some of his own kinsmen (Matt. 10:36). (Two of his half brothers were apostles, however.) Jesus testified, “A prophet hath no honour in his own country” (John 4:44). The circumstances under which these words were uttered indicate he was speaking about his own experience. Jesus was also saying that this principle was true in Old Testament times, as with Jeremiah, for example.

The soliloquy mode continued. Being moody, Jeremiah was prone to this type of reflection. In fact, at one time, he was so moody that he thought, “I am getting nothing but flack, so I will hold my peace.” However, his righteous indignation was like a fire in his bones and he could not forbear to speak for long (Jer. 20:9). He knew that the potential for Israel’s future was magnificent, but everything the people were doing contradicted what would be of benefit to them. Thus Jeremiah was a blend of compassion and righteous indignation. God Himself is pictured by the sard stone and the jasper, that is, the diamond (Rev. 4:3). He *loves* righteousness and *hates* iniquity, and that is why Jesus, who is filled with God’s Spirit, also loves righteousness and hates iniquity (Heb. 1:9). Jeremiah had this same disposition.

**Jer. 12:7 I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.**

Verse 7 is an abrupt change. Through the prophet, God had said previously, “I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage,” the implication being that Judah had reached the point of no return in judgment and would go into captivity.

“I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.” The nation of Israel had been greatly favored by God. Among the nation had been some outstanding personalities such as Abraham, Daniel, Moses, and David. Although they were few in number compared to the total populace, there was a much greater preponderance of such “geniuses” in Israel than in other nations. For this reason—because of these individuals—God could speak of Israel as “the dearly beloved of my soul.” He favored the whole nation because of the few. He said, “Do not think I am promising you great things because of the nation or because of your righteousness. It is because of the fathers and the promises I made to them” (Rom. 11:28 paraphrase).

**Jer. 12:8 Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it.**

God’s heritage, Israel, was like “a lion in the forest” that cried out against Him. Therefore, God “hated” it; that is, Judah’s inveterate refusal to take His advice, which was generously given over a long period of time, resulted in the need for severe retribution. We use an expression today about an animal biting the hand that feeds it. Normally that is not the case, for animals usually realize their dependence on their master and eagerly await food. God similarly favored Israel, but the nation rejected Him. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass knoweth his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider” (Isa. 1:3). The Israelites’ reaction to God’s favoring them with such wonderful opportunities was like a dog’s biting the hand that feeds it. Imagine the disappointment of having a Doberman pinscher as a pet for years and then seeing it turn on your child! And so God had to bring judgment on Judah.

With the people being unrepentant, there came a point in time when appeals to change their course actually hardened their hearts. Instead of just ignoring the repetitive advice of God through Jeremiah, they got angry and resented the peaceful overtures. When the Lord instructed Jeremiah to pronounce strong admonitions and warnings of the dire results of continued disobedience, the people roared like a lion against the prophet.

**Jer. 12:9 Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour.**

God’s heritage, Israel, was like a “speckled bird.” A bird with startling colors attracts attention and becomes a target. “The birds round about [i.e., Israel’s enemies, such as Edom and Moab] are against her.” Although Babylon was the chief enemy, other confederate peoples took advantage of the hapless state of Judah in 606 BC, seizing spoils and searching out escapees.

“Come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour.” God invited all the beasts of the field to assemble and devour Judah. In the destruction of Jerusalem, there were perhaps a million corpses. Not only did vultures pluck out the eyes, but also beasts devoured the dead bodies. In ancient times, blood on the battlefield attracted jackals, hyenas, and vultures. As here, where Nebuchadnezzar and his allies answered the invitation and devoured, “beasts” (or animals) often represent governments or nations. Figuratively speaking, this invitation reminds us of Revelation 19:17,18, which bids all the fowl of heaven to come and feed upon the carcasses of the slain in the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

The Lord’s people are sometimes likened to speckled birds. For instance, cardinals are beautiful but timid birds. Most birds have a sharp beak for defense, but male cardinals have a rounded beak, yet its bright color attracts other birds. Without a weapon of defense, it humbly eats off the ground instead of a feeder, generally speaking. Also, it feeds at dusk, when its color is less noticeable and other birds are already in their nests. Spiritually speaking, people tend to be envious and jealous of those who have more qualifications or outstanding opportunities. In bitterness of soul, those with the wrong spirit make such individuals their target.

**Jer. 12:10 Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.**

Not only the fowl of heaven and the beasts of the field but also the “pastors” (shepherds) would be involved in the coming destruction. They should have warned the people and supported Jeremiah, but instead they gave contrary advice and ate away at the people’s moral fiber by giving wrong instruction. Hence they destroyed God’s vineyard (the commonwealth of Israel) and trod His portion underfoot, making a “desolate wilderness,” a barren, unfruitful land. The *religious* leaders did not promote godliness and righteousness. Pastors are supposed to encourage character development, but instead their counsel lowered the standard so much that there was no fruitage of righteousness and no hunger to know the Lord and do His will.

God’s “portion” was the part of a sacrifice that was given to Him (the people partook of the remainder, generally speaking). God was supposed to get the *choicest* part. Instead the priests despised this portion and trampled it underfoot by being self-seeking and by serving the Lord for filthy lucre, profit, and honor as Balaam did. The priesthood was greedy for their *own* portion but careless about the portion for Jehovah. In the antitype, some religious leaders, especially in Roman Catholicism, accept to themselves honor and homage that belong to God. Back in the type, the portion for the Lord was burned (eaten by fire, as it were); this was the choicest portion. Then the priests got the next choicest portion, but in their greed, they often accepted both portions. Instead of putting God’s portion on the fire, they ate it themselves, thus dishonoring the Lord and despising what the sacrifices were designed to signify.

The religious leaders destroyed the “vineyard.” Jesus said he was sowing seed in his parcel of ground with the object of producing wheat, but the devil planted tare seed in the same plot of ground—that is, in the Church—so that after a while, it became a *tare* field with only a little bit of wheat (Matt. 13:24-30). The vineyard, Israel, was supposed to bring forth fruit, but it did not. John the Baptist said, “A few of you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, but the majority, the great nominal mass, will be baptized with fire [trouble]” (Matt. 3:11 paraphrase). The vineyard was ostensibly the Lord’s, but everything was awry and desolate.

In the type, Jeremiah tried to lift up the moral standard. In the antitype, the nominal Church gives wrong instruction by advocating homosexuality and lesbianism, for example. Where the religious leaders should build up the people morally, they are lowering the standard.

To tread something underfoot is to destroy it. For example, to walk on the tender flowers on the tundra kills them. Figuratively speaking, our tenderest plant is our conscience. A conscience that becomes too hard results in the death of the individual; it is like a plant of the Lord being destroyed. Therefore, if the moral standard that God gave His people under the Mosaic Law to educate them in the distinction between good and evil was not instilled in the fiber of their being, the people became less and less desirable and were eventually rejected.

**Comment:** Isaiah 9:15,16 reads, “The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.”

**Jer. 12:11** They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart.

Israel, the favored land that God had blessed, was filled with confusion and desolation. The land, the people, the animals, the priesthood—all were withering and dying and becoming a wilderness. The actual death knell occurred when they went into captivity, but signs of withering preceded the actual captivity. Jeremiah was saying that the whole nation was off balance as far as God was concerned.

One of the punishments listed in Leviticus 26 for disobedience was that the land would not be fruitful. Hence this condition was a warning to the people of Judah to wake up and repent. If the disobedience continued, then a long “seven times” punishment, lasting for 2,520 years, would occur, and that is what began in 606 BC, at the end of the Period of the Kings.

“No man layeth it to heart.” No one was observing the warnings. After the enemy entered the land, it would be too late.

**Comment:** Verse 11 reads as follows in the NIV: “It will be made a wasteland, parched and desolate before me; the whole land will be laid waste because there is no one who cares.”

With human nature, it seems that people go for the short gain and not for the long haul. A fairly prominent supposed Christian minister used the slogan “We are interested in the here and now, and not in the pie in the sky by and by.” To the contrary, we must fight against the short-term tendency, which seems to be ingrained in fallen human nature.

**Jer. 12:12** The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land: no flesh shall have peace.

“The spoilers are come [present tense] upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall [future tense] devour.” Jeremiah viewed the future destruction as such a foregone conclusion that it could be considered as already happening.

The “spoilers” were the enemy, Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, who would “devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land.” Through this enemy, the “sword of the LORD” would search out all the inhabitants of the land, and because of fear from morning to night, “no flesh shall have peace.”

Again we can imagine how unpopular Jeremiah was in giving his message. Without the Lord’s hand of protection, he would have been slaughtered. The people probably sensed that a supernatural power was helping him—much like the divine protection over the dispensational messengers down through the Gospel Age. Jesus’ holding the “seven stars in his right hand”



indicates they were miraculously preserved for the strong messages that were due to be given (Rev. 1:16; 2:1). Of course they suffered persecution but within the bounds permitted by the Lord so that they were upheld until the due time for their ministries to end.

The “wilderness,” or desert, can be explained two ways, either of which would be correct. Both explanations have a value for the account.

1. An army can unknowingly be in a fortified desert. The landscape looks barren until suddenly the enemy appears over the hills of sand dunes. In a desert, it seems as if everything can be seen, but actually the enemy can weave in and out of gullies and approach quite close before being sighted. In other words, suddenly, unexpectedly, and seemingly out of nowhere because of the barrenness of the land, the enemy appears.

2. Pertaining to the previous verse, the second explanation is as follows. Because of Israel’s departure from God’s favor, the land had become unfruitful, and when the enemy came down, Israel would be in this desolate condition.

What are the “high places”? From an agricultural standpoint, cities, towns, and fortified places were usually on the hills, and the fields for planting were in the valleys, which were watered by rains that fell on the hills and flowed down. The Jews occupied the mountainous areas of Israel.

**Jer. 12:13 They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit: and they shall be ashamed of your revenues because of the fierce anger of the LORD.**

In viewing Israel’s broad history, we see that the people had a good start, but the latter end was one of disappointment and nonproductivity in regard to the fruitage God was looking for. “The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail” (Isa. 9:15). In other words, Israel’s beginning was favorable, but the nation declined thereafter.

“They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit.” From the literal standpoint, the people in Jeremiah’s day sowed wheat, but the crop did not grow because the nation was not being blessed. Contrary to nature, thorns came up. When people put much effort and money into a crop and then lose it, the disappointment is great. The “pain” is so great that it is as if the “thorns” are pricking them.

This was still the warning period for Judah, so the people should have seen that the God of nature was against them. Even the land was rebelling. Their attitude shows the deceitfulness of evil. No matter how good a person is initially, little by little he can become degraded if he is not watchful and praying for help. The fearful thing is to become incorrigible. David wisely prayed to be kept back from “presumptuous sins” and the “great transgression,” which indicates incorrigibility and the point of no return (Psa. 19:13).

Depending on their degree of obstinacy, when the people of Judah who were contemporaries of Jeremiah come forth in the general resurrection and are given the opportunity for life, the character they developed will make it much harder for them to walk up the highway of holiness. Even with the unconsecrated, the principle is that what a person sows in the present life, he will reap. The reaping comes either before he dies in the present life or when he comes forth from the tomb in the Kingdom Age. Wrong character traits developed now will be inhibiting factors that need to be overcome later. Stated another way, the evil a person does in the present life proportionately jeopardizes his future. Certainly one will not receive carte blanche forgiveness, regardless of past sins, when he is resuscitated in the Kingdom. God told Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, “Do not promise the people the good things of the future

too strongly, for if you do, you will incur my displeasure.” Jeremiah did not need that advice, for he was the opposite by temperament. Incidentally, all the consecrated are either too severe or too loving by nature, yet there is a grain of backbone in each one who is called that can be properly developed and schooled by the Holy Spirit.

**Comment:** Moses warned of the curses for disobedience: “Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it. Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast his fruit” (Deut. 28:38-40).

**Reply:** In an agrarian society, the people depended on their crops, so these punishments for disobedience under the Law were sobering to those who considered them. Verse 13 ends with, “They shall be ashamed of your revenues [their meager crops] because of the fierce anger of the LORD.”

**Jer. 12:14 Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.**

“Thus saith the LORD ... Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.” A *double* plucking is mentioned. God would pluck Israel’s enemies out of their own land, and in 536 BC, He would pluck Judah out of the enemy’s land where they would be taken captive. Stated another way, both Israel’s enemies and Judah would be taken captive, but God would ultimately forgive the Israelites and select them out to come forth from captivity back to their own land.

Israel’s evil neighbors—Ammon, Moab, Edom, etc.—were also taken into captivity by King Nebuchadnezzar. When the ten tribes were taken captive earlier, these surrounding nations tried to steal things that were left behind and to occupy the land. But when the later captivity of Judah occurred, these neighbors were also taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. First, the king of Babylon was preoccupied with the siege of Jerusalem, during which these other peoples watched the action from the hills and spied out and betrayed escaping Jews. Some even stayed on the Mount of Olives, gloating and saying, “Aha!” (Ezek. 25:3). But Nebuchadnezzar made these neighbors his next target. The principle is that he who touches Israel touches the apple of God’s eye (Zech. 2:8).

Ammon, Moab, and Edom were formerly mighty kingdoms, but ever since their captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, they have never fully recovered. Jordan is a rather desolate area. In the past, there were flocks of several hundred thousand sheep but not today. Thus those who mocked the Jew reaped a violent end.

**Jer. 12:15 And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.**

Verse 15 has a *double* suggestion. (1) God promised that He would relent after the Israelites suffered for a while in Babylonian captivity and that they could then return to Israel. (2) The primary application is a prophecy of our day, when God will gather the Jews out from all nations back to Israel.

“Every man [will be brought] to his heritage, and every man to his land.” In 536 BC, only those with faith returned (approximately 50,000 Jews), but they did not get liberty regarding the

whole land—just liberty to rebuild the Temple and later the city wall. However, at the end of the age, *all* will return, including those in the grave.

Those Jews who returned to the homeland in 536 BC encountered hardships. Not only did they leave houses in Babylon and foreign wives, but also about three months' travel was required, so they could take only a few possessions, and they had to start from scratch. However, because of their obedience in returning, God helped them when they reached Israel. The same principle operates with us as Christians. When we do hard things in obeying the Lord, there are rewards—sometimes even in the present life, let alone in the future life.

**Jer. 12:16** And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people.

**Jer. 12:17** But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD.

Verses 16 and 17 are rather ironic. If the Israelites displayed the same zeal for Jehovah that they formerly had for false gods, then God would bless them. This tells us that the Israelites *zealously* followed the *false gods*. Their zeal needed to be converted to Jehovah.

Verses 15-17 give a double prophecy regarding (1) 536 BC and (2) AD 69-70. God was saying that after the Babylonian captivity, there would be a return to the homeland, but eventually another destruction would occur “*if they will not obey,*” which was the case. The third time, that is, in Jacob’s trouble, Israel will be delivered. Of this latter trouble, God said, “*Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee*” (Jer. 30:11). However, He will make a *large* end of Israel in the near future, sparing only the Holy Remnant. All of the false element will be purged out. The Holy Remnant will be established and built up.

In verse 17, the word “*nation*” in the Hebrew can mean *nationally* or *individually*. The context determines the meaning, although there is not always sufficient evidence to tell which is meant.

**Jer. 13:1** Thus saith the LORD unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water.

**Jer. 13:2** So I got a girdle according to the word of the LORD, and put it on my loins.

**Jer. 13:3** And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying,

**Jer. 13:4** Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock.

**Jer. 13:5** So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me.

**Jer. 13:6** And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there.

**Jer. 13:7** Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it: and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing.

**Jer. 13:8** Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

**Jer. 13:9** Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.

**Jer. 13:10** This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.

**Jer. 13:11** For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

God told Jeremiah to “go and get”—that is, buy—a brand-new linen girdle, a wide folded band. He was to wear the girdle for a length of time and not wash it. (Normally, a girdle was worn and then washed and dried overnight but not in this case.) In connection with the priesthood, the high priest wore two girdles, a “linen girdle” underneath and an outer “curious girdle” (Exod. 28:4,8; Lev. 16:4).

Jeremiah obtained the plain, off-white girdle and put it on. For his girdle to be outward and visible to the public, he would have worn it over an appropriate plain, off-white robe. Since the girdle was intended as a lesson or symbol, it was prominently displayed for the benefit of the people, who would question certain things as days passed and Jeremiah continued to wear it.

The point is that the prophet wore the girdle for a sufficient length of time for it to start to get dirty. Thus the girdle was fresh to start with, but it became a little soiled. We know that a period of time elapsed because verse 3 states that the “word of the LORD” came unto him “the second time.” Therefore, Jeremiah was to wear this girdle, which was purchased new, and not wash it during the indefinite time period of the wearing.

Not only was Jeremiah to put the girdle around his “loins,” but also linen is a symbol of purity and righteousness. In wearing the girdle, the prophet represented *God* (see verse 11).

Now some questions need to be addressed. When was the girdle purchased? What time period is represented in this pantomime? When did God originally cause Israel and Judah to cleave to Him? God purchased the girdle when “the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah” came out of Egypt, when they were redeemed as *one* people at the time the Law Covenant was given. They were redeemed by the institution of the ransom price of a bekah (half a shekel) for every man 20 years of age and upward (Exod. 38:25,26). Of course Jeremiah was living several hundred years after the purchase of this original clean “girdle.” The girdle represented servitude. For instance, when Jesus removed his outer mantle and girded himself with a towel to use in washing the disciples’ feet, the girdle was a symbol of servitude (John 13:4,5). Thus Israel is called God’s “servant.”

Verse 11 tells that the “girdle” was close to God: “For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to *cleave unto me* the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.” For example, the Israelites in the wilderness were fed by manna from heaven. Because they depended on God for daily sustenance, they had to cling to Him as a baby clings to his mother. But as time went on, that condition began to change from obedient, righteous, proper, good servitude to Jehovah to a condition that was tainted.

When the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the second time, he was instructed to take the girdle and go to the Euphrates River, which was a distance away in the northernmost point of

Israel. There he was to hide the girdle in a cleft of the rock (verses 3 and 4). But why was the Euphrates singled out? It was the boundary line between Babylon and Israel, but of course with the ten-tribe kingdom having gone into captivity in the days of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser, another people now occupied northern Israel. Jeremiah traveled north to the Euphrates River unmolested and hid the girdle near what is now the northern part of Lebanon, very close to Haran, where Abraham buried Terah, his father. Not only did this long journey take time, but Jeremiah would have informed the public he was going to leave them for a while because God had instructed him to travel to the Euphrates and hide the girdle he had purchased.

Why was Jeremiah told to hide the girdle “in a hole of the rock” on the banks of the Euphrates River? The Euphrates represented Babylon, Chaldea. With the ten tribes already in captivity, Judah was next. In other words, Jeremiah was told to take the girdle to the Euphrates because the remnant of Judah would be taken to Babylon. In captivity, they were sent to different parts of the empire, where they were buried in a sense and made subject to the Babylonian Empire.

After Jeremiah returned to Judah and remained there for “many days,” resuming his regular ministry, God spoke to him again: “Arise, return to the Euphrates, and retrieve the girdle” (verse 6 paraphrase). The prophet would have explained publicly the reason for his return trip: “God instructed me to go back and get the girdle that I hid in the cleft of a rock.”

“Then I [Jeremiah] went to Euphrates [a second time], and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it: and, behold, the girdle was marred [ruined], it was profitable for nothing” (verse 7). Jeremiah brought the girdle back to Judah, but it was now useless.

“Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ... After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem” (verses 8 and 9). God had said of Israel, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). But instead of Judah’s faithfully following on to serve God in obedience, being called His special people, their having the truth and God’s protection and dealings led to the development of pride. In a secondary sense, then, the girdle represents the “pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.” Not only was Jerusalem unique, but also the Temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

“This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing” (verse 10). The significance of the girdle and the lessons were to be told to the people. Jeremiah probably held up the girdle as he said in effect, “I purchased this girdle brand-new, and now look at it. The girdle is useless.” There were two lessons, one along natural lines and the other along spiritual lines. What happened to the girdle was in harmony with what Jeremiah had been saying all along; namely, Jerusalem was to be destroyed, most of the people would be slain, and a small remnant would be taken captive to Babylon. The girdle started with the Lord’s blessing but then got soiled and was hidden, or buried, in Babylon, where the Israelites lost their national identity and pride.

Babylon is the first universal empire to be mentioned in Scripture. In addition to Jews, others (Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, etc.) were in Babylonian captivity. Thus those of Judah were such a small portion of the captives that they were described as being “buried” there. Later this mix of captive people was scattered into other nations so that it became the Diaspora of Europe, hence the expression “the lost ten tribes of Israel.” In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Jesus described their pitiful condition as being “in hell” (Luke 16:23,24).

In ancient times, Gentiles who visited Israel probably noticed that the Jews were “stiffnecked,” that is, proud as they showed off Jerusalem to foreigners (Exod. 32:9; Deut. 9:6,13). But spiritually speaking, the Israelites were sick, for they worshipped other gods. The point is that

along *natural* lines, their pride suffered great humiliation and ridicule in captivity.

Along *spiritual* lines, Christendom is the antitype, the professed people of God in the Gospel Age, and there was a spiritual captivity of true Christians. Release from that captivity began with Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, and the French Revolution broke open the doors. Thus natural Israel was in bondage in natural Babylon, and true spiritual Israel was in bondage in spiritual (mystic) Babylon.

It is interesting that Jeremiah hid the girdle in a cleft of the rock. Like the burning bush, the miracle of natural Israel is that the Jews never became assimilated, even though they were separated from the homeland and in a sorry condition. The survivors not only of the original captivity but also throughout the captivity—those who formerly prospered and were happy and multiplied—were in a demeaned state; they were in a pitiful condition. However, although they had to scrounge for survival, they were preserved as a people and did not lose their identity. Even in their state of humiliation, they were in a cleft of the rock.

And true Christians survived, even though they had only fragments of their former teachings. For instance, they had little food, spiritually speaking, and for survival, they had to purchase barley instead of wheat (Rev. 6:6). In other words, despite a famine for the Word of God, true Christians survived on “the oil and the wine” while they were hidden in the rock.

Jeremiah forewarned his people of the coming destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. He foretold the results and how great their shame would be, but they did not believe him. Jeremiah was very unpopular. God wanted the Israelites to “be unto [Him] ... for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.”

There is another reason why Jeremiah was told not to put the coarse linen girdle in water. Had he done so, the cloth would have adhered more closely, contouring more to his body, and become softer. Instead the girdle was not as good a fit as it should have been. The unprepared girdle portrayed the *pride* that prevented the Israelites from being close to the Lord and faithful. They did not heed His instructions; they were stiff-necked and proud instead of being supple, pliable, and amenable to His commandments. The stiff girdle, untreated with water, looked peculiar. Thus the cloth represented the people (all 12 tribes but especially Judah).

The damaged girdle pictured the humiliation of the Israelites. After Judah’s 70 years of captivity and Israel’s 200-plus years, the majority stayed in Babylon—they were “marred,” ruined. Only a small remnant returned; that is, only a small remnant escaped damage. Later Jeremiah would speak about these two classes. He would tell (1) about the downfall of those who stayed in Babylon and (2) how those who sacrificed a lot to return to Israel were developed. Those who returned were the cream of the crop.

We speak of “Solomonic pride.” Israel reached the zenith of its glory under Solomon, but it became an empty glory as time went on. What started as pristine and proper got inflated to a “whited sepulchre” condition; that is, the beautiful “white” exterior hid an interior of “dead men’s bones” (Matt. 23:27). In regard to Jeremiah 13, this primary lesson of verses 1-11 sets a backdrop for a powerful lesson about the character of God Himself.

**Jer. 13:12** Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word; Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine: and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine?

**Jer. 13:13** Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David’s throne, and the priests, and the

prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness.

**Jer. 13:14** And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.

Verses 12-14 pertain to the filling of bottles, or clay pots, with wine. (Some translations have “wineskins.”) God gave Jeremiah the words to speak to the people of Judah. Accordingly, he said, “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel. Every bottle shall be filled with wine.” God also told Jeremiah what the people would say to him: “Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine?” In other words, “What is new about that statement?” The people would respond this way because all the false prophets had been prophesying peace, prosperity, and good times ahead, whereas Jeremiah was a loner as the prophet of gloom and warnings. The false prophets were saying the opposite: “The vessels that were taken away a few years back will be returned. Nebuchadnezzar will not be successful in his campaign to conquer and destroy.” Of course they were thinking that Egypt would help Judah and be a dependable bulwark against Babylon.

Next Jeremiah was to say, “Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David’s throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness.” Unlike what the false prophets were saying, prosperity was not indicated but *drunkenness*. The false doctrines flattered the people and their wrong conduct, whereas Jeremiah prophesied that bad things would happen not only to the nation but also to the individuals involved in corruption of any kind.

The “bottles,” that is, the bottle-shaped clay pots, were all shapes and sizes to represent the people from kings on down to the common man. Jeremiah filled the bottles with wine and then said that the wine would inebriate the people from top to bottom, including the king and the priests. The priests were incensed, for to become filled “with drunkenness” meant they would not be able to soberly appraise the coming judgment.

Jeremiah continued to prophesy what God would do. “I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.” Then Jeremiah would have smashed the bottles, and the spilled wine looked like blood. This action showed that God would have no mercy and that Judah would be defeated. God would not spare the people from destruction. Probably a few bottles were spared to represent the king and certain nobles who were taken captive. Since the others were killed, their bottles were destroyed. At any rate, *all* were drunk.

The word “dash” in verse 14 reminds us of the smiting of the image (Dan. 2:34,35). One of the promises to the Church is, “He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Rev. 2:26,27). There is somewhat of a similitude here in that the corruption of society in Judah is analogous to what is happening today in Christendom (in Europe, the United States, and other supposed Christian nations). The evil practices are more or less winked at as long as they do not interfere with the prosperity. Therefore, Jeremiah stood out like a sore thumb. How different the spirit of the world is from the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit! They are contrary, the one to the other. In this battle, very few are on the side the Lord approves. Some of the unconsecrated decay conditions, but usually they are not given much credence.

The pronoun “I” in verse 14 indicates that in the coming conflict, *God* will dash individuals “one against another, even the fathers and the sons.” This conflict in the type took place during the siege of Jerusalem in 606 BC. In the fight for food and survival, family ties of endearment were

broken—mother against daughter, father against son, etc. The bodies of those who died of famine were not even buried. In extreme times of trouble with stark hunger, the veneer of the niceties of life and proper behavior wears off. The desire for food and survival becomes preeminent.

The people of Judah knew what Jeremiah was insinuating because he repeated the same theme again and again. They faulted him for always speaking about the coming trouble. Jeremiah's strong personality and emotionalism made a deep impression as far as what he was saying, but the people did not react properly.

“I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but [will] destroy them.” In addition to fathers and sons, the pronoun “them” in verse 14 referred to “the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” The term “the kings that sit upon David's throne” is significant, for the people, knowing of the “sure mercies of David”—that of the seed of David there would not be wanting a man to sit on the throne—felt that the lineage would continue with someone always occupying that seat (Isa. 55:3). There was a *false confidence* with regard to David's throne (the kingship), the priesthood, the Holy City of Jerusalem, and the Temple. That confidence was so inbred that the people drew wrong lessons. Their wrong conclusions were based in part on misconceptions of what God had said, but had they paid sufficient attention, they were informed of exceptions.

When a truly wise person speaks, he chooses his words carefully because he knows they are for posterity. There is no idle conversation, nothing shallow, empty, or ephemeral. Of course God chooses His adjectives *very carefully* and speaks with *utter accuracy*. Hence we should try to become familiar with the little details and nuances so that when we come to difficult situations, we will be better prepared to know what is being said. The study of Scripture is a *lifelong* enterprise. The truth is bigger than we are and bigger than our movement. We are *in the way* of truth. To say that we *have* the truth is too large a statement for anyone but Jesus to make.

**Q:** What kind of spirit does “drunkenness” indicate in this context?

**A:** People are disappointed when their false expectations do not materialize. When they realize that all their hopes are wrong, what will they do? The professed people of God had held wrong expectations and false doctrines for such a long time that He was saying, “I will not forgive you. When you come to your senses in the coming time of trouble, you will have to pay the penalty.” Those in Judah were passing the point of no return, for *habitual* misconduct breeds a character that is difficult to change. With regard to the antitype, in nominal Christendom's confusion (called “drunkenness”) in the coming circumstances, the people will receive a rude shock. At that time, their prophets will be bewildered. Their “wine” of “drunkenness” will be confusion. Because of years of self-indulgence with the pleasures of life, of not giving heed to God's warnings, and of having a worldly spirit, they will not know what to do in the time of decision making (see Isa. 28:1-4,7,8).

**Comment:** Psalm 107:27 reads as follows with the marginal alternate translation: “They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man; and all their wisdom is swallowed up.”

When we compare the three contemporary major prophets, Jeremiah was emotional and God-fearing rather than mathematical in his thinking, whereas Ezekiel was mathematical and orderly. Daniel was a leader and an administrator whose ministry was more far-reaching in some respects.

**Jer. 13:15** Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken.



Pride and arrogance were the sins of the people. The Jews thought the threat of the enemy (the king of Babylon) would vanish, and the false prophets spoke peace. But Jeremiah said real trouble was coming. He was distraught with the lack of perception of the impending judgment.

**Jer. 13:16 Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.**

Jeremiah was saying, “Give glory and honor to the LORD before He causes darkness, dismay, stumbling, and confusion. Heed His counsel, and change your ways lest while you look for light, He will make it gross darkness.” The time setting was now about 11 years before the destruction of 606 BC, and instead of light coming, the conditions got darker and darker. If God removes the light from any of us, the darkness of the world will ensue.

What is the thought of “before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains”? In those days, which was a natural way of life compared to our present-day artificial society, mountains shaded the light as twilight neared. Not being able to see as clearly, the people stumbled. David wrote, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills [or mountains], from whence cometh my help” (Psa. 121:1). From that standpoint, “mountains” were symbols of protection, security, or refuge in times of trouble. But spiritually speaking, if God’s favor is withdrawn, a “mountain” has the opposite effect. Instead of being a mountain of security and strength, it becomes a mountain of darkness and shadow. The people of Judah would look for light when they were in trouble, but it would be too late, for God would “turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.” The very thing that was supposed to be security became insecurity.

**Jer. 13:17 But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD’S flock is carried away captive.**

Jeremiah was speaking. A true patriot for the Jew, he was concerned for the people, not just for himself. We are reminded of Moses, who said, “Destroy me, not the people.” Both Moses and Jeremiah had a laudable spirit. Thus Jeremiah was weeping “in secret places” for the people’s pride, and his eyes were running “down with tears, because the LORD’S flock is carried away captive.” The prophet regarded Israel as the sheep of God’s pasture, and having the true spirit of a shepherd, he was concerned for the sheep. Incidentally, as we look at the Old Testament and see God’s patience in dealing with His people, it should make us think of Him as a Father.

Thus Jeremiah wept about the coming judgment. He knew that the long captivity of the ten tribes prefigured what would happen to Judah, for Judah had developed the same iniquitous habits. Again we see that Jeremiah was a *strong* character, yet he had feelings and emotions with love and sympathy for the people. Although he laid down his life for the nation and even wept for them, they did not appreciate him.

**Jer. 13:18 Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory.**

At different times, of which this was one, Jeremiah was told to speak personally to the king. The king and the queen mother (see the NIV) were Jehoiachin, who reigned about three months, and his mother, respectively. Hence we know that Jeremiah did and said these things about 617 BC. He said to both in effect, “Get off the throne, sit down on the ground in humility, and bow your heads in grief for what is happening.” If they did not humble themselves, their crowns would fall.

What happened to Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) and the queen mother? They were taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. In other words, they were humbled. However, 37 years later Jehoiachin was taken from prison and invited to eat at the king's table.

**Jer. 13:19** The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them: Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive.

“The cities of the south [the Negev] shall be shut up, and none shall open them.” Jerusalem was on the northern border of Judah, so the capital city was shared with, or was between the “shoulders” of, Benjamin and Judah (Deut. 33:12). Since Nebuchadnezzar was coming down from the north and the prize he wanted to capture was Jerusalem, those in the cities of southern Judah, in the Negev, including Beer-sheba, felt they were safe. However, Judah was to be *wholly* taken into exile, and these “cities of the south ... [were] shut up,” that is, put under siege so that no one could escape.

When only a few were taken captive in 617 BC (the king and a few nobles), the people thought that Jeremiah's prophecy had failed. But the prophecy was fulfilled 11 years later, and this earlier partial captivity was only a picture of the still future trouble.

The statement “it [Judah] shall be wholly carried away captive” could be misunderstood, for only a remnant was taken to Babylon. The thought is that, except for the remnant, all were taken captive and *slain*. They died by sword, famine, or pestilence.

Jeremiah tried to reason with the people of Judah, telling them what information God had given him and what they should do, but they thought he was a prophet of doom. They considered him to be only one voice versus the hundred or more false prophets. The same is true of the Gospel Age, for people are subconsciously influenced by numbers—big churches, big choirs, big attendance. A person has to *think* about where he is and what he is doing and how propitious it is for him to obey the *Emperor of the universe*.

Many captives, including Zedekiah and his sons, were taken up to the northern part of the ten-tribe kingdom, to Riblah on the border of northern Israel, and killed (see 2 Kings 25:5-7; Jer. 39:5-7; 52:8-11). Only a handful of those captives were taken to Babylon.

Jeremiah was given history in advance. The Bible contains much history that is not in the textbooks.

**Jer. 13:20** Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north: where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?

Those who would “come from the north” were King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. “Where is the flock [of prosperity] that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?” As a pastoral nation of milk and honey, Israel had great wealth, especially during Solomon's reign, but through disobedience and iniquity, the nation was denuded in various ways. Here Jeremiah asked, “Where is all the great wealth and prosperity you once had? Why did it disappear?” After Solomon's day, the nation began to decline. Jeremiah was making sure that the people saw the crumbling aspect.

**Jer. 13:21** What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? for thou hast taught them to be captains, and as chief over thee: shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail?

Judah helped other nations previously, but those nations turned against her. The NIV reads, “What will you say when the LORD sets over you those you cultivated as your special allies?”

Will not pain [sorrows, travail] grip you like that of a woman in labor?"

What about these "special allies"? Judah changed allegiance. Jehoahaz was a minor king who reigned for three months and then was taken captive to Egypt, the predominant power. Two kings later, Jehoiachin also reigned for three months, but he was taken captive to Babylon, the superior power by then. When Judah saw the power of Babylon increasing, they thought it expedient to change allies, for they wanted to be on the winning side. Judah tried to make friends of Babylon but to no avail. Like the scorpion whose tail has a powerful sting, Babylon would sting Judah.

**Jer. 13:22** And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare.

The clause "For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered" is based on a custom that was practiced on rare occasions. While the King James is an excellent translation, the translators had a certain reserve in trying to use delicate language to explain passages that would be considered of a vulgar nature. Thus the force of some Scriptures is somewhat lost or vitiated. However, in some places where the Lord used strong language, the translators could not handle the text in a delicate way. For example, the expression "him that pisseth against the wall" means the males (1 Sam. 25:22; 1 Kings 14:10; etc.).

With regard to the clause under discussion, women of former times and certain cultures or religions veiled their faces, but here Jeremiah was referring to the whole cloak arrangement. In the Hebrew, skirts being "discovered" means they were thrown "on the face." In other words, the policy when harlots were discovered was to throw their garments over their head; they were undressed so that they were exposed and naked. Therefore, Jeremiah was saying that the iniquity of Judah would be discovered. The "heels," or feet, were also made bare when the skirt was thrown up. The combined thought, then, meant that from top to bottom, from head to foot, Judah's iniquity would be revealed. Theoretically, the mask, or covering, was removed so that the individual would be seen as she really was. Such was the punishment that was meted out in ancient times. Under the Law, a harlot was put to death and then burned.

**Comment:** In Ezekiel 16:35-37, God spoke of Israel as follows: "Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD: Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers ... round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness."

In hearing Jeremiah speak, the public knew that the nation was the subject of the lesson. The condition of the people would be revealed. Individuals were *radically* turned either on or off to the prophet's message and such a condemnation.

**Jer. 13:23** Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

The answer to the rhetorical question was no. The die was cast; the leopard could not change its spots, and the Ethiopian could not change his skin. The time was coming when Israel's true disobedient and iniquitous condition would be exposed. All the trouble would come because they had forgotten God and trusted in false gods.

Similarly, Jesus spoke of an impossibility: "Which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?" (Luke 12:25). Perhaps an inch or so can be added but not 18 inches.

The *Expanded Biblical Comments* say, “The differences between the races of men have long been arguments against the solidarity of the human family. God can change the Ethiopian’s skin in his own due time” (R3320:5). Of course the Lord could do this, but we do not see anything undesirable in the Kingdom about a different-colored skin when it is seen in the proper condition of health, happiness, and uprightness. There is simply variety in the human race.

Jeremiah was saying that the people could not change because they were getting inveterately disobedient. They had been in that condition for such a long period of time that disobedience was habitual. The people were almost to the point of no return, at least in the current society of the prophet’s day. What the unconsecrated sow in the present life does have an effect on their character when they come forth from the tomb. Yes, they will have an opportunity for life, but it is possible to seal, or almost seal, their future destiny now. However, no one can go into Second Death without first knowing Christ and that he tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). Nevertheless, those who never knew Christ in the present life can still develop an incorrigible character so that they will not be able to change in the Kingdom Age.

In summary, then, those of Judah were so accustomed to doing evil that it was not in them to do good. Therefore, God said, through Jeremiah, what He intended to do (verses 24-26).

**Jer. 13:24** Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness.

“Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away [not just] by the wind [but by the wind] of the *wilderness*.” The wind of a desert is fiercer than the winds we are accustomed to here in America, where there are certain impediments in the topography of the land: trees, hills, mountains, etc. In a desert, the dunes are streamlined, even if they are fairly high, so the wind blows with force. Hence God would scatter Judah hither and yon as a thistle blows in the desert. Jeremiah used familiar terminology, so the people knew what he was talking about.

**Jer. 13:25** This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood.

The people of Judah had forgotten the Lord, but He reminded them. They received the false prophets as telling the truth and viewed Jeremiah as giving falsehoods. Because of their evil characters, the people could not discern the good from the evil.

**Jer. 13:26** Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear.

Jeremiah kept repeating the moral debasement of Judah—how far she had fallen from her former situation in the beginning. These verses have a double application for natural and spiritual Israel. Mystic Babylon is becoming ripe for judgment and full exposure. The *face*, the system’s bad *character*, will be made manifest. The *feet*, mystic Babylon’s bad *deeds and exploits*, will be made known. “I [God] myself will lift up your skirts over your face” (RSV). The harlot will be exposed (Rev. 17:1-5).

**Jer. 13:27** I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?

Judah worshipped false gods and statues and had brothels “on the hills in the fields.” Since Jeremiah started his ministry during King Josiah’s reign, he saw how many idols had to be destroyed. After Josiah died, the people returned to the worship of idols. The situation was

becoming hopeless—to all practical purposes, the people were beyond redemption!

“Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?” Jeremiah talked tough language to wake up the people, who had become crude and base, and here he was looking for just a little evidence that some were changing. In asking, “Isn’t *anyone* paying attention?” he was expostulating and looking for a straw of hope. Using his hands, his mouth, and his body, he exhorted the people. His ministry was very frustrating because the results were so meager. Later he even gave up momentarily. But then the word of the Lord stirred him up and revived him to start all over again.

Certainly a people steeped in evil were not interested in studying God’s Word. They feared that knowledge would bring responsibility, but being willingly ignorant also brings responsibility. Not wanting to hear Jeremiah anymore would not excuse them.

If we lose our joy and enthusiasm for divine truths and they begin to get foggy, that is a very bad sign spiritually. Lamentations 4:1 gives a spiritual lesson about divine truth: “How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!”

**Jer. 14:1 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth.**

Jeremiah predicted a literal drought and famine on the land as a sign of God’s disfavor because of Israel’s disobedience (Deut. 28:24). As subsequent verses show, the drought would be severe with no water for the children and the animals.

**Jer. 14:2 Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.**

Since chapter 13 had a time setting of 617 BC, this famine occurred about a decade before 606 BC, sometime during the reign of King Zedekiah. This information is not found in history.

“The gates thereof languish.” Gates are a sign of activity and commerce. In the famine, all was brought to a standstill. The people dragged around like old men; they were “black” in mourning, famine, and death.

**Jer. 14:3 And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.**

The nobles “sent their little ones [their servants] ... to the pits [cisterns—RSV], and found no water.” What a sorrowful condition!

**Jer. 14:4 Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.**

The ground and the animals were also affected by the drought. “Chapt” means that the dry ground was hard. Depending on the nature of the soil, the ground became dust. When wind blew the dust away, the crust of the earth that remained was hard like clay baked in the kiln. Evil was producing more and more evil.

**Jer. 14:5 Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass.**

Deer are usually tender to their young, but in the famine, the does forsook them.

**Jer. 14:6** And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass.

The wild asses breathed heavily, *panting* in the famine. From dehydration, the moisture in their eyes dried up, and there was no grass to replenish the fluid. Some animals breathe and perspire through their mouth.

**Jer. 14:7** O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

Jeremiah confessed the iniquity of Israel just as Daniel did at a later date. (Daniel's confession was based on Jeremiah's earlier prophecy.) Both Daniel and Jeremiah were sympathetic and confessed the people's sins as if they were their own. Very few others would have shared Jeremiah's sentiments at this time.

Jeremiah was the people's advocate in the true sense of the word. Today a defense lawyer tries to exonerate the criminal, giving excuses, but Jeremiah was a true lawyer. By identifying himself with the iniquity of the people, he suffered with and for them and did not try to say they were innocent. However, like other prophets, he pleaded for the mercy of the court.

**Jer. 14:8** O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?

**Jer. 14:9** Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

Jeremiah's character is revealed by his emotional statements on behalf of Israel. He addressed God as "the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble." Then he asked, "Why should you be as a stranger and as a mighty man that cannot save? O LORD, you are in our midst, and we are called by your name; leave us not." This was a correct petition, for even in the Lord's Prayer, the words are, "Abandon us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13—see *Diaglott*). Jesus, the perfect one who never sinned, identified himself throughout the whole prayer by beginning, "Our Father who art in heaven." Jesus is our Advocate in the best sense of the word.

"Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied [astonished]?" It is interesting that some heathen religions like Buddhism have stone gods. The monks in Tibet, for example, pray before idols, which show no emotion or interest and are as stone. Jeremiah, who was making no headway with the people, pleaded, "Have mercy on us, O LORD. Deliver us from this pitiful condition."

**Jer. 14:10** Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.

**Jer. 14:11** Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.

Verse 11 confirms that Jeremiah was praying for the people, but God said, "Do not pray for them. The trouble is needed as punishment and to give the people a lesson." It was too late for such a prayer because the people had gone too far.

"Pray not for this people for their good." Bro. Magnuson said about Sodom and Gomorrah, "In His mercy, God took them away for their good," that is, before the people became utterly incorrigible. Had they remained in that condition for a generation, there would be no hope for

them in the Kingdom. Then Bro. Magnuson raised his hand and said with regard to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, “We should be able to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.’” He next quoted Revelation 4:8, “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” In other words, there was goodness in the destruction. And that is what God was telling Jeremiah: “It is better that I do not answer your prayer and that I cut the sinful condition short now, before it goes so far that no one will be saved.”

**Comment:** Verse 11 is a reminder of 1 John 5:16, “There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he [the Christian] shall pray for it.” Verse 10 gives the reason why: “Thus have they loved to wander ... [and] have not refrained their feet [from willful sin].” The point of no return comes not when one is sinning and struggling against it but when the sin has become such a part of the individual that he loves to sin.

**Reply:** Yes, Amos 8:5,6 speaks of that condition with the Second Death class at the end of the Kingdom Age. Their thinking will be, “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the [antitypical] sabbath [be over], that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?” Some people in the Kingdom Age will prudently obey but will want to go back to their old methods. They will be exposed in the Little Season when Satan is loosed and works his deceits.

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

God turned a deaf ear in regard to speedily ending the famine. A prayer of contrition would be acceptable but not a prayer of expediency.

Of course the people would pray when they saw the enemy coming down in 606 BC, but the prayers would not be answered. Nor would their offerings in the Temple bring any comfort. God said He would “consume them by the sword [violence], and by the famine, and by the pestilence [disease]”—three means of death. In regard to the famine, nature would be against them; the produce of the land, the milk from the cows, etc., would be adversely affected.

The Prophet Ezekiel demonstrated and prophesied the same thing in regard to 606 BC. He shaved his head and divided the hairs, representing the individuals of Judah, into three equal piles, saying that the people would die by the sword, famine, and pestilence (Ezek. 5:1-12). However, he took a few hairs to show that a remnant would be spared and go into captivity.

**Jer. 14:13** Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.

**Jer. 14:14** Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

**Jer. 14:15** Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.

**Jer. 14:16** And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem

**because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.**

There was a break in time here during which Jeremiah spoke emotionally because he was troubled (verse 13). Purporting to be speaking in the name of the Lord, the false prophets differed with Jeremiah, using God's name and authority for their message. In honesty, he brought the matter to God in prayer to be assured that he understood the matter correctly because their message was exactly the opposite of his.

In verse 14, God reassured Jeremiah, stating explicitly that such words were never given to the false prophets and that they were not prophesying in His name. Their message was deceit and imagination. To keep up his spirits and courage, Jeremiah needed this affirmation. "The [other] prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy ... a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart." Jeremiah is the very prophet who said on behalf of God, "The [natural] heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). In other words, if one is deceived, the natural heart makes him think he is right. God *did not directly say* to the other prophets, "Thus saith the LORD." *Honesty is needed in examining ourselves, for the natural heart imagines things and even dramatizes them. And this is exactly what happened to the false prophets, as we will find out.*

Verse 15 starts with the clause "Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets [plural] that [claim to] prophesy in my name." God continued to speak: "[Because] I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed." Jeremiah now knew not only that God was speaking through him but also that the false prophets themselves were going to die, as well as their wives, sons, and daughters. This knowledge strengthened him so that he could speak even more authoritatively. (Later, based on this backing, he was justified in pronouncing a curse on one of his opposers.) The very violence and famine that the false prophets denied would occur would be their personal experience. Moreover, in verse 16, God said, "They shall have none to bury them, ... for I will pour their wickedness upon them." Their carcasses would be left on the ground for animals, vultures, and bacteria to devour, so that even the memory of them and their posterity would perish. Thus God strengthened Jeremiah to withstand the onslaught of the false prophets as a loner against these opposers.

Notice that Jeremiah did not discredit the other prophets until God reaffirmed that what he had been told to say was still correct. Jeremiah's attitude showed humility. If this scenario has an antitype at the end of the age, the time will come when Christians need to be reassured about the prophesied destruction of nominal spiritual Israel. The expression "false vision and divination"—that is, a *lying vision*—sounds like the end of the age.

Because the false prophets contradicted Jeremiah, God said they would suffer, as retribution, the very things they denied—sword, famine, and pestilence. The famine would be so severe that however one died, the body would lie unburied in the street. A severe famine affects one's thinking and personality.

"And the people to whom they [the false prophets] prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword." In addition to the false prophets, those who *listened and looked to them* for leadership would suffer. In other words, an accountability was required of those who endorsed the false prophets. *All* would suffer the same fate of dying by sword, famine, or pestilence. Only the righteous element, a *small* minority, was spared.

There is a principle underlying the retribution that came on the false prophets for *differing* with



Jeremiah; namely, if we *differ doctrinally* with someone on an important subject, we should make sure that we really know what we are saying. We should be slow to speak and take a little time to learn so that we can speak with a “thus saith the LORD.” A possible danger for those who are more prominently recognized is that if they respond too quickly, they may be held accountable in the future and thus lose their crown.

Both Jeremiah and the false prophets professed to know the Lord, but each said something different. So serious was the penalty for falsely speaking that the false prophets and their families were destroyed without even so much as a burial place. Since the Gospel Age calling is higher than the Jewish Age calling, there is more to lose in the present age.

**Jer. 14:17 Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.**

Jeremiah was instructed to say, “Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease.” According to this rendering in the King James, he was to commiserate with the people in regard to the coming trouble. Jeremiah would have mimicked the crying, for he could not literally cry night and day. He was prefiguring others who would act this way when the trouble came. The survivors, a minority, would cry and see the dead everywhere; they would cry in sincerity and sorrow, realizing the sinful condition of the nation.

The point is that *God’s* emotions were not involved here. We know this because He said both earlier and later, in context, that He would not listen to the people’s prayers. Jehovah was angry, and if He was wrathful, how could His eyes be full of tears? It would be incongruous to ascribe such emotions to Almighty God.

There is a pronoun change in the Sinaitic manuscript: “Therefore thou [Jeremiah] shalt say this word unto them [the inhabitants of Judah]; Let *your* eyes run down with tears night and day.” In this alternative rendering, God was saying to the inhabitants, “Your attitude should be one of sorrow for what is yet to come upon you.” We believe this rendering is on the right track.

“The virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.” The expression “daughter of my people” was used frequently by Jeremiah with regard to the people of Judah, the city of Jerusalem, and the nation of Israel. But why did he add the word “virgin” here? Jeremiah had a comprehensive understanding of the history of Israel. God had mentioned that when the Israelites were taken out of Egypt, He thought of the younger generation (the ones who actually entered the Promised Land) as an innocent babe. He was thinking of the nation rather than of specific individuals. God had called a holy nation to be priests and kings (Exod. 19:6). Of course the Israelites forfeited the spiritual priesthood, the chief prize, but in the Kingdom, they will be restored and blessed materially in a special sense.

Originally God called a people who were amenable to instruction. For example, for seven days, the nation marched around Jericho and did not say a word until Joshua gave the signal. Those who entered the Promised Land were a very promising people. However, that trait was short-lived, for the 450-year Period of the Judges, with ups and downs, followed the death of Joshua. Because Jeremiah understood this history of the Israelites, he now used the term “the virgin daughter of my people.” In other words, the nation of Israel, which was born as a baby and grew to a beautiful maiden, was subsequently seduced.

In the antitype, the purity of the early Church was soon lost sight of. Revelation 12:1 speaks of the early Church as “a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” But this virgin woman was subsequently impregnated with

the incipient error of the man of sin. As Paul's ministry was closing, this impregnation was beginning to take place. He said, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thess. 2:7). Later the Apostle John wrote, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists" (1 John 2:18). Thus there is a counterpart in the history of the Christian Church for what happened to the nation of Israel.

**Comment:** First with the Jews and then with the gospel Church, the overwhelming majority fell into the same trap. The Adversary must have gloated because each time God tried to do something pure and holy, it was spoiled almost entirely.

**Reply:** Yes, Satan would have viewed his efforts in these areas as a success story.

**Q:** How was "the virgin daughter ... broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow"?

**A:** Jeremiah viewed the people of Judah as going beyond the point of no return. David asked God to guard him against presumptuous sins (Psa. 19:13). Antitypically, such sins are unto Second Death. In the Old Testament, they would be sins of incorrigibility, which would lead to Second Death but not until the Kingdom Age, for an incorrigible character developed in the Kingdom Age—though it be given seven opportunities—would be a failure.

From another standpoint, the term "virgin daughter of my people" can refer to a better class within Israel. As an illustration, many take the name "Christian," but not all who do are bona fide. And even of the virgin class, not all are of the Little Flock, for the Great Company is included. Both love the Lord but in differing degrees.

In the antitype, nominal Christendom is a mixed group. The ones who "escape" are basically a higher class, a virgin daughter class. The Ancient Worthies, a very elect class prior to the Gospel Age, are comparable to the Little Flock. In Old Testament times, there was also a "Great Company" class.

The Holy Spirit, the power of God, can do marvelous things with those who, by birth, are naturally mean, ignoble, and uneducated. The resulting character is far more meritorious than an individual who is born with a glib tongue and nobility and is reared with polished manners and all kinds of benefits.

**Comment:** When John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, was at the height of his popularity following his conversion, a duke went to hear him speak. Another aristocrat asked the duke, "Why would you go and listen to this reprobate peasant, who is a nobody?" The duke, who was so impressed with John Bunyan, said he would give all that he had if he could speak like that man.

**Jer. 14:18** If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.

Jeremiah believed in this prophecy so wholeheartedly that it was as though he envisioned the situation when these things would happen. Likewise, with the wonderful blessing of present truth, we can see what God intends to do in the future. We can speak with certainty that there will be a Kingdom because we believe God entirely and His Word. We speak about things in the future as though they are a reality.

The "field" was outside the city of Jerusalem. Whether one was outside or inside the city in 606 BC, the fate was the same. Similarly in the great Time of Trouble yet future, none will get peace

and safety whether they flee for refuge to the country, the city, or the suburbs.

“Yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.” The RSV has, “For both prophet and priest ply their trade through the land, and have no knowledge.” In other words, the blindness of the false prophets and the priests, both in and out of the city, adversely affected their ministries. They were blind to the truth, the reality, that Jerusalem, which affected the prophets, and the Temple, which affected the priests, were to be destroyed.

**Jer. 14:19 Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!**

**Jer. 14:20 We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.**

**Jer. 14:21 Do not abhor us, for thy name’s sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.**

Jeremiah prophesied that the survivors would confess their sins and ask for forgiveness—but *too late*. Nevertheless, he was telling the survivors how to express their grief when the time came. They were to have a spirit of mourning. Notice that he used the pronoun “we.” In empathizing with Judah, he spoke like Moses, Daniel, and other prophets. And Jesus said in the Lord’s Prayer, “Forgive *us* our trespasses.”

Because of the gross condition that the nation had fallen into, Jeremiah could not understand the permission of evil. Like today, corruption had entered politics, religion, and society. It is marvelous how God dealt individually with the Ancient Worthies, who were guided by the Holy Spirit of that age but did not understand the permission of evil. None of the Old Testament prophets understood because the Holy Spirit of sonship of the Gospel Age had not been given. Here was a class that, like us as Christians in the present age, was not forced to consecrate. We were drawn by God to submit our wills to Christ, to give our all. Because we have great understanding, particularly of the New Testament, which spells out very distinctly what we are and are not to do as individuals, we incur more responsibility, but if faithful, we will have a much greater reward—the divine nature.

The Ancient Worthies loved God from the little they knew, relatively speaking, based upon His dealings of the past. There is no statement that they made a formal consecration with public baptism. They were just naturally led with relatively little light, and for that reason, they were dealt with more leniently with regard to their personal lives. Because Christians have greater understanding, they are more accountable for certain things.

We can sympathize with those in the middle period of the Gospel Age when there was a famine for the Word of God. Fewer Christians made their calling and election sure at that time because of the severe trials and the lack of understanding. Therefore, that period was similar to what happened with Jeremiah and other Ancient Worthies, who did not understand why God permits evil. Under those circumstances, Christians who were faithful unto death were very worthy, and a lot of knowledge was not the criterion for judgment. God looks on the heart and the will, not on the outward man, to determine whether one will be of the elect class of either age. Incidentally, Baruch was probably an Ancient Worthy (Jer. 36:8).

“Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and ... healing, and behold trouble!” Jeremiah hoped that God would intervene in some miraculous manner and save Jerusalem and the

Temple. Later in Jeremiah's ministry, God gave him the comforting Kingdom message (Jeremiah 31). Therefore, we assume these verses took place in the early period of Zedekiah's 11-year reign. In the middle and toward the end of that reign, Jeremiah was given the hope that ultimately Israel would be salvaged and not expunged as a people. But here, in humility, Jeremiah included himself as he prayed and pleaded: "We acknowledge, O LORD, *our* wickedness, and the iniquity of *our* fathers: for *we* have sinned against thee."

Like Moses, Jeremiah was trying to be a "father confessor" for the people. After the Israelites had worshipped the golden calf, God said to Moses, "Do not pray for this people. I will make *you* a great nation. I do not need the others." But Moses did not want that separation. He could have had a lot of children as the start of a new nation, but instead he offered his own life for the life of the Israelites. Understanding the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy, Daniel prayed similarly two years before the liberation of Israel from Babylon in 536 BC.

Today the Holy Spirit operates quietly and works subtly, but back there the people knew when Jeremiah was speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit, for he was in a trance. They could see he was artificially talking and describing conditions that were nonexistent at the time, yet the descriptions were so realistic that it was as if they were actually occurring. Jeremiah spoke of the *future* as being *current*. Many of the people would have said, "He has a devil." However, because of Jeremiah's godly life, his testimony, and the accuracy of his statements about the people's behavior being incongruous with the Law of Moses, a few would have said, "He has the Holy Spirit of God." Anyone with an honest heart had to admit that the prophet's words about the people's wickedness, evil, and sin were true.

Jeremiah continued with his prayer: "Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory [Jerusalem and the Temple]." This part of the prayer proves that the destruction was still future, but Jeremiah knew God's intent. He knew that the northern army would come down from Babylon. Thus he was saying, "Can't something be done to stop the destruction?" Even Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "If it is permissible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, thy will be done." This reasoning quality is good to possess. Every one of the Little Flock will get a very crucial test of utter submission to God's will. In studying the life of the prophets of old and the apostles, we find that absolute submission is the ultimate requirement. Although we do our best to fulfill the conditions of our covenant, we make many mistakes.

In some instances, the Ancient Worthies were given a *visual* display of something future, and they actually *heard* a clear and distinct voice in their mind or ear. When God talked to Jeremiah, the prophet *literally heard* reasoning and words. As the prophets listened, they were as stone, giving full concentration to hear every single word. When the instruction ended, they returned to normalcy.

Both the evil spirits (Satan and the fallen angels) and the good spirits (God through the Logos, Gabriel, or another holy angel) gave visions and audible instructions. Therefore, the *content* of a message is meaningful. A message is to be weighed by its merit, or value, and that weighing is difficult to do unless we understand God's Word.

"Remember, break not thy covenant with us." Jeremiah was probably thinking of the Davidic Covenant. The "sure mercies" were preserved because Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) was taken captive to Babylon and many years later removed from prison and elevated to the king's table. The lineage of Messiah came through him.

**Jer. 14:22** Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.

Verse 22 is saying that God is the true God of nature; He is the Creator. Whatever He orders will happen—flawlessly. He made the earth and the environment—air, land, food, animals, and humans. But then Jeremiah added another fact; namely, Jehovah is not only the Creator but also the God of Israel. “Art not thou he, O LORD *our* God?” Many Gentiles believe in God, a Creator, an intelligent being, but they cannot say “our Father” or “our God” unless they come into covenant relationship with Him.

“Therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things [the rain, the heavens, etc.]” As Christians, we have to trust our Creator with regard to things we cannot understand and that are puzzling, particularly in our personal life. In such cases, we must wait on the Lord. One example is the verdict of our destiny—the particularity of our place, where and what it is.

**Jer. 15:1** Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.

God singled out two individuals whom He loved and especially appreciated: Moses and Samuel. Moses changed God’s mind on one occasion when he interceded for Israel. God had said He would destroy Israel and make a great nation of Moses, but Moses reasoned with God and declined the personal offer, even declaring his willingness to be blotted out if the nation could be saved.

**Comment:** A cross-reference for Samuel is as follows: “And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him” (1 Sam. 7:9).

God had a very high regard for Moses and Samuel. In the top 12 Ancient Worthies are Noah, Daniel, Job, John the Baptist, Moses, and Samuel. But even if Moses and Samuel were there, God’s “mind” (or “heart”—RSV and NIV) would not be changed toward Israel. The judgment was coming; it was irrevocable. Most of the nation was to “go forth” to death.

**Jer. 15:2** And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity.

Through Jeremiah, three kinds of destruction were prophesied for the people of Judah: death (pestilence—see RSV), sword, and famine. In addition, a remnant would go into captivity. Verse 2 disproves the thought of some that it was God who cried in the previous chapter, for He was displeased with Judah and thus assigned a severe retributive experience. The wording “such as are for the captivity, to the captivity” indicates a discrimination on the part of those whose lives were spared for captivity.

**Jer. 15:3** And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.

Four kinds of “destroyer” are named: the sword to slay, dogs to tear, and birds and beasts to devour and destroy. However a person died, no one would bury the body. The famine would so weaken those who were still living that they would not be able to provide normal burial. Moreover, dogs, vultures, and wild beasts would feed on and devour the carcasses of those who were slain by the sword, so that no identifiable similitude would remain to put in a tomb. The memory of the people would perish.

**Jer. 15:4 And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem.**

All in Judah would either die (the vast majority) or go into captivity. The small number of survivors would be removed into “all kingdoms of the earth.” The survivors were taken into Babylonian captivity, which covered much territory, and then individually placed in various subject countries.

Ezekiel dramatized the ratio of dead to survivors by shaving his head, eyebrows, beard, etc., and then putting a *little pinch* of hair in a napkin to show the survivors. The rest of the hair was divided into three piles to show death by famine, sword, and pestilence.

An account of Manasseh’s evil deeds is in 2 Kings 21:1-9.

“Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem....

“And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

“For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

“And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name.

“And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

“And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

“And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

“Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.

“But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.”

Judah was being removed because of Manasseh’s sins. Manasseh reversed the good done by his father Hezekiah with such sins as passing his son through the fire to the god Molech, reinstating idol worship, shedding innocent blood, and using witchcraft and enchantments. The altars unto Baal diminished and supplanted the altar to Jehovah by diverting attention to the false god; they distracted from the main altar. In the antitype, the god Molech pictures the doctrine of eternal torment, and since the main altar to Jehovah represented the work of Jesus, the altars to Baal represent Papacy, for the pope is regarded as the vicar of Christ.

Hezekiah was the king of Judah about the time the ten tribes went into captivity. Judah’s passing the point of no return in regard to judgment occurred not too long after the

banishment of the ten tribes. However, the judgment did not actually come for more than 100 years because although Manasseh lived quite a long time and committed unpardonable sins, God delayed the judgment when the king repented. The judgment of 606 BC was irrevocable, yet God said He would not bring the judgment if the people repented. How can this seeming contradiction be explained? The judgment would have to come eventually, but it could be postponed. King Ahab is another example, for when he repented, judgment was delayed.

By having Ezekiel lie on one side for 390 days and on the other side for 40 days, God was telling him in advance that the judgment would come in 606 BC (Ezek. 4:1-6). Ezekiel built a model of the city of Jerusalem and then lay on each side for the specified time. The calculation of the 390 days to pinpoint 606 BC is as follows:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 513 \text{ years in Period of the Kings} \\
 \underline{-120} \text{ years in reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon (40 years each)} \\
 393 \\
 \underline{-3} \text{ years until the kingdom was divided} \\
 390 \text{ years until the judgment would come (a day for a year)}
 \end{array}$$

Note: Both 606 BC and AD 70 are *precedents and principles* for the *delayed judgment* of the great Time of Trouble, which did not happen in 1914. The blood under the altar cried out for vengeance—the blood from Abel to Zacharias—and God knew that the vengeance would be due in AD 70 (Matt. 23:35). Willful sins must be expiated in proportion to the degree of willfulness. They cannot just be forgiven; there must be stripes.

“I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth.” This prophetic statement was more far-reaching than the captivity of the ten tribes by Assyria and the 70-year captivity of Judah by Babylon, for in AD 69-70, there was an even greater dispersion into other lands.

**Jer. 15:5 For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest?**

No one would ask about Jerusalem’s welfare.

**Jer. 15:6 Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting.**

For God to say, “I am weary with repenting,” meant He was weary in giving *opportunities* for repentance, for Judah had forsaken Him and was retrogressing. When Sodom and Gomorrah likewise increased more and more in evil, God took them away for their own good. If left alone, they would have become incorrigible, and the same was true of Israel. Instead of progressing, they went backward and needed judgment to prevent character incorrigibility.

Therefore, instead of being sorrowful for the trouble that would come, God permitted it as a prelude to make the Israelites amenable to repentance at a later time. Those who went into captivity mourned and repented. And for those who died, recalling that traumatic experience when they come forth from the tomb in the Kingdom will have a bearing on bringing them to proper repentance.

**Jer. 15:7 And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways.**

This prophecy, expressed in the future tense, applied to 606 BC. “Fanning” (winnowing—RSV) would select the remnant and get rid of the chaff. God told those who went into captivity to have as many children as possible so there would be a sizable remnant.

God winnowed Judah in the gates of the land. A gate was the entrance or the exit of a city. When a siege was laid, the city gate was closely guarded by those inside. The mortality rate was high at the city gate when a breach occurred. Judgment also took place in the gate—both the verdict and the punishment.

**Jer. 15:8** Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler at noonday: I have caused him to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city.

God was speaking: “Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas.” Because their husbands were killed, most of the Jewish survivors were women, for they were taken to Babylon as booty. Thus, in addition to males, *many* Jewish women were taken into captivity.

“I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler at noonday.” “Noonday” is sometimes used in a figurative sense. For example, “high noon” is the deadline hour of execution. Jesus was crucified—the Cross was raised up—at noon; that was his “high noon” of judgment. Also, it was more miraculous for darkness to come over the land at the height of the light of the day, when the sun was above the meridian. Darkness covered the land for three hours, and it took those three hours for Jesus to die on the Cross, for he expired at 3 p.m. Therefore, “noonday” in verse 8 was a critical juncture of time.

**Jer. 15:9** She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day: she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD.

“She that hath borne seven [males, or sons] languisheth.” The time period having expired, the trouble was due, and all seven children would be killed. “She [the mother] hath given up the ghost”; that is, she gave up all hope. “And the residue of them [her children] will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD.” The woman herself might survive depending on the circumstance but not her children.

Incidentally, the Orthodox Jews in Israel are trying to raise as many children as they can because they are thinking of the future. The more children one has, the greater the likelihood that some of them will survive, thus preserving posterity. Here Jeremiah was saying, “No matter how many children a woman bears, they will all die.”

From another standpoint, the woman can be considered Israel: “She [Israel] that hath borne seven languisheth.” The number seven is a complete unit for good or for evil depending on the circumstance. Here “seven” refers to the period of God’s dealing with Israel. Instead of being developed for good, the people backslid for evil. The same is true of the vine of the earth (Rev. 14:18,19). Instead of producing sweet grapes of character, it has developed grapes of wrath.

In AD 33, at the beginning of the Gospel Age, Israel lost national favor. In AD 36, the gospel call was opened to both Jews and Gentiles. The gospel Church is predominantly Gentile, but more Jews may become interested in the truth at the very end of the age.

**Jer. 15:10** Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me.

Jeremiah was “a man of strife and a man of contention” to the whole nation—or to Judah more specifically. Everyone hated and cursed him, even though he had neither lent for usury nor



borrowed from others. Also, by implication, he had not taken any bribes. In fact, he did the opposite, for when God told Jeremiah to buy a deed from a family member, the prophet paid for what was considered worthless property because the king of Babylon was coming down. Hoping he would escape, the owner of the land wanted to have some money in his pocket.

**Comment:** Verse 10 reads as follows in the NIV: “Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth, a man with whom the whole land strives and contends! I have neither lent nor borrowed, yet everyone curses me.”

**Reply:** Again we see the emotional side of Jeremiah. His mother brought forth a son who was not appreciated, even though he was not given to making a profit but was constantly helping others. He expressed many times that the opposition of the people was heartrending to him. His good advice came from the Lord, but they considered him an enemy, a traitor, and a false prophet because he predicted that the king of Babylon would be successful and told them to willingly submit to captivity to greatly increase their chance for survival.

**Jer. 15:11** The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.

**Jer. 15:12** Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?

Jeremiah was bemoaning the fact of his own personal experience, but now the Lord said, “Jeremiah, you will not perish, for I will protect you.” When Nebuchadnezzar came down, one of the first things he heard was about Jeremiah’s prophecies. In other words, the prophet’s faithfulness in giving the advice to yield stood him in good stead.

“Verily it shall be well with thy remnant.” The enemy was utterly ruthless and without compassion. When Israel broke their covenant with Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was determined to wipe them out, and Israel would be defeated because Babylon had superior and stronger weapons (“northern iron”) and force (“steel”). Nevertheless, Jeremiah and the remnant, the *very few* who heeded his words, would be treated favorably in captivity. Those who responded to Jeremiah’s message because they were similarly minded were a holy remnant, as it were, even if they were only, say, one in 10,000. Baruch and the Ethiopian eunuch who delivered Jeremiah from the cistern were two such individuals (Jer. 38:7-13).

On a higher level, the “iron” that God would give Jeremiah would withstand the enemy’s iron. From this standpoint, God was saying to Jeremiah, “Despite the reputation of the northern army of Babylon, I will nullify their iron and take care of you.”

**Comment:** It is amazing that *Almighty God* said to Jeremiah, *one man*, “I personally will take care of you.”

Now evil prevails, but there is *some* righteousness. In the Kingdom, righteousness will prevail, but there will be *some* evil. This principle was manifested in regard to Korah’s rebellion. Even after the earth opened up and swallowed Korah and his family, *the very next day the people blamed Moses!*

**Jer. 15:13** Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders.

**Jer. 15:14** And I will make thee to pass with thine enemies into a land which thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you.

Israel's goods would be taken to Babylon as a spoil. God was angry. A fire was kindled in His eyes that would burn upon Judah. Here is another proof that the emotionalism and the weeping were the reaction of Jeremiah, not of God.

**Jer. 15:15 O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.**

In verses 15-18, Jeremiah voiced the sentiments of his heart. He was being persecuted for his words and asked God to remember him. He realized God knew what was happening. While Jeremiah was predicting the coming trouble, the false prophets prophesied peace. The people hated Jeremiah's message.

"Take me not away." Jeremiah asked to be spared in the coming trouble. He suffered rebuke for God's sake. A loner, he was estranged from the mockers and the merrymakers. Knowing that he was not perfect but that he had tried, Jeremiah prevailed upon God's long-suffering and asked for mercy.

**Jer. 15:16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.**

Jeremiah was talking to God from his heart. "Thy words were found [in my younger days], and I did eat them." He devoured the words and rejoiced: "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Many true Christians have the same experience. There comes a time when they are startled and awed by the Word. Not only Jeremiah but also other faithful ones of the Old Testament likewise had this experience.

"I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts." How was Jeremiah called by God's name? He was a prophet of God, and the name Jeremiah is partially a derivative of "God," for it means "Jah is high [exalted]."

**Jer. 15:17 I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation.**

After Jeremiah devoured God's words, the Lord said to him, "You have a mission to perform. I sought you while you were still in your mother's womb and have watched over you for the particular purpose of confrontation with your people. They will not like what you say on my behalf, but I will make your forehead stronger than their foreheads." Year after year Jeremiah had this experience of rejection and opposition from his people. Now that he was getting older, he would like some relief.

Jeremiah reminds us of Moses, who also reasoned with God. Jeremiah reasoned in a way that seems almost too familiar. However, he was not enlightened in this matter like the Christian of today, and he felt that he was due for some rest and peace. He did not want to die in the state of turmoil that he had experienced for so much of his life. Clues in the Bible indicate that Jeremiah lived for quite a long time after this.

Job, too, reasoned with God, for his condition, like Jeremiah's, was almost unbearable. The difference is that Job's suffering was a physical ailment, but when those who formerly honored him saw his pitiful physical condition, they looked down on him and accused him of displeasing God and being punished for sin. Job felt deeply the repeated accusations. With neither Job nor Jeremiah (nor any of the Ancient Worthies) knowing about the permission of evil, we can commiserate with their complaining. We have been richly blessed—and possibly even

spoiled—with this knowledge, for without it, how dark things would be for us at times! Therefore, if we have the correct thought, the Lord understood their complaining, whereas we have no excuse. The Apostle Paul and Jesus made very clear the principle “no cross, no crown.” Thus, in reading about the Ancient Worthies, we should not assume we have their liberty.

Of all the Ancient Worthies, Abraham seemed to instinctively realize that God had a purpose in allowing evil. And he trusted God implicitly even when asked to sacrifice his own son Isaac.

“I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation.” When Jeremiah found God’s words and rejoiced in them, he could see how far astray the nation of Israel had gone. Now he was filled with indignation. We, too, should be indignant at unrighteousness. We are to love righteousness and hate iniquity.

**Jer. 15:18** Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?

Jeremiah’s pain was perpetual and his wound incurable. He reminisced back on when he first studied God’s Word. He expressed confidence in God, but now came a wave of despondency. The distress was constantly with him, for he was compelled to speak God’s Word, but mocking always followed. The great opposition he received *over a long period of time* produced some weariness of spirit. The antitype pertains to the feet members.

Jeremiah experienced an instability of discouragement, times of despondency, because so few listened to his message. “Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?” The wicked were happy, but he was alone and burning with indignation. (We are again reminded of Job’s afflictions.) Jeremiah questioned the Lord: “Won’t you give me refreshment? Are you a mirage [like waters that fail]?” Ezekiel had a similar experience. He ate the Lord’s word. At first, it was like honey; then it got bitter, and he was indignant at the sin and corruption (Ezek. 3:3). John the Baptist also experienced discouragement and doubt after first being so confident that Jesus was the Messiah. Each of us will be *individually* tested as to whether we *truly believe* that God deals *personally* with us.

**Comment:** The RSV reads, “Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Wilt thou be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail?”

Jeremiah had many problems because of his experiences. He was imprisoned in solitary confinement, put in public stocks, cast into a cistern, etc., but what seems to have hurt him most was the continual opposition of his people and the fact he was considered a traitor. Jesus had the same experience in dying on the Cross, for the Scriptures say, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13; Deut. 21:22,23). The depth of his despair, even worse than the Cross itself, was when he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

**Jer. 15:19** Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.

**Jer. 15:20** And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

God assured Jeremiah, “If you return [from isolation and discouragement] and stand before me as my mouthpiece and do the same preaching, I will make you a fenced brazen wall unto the people.”

“Take ... the precious from the vile.” Jeremiah would succeed in finding a *tiny* remnant, a little flock, as it were, if he returned to his former ministry. (“Precious” means something that is scarce.) He already had the knowledge, but he needed courage.

“Let them return unto thee.” The “precious” element, the few with a hearing ear, would repent and seek out Jeremiah. In antitype, Jeremiah represents the faithful at the end of the age before Babylon is destroyed. He had to be apart from the wicked and not come down to their level. Instead any who responded would come *to him*, drawn by the power of the truth. Accordingly, the feet members are to stay apart from the fire and pluck others out; they are not to get in the fire and sin themselves (Jude 23). That principle supersedes opportunities for service. We must not get enmeshed in the system, or arrangement. The precious element will come out to us.

“I will make thee ... a fenced brasen wall.” God was saying, “Your ministry is not finished yet. You still have strong messages to give on my behalf, but I will greatly strengthen you and give you respite in the end. There is something good in store for you. In the meantime, be patient and faithful, and do not compromise. If you continue as my representative and salvage the few, you will be rewarded.” Despite continual opposition, Jeremiah’s ministry would succeed.

In addition to the smiting message, the feet members will give a secondary message to the world: “Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger” (Zeph. 2:3). There is also an antitypical John the Baptist message. When asked what to do with regard to the coming trouble in AD 69-70, he gave separate advice to the people, the soldiers, and the publicans (Luke 3:10-14).

**Jer. 15:21** And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

God promised to deliver Jeremiah, to redeem him from the wicked. How the deliverance was accomplished will be seen subsequently. In the antitype, the feet members will be delivered in death—as new creatures. They will not be tested beyond what they can bear (1 Cor. 10:13). As a guide to the feet members’ conduct, previously the three Hebrews were expedient and tactful but not in the severe test. They replied, “We will not answer thee, O king, in this matter.”

The *small* remnant in Jeremiah’s day suggests that of the vile element in mystic Babylon, a small number will come out at the end of the age to be part of the feet members; that is, they will come out before the saints are all gone. The remnant will respond to the message of the Jeremiah class.

**Jer. 16:1** The word of the LORD came also unto me, saying,

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

God entered Jeremiah’s *personal* life by instructing him not to get married. Jeremiah was middle-aged now and had not married thus far because of his work. He was lonely, but God said not to marry at this time. Hence he would not have sons or daughters “in this place [Judah].” The reason for not marrying was that a wife and children would die of a terrible disease, sword, or famine. Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, was told not to mourn when his wife died.

**Comment:** By extension, it was inadvisable for the others to marry and have children as well.

**Reply:** That was prudent advice, but since the people as a whole had not heeded Jeremiah's warnings, this instruction was not directed to them. It was God's determination that the people would reap what they had sowed over many years.

We are reminded of Jesus' statement near the end of his ministry, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck" (Luke 23:28,29). In AD 69-70, a double trauma came upon mothers who had an infant feeding at their breast, for they tried to protect their little ones.

**Jer. 16:3 For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land;**

Notice the emphasis on the sons and daughters who were "born in this place" and the mothers and fathers who begot them "in this land." Those who were native to the land would be alive when the holocaust came a few years hence. All would die in the trouble except for a very small remnant. As far as what is recorded of Jeremiah's ministry, he spoke prolifically in the last 11 to 15 years before the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah in 606 BC.

**Jer. 16:4 They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.**

Verse 4 shows the severity of the coming trouble. The people would die grievous deaths as they were consumed by sword and famine. The dead would not be lamented or buried but would be as dung on the face of the earth. Vultures and wild animals would eat the carcasses.

**Jer. 16:5 For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, even lovingkindness and mercies.**

Jeremiah was emotional by nature, but he was told not to let his sympathy overcome him when people died. He was not to offer consolation, for God had cut off the people from peace and ceased His loving kindness and mercies for them. This prohibition applied not only to the coming trouble but also to the present time, the time preceding the trouble, when God was instructing Jeremiah.

Verse 5 certainly negates the thought of some that God mourned with great tears. Jeremiah did the mourning at first, but now he was being told that there was no place for such emotion in the coming trouble.

Spiritually speaking, we are not to pray for those who have sinned the sin unto Second Death, for that would be showing loving kindness and tender mercies. If we show compassion for one who has passed the point of no return, we are being compassionate for an *enemy of God*. Accordingly, those who harbor the doctrine of universal salvation do not have the spirit of a sound mind, for they are being more loving than God.

Here God was saying that Judah had passed the point of no return, and there would be no change in this dire circumstance. Likewise, Aaron was told not to mourn for two of his sons who died, Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-6). Apparently, they were promising sons, for they were favored to go up in the mount to see a vision of God (Exod. 24:1,9).

**Jer. 16:6 Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them:**

**Comment:** Under the Law, the Israelites were not to “cut themselves” or “make any baldness” between their eyes for the dead (Deut. 14:1; Lev. 19:28). These heathen practices were prohibited.

**Reply:** The point was that there would be no mourning in any shape, manner, or form, even in the proper way with sackcloth and ashes.

**Jer. 16:7 Neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother.**

The “cup [or drink] of consolation,” which was used in regard to sorrow, was a strong wine that offset great mourning by dulling the senses. Jesus was offered but refused such a drink when he was on the Cross. However, Jeremiah was saying that when the troublous conditions prevailed, no one would mourn for the dead. Usually a close friend or relative tried to console a mourner in his loss, but the conditions and the grief would be so overwhelming in 606 BC that there would be no desire to comfort one another. No sop would be given.

**Comment:** Proverbs 31:6 describes the drink of consolation: “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.”

Similarly in the Warsaw ghetto, the starvation conditions caused by the Nazis were so horrendous that stinking corpses were lying all around. Jews walked by like zombies, drained of all emotion, making no attempt at burial. All the people were going through their own grief, so they were in no position to comfort anyone else.

**Comment:** In the antitype, mystic Babylon has passed the point of no return, but there are still some godly individuals in the system. Also, as a nation, Israel today is secular, but the minority Holy Remnant will be spared. And so Jeremiah was seeking the handful of right-hearted Jews.

Of course we cannot judge the heart, but in connection with mystic Babylon’s fall, some will have experiences that should not be mourned. The warning in Jude 23 is to snatch “out of the fire” those who are in danger of perishing, “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” When the true Church is complete, when the wedding is over, some who may not understand the situation will be snatched from mystic Babylon before its fall. How many people do we currently know in Babylon? Our contact is limited because we have disassociated ourselves, but we sometimes see sincere individuals who we feel are Spirit-begotten. As the years go by, we generally lose track of them, but after the wedding, part of the Jude picture will take place. Just as two angels were sent to extricate Lot, his wife, and his two daughters from Sodom, so we should have, as a principle, the desire to snatch people out when we see they are on the brink of the sin of Second Death. When they are nearing that precipice, we should try to rescue them, if possible. However, once an individual passes that point, we must not show sympathy lest we, too, become an enemy of God. After the Church is complete, the snatching will be more dramatic, and it will be done by those on the other side of the veil who know the true situation because they can read the heart.

**Comment:** For “Neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning,” the King James margin has, “Neither shall men break bread for them in mourning.”

**Reply:** The alternate is probably more accurate, for otherwise, “tearing themselves” would duplicate “cutting themselves.”

**Comment:** The NIV has, “No one will offer food to comfort those who mourn for the dead.” They were not to be comforted in any way.

Not even one’s father or mother was to be comforted. This advice was very soul-searching for trying to control emotions. If a person had developed sufficiently to discern right and wrong, then no matter how heartrending the experience was, he would see the propriety of following this advice. Jeremiah was emotional by nature and very concerned for Judah, so God was trying to build him up not only by giving personal advice but also by telling what the divine attitude was.

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

Verse 8 is more or less a continuation of the previous verses and the advice given therein. God told Jeremiah to be *separate* from the people in happy feasting as well as in mourning. In other words, Jeremiah was now *instructed to be a loner*. Previously he was a loner *because of his work*.

**Jer. 16:9** **For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.**

The effect on Christendom is mentioned almost word for word in the Book of Revelation, indicating a natural fulfillment in the past (606 BC), and an antitypical fulfillment in the near future. Thus there is justification for drawing typical lessons from Jeremiah and his experience and mission that are applicable to the end of the Gospel Age.

Jerusalem is a picture of mystic Babylon, the professed Church. Revelation 18:23, which states, “And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee,” applies to the *destruction* of mystic Babylon (Jerusalem here), which has not yet happened. At the present time, the “voice” is still calling, “Come out of her, my people,” indicating that some of the Lord’s children are in Babylon (Rev. 18:4). While the Lord is outside Babylon, His voice penetrates into Babylon, calling the Spirit-begotten to separate themselves from the nominal system. However, there will come a time, prior to the destruction, when the voice of the Bride class will no longer be heard either inside or outside of Babylon because the Church will be complete beyond the veil. The “voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride” will all cease when the trouble comes. At that time, the Great Company will realize the door is closed, the Church is complete, and they are not of that specially called class. The consolation will be a secondary salvation to spirit life for those who are rightly exercised and renew their consecration.

“Behold, I [God] will cause to cease out of this place in your [Jeremiah’s] eyes, and in your days.” God was telling Jeremiah that he would see these things happen. In the antitype, how can the feet members see the destruction if they die *before* mystic Babylon falls? Just as Abraham saw the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah *afar off*, so the feet members will see these things from beyond the veil. Therefore, it can be said that the destruction of mystic Babylon will occur in the “days” of the feet members.

God told Jeremiah in advance what would happen. The prophet was assured that he would be on the scene through these events, that he would see these things cease. Strictly speaking,

therefore, Jeremiah does not represent the feet members, although a principle applies, as already explained.

**Jer. 16:10** And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt show this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?

The sins were enormous throughout the land, yet the people would ask, “What is our iniquity against the Lord? What have we done?” They could not understand why God had pronounced such “great evil” against them. It is startling that they did not know, but they were impervious to the true situation. They could not see why judgment was necessary. Their reaction shows how bad the condition was.

**Jer. 16:11** Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law;

**Jer. 16:12** And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me:

“Both you and your fathers—at least two generations—have sinned” was the answer. “You should wonder that the punishment did not come earlier, with your fathers, yet your sins are even worse” was the implication. Conditions are the same today. As standards get lower and lower, people lose sight of the correct standard. What a strong message for Jeremiah to give!

**Comment:** God, through Jeremiah, was specific about the people’s sins. Their fathers had forsaken Him and not just walked after other gods but *served and worshipped* them; they had not kept Jehovah’s law. And if those sins were not bad enough, the current generation was worse, for they walked after the imagination of their evil heart and did not hearken unto God.

**Comment:** In Jeremiah 2:10-13, God’s message to Judah was, “The people of these other nations are loyal to their *dumb* idols, but you have turned from me, the *living* God, to worship idols of wood and stone.”

**Reply:** Yes, the Israelites were disloyal to the *true* God.

In reading the entire Old Testament, we get the fullness of the picture. For Israel to be saved, ultimately humbled, and then given a position of honor, the people will have to be thoroughly repentant. The Holy Remnant will come to this realization just before Jacob’s Trouble.

**Comment:** Nominal Christendom has the same attitude, “What have we done?” yet they have forsaken God and His Word and walked after Mary and supposed saints. Many of the practices, especially of Roman Catholicism, are really more identified with heathen religions.

**Reply:** Yet, like Judah, they say “*our* God” (verse 10). Nominally they are Christians, but in practice, they have followed other gods.

By Jeremiah’s speaking in a mechanical fashion, it was obvious he was speaking for God, so it is surprising that the people were not shocked into a realization of their sins. Their failure to get the lesson shows how strong their prejudice was.

**Jer. 16:13** Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye



**nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not show you favour.**

Judah was to be cast out of Israel and into Chaldea. The king of Babylon took Ammon, Moab, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt into captivity as well as Judah, and all were left without inhabitant (see Jer. 15:14). Nebuchadnezzar was truly the head of gold as far as conquering goes, yet history has forgotten him. He invaded both Upper and Lower Egypt. Israel's "enemies" were those who ridiculed the nation and gloated over its troubles.

Today most of the news in the United States comes from the Associated Press. A great volume of news comes in, but only a fraction of it is released. And only a handful of individuals decides what to release. This is *controlled* news.

The people in Israel had worshipped the false gods of Ammon, Moab, etc., but when captivity came as punishment, they had to serve these false gods until they got their fill. The Israelites then felt a loss of their heritage and longed to return to the homeland. And other galling practices were associated with the worship of these false gods. Hence God would show the Israelites no favor.

Verse 13 is not antitypical, for all false gods will be destroyed at the end of the age, with no possibility of reoccurrence. In principle, however, those who survive the fall of the nominal Church will serve the "god" of their belly during the trouble. As they experience poverty, hunger, and homelessness, they will be forced to give in to cravings that are basic to survival. When people are starving and thirsty, they will not be thinking of God. Thus they will serve "other gods" in the circumstance of servitude to these traumatic experiences. Under those conditions, the people will feel that God is withdrawing His favor.

**Jer. 16:14 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;**

**Jer. 16:15 But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.**

"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall ... be said, ... The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north." Verses 14 and 15 were partially fulfilled after the 70-year captivity, and there has been a greater fulfillment in the Harvest period. But notice, when God brings the Israelites back "again into their land" that He gave to their fathers, He will bring them from "all the lands" where He has driven them. To date, there has not been any great migration from America to Israel. In fact, the Jews are quite comfortable here, and those who have returned have done so with great sacrifice. It is true that a lot of Jews have gone back from Europe and recently from Russia, but verse 15 seems to suggest, based on other Scriptures, that there are two regatherings of Jews to Israel, one prior to Jacob's Trouble and one after. Isaiah 43:5-7 reads, "Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." Thus the greatest fulfillment of verse 15 is still future.

Incidentally, in some Old Testament Scriptures and on certain maps, Europe and Russia are both considered to be north of Israel. Based on what is happening in Israel, that nation is a prophetic signpost that helps us to gauge, to some extent, where we are on the stream of time.

**Jer. 16:16** Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

Jehovah would send “many fishers” to draw Jews back to Israel, and He would also send “many hunters,” who would “hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.” Examples of “hunters” are Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, and those who incited pogroms in Russia. All of them induced Jews to return to Israel. The persecutions were an awakening signal that brought the subject of Zionism to the attention of Jews worldwide. Many who did not return from one circumstance were exposed to another circumstance. Thus God’s providence saw to it that Jews returned to Israel, and at times, the fishers and the hunters operated almost simultaneously. These activities are still going on, for eventually God will even get the Jews out of the “holes of the rocks.”

**Q:** Generally speaking, do the “fishers” refer to a more favorable or gentler means of bringing the Jews back to the homeland, whereas the “hunters” are a harsher method?

**A:** That is the usual interpretation. Wealthy Jews such as the Rothschilds established funds to encourage Zionism. The funds helped to provide transportation of Jews back to Israel and to give them a little financial help and farming equipment when they arrived. From mercantile professions, returning Jews became self-sufficient farmers in a relatively short period of time. “Fishing” made the returning attractive, and “hunting” forced Jews back through persecution.

**Comment:** The use of the word “many” in “*many fishers*” and “*many hunters*” helps to prove that the fishing and the hunting, which started early in the Harvest period, are still going on.

**Jer. 16:17** For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.

Nothing is hidden from God’s eyes. “Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jer. 32:19).

**Jer. 16:18** And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things.

Verse 18 should start with the words “*But first,*” for the punishment had to precede the fishing and the hunting; i.e., it had to occur before 1878. Since the 1,845-year period of favor extended from the death of Jacob in 1812 BC to AD 33, the “double” (Hebrew *mishneh*) was the corresponding equal time of 1,845 years of disfavor from AD 33 to 1878. The double was levied and the punishment was necessary because the land had been filled with animal sacrifices, even pigs, through false worship. These were “detestable and abominable things,” as were the idols and statues themselves. Blood was drunk from *live* animals until they died. Children were thrown *alive* to Molech. (In Gehenna, corpses—*dead* bodies—were thrown on the garbage dump to burn, which is quite different!) These awful acts were done during the 1,845 years of *favor*. Under Solomon, only about one fourth of the way into the 513 years of the Period of the Kings, these heathen practices began to proliferate—and they got worse and worse! Heathen worship ceased during the 70-year period of Babylonian captivity and was not resumed. Instead a major problem after the 70 years was failure to rest on the sabbath, for *money* became the Israelites’ god. Obviously, Jeremiah’s mission was instruction and doctrine.

In the Hebrew language, the pointing, or the dots, were *arbitrarily* supplied in the 1100s by

Hebrew scholars. If the dots are removed, as in the original manuscripts, the Hebrew words are left open to interpretation according to context. Accordingly, we feel that verse 18 should begin with the word “But,” not “And,” to indicate a change in thought.

While 1878 saw a marked change in God’s conduct toward the *nation of Israel* from His attitude during the Diaspora, at which time He turned His face for a long period of time, that does not mean *Jews as individuals* are in favor, for other Scriptures show that ungodly Jews will be purged out from the returned element at the time of Jacob’s Trouble. A Holy Remnant will remain after the cleansing.

**Comment:** The Hebrew *mishneh* does not mean “double” in the sense of “twice as much.” *Strong’s Concordance* defines the word as “repetition, that is, a duplicate, or a double amount, by implication, a second.”

**Comment:** Similarly, Elisha asked for a “double” (or equal) portion of Elijah’s spirit.

**Reply:** Yes. Likewise, we say that an identical twin is the “double” of his brother.

God is interested in His people, so He deals with them as a parent with a child and gives them a spanking or a stern admonition if they need it for their *eternal* welfare. That motive is a lot different from the ways of a tyrant, who does things for his *own* benefit.

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

**Jer. 16:20** Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?

**Jer. 16:21** Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The LORD.

“Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know ... mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The LORD.” *All the world* will get a lesson in the Time of Trouble. The Holy Remnant will recognize and acknowledge previous sins. Former “gods” will cease. Israel will be delivered, and *all nations* (Jew and Gentile) will know that God is *all powerful*. From that day and onward, the nations will know that God is dealing with *Israel*, that the Jews are *His* people, and that the God of *Israel* is the true God. Jerusalem and Israel will be the capital of the world. The fact that the Jews rejected Jesus for 2,000 years will humble them when they realize he is their Messiah. They will be greatly embarrassed.

The guilt of Christendom parallels that of Israel. Both have much guilt but do not hearken. The Pastor thought that Orthodox Jews would primarily comprise the Holy Remnant. There are divisions and variations of thought among the Orthodox Jews.

“Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?” Both literally and figuratively, man has made gods and idols. It is strange that man, with his *own* hands, cuts lumber or stone, makes an image, and then bows down and prays to it. This history, with man venerating his own products, will be seen in the future. Today man glories in technology, so a great humbling has to come. Technology is truly extraordinary, but God is omitted from the praise.

**Q:** What is the thought of the clause “Behold, I will this once cause them to know”?

**A:** It is one thing to repeatedly warn somebody, but the great Time of Trouble will show once

and for all that God is God.

**Comment:** The NIV renders verse 21, “Therefore I will teach them—this time I will teach them my power and might. Then they will know that my name is the LORD.”

**Reply:** Yes, the people will be convinced and convicted.

**Jer. 17:1** The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;

“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.” Not only was Judah’s sin deeply engraved in their hearts, but the hearts themselves were *hard*. Hardness was met with hardness—their hard hearts were engraved with the point of a diamond—indicating that they readily accepted still grosser sins, even though they were already hardened in sin. What sarcasm! The climax had been reached. The sin concerned their heart condition and the horns of their altars; that is, they had gotten so far from God that the very institutions and morals He had given them as safeguards were being ignored. There was no standard. Israel’s condition parallels the situation today.

Incidentally, for a person to get a point across in a proper way, the general rule, or principle, is to meet strength with strength, and weakness (commiseration, mercy, and compassion) with weakness. The Apostle Paul said, “To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22).

How was the sin of Judah engraved “upon the horns” of their altars? The people embellished their heathen altars with large horns or figures of other gods, making the altars even more obnoxious. Notice that *sin* was the point of the diamond, the chisel. Depravity was manifested in the ritual and type of worship.

**Jer. 17:2** Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.

Much lasciviousness was associated with the worship of the false gods. Immoral acts were committed under the shade of trees and on the ground up on the high hills. This type of sin is common to man, for it is Satan’s greatest tool; that is, it has the greatest appeal to all strata of society. Having been raised in evil, the children knew nothing else. The parents had the greater responsibility.

**Comment:** Instead of “groves by the green trees,” the NIV has “Asherah poles,” meaning, according to the footnote, “symbols of the goddess Asherah.”

**Reply:** The shape of the columns was suggestive of reproductive organs of both men and women. Thus the sin that was related to altars was mostly lasciviousness. This strange combination shows the peculiarity of two extremes with man’s fallen flesh. It is like putting one foot on earth and the other foot in heaven. From the standpoint of fallen human nature, mankind has a dual personality. Even if the nominal professed people of God want to do better, the god of this world is more powerful, generally speaking.

**Comment:** In connection with totem poles and other idols, the JWs object to Christmas trees, but the Scriptures speak of *carved* trees used for purposes of worship as being an abomination.

**Reply:** Many years ago, a prominent brother who came from the Society spoke against the observance of the Christmas tree and even gifts but then, at the end of his sermon, said that

instead we should give money to the Lord. The talk was not appropriate.

**Jer. 17:3 O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders.**

Israel is quite hilly as a country, and most of the people lived in the hills because the Canaanites were down in the lowlands. For hundreds of years, the Israelites had trouble with Philistines, Amorites, Hittites, Hivites, etc., who were in the valleys and lowlands with their chariots. Of course Israel had neither chariots nor horses.

“O my mountain in the field.” In other words, Israel was a hilly country set on a plain, or flat land base. Spiritually speaking, the “mountain” represents Israel in the Kingdom. Although Revelation 8:8 refers to a later date in history, Israel is called a “mountain”—“And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great *mountain* burning with fire was cast into the sea.”

“I [God] will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders.” All the wealth and goods of Israel would be given to the enemy as a spoil. That which they delighted in would be removed from them because of their sins.

**Jer. 17:4 And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever.**

Because of their obstinacy and disobedience, the people would be severed from their land and possessions and put in a foreign land. This punishment was a necessary expedient to humble them and make them salvable. The judgment stopped the contagion of sin to the point of incorrigibility. Therefore, when the Jews who went into Diaspora come forth from the grave in the Kingdom, the hardships they endured will be valuable knowledge.

“Ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever.” Israel had kindled a fire that would “burn for ever,” and God was angry. In both Hebrew and Greek, “forever” is a relatively elastic term. As used here, it means lastingly, enduringly, for an age, that is, for a long purposed period, for an effective duration of time, to accomplish what God intended. In other words, more people will get life as a result of that hard experience than if God had just ignored the situation. If the judgment were “forever” in the sense of being for eternity, either another word would have been added, or the word would have been repeated.

**Jer. 17:5 Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.**

“Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.” We should trust in God more than in man. There are modifying factors, however, for we should not distrust or be suspicious of every human being. For example, a message in harmony with the Word is to be trusted, and human agents are often used by the Lord. But if a man lets his heart depart from Jehovah, then certainly we should not trust that individual’s counsel, advice, or help; rather, we should stay as far away from his influence as possible. The warning is also for man not to make “flesh his arm.”

Since the word “cursed” is so strong, it would have to be evident that the former stalwart’s heart had departed from the Lord. In this context, he supposedly was a Jew, so his conduct would warrant such condemnation. On the one hand, we cannot read the heart in a direct sense, but on the other hand, Jesus said that we can tell a tree by its fruit. If what comes out of the mouth is nothing but abomination, then we know the condition of the heart is not pure, for contaminated water cannot come forth from a pure source. Hence words and deeds can

manifest the condition of the heart.

**Comment:** Judah erred in allying itself with Gentile nations instead of trusting God.

**Reply:** Yes, in the 22 years under the combined reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, an alliance was made with Egypt, and a couple of covenants were made, one with Egypt and the other with Babylon. Those are examples of trusting in man. As individuals, false prophets spoke lies in the name of Jehovah, and the majority of those in Judah liked their message. They would have discerned the true message if they had searched the Scriptures.

**Jer. 17:6** For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

“For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh.” Jeremiah compared trusting in God, which results in a fertile, fruitful condition, with not trusting in God, which results in a barren condition. A “heath” is a dried-up shrub that has no substance and is something like a tumbleweed. Those with the wrong heart attitude do not recognize, or perceive, good when it comes because their heart is so hardened. The heat of the shimmering refraction of light rays can cause what looks like a lake in the distance. One can travel all day—and even day after day—yet the lake appears to be the same distance away because it is a mirage. The opposite experience can also occur. After a person sees a mirage of water, the panorama may then again appear to be only desert. The mirage spurs the traveler on, but a letdown occurs when the lake is seen to be false. Because of the frequency of mirages, desert travelers and caravan leaders depended on camels rather than sight. Camels seem to possess an innate sense of where there is water, even at a great distance.

Jeremiah was saying that those of Judah would not get the blessing of the water they imagined they were seeing but would “inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land ... not inhabited.” A glass of salt water is the last thing a thirsty person wants. Thus Jeremiah was prophesying of a desolate experience, which is part of the curse of the man who trusts in man and not in God. Extreme deserts like the Sahara have virtually no vegetation except for an occasional oasis. Salt in the soil makes the land arid. For example, *Death Valley* in this country has almost no verdure or moisture.

**Jer. 17:7** Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

**Jer. 17:8** For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

The one who trusts in the Lord is like “a tree planted by the waters”; the tree bears fruit, and its root spreads. Today the wicked seem to flourish, and the righteous are in the desert condition. Hence verse 8 shows the *ultimate* condition of the righteous when they get the blessings and the bounty. *Human* wisdom back there would have rejected these words of Jeremiah. The lesson is that we should not look for *present* material blessings.

In verses 5-8, the individual is the same. In one circumstance, he is cursed, and in the other, he is blessed. Thus it is possible for a man to be blessed in a dry land, where everything around him is parched. He will be as a tree whose roots find water and whose leaves luxuriate in spite of the conditions. No matter what circumstance that individual is in, he will survive. He “shall not be careful [overly anxious] in the year of drought, neither shall [he] cease from yielding fruit” because he trusts in the Lord. God was talking about His professed people, the Jews, with two different heart conditions.

**Comment:** God promised that if the Jews were faithful, He would open the windows of heaven, and they would receive more material blessings than they could contain (Mal. 3:10).

**Comment:** The First Psalm reads, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

**Jer. 17:9** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

**Jer. 17:10** I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

The natural heart of man “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Why was the rhetorical question then asked, “Who can understand the heart?” Obviously, God understands, but the individual does not know his own heart *unless he has the mind of Christ and of God*, which enables him to see the wickedness and the desperation. There is a contest, a warfare, between the old man and the new man in Christ. To know the depth of the deceit and the desperation of wickedness that lies in the natural fallen human heart, we must be in close relationship with the Lord because He can search the depths of the heart and the marrow of the bone (Heb. 4:12).

**Comment:** Psalm 139:23,24 reads, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

**Reply:** That Psalm gives an insight into David’s character because he revealed his innermost desire and heart condition.

**Comment:** The “reins,” the kidneys, are the governing factor.

**Reply:** Yes, they represent the will, the intent. God searches the heart and tries the reins. The heart, the seat of affections, is emotional, whereas the reins, the motives, are deeper. Just as the reins are attached to the bridle and bit of the horse’s mouth, so the Christian’s intent is related to his words and conduct. There is a threefold comparison of the mind, the heart, and the will.

As a whole, the heart of Judah was hard like stone (verse 1). Here God said, “I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings”; that is, He searches each individual’s heart and will punish or reward according to where the affections lie and what motivates him. The one who wants to do the Lord’s will and is earnestly seeking will be assisted in producing good fruit according to his desire. However, if a person’s heart is not akin to the Lord’s ways, bad fruit will be the result.

**Jer. 17:11** As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

The RSV reads, “Like the partridge that gathers a brood which she did not hatch, so is he who gets riches but not by right; in the midst of his days they will leave him, and at his end he will be a fool.” The NIV has, “Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end he will

prove to be a fool.” The King James alternate reading is, “As the partridge gathereth young which she hath not brought forth.”

The illustration is of a partridge that sits on unfertilized eggs which do not hatch. Some feel the partridge is a particular type of bird that takes over the nest of other birds and their eggs. The partridge tries to incubate the eggs with the warmth of her body and brings forth the young. There is that type of bird in nature, but the young forsake the bird that mothers them because they seem to have a genetic recognition that she is a false parent. Some animals successfully nurture the young of another species, and the young accept the “adoptive” mother as their own. However, with this particular kind of bird, the young forsake her.

Some might interpret this bird as the ostrich, which lays large eggs in the sand and then leaves, forsaking them and letting them incubate and hatch on their own. Thus the ostrich forsakes her young. Whatever kind of bird is being referred to, the result is negative, for the gathering of the young results in fruitlessness. The usurping bird, which wants to acquire the young when she had nothing to do with bearing the eggs, capitalizes on the misfortune of others. Thus, likewise, is the condition of the rich. Normally the rich prosper because they appropriate the possessions of others to themselves; they exploit and take advantage of the guileless, the uninstructed, and the poor. This type of character, if unrepentant and incorrigible, is referred to in Amos 8:5,6 regarding the end of the Kingdom Age. Such individuals will harbor in their hearts the attitude “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?”

“So [is] he that getteth riches, and not by right.” Evidently, “partridge” is the correct thought, for the rich who gather wealth through unscrupulous means are like the partridge. They aggrandize, or collect unto themselves, that which is not really theirs. What vanity and foolishness! In the final analysis, the riches are harmful because they are gathered to the *neglect* of spiritual things. Trusting in wealth now will bring barrenness later, whereas trusting in God now will bring fruit later.

“He that getteth riches ... shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.” When a rich man dies, his wealth is left behind. Thus the ultimate result is emptiness and disappointment. To get rich, one must devote a lot of thought and time to conniving, scheming, and planning, but is the time worth the effort if all is lost at the end? Riches are like the mirage in the desert; they disappear.

Through Jeremiah, God was instructing the Jews, for while some of them had a measure of temporal prosperity, the goods would all be lost in 606 BC. Except for a small righteous remnant who were taken captive with just the clothes on their back, the people starved, were slain, or died of disease.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36).

**Jer. 17:12** A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

Verses 12-14 are an utterance of Jeremiah, who, as a leader of the people of Israel, prayed that others would mend their ways. Back there, as well as now, the “glorious high throne,” the “place of our sanctuary,” is centered in heaven. Emblematically in Jeremiah’s day, the Temple in Jerusalem was the “sanctuary” of the Lord.



God's throne has been on high "from the beginning," but what "beginning"? Of course prior to creation, God purposed the plan of the ages, The Christ, etc., but *from the standpoint of Israel*, the "beginning" was the Tabernacle, which was converted into the Temple. Both structures had a "sanctuary." Ever since the Israelites were taken out of Egypt—that is, from their beginning as a people coming out of Egypt—God has sustained and upheld them. The "place of our sanctuary" refers to the Church in the spiritual picture and to the Temple in Jerusalem in the natural picture. Both the Church class and the Temple were long premeditated.

**Jer. 17:13 O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.**

Jeremiah prayed, "O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed." However, the next clause is a change of speaker, for curiously and very interestingly, when Jeremiah was subject to emotional outbursts, the Lord sometimes interjected His thoughts. Just as Moses reasoned with God, and then God interrupted him, so the Lord did this to Jeremiah, sometimes favorably and sometimes reprovably. The clause "and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth" is one such interruption.

It was unfavorable for Israelites to have their names written in the earth. The names of the unrighteous would disappear as if written in the dust of the earth; that is, they would come to naught, even though they were prominent in the present life. In the future, in years to come, they will be disregarded. There will be no honor roll for them "because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters." They came out of the earth, and they will return to the earth.

In other words, the pronoun "me" is correct in the expression "they that depart from me," for God was speaking. Jeremiah wrote this book in his old age, recording things that were originally done orally, and in retrospect, he added his own comments from time to time.

**Jer. 17:14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.**

Verse 14 is a remarkable insight into the character of Jeremiah, for he felt a guilt by association. Being in the midst of an evil generation, he could see the corruption, and he concluded, "I am one of them—a Jew, an Israelite—and I do not find anything sufficiently commendable in myself to guarantee where I stand with thee, O LORD." This prayer for deliverance in the coming trouble was like a confession, and the prophet wanted to be healed. He questioned whether he was worthy to escape the trouble, yet he was probably exemplary in his walk under those conditions. He did not ask to be relieved of persecution but just to live. We, too, hope to be delivered (to escape the coming trouble and get spiritual life), but we must also expect persecution.

During a certain period of the Apostle Paul's ministry, he was in a similar frame of mind. Thus this type of feeling is commendable. Jeremiah was not so high-minded or aloof that he thought he was God's favorite and the others were less favored.

**Comment:** Like Jeremiah, Christians also pray, "Thou [God] art my praise."

**Jer. 17:15 Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the LORD? let it come now.**

In recalling how the people had mocked and criticized him, Jeremiah sarcastically asked, "Where is the word of the LORD? let it come now." The people did not believe that Jeremiah's

woeful predictions were accurate because they had not yet materialized. Moreover, he was a loner, and the false prophets, who considerably outnumbered him, contemporaneously prophesied peace in Jehovah's name. They said that Nebuchadnezzar would start to come down but would turn back. In fact, when Nebuchadnezzar came down a number of years earlier and Judah was not taken at that time, the people thought Jeremiah was a false prophet. But the king of Babylon came several times and would yet come again. Meanwhile, the people thought the imminent threat had evaporated for good, as it did with Sennacherib, for example.

Jeremiah was a different prophet in many ways, for much of his prophecies revealed his own thinking. He could not help interjecting thoughts because he was so emotionally involved in the message.

**Jer. 17:16** As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee.

Jeremiah was saying to God, "When I heard what you wanted me to say to this people, I did not decline the office but obediently performed." Then he added, "Neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee." While he did not desire the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the famine, etc., he faithfully gave the message as God had instructed him to do.

The NIV uses the word "shepherd" instead of "pastor": "I have not run away from being your shepherd; you know I have not desired the day of despair. What passes my lips is open before you." The predictions of doom did not originate with Jeremiah, nor did he desire them—but, as stated elsewhere, he saw the *need* for them.

**Jer. 17:17** Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil.

In the midst of a corrupt people, Jeremiah prayed to God for his personal salvation. He reasoned, "I declared your message to the nation as faithfully as I could. Give me courage and strength of character so that I do not succumb to the tauntings, criticisms, and persecutions incurred because of proclaiming your message."

**Comment:** Jeremiah somewhat frequently needed reinforcement from the Lord.

**Reply:** A person who is emotional by nature needs continual encouragement in one way or another. Being of that tender disposition, Jeremiah needed frequent strengthening and shoring up lest depression engulf him. As we read the Book of Jeremiah, we glean tidbits of information on how the people treated him and the types of persecution to which he was subjected. When we add them up, we see that he had quite an experience.

Verse 17 can also be interpreted to mean that Jeremiah wished to be protected in the coming trouble, and he was protected—marvelously so. Being astute, he knew that the people would turn on him when the trouble was upon them and he urged submission to the enemy.

**Jer. 17:18** Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

Jeremiah asked that he not be confounded or dismayed. He was not that confident of his own strength and immunity, for even though he was used mightily by the Lord, he knew he needed help from above. Previously he did not want trouble to come on the people, but gradually he saw the need for it. Now he asked for the trouble to come on those who were

steeped in evil and particularly on those who were opposing him. They needed judgment.

We, too, should continually ask for God's strength in the days ahead. We cannot be faithful unto death in our own strength. Our attitude should be like that of Jeremiah.

**Jer. 17:19 Thus said the LORD unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem;**

**Jer. 17:20 And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates:**

Jeremiah was instructed to stand in a city gate—specifically, the Benjamin Gate—and deliver a message. The gate was composed of a large arch, under which were two smaller arches with a gate for each and an island in between. One gate was an entrance, and the other was an exit. Jeremiah was to go first to the gate used by the nobility, the upper echelon of Judah, and give a message. Then he was to circle around to the other gates so that all of the people would hear.

**Comment:** Judges sat in the gates, so the people were accustomed to going there for instruction and to get help with a grievance, for example.

**Reply:** Yes. Jeremiah was instructed to take advantage of this pulpit, as it were, and to use it to speak to the people.

The proclamation began, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, who enter by these gates” (paraphrase). Jeremiah would have raised his voice as loudly and as distinctly as possible to get the ear of the people. Probably he chose the moment in the flow of traffic that was most propitious for making this announcement.

**Comment:** Just as Jeremiah was instructed to stand in the gate and give his message, so we should look for ways of getting the most exposure for witnessing.

**Jer. 17:21 Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;**

**Jer. 17:22 Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.**

**Jer. 17:23 But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction.**

The message, a “thus saith the LORD,” continued: “Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses ... neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.”

At this juncture of history, about 16 years before the destruction of Jerusalem, what was so important about calling attention to the violation of the sabbath? The burdens the people were bearing were mostly merchandise, whereas one of the Ten Commandments was to keep the sabbath day holy (Exod. 20:8). For the people to set aside burdens one day a week to be instructed from God's Word was a reasonable commandment. The erosion of the sabbath day opened the floodgate to all kinds of malpractices. The sabbath was a mood-setting day in which the people were to rest and listen to instruction from God's Word.

To be an Ancient Worthy required persecution and hard experiences. To be just one of the people required obeying simple laws, such as honoring the sabbath and keeping it holy, but *greed* kept them from *simple obedience*. Jeremiah gave the people a practical message with a *test of obedience*, but being stiff-necked, they disobeyed.

Some of the city gates were also gates to the Temple precincts. Of course those who sold goods wanted to set up their wares where the traffic was greatest, so from their standpoint, Jerusalem was the most desirable city on the sabbath day. Thus they took advantage of that which was supposed to be kept holy. Shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus not only overthrew the tables of the money changers but also forbade women carrying water to take a shortcut through the Temple precincts. They got water from the Pool of Siloam on the south, and instead of going around the outside of the city, they crossed in front of the worshipping congregation. This was a distracting influence, to say the least.

**Jer. 17:24** And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein;

**Jer. 17:25** Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever.

Many of Jeremiah's prophecies were dire predictions of impending doom because of the people's failure to heed the warnings that God uttered through his mouth. Now the message was the opposite, and it was a way out. The other messages were, "Because of your sins, such and such will happen," but here was a simple command. As a test of their faith and trust in God, the people were told to properly observe the sabbath and not bring burdens through the city gates on the sabbath day. If they obeyed, Jerusalem would be preserved forever. Also, by implication, the Temple would not be destroyed, and God would remove the threat of the king of Babylon. In addition, if the people had obeyed and kept the sabbath holy, they would have had continuous kings until Messiah and no captivities. The word "kings" (plural) indicates a continuity of the preservation of Jerusalem—an abiding and enduring security—if the people hallowed the sabbath. In other words, if they had obeyed this *simple test* given to them through Jeremiah, they would have prospered greatly and had peace. However, God knew the people would disobey, for they had already hardened their hearts toward His instructions.

The test given to Adam in the Garden of Eden was also simple. God said to him, "You may freely eat of *all* the trees in the garden but not of one particular tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Many who read the account in Genesis think that God's punishment was harsh, but in reality, it was a *simple* command of obedience.

The antitype of Judah's opportunity to repent was when God gave the nominal systems "space to repent" (Rev. 2:21). Had they repented, the 144,000 would have come from the systems. Arius, Waldo, Wycliffe, and Luther were all from the nominal systems, at least at one time.

Our *habit* of thought has a lot to do with our character and how we respond to situations. If we keep our conscience tender, we become more responsive in doing the Lord's will. The words of the hymn "Earnest Watchfulness" are as follows:

I want a principle within, of jealous, godly fear;  
 A sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near;  
 I want the first approach to feel of pride or fond desire;  
 To catch the wand'ring of my will, and quench the kindling fire.

Verse 1 of this chapter said that the sin of Judah was engraved on a stony heart. The sin was dug in deeply, whereas the Lord's word should enter and penetrate a fleshly heart without the need for a chiseling instrument.

**Comment:** From a practical point of view, if the people's focus had been on the Lord instead of on their merchandise, they would have prospered temporally. Jesus expressed the principle in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

**Jer. 17:26** And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the LORD.

Jeremiah used topographical designations to describe the four points of the compass. If the people would hearken and obey God's commandment, the great concourse to Jerusalem from the whole surrounding area would result in material prosperity. The people would come to Jerusalem for the feasts, "bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat [cereal] offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the LORD." They would praise God for the daily benefits received. Incidentally, a condition of thankfulness is an area of our Christian walk where we can all improve.

**Jer. 17:27** But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

To heed the advice of Jeremiah with regard to the sabbath would bring security from on high. To ignore the advice would bring the destruction of the city and the "palaces" (the Temple and the residences of the king and other nobility). The gates of Jerusalem would be burned because an enemy customarily intruded upon the point of least resistance; that is, to burn the gates of the city was easier than breaking down the wall.

In verses 24-27, God threw down the gauntlet, as it were, and called the people's bluff, but they were only nominally His. By this method, their disobedience manifested the true situation, for they rejected Jeremiah and believed the false prophets. A *thinking Jew* today should get the point, for the sabbath is *still profaned*. God gave a *practical* lesson here that all could grasp.

**Comment:** Jeremiah 39:8 tells how the city was defeated in fulfillment of verse 27: "And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem."

**Reply:** After the enemy became resident in the city, a work crew systematically broke down the walls by removing the stones.

**Q:** What did Jesus mean when he said in Mark 2:27, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath"?

**A:** Not only were the benefits of the sabbath spiritual in that the people heard and meditated on the Word of God and were spiritually nourished, but also there were practical benefits in that the people and the animals rested. The sabbath was helpful to family life too because during the other six days, family members were often separated by long hours of labor. Along

another line, even metals are benefited by the sabbath, for when steel and other elements get fatigued, they are subject to fracture.

**Comment:** Agriculturally speaking, fields that rest periodically are more productive.

**Comment:** Even though Christians are not under the Law, they benefit by the spirit of the Law. Sunday should be a day for worship and meditation on the Lord as a family.

The initial step of turning to serve the Lord is remarkable. At the top of the Grand Gallery in the Great Pyramid is the Giant Step, which is before the Antechamber leading to the King's Chamber. Prior to consecration, the old creature may decline further understanding because of a Satanic influence and the realization that with knowledge comes responsibility. Such individuals do not properly evaluate or see the rewards of the Christian life, which are tenfold greater: peace of mind, knowing what God is doing, etc. The world sees the Christian life as a casket draped in the black sealskins of the Tabernacle, but inside are gold, enlightenment, and treasures of divine knowledge and blessings. At the step of turning aside is where the Adversary wants us to wait and think things over. If we delay too long, the fowl of the air come and pluck up the seed by the wayside (Matt. 13:3,4). But those who receive the seed into good and honest hearts bring forth fruit and are wonderfully blessed.

**Jer. 18:1** The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

**Jer. 18:2** Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

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

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

Jeremiah was told to go down to the potter's house, where he would hear God's words. As he witnessed the potter at work, he noticed that the vessel being formed out of clay was not what the potter wanted. Therefore, another vessel was made "as seemed good to the potter."

What are some of the unusual things we observe in this scenario? First, Jeremiah went "down" to the potter's house, which was south of Jerusalem in the area called "potter's field" when it was purchased many years later with the money Judas obtained for betraying Jesus (Matt. 27:3-8). God had said He would talk to Jeremiah down there, but there was no talking while the prophet witnessed the potter at work.

What is the lesson? The potter, who represented God, was working with the clay, which pictured Israel. For the potter to form the clay, it had to be malleable and soft, not dried. Then a defect was discerned, for "the vessel ... was marred in the hand of the potter." The marring, which was not the fault of the potter, refers to the unfavorable reaction of the people of Judah, who refused to repent and continued in their evil ways. In other words, the clay was the problem, not the potter's skill, for it contained an inherent defect, perhaps an air bubble. The potter's reusing the clay and changing it into "another vessel" shows that in spite of Israel's displeasing God by their attitude, He gave them another opportunity to repent and change their ways. In other words, if the people would change, He could make something useful.

When the potter made a second vessel out of the clay, he did what "seemed good" to him. The account seems to hint that if Israel changed their course, the vessel remade from the original

clay would not be exactly like the first vessel. Rather, the second vessel would be of some other kind and not quite as honorable as the original intent of the potter; it would be of less honor.

There are two kinds of dishonor, as follows:

1. *Less honor in the sense of another vessel that is of good use but is not quite as honorable as the previous one.* If Israel repented and yielded to the potter's control, there would be a good use but not of the same status they once had. Favor is coming back to Israel, but the nation lost the chief prize. Had the nation remained obedient, they would have been kings and priests on both a spiritual and an earthly level. Their future repentance in Jacob's Trouble and their mourning upon realizing that Jesus is their Messiah will make them malleable for use in the Kingdom as the blessing nation, as the earthly channel for Kingdom blessings.

2. *Shame whereby the vessel could be used for something very menial.* Clay pots were used for all kinds of purposes in ancient times. Accordingly, this second kind of dishonor would be utter rejection for special honor on either the spiritual or the earthly level.

The same two alternatives apply to the calling of the spiritual Church, namely, the Great Company or Second Death, respectively. And there are two categories in the Great Company. (1) Many make great advancement in running for the high calling and then fail. (2) Others are immature and do not ripen fully as wheat. Still other Christians draw back into Second Death, which is utter destruction. Thus, while Jeremiah was dealing with natural Israel, and while the potter-and-clay lesson applied primarily back there, it was also written for the edification of Christians, upon whom the ends of the age come (1 Cor. 10:11).

Based on later prophecies, we know there will be a future return of Jews to Israel. Jeremiah was a prophet before the destruction of Jerusalem in 606 BC, and Israelites did return to the homeland when Cyrus issued his decree in 536 BC. That return is a mini-picture of a reality that will occur at the end of the Gospel Age after Jacob's Trouble. The Jews who returned in 536 BC were a chastened people.

**Jer. 18:5** Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

**Jer. 18:6** O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

God, the Potter, likened the clay to the house of Israel. He is also the Potter with spiritual Israel. We are called God's "workmanship," and much depends on how malleable we are in His hand (Eph. 2:10).

**Jer. 18:7** At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;

**Jer. 18:8** If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

**Jer. 18:9** And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;

**Jer. 18:10** If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

Why did God say in verses 7 and 9, "At what instant I shall speak"? Usually a time comes when

a decision has to be definitely made. God is patient up to a certain point, and then a decision is made that becomes irrevocable. At that time, there is a change in God's conduct, or action, so that what once was favorable becomes either less favorable or unfavorable. The same is true with repentance. People can mourn and feel they have sinned and are drifting away from God, but just as they made the initial covenant of consecration, so they can reconsecrate. This is decision making, and when they completely unburden their heart, the Lord in His mercy gives them another opportunity to make good. Thus decision making is very important, not only at initial consecration but also later if one drifts away from the Lord. God looks for that instant, and when it occurs, He changes with it—in proportion to the nature of the turnaround.

Verse 8 is speaking about a change in the “clay”—a remolding and a remaking of it to bring the individual back into favor. In contrast, verse 10 says that if failure occurs *after* the remolding and the remaking, then God will not repent and bring the individual back into favor.

**Q:** Don't these verses have to be tempered with other Scriptures of the Old Testament, for otherwise, some would conclude that Israel was permanently cast off from favor?

**A:** That is true. Also, it is important to keep in mind that natural Israel is repeatedly used as a type. Of course some of the types and individuals picture Second Death, but what they picture and what the reality is are two different things. For instance, those who die in the holocaust when Gog and Magog come down will be resuscitated in the Kingdom. Moses pictured Jesus and The Christ, but he also pictured a Second Death class when he smote the rock in his own strength the second time. Therefore, God was enunciating a principle—that in spite of how grievous Israel's sin was, if the people truly repented and changed before the point of no return, there was the possibility of renewal along some line. However, when the decision came for the destruction of the nation, the judgment would be carried out. The hope for those who died in a judgment in the present life is that they will come out of the tomb in the general resurrection with an opportunity for life, for Jesus tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9).

Thus two alternatives are shown in verses 7-10. It is possible for a marred vessel to be remade, but if that happens, there is a hint that should the remade vessel also become marred, then the material has no further use. It is one thing to have a major fault, but if the person is malleable, he can repent. However, if the major fault occurs again, the potter concludes something is wrong with the clay, and he will not waste further time. Instead of a reworked lump, it would be a rejected lump. Then the potter would look elsewhere for a completely different lump.

### Summary

Jeremiah was told to go to the potter's house, where he observed what the potter was doing. Then God gave him a personal explanation.

The potter had all power over the clay to do with it as he wished. He used his hands to shape the clay as it revolved on a wheel. The clay was the medium, and the potter could rework spoiled clay; that is, he reworked the *same* lump when it was spoiled but made it into something else. Then the clay was kiln-dried.

*Character* lessons are usually given in regard to this picture. For example, we are to be pliant in the potter's hand (God's or Jesus' power). If not properly submissive, we will not be properly developed. However, there is also a *dispensational* lesson. The clay is likened to the nation of Israel. God gave a preliminary discourse first, making general statements, before He narrowed down the picture to Israel. If a people or a nation repents, God can withhold evil and destruction. (An example is the city of Nineveh when Jonah finally delivered his message.) The potter knows what he intends to make, whereas the onlooker does not necessarily know, for



the potter has the power. If God intends to destroy a nation, that is His prerogative, for He can both make and destroy. The potter (God) *can change His mind* depending on how a nation reacts, that is, whether it repents or goes into evil.

A point of development becomes very important as far as decision making and destiny are concerned. In this vision of the potter, the clay is to be either remade or rejected. There are two alternatives with regard to the first failure. One alternative is favorable but a little less favorable, and the other alternative is utter rejection. However, if the clay is remade but fails again, it is discarded, and another lump of clay is selected.

As stated in verse 9, if God's intent is to build, or plant, a nation, He can subsequently change His mind and destroy the nation if evil is done. After Jeremiah observed the potter, general principles were given. The specifics start with verse 11.

**Jer. 18:11** Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

**Jer. 18:12** And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.

Jeremiah was instructed to go and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Behold, I frame evil [calamity, or disaster] against you, and devise a device against you: return ... every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good." Why did the inhabitants respond, "There is no hope."

The people did not believe Jeremiah when he gave the message of verse 11. Now verse 12 gave their response, which reads as follows in the RSV: "That is in vain! We will follow our own plans." In other words, "We will do our *own* thing and in our *own* way."

The antitype is our day, shortly before the great Time of Trouble. The "kingdom" is the professed Kingdom-of-heaven class, Christendom, who will not listen to the feet members (see verse 7). The advice of ecumenism will prevail despite the cry of the feet members for principle. Of that time, God tells us, "Do not let *men* be your fear. Fear *God* and obey *Him*." For the clause "There is no hope," see the King James margin for Jeremiah 2:25. There the same statement is correctly expressed in question form: "Is the case desperate?" The people's answer to their own question will be, "No, we do not think it is desperate, so we will do our own thing."

**Comment:** Choosing to believe the false prophets, the people of Judah did not feel that the threat from the north was real. Thus they would continue to walk after the imaginations of their evil hearts.

**Reply:** The people did not believe in Jeremiah's credibility as a prophet because the false prophets contradicted him.

**Jer. 18:13** Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing.

God told Jeremiah to ask among the nations, "Who has heard such things?" The question was really for the Jews: "Can you find any precedent in history for taking the course you have chosen when God has done so many miracles on your behalf? Does anything justify your attitude?" No! The surrounding nations had viewed Israel like a spectacle, seeing God's

providences and extraordinary watch-care.

“The virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing.” Why was Israel called a “virgin”? God was comparing the people in their present condition near the end of the Period of the Kings to their condition when they first entered the Promised Land almost a thousand years earlier. Originally they were pure, relatively speaking.

**Jer. 18:14** Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?

**Jer. 18:15** Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up;

The NIV reads, “Does the snow of Lebanon ever vanish from its rocky slopes? Do its cool waters from distant sources ever cease to flow?” Israel would not leave the snow of Lebanon and the cool water, but the nation had left God. “My people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity [i.e., to false gods].” In Isaiah 1:3, God said, “Will an ox leave its source of food? No, but you left me. My people do not consider.” Israel left a fountain of blessing, a brook of running water, for a man-made, man-carved cistern of quiet water without truth.

**Comment:** Verse 14 is saying, “Even nature teaches you.”

**Reply:** This was sanctified common-sense reasoning; it was plain talk in harmony with the Word of God and scriptural principles.

For verse 15, the RSV has, “But my people ... have stumbled in their ways, in the ancient roads, and have gone into bypaths, not the highway [the paved road shown by Jehovah].” The Israelites left the ancient, time-proven, straight paths of truth for unknown, irregular, circuitous routes. Israel’s religious leadership was responsible for their negligence in properly instructing the people, for failing to warn them as watchmen, and for not helping them as shepherds.

**Jer. 18:16** To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.

God was speaking about *cause* (in the past and in the present) and *effect* (in the future). He would make the “land desolate, and a perpetual hissing [whistling]” unless the people repented. During the 70 years’ captivity, passersby observed the ruins of Jerusalem and realized it was a judgment from their God. Looking at the ruins of the grandeur that once was, they could not believe what they were seeing, and they whistled with astonishment. The same concept of judgment led to the Jews’ being called “Christ killers” in the Gospel Age.

**Comment:** Written from Babylonian captivity, Lamentations 2:15 states, “All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss [whistle] and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?”

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

A hot, dry, powerful “east wind,” the sirocco is devastating in the Middle East. “I will show them the back [side], and not the face, in the day of their calamity.” The back side represents disfavor. In other words, Israel would try to defend against the enemy, but the effort would be fruitless because God’s face (favor) would be turned against them. The situation in 606 BC

would be just like a sirocco, monsoon, or sandstorm, where there is no concentrated defense—it is a matter of individual survival with each person trying to preserve his own life. People cannot get together against an enemy when nature itself is destroying their focus. To the Israelites, the destruction under Nebuchadnezzar would be like stubbing a toe on a rock, being bitten by serpents, and getting sand in the eyes all at the same time.

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

Verse 18 is a change of thought. “Then said they.” The Pastor wrote that the pronoun “they” refers to the nominal people of God (in this case, the false fleshly Israelites), whereas “we” refers to true Israelites, either natural or spiritual.

“Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah.... Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.” The attempt by the people—particularly the *religious leaders* and the *false prophets*—was to drown out Jeremiah’s message with their own message. Wanting to stifle his influence, their attitude was, “We will counteract his message with a message of our own.”

Jeremiah was a loner, while all the judges, priests, and other prophets of Judah opposed him. They were saying in effect, “Shall we desert our own counsel for the advice of this traitor? The law will not perish.” In their estimation, Jeremiah was a dissenter and a disturber of the peace, and he was rocking the boat.

The counterpart “they” class in our day are the nominal religious leaders of Christendom. The froglike spirits will be teachings, doctrines of demons, that gather church and state together and get the people’s support to stifle the message of the feet members, who will be considered a cult (Rev. 16:13,14).

**Comment:** It is amazing that one man had such an impact. The whole nation feared him.

**Reply:** Jeremiah was a powerful speaker with the Lord’s backing and Spirit. His mannerisms, voice, and earnestness were all outstanding.

**Comment:** The hard-heartedness and arrogance of the people were manifested again and again.

Ezekiel and Jeremiah were contemporaries. Having been humbled and separated from the homeland, Ezekiel was already in Babylon, speaking to the Jews who were captive with him. Jeremiah, still in Judah, prophesied about the fate of the nation and received persecution as a result; he got flack because he was where the action was taking place. We learn a lot about history and get nuances of understanding by comparing the writings of the two prophets. Ezekiel was very informative, telling about the destruction of Jerusalem, the Third Temple of the future, and the blessings to come, but he did not get the same degree of persecution.

Like Jeremiah’s message, the end-time message of the feet members will not be popular, and everyone will be against those who proclaim it. With the feet members, however, there is one outstanding difference; namely, the civil authorities will be forced into the situation. They will see some sense in the message, but they will be constrained because of their own position and the need for support from their adherents. In Jeremiah’s day, the kings were as guilty as the prophets, judges, and priests.

We can certainly get the mood of what Jeremiah experienced, and his mood will be the

experience of the feet members. They will also be loners, outsiders, and dissenters. However, Jeremiah is not a type of the feet members, for a type is exact and mathematical; the similarity is more along emotional lines.

In regard to “Come, and let us smite him with [for] the tongue,” the religious leaders wanted to silence Jeremiah because they did not have a rebuttal. Exasperated, they could not fight reason with reason to stop him. Pashur, the one individual who thought he was capable, got retribution from the Lord through Jeremiah (Jer. 20:1-6).

Jeremiah did most of his prophesying in a relatively short period of time. He seemed to be going out every week with new instructions. People who went to the city probably tried to enter a gate where they felt he would not be speaking because they considered him a nuisance.

**Jer. 18:19 Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me.**

**Jer. 18:20 Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them.**

**Jer. 18:21 Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle.**

**Jer. 18:22 Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet.**

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

In verses 19-23, Jeremiah was praying to the Lord and recounting the people’s response to his message. He asked God to hear him and his request, for he knew that they were plotting to kill him; they were scheming and setting a trap. The false prophets and the recognized religious leaders, who followed their *own* concept of the Law, were all opposed to Jeremiah. Their attitude toward him reminds us of the end of the Jewish Age in regard to Jesus. “It is expedient that one man die lest a whole nation perish. We must preserve our Law and wise counselors” (John 11:50 paraphrase).

“Shall evil be recompensed for good?” Jeremiah was asking, “Lord, will you allow me to suffer and die for all my faithfulness to you?” He meant well and obeyed God, but only evil resulted for him. The leaders dug a pit for him, a trap. “Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them.” Previously the prophet had tried to defend the nation. He had acted like a mediator, trying to bring two disparate parties together, but now he felt differently and knew the situation was hopeless. He wanted judgment to be visited on the wicked, and he was specific regarding the women, the men, and the children. He realized the need for retribution.

What strong words in verse 21! Jeremiah’s attitude was proper, for he was really saying “Amen” to God’s prediction of trouble. Earlier he had tried to present the people’s case to God, but now he knew the trouble had to come. We must have Jeremiah’s attitude at the end of the age—even in regard to our natural families. Jeremiah saw the wisdom of the Lord’s method. And remember, the Lord still offered to avert the trouble *if there was sincere repentance*.

When a person is incorrigible, there should be no sorrow over his destruction, for such a one is *God's enemy*. David, Isaiah, and others had this proper attitude. David said, "I hate them [God's enemies] with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Psa. 139:22).

In verses 22 and 23, Jeremiah was not wishing the people of Judah into Second Death, but he realized that punishment and stripes were needed. The *degree of light* determines the *degree of responsibility*. Sin against *full light* merits Second Death. In his life, Jeremiah manifested a *love of righteousness* and a *hatred of iniquity*. It is touching that at the end of his prayer, he said, "LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me."

The clause "Let a cry be heard from their houses" reminds us of the cry in the houses of Egypt when the destroying angel went through and all the firstborn died. "Thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them [the people of Judah]." This happened when Nebuchadnezzar burst through the city wall after the long siege. Similarly at the end of this age, we see all the signs of impending danger, but the real trouble will come very suddenly.

"For they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet." In looking for ways to trap Jeremiah, the leadership used decoys and camouflage. The ground looked safe, but the danger was there, and they were watching his every move.

"Neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal thus with them in the time of thine anger." This righteous indignation reminds us of some of David's Psalms. Such was Jeremiah's mood now, and the Lord would use it for the next instruction.

Jeremiah was subject to mood swings. Having the people's interest at heart, he repeatedly pleaded for them earlier. But his attitude changed as he recognized the degree of their wickedness. In addition, he questioned God because he did not understand the permission of evil. Since those with present truth at the end of the Gospel Age have this understanding, they are more responsible.

**Comment:** In turning from wanting to spare the people to wanting to destroy them, Jeremiah had a great love for the nation and the people. They could not see that he was trying to keep them from Jehovah's wrath, but now, being fed up, he said, "What kind of lesson will this be if you allow the people to punish me for what I have said? They will think they are right."

**Reply:** Yes, this is a real back-and-forth narrative of true history. When this generation comes forth from the grave, the people will not be able to say, "Why didn't you tell us?" If God had not raised up a "Jeremiah," the people would have some excuse, but this way they will more likely be humbled. Also, we can see the effects of sin. When wrong deeds are done over a period of time, there is an affinity for that habit of perverseness, and when a *habit* of any kind is developed, it is harder to change. The exceeding sinfulness of sin is made apparent in the fact that almost an entire nation was going down the sewer, as it were. But the Lord raised up Jeremiah, and a very small remnant was spared. Otherwise, where would Israel be? Thus the mission was successfully accomplished. We are reminded of Noah and the seven souls with him who were spared and carried over from the dispensation before the Flood. The whole population today can trace their ancestry back to those eight individuals.

What a powerful mission Jeremiah had to perform! God had to strengthen him continually for this task.

**Jer. 19:1** Thus saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests;

**Jer. 19:2 And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee,**

Jeremiah was instructed to secure a potter's earthen vessel and have some of the older priests and some of the elders, or civil leaders, hear a message from the Lord. Under the Law, there was a separation between clergy and laity, whereas in the Gospel Age, all Christians are called to be priests. There were 70 elders in Moses' day, and this concept was carried forward to become the Sanhedrin, which existed at the time of our Lord's First Advent (Exod. 24:1,9; Num. 11:24,25).

How could Jeremiah, an *unpopular* prophet, "take of the ancients" of the people and of the priests? For this to occur would mean that in spite of his being persecuted and his message not being heeded, he had a certain air of authority to be able to tell others to accompany him to the Valley of Hinnom. However, the supplied word "take" is misleading and should be omitted.

We conjecture that on certain occasions, it must have been the custom in Jeremiah's day for the ancients to be by the "east gate" representatively. That way the 24 priests, as well as the Sanhedrin, would have been at the gate representing the people on this unnamed occasion (perhaps on a feast day), and Jeremiah went there to take advantage of the existing custom. This reasoning makes sense because it is unlikely that the ancients, who despised him and his message, would have obeyed a command to accompany him.

The "potter's earthen bottle" would have been a beautiful prized clay vessel, perhaps used for water. The vessel represented Jerusalem, which, with all of its promises and potential, had to be destroyed because of disobedience.

Jeremiah was told to take the clay vessel to the Valley of Hinnom. Since Hinnom was on the south side of the city, the translation should be the "*south gate*" instead of the "east gate." The RSV calls it the "Potsherd Gate." The valley containing potter's clay was located to the south, and Young's *Analytical Concordance* defines the Hebrew word *charsith*, which is translated "east" in the KJV, as "pottery."

To exit the Golden Gate on the east would have required going through the Temple area, which was not meant to be a thoroughfare. Hence the logical gate to use seems to be the gate to the south that was in closest proximity to where the potters worked. On the man-made hill (or "high place") entering the Valley of Hinnom, there was an altar to Baal. Jeremiah went to the brow of this hill to give his message to the witnesses.

**Q:** Is "potter's field" still in Jerusalem today?

**A:** Yes, but since other materials are used, there is no longer a necessity for clay vessels. Back there when people worshipped and brought incense, etc., they had to discard the vessels. The Valley of Hinnom, which was used for the disposal of garbage, was also on the south of the city, so potter's field and the Valley of Hinnom were more or less together. Today the gate nearest these two locations is the Dung Gate. A person would just exit the Dung Gate and turn right or left depending on where he was going.

"The valley of the son of Hinnom" sets the mood for Jeremiah's actions, which, in harmony with the Lord's instruction, were associated with death and doomsday, especially when we think of Judas. Therefore, Jeremiah was told to go to a particular gate by the Valley of Hinnom and proclaim the words that God would give him. In other words, he obediently went to the designated location, not knowing in advance what the message would be.

Incidentally, Judas Iscariot was buried in potter's field after committing suicide (Matt. 27:3-10). "Falling headlong, he burst asunder ... and all his bowels gushed out" down into that valley, so he was buried in this very area near the Valley of Hinnom (Acts 1:18,19).

"Baal" is a term that covers Molech, Ashtoreth, and other false gods and idol worship, but sometimes it refers to a particular type of worship with the sun god. The fact that the sun god was worshipped in the Hinnom area supports the thought that a south gate was used instead of an east gate. Moreover, the sun god was worshipped with fire. It is interesting that the King James margin has "the sun gate."

**Q:** Does the expression "the valley of the *son* of Hinnom" imply that Hinnom was an actual person? In 2 Kings 23:10, the expression is "the valley of the *children* of Hinnom."

**A:** We do not think Hinnom (or Gehenna) was a particular person. The "son" or "children" would be the worshippers of Molech, the fire god. In this play on words, the Jews were supposed to be the "children of Israel." Israel means "prince with God," referring to Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, but the name later came to have a plural significance, hence the (plural) children of Jacob. Thus, even though Jacob and Israel are singular, they have a plural connotation.

**Jer. 19:3** And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.

When Jeremiah got to the Valley of Hinnom, he was mechanically moved by the Spirit to give a pronouncement regarding the coming destruction (verses 3-9). The pronouncement began, "Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem," suggesting that the occasion was a particular holy day, in which the congregants went to that gate. The king and the princes would have been present. By addressing the "kings" (plural) of Judah, Jeremiah was probably addressing past posterity as well as the current king occupying the office and any future kings in his loins.

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil [calamity] upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle." Jeremiah opened his discourse with this remark. The people were so accustomed to the nature of his messages in the past that they would have thought, "Oh, some more of that!" But this message would make their ears tingle. In other words, "What you are about to hear will shock you so much that your ears will tingle with anger and emotion."

**Jer. 19:4** Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents;

**Jer. 19:5** They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:

Verse 4 is similar to other statements of Jeremiah. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had "estranged this place [the Valley of Hinnom, which is later called Gehenna]" by worshipping other gods. They had polluted the worship of Jehovah by the proximity of this evil practice to the Temple environs. In fact, the Temple was within a short walking distance. "They ... have burned incense in it [the Valley of Hinnom] unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah." This practice started gradually—like sin. Sin starts with a little

seed, which multiplies, grows, prospers, and accumulates. Finally at this time, which was near the end of the 513-year Period of the Kings, heathen worship was so out of alignment that the area was filled with the “blood of innocents,” meaning that infants and very young children, who did not know good and evil, were burned as *live* offerings to “Baal,” that is, to Molech.

Jeremiah was talking about the abominable *practice*. Evidently, instead of just one statue, there were multiple ovens because more than a few offerings were made. We recall how Solomon enlarged the regular altar to accommodate offerings for the dedication of the Temple. Since the regular altar was not sufficient for all the animals to be offered within the time allotted for the ceremony, a whole area was considered as the altar for that occasion. Here the same thing happened with the practice of Molech. Instead of one god with fire arms, there were others so that all *live* offerings of firstborn children could be done within the time frame of a day. Thus we can see the depth of the people’s depravity. Moreover, the screaming of the infants added to the ardor of this macabre worship. In the sacrifices God ordained for the Tabernacle and the Temple, the animals were slain *before* they were offered on the altar of fire. In Molech worship, the agony of the victim was regarded as a purifying or pacifying incense to appease the fire god, who was a demon. Imagine, this god of hate was fed live children in order to be pacified!

“They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal.” The word “sons” is used here, but if there was no son, the firstborn daughter was offered instead, and this substitutionary method was acceptable.

Verse 5 is an excellent text to combat the doctrine of hellfire, which teaches that those who do not accept Jesus in the present life have a destiny of eternally roasting in fire. “They [the worshippers of Molech] ... burn their sons with fire ... which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind.” For the great Jehovah, who can think on all kinds of subjects, such a concept never entered His mind because it is so abhorrent, yet billions are supposedly relegated to hellfire.

**Jer. 19:6 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter.**

Here is another evidence that Jeremiah was talking in the vicinity of the Valley of Hinnom (or Tophet), which pertained to fire worship and was south of Jerusalem. The valley was filled with the “blood of innocents” (children who were passed through the fire). As obvious retribution, the parents would be killed by Nebuchadnezzar and thrown into this very valley, which would then be called “The valley of slaughter.”

**Jer. 19:7 And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.**

“I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place.” What was this “counsel”? It is true that the false prophets prophesied peace and said that within two years, the threat of King Nebuchadnezzar would be removed entirely, but we are more inclined to think of the counsel in the following light. As the capital, Jerusalem was the center of the people’s affection, for it was there that they sought guidance from the priests or the king or through prayer. Jerusalem, “this place,” would vanish as a hope and come to naught as a center of information.

“I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives.” Jeremiah had predicted this defeat earlier, but now God was leading to a climax through the prophet’s mouth. In other words, the people were familiar with this type of



message, but little by little, Jeremiah would bring in more of the nitty-gritty detail.

“Their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.” The slain would not be buried. Not only would their carcasses remain on the ground, but also they would be eaten by vultures and animals and have no place of memory.

**Jer. 19:8 And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof.**

The glorious city would be reduced to such a terrible state of ruins that passersby would shake their heads and make a particular type of whistle (“hiss”) in astonishment “because of all the plagues [the evidences of destruction].” They would see the results of the different types of destruction that took place on the city.

In regard to the antitype, just as there was a judgment on Jerusalem, the capital of professed religion back there, so there will be a judgment on Rome in the future. The word “plagues” is the key to this thought.

**Jer. 19:9 And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.**

Jeremiah continued to prophesy the escalating nature of the destruction. The famine caused by the coming siege would be so terrible that the people would eat the flesh of their own sons and daughters and also the flesh of their friends. Now the ears of the priests and the elders began to tingle, as Jeremiah had predicted (verse 3).

“And I will cause them to eat ... flesh.” In the dire conditions of the siege in 606 BC, some of the Israelites actually ate other humans, as stated in Lamentations 4:9,10, “They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.”

Jeremiah said that what God would do was based on the people’s past sins. Jeremiah’s prophesying began toward the end of Josiah’s reign, but the time setting here was years later. During the interim, the people changed and hardened their hearts. (Their hearts were softened during Josiah’s reign, but the people lost their opportunity for true repentance by returning to sin.) In chapter 18, the potter (God) could rework the clay, but in chapter 19, the vessel was hardened in sin and was good for nothing but destruction (verse 15).

**Q:** How long did the siege last?

**A:** The siege continued for a little more than a year. Jeremiah’s advice was to submit and go willingly into captivity. The people’s best hope was to flee from the city when Nebuchadnezzar came down and go out and depend on the mercy of the Chaldeans, a very brutal race, a “bitter and hasty nation” (Hab. 1:6). Their guttural language was so hard that it grated on the ears, and their temperament harmonized with their way of speaking. Only the very few who believed Jeremiah survived and were taken captive to Babylon.

**Jer. 19:10 Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee,**

**Jer. 19:11 And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter’s vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and**

**they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury.**

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter’s vessel, that cannot be made whole again.” The climax came when Jeremiah *smashed* the earthen vessel in the sight of the priests and the elders who were present (verse 1). How impressive the *shattering sound* would have been in the dry air! Just as the vessel was shattered so thoroughly that it could not be mended, so God would break the city and the people.

Onlookers would have been puzzled about the “bottle,” or clay vessel, in Jeremiah’s hand. As he was prophesying, they would have wondered what he would do with the bottle. Sometimes even though people hear things they do not like, they have a fascination and an attraction for the unknown. And so here, the vessel was an unknown factor that aroused their curiosity. From one standpoint, the smashing of the vessel climaxed what Jeremiah had just said, but even more significant were his postremarks, for he would tell of other things as the Lord informed him.

The breaking of the potter’s vessel can be equated to the smiting of the image in Daniel 2. The destruction will be *sudden and complete*. “Thou shalt dash them [the nations] in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psa. 2:9; compare Rev. 2:26,27 and Isa. 30:14).

“And they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury.” Tophet would become a graveyard. What previously was a potter’s field and a place of worship would not be sufficient for the number that would perish.

**Comment:** Apparently, the Jews tried to bury some of the dead, but they were overwhelmed by the great numbers.

**Reply:** The picture is complicated. At first, the people tried to bury the dead, but as time went on, they got so weak from the famine that the bodies were left unburied, smell and all.

**Jer. 19:12 Thus will I do unto this place, saith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet:**

Tophet was the hill of Baal’s altar in the Valley of Hinnom. The valley became a cemetery instead of a place of reverence. So many would die that there would be no place to bury them, and corpses would lie exposed. The names Molech, Baal, Tophet, and Hinnom are all associated.

**Jer. 19:13 And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods.**

Defiling would occur through contact with dead bodies in connection with the coming destruction. Under the Law, to even touch the garment of a dead person caused defiling. Dead bodies would be in the houses, and corpses would even start to rot before they could be carried out or buried. This was retribution for the incense the people had burned and for the drink offerings they had poured out to other gods (plural).

Throwing the corpse of a criminal on the garbage dump signified the individual would get no resurrection. That is what the people thought, for they believed one would come back with the *same* body.

There were two types of offering. One was given to the priest, and the other was poured out

on the ground. In the latter case, the empty earthen vessel was then intentionally smashed, so mounds of potsherd debris resulted. Just as these vessels were broken previously, so Jerusalem would be broken. Thus Jeremiah's smashing of the vessel made an association in the people's minds of how they had previously smashed vessels in their false incense offerings.

The "host of heaven" consisted of the sun, the moon, and the stars. The people offered drink offerings to these false gods on the roofs of their houses instead of offering them to God in the Temple.

**Jer. 19:14** Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD'S house; and said to all the people,

**Jer. 19:15** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

Immediately after giving the sermon and breaking the vessel, Jeremiah went from Tophet and stood in the court of the Temple, where he spoke again. A strange thing about human nature is that even though Jeremiah predicted all these evils, a certain segment of the populace followed him as he went to the court, for they wanted to see what more this madman would say. Jeremiah's message in Tophet was so strong that repercussions occurred almost immediately (see Jer. 20:1,2).

The God of Israel would bring all the prophesied calamities not only on Jerusalem and its inhabitants but also on the numerous surrounding towns of Judah because of their hardened necks. Once Jerusalem, the capital, the backbone of the nation, was destroyed, the towns would be an easy prey; they would be similarly destroyed.

How many Jews today study the Old Testament? Most would be turned off by these prophecies, so some credit has to be given to those Orthodox Jews who read all of the Old Testament. Orthodox Jews have more veneration for the Word, generally speaking, but because of the distastefulness of books like Jeremiah, most Jews read only the Pentateuch, the Torah. The Pastor felt that a larger portion of the Holy Remnant would come from Orthodoxy, and we are inclined to agree. For a Jew to persevere through the Book of Jeremiah and want to know about the past history of his people and what the future might portend, he would have to really love the Lord.

**Jer. 20:1** Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things.

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

As the son of Immer the priest, Pashur was of the lineage of Aaron. He was also the chief governor in the Temple, having civil authority as a chief officer. Pashur "heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things"; that is, he was not present, but just hearing the report secondhand incensed him to the extent that he went to Jeremiah and smote him publicly. It is possible that the public smiting took place when Jeremiah was giving the second discourse, the one in the Temple court. At any rate, Pashur, the son of a *priest*, beat Jeremiah and "put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin," which was near the Temple. Contrary to what modern scholars say about Jeremiah's being put in prison, the "stocks" (plural) had a hole for the head and neck, holes for the wrists and hands, and usually holes for the feet also. People spit on the one in the stocks, and they hit, cursed, and mocked him.

**Jer. 20:3** And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib.

Jeremiah was kept in the stocks for a whole day, being subjected to physical abuse and humiliation. When Pashur released him the next day, Jeremiah said, “Jehovah has changed your name to Magor-missabib.” This new name, which was prophetic, has a variety of different meanings in concordances and commentaries, but the word “terror” is involved—“terror everywhere,” “terror on every side.” Some think it means an “abomination” with the thought of fear attached to it.

Jeremiah himself was regarded as a madman and a troublemaker who was not conducive to the peace of Jerusalem in any way. He struck fear in the hearts of those who were timid.

**Jer. 20:4** For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword.

**Jer. 20:5** Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon.

**Jer. 20:6** And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

*Immediately* upon Jeremiah’s release the next day—after such a persecuting experience—he pronounced the *same kind of strong message* that had led to his being put in the stocks in the first place. What a marvelous character he was! Jeremiah was emotional but *firm in principle*—with the *Lord’s* help. Because he told of the retribution that would come, the people thought he was nonpatriotic and a liar and a traitor.

Through Jeremiah, God said of Pashur, “I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends.” Pashur would be taken captive by the king of Babylon, but in connection with the downfall of the city, he was made “a terror” to himself and to all his friends. Certainly Pashur’s friends were sympathetic with his maligning and mistreating of Jeremiah, putting him in the stocks, etc., but when they heard about this prophecy of Pashur’s doom, they probably withdrew from him out of fear. Their reaction was retribution for how Jeremiah had lost his friends. Pashur’s being “a terror” to himself means that when the enemy broke into Jerusalem, he tried to hide. Meanwhile, some of his friends were slain in the city, and somehow it became manifest to Pashur that all those sympathetic to him would, one by one, be dealt with in a terrible way—as though to say he was next. However, he was taken captive to Babylon.

It is interesting that those of Pashur’s friends who happened to escape and were carried captive to Babylon with him were slain there. This was an exception, for Nebuchadnezzar’s policy was to spare the lives of the captives that were taken to Babylon. Thus Pashur was taken into captivity *in shame*, not honorably like Daniel and Ezekiel.

At the time of the siege, King Zedekiah tried to flee Jerusalem and sneak down to the river Jordan by a back gate, but he was captured and taken to Riblah in northern Israel, where his

sons were slain in his presence and his eyes were put out. From there, he was taken to Babylon. Two prophecies seem to contradict, for one prophecy said that Zedekiah would not die but would be taken captive to Babylon, and the other said he would not see Babylon. However, both prophecies were fulfilled, for his eyes were put out and then he was taken to Babylon, where he died.

Some of those with Zedekiah were slain in the border town of Riblah, and some, including the friends of Pashur, were slain in Babylon. When news got out in Babylon that these individuals had persecuted Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar made sure they were put to death; that is, he took revenge on them for Jeremiah's sake. Not only was the retribution apparent to Pashur, but he was dealt with as well. He survived long enough to see all his friends who were not slain in Jerusalem die by the sword in Babylon because of their association with him. We assume that Pashur, too, died by the sword, for after seeing all his friends die one by one, he would have been slain last of all.

“And thou, Pashur, ... shalt come to Babylon, and ... thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast *prophesied lies*.” As a false prophet, Pashur “prophesied lies” of peace that contradicted Jeremiah's truth about the coming destruction.

**Jer. 20:7 O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.**

These were strong words from Jeremiah. Although he said at this low point, “O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived,” that was not a true statement, for God tries and tests His people but does not tempt (or deceive) them. God had told Jeremiah earlier, when He called the prophet, that all the people would oppose him but that He would make Jeremiah brazen walls and an iron pillar (Jer. 1:18). Therefore, Jeremiah was not deceived, for God had forewarned him that the message would be unpopular and would bring persecution.

Apparently, Jeremiah was not given information about a personal reward for faithfulness, but he did have access to part of the Holy Scriptures, so he could have known that God has a plan and that He would eventually rescue Israel. Thus there was some hope for mankind in the future, and this is where faith comes in, yet here was sort of a derogatory statement. However, we, too, even with all the light we possess in the Harvest period, have low and high points. Therefore, it is encouraging that God, in His mercy, dealt with Jeremiah. In the final analysis, Jeremiah did not forsake the Lord and go “out of the truth,” but he did begin to question Him and His intent. Jeremiah admitted that God's wisdom and power were overwhelming, especially when he was instructed in the inner ear with such a strong, authoritative voice.

When the angel Gabriel spoke, Daniel was awed at first; he was stunned and knocked off his feet. But then Gabriel strengthened Daniel. And here Jeremiah was strengthened so that he could continue to deliver the same type of message. Just as this was a real test for Jeremiah, so the Lord tests Christians to the limit. The greater the maturity of the individual, the greater the test. God judges us as to how we react to the test, and Proverbs 24:16 encourages us with the words “a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.” If we are rightly exercised, renewal is followed by continuing to try to do the Lord's will. The Book of Lamentations reveals the soul of Jeremiah, and his tears and feelings show repentance and reformation.

Thus in verse 7, we see a low period in Jeremiah. Some have committed suicide, thinking they have sinned the sin unto Second Death. One particular individual went around to elders, asking their advice, and then took his own life. We have often wondered what advice he was given with regard to the low point he was experiencing.

Therefore, while this low point was a failing of Jeremiah, we see how the Lord dealt with him, and we see how the prophet continued. Job did some of the same things, yet he is listed as one of the personal favorites of God. With such a commendation, we know that Job made his calling and election sure in spite of some of the things he said. If someone spoke something very disparaging to us or stepped on our spiritual corns, would we hold that as a grudge for the rest of our life? The tendency of fallen human nature is to do that very thing. However, we do not believe that God held these statements against Jeremiah in the long term. Momentarily yes, God did criticize Jeremiah in an earlier chapter, but the principle is that He “knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psa. 103:14).

**Q:** Would we describe this tendency as the struggle between the flesh and the spirit?

**A:** Yes, this was the reaction of the flesh. However, what is important is that Jeremiah did not remain in that state.

**Comment:** Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).

**Reply:** Jonah is another example, and Jesus did not speak disparagingly of him. We are given only a little synopsis of his life, but evidently, there was a real change.

Today we have more light and hence more responsibility than the prophets of the Old Testament, but the lesson is that if one falls, he should not commit suicide or go back into the world but should renew his consecration and go forward.

**Comment:** The thought of Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16 is that all scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, and here is an example. We can learn from Jeremiah’s experience, but certainly the words he uttered at a low point were not inspired by God.

**Reply:** Yes. Jeremiah was speaking personally here, not as a prophet or mouthpiece of God.

Prior to consecration, I was very critical from the standpoint of having a mathematical-type mind frame. Many leading brethren came into the home where I was staying, but I could not follow their logic. The one the Lord used was a man who had little understanding and logic, but what moved me was his spirit, which was different from that of anyone else I had ever met. While he did not bring me into the truth, I knew what he believed. The *Reprints* and the *Volumes* were then delivered to the front door by a postman and just dumped in my lap, as it were, and I came into the truth through reading. The point is that one particular man touched me, whereas the others had spoken more mechanically. I knew he had something.

The next step was to see that the Bible was inspired of God. In an early chapter of the *First Volume*, Bro. Russell used rational logic in giving reasons why the Bible is the Word of God. For instance, the Bible exposes the weak points of its heroes. The fact that their faults are depicted shows it is not of human manufacture. A novelist would have garnished the hero and not have tried to give insight into any inner faults, such as the Apostle Peter manifested in denying Jesus. But subsequently Peter indeed became a rock.

Thus little insights into the character of individuals in Scripture are important. For instance, we are given a touching insight into some of Ezra’s thinking and fears when he refused protection from the king of Persia, who wanted an armed guard to accompany Ezra and the Israelites back to Israel with the Temple treasures. Ezra had been bragging about the Almighty God of the Jews, so he felt that to accept the armed guard would be demeaning to the character of the One he worshipped. In short, the Bible is the truth. The prophets of old spoke as they were

moved by the Spirit of God. The insight into Jeremiah is very helpful because as we continue to study this book, we see changes.

“I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.” The consecrated of all ages have to fight a fight of faith. They know God called them, yet they experience moments when they do not feel strong enough. This was a “down” period with Jeremiah, but it was followed by strengthening. A moment of depression, or despondency, is not a barometer of overall character. The Apostle Paul also felt this way momentarily but was subsequently strengthened. And Moses, too, had a moment of weakness. Thus a moment of wavering, doubt, or questioning is not indicative of a whole life. We should not judge hastily.

Earlier Jeremiah felt he was not strong enough to deliver God’s message, but God, who was a better judge of his character, strengthened him; that is, He “prevailed” by persuading Jeremiah to proclaim the message. Likewise, Moses felt insufficient when he was called by God, and accordingly, he asked for a mouthpiece (Exod. 4:1-16). It is true that Jeremiah experienced frustration over the meager results of his preaching, but God never promised great results.

**Jer. 20:8** For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.

Jeremiah’s words sound a little like what Mother Eve said as an excuse: “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Gen. 3:13). Adam also made an excuse—“The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat”—but he had transgressed willfully.

In giving the message, Jeremiah was mocked daily. His message was one of *judgment*, and because he had announced it with *strength, zeal, energy, and animation*, the “word of the LORD” became a reproach and a derision unto him. When King Nebuchadnezzar came and left without doing all that Jeremiah had predicted, the people mocked because Jeremiah had been *so confident and sure* of the message. However, 11 years later under Zedekiah, the message came true, and Jeremiah was vindicated by the destruction.

In the antitype, the expectation that all would conclude in 1914 brought derision, for the public considered the message false. As a result, many consecrated ones departed from the faith.

**Jer. 20:9** Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

What was Jeremiah’s reaction? “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name.” Could any statement be more negative? Temporarily, he was frustrated and depressed. (Christians have similarly experienced a pattern of testing from time to time during the Gospel Age, for example, the disappointment of the Millerite movement and the French Revolution.) However, after reflecting on the situation, Jeremiah renewed his ministry. “But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” He knew the warning was necessary, and who else could give it? The calling was true, and he gave the message with renewed vigor. The “fire” in his bones reminds us of the “live coal,” the coal of fire, that was put on Isaiah’s tongue (Isa. 6:6,7).

**Comment:** Verse 9 is an illustration of the struggle between the flesh and the spirit. With regard to persecution, the flesh says, “Enough,” but the new creature within us cannot be quiet.

**Jer. 20:10** For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be

enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

Imagine Jeremiah's living as a loner in such an atmosphere! It seemed as if the entire nation was against him, not just outsiders but even his family. Earlier those of Anathoth, the city of priests from which he came—his relatives—ridiculed him. Now even his close friends (all his "familiar") denounced him. They wanted to trap him by his own words, just as the scribes and Pharisees tried to trap Jesus. Thus Jeremiah was under this pressure and was no doubt regarded as a madman with an evil heart and a bad spirit. Sometimes the Lord's people of the Gospel Age have this same experience.

Those who mocked, the great majority, were *bold* as a general rule, while others in the nation, a very small minority, were *fearful*. To this latter class, Jeremiah said to submit and go peaceably to Babylon. Some followed this advice, even though they were accused of being cowards by the majority. The rest died by the sword, famine, and pestilence.

Jeremiah was in a prayerful attitude. He was saying, "The persecutions are coming daily. I have been preaching the judgment message for a long time, and I am weary with forbearing." When we consecrate, the Lord hands us a contract entitled "My Will Concerning You" and says, "Sign the bottom line." We do not read the contract in advance, but in signing our name, we put our faith in the Lord. Thus we consecrate, not knowing what awaits us of either joys or sorrows. If we have a long consecrated life and could read about all the experiences in advance, we probably would not consecrate, but God gives us the strength, step by step, to go on. "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). By faith, we sign the bottom line. By faith, Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees with a limited promise, not knowing he would be asked to offer his son as a sacrifice. At our initial consecration, we all start as babes and have the understanding of a babe, relatively speaking. But then, by God's grace, we grow as a new creature. It is encouraging to see that the "God of patience" helped Jeremiah with his discouragement (Rom. 15:5).

**Jer. 20:11** But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

Jeremiah was up and down emotionally. Earlier he pleaded with the people to listen, telling them that their lives were in jeopardy if they did not repent. Now he saw the need for retribution and judgment not only on Judah but also on his persecutors. "Therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten." We are reminded of David: "O Lord, give me a perfect hatred" (Psa. 139:22 paraphrase).

God was with Jeremiah, giving strength so that the mockers and the persecutors would not overcome him. And in due time, God would take vengeance on the evildoers. There will be "eternal dishonor" (see the RSV) when Jeremiah's life is played back in the Kingdom and the detractors are shamed.

**Comment:** The principle will be the same when Babylon, the "great city," is destroyed, and the "smoke of her burning" remains (Rev. 18:9,18).

**Jer. 20:12** But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

Jeremiah realized that he needed to be tried and that his disappointment and discouragement were necessary, but now he had to go on with his mission and message. He would continue to publicly pronounce judgment, but he wanted to see his persecutors eat humble pie. The



prophet had confidence that God sees “the reins and the heart,” that He knows an individual’s true intent and will for good or for bad. “Let me see thy vengeance on them.” There is “a time to love, and a time to hate” (Eccl. 3:8). Thus ended Jeremiah’s prayer.

**Jer. 20:13 Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers.**

Verse 13 is a separate thought, a paragraph break. God will vindicate His servants in due time. When we see this assurance in Scripture, we rejoice. When one who is unjustly treated has his cause championed, we are glad. Eventually God will vindicate His own name as well as the names of His servants.

**Jer. 20:14 Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.**

Verses 14-18 are a new paragraph. Jeremiah’s voicing his grievance reminds us of Job, who was tested *severely* and was despondent in the intensity of his trials. It is good that the Lord does not always answer our prayers in the affirmative, for sometimes we ask for things it is better we do not get.

One lesson is that we are not to judge someone by his *moments* of depression. We should not be joyful and happy under *every* circumstance, for no trial for the moment seems joyful but grievous (Heb. 12:11). In a severe trial, we may have momentary adverse emotions.

**Comment:** God had told Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5). Therefore, Jeremiah knew that God had ordained him for a special purpose, but now he was so low that he temporarily forgot what had been said.

**Reply:** Sometimes suffering, sickness, and/or fatigue may disclose things that are not really us. However, we cannot make excuses for an aberrant lifestyle.

**Jer. 20:15 Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad.**

In verses 14 and 15, Jeremiah cursed his mother and father for bearing him. How blue the prophet felt in experiencing another wave of despondency! Just as with Jesus—and many Christians—his experiences were depression, strengthening, depression, strengthening, etc. The feet members, too, will have these alternating experiences.

We can judge wrong conduct, but emotions waver, so we should not judge the latter too hastily. Fatigue, weakness, medicine, etc., can all make us more susceptible to depression—at least momentarily.

Here, as well as elsewhere, we are given an insight into Jeremiah’s character. The honesty and frankness of the Lord’s Word reveal these things. The characters of the 144,000 will be made manifest when their biographies are shown in the Kingdom. Necessary and profitable strengths and weaknesses will be revealed.

**Jer. 20:16 And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide;**

Jeremiah was saying, “Cursed be the man who brought the tidings of my birth. Let him have

the fear of seeing an enemy approaching and feel the alarm of being conquered and hearing a victory shout at noon.” These words, which are almost unbelievable, show that at times, a person may go berserk in what he thinks and says. Hopefully, such words are not uttered in a public fashion.

We continue to get an insight into the character of Jeremiah. Certainly in later life, he made up for these words, which were uttered in the depth of despondency.

**Comment:** Jeremiah must have just suffered severe persecution and felt he could not take any more.

**Reply:** Ever since we went part way down into Jeremiah’s cistern and saw its depth, we have periodically thought of his being way down in the ground in cold water with only a tiny hole of daylight far above his head. What an experience of isolation! The cistern is near the Garden Tomb.

**Jer. 20:17** Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me.

**Jer. 20:18** Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

How painful it must have been for Jeremiah to later record these thoughts he had during his low periods of wishing he had died in the womb and been a stillborn! As a prophet to Judah immediately prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, he pictures the feet members in regard to the destruction of Christendom.

**Jer. 21:1** The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying,

**Jer. 21:2** Inquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.

The word of God came to Jeremiah as the siege of Jerusalem was about to be implemented. Since the siege began in the ninth year of Zedekiah, the time setting was about 1 1/2 years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Zedekiah instructed Pashur, the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah, the son of a priest, saying, “Inquire ... of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar ... maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he [the king of Babylon] may go up [withdraw—RSV] from us.” (This Pashur is different from the one in Jeremiah 20:1.) How interesting! Previously Jeremiah was ignored, but now Zedekiah wanted his advice because the king of Babylon was at Jerusalem. All along the false prophets, claiming to be Jehovah’s spokesmen, had prophesied peace. But when Nebuchadnezzar began to surround the city on three sides, the threat was a reality. Like a deathbed confession, the king suddenly became “converted,” as it were, hoping that Jeremiah’s answer would be favorable, that the king of Babylon would depart and not attack.

Zedekiah wanted the Lord to intervene without the necessary condition of repentance. “Pray ... that the LORD will deal with us according to all his *wondrous* works.” They were worshipping idols, but now that they were under fire from the enemy, their king hypocritically sought help from Jehovah.

Was Zedekiah really humble? No. However, this incident shows that Jeremiah was a true prophet. Because he had *faithfully* prophesied, inquiry was now made of him. Similarly at the end of the age, God will set the stage for some of the feet members to have unusual witnessing opportunities before “kings,” etc.

**Jer. 21:3** Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah:

**Jer. 21:4** Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city.

**Jer. 21:5** 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.

**Jer. 21:6** And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence.

Jeremiah responded to Zedekiah’s two messengers with a stern message and a dire prediction of destruction. The city would be under siege, and many would die from pestilence, sword, and famine. Thus, instead of praying for Judah’s deliverance from this threat, Jeremiah replied in a negative fashion. God would use an “outstretched hand” and a “strong arm” in *anger, fury, and great wrath*. The Heavenly Father used repetition as if to say, “Pay attention!”

In lieu of a favorable reply to the slanted inquiry of Zedekiah, God said through Jeremiah, “I will assemble them [the Babylonians] into the midst of this city.” In other words, not only would the city be taken, but it would be inundated, for the enemy would come in like a flood at the end of the siege. Other accounts tell that Nebuchadnezzar came in suddenly in 606 BC.

In verse 5, God’s “strong arm” signifies power, and His “outstretched hand” indicates direction in the sense of beckoning the enemy. God would not only invite the Babylonians into Jerusalem but also bring them in with a strong arm and assemble them in the midst of the city.

“I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast [domesticated animals].” From a human standpoint today, one might reason, “The humans were responsible for not agreeing with Jeremiah, not the beasts, so why should the animals be punished?” However, evil is like leaven, and strangely in nature, if a person is evil, there is an association between that person and a domesticated animal in his possession. Along another line, the leprosy of sin can even affect a stucco wall in a house. In other words, there is guilt by association.

If Jeremiah is a prototype of the feet members, this incident shows that some of them will be summoned to give instruction to “kings,” and the message will be *strong*. Micaiah was called by the kings of Israel and Judah, the *civil powers*.

**Jer. 21:7** And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

Jeremiah told of Zedekiah’s fate and the fate of his servants and the people. Nebuchadnezzar would “not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.” Without other Scriptures, these

verses would seem to say that those who escaped the sword, famine, and pestilence would *all* be slain. It is true that *many* were slain at Riblah but *not all*, for some were taken to Babylon.

Zedekiah escaped from Jerusalem, exiting at the southeast corner of the city and going to the Jordan River at Jericho, where he was captured and taken to Riblah, up near Hamath. There his sons were killed and his eyes put out. Then he was taken to Babylon, where he died. The nature of that death is not stated.

The small remnant who took Jeremiah's advice and submitted to Nebuchadnezzar were taken captive to Babylon and not slain. Jeremiah evidently remained in Jerusalem because of his office and responsibility to the people as prophet, but those who were sympathetic to him followed his instructions. It was like the old saying that if a ship is sinking, the captain is the last to leave the ship. When Jeremiah was apprehended, Nebuchadnezzar, who knew about the prophecies, gave him the choice of either staying in the homeland with the vinedressers or going to Babylon.

**Jer. 21:8** And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

**Jer. 21:9** He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

**Jer. 21:10** For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

“Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.... He that goeth out, and falleth [surrenders] to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey [he shall be taken as a spoil of war and then made a servant].” With the principle of free moral agency, the decision was up to each person. Those who surrendered to the Chaldeans would be spared and taken captive to Babylon. Jeremiah had said earlier that all the weapons of defense would boomerang and be of no avail.

“For I have set my face against this city for evil, ... saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.” Notice that “fire” is mentioned. The means of destruction were sword, famine, pestilence, and fire.

**Jer. 21:11** And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

**Jer. 21:12** O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

The same theme continued—“Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death”—with verses 11 and 12 being a special message to Zedekiah. Opportunity was being given to the very last minute to heed the injunctions against the nation. God was saying through Jeremiah, “If you become deserters and surrender to the king of Babylon, your life will be spared.”

**Q:** What is the thought of the clause “Execute judgment in the morning”?

**A:** High noon, the real judgment day, the showdown, was coming. God was saying, “If you do not heed what Jeremiah is saying as my mouthpiece, you will be executed at this symbolic noontime. Surrender now while it is still the morning of your opportunity.”

**Jer. 21:13** Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?

“Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the LORD.” If we understand this statement correctly, it is meant to be sarcasm. As a high city in relationship to the surrounding land, Jerusalem was conducive to being a fortress. Because the inhabitants were up on a hill, it seemed that an enemy frontal assault on any side but the north would be suicidal. With this elevation, Jerusalem seemed well suited as the site for a capital and center of authority, and the inhabitants felt secure. However, God was saying, “In my estimation, you are not up there on that hill but are as an inhabitant of the valley. Your rock fortress, your elevated portion in the plain, your position of favor, and the enemy’s position of inconvenience are meaningless and void.”

**Comment:** Verse 13 reads as follows in the NIV: “I am against you, Jerusalem, you who live above this valley on the rocky plateau, declares the LORD—you who say, ‘Who can come against us? Who can enter our refuge?’”

**Reply:** Yes, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were elevated. However, from God’s standpoint, they were defenseless and not elevated.

**Jer. 21:14** But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

God said, “I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof.” There were many trees in the Jerusalem area in that day. Groves of olive and fig trees abounded. The year 606 BC marked the beginning of the denuding of the land, for the enemy in the suburbs used the trees as battering rams and built ladders to invade the city. The technique was to make a ramp with a wooden frame to besiege the city. Thus both literally and figuratively the trees would be consumed in one manner or another. All combustible materials in the city were set on fire. That which resisted fire, such as the walls, was battered down. And so the people of Judah were punished according “to the fruit” of their doings. Total destruction was the picture.

There is an additional thought. Chapter 21 ends abruptly, and the next 16 chapters are an assortment of prophecies, messages, and deeds of Jeremiah at different times of his ministry—in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. Then chapter 38 goes back and picks up the sequence from chapter 21. We would like to know why Ezra, a very astute individual, did not follow the logical sequence in which Jeremiah gave the prophecies. We believe he had a good reason, and perhaps, Lord willing, we will be able to ferret out the answer as we proceed.

Ezra did not change the Lord’s words, but he did sequence them into book form, and of course he did this much later because the writings were scattered in the temple of Cyrus, king of Persia. In other words, the writings had been put under lock and key, and then years later when they were removed from the vaults, Cyrus gave them to Ezra. The king liked Ezra and thus honored him with the writings. (Nehemiah is another outstanding individual who was similarly honored.) Because the writings were not in a convenient form, Ezra took the words of the Lord and sequenced them. Some of the books of the Bible are arranged in historical order. For instance, the prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel are arranged according to authorship, and the historical books of 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles are sequenced according to kingship. Then come Ezra and Nehemiah, which are also historical. The prophets are arranged according to authorship, but actually they are a mixture of prophecy and history. In order to understand the Bible correctly and get things in

proper sequence, the historical books and the prophets have to be integrated. The Lord gave the format and then rewards us if we prayerfully and carefully do the integrating.

**Jer. 22:1 Thus saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,**

God commissioned Jeremiah to go to the king's house and deliver a powerful message. The residence of the kings of Judah was at the south part of Jerusalem, below the Pool of Siloam.

This message was a personal affront to the leadership of the nation. Instead of going to the Temple or a city gate to deliver a message to all the people of Judah, Jeremiah slanted this message directly to the king and his household.

**Jer. 22:2 And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates:**

Imagine sitting on the throne of David and having Jeremiah approach and boldly deliver this strong message! "Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David—you, your servants, and your people." Of course the king was living very luxuriously.

**Jer. 22:3 Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.**

The very content of the message suggests that all these things were being done. The king, the courts, the priests, and the false prophets were out of sync as far as following the Mosaic Law.

**Jer. 22:4 For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.**

**Jer. 22:5 But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.**

What a promise! If the people would just make a fresh start—if they would repent and return to doing God's will—what a wonderful opportunity! The future would be very bright, in spite of the evils that had been done, if the king and his successors would follow this advice. But if they refused, the house of Judah would become a desolation. (However, as pointed out at the end of chapter 21, chapters 22 through 37 are not in chronological sequence; that is, chapter 22 is in a different time frame, as we will see.)

Verse 5 contains another use of the expression "I [God] swear by myself." We think of that expression in connection with the Abrahamic Covenant, where the Apostle Paul showed that there were two witnesses: God and His word. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself" (Heb. 6:13; see also Gen. 22:16). With Abraham, not only was the swearing a positive, but also it will be carried out. Here in verse 5, the swearing was *conditional*: "But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation."

**Jer. 22:6 For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness; and cities which are not inhabited.**

If the “king’s house of Judah” changed its ways, Judah would be restored to what it once was. Gilead, with its balm and balsa trees, was known as a very fruitful area. Also, the “head of Lebanon,” Mount Hermon with its snows, was like an unending blessing with pure water (see Jer. 18:14). Israel was like Gilead and Lebanon to the Lord, having providential care and protection for many years—it was a most fruitful condition, a source of water—but without repentance, it would become a barren desert. Israel would lose its fruitfulness and water and be the opposite.

Mount Hermon is the source of the Jordan River. There are two mountain ranges in Lebanon (Anti-Lebanon and Lebanon), and in between is the Jordan. Mount Hermon is sometimes a type of heaven itself, that is, God’s throne. Mount Hermon, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea, with their different levels, all have a symbolic representation.

**Comment:** In Song 4:1, Jesus said, “Behold, thou art fair, my love; ... thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.”

**Reply:** Yes, that is a proof text for the fruitfulness of the land. In addition, at the time of the entering of the land under Joshua, Reuben and Gad were interested in Gilead, the land east of the Jordan River. God said they could have that territory if the males continued with the other ten tribes in conquering the land of Israel proper.

**Jer. 22:7** And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire.

Not only would destroyers be prepared, but they would be so successful that it would seem as if each Babylonian was personally strengthened and providentially guided in the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. Because of their straightness, the cedars of Lebanon were used to panel Solomon’s Temple. But the cedars would be cut down and made into battering rams and siege towers to destroy the city. Also, the Temple and the houses, many of which had been constructed of cedar, would be burned. Even the battering rams and the siege towers were set on fire to add to the destruction. The Babylonians wanted to destroy everything so that no good materials would be left for salvage purposes.

The previous chapter, chapter 21, took place during the reign of King Zedekiah. With the time frame of chapter 22 being earlier, Jeremiah’s message was a prediction that if the people of Judah did not change their ways, irreversible destruction would come.

**Jer. 22:8** And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?

Many peoples and nationalities traveling in their caravans would pass Jerusalem and see the desolation and destruction of the former magnificence and ask, “Why has the Lord done this?” Similarly, in going through Egypt today, we see extensive ruins of the former glory, and that is also true of Ephesus in Turkey.

**Jer. 22:9** Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

When passersby inquired, the answer would be that the destruction came because the nation transgressed their covenant with God and worshipped and served other gods. In this setting, Jerusalem pictures Christendom, which will be destroyed by a non-Christian element represented by Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar in the type. Those who return from the grave will receive a similar explanation about the destruction of Christendom.

**Jer. 22:10** Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.

**Jer. 22:11** For thus saith the LORD touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place; He shall not return thither any more:

**Jer. 22:12** But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.

Shallum is Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, the last legitimate king of Judah. After Josiah, the kings were placed or displaced by foreign powers. Jehoahaz, a puppet king, reigned for only three months and then was taken captive to Egypt, the predominant power at that time, where he died. Hence Jehoahaz did “not return thither any more” to Judah. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah were all sons of Josiah.

<b>Order of Last Four (Puppet) Kings</b>	
<u>Names given by foreign powers</u>	<u>Hebrew names</u>
Jehoahaz	Shallum
Jehoiakim	Eliakim
Jehoiachin	Jeconiah (or Coniah)
Zedekiah	Mattaniah

To wipe out the previous nationality, the foreign conquering power changed the name of any government representatives, even those on a lower level. A person with a position of responsibility was given the name of the god, for example, *Beltshazzar* for Daniel (Dan. 1:7).

**Q:** What three kings does Zechariah 11:8 refer to? “Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.”

**A:** The three puppet kings were Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, for Jehoiakim died a different type of death. Thus even Zedekiah was a puppet king because Nebuchadnezzar changed his name from Mattaniah and put him on the throne of Judah. Zedekiah signed a contract with the king of Babylon and swore in the name of Jehovah that he would keep his word. However, Zedekiah broke that word.

Incidentally, at this time in history, God posed about three different riddles that seemed to contradict, but that was not the case. (One riddle was the prophecy that Zedekiah would go to Babylon but not see it.) Because of the seeming contradictions, many who listened to the prophecies were turned off more and more from following the Lord. An important principle is illustrated in God’s Word; namely, if a person once has a sufficiency of light and then loses it, a great darkness results (Matt. 6:23). In other words, it is God’s intention in the Gospel Age that if a Christian passes a certain point in disobedience, he is given over to blindness. He is not just turned over to Satan, for that act indicates a possibility of retrieval (1 Cor. 5:5). Hence the great darkness is *everlasting destruction*. In the Old Testament, being given over to destruction is a *picture* of Second Death and does not necessarily mean the individual will reap that destiny in the final analysis.

**Jer. 22:13** Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;

**Jer. 22:14** That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.



Jeremiah was speaking to the king of Judah: “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong.” The king had a “wide house” with “large chambers ... ceiled [paneled] with cedar, and painted [decorated] with vermilion,” but he and his associates did not pay wages to the laborers who did this highly skilled work. Under the Law, day laborers were to be paid before the sun went down.

**Jer. 22:15** Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?

**Jer. 22:16** He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.

**Jer. 22:17** But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.

**Jer. 22:18** Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory!

**Jer. 22:19** He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Good King Josiah is commended in verses 15 and 16. He was blessed when alive because he was righteous. Now God asked through Jeremiah, “Shalt thou [Jehoahaz] reign, because thou closest [closeted] thyself in cedar? did not thy father [Josiah] ... do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?” Jeremiah was speaking in past tense with regard to Jehoahaz (Shallum), who was in captivity in Egypt with no hope of returning to Israel.

Thus we have the time frame. To all practical purposes, basically speaking, Jehoiakim was the predecessor of Zedekiah. Chapter 21 discussed the latter days of Zedekiah, so we can see that the account now shifted back in history to Jehoiakim. God used this method in connection with certain prophecies, and here we have both history and prophecy. Some say that history is prophecy fulfilled and that prophecy is history yet to be fulfilled. This mixture, whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, has spiritual implications.

Verse 17 is a strong condemnation of Jehoiakim. “Thine eyes and thine heart are ... for thy covetousness, ... to shed innocent blood, ... for oppression, and for violence.” He was greedy, grasping, guilty of shedding innocent blood, oppressive, and violent.

Prophecy was fulfilled as stated here. When Jehoiakim died, there was no lamentation for him, and he was “buried with the burial of an ass”; i.e., his body was “cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem” and left there to decay like garbage. Such was the fate of this king—an ignominious death outside the city without burial. And no one remembered any honorable deeds by saying, “Ah lord! or, Ah his glory!”

**Comment:** Jeremiah 36:30 also talks about the death of Jehoiakim. “Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.”

The prophecies about Jehoiakim were written and spoken in his time, that is, before his demise. Starting with chapter 22, Ezra purposely put 16 chapters out of sequence by sandwiching them in between chapters 21 and 38.

The Bible is deeper than the human mind can go. Even when we go down, the Scriptures are deeper still. We like the illustration of a person in a boat who lets down a fishing line to see how deep the water is. After the line goes down five miles, and then six miles, he gets a sense of awe of the depth. He starts to measure at sea level, and the farther down he goes, the greater the awe. No one can plumb the bottom of God's Word, but we can go to various levels.

**Jer. 22:20 Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed.**

**Jer. 22:21 I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.**

**Jer. 22:22 The wind shall eat up all thy pastors, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness.**

**Jer. 22:23 O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail!**

Verses 20-23 pertain to a message to Lebanon, which is north of Israel today. However, Bible maps of Israel in King David's or Noah's day, for example, were different. Similarly, the map of Europe has changed and fluctuated depending on what century of history is being studied. The point is that we believe the reference in these verses is to a northeastern section of the ten-tribe kingdom. This territory was in between Mount Hermon and the Anti-Lebanon mountain range. "Anti-Lebanon" means "similar to Lebanon but opposite or adjacent to." In other words, an extension of Lebanon reached down into the ten-tribe kingdom. Stated another way, Lebanon, Bashan, and "the passages" ("Abarim"—RSV) were originally strategic territories in Israel. Specifically, Abarim was in Transjordan, being mountains east of the Dead Sea.

Now other people lived in these territories, for when the ten-tribe kingdom was taken captive to Assyria over a hundred years earlier, the Assyrian government took a mixed populace from their midst and put them in those areas. In addition, many of the wealthier Jews from the two tribes took advantage of the vacuum left in large parts of northern Israel. Since an organized government was no longer there, Jews just went in and possessed the land, exploiting what they saw as a golden opportunity to occupy those areas of the ten tribes that were not inhabited by the transferred peoples of Assyria. This whole area is now called Lebanon.

Jeremiah was now told to go up to this area designated "Lebanon" and deliver a prophecy that not only would Judah be destroyed but also the Jews from the two tribes who were living in the former territory of the ten tribes. The "pastors" were some of the more elite of Judah who were living there, and "lovers" fraternized with and were enriched through their alliance with Judah. The antitype would be those who are allied with Papacy through prosperous business relationships.

Thus Jeremiah was instructed to "go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice [prophecy] in Bashan." Other Old Testament prophecies show that the first Jeroboam had introduced idolatrous worship in Bashan centuries earlier. He set up a religious center in opposition to Jerusalem, declaring rival religious holidays there on the same days as the Law prescribed them in Jerusalem. In time, for prudence' sake, the inhabitants of the ten tribes stopped going to Jerusalem lest they be considered traitors and receive persecution. Now, in Jeremiah's day, some from Judah occupied this area of the former ten tribes called Lebanon and Bashan.

As instructed by God, Jeremiah spoke to Lebanon and Bashan, "I spake unto thee in thy

prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice. The wind shall eat up all thy [Judah's] pastors [i.e., those who had colonized part of the northern kingdom's territory], and thy lovers shall go into captivity." God assisted Jeremiah and several other Old Testament prophets so that they spoke with megaphonic voices for the occasion. In other words, the Holy Spirit magnified their words, enabling them to speak to those down in the villages and fertile valleys. Being attracted to the strong voice that they heard, the people wondered what the "lunatic" had to say. Subsequently they conveyed to others what they had heard. That way the relatively few who heard the message brought its substance back to towns, and it served the purpose of a witness against those who had gone up there as profiteers and occupied this area. Although this information is not found in history books, the inference is contained in Holy Writ. The area, called Bashan, was in the "Lebanon" of that day.

Jeremiah continued his prophecy: "O inhabitant of Lebanon [the northern sector of the ten-tribe kingdom], that makest thy nest in the cedars." In other words, the "cedars of Lebanon" extended down into the northern kingdom of Israel to a certain extent.

In the statement "the wind shall eat up all thy pastors," the "wind" signified *trouble*. When Nebuchadnezzar came down and invaded Judah, other hostile nations were confederate with him. Wanting to settle their grievance against Israel, these other nations felt the confederacy was an opportunity to get even; that is, they felt they could take advantage under the coverage of the king of Babylon. We had read in an earlier chapter of the Book of Jeremiah that other peoples, who were not necessarily inhabitants of Chaldea, came down with Nebuchadnezzar.

"Surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness. O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail!" Because of their iniquity, God would take vengeance against Jews from Judah who were in northern Israel. Not being in Judah proper did not allow them to escape troubles that would come on Judah, the Temple, and Jerusalem.

**Q:** Who were the "lovers" in verses 20 and 22?

**A:** Generally speaking, "lovers" mixed in with the local population. In principle, that area of northern Israel was very much like the Samaritans, a mixed race that claimed to be Jewish. They believed in the Jewish God but thought the capital had been transferred from Jerusalem to their area. They were not of the Jewish seed except through a mixed marriage relationship.

**Jer. 22:24** As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence;

**Jer. 22:25** And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

In verses 24-30, we come to King Jeconiah, about whom there is a lot of history but with some confused statements, even in marginal references and among Bible scholars. The account is interesting because it bears on a lot of subjects that we would not normally think of.

This part of history is more identifiable because it is duplicated in the books of Chronicles, Kings, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The subject matter pertains to King Coniah (also called Jeconiah and Jehoiachin). Here we get a time frame, for chapters 22 through 37 interrupt the chronological sequence and give a composite history. Jeconiah was the son of Jehoiakim, who reigned for 11 years. Thus the time frame is just after Jehoiakim's decease, and since his son

Coniah was on the throne for only three months, the time setting is a definite period of history, that is, 11 years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Through Jeremiah, God said, “Though Coniah ... were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence.” Even if Coniah were desirable and personally fit, conditions in society had deteriorated so greatly in Judah that the people were close to the point of no return. Hence God gave three startling opportunities for Judah to wake up. As is said in baseball, “One, two, three strikes, and you’re out!” That same principle applies to other fields and in history. Because the opportunities were not heeded, the conflict became irrepressible. In antitype, society today is also becoming more and more corrupt, and judgment has to come.

The third opportunity for Judah’s repentance was that Coniah would be taken captive to Babylon. Thus, even if he were the “signet” on God’s right hand, it would be necessary for this captivity to take place. The captivity involved about 3,000 people including the king, his wife, his mother, and those associated with him such as personal bodyguards. Therefore, 11 years before Zedekiah was taken captive, this relatively small number of individuals was taken hostage to Babylon.

**Jer. 22:26** And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.

**Jer. 22:27** But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

“And I will cast thee [Coniah] out, and thy mother [Coniah’s mother, hence the queen mother] that bare thee, into another country [Babylon], where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.” Coniah died in Babylon, never returning to the homeland.

**Jer. 22:28** Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?

Verse 28 seems very unfavorable to Coniah. He was taken captive to Babylon for a reason that is stated elsewhere. “Wherefore are they cast out [the mother, the son, and the retinue associated with them], he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not.” He and “his seed” (singular) were taken into captivity *for a purpose*. Assir, Coniah’s only son at *this* time, was killed.

**Jer. 22:29** O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.

Here Jeremiah interjected his own emotions in an *agonizing* outburst: “O earth, earth, earth...” He was giving the prophecy and speaking what God said would happen, and then all of a sudden, not being able to contain personal emotions, he spoke from the heart. When Coniah was taken into captivity, it seemed as if all of Judah’s hopes of being the royal seed of David rested in him, for Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim had already died and now Coniah’s own son as well. Subsequently Jeremiah calmed down and gave constructive information from the Lord about Coniah and his fate. This information becomes interesting because a lot is involved (verse 30).

**Jer. 22:30** Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

“Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man [Coniah] childless.” Since Coniah had two sons, we have to consider this statement in connection with the time frame and certain modifying factors. Josiah’s lineage is given in 1 Chronicles 3:15: “And the sons of Josiah were, the firstborn

Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum [Jehoahaz].” The names of Coniah’s two sons are listed in 1 Chronicles 3:17: “And the sons of Jeconiah; Assir, Salathiel his son.” However, at the time of verse 30, when Coniah was called “childless,” he had only one son, Assir. That prophecy was fulfilled when Coniah was taken to Babylon, for at that time, “his [only] seed” (Assir) was slain. The policy of victorious kings was to kill the defeated king’s posterity, the royal seed, so that there would be no danger of a future successor.

A multitude of facts need to be harmonized. Coniah had a seed, but when he was taken captive, he became childless. However, he did penance in prison and was eventually elevated, being raised to the king’s table in the thirty-seventh year of his captivity. Not only was he raised up to King Nebuchadnezzar’s table, but favor was shown to him until his death. Thus Coniah died a rather pleasant death in Babylon. The descendants of Josiah died as follows:

1. Shallum (Jehoahaz) died in Egypt.
2. Eliakim (Jehoiakim) died in shame outside Jerusalem.
3. Coniah (Jeconiah) died in Babylon.

In regard to Coniah, the words “in his days” are the significant modifying factor. “Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper *in his days*.” The point is that Jeconiah had two sons, Assir and Salathiel. Assir was killed, but when Jeconiah was elevated to the king’s table in Babylon, he had another son, Salathiel. Not only is Jeconiah in Messiah’s lineage but also his son Salathiel (Matt. 1:11,12); i.e., Jesus’ lineage, the seed of David, went through Coniah.

Thus Coniah was “childless” for 37 years, and the situation seemed hopeless. And it is true that none of his seed returned to the land of Israel when Assir, his only son, was slain. Moreover, Coniah himself could not return. But Salathiel, the second son, survived and bore Zerubbabel, who returned to Israel at the end of the 70 years.

Another place in the Bible also seems to emphatically say there was no hope of a future in Israel. However, as with Jeconiah, that Scripture is meant to be understood on a temporary basis. We have to keep in mind that, depending on context, the term “for ever” means “for an age.” In the Book of Ecclesiastes, a text gives no hope of life after death, and that was a true statement for the time period of King Solomon. It was Jesus’ coming at the First Advent that gave the hope for mankind to be restored to life, for he tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). In other words, to know about the condition of the dead, we need to read the *whole* Bible. Thus “no” in the Bible does not necessarily mean for eternity.

And so Coniah was “childless” *temporarily*, not for eternity. He did not have a successor contemporary with him who sat on the throne of David. But Jesus, the son of David, is his successor. In the future, Jesus will sit on the throne of Israel as the King of the world.

*Principles* are involved here. Seemingly conflicting statements were purposely inserted in Scripture to cloud certain subjects so that they would not be too clear, even to the most astute mind. Another example is King Zedekiah, of whom it seemed that he would be killed and thus not be taken to Babylon. However, he did go to Babylon, but first, he was blinded so that he would not see it. Moreover, his sons were all slain at the time of his blinding.

*Principle*: “Mark those who cause divisions.” However, some divisions are proper. For instance, Jesus came to bring “a sword” of *truth* (Matt. 10:34). Romans 16:17 reads in entirety: “Mark them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned*; and avoid them.” Those who cause divisions *based on God’s Word* are right!

*Principle*: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another,” *but not in every condition* (John 13:34). Notice, we are to love one another “as [in the same manner] I have loved

you.” How did Jesus love his disciples? He loved them in proportion to their obedience.

*Principle* in verse 30: The phrase following the word “childless” tells what it means, namely, “a man that shall not prosper *in his days*.” In other words, during Coniah’s life, none of his sons would reign in Judah. His *immediate* sons would die without reigning, but a *grandson* is in Christ’s ancestry, for after the 70 years, Zerubbabel was made a governor (not a king) in Jerusalem. Hence Coniah had children, but they did not sit on the throne. His seed went back to Jerusalem after 536 BC.

Generalities are sometimes used in Scripture, an example being Matthew 26:52, where Jesus said, “They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” We are to consider this statement against other statements. When the foundation of Zerubbabel’s Temple was laid, half of the people (the older ones) cried because of its smallness, for they remembered Solomon’s Temple. The other half (the younger ones) shouted for joy because they had no foreknowledge. Hence some of those who were taken captive to Babylon returned to Israel after 70 years. We recall that Ezekiel divided his hair into three piles to show that all would die. However, he retained a *tiny pinch* of hair in his bosom to indicate a few survivors. And many prophecies with the word “all” do not literally mean “all.” For example, John 5:28,29 says that all who are in the grave will hear Jesus’ voice and come forth but not the Second Death element. “Every one” and “all” are often qualified. Jesus gave his life as a ransom for *many*. Thus the Scriptures in the Book of Jeremiah that sound as if all would perish in the 606 BC destruction do not mean “all,” for a *small remnant* was spared and taken to Babylon.

**Jer. 23:1** Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.

Verse 1, which starts a message against the pastors who destroyed and scattered the sheep, reminds us of Ezekiel 34, which similarly denounces the religious rulership, although the time period is a little earlier here in Jeremiah. The message applied literally to Judah’s false prophets in Jeremiah’s day and antitypically to mystic Babylon’s ministers and clergy in our day.

How did the pastors “destroy” the sheep? By giving false messages not of the Lord, they destroyed faith. Moreover, they were hypocrites, and they destroyed widows’ houses by taking advantage of these women in times of duress. Ezekiel said the priests took money, goods, and honor to themselves that belonged to God.

Spiritually speaking, one of a pastor’s responsibilities is to warn of dangers such as doctrinal error, an enemy coming in, and the spiritual condition of the flock. If persisted in, these dangers will lead to God’s indignation and judgment. If a pastor is responsible for a person’s leaving the “truth,” there is a price to pay.

How did the pastors “scatter” the sheep? They failed to provide proper nourishment and food. In addition, prominent personalities got sheep to follow *them* rather than the Lord. Today such personalities encourage a dependence on themselves and continually solicit funds.

**Comment:** The RSV uses the word “shepherds” instead of “pastors.” These individuals were supposed to be caring for and protecting the sheep and keeping them together, but they were doing just the opposite. Instead of loving the sheep and having their welfare in mind, the pastors had selfish motives.

**Reply:** People who are cruel to animals may unmercifully flail a donkey, for example, if it does not move quickly. A tendency of pastors to reprimand and punish too severely drives the sheep away instead of coalescing them.

**Jer. 23:2** Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

The proof of a good shepherd is that if a predator attacks the flock, he brings back a piece of the animal to prove that he confronted the beast and tried to rescue the animal. Jesus said that if a sheep wanders away, the shepherd leaves the 99 to try to restore the one (Matt. 18:12). Jesus confined his ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

“Behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.” Verses 1 and 2 are a condemnation of the pastors’ failure.

**Comment:** Bad shepherds did not seem to realize that Jehovah, the Great Shepherd, would visit retribution upon them for their evil doings.

**Jer. 23:3** And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

“And I [God] will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them.” The scattering occurred because the disobedient sheep needed judgment. The pastor was responsible for the lack of food, instruction, warning, etc., but when the sheep wandered out of the way and became evil, judgment from the Lord was necessary to restore them. God was responsible for the judgment of the Diaspora in order to wake up the flock and cure the problem. He will rectify the situation eventually by bringing the Jews back to Israel—and even to their own tribes.

Thus verse 3 is talking about sheep that went astray due to the negligence of their shepherds in not providing proper nourishment. Now the sheep needed judgmental treatment, which would not have been necessary if they had been under good pastors to start with.

**Q:** Was verse 3 partially fulfilled after the 70 years of desolation?

**A:** Yes, although the subject matter is the regathering from the Diaspora of “the remnant ... out of all countries” whither God has driven them.

**Jer. 23:4** And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

“And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them.” The Law will go forth from Zion, but the Ancient Worthies will be the mechanism of the feeding; that is, the Church will do the shepherding through the Ancient Worthies. Therefore, the “shepherds” can be considered as either the glorified Church or the Ancient Worthies. “And they [the Church] that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they [the Ancient Worthies] that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3). At the end of the Millennium, the Ancient Worthies will be honored and rewarded for their efforts during the Kingdom Age.

**Jer. 23:5** Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

In due time, the Messiah, the King, will come of a righteous branch (lineage, or family tree) to reign and prosper and shepherd his sheep. Jehovah “will raise unto David a righteous Branch,

and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” The Scriptures liken Jesus to “the son of David,” “the son of Abraham,” and “the Son of God.” The Father has “appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained” (Acts 17:31). Jesus is also “a righteous Branch” in the sense of providing support, comfort, help, and strength.

**Jer. 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

In Messiah’s days, “Judah shall be saved.” Verse 6 has a natural application, and the mention of Judah indicates that the salvation will be primarily Jerusalem at the end of the age when the hordes of Gog come down from the north. “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished.... Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:2,3). Thus the deliverance will be concentrated, or more noted, in the Judah region of the land of Israel, and specifically in the Jerusalem area (see also Ezekiel 38 and 39). Jehovah’s “feet” will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is just east of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:4). In other words, this whole area will be the final dramatic stage of the inauguration of the Kingdom. The spotlight will be particularly on Jerusalem and its immediate environs. The cemetery in which the dead will be buried is a little more toward Jericho. Following the drama of the setting up of the Kingdom, the whole nation of Israel will be restored, and “Israel shall dwell safely.”

Jesus’ name will be called “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (singular), the Hebrew being *Jehovah-tsidkenu*. The Pastor wrote quite a lot on this title in the *Fifth Volume*, page 42. Then he quoted Jeremiah 33:15,16, which uses the same title in the plural and associates it with the Church. Thus The Christ, Head and body members, will have that title. “In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith *she* [the Church—feminine plural] shall be called, *The LORD our righteousness*.” Obadiah 21 states that The Christ—“saviours” plural—will arise on Mount Zion. God, the Savior, will send Jesus with the Church. The “Branch” is Jesus alone, referring to his natural descent, or lineage. The Church gets their right to reign *through* Jesus.

The King James translation is confusing. A better translation of Jesus’s title would be, “Our righteousness of Jehovah,” for Jesus is the *channel* of blessing. God is the Savior, but He sent Jesus to redeem the human race. Jesus is the means whereby the world will be made righteous.

In addition, Isaiah 45:24 shows that Israel’s righteousness is of Jehovah. God will justify Israel’s seed. “Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.”

**Jer. 23:7 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;**

**Jer. 23:8 But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.**

After Jacob’s Trouble, the saying that God brought up Israel out of Egypt will be replaced with the saying that God brought up Israel out of the “north country” and from “all countries” where He has driven them. The time setting of verses 7 and 8 is following Jacob’s Trouble, for there will be a second regathering to Israel. In other words, there will be two regatherings of Jews, one prior to Jacob’s Trouble and another in the Kingdom Age from the various lands



where Jews have survived the Time of Trouble. Gentiles will provide planes and other means of transportation, plus financial and physical assistance, to ship those Jews back to Israel.

The two regatherings are sometimes confused. In fact, some Christians are even trying to say that the second (future) phase of the regathering is occurring now. For example, while there has been a previous regathering from Russia into Israel, there will be a second regathering from “the north,” a mass exodus of Jews from Russia, after Jacob’s Trouble.

**Jer. 23:9 Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.**

“Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets.” Jeremiah’s heart was broken because of the false prophets and the evil condition in Judah. He was not only emotional but also patriotic. God’s holy words revealed to him the depth of the people’s wickedness. As a result, his bones shook, and he was like a drunken man as he contemplated the evil of God’s professed people. Because of his righteous indignation, his hatred of iniquity at seeing the evil, he was so disturbed that he could not control his emotions. He probably did not even sleep well and awoke with tremors. Emotional distress can cause such conditions in some people.

**Jer. 23:10 For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right.**

The land was full of adultery and cursing. (The same condition prevails today as well.) “The pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up.” The fact that the few oases even dried up should have made the people realize their disobedience, for the effect of unrighteousness could be seen. “Their course is evil, and their force [for good] is not right.” Civil society was askew to favor evil, and the people’s attitudes, ideas, and judgmental decisions were out of balance.

Ever since the French Revolution in 1799, it has been the “time of the end” (Dan. 12:4,9). Both the Harvest and the end of the age began in 1878 and continue. However, only at the very end, the *third* “end,” will there be the Time of Trouble greater than anything previous or afterward (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21). Hence conditions will be *even worse* than at the time of the Flood. This will be especially true because the fallen angels will manifest HATRED and VENOM as they come in like a flood (Isa. 59:19). As bad as conditions were in Noah’s day, the fallen angels simply practiced violence and lust and took wives of all they chose. The future trouble will be *more intense* than anything previous.

**Jer. 23:11 For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.**

Both prophets and priests were “profane,” or worldly, and the “house,” the Temple, contained wickedness. Instead of favoring the sheep, who needed help and correction, the leadership was corrupt. In a vision, the Prophet Ezekiel saw all the wickedness through a hole in the Temple wall (Ezek. 8:7-12). The private lives of the priests and the false prophets were known to the Lord, and the same is true of the antitype. Like today, the general condition of religious and civil leadership was wanting and corrupt. The Lord’s Kingdom is the only answer.

**Jer. 23:12 Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.**

“Their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness; they shall ... fall therein.” The religious leaders, who were supposed to be in the inner circle of God’s fellowship, were in darkness because blindness had come over them. “The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, ... they err in vision, they stumble in judgment” (Isa. 28:7).

**Comment:** Isaiah 56:10,11 is also pertinent: “His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.”

“I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.” When was “the year of their visitation”? In God’s program, the destruction would come in 606 BC. Jeremiah gave this prophecy just a few years prior to 606.

From the *individual* standpoint, each person has a price to pay in his own time of “visitation.” *Collectively* speaking, Judah received judgment in 606 BC. The evil condition had existed for some time, but the destruction came on Jerusalem, the Temple, and the individuals of that generation in Judah. And so, at the end of the present age, mystic Babylon will fall in the Time of Trouble.

**Jer. 23:13** And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.

**Jer. 23:14** I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.

The “[false] prophets of Samaria [Ephraim]” were of the ten tribes. In setting up altars dedicated to Baal and naming a place after Baal, they were mixing Baal with the religion of Jehovah. The “prophets of Jerusalem” were of Judah. The Samaritan prophets represent Catholicism, and Jerusalem’s prophets picture Protestantism. Just as both caused natural Israel to err in the type, so both have caused the people of Christendom to err in the antitype.

Equally corrupt, the prophets of Judah were likened to Sodom and Gomorrah. Israel was sick from the top of the head to the sole of the foot and filled with rotteness, yet God said, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool [if you will commune with me for instruction and change from that condition]” (Isa. 1:9,10,18). The same sick condition exists in spiritual Israel.

**Jer. 23:15** Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

The widespread bad example not only of the priesthood but also of the false prophets was very damaging, for their influence undermined the mettle and character of society as a whole. As retribution, the false prophets themselves were to be fed with wormwood. Imagine being Jeremiah and speaking this type of message from the Lord!

God would feed the false prophets with “wormwood”—a *bitter purgative*, a poison if taken in too large a quantity—and with “water of gall.” In regard to the wormwood, the false prophets would have to eat their own words. They spoke peace and lies, but trouble would come. The people would curse them.

**Jer. 23:16** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Harken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.

God told Jeremiah to stand alone, apart from all the religious leaders, and tell the people not to heed the false prophets.

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

The false prophets comforted the unrighteous. They did their own thing, walking after the imagination of their own hearts and recognizing no authority. Through Jeremiah, the Lord criticized those who speak too favorably to the wicked. Thus we should not give the restitution message in a wrong climate. It is dangerous for people to think, "If the Kingdom is coming, I do not want it now, but if I get a chance in the next age, and all in their graves come forth and have this wonderful opportunity, then I will seek it." In other words, we should not cast our pearls before people who are swinish (Matt. 7:6). Along with the message of restitution and a hope for all, we must also tell of the judgment to come. It is wrong to teach that everyone will be forgiven everything in the Kingdom. Paul said plainly that what a man sows, he shall reap (Gal. 6:7). We must not be more loving than God. It is nice to be generous, but some level of moderation is needed.

**Jer. 23:18** For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?

The answer to the rhetorical questions was, "Nobody." Generally speaking, society was so perverted that no one was standing up for truth. Paul referred to this verse in 1 Corinthians 2:16, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." In other words, "Who has known the mind of God? We [true Christians] have known it." Jeremiah was saying that no one understood, and indeed *few* understand!

**Jer. 23:19** Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.

The Time of Trouble will fall especially on the *wicked*. In Jeremiah's day, the trouble was visited primarily on Jerusalem and those gathered there. The city was like a cauldron, or pot, in which the people—except for a very small remnant—clustered to be killed by sword, famine, and pestilence. The judgment would come with suddenness and surprise upon the wicked.

As for the world in the near future, the bulk of the trouble will be on the heads of those who do the violence. The advice for the world, for the unconsecrated, is that if they are satisfied with their wages and are meek, righteous, and generous, they may be spared (Luke 3:9-14). They are not to get emotionally involved in troublous conditions. Both back there and in the future, the dovelike ones stand the best chance of being spared.

**Comment:** The end of verse 19 in the RSV is, "It will *burst* upon the head of the wicked."

**Jer. 23:20** The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

"In the latter days" has a double fulfillment: (1) Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, and

judgment fell on the various strata of society in 606 BC. (2) The great Time of Trouble will occur at the end of the present age. In regard to the near future, God has threatened the trouble for a long time. When it comes, He will be satisfied. “The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart.” His anger will be expended, and then will come the reign of peace. But, first, will occur the day of *Jehovah’s* wrath! As stated in Romans 12:19, vengeance is His; God will repay! His fury will come up in His face when Gog comes down; He will roll up His sleeves, as it were (Ezek. 38:18; Isa. 52:10).

“In the *latter* days,” the people will reflect back on the vengeance and “consider it perfectly.” The unfolding of events will show the accuracy of God’s Word in predicting the trouble—and the necessity and wisdom for it. The RSV reads, “In the latter days you will understand it clearly.”

In a few places, Jeremiah prophesied in detail what the end of particular named individuals would be. He described the moment of truth in their lives, but of course in verse 20, he was describing the trouble in general terms.

**Jer. 23:21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.**

The false prophets “ran”—they were very active—in *confidently* dispensing the false message of peace out of their own imaginations. The principle is that witnessing must be done *properly* in order to please the Lord. The false prophets mixed *human* wisdom with the teaching of Scripture and came up with a *false* message. They were deluded. Only by personally studying the Word do we discern whether we are truly obeying the Lord.

We are to judge doctrine, habits, and conduct but not the individual. The false prophets wrongly judged Jeremiah to be an unpatriotic prophet of doom.

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

If the false prophets had spoken *truth*, the people would have turned from their evil ways. They would have obeyed if they had been properly instructed. People tend to follow the *leaders* and the *majority*. We must be careful—and *know the Word*. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).

**Jer. 23:23 Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?**

**Jer. 23:24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.**

Although grammatically, verse 23 can be read either way, it is stronger when worded as a statement, “I am a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off.” He is aware of *everything*, and *everything* is under His control. Even though God dwells in the heaven above the heavens, the scope of His powers is so great that He is nearer at hand than we are when next to one another.

Nothing is hidden from the eyes of Jehovah. Nothing can be done secretly, for He is cognizant of all that happens. The seeming discrepancy is that He is both near and far. Isaiah 57:15 states, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place [*the heaven of the heavens, and close*] with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

He is both distant and close.

Not only is God afar off, but also He is so immense and powerful that the earth is like His footstool. He *fills* heaven and earth. This language is not just figurative. God has agencies at His disposal so that nothing can be done secretly, “for the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth” to hear, in a favorable sense, the humblest cry of the feeblest saint and, in an unfavorable sense, the secret counsel of the wicked (2 Chron. 16:9; Zech. 4:10). Certainly the divine mind is not filled with hearing negative things, for Habakkuk 1:13 tells us, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold [be cognizant of] evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” However, records are being kept.

By implication and extrapolation from this Scripture and others, God’s size is so enormous that Solomon prayed, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house [Temple] that I have builded?” (1 Kings 8:27). God was only symbolically in the Temple because not even the entire universe is large enough to contain Him. The great Jehovah, the Emperor of the universe would have claustrophobia if confined to that space. With His hands, He “stretched out the heavens” and formed the universe (Isa. 45:12). If even the size of planet Earth is like dust on a scale (Isa. 40:12,15), what about the size of the human beings who live on this planet?

**Jer. 23:25** I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

God discussed the principle of His majesty and power in verses 23 and 24 because He had “heard what the [false] prophets said”; He was aware of those who prophesied lies in His name, saying, “I have dreamed, I have dreamed.” This is also true today, for many are convinced they have seen and talked to God and Jesus in vision, but the visions are *false*. Back there the prophets followed false dreams, telling them *repeatedly*—and so do those who have visions today. Even if the visions were true, those who have them should not make this experience the mission of their life. Satan is the master of deception.

**Comment:** The peculiar thing with a lie is that if a person tells it often enough, he believes it is the truth.

**Jer. 23:26** How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

**Jer. 23:27** Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

The false prophets no doubt thought that they were advanced thinkers, that they had a better grasp on matters than the people of Judah. In their broad-mindedness, they believed that God is in all religions and that, to a certain extent, all religions are guiding mankind in a gradual way in the same direction toward the true God, whoever He is. They felt they understood God’s Word and thinking, but they interpreted it with this largesse viewpoint.

The false prophets were *truly deluded* for the most part, and such deception and deceit can be induced by one’s own thinking. Similarly, higher critics think they have a more advanced intellect. Their attitude is demeaning to God because it vitiates His role as the one-and-only Emperor, the jealous God. These bags of wind have a price to pay for what they do.

**Comment:** The principle is stated in the Law: “If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass,

whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 13:1-3).

**Reply:** In other words, if a prophet gives a prophecy that ends up being true but then uses that factor to lead away from Jehovah to another religion, he is a false prophet—even though the prophecy was accurately fulfilled. Therefore, in listening to a person teach, no matter what the subject might be, we are helped by asking, “If I accept this reasoning, where will it lead?” A theme is dangerous if it leads away from God in any way. Also, for the Christian to accept a teaching, there should be at least two or three witnesses in the Scriptures.

God said, “[False] prophets ... think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour.” Whatever is taught, the question should be, What is the motive? Sometimes it is along other lines and not even religious. “Yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart.” If one does not thoroughly analyze the intent of his own heart, high-mindedness and pride can lead to self-deception. In the antitype, many ministers tell stories instead of sticking to the Word. “Dreams” are imaginations and storytelling.

Originally “Baal” meant “Lord,” but in time, the term got a bad connotation and became associated with a false message. Similarly “Babylon” once meant “gateway to God,” but later it became corrupt and signified “confusion.”

**Jer. 23:28** The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.

In this context, the *false* prophet has a dream without substance, a vapor, that does not conform to God’s Word, whereas the *true* prophet speaks God’s Word faithfully. “What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.” The *false* prophet is the “chaff,” and the *true* prophet is the “wheat.” There is an *individual* responsibility on the part of the hearers, as well as the speakers, to try the message. From another standpoint, the “chaff” would be dreams or wind, and “wheat” is sound counsel and truth.

**Comment:** The principle is, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). Another related text is, “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14).

**Reply:** Yes, both Scriptures show the responsibility of the hearer.

Since Satan tries to rebut everything God does, he has his own line of reasoning to deceive mankind. When his arguments get to be very subversive, the Lord supplies the need of His people so that they can be properly defended with armor as the exigency of the situation necessitates. An elder, a teacher, who shuns to declare some of the necessary things because of popularity, his own office, family relationships, etc., is culpable before the Lord.

Jeremiah was speaking near the end of an age, and verse 28 is like the principle expressed in Revelation 22:11, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” In other words, a time will come when there will be no change, and each will meet his fate accordingly. Jesus’ words to Judas were similar: “That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27). A just man falls seven times and can be reinstated—but not after the seventh time (Prov. 24:16).

**Jer. 23:29** Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

God likened His Word to a *consuming fire* that burns (destroys) the chaff and to a *hammer* that breaks a rock in pieces (brings judgment). The false prophets who resisted God's Word by preaching peace were *hammered*; that is, they received retribution.

"Is not my word like as a fire?" This question is based on a custom in ancient times when people threshed the wheat by hand to beat the seed out of the husks. Since the dust of the chaff was mixed in with the seed, the people then threw the mixture up in the air, and the wind blew the chaff away. Those who were in an area where the wind was fickle built a fire near the threshing mound, and by various means, they tried to create a wind that would blow the chaff in the direction of the fire so that it would be destroyed and not fall back down into the seed. Thus the fire destroyed the chaff.

"Is not my word ... like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" The Word of God breaks the unregenerate, the hardened in heart, in pieces in two ways, that is, both favorably and unfavorably. (1) If a person is naturally stubborn yet respects God's Word and is honest-hearted, that Word can break his prejudice. Regardless of what feelings and beliefs a person may have traditionally or personally, if he sees that the Word of God contradicts his thinking and he is honest and humble, that Word is powerful enough to break what would be impossible to break from a worldly standpoint, for the world is unregenerate and does not have that blessed standard. (2) In addition, the enemies of truth are like a "rock"; they are strong and have faces like flint. But the Lord's Word can confuse and rout the enemy.

**Comment:** Three Scriptures are especially pertinent. Hebrews 4:12 reads, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And Hebrews 12:29 states, "For our God is a consuming fire." Thus His Word can do what He *Himself* can do. Finally, Malachi 3:2, which is well known from Handel's "Messiah," says, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap."

**Jer. 23:30** Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.

The false prophets in Jeremiah's day stole God's words by claiming their own words were a "thus saith the LORD." Their false message contradicted, negated, and vitiated the true Word. However, when the prophecies regarding 606 BC were fulfilled, then it was seen that God's Word was a fire and a hammer.

As an illustration, Satan denigrates the holy symbols of God by giving them a perverted meaning. With the basic nature of man, even with the consecrated, there is a certain affinity for that which caters to the interests of the flesh, and the new creature must fight against and overcome this preference. Of course in the world, the unconsecrated have two or three strikes against them right away, but there is also a danger with the professed people of God.

**Q:** What is the thought of stealing "every one from his neighbour"?

**A:** To steal someone's thunder is a colloquial saying. It is one thing to do this unknowingly, but to do this knowingly without giving proper credit is plagiarism, which is a form of stealing. There is also stealing in the sense of misusing, or twisting, another's information.

**Comment:** An example of stealing might occur after we have an opportunity to speak with someone on the truth about hell or the Trinity. Then the hearer goes back to his pastor, who calls the truth error and labels us as misguided people.

**Reply:** Yes, that would be a case of stealing and misusing the Word.

**Jer. 23:31** Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.

How deceptive a false prophet is! The hearer is responsible for being able to distinguish between two people when each claims to use a “thus saith the LORD.” One is a true prophet, and the other is a false prophet, so how does the hearer discern between the two? The hearer must determine which one is speaking according to the “law” and the “testimony,” for if one speaks “not according to this [God’s] word, it is because there is no light” in him (Isa. 8:20).

**Comment:** When we consider the nominal systems today and the prophets who were contemporary with Jeremiah, certainly the bulk of the prophets spoke in favor of Baal and peace, and Jeremiah was a loner.

**Comment:** Because multiple voices with different instructions, all professing to be God’s spokesmen, are telling how to worship the Lord, the resultant confusion actually steers people away from God, generally speaking.

**Reply:** In varying degrees, the blind are leading the blind. Jesus said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them [the Pharisees, the nominal religious leaders] alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt. 15:13,14).

**Comment:** For “Behold, I [the LORD] am against the [false] prophets ... that use their tongues,” the King James margin has, “Behold, I am against the prophets ... that *smooth* their tongues [by preaching peace].”

**Reply:** Yes, smooth talk attracts many people.

The word “prophet” is used two different ways in Scripture. A prophet can be either a teacher who speaks on prophecy or a seer. One should be very careful in interpreting Scripture. For example, a conjectural thought should be stated as such so that the speaker is relieved of the responsibility that he is just making suggestions. To speak in an affirmative and positive mode can be helpful when a matter is true, but to give strong instruction contrary to Scripture is dangerous. Hence we have to compare what we hear with our understanding of God’s Word.

**Jer. 23:32** Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

The false prophets were “light” in their utterances. Even though they may have been truly deluded, they were careless or reckless, nevertheless. They spoke too hastily and misapplied Scripture, which was another way of “stealing” God’s Word. In addition, “lightness” can mean that the false prophets glossed over somber and serious subjects, giving a loose application. Of course these prophets, who were in the majority, contradicted Jeremiah and predicted the opposite of what he was saying.

Incidentally, it is dangerous for a woman to teach publicly on religious subjects, even if she is



very knowledgeable. A woman who is an advanced thinker can be misleading in the net effect of those who adhere to her instruction. In fact, hearers can be almost mesmerized because of the personal charisma of a leader, whereas they should analyze the substance of the message.

**Jer. 23:33** And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD.

**Jer. 23:34** And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house.

Verse 33 is a break in thought, showing that the prophets, the priests, and the people at large all viewed Jeremiah's messages as "woes," or "burdens," and did not heed them. They considered Jeremiah a prophet of doom. Instead of asking him, "What is the good news?" they said, "What is the bad news?" However, even though they felt his message was a burden, they were curious to hear what he had to say. The same was true of Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah. The Israelites sat before him and asked questions, not with the thought of being informed and benefited but with the motive of wanting something to criticize.

The answer to the question "What is the burden of the LORD" was a *twofold* responsibility. (1) The *nation* would be punished at the hand of the king of Babylon. God would forsake the people of Judah and their religious leaders in the coming *national* disaster. (2) Each *individual* bore a responsibility.

"I will even punish that man and his house." There are many illustrations of family members—son, brother, father, mother, etc.—but if there is a difference within a family on an important truth, each should maintain his integrity. The one who is faithful to the Lord and His Word has to be careful not to compromise his principles in the family relationship. A Christian should be faithful to his marriage vows as long as the burden is not too great. However, if the one who is in the wrong becomes too dogmatic, then a separation is permissible.

Jeremiah sometimes spoke *mechanically* to the people by the power of the Holy Spirit. At other times, he got the message privately through the Holy Spirit and then subsequently related it. (Ezekiel had these two experiences also.) It could thus be sensed by others that God's power was on Jeremiah. The same will be true of the feet members. The "spirit" of Elijah will be apparent and provide the words. Later the "spirit" of Elijah will rest on Elisha.

**Jer. 23:35** Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken?

**Jer. 23:36** And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God.

Jeremiah continued to speak to the nation on behalf of Jehovah. The words sound almost personal, but he was following the Lord's instructions.

**Q:** Does the clause "for every man's word shall be his burden" mean that each person was responsible for the words that came out of his own mouth.

**A:** Yes. Jesus voiced this principle in Matthew 12:37, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." No matter what form of the question the people used—"What is the burden of the LORD?" "What hath the LORD answered?" and "What hath

the LORD spoken?”—all three were negative and critical of Jeremiah as a prophet of doom and gloom. The false prophets tried to minimize what he was saying. But just as when the people complained about Moses, the complaint was really against God, so here the criticism against Jeremiah was also against God, who used the prophet as His spokesperson to Judah. There would be a penalty for the people’s attitude. While the false prophets took a more public stand against Jeremiah, those who supported and hearkened to them shared in the responsibility by having the same wrong attitude. Jeremiah’s advice to the people was, “If you want to live, desert Jerusalem and go over to the foe. At least you will have life in captivity.” The false prophets contradicted Jeremiah until Nebuchadnezzar actually broke through the city wall. At that point, everyone panicked.

All three questions were critical, as would have been apparent by the tone of voice in which they were asked. What was God’s response through Jeremiah? “The burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: ... for ye have perverted the words of the living God.” In other words, God did not have a deaf ear; He was *alive* and was *taking note* of the situation.

**Jer. 23:37 Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken?**

The false prophets were giving false advice, but when conditions deteriorated so that the enemy not only came in and surrounded Jerusalem but also subsequently broke through the outer gates of the city, it was obviously just a matter of time before the city would be completely conquered. When queried at that time, the false prophets would be in a state of panic and fear, not knowing what to say, for the destruction of Jerusalem (as Jeremiah had prophesied) proved they were liars.

However, since verse 37 does not say whether “the prophet” was a *true* prophet or whether, as a collective noun, the term embraced all of the *false* prophets, it can be taken both ways. Therefore, the false prophets might have wanted to inquire of Jeremiah when the destruction was about to occur. If so, then verse 37 is a form of sarcasm. Earlier the false prophets had sneeringly asked Jeremiah, “What hath the LORD answered thee?” and “What hath the LORD spoken?” But when the fall of Jerusalem was imminent, their tone of voice would be different. In fear and panic, the false prophets would want to know what to do—but it was too late!

**Jer. 23:38 But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD;**

**Jer. 23:39 Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence:**

In verse 38, *past tense* should be used: “Because ye *have said* this word, The burden of the LORD, and I *have sent* unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD.” This verse more or less shows that the false prophets would duplicate the questions, but the Lord would not listen to them—even if the questions were now asked out of sincere concern.

“Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence.” God would utterly forget the false prophets, as well as the people they represented. This would be a shameful experience for the false prophets.

According to the Pentateuch, the prophet who speaks that which does not come to pass is a false prophet (Deut. 18:22). Note: False prophets could (and can) speak mechanically under the

influence of an *evil spirit* rather than the Holy Spirit.

**Jer. 23:40** And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

Verse 40 calls to remembrance Revelation 18:9,18 and 19:3, which tell that the “smoke” of mystic Babylon’s burning will rise up “for ever and ever.” The smoke of the destruction will be everlasting and perpetual; that is, the memory of that experience will be seared into the conscience of people so that they will never forget. The memory will be profitable and beneficial for some but not for those who have started to form an incorrigible character. If a man is given seven times of opportunity to repent in the Kingdom Age and does not properly respond, he will be a failure and go into Second Death. Such individuals will have so catered to the old nature that they will not be able to get out of that box, willful sin being a part of their very being.

**Jer. 24:1** The LORD showed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon.

**Jer. 24:2** One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.

A time frame is given, for Jeconiah was taken captive 11 years before Jerusalem was destroyed. Since verse 1 states that he *had been* carried away captive, the time setting is *during* the reign of Zedekiah, when the Temple still existed. In other words, sometime after King Nebuchadnezzar took Jeconiah to Babylon, God showed Jeremiah two baskets. One basket contained “very good figs,” and the other had “very naughty figs”—figs that were overripe, not fit to eat, dried, or wormy. To be commensurate with the drama about to be enacted, the baskets were probably quite large. Thus a lot of labor was involved in collecting the figs. Not only were the two baskets put on display before the Temple, but no doubt they were there for a while. When Jeremiah appeared on the scene, the onlookers knew something was about to happen, so their curiosity was aroused. Jeremiah himself would want to know what the figs represented.

Nebuchadnezzar took King Jeconiah and his family captive as hostages, and he took other prisoners to serve as skilled laborers. The same policy was followed when Daniel and the three Hebrew children were taken captive. Nebuchadnezzar took the cream of Israel to benefit Babylon. A judgment occurred when Jeconiah was taken captive (and also a little earlier when Jehoiakim was taken into captivity).

**Jer. 24:3** Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

The nation of Israel was the fig tree that produced good and bad figs. Fruit represents character development; hence the baskets represent good and bad characters. Fruit is also a symbol of maturity, that is, a climax of a period of time.

**Jer. 24:4** Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

**Jer. 24:5** Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.

Now came the explanation. The good figs pictured an element that God favored by taking them captive “for their good.” From other Scriptures, we find that they were not necessarily such “good” people. For example, Jeconiah received criticism, but he changed through subsequent experiences. He was considered good by the nation, for the people were happy when he was put on the throne, but he was taken captive after only three months. Eventually the Lord honored him but not until almost a generation later, when he was removed from prison, brought up to the king’s table, and given a position of favor.

“So will I [God] acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.” These captives were taken involuntarily. In other words, God’s providence deemed it wise and good from both His and their standpoint.

**Comment:** One of the factors in the captivity was the preservation of the nation of Israel. Carpenters and smiths were taken involuntarily so that this craftsmanship could be passed on to succeeding generations. Then, at the end of the 70 years, among the Jews who returned to the homeland in 536 BC were some with these skills for rebuilding the nation.

**Reply:** Yes. There were other reasons as well.

**Jer. 24:6** For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up.

**Jer. 24:7** And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

“I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land.” Verse 6 is almost saying that not only would the captives fare well but also their lives would be prolonged. For example, Daniel, who lived beyond the 70 years, was approximately 100 years old at his decease. Incidentally, current old-age statistics are primarily the result of decreased infant mortality. Hence the average age today is much higher than in preceding recent centuries, but even back there many lived to old age.

Verses 6 and 7 were only partially fulfilled at the return in 536 BC, for dispersions occurred again in AD 70 and 135. A humble, chastened people returned to Israel in 536 BC. Only in the future—that is, from Israel’s establishment as a nation in our day—would Israel never again be plucked up. And after Jacob’s Trouble, “they shall return unto me [God] with their whole heart.” Moreover, God will “give them an heart” to know Him. Ezekiel 11:19 reads, “And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh.”

**Jer. 24:8** And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt:

**Jer. 24:9** And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.

**Jer. 24:10** And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.

Verses 8-10 explain the figs that were so bad they could not be eaten. The bad figs pertained to the captivity of Zedekiah and his retinue, plus those who survived the destruction of Jerusalem in 606 BC and did not go out in obedience and submission to the enemy in harmony with Jeremiah's advice.

The few who survived by being taken captive at this time, as well as the even fewer individuals who were later taken captive of the 606 BC escapees to Egypt, were taken for their hurt and reproach. The great majority, the bad figs, were not those who returned to Israel in 536 BC when Cyrus issued the decree, and thus they were dispersed all over the world with most of the ten-tribe captives, taken much earlier. Numerically speaking, a large percentage of the Jews who went up into Europe were from the ten tribes.

Those of the right disposition went into Babylonian captivity in obedience to Jeremiah's advice. It took courage to heed that advice and go willingly into captivity and be considered traitors by other Jews. But they obeyed because they felt the advice was from God. That type of element returned to Israel in 536 BC—plus those of the Jehoiachin captivity who were part of the good figs in the final analysis.

A faith strain is transmitted from generation to generation. Thus the Holy Remnant will mainly comprise descendants of those who were in Babylonian captivity but returned to Israel after the 70 years. The "tents of Judah" will also be of this "good fig" element (Zech. 12:7).

"The sword, the famine, and the pestilence" were mentioned time and time again as the means of destruction of the vast majority of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Most were slain but not all. Of those who were not slain, some remained in the land as vinedressers, and some were taken captive to Babylon. The relative handful who did not die suffered ignominy both in Babylon and in the nations whither they were scattered, for they were considered "a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse."

**Chapter 25 will first be considered as it was treated in the 1981-1983 study. Then the chapter will be presented again, this time as set forth in the 1998-2004 study.**

**Jer. 25:1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon;**

In referring to the fourth year of Jehoiakim (624 BC), Jeremiah was talking about an earlier time than the beginning of chapter 24. One reason is that the 70 years will be mentioned and Jeremiah was *reviewing* his ministry.

Many take this fourth year of Jehoiakim as the beginning of the 70-year captivity, but the account does not so state. The chronology is thrown off 19 years by such reasoning. At this time, Jeremiah *began to prophesy* about the 70 years—the account does not say that the 70 years began here. Chronologists generally take the year 587 BC as the start of the 70 years. To do this, they make the desolation 51 years long and the captivity 19 years—for a total of 70 years; that is, 606 (BC) - 587 (BC) = 19 years.

**Jer. 25:2 The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,**

**Jer. 25:3 From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.**

**Jer. 25:4** And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

In review, Jeremiah said that for 23 years, he had been giving a message about God's coming judgment; he rose *early* to speak and do the Lord's will. However, the people refused to hearken to the message. Had they obeyed, God would have stayed the judgment (see verse 5). Not only Jeremiah but also all the Lord's prophets had been preaching not to go after other gods, but the people would not listen.

**Jer. 25:5** They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever:

**Jer. 25:6** And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt.

In other words, "Repent!" said Jeremiah. But the people refused.

**Jer. 25:7** Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

The people preferred to make and worship idols—things made with their own hands.

**Jer. 25:8** Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words,

**Jer. 25:9** Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

God said He would bring Nebuchadnezzar plus associated peoples *from the north* against Jerusalem and surrounding nations and destroy them. Jerusalem and Judah would be destroyed first. The surrounding nations rejoiced at this destruction, but then Nebuchadnezzar destroyed them too.

What is the antitype *here*? Jerusalem pictures the professed people of God. With Israel not in this picture, Jerusalem and Judah represent Protestantism and Catholicism, the *religious* element of Christendom. The surrounding nations represent another element, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Regarding the term "perpetual desolations," the Hebrew *olam* means "*lasting*," that is, a long period of time. Although *olam* can mean "everlasting," that is not necessarily the thought, for *context* determines the signification. Jerusalem and Judah were not destroyed everlastingly. (Note: If context does not make the meaning of a word clear, then we should consider *all* Scriptures on that subject.)

**Jer. 25:10** Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.

In 606 BC, Jerusalem and Judah experienced the ceasing of the voice of mirth and gladness, etc. Jeremiah prophesied that sounds and light would cease. The same experience befell the

surrounding nations in a secondary sense.

In the antitype, Jerusalem and Judah represent Christendom. Therefore, in this chapter (and in much of the Book of Jeremiah), “Babylon” does NOT represent Christendom. Rather, it represents Gog and Magog, a nonreligious communistic element. To repeat: When compared with Jerusalem and Judah in the Book of Jeremiah, Babylon does NOT represent Christendom. Jeremiah prophesied that joy and gladness would depart from Judah and Jerusalem (Christendom) in the destruction.

In Scripture, Jerusalem can represent (a) the true Church (Rev. 21:2), (b) the future capital of the world, or (c) Christendom. Verse 10 is the key to understanding this chapter with regard to Sheshach and Babylon representing communism (Jer. 25:26). In many cases, the following three are equated: (1) Gog and Magog of Ezekiel, (2) the Assyrian of Isaiah, and (3) Babylon (Sheshach) of Jeremiah. Many falsely assume that the voice of mirth, gladness, etc., pertains to Babylon, but that assumption has been a stumbling block, for here it applies to *Jerusalem*.

**Jer. 25:11** **And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.**

Verse 11 has only a *natural* application. For 70 years, the land of Israel would be desolate. While in captivity, Daniel later prayed in regard to this 70-year prophecy of Jeremiah.

Chronologists have erred by starting the 70 years in 587 BC instead of in 606 BC. The setting of this chapter is the fourth year of Jehoiakim (see verse 1), but the 70 years did not begin until the last year of Zedekiah, as shown by other Scriptures. The 70 years were years of *sabbath*: “To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, *until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths*: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil *threescore and ten years*” (2 Chron. 36:21). The 70 years began when Jerusalem and the Temple were burned and the wall was broken down. “And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof” (2 Chron. 36:19). The 70 years ended with the decree of Cyrus. “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, ... the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up” (2 Chron. 36:22,23).

**Jer. 25:12** **And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.**

The “perpetual desolations” of verse 12 are longer than the 70 years of verse 11. The length of time depends on the context, and here the word “perpetual” means a *very long* desolation. When the Babylonian “head of gold” kingdom perished, the Persian “arms and breast of silver” took over. Babylon as a power ceased to exist; hence “perpetual” means everlasting in regard to Babylon’s power. (Of course the people will come out of the grave in the Kingdom, and the desert will be made fruitful.)

Belshazzar was the king of Babylon at the end of the 70 years. Thus Belshazzar and the city, the land, and the empire of Babylon would all go down.

**Jer. 25:13** **And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.**

Verse 13 indicates that the Book of Jeremiah was not finished until shortly before the prophet's death at about age 90. Although the book was finished or collated late in his life, prophecies were uttered sequentially throughout his ministry. All that God prophesied through Jeremiah concerning the destruction of Babylon would come to pass. After going to Egypt, Jeremiah went to Babylon, where he finished his book during the 70 years.

**Jer. 25:14 For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.**

There would be a literal balancing of the scales of justice. Babylon would receive retribution, and the people would become slaves, experiencing that which they did to Judah. The Babylonians treated their captives more brutally than was necessary.

**Jer. 25:15 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.**

God instructed Jeremiah to take a "wine cup" of His fury and make "all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it." We are reminded of the cup of wrath that Christendom will have to drink (Rev. 18:6). However, it is not reasonable to think that Jeremiah literally went to all the nations listed in verses 18-26. There are several possibilities as to how verse 15 was fulfilled.

1. On feast days, Jeremiah could have stood in one of the gates of Jerusalem and given Jews of some of these lands this message to take back to their homes.
2. When Jerusalem was under siege just before its capture, the confederate army host with Nebuchadnezzar had representatives from a number of nations. Jeremiah could have reached many nations at that time (see Jer. 1:15).
3. Jeremiah could have sent messengers out with this message.

**Jer. 25:16 And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them.**

**Jer. 25:17 Then took I the cup at the LORD'S hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me:**

Jeremiah did not literally take a cup but probably had a very real dream. In the dream, God gave him a cup, and then Jeremiah made all of the specified nations drink it. Upon awaking, he realized that God had charged him to deliver a message of condemnation to these nations for their wickedness.

**Jer. 25:18 To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as it is this day;**

**Jer. 25:19 Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people;**

**Jer. 25:20 And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod,**

**Jer. 25:21 Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon,**



**Jer. 25:22** And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles which are beyond the sea,

**Jer. 25:23** Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners,

**Jer. 25:24** And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert,

**Jer. 25:25** And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes,

**Jer. 25:26** And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

The peoples to be condemned, which can be grouped into a category of ten, were Jerusalem, Judah, Egypt, Uz, Philistines, etc. History about Nebuchadnezzar is scarce, but no doubt all of these nations literally suffered retribution and trouble. However, history shows that, with the exception of the king of Sheshach, who drank last, the nations did not experience retribution in the sequence listed. Nebuchadnezzar was called “a king of kings,” yet secular history says very little about him (Dan. 26:7). Our information comes almost exclusively from the Bible.

Israel, the ten-tribe kingdom, is missing, for it had already become desolate and gone into captivity. The nations that are listed are both literal (natural) and prophetic (primarily spiritual). With Israel missing, Jerusalem and Judah take on other meanings. Jerusalem can be literal, or it can picture either the true Church or the false Church. Egypt represents Christendom (the Christian world). Tyre, Bozrah, and Edom all represent Papacy. Hence several in this list can spiritually picture Catholicism, and this fact is a clue that Sheshach (Babylon) represents something else here, even though Babylon is often a picture of Christendom.

The ten categories, which are basically centered around Abraham’s day, are shown below.

1. *Jerusalem, Judah, and their kings and princes.* These are a representation of Protestantism.
2. *Egypt and its king, servants, princes, people, and “mingled” people (immigrants).* “Pharaoh king of Egypt” is a *double title*, which none of the other categories have. Pharaoh can represent either Satan or God depending on the picture. Here Satan represents the pope, Satan’s chief earthly representative. The listing of all segments of the Egyptian population (Pharaoh, servants, people, etc.) is a picture of the papal hierarchy. The “mingled people” would be Greek Catholics, Armenian Catholics, Russian Orthodox, etc.

In prophecy, Pharaoh had his arm broken twice; hence there were two judgments. In the antitype, Papacy was judged once in the Protestant Reformation through the French Revolution with Napoleon. The future complete destruction will be the second judgment.

3. *All the kings of the land of Uz.* Why is this virtually unknown place listed as the third category? The Holy Spirit thus separated the first two categories from the remainder to show that they are the significant ones from the Christian standpoint. The first two represent all the *Christian nations*. The others represent *non-Christian nations*.

Very little is known about Uz, which is mentioned in Genesis 10:23. Job came from Uz, which was near India and includes those of the Hindu religion and the Persian Gulf states such as the small wealthy nations of Kuwait and Oman.

4. *The Philistines (Ashkelon, Azzah [Gaza], Ekron, and Ashdod), i.e., terrorists such as the PLO.* These cities and this area, which are in Israel today, do not represent a particular god or religion.
5. *Edom, Moab, and Ammon.* These three are all in Jordan, the Hashemite kingdom. Edom was Esau, Jacob's twin brother, a grandson of Abraham. Moab and Ammon were Lot's children after his daughters got him drunk. (Lot was a nephew of Abraham.) When Ishmael was sent away from Abraham, he went east and settled in the desert.
6. *Tyre, Zidon, and the isles beyond the sea.* Tyre and Zidon are close together; hence all were maritime peoples on the seacoast. The "isles" would include England in the antitype. Spain, Portugal, and France were also great maritime powers. All of these colonial powers had outlying colonies, which they controlled through their ships and navigation. In other words, the maritime powers of Europe are pictured here.
7. *Dedan, Tema, and Buz, plus Arabia and the kings of the mingled people in the desert (the bedouins) and Zimri.* These places are a description of the Arab nations.
8. *Elam (Persia) and the Medes.* The Medes are related to Persia, that is, to Iran and Iraq.
9. *This category is different: "all the kings of the north, far and near ... and all the kingdoms of the world."* The "kings of the north" include Russia, China, Japan (in the far north), and Turkey (in the near north). "All the kingdoms" would be Africa, Australia, and North and South America (including the United States). In other words, the Time of Trouble will include all the nations of the world. Why? Because they all worshipped "the works of their own hands" (verse 14). The Apostle Paul said that the nations degenerated (Rom. 1:21-32).
10. *Sheshach.* Judah, Egypt, and Sheshach are the three principal actors. They are, respectively, the first two and the last in the categorical listing.

In the natural picture, Babylon was judged when Media-Persia took over. First, however, Babylon captured all of these other nations—the whole civilized world of Jeremiah's day. In this chapter, Babylon represents communists, anarchists—the element that will be chiefly responsible for tearing down the governments of the world. The communist element that has infiltrated many nations but is disenchanted with organized governments is the Lord's Great Army, which will be operating in all nations. "And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel 2:11). The Lord's Great Army will consist of *many* little armed bands of guerrillas. Gog, which originates out of the north (Russia), will be part of this worldwide tearing-down element. When Gog from the land of Magog goes down to Israel, it is significant that this element will be destroyed last.

Ultimately, these lawless hordes (with guns) will fight and slaughter each other for food. Hence the brunt of the trouble will be on the heads of the wicked (as well as on "kings" earlier when the leaders of the nations are singled out for punishment). Verses 18-26 emphasize "kings," for those in positions of leadership and power will suffer most in the Time of Trouble. The prominent leaders who have taken advantage of others will experience the most trouble. The trouble will start in Europe, for World War III will create great havoc there. Armageddon will affect the whole world religiously and politically, but Europe (Christendom) will especially experience trouble. There will be no place to hide. Homes will be entered and violated.

Gog and the Assyrian are exact equivalents. However, Sheshach is a worldwide element that includes Gog/the Assyrian. Terms like Czar, Kaiser, Caesar, Ptolemy, Herod, and Sheshach

refer to an office or a title. At the time of the literal fulfillment, Belshazzar was the Sheshach. Note: The names of the nations in the then-known civilized world of Jeremiah's day were used to describe the nations of our day, with verse 26 including all those not specifically delineated.

**Jer. 25:27** Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spew, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.

**Jer. 25:28** And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ye shall certainly drink.

If the nations just mentioned refused to drink the cup Jeremiah gave them, God would make them drink. "Spew" means vomit. By his *message*, Jeremiah tore down kingdoms.

"Drink ye, and be drunken, and spew, and fall, and rise no more." The nations just mentioned lost the great power they once had. The Medes, Elamites, etc., had to *share* power after that.

**Q:** How would the cup of fury and wrath be refused?

**A:** The cup was refused when the religious leaders declared that Jeremiah was not the Lord's prophet and went on with their own arrangements.

**Jer. 25:29** For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

Jerusalem was the city called by God's name. In the antitype, Christendom is falsely called by Christ's name. Hence the trouble will start in Christendom. And what do the Scriptures say? "Judgment *must begin* at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17). The judgment began in 1878 with Babylon's fall *from favor*. Its destruction is future. At the same time that *nominal spiritual* Israel was falling from favor, favor was starting to rise on *natural* Israel. Also at the same time, God's favor to the *true spiritual* Israel has been taking place, beginning in 1878.

1878 - Rejection of nominal Church

1878 - Favor begins to return to natural Israel

1878 - Resurrection of sleeping saints (true Church)

Moreover, the glorification of the true Church in the near future will occur very close in time to the destruction of the false Church and the establishment of the New Covenant with Israel. In other words, judgments of favor and disfavor are occurring at the same time.

After Jerusalem's fall in the type, all the other nations received a judgment. Accordingly, after Christendom's fall, God will bring a judgment on all the nations outside Christendom. The smashing of the image on the feet shows the destruction of Christendom plus the other nations (the entire image—head, arms, breast, belly, etc.—which represents Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Holy Roman Empire).

**Jer. 25:30** Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

The Lord shall "mightily roar." This description suggests a lion, justice, and judgment. The origin of the judgment will be from God. From His heavenly habitation, He will "mightily roar upon his [earthly] habitation"—Jerusalem and Judah (Christendom). God will "shout" and

“tread the grapes.” We are reminded of the treading of the grapes of wrath in Revelation 14:18,19. “And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.” The custom in treading the grapes was to shout and sing in unison. In karate, a shout helps the athletic movement. All of the world’s inhabitants will be involved.

**Jer. 25:31** A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.

News will spread of the coming judgment until all are included. Revelation 18:9,10 shows that the kings of the earth will be fearful when Babylon falls because they will know they are next.

God “will plead with all flesh,” giving especially the wicked to the sword. The instruction to the world is to “seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid [spared] in the day of the LORD’S anger” (Zeph. 2:3).

**Jer. 25:32** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

The evil (judgment) will go forth from nation to nation like a domino effect, with the contagion *spreading out* like a forest fire until all lands are included. At the same time, trouble will *spread inward* from the coasts of the earth so that all are embraced in this trouble. This is a description of *all-comprehensive* judgment!

**Jer. 25:33** And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.

The dead will be from one end of the earth to the other. So many will die that the bodies will not be buried or lamented. Whatever way people die, they will not be mourned because the trouble will be *so comprehensive*. Many will starve to death, and many will be killed by violence. Moreover, epidemics and plagues will result from the dead bodies. The three means of death are sword, famine, and pestilence.

**Jer. 25:34** Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel.

**Jer. 25:35** And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape.

**Jer. 25:36** A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock, shall be heard: for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture.

The “shepherds” are the religious leaders primarily and the civil leaders secondarily. They will not escape but will cry in unison in regard to the trouble coming upon them. Their “pasture” (congregation) will be “spoiled” (taken from them).

The shepherds will “fall like a pleasant vessel,” that is, like a potter’s vessel. The picture is one of *complete destruction*—just as the awesome image was all smashed together (Dan. 2:34,35).

**Jer. 25:37** And the peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

The “peaceable habitations,” that which the leaders hoped would bring peace, will end in trouble and destruction. Belshazzar’s feast was a time of *false* peace. “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thess. 5:3).

**Jer. 25:38** He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

God will forsake His peaceful repose of ignoring the permission of evil and exhibit *fierce* anger. He will leave His covert (den), and it will be the day of Jehovah’s WRATH.

Nebuchadnezzar (Sheshach) was the oppressor, but he was the instrument of God’s anger, the axe that boasted itself against its maker, God. Therefore, God will also judge the hammer—the anarchists—after they do their work.

The following commentary on chapter 25 is from the 1998-2004 study.

**Jer. 25:1** The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon;

**Jer. 25:2** The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,

**Jer. 25:3** From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.

A time period is given as to when the following statements, at least through verse 7, were uttered. From the thirteenth year of Josiah’s 31-year reign to the “fourth year of Jehoiakim” was a period of 23 years; that is, it was the “three and twentieth year” of Jeremiah’s ministry. At that time, he said to all the people of Judah, “I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.” “Rising early” shows Jeremiah’s intensity of purpose in not wanting to waste any time. Feeling that his time was dedicated to God and that he had a stewardship, he got up early on a regular basis to do this public work. However, generally speaking, his preaching fell on deaf ears.

**Comment:** Twenty-three years was a long time to keep prophesying without significant results.

**Reply:** Yes, and Jeremiah continued to prophesy to Judah through the reign of Zedekiah and even beyond, when he was down in Egypt with the vinedressers who fled after assassinating Gedaliah. His long ministry covered a period of at least 40 years.

**Jer. 25:4** And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

How far back in history was Jeremiah’s reference to Jehovah’s sending “unto you [Judah] all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them”? Of course he was including the contemporary prophets of Ezekiel and Daniel. Many of Ezekiel’s prophecies were similar to

Jeremiah's, and in some cases, he even went into more detail. In addition, Jeremiah was referring to the prophets immediately prior to his day. For example, Zephaniah prophesied a little earlier and perhaps overlapped the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry. Habakkuk was another such prophet. When we read the different prophecies, sometimes the name of a prophet comes up for which there is no book.

"But ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear." It was as though the Lord gave opportunity to nip the evil in the bud, but because the people stubbornly resisted, they became increasingly hardened against hearkening to subsequent prophets and changing their ways.

**Jer. 25:5** They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever:

The prophets who rose early and prophesied said, "Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and [then, as a consequence, you will] dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever."

**Jer. 25:6** And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt.

Why did the people of Judah go "after other gods" to serve and worship them? Careless intermarriage was probably a big factor. For that reason, the Christian is told to marry in the faith as far as possible: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14; compare 1 Cor. 7:39).

"Provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands [making idols, altars, and statues to heathen gods]; and I will do you no hurt." These works of their hands were usually placed in prominent, conspicuous spots on the hills and in the groves.

**Comment:** As a modern-day example, huge statues of prior popes are in some of the Italian churches.

**Reply:** Yes, the statuary is prolific. On one of the tours, we saw the statue of St. Peter with the toes worn down into stumps from being kissed so many times over the years.

**Jer. 25:7** Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

The people refused to hearken.

**Jer. 25:8** Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words,

**Jer. 25:9** Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

"Behold, I will ... take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land." "All the families of the north" were other nations that were sympathetic to Nebuchadnezzar and opposed to Israel. When it was seen that the king of Babylon was going down to visit a judgment on Israel, many

volunteers from surrounding nations joined his army. Nebuchadnezzar was the representative of the main core of the Babylonian Empire, which included many subservient countries. Volunteers from these countries were happy to join the army under his leadership. We believe there was an ulterior motive for the inclusion of this information in the account, as will be seen.

God called Nebuchadnezzar “my servant” not from a moral standpoint but as the instrument of judgment. He was also called “the lion [that] is come up from his thicket,” and a lion is a symbol of justice and judgment (Jer. 4:7). For example, Solomon’s throne had several lions. “Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom” (1 Kings 10:18-20). The lions were a symbol of judgment, especially if one did not hearken, for the king’s word was *law* in the realm.

Why would God bring Nebuchadnezzar and participants from other countries “[1] against this land [Judah], and [2] against the inhabitants thereof”? The moral reason was that the people of Judah did not hearken to God’s instruction. In addition, Nebuchadnezzar and his army destroyed the land—they ate the crops during the siege, burned the land, cut down the trees to make battering rams, destroyed houses and fortifications, and spoiled the goods.

Moreover, God brought Nebuchadnezzar “against all these nations [peoples] round about”—Ammon, Moab, Edom, Gaza, Ashkelon, Tyre, etc. The nations immediately surrounding Israel were sympathetic to Nebuchadnezzar’s coming down against Judah because of past experiences and defeats in war, such as under King David. As spectators with seething hatred, they cheered as they watched Israel’s destruction. When some of the Jews fled and hid from the enemy, these spectators pointed out the hiding places to the Babylonians. Therefore, through Nebuchadnezzar, God would “utterly destroy them [not only Judah but also the nations surrounding Judah], and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual [lasting] desolations.” This important information requires some consideration so that we will know which thought is correct when certain other judgments come up. To understand the desolation on the other nations, we will take Judah as the example. What did the king of Babylon do to Judah? He destroyed the capital city and the Temple, killed great numbers of people, burned houses, etc., and took a *few* of the inhabitants captive to Babylon. The point is that if Judah became a “hissing” and a byword, these other nations suffered a similar fate.

Secular history is very deficient on this information, so the Bible provides details not obtainable anywhere else. It pictures that from a worldly standpoint, Babylon was the greatest nation, the head of gold. Nebuchadnezzar did many things in his long reign of more than 40 years.

**Jer. 25:10** Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.

The voice of mirth, gladness, the bridegroom, and the bride and lighted candles and the sound of millstones were removed not only from Judah but also from the surrounding nations. Right away we can see a spiritual connotation because of Revelation 18:23, “And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.” In other words, the *natural* picture, from which we can extrapolate valuable information, is a past historical fulfillment that embodies a prophecy of the future. As we continue, we will become more and more convinced that chapter 25 was not wholly fulfilled by the king of Babylon and his confederates, for some of the details did not

happen back there but are prophesied elsewhere as events in the near future.

As we read verse 10, we can almost picture a wedding. During the Harvest period, the voice of Jesus, the Bridegroom, has been *outside* the nominal Church, yet the voice can be heard *inside*. Therefore, it is improper to say there is no Spirit begettal inside Babylon, for the voice is heard *within* the system *from without*. The Bride responds to the Bridegroom's call, "Come out of her, my people" (Rev. 18:4). In 1878, the nominal system ceased to be the mouthpiece of the Lord, but that did not stop the Lord's people.

The "sound of the millstones," the grinding of the wheat—Sunday school classes for children, the preparation of food in the seminaries, etc.—will cease. Eventually, the "light of the candle" will be entirely extinguished. At present, mystic Babylon is getting darker and darker. The degradation of the nominal Church hastens on, and in time, these activities will cease. Thus there is a progression, but also a definiteness, that will end in desolation.

**Jer. 25:11** And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Verse 10 reads, "I [God] will take from them [*plural*—that is, from Judah plus the nations round about Israel]." Now verse 11 continues, "This whole land shall be a desolation," starting with Judah and extending to much of Egypt, Ammon, and Petra (areas that once flourished). Egypt's former grandeur in large cities and temples is in ruins. Even today these areas have not regained their former richness and agrarian fertility. The shock wave was so bad when King Nebuchadnezzar did his destroying work that the recovery process is taking thousands of years. "Astonishment" is associated with "hissing" (whistling).

And so a judgment was to come that would humble the nations so that they would be in a nonthreatening position for many years. "These nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."

**Jer. 25:12** And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

Here is a time period that has been universally accepted, namely, 70 years. However, *as to the application of those 70 years*, Bro. Russell and a few old-timers back there—but very few of other denominations—had the correct thought. The beginning of this chapter (Jer. 25:1) tells the time period here: "The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim ... [which] was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon." Some *incorrectly start the 70 years from this period of time*, but verse 1 is merely saying that Jeremiah was *predicting future things in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim*.

To repeat: Verse 1 does *not* mean the 70 years started in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Many Bibles today have a marginal reference that this date is 606 BC, meaning that the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the first year of the king of Babylon, was 606 BC. However, based on the detailed information in Chronicles and Kings, the destruction of Jerusalem would then be 586 BC, a date commonly accepted by others, instead of 606 BC. They apply 606 BC here instead of at the time the city was destroyed according to the chronology of the *Second Volume*, which we accept. We gave several years to a study of the chronology and all the alternative thinking, and today's thinking is no different. It sounds new with the mention of the tablets, but a lot of tablets had already been uncovered when the same thinking was used in the past—50 or more years ago.

**Q:** Do some use the backward approach with Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes to get 586 BC?



**A:** They use the forward approach, whereas we use the backward approach, and Pastor Russell must have done the same. We take 536 BC as being a correct date. Therefore, 70 years earlier would be 606 BC. The Pastor applied 606 BC not to Jehoiakim but to Zedekiah and the destruction of Jerusalem, which we believe is correct.

And there is another line of reasoning. When verse 11 says, “This whole land shall be a desolation, ... and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years,” did Israel serve the king of Babylon in the fourth year of Jehoiakim? No. Jeremiah was talking about a *future* 70 years, not a current 70 years, yet Bible chronologists across the board get this mixed up. Fortunately, a couple of other places in Scripture give the correct thought to solidify the thinking that the 70 years were from 606 to 536 BC. Otherwise, when speakers with the other view use the wording here in Jeremiah 25, they can make one think they are right because they speak with such assurance. Their positiveness has the effect of traumatizing some who are less informed on the subject matter.

Therefore, the 70 years started at a future time from the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim. Jeremiah was *not implying* that the 70 years began there. For one thing, Egypt was not in subjection at this time. Nebuchadnezzar had warned Egypt and then come down and broken one arm. However, he did not go into Egypt and destroy it until the second time when he broke the other arm. Therefore, anyone who delves into *secular* history, where there is so much confusion, instead of getting informed by the Bible, which presents *true* history, has caused a lot of confusion. It is good that not too many brethren are affected, for how many have the time, the desire, or the talent to go into the nitty-gritty of secular history?

**Jer. 25:13** And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.

We have already read where Jeremiah sent emissaries with prophetic messages to the different surrounding nations, telling them what would happen. From captivity, Ezekiel prophesied of the same time period. The double witness is encouraging because it tells us that God informs His people wherever they are, that is, even if they are in different lands. The message may come from people we do not even know, but God feeds His people in the various places with the necessary information.

**Jer. 25:14** For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

From this point on, the prophecy is being enlarged down to our day. The natural picture of something that literally happened can be spiritualized—somewhat like chapters 50 and 51 of this same book, which are a detailed prophecy against Babylon. From here to the end of chapter 25, we will get a little information on events that were about to occur—and the 70 years began when the actual occurrence started.

**Comment:** It is interesting that earlier in this chapter (verse 9), Jeremiah called Nebuchadnezzar a “servant” of God, but even though the king accomplished that work, he was responsible for his actions. The same principle applies to Judas. Although he fulfilled prophecy in betraying Jesus, he incurred the penalty of Second Death.

**Reply:** In Isaiah 10:5-15, the Assyrian was the battle-axe that did the Lord’s work, but then God said in effect, “Do not get high-minded, for you, too, will receive retribution.” The same principle operated with the king of Babylon.

**Jer. 25:15** For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.

God said to Jeremiah, “Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.” This verse needs to be modified to some extent because we do not think that Jeremiah went personally to each of the 15 or so nations. However, he did go *representatively* by sending a messenger with the pertinent message for each nation. The same principle applies to Zechariah 14:16,17, which states that there will be no rain upon the nation that does not go up to the Feast of Tabernacles. The thought is that all nations will have to go *representatively* to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. As an illustration, when a dignitary dies, the various nations are represented at the memorial service by their president, vice president, prime minister, or other high-ranking leader. Thus Jeremiah went representatively to all of these nations and caused them to drink the “wine cup” of fury, that is, the message of trouble. In contrast, Paul urged the Christian to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the holy wine of joy (Eph. 5:18).

**Jer. 25:16** And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them.

God told Jeremiah in advance that the nations would drink and that the wine of fury, the message, would make them angry. They would be insulted and mad that the message of bad news came out of Jerusalem, the headquarters of the Jewish nation.

**Jer. 25:17** Then took I the cup at the LORD’S hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me:

In what way did Jeremiah take the cup and make all the nations drink? The message was probably enacted, or dramatized, as on a stage. Jeremiah went to a prominent place with a symbolic cup of the wine of fury and, while pointing in the direction of a particular nation, repeated the judgment message God had given him. As he turned, he pointed to one nation after another: to Egypt, to Moab, to Ammon, etc. Ezekiel used the same technique of dramatization by drawing a map of Jerusalem under siege and lying on his left side for 390 days and then on his right side for 40 days. In addition, his food and water were rationed to indicate that the food supply would be scarce.

After performing this pantomime, Jeremiah sent a messenger to the various nations to deliver the message in person. Thus there were two stages: (1) he gesticulated the message and (2) he sent a messenger to deliver the message verbally.

**Comment:** Jeremiah made sure that the leadership of each nation heard the message.

**Jer. 25:18** To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as it is this day;

Jerusalem, the cities of Judah, and the king, prince, or leader of each city would be made “a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as it is *this day*.” Verse 18 is important from a chronological standpoint to determine the time frame of the 70 years of desolation. Verse 12 reads, “And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.” What does the term “as it is this day” in verse 18 signify? Ezra wrote this clause *later*, that is, *after the 70 years had already started*. Without this realization, the chronology becomes confused. As we will discuss subsequently, certain problems existed at the time this information was recorded.

**Jer. 25:19 Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people;**

**Jer. 25:20 And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod,**

When we read verses 19 and 20, certain little pauses and couplings should be observed. For instance, verse 19 refers to Pharaoh and the people of Egypt—his servants, princes, and people. But the beginning of verse 20, “And all the mingled people,” also refers to Egypt, meaning the mixed population of not only the Egyptians but also the foreign element dwelling in the land.

Just like Israel, the land of Egypt was laid waste by King Nebuchadnezzar, yet there is no record of this defeat in secular history. The decimation was so bad that the survivors were taken captive to Babylon, and Egypt was desolate for a period of time. Thus on the one hand, Nebuchadnezzar poured out fury on those who differed with him. On the other hand, he honored those whom he approved, so he was polarized in two different directions depending on his mood. He had no qualms about burning his enemies alive.

The next clause in verse 20, “and all the kings of the land of Uz,” has nothing to do with Egypt. Uz was a separate territory in what today is more or less the land of Arabia. Job dwelled in Uz. Saudi Arabia is a large, nebulous area covering a tremendous amount of ground that is filled with oases and stark desert, which is sort of an odd mixture.

“And all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and [even] Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod.” Now the reference is to a much different area. Uz was to the east of Israel, being a desert kingdom that flourished at one time in history, and the Philistines were on the west side of Israel, being on the Mediterranean coast. Ashkelon, Azzah (Gaza), Ekron, and Ashdod were principal cities of the Philistines.

There is the possibility that verse 19 should be kept separate. If so, then verse 20 should read, “And all the mingled people, *even* all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, *even* Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod.” Just as in the Greek of the New Testament, the word translated “and” in the Old Testament can mean either “and” or “even.” A committee of many scholars translated the Scriptures; for example, 70 scholars worked on the Septuagint. However, each scholar could not do the entire Bible because to analytically study the grammar of the Old or New Testament is a daunting task that requires a lifetime. Therefore, the scholars were segmented so that each handled only smaller portions. The use of this method accounts for multiple spellings of the same name through different provincial dialectical twists.

**Jer. 25:21 Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon,**

Going from north to south and bordering one another in a rather uneven fashion, this grouping of separate and distinct peoples was Ammon, Moab, and Edom. Edom was on the east side of the Dead Sea, and it extended all the way down to the Gulf of Eilat.

**Jer. 25:22 And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles which are beyond the sea,**

With regard to Tyrus and Zidon, there are a Tyre and a Sidon in Lebanon today.

**Jer. 25:23 Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners,**

**Jer. 25:24** And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert,

Of the two Dedans and Shebas, this Dedan and Sheba were in Saudi Arabia, being related to the children of Abraham through his wife Keturah. Like Ishmael's children, they left Abraham and went east but in a different time period. Incidentally, the other Dedan and Sheba are in Africa.

Tema, probably an abbreviation of Teman, was also in the Saudi Arabia area. What about Buz? Elihu of the Book of Job was the son of a Buzite (Job 32:2). Job was of the land of Uz (Job 1:1).

**Comment:** According to Job 4:1, Eliphaz was a Temanite.

“And all that are in the utmost corners.” This expression pertaining to the skull, or head, is figuratively used to describe a geographic area in what we believe is Kuwait and Yemen today. What is presently Saudi Arabia consisted of different provinces with distinct people and was a very populated area at one time.

**Jer. 25:25** And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes,

Now the description is going from Saudi Arabia more into northeastern and northwestern areas. A portion of eastern Turkey, called Anatolia and embracing the Ararat area, is included. The Medes are familiar to us because of the Media-Persia Empire. Elam is Persia, or Iran.

Zimri is mentioned in 1 Kings 16:16-19, as follows. “And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king: wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp. And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died, For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin.”

Basically, the account is now getting into the areas of Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Generally speaking, the description shifts up to a very large bloc north of Saudi Arabia.

**Jer. 25:26** And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

Verse 26, “all the kings of the *north*, far and near,” is a summary of verse 25 about Zimri, Elam, and the Medes. The description is of a large area, or bloc, north of Saudi Arabia. Some of the nations are farther north, and some are a little more to the south, but all are north of Saudi Arabia as we know it today. Even these nations have changed down through history, just as Israel and particularly the nations in Europe have changed. What was once Media has shifted, just as the nations in Europe have shifted.

“All the kingdoms of the world” are more or less the mercantile or professional world, the world of business. After the Flood, Noah's three sons went in three directions—but not right away. Their migration was gradual. For instance, the earliest period of Rome in history is about 767 BC, but at that time, Rome was a little nothing. Later, of course, it became a great empire with the Caesars—Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero. Although these emperors ruled in the early part of the empire, the time period is rather recent. The point is that Japheth

sort of dragged his steps in Turkey and in going across the Bosphorus into Europe.

“All the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach [Babylon] shall drink after them.” Right away this portion of verse 26 helps us, for the king of Babylon is the *last* to drink the cup of the wine of God’s fury. In the New Testament, mystic Babylon, or Christendom, drinks the cup *first*. Therefore, these two cups are different. All the nations in verses 18-26 had a past experience, and they prefigure a future experience—but not the one that we, as Christians, are more familiar with, namely, England, the Anglican Church, the Protestant churches, and the Catholic Church. The nomenclature in this chapter is different, for it pertains to the territories that are involved.

And there is another point. Sometimes people say that with a type and an antitype, the antitype has to be distinctly different. If the type is material, they feel that the antitype has to be spiritual. In many instances, that statement is true but not necessarily. Some carry this dogmatic thinking even down to pictures with regard to beings. For instance, the *man* Joseph pictures the *man* Jesus. At his First Advent, down here on earth, Jesus was the fulfillment of the picture of Joseph; each was hated of his brethren, who conspired against him. Thus both type and antitype are a man, not man and a spiritual being.

The clue found here in verse 26 that the king of Sheshach will drink *last* disengages us from a Christendom type of picture and enables us to see that the antitype pertains more to the *natural*. With this realization, we can now begin more properly to draw other conclusions as we read verse 27.

**Jer. 25:27** Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spew, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.

Where is Babylon today? Prior to the start of the war with Iraq, Saddam Hussein, who was a nobody, thumbed his nose at the other nations. And the Shah mentioned that his kingdom, Iran, going way back in history, was one of the longest kingdoms on earth. He was being very successful in trying to modernize his country and bring it up to a standard like other nations, but then the religious element, who felt that all of their standards were being eroded, conspired against him.

Where are Zimri, Elam, and the Medes today? They are gone. From a natural standpoint, the land remains, but Babylon no longer exists as a kingdom. Egypt still exists but because of American aid. Therefore, we make a distinction between a “curse” and “desolation” (compare Jer. 25:18). Egypt is a mean country in its poverty, although Nasser and subsequent leaders have tried to raise the standard and unify the Arabs.

**Jer. 25:28** And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ye shall certainly drink.

**Jer. 25:29** For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

“For, lo, I [God] begin to bring evil [through the king of Babylon] on the city [Jerusalem] which is called by my name.” (Jerusalem is at the head of the list in verses 18-26.) The evil first came upon Jehoiakim, then on Jehoiachin, and finally on Zedekiah. At this point in the account, Nebuchadnezzar was dealing with Jehoiachin. Therefore, the destruction of Jerusalem and the lasting desolation were still future.

“Should ye [all the nations previously mentioned] be utterly unpunished?” God was saying through Jeremiah, “Should I bring judgment on Jerusalem and leave all the other peoples unpunished? No! The others will have to drink this cup of fury too, not just the people called by my name.” The point is that in the application here, Babylon does not picture Christendom because in the *religious* picture, mystic Babylon will fall *first*. Subsequently the other nations will be dealt with.

“Ye [the other nations already enumerated] shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.” They would all have to drink of the cup of fury.

**Jer. 25:30** Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

When the image is smitten, which is a different picture, the smiting will take place on the *feet*. When the ten toes are smitten, the entire image will fall (Dan. 2:34,35). Babylon was the head of gold, so when the stone hits the feet, the whole image will *instantly destruct*. “The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth,” causing the image to explode or implode *at once*.

As Jeremiah was giving these prophecies, Ezekiel was talking the same way in captivity. These prophecies had a fulfillment in Jeremiah’s day, and they will have another fulfillment at the end of the present age.

**Comment:** There is a fourfold emphasis on Jehovah’s voice. He will “roar,” “utter his voice,” “mightily roar,” and “shout.” It is like a person who has been holding back his words until all of a sudden, a tremendous verbal explosion occurs.

**Reply:** Yes, God’s fury will come up into His face (Ezek. 38:18).

**Jer. 25:31** A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.

Verse 31 is like shifting into another gear, going from the fulfillment in the past to the fulfillment in our day. We see Kosovo, Ethiopia, the Sudan, etc.—these tremors, which are jumping all over like a flame, precede the real earthquake, or trouble, that is still future. A tremor is related but is relatively superficial compared to the crescendo of the earthquake, the great Time of Trouble yet future.

“The LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh.” The future trouble will be very embracive, involving “all flesh,” whereas Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction was more local, and it was accomplished in a few years.

**Comment:** Although God “will plead with all flesh,” He will particularly “give them that are wicked to the sword.” This is one of several Scriptures that show the trouble will be primarily on the heads of the wicked.

**Reply:** Yes, that is true in a *broad-brush* sense.

## Review of Jeremiah 25

Before proceeding, we will summarize the earlier part of this chapter. We went into great detail to show what areas the various nations occupied back in Jeremiah's day. Some of the nations are grouped in mini blocs of two, three, or four peoples. At any rate, the nations embraced the then-known world, and the prophecy of coming trouble and desolation had a past fulfillment. However, secular history does not record the marvelous deeds of King Nebuchadnezzar. More is probably known in Arab annals than by present Western scholarship—except for what is written in God's Word, specifically in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Those three prophets gave clues regarding the various component nations that are mentioned in the listing. While there was a past fulfillment, Pastor Russell and other writers saw that some of these prophecies also have an end-time fulfillment. In other words, there is to be a future fulfillment.

The listing, starting with verse 18, begins with Jerusalem and ends in verse 26 with Sheshach. Thus, whatever the listing signifies, Jerusalem is first in the sequence, and Sheshach is last. However, what is sandwiched in between is not necessarily sequential, for many of the kings had their experience in blocs within a period of a few years. Verse 29 is one clue that Jerusalem was first to receive judgment in the type: "For, lo, I *begin* to bring evil on the city which is called by my name." In the past, the city called by God's name was Jerusalem. And Sheshach, or Babylon, ended the scenario back there by drinking the wine of God's fury last. If we try to give Babylon (Sheshach) an antitypical fulfillment, there appears to be a problem because in many Scriptures, Babylon is a picture of Christendom, spiritually speaking, and Christendom will be the *first* to receive judgment, not the last. The conquest of Jerusalem started shortly before 606 BC and ended with the destruction of the city and the Temple. In the type, Jerusalem was destroyed and made desolate, just like the other nations and Sheshach, but in the antitype, the city has to picture something else, for the Scriptures plainly show that the Lord will not make Jerusalem desolate in the end time. God will interfere at the time of Jacob's Trouble and fight as in the "day of battle" to rescue Israel, specifically the Holy Remnant (Zech. 14:3). Therefore, in chapter 25, Jerusalem pictures *Christendom*, as applied in the *Volumes*.

The seeming problem is as follows. If Jerusalem is Christendom (nominal spiritual Israel) in the antitype, what does Babylon (Sheshach) represent? We will read verse 29 again: "For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name [Jerusalem], and should ye [the other nations previously mentioned] be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts." In addition to Jerusalem, these other nations would have to drink the cup of the Lord's wrath.

When we bring this prophecy forward to our day and see that Jerusalem is the first to drink, we realize the city pictures Christendom in the antitype, and this interpretation harmonizes with other Scriptures which show mystic Babylon's falling first in the end time. Clearly, then, the "Babylon" of Jeremiah 25 pertains to something else, which we will treat shortly. After the nominal Church systems fall, the kings of the earth will stand afar off, witnessing the "smoke of her burning" (Rev. 18:9,10). As has been said for years, the fall of the nominal Church will mean that the Little Flock is complete. Having obeyed the call to come out of Babylon, the feet members will be spared that experience (Rev. 18:4).

**Q:** Do verses 29-33 lead down to the end of the Gospel Age?

**A:** Yes. First, the judgments of the past occurred as enumerated, but then the picture enlarges into a broader stroke to apply to the end of the present age. Clues to this effect are the terms "all the inhabitants of the earth" (used twice), "the ends of the earth," "all flesh," "the coasts of the earth," and "from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth."

A question arises at this point: How can we *spiritualize* Jerusalem by saying that it represents Christendom when all the rest of the detail is *natural*? Common sense would say that everything must be either spiritual or natural; for example, if Jerusalem is spiritual, then Egypt should also be spiritual (and the others too—Ammon, Moab, etc.). However, there are precedents in Scripture where a spiritual signification and a natural application are in the same picture. Let us try to think of some of these precedents, which are exceptions to the general rule. Normally, we think along the lines of the general rule, which is proper, but we should never feel that when exceptions are made, they are contrary to the general rule.

The stone smiting the image is a prominent example of the spiritual being mixed in with the natural, for the ten toes are a mixture of iron and clay. “And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they [the ecclesiastical element] shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay” (Dan. 2:43). With the ten toes, “clay” (the ecclesiastical element) and “iron” (civil Rome, the political element) are mixed together in the same picture, and all the other parts of the image are natural. When smitten on the toes, the whole image will be broken together—at once. The destruction is described as going *up* the image: “A stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together” (Dan. 2:34,35). The destruction will begin with the feet (Christendom, a *mixture* of church and state) and then go up the legs to the thighs and the arms and finally to the head (none of which are a mixture as far as ecclesiasticism is concerned). The iron and clay represent Christendom, but what part? The *ten toes* show that the area particularly affected will be Europe, a geographic area just like the other representations. Thus Europe is brought into the breaking down of the end-time picture, whereas the past fulfillment of Jeremiah 25 embraced only the Middle East. All of those nations—the Medes, the Persians (Elam), etc.—will be involved in the future Time of Trouble, but the smiting will start with Christendom and end up with Sheshach, or Babylon (verse 26).

The end-time enemy of Christendom is called “the Assyrian” in the Book of Isaiah. Moreover, the one who is given great prominence as being used of the Lord to come down and visit judgment on Israel is the “Assyrian, the rod of mine [God’s] anger” (Isa. 10:5). During the prophecies here in Jeremiah, the term “Sheshach” (Babylon) is the equivalent (Jer. 25:26; see also 51:41). In the Book of Ezekiel, the enemy element is “Gog” of the land of Magog (Ezek. 38:2,3,14,16,18; 39:1,11). Thus the “Assyrian” in Isaiah, “Sheshach” in Jeremiah, and “Gog” in Ezekiel are all the end-time enemy under different terminology.

**Jer. 25:32 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.**

**Jer. 25:33 And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.**

Verse 33 is the closing verse of a scenario that began with verse 1 of this chapter. Already we are beginning to see “evil ... go forth from nation to nation” in multiple trouble spots. But the pleading with “all flesh” (verse 31) will be as a composite *whole*. We are in a time of trouble but not *the* Time of Trouble. What we see at present is symptomatic, and it will lead up to the great social explosion that will cover the earth.

Earlier verses of this chapter mentioned many nations being visited with desolation beginning with Jerusalem. Many kings and various component parts of the known world in Jeremiah’s day were enumerated. The listing ended with verse 26 telling that the last to drink the cup of



the Lord's wrath will be the king of Sheshach, which is another name for the king of Babylon.

The fulfillment of verses 32 and 33 is still future, but we have seen samples of this type of destruction. For instance, when two tribes in Rwanda warred against each other, more than a million people were slain. The corpses, being too numerous, were not buried but were left on the ground to decompose with the stink going forth for many months. Another instance of the dead not being buried was the Warsaw ghetto in Poland, where for months Jews walked by the dead and did not lament because the magnitude of the horror was so overwhelming.

Many were also killed in Kosovo and Serbia, but there the casualties were buried in mass graves—trenches dug by bulldozers. The point is that these tragedies, as bad as they were, are not evidences of the great Time of Trouble but are merely *samples* of trouble which are permitted to alert us as to what to look for in the future.

**Comment:** Israel will need seven months to bury the dead after Jacob's Trouble (Ezek. 39:12).

**Reply:** Yes, we were coming to that Scripture. It will take seven months to bury the dead and seven years to convert the implements of war into agricultural purposes (Ezek. 39:9).

In the future Time of Trouble, "the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground." Isaiah 34:1-3 describes the same end-time period: "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood." Throughout the entire earth, contemporaneous deaths will be so devastating that people will be worried about their own survival. Mankind, with all of their problems, have not gotten down on their knees and prayed in reverential fear for God to deliver them. Therefore, the coming trouble is necessary to get the people to "look upward" to Jehovah (Isa. 8:21). "They shall ... curse *their* king [civil or political authorities] and *their* God [false religious leaders]." False religion throughout the world will cease. Meanwhile, the people are getting sick of the corruption, but the explosion is still future.

**Comment:** Jesus said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matt. 24:22).

Verses 32 and 33, then, are an end-time picture beginning with Christendom and ending with the destruction of the ones who visit their wrath worldwide. The Assyrian was called "the rod" of God's anger. Nebuchadnezzar was called God's "servant," His "lion [that] is come up from his thicket" (Jer. 4:7; 25:9). The Lord's Great Army will cause anarchy at the end of the age (Joel 2:11), but eventually God will cause the wrath of men to bring forth praise to Him, for severe trouble is necessary to make them get down on their knees. But, first, they will "pass through it [the land], hardly bestead and hungry" (Isa. 8:21). The RSV has "greatly distressed and hungry." Hunger, the nonavailability of food, will be a big factor.

**Comment:** Hungry people are dangerous people.

**Reply:** During this period of time, only Israel will have a measure of security with their "cattle and goods" (Ezek. 38:12). People cannot eat or drink oil; they will want to satisfy their immediate temporal needs.

**Comment:** In connection with Gog coming down from Magog, God said, “I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws [their *mouths*], and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords” (Ezek. 38:4). This text is a clear indication that the invasion of Israel will have nothing to do with material wealth but with food.

**Reply:** The forces of Gog will first go into Europe, to Rome. After they visit their wrath on Papacy, they will be turned around to go southward down into Israel. Gog will want to wreak vengeance in one direction, but the lack of food will force them to turn around. It has been said, “An army travels on its stomach.”

“They [the dead bodies] shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.” They will lie on the surface of the ground until they completely decompose. In the beginning of the seven months in Israel, thousands of corpses will be buried daily. When bodies and bones are subsequently discovered on the outskirts, they will be brought back to the cemetery called “Hamon-gog” (Ezek. 39:11-15). Gog will be sort of an antitypical fulfillment of Haman in the Book of Esther. Agag is also related to Gog (1 Sam. 15:32,33).

Jeremiah 25:12 states, “And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.” That area is largely desert today, even though Iraq unsuccessfully tried to rebuild Babylon. Notice again what God said: “When *seventy years* are accomplished [i.e., *after the 70 years*], ... I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation ... for their iniquity ... and will make it perpetual *desolations*.” What “seventy years” were accomplished? What is usually not explained or is given a low profile with the chronology changes being made is that the 70 years of desolation are said to be 51 years, with 19 years being dropped. After the desolation of all the enumerated nations, who drank of the wine cup of God’s fury, the last to drink was the one who caused the captivity. Nebuchadnezzar had a *tremendous* campaign including the capture of Egypt, of which secular history says virtually nothing. Reliable secular history goes back to the Persian king Cambyses, but the Bible gives us earlier details of ages, births, deaths, and years. In addition, the Jewish annals tell about the chronology so that we can add up the years. No other nations of ancient history left behind such an accurate record. Even the register on the mountain in Persia provides only the names of successive kings, not the years. The Abydos tablet, too, gives the sequence of different Pharaohs who ruled Egypt but not the years. Only the Bible gives us the specifics—how marvelous! The scholars go everywhere but to the Bible, which has the accurate information. The god of this world is powerful in blinding the minds of men who are smarter than we are in academic education but ignore the Word of God.

**Comment:** The wisdom of God is foolishness to men (1 Cor. 1:18-29; 2:14; 3:19).

**Reply:** Yes. Jesus said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25). We are “babes” from the perspective of the world.

Now let us turn to 2 Chronicles 36:20,21, “And them that had escaped from the sword carried he [Nebuchadnezzar] away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.” Jeremiah 25:1 reads, “The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.” The question is, Was the land desolate in the fourth year of Jehoiakim? No. Was it desolate eight years later when his son, Jehoiachin,

reigned for three months and then was taken captive to Babylon? No. The land was not desolate until the city of Jerusalem was destroyed; that is, the 70 years are marked from the destruction of Jerusalem. "To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah," the *whole* land had to lie desolate for 70 years, which did not happen until the people of Judah and the foreigners that had been placed in the former territory of the ten tribes were taken captive, leaving the entire land desolate. Egypt, Edom, Moab, Ammon, etc., were also made desolate; the people were either killed or taken captive to Babylon, just like the survivors of Judah.

**Q:** How long did the vinedressers and Gedaliah remain in the land after Nebuchadnezzar left them there?

**A:** They were there for only a few months when Gedaliah, the puppet governor left by Nebuchadnezzar, was slain, and the vinedressers fled to Egypt.

**Jer. 25:34** Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel.

**Jer. 25:35** And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape.

**Jer. 25:36** A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock, shall be heard: for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture.

**Jer. 25:37** And the peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

Verses 34-37 are stated as though the desolation had already occurred, but that was not the case. Jeremiah's uttering this prophecy as though it had already taken place shows God's determination to fulfill what was irrevocable. The surety of fulfillment added emphasis, as if to say, "The Lord's evidence of what He had been predicting for years was now accomplished." Although the dispersions had not fully taken place, some were beginning to happen, for one or two of the shepherds who had disagreed with Jeremiah got summary punishment before the year was over.

Verse 34 says, "For the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions *are accomplished*." This statement sounds as if the days had already occurred, but then the rest of the verse states, "Ye *shall fall* [future tense] like a pleasant vessel." Thus verse 34 has both past and future tense. Verse 35 uses future tense: "And the shepherds *shall have* no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape." Then verse 36 mixes the tenses: "A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock, *shall be heard*: for the LORD *hath spoiled* their pasture." Jeremiah spoke with *surety* of the details that were *going to happen*. This method of speaking added power and force to his message.

The "shepherds" were particularly the religious leaders of both the priests and the false prophets. "Wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of *your* slaughter and of *your* dispersions are accomplished." One interpretation is that the principals were slaughtering the flock. There were two types of dispersion: (1) the Jews went into captivity and were dispersed, and (2) the shepherds of the flock scattered the sheep. Instead of gathering the sheep together and nourishing them, the shepherds dispersed them. Instead of being shepherds, the religious leaders were slaughterers, and they dispersed the flock. They were guilty of the sectarian spirit of rivalry and internecine destruction and biting one another. It was as though the book was now being closed on such activity. "Now is the time for your

falling like a pleasant vessel” is the thought; it was like a rich man being made poor again. The religious leaders were like a pleasant vessel in their appearance. They had good clothes, a very religious look, and all the ornamentation of religiosity and honor, but they would be debased.

The falling of a pleasant vessel reminds us of other falls: the smiting of the image, the clay potter’s vessel that Jeremiah smashed, and especially the fall of (mystic) Babylon (Rev. 17:5). The kings and the merchants will stand afar off and mourn and howl over Babylon’s fall (Rev. 18:9-11). The vessel was pleasant in appearance prior to the smashing. As an illustration, if a woman had a precious vessel that fell and broke, she would be dismayed. But here, of course, the shepherds themselves would be demeaned and lose their influence and authority. They “shall have no way to flee, nor ... to escape.” As we proceed, we will find that the false prophets and the false priests were put to death; none escaped in the trouble of 606 BC.

As Jeremiah continued to prophesy, it was like hearing “a voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock,” but the event had not yet happened. “For the LORD hath spoiled their pasture. And the peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of the LORD.” The Temple, the shepherds’ way of life, and the shepherds themselves would be destroyed.

This whole chapter pertains to what Jeremiah said in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer. 25:1). Since the next chapter starts with “In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim” and does not state specifically, the time setting could be about the same. The prophecies of Jeremiah were written down, probably by Baruch, who acted like a secretary, so we are given thumbnail descriptions of different things that happened in the prophet’s ministry. The documents were later taken by King Nebuchadnezzar and put in the archives of the Temple of Bel in Babylon. Not until many, many years later did the king unlock the archives and tell Ezra to take the documents of Jeremiah’s sermons. The question facing Ezra was how to compile and collate them. Baruch had inserted the time period, but if multiple talks were from the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the problem was how to sequence them. Earlier, in chapter 22, we mentioned that there was a continual chronological description through chapter 21; then the sequence stopped. The refrain resumes way down here, so the chapters in between are this material, which consists of several discourses given the same year. Does it matter whether something was said in the first or second month, for example? In other words, it was hard to sequence sermons given in the same year. Having insight, Ezra probably felt there was something in the chapters that merited the sequence as it has come down to us. We do not fully fathom the purpose, but no doubt there was one. Ezra was a most unusual person. We think he was even nobler than Nehemiah, but Nehemiah had a more honored position and was the king’s cup bearer.

The recognition of past and future tense had an effect on the hearers, for it showed that the speaker was *convinced* he was telling the truth. His words brought conviction. Not only was Jeremiah speaking a “thus saith the LORD,” but he was *positive* it would occur that way. To not hearken to Jeremiah’s message shows how hardened the Jews were as a people. With regard to the sinner, if there were seven opportunities, if there were seven Millennial Ages, a certain class would fail in every one of them. A hardened heart is very deceitful.

In the term “principal of the flock,” the word “principal” is plural, meaning “principal ones.” Thus the majority followed the advice and guidance of the false shepherds. Only a small minority heeded Jeremiah’s instruction, namely, “When the enemy surrounds Jerusalem, those who run out of the city and become willing captives are guaranteed survival, but they will be slaves for the rest of their life.” Faith would say, “If my life is spared and I am to be a slave, perhaps I will have a good master and be treated reasonably well.” And that is what happened, for many captives, like Daniel and the three Hebrew children, were given prominent positions.

**Jer. 25:38** He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

“He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion.” In this context, the “lion” has a dual application—to both Jehovah and Nebuchadnezzar. God roars as a lion, and King Nebuchadnezzar was likened to a lion earlier (Jer. 4:7). Verse 38 incorporates both thoughts: “He [the LORD or Nebuchadnezzar] hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor [Nebuchadnezzar], and because of his [Jehovah’s] fierce anger.” Not only did the king of Babylon come down and destroy Jerusalem as a lion coming from its covert, but also God was the lion visiting judgment on His people. Solomon’s throne had lions on either side to represent justice and judgment in carrying out the Lord’s will. In visiting judgment, Nebuchadnezzar acted as God’s executioner.

**Jer. 26:1** In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from the LORD, saying,

Verse 1 gives the time period in Jeremiah’s life, as well as the reign of a king of Judah, so we know this message was given “in the *beginning* of the reign of Jehoiakim,” which might mean the first or second year. “The *beginning* of the reign” seems to be a discrepancy in sequence with Jeremiah 25:1, which said, “In the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim.” The account seems backwards, for the “beginning” sounds earlier than the “fourth year.” Jeremiah 27:1 reads the same as Jeremiah 26:1, and Jeremiah 28:1 states, “In the *beginning* of the reign of Zedekiah.” However, the word “beginning” simply means “in the forepart” or “in the earlier part” and thus could even be the fourth year, although it was probably the first or second year. This is not a problem, for Ezra’s purpose was to arrange a group of sermons in their own sequence within parameters that give us a more-or-less coherent idea of the time setting. Ezra would have given much thought to the collation of this book.

Since the time setting was the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, whatever occurred in this chapter happened roughly at the midpoint of Jeremiah’s ministry. He prophesied for at least 40 years, and the 18 years of the latter part of Josiah’s reign added to, say, two years of Jehoiakim’s reign would be 20 years, or half of Jeremiah’s ministry. Thus far we have read about the prophet from the start of his ministry as a young man up until now, and about the circumstances and the result of his ministry to this point.

**Comment:** From the tone of the Lord in asking the people to repent in verse 3, we can reason that it was still a fair amount of time before the Babylonian captivity.

**Reply:** Yes. We are calling attention to this time slot because it will help us to understand certain statements that were made later on.

**Jer. 26:2** Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD’S house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD’S house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word:

God told Jeremiah to stand in the Outer Court of the Temple where the people could come at any time. On special occasions, this court served as a lecture hall. (In Ezekiel’s Temple, the Outer Court will be like a stadium.) This was probably a special occasion when Jeremiah could speak to a larger segment of the people of Judah. God said, “Speak unto all the cities of Judah ... *all the words* that I command thee to speak unto them; *diminish not a word.*” In other words, “Do not soften or omit any of the message.” This message is a type of Elijah’s smiting the Jordan.

The account does not tell us with particularity the actual details of the message. However, the

substantive summary of Jeremiah's remarks gives us an idea of how important the message was. A principle is shown here; namely, as the Lord's spokesmen, we are not to evade certain subjects because of the sensitivity of those in attendance. Stated another way, we must not compromise the Word because of not wanting to step on someone's spiritual corns. However, there is a time and a place for moderation, which the Lord's Word also encourages. For example, we do not give strong meat to babes lest they get indigestion and choke and die.

Incidentally, since Jeremiah came from a town of priests, he was probably a priest himself, although he was not active in that capacity. Being a prophet was a more important service.

**Jer. 26:3** If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.

"If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I [God] may repent me of the evil." That was certainly fair and square. The message was strong, but God was patient. In speaking of *habitual* practices, of a *course* of conduct, He reasoned with His people, "Don't you see where this evil will lead? Am I not a God to you? I am willing to change matters, but you have to change first."

If the people turned from their evil, God might repent (change the course of the purposed destruction). However, a majority would have to reform in order for the punishment to be turned back, that is, for the destruction of Jerusalem not to occur.

"That I may repent me of the evil." "Evil" in this context means *calamity*, for God does not do evil in the sense of sin. As stated in the *First Volume*, sin is always evil, but evil is not always sin.

**Jer. 26:4** And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you,

**Jer. 26:5** To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened;

From one standpoint, the term "rising up early" refers to the zeal of the prophets in getting up early to deliver the Lord's message. It stresses the *urgency* of doing the Lord's will.

From another standpoint, "rising up early" can be explained as follows. Let us say that an individual is starting to depart from the way. To those observing the Lord's dealings with him, it is apparent that He does not wait until the situation becomes habit-forming. The same was true with God's dealings with Judah, for when the deviation began, He intervened soon enough to nip the evil in the bud, but the people turned a deaf ear. As they continued in their evil, they became confirmed in their errant ways. God did not wait until that point to plead with them to repent, for He sent messengers, His "servants the prophets," very early, at the *first* sign of a departure. Therefore, *no responsibility* can be laid at His feet, yet many in the world complain about God when problems occur, but during the good times, they forget Him.

**Jer. 26:6** Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

Why was Shiloh introduced in connection with this message? What happened at Shiloh? The Tabernacle was there for hundreds of years, and during that time, the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant when, in disobedience, the Israelites took it to the battlefield. This incident occurred in the days of the judges with Samuel and Eli, the high priest. From that time until Jeremiah's day, conditions deteriorated, but Shiloh was in the ten-tribe Kingdom. Not only had

the ten tribes gone into captivity, but the Tabernacle was removed from Shiloh. Moreover, Shiloh became a garbage dump. Hence Jeremiah was saying that what had happened to the Tabernacle was now an impending doom that would happen to the Temple in Judah. Those in Judah should have taken lessons from the past. Similarly, as Christians, we should learn lessons by profitable introspection.

This was serious talk from Jeremiah, and he was not to leave out one word. *If the people of Judah did not hearken to the spoken message of the prophets, to the written Law of God, or to God Himself, the Temple would be made like Shiloh. Shiloh, an out-of-the-way place in the ten-tribe kingdom, was finally destroyed because of disobedience. Shiloh means “quiet” or “silent,” as opposed to the busy Temple in Jerusalem. When the Temple was destroyed, there was quietness in Jerusalem for the duration of the 70 years.*

Instead of heeding Jeremiah’s message, the people built their faith on the security of the Temple and the capital city of Jerusalem. He had warned them, “Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these” (Jer. 7:4). Jeremiah was trying to persuade his people so that the same calamity would not befall the Temple and city as had happened to the Tabernacle and Shiloh.

The Tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple lasted approximately the same number of years. The Temple was built during the reign of Solomon, who was the third king, and it was destroyed in the reign of Zedekiah at the end of the 513-year Period of the Kings. The reigns of Saul and David, plus about four years of Solomon’s reign before the Temple was built—a total 84 years—have to be subtracted from 513, for a total of 429 years.

The Tabernacle was built one year after the Exodus, so it was in Sinai for 39 years. It took six years to divide the land under Joshua, and then came the Period of the Judges followed by 80 years of the reigns of Saul and David and about four years of Solomon’s reign. Thus the Tabernacle existed for 579 years.

With both sacred and secular history, there is very often a mechanism at work where history repeats itself. It is interesting that both the Tabernacle and the Temple existed for a long period of time, and both ended with dissolution, captivity, desolation, many deaths, sorrow, and pain.

“I ... will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.” How was Jerusalem made a “curse”? When destroyed, it was a continual reminder of what God had permitted to happen because of Israel’s disobedience. The surrounding peoples talked about the destruction of Jerusalem and used it as an example of a curse. With regard to the dissolutions of Jerusalem in AD 70 and 135, the Romans looked on the nation of Israel as an example of what happened to an upstart, rebellious, stiff-necked people, who were a great irritant.

And later in history, the city, the people, and even the Temple became an example because Roman Catholics felt that they were now the people of God. In taking over the religious vacuum, they looked upon the Jew not only as having God’s disfavor but also as never again having favor. Anti-Semitism developed. The Roman Church claimed to be the Israel of God, and to one degree or another, Protestants did the same thing in principle.

**Jer. 26:7** So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

For Jeremiah to speak to “the priests and the prophets and all the people,” he probably repeated the message over and over. They thought he was always harping on the same message of doom, but he faithfully discharged his responsibility by getting as many people as

possible to hear him. Therefore, he selected the spot for the best acoustics and the greatest access to the most people so that the message would be most effective.

God helps His servants with memory. For example, Moses gave most of the content of the Book of Deuteronomy in one day, and the people listened. Moses needed a perfect memory for that occasion. A loud voice and a strong physical frame were also required so that he could endure the experience. In addition, the people were strengthened because God wanted them to hear Moses' words. Similarly, when they traversed the Wilderness of Sinai, their leather sandals did not wear out, even though they walked on uneven hard sand with rocks and sharp Cretaceous stone. And a cloud covered the nation so that rain did not penetrate to disturb them except where it would be of benefit. The cloud also protected them from the heat of the sun during the day and from the cold of the moon at night.

**Jer. 26:8** Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

**Jer. 26:9** Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

The result of Jeremiah's preaching was a tumult. Because of his remarks, the priests, the false prophets, and all the people turned against Jeremiah, saying he would die. "Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant?" In other words, Jeremiah had prophesied not only that the Temple would be destroyed but also that the city would be made desolate. Obviously, he had said more than the few words that are recorded here, and what he said made the listeners burning mad. Making a comparison between what had happened to Shiloh and what would happen to the Temple incurred their wrath. Their reaction was, "Thou shalt surely die."

**Comment:** For years, Jeremiah had prophesied of the coming destruction and death by sword, famine, and pestilence, but the people had basically ignored him. Even though Shiloh was mentioned in Jeremiah 7:12-14, the mention of Shiloh here was more than they could bear.

**Reply:** The reference in chapter 7 was an earlier time period. During his 40-year ministry, Jeremiah more or less repeated several themes. People who heard him speak again and again just ignored him, but as time passed, those who were hearing him for the first time were given their opportunity to repent. And so the Lord rose up early through the prophets during the interim time and up until the point of no return (verse 5).

God was patient in dealing with His people. While the message was strong, it actually showed His mercy. Like a parent who is concerned about the development of a child, God gave opportunity for correction and repentance. Since His punishments were meant for the eternal welfare and benefit of His people, He made sure they heard the message of His prophets.

The current religious institution of priests and prophets was not recognized or appointed by God. Rather, the individuals inherited their respective office from their fathers; they got it mechanically. Jeremiah was the real teacher, but his message was not what the religious leaders wanted to hear. The people agreed with the pronouncement of the priests and the false prophets in wanting Jeremiah's death. They spoke *Satan's* words: "Thou shalt surely die."

Back there the nominal religious element took the leading evil role, just as it will with the feet members in the near future. There was *immediate open animosity* when Jeremiah did not



“diminish” a word (verse 2).

“And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.” Subsequent verses reveal some interesting developments.

**Jer. 26:10** When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king’s house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD’S house.

**Jer. 26:11** Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

Jeremiah had prophesied to the priests, the false prophets, and the people (verse 8), but the princes, who were down in the southern part of Jerusalem where the king had his residence, were not present. When the princes got word of the furor that was taking place, they “came [of their own volition] up from the king’s house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD’S house.” The “new gate” was in the northwest corner of the city. The priests and the false prophets did not have the authority to put Jeremiah to death, so they now petitioned the civil authority, saying “This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city.”

The very fact the princes “sat down in the entry” of the gate meant a trial would take place, for judgment was customarily done in the city gate. The priests and the false prophets intended that the trial would be a kangaroo court, but the Lord overruled the matter. Meanwhile, there was a large audience, for “all the people” were also present at the gate. “Then spake the priests and the prophets ... saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.” This was a certification to the princes, who had not been on hand earlier; they were getting the testimony of the people, the priests, and the prophets, all of whom were witnesses.

Verses 10 and 11 sound like the religious leaders taking their “cause” to Pilate in regard to Jesus’ death. The priests and the prophets said to the princes and the people, “Jeremiah is worthy to die because he prophesied against Jerusalem.” The feet members will be considered worthy of death when they publicly prophesy against Babylon (Christendom).

**Jer. 26:12** Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

**Jer. 26:13** Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

**Jer. 26:14** As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.

**Jer. 26:15** But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

Jeremiah was condemned, but he did not remain silent. Like the Apostle Paul and our Lord, he spoke through the power of God’s Spirit. Jeremiah responded by addressing those who might be more amenable to the logic of his reasoning. Notice that he spoke “unto all the princes [who

were not on hand originally] and to all the people” and left out the priests and the false prophets. Thus, in order to rescue as many as possible, he reasoned with those who were more likely to have an open mind. The priests and the prophets were bringing the charge, and the people went along with it, being momentarily swayed by the religious leaders.

Before the Diocletian persecution, there was a period in Christianity when many Christians who were brought up before the civil magistrates were exonerated and freed. Eventually, however, the civil authority got so tied in with the religious authority that principles were abandoned, and judgment got warped. For that very reason, church and state should be kept separate.

Notice that Jeremiah spoke very positively. Human nature would cower and fear what would happen, but he did not waver. Taking the attitude of God Himself, Jeremiah said, “The *LORD* sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.” Jeremiah was saying, “I am not the originator, but I am certainly in sympathy with the message, so why don’t you listen to reason?” He declared himself as being of the same mind. (Some blame the other party and shun personal responsibility, but not Jeremiah.) Then he said, “As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.” In other words, “Do with me as it seems right in your own eyes.”

We are reminded of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. When he was apprehended, he said, “I am the one you want. Let the others go their way” (John 18:8 paraphrase). Jesus did not resist, even though Peter and the others would have defended him. Jesus submitted willingly because it was the time for him to be offered up.

But then Jeremiah added, “But *know ye for certain*, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof.” Jeremiah spoke *with strength*, “Know that for whatever you do to me, you will pay a price because I am innocent. What I am saying to you *God* told me say. Therefore, you are adding to your problem instead of subtracting.”

The mention of “innocent blood” reminds us of Revelation 6:9,10, where John “saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our [innocent] blood on them that dwell on the earth?” Innocent blood cries for justice. Jeremiah was saying, “These words are the *truth*, for God told me to deliver this message. I am not lying. You will pay a penalty for harming an innocent person. A wrong attitude will make more sure the desolation of Jerusalem.”

Jeremiah continued, “For of a truth *the LORD hath sent me* unto you to speak *all* these words in your ears.” Not only were none of the words Jeremiah’s, but God had said, “Diminish not a word” (verse 2). If the princes and the people killed him, there would be a *double* penalty: (1) for disobeying the Lord and (2) for spilling innocent blood.

Here we get an insight not only into God’s dealings but also into the type of people He chooses for certain types of tasks to be performed. We see Jeremiah’s earnestness and appropriateness as a spokesman, especially when he got on fire with zeal. There was no pussyfooting, whereas the false prophets spoke smooth things that people liked to hear. Strong talk has its place depending on the circumstance, that is, when it is in season for the occasion. In other cases—with the mourning, the sick, the weak, and the repentant—we are to be merciful and sympathetic. In other words, we are to deal with a situation according to what it cries for.

What was the effect? Jeremiah had made his defense in the trial, and then he rested. As a

hearer, we would have listened to his original message, followed by the reaction of the priests, the prophets, and the bulk of the people, and we would have seen that the princes seemed to be in agreement. Then we would have heard Jeremiah's defense. Now the judgment would rest with us. Would we tolerate the injustice? The people could demand justice for Jeremiah after his defense. What would they do?

**Jer. 26:16** Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

Jeremiah made his defense, and some listened, for it seemed to them to make sense. This line of reasoning was prudent. Although the situation was a little different, when Peter and John were imprisoned around the time of Pentecost, Gamaliel reasoned with the council and spoke common sense (Acts 5:34-39). As a result, the two apostles were given a tongue-lashing and released.

The princes and all the people said to the priests and the false prophets, "This man [Jeremiah] is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God." In the beginning, everyone was in an uproar. Even when the princes were summoned, there was an overwhelming desire to put Jeremiah to death, but he stood up to the occasion. When he spoke so earnestly and strongly the second time, repeating his message, it sunk in with some of the very ones who had clamored for his death. As a result, the princes (like Pilate with regard to Jesus) and the people did not want him to be killed. However, the priests and the false prophets were adamant.

**Jer. 26:17** Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,

**Jer. 26:18** Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

**Jer. 26:19** Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

**Q:** Who were the "elders"?

**A:** Although they did not sit in judgment like the Sanhedrin, they had that type of thinking. Thus they were like elder statesmen. They were not necessarily prophets or priests or in line for royal office, but they were men whose counsel and thinking were esteemed. Usually they were older in years but not always.

**Comment:** It seems they were impressed that Jeremiah had no evil motive but simply spoke what the Lord had told him to say. He realized the message might cost him his life, yet that fact did not dissuade him. It would have been easy to back down and apologize, as a false prophet would have done. However, the people saw his determination and realized nothing worthy of death had been said. Perhaps they also recognized jealousy on the part of the priests and false prophets, as well as an evil motive, for the religious element clamored for Jeremiah's death.

Jeremiah's defense and the reaction of the princes, the people, and certain of the elders caused a division—like the dividing of the waters of Jordan to the right and left. Initially, there was a mob scene that was almost like a lynching trial, but after Jeremiah's defense, opinion was

divided, with many saying he was not worthy of death. At the time of Jesus' trial, Pilate saw no reason for his death, even saying, "Behold the man!" (John 19:5).

Thus the thinking of many hearers now changed. The Lord had backed up Jeremiah, giving him a portion of the Holy Spirit and stiffening his backbone under great pressure.

"Certain of the elders" (not all of them) cited the precedent of the Prophet Micah in the days of both King Hezekiah and Isaiah, the major prophet at that time. As old-timers, the elders remembered what their parents had told them about Isaiah, Micah, and Hezekiah and what Sennacherib and Rab-shakeh had done more than a hundred years earlier. These elders showed why Jeremiah should not be put to death.

What did Micah say to the king of Judah and the people back there? "Zion ... [shall] be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest" (Micah 3:12). The "high places of the forest" are above the timberline and thus are devoid of trees. Of course Micah spoke in a figurative sense because the Temple was not that high, but it would become denuded.

"Zion," the Temple Mount, would be destroyed. In the days of Solomon, the Temple Mount had beautiful trees and gardens, but today it looks quite smooth and level because it was "plowed." The Romans later destroyed Herod's Temple, laying it completely waste. In other words, history repeated itself. What would happen in 606 BC also happened in AD 70 and 135, comprising three overturnings.

Certain of the elders continued to speak: "Did not Hezekiah fear the LORD like Jeremiah, who just spoke to us? Jeremiah told us his message had come from God, and that makes sense. Moreover, if God repented of the evil in Hezekiah's day, perhaps He will do the same for us." Because the king hearkened to Micah's message, the judgment on the Temple and Jerusalem was delayed. Now, in Jeremiah's day, the time for judgment was very near. Hence the elders were saying, "If we listen to Jeremiah's message, there might be a remission of our sins."

"Thus might we procure great evil against our souls." Instead of saying, "It is expedient for *one* man to die lest the nation perish," the elders were giving the opposite reasoning. "Why should we put ourselves—all of Judah—in jeopardy by slaying Jeremiah, *one* individual? It makes sense to spare him, for he may be telling the truth." In the antitype, there will be quite a lot of notoriety at the public trial for the feet members. Jeremiah's experience is a prototype.

**Jer. 26:20** And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah:

**Jer. 26:21** And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt;

**Jer. 26:22** And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, namely, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt.

**Jer. 26:23** And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

Apparently, another elder spoke about Urijah to present an opposite case, a case *against*

Jeremiah. Urijah, a true prophet, prophesied against Jerusalem but then fled in fear to Egypt. King Jehoiakim sent men to bring Urijah back to Israel, where the prophet was put to death. And what happened to the nation? Nothing!

There is a lesson in these verses for the feet members. “And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his [Urijah’s] words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt; And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt.... And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.” Urijah was not put to death at first because he fled. Later he was brought back to Judah, and Jehoiakim killed him with the sword. Urijah fled out of fear, whereas Jeremiah stood his ground. The historical lesson for us is what not to do. We must stand for the truth *regardless of the cost*.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 16:25).

**Reply:** That statement will be particularly appropriate at the end of this age. Urijah pictures the Great Company, who will flee for fear when Elijah smites the Jordan. Elijah and Elisha will be together, but Elijah (pictured by Jeremiah) will not diminish a word.

Also, there is a faint possibility of two trials at the end of the age. First, the feet members will be exonerated. Second, they will be condemned to death (and thus be delivered as new creatures).

**Jer. 26:24** Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

The Lord raised up Ahikam, as it were, to protect Jeremiah so that he was not put to death. Ahikam may have been one of the elders.

2 Kings 22:3-11 tells that when Ahikam’s father, Shaphan, brought the “book of the law” back to King Josiah from Hilkiah, the high priest, and read the Law to him, Josiah was repentant. Thus Shaphan was instrumental in Josiah’s repentance. Even the son, Ahikam, was involved, for Josiah sent him back to Hilkiah.

2 Kings 22:12-14 continues the narrative: “And the king [Josiah] commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king’s, saying, Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us. So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess ... (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.” Under King Josiah, Ahikam was faithful, and now he sided with Jeremiah. Ahikam was a highly respected scribe, so the people listened to him.

Jeremiah 39:14 states, “They sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people.” Ahikam’s son, Gedaliah, was sent to release Jeremiah from prison. Later Gedaliah was murdered, that is, after he was left in Judah with the vinedressers. The family of Shaphan (the grandfather), Ahikam (the father), and Gedaliah (the son) were all reasonably faithful as a family.

**Jer. 27:1 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,**

This message came in the beginning (the earlier part) of Jehoiakim's reign. We do not know specifically which year.

**Jer. 27:2 Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck,**

**Jer. 27:3 And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah;**

“Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck.” A yoke, which is shaped like either a horseshoe or a circle, goes over the head and around the neck. “Bonds,” or straps, were attached to the yokes. For example, an ox was harnessed to a plow with straps over its back. The yokes were a symbol of servitude and being under control.

God told Jeremiah to make several bonds and yokes and to put them on his neck. Then the prophet was to send them, via messengers from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon, to the kings of each of these countries and also to Zedekiah, king of Judah. Making the yokes and bonds required *time*. Therefore, if five or more years were needed to make and distribute them, Zedekiah would be king by then. In other words, when Jeremiah started to make the bonds, Jehoiakim was the king of Judah. When he was ready to deliver the bonds, Zedekiah was the king of Judah. The bonds represented the coming captivity of all these nations.

After Jeremiah made the bonds and yokes, he was to send them in a unique way. These countries had commercial or business ties with Israel, so when a representative came to Jerusalem, Jeremiah could give him a yoke and a message to take back to his king or master. Time was involved, for not only did Jeremiah carve the bonds and yokes out of wood, but the delivery had to wait until the various representatives came from the different nations that were enumerated. From north to south, Ammon, Moab, and Edom were east of the river Jordan on the other side of the Dead Sea. Tyre and Sidon were north of Israel and west of the Jordan River in what is Lebanon today. In other words, these were immediate neighbors of Israel.

**Jer. 27:4 And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters;**

When the bonds and yokes were made, Jeremiah was to command the representatives to deliver a message to their respective king or whoever sent them. Since messengers would come to Jerusalem to communicate with the king of Judah, Jeremiah could speak to them.

**Jer. 27:5 I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.**

The future message to these five areas was that God had personally made the earth, man, and the living creatures by His *great power* and His outstretched arm and that He had given the land to whom it seemed meet. The “outstretched arm” is not a reference to Jesus. Other Scriptures show that God used His fingers and His hands (plural), so He did not make the earth through the Logos (Psa. 8:3; Isa. 45:12).

Verse 5 sounds like Daniel 2, the chapter about the smiting of the image. Daniel 2:37 reads,

“Thou, O king [Nebuchadnezzar], art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.”

**Jer. 27:6** And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

The message to be given continued: “And now have I [God] given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field ... to serve him.” What is the thought here? When the king came down and captured the land, there was only so much that could be transported back to Babylon, but he would take what could walk. Nebuchadnezzar could not transport houses and crops, but he did take the survivors (for example, those of Judah who willingly submitted to capture) and the beasts.

When the message was delivered subsequently, the recipients considered it an insult. Whether it was Israel’s earth (land), man, and beast or Ammon’s (or another nation’s) earth, man, and beast, the Creator was the same. These other nations worshipped their own god(s) and did not want to hear about the God of Israel.

In this peculiar situation, Nebuchadnezzar was God’s “servant.” With the lands and the beasts being given to him, we are again reminded of Daniel 2. The Babylonian Empire was GREAT!

**Jer. 27:7** And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son’s son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.

All the civilized nations of that day were subject to the Babylonian (universal) Empire and served King Nebuchadnezzar, his son Evil Merodach, and his son’s son (Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson) Belshazzar—three generations. Historians think more generations were involved because of additional names on the tablets, but obviously, several individuals took over temporarily while Nebuchadnezzar was insane, so there were more than three rulers.

“All nations shall serve him, ... and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.” Verse 7 is a prophecy that the situation would be reversed in God’s due time, for the Babylonian Empire would be captured and subjugated by the Persian Empire.

**Comment:** The second part of verse 7 reads as follows in the RSV: “Until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.”

**Reply:** The kings at the end of the 70 years were different from the kings who preceded the 70 years; that is, there was a group of kings before and another group of kings later. The second half of verse 7 pertains to the end-time period of the 70 years.

**Jer. 27:8** And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

The yoke became a symbol of the first group of kings being conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and the instruction that they should submit. Annihilation was their fate if they did not submit willingly.

King Nebuchadnezzar would conquer many nations, but that experience would be less galling if the captives *submitted*, for then the land would not be made desolate. The nations were to put their heads in the “yoke,” just as Jeremiah demonstrated with the literal yokes. However,

because of nonsubmission, not only Israel but also other nations were made desolate. For example, after being a *world* empire, Egypt was relegated to being a *poor* country.

**Jer. 27:9** Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:

**Jer. 27:10** For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish.

Jeremiah told the messengers that their own mystics would counsel the opposite, but the mystics were not to be believed. The occult sources told the people not to submit because the king of Babylon would not be victorious. Notice the descriptions of the religious deceivers and the different types of prophesying: (false) prophets, diviners, dreamers, enchanters, and sorcerers. Some used incense or smoke, some examined entrails, some threw sticks up in the air and interpreted the meaning according to how they fell, some used necromancy, some were astrologers, etc. The thought is not that every nation utilized all of these methods, but that each land adopted some of these procedures to divine, or foretell, what the future held.

**Jer. 27:11** But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

God gave the nations a way of escape. As a people, *if a nation submitted to the yoke*, they would remain in their land, even though Nebuchadnezzar would take hostages and captives. As a vassal state, they might have to pay tribute money, but they would be spared.

Time and time again, this message was given to Judah, but the people just hardened their necks and resisted, so the land was made desolate. However, the other nations got this message for the first time when it was delivered along with a yoke. Stated another way, an ultimatum was extended to the other nations, and some did submit.

To those with the wrong heart condition—to those who were stubborn and resistant—God's added provision for mercy did not appear to be mercy. Instead it made them angry. Their attitude was, "What do you mean that we are to submit to this king when our own prophets say we should not serve the king of Babylon?" Jeremiah's message was regarded as traitorous. But just as with Judah, so presumably it was with the other nations; that is, a few of the people noticed the merciful addendum, and in thinking matters over, they submitted and were taken captive to Babylon. For the people to remain in their land, the *nation*, not just a handful of individuals, would have to submit. Therefore, every one of these lands—Ammon, Moab, Edom, Tyre, and Sidon—was defeated, and a few captives were removed to Babylon.

It is interesting that Ammon (Amman is the capital of Jordan), Tyre, and Sidon still exist. Thus their etymology has remained more or less intact, even though they were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. People live there today, so the desolation of these lands was temporary, lasting approximately 70 years in some cases and 40 years with others. The fact these lands were utterly laid waste of inhabitants during that time is a tremendous occurrence in history, yet the secular records are silent. When Cyrus issued his decree, it first applied to Israel, but then it was proclaimed to anyone who wanted to return to his homeland—as long as the people did not go back and refortify their countries.

**Jer. 27:12** I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.



Verse 12 was inserted like a historical footnote, stating the time period *later*, not at the time of the instruction of the previous verses. In other words, Jeremiah wrote *after the fact*, as if to say, “This was dutifully done *subsequently*, after the yokes were made.”

**Comment:** The principle is like the notation earlier in the Gospels, “Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him [Jesus]” (Matt. 10:4; see also Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16; and John 6:71).

**Reply:** From time to time, historical notations were inserted later by the one who compiled and collated the written records.

**Jer. 27:13** Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?

“Why will ye die...?” Because the king of Babylon was His “servant,” God was just in His dealings not only with His people but also with the other nations by giving them an opportunity to submit to the coming invasion.

**Jer. 27:14** Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you.

**Jer. 27:15** For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you.

Jeremiah instructed Judah similarly; that is, the people were not to heed the prophets or mystics who counseled falsely but claimed to speak for the Lord. They told the people not to serve the king of Babylon, whereas Jeremiah’s true message advised the opposite. His message was strong: “Your prophets *lie* unto you.” Jeremiah had some hard things to say, and this strong message would be considered the height of rudeness because it offended the sensitivity of the representatives of foreign governments who came to Judah. The prophet had high and low points, but he was a STRONG character!

**Jer. 27:16** Also I spake to the priests and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the LORD’S house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you.

In addressing Judah’s priests and all the people, Jeremiah was pleading and saying that all the rest of the Temple vessels (the more prominent articles of worship)—those not already taken—would be removed by King Nebuchadnezzar. On the other hand, the false prophets said that the stolen vessels would be returned and no more would be taken. There is great responsibility for those who knowingly give a false message in the name of the Lord. It is an abomination to prophesy smooth things to curry the favor of those in power.

**Jer. 27:17** Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste?

Jeremiah advised, “*Submit* to Nebuchadnezzar and *live*. Why should Jerusalem be destroyed?”

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

Now Jeremiah particularly zeroed in on the false prophets, laying the responsibility upon them to intercede with the Lord of hosts that the vessels be left in the Temple, in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem. How boldly and directly Jeremiah spoke in this confrontation with the false prophets! We, too, are considered *prophets of doom* in saying that the old order will pass away. When appropriate, we must speak *boldly* and be a brazen, *unyielding* pillar.

**Jer. 27:19 For thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city,**

**Jer. 27:20 Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem;**

The two giant brazen “pillars” (Jachin and Boaz), the large “sea” (the Laver), the “bases,” and “the residue of the vessels that remain in this city” were left behind when Nebuchadnezzar previously took Jeconiah and “all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem” captive to Babylon, for he was more interested in the gold and silver Temple vessels as booty. The priesthood probably hid the Ark of the Covenant at that time so that it would remain in Jerusalem. Jeremiah was predicting that the remaining vessels would be either exploited or destroyed when Zedekiah was overthrown in 606 BC.

The “nobles” of Judah and Jerusalem included Daniel and the three Hebrew children, who were taken in the Jeconiah captivity. The Book of Ezekiel uses the chronology of the Jeconiah captivity, stating what happened in the fifth year, the sixth year, etc. (Ezek. 1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 33:21; 40:1; etc.). In reasoning at this end of the age, we go by our chronology to try to see where we are on the stream of time.

**Jer. 27:21 Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem;**

“Yea!” indicates a *strong* presentation by Jeremiah. (We are reminded of the words of the three Hebrew children in Daniel 3:18, “Be it known unto thee, O king.”) These were not meek messages. In the antitype, the feet members must speak *boldly and courageously!*

With regard to the Temple, innumerable vessels would be taken as booty. The smaller items, which were more readily transported, were taken intact, and the larger items were later smashed and carried off to Babylon in pieces. Bringing back the smaller vessels earlier signified to the Babylonians that their gods were superior to the supposed God of Israel. The Jewish vessels were exhibited as artwork and relics. Vessels that were taken whole to Babylon were stored in one of the Babylonian temples. Not only were the vessels carried to Babylon, but also they remained there until the days of Ezra.

The vessels in the “house of the king [Zedekiah] of Judah” were also booty to be exhibited. In addition, vessels in the city of Jerusalem were taken for their monetary value.

**Jer. 27:22 They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.**

Verses 19-22 were an insertion, for earlier verses pertained to the *coming* judgments. When Jeremiah summed up this dissertation to say that not only would the city and the Temple be destroyed but also the prize relics peculiar to the king and the Temple, it was like rubbing salt in the wound of the people.

But then, by prophesying that the vessels would someday be restored, Jeremiah ended on a note of hope: “There [in Babylon] shall they [the vessels] be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place [Jerusalem].” In Ezra’s day, after 536 BC, the vessels were brought back to Jerusalem from Babylon. The decree under Cyrus occurred in 536, but the vessels were not restored until Zerubbabel’s Temple was built.

**Comment:** Despite all of Jeremiah’s judgment messages, those who had the *right* attitude and *listened carefully* would have kept this ray of hope in their heart. Instead of being so opposed to Jeremiah’s words, the people of Judah should have realized that they needed the punishment and that the Lord would still deal with them.

**Reply:** Yes, previous chapters also contained some comments of a constructive and hopeful nature. Moreover, the same is true of the remainder of the Book of Jeremiah. Isaiah probably spoke more on restitution than any of the other prophets, yet he was slain. The prophets had good things to say as well as hard truths that the people could not stomach.

**Jer. 28:1** And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying,

**Jer. 28:2** Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

In the same year as Jeremiah 27:12, which was the fourth year of Zedekiah’s reign, Hananiah spoke to Jeremiah in the “house of the LORD” (the Temple) in the presence “of the priests and of all the people,” who were quite an audience. Hananiah was a son of a prophet, but he was corrupt. (The office of prophet became defiled as time went on, for the office was inherited regardless of merit.) Notice that the time setting is called the “*beginning* of the reign of Zedekiah,” but it was the fourth year.

Verse 1 confirms the explanation of Jeremiah 27:1, which uses the expression “in the *beginning* of the reign of Jehoiakim” to refer to the *earlier part* of his reign, and not necessarily to the first day of the first month. When Ezra incorporated the notes, he more or less used a time sequence, but not with too much particularity because he went by subject matter as well.

**Jer. 28:3** Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD’S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon:

Hananiah gave a false message that the Temple vessels taken in the Jeconiah captivity would be returned from Babylon “within two full years.” He was convinced he was right, *but he was wrong!* In saying God had broken the yoke of the king of Babylon, he *directly contradicted* what Jeremiah had just said and done in regard to the yokes (see chapter 27). That was a dangerous thing for Hananiah to do, for he incurred responsibility. He probably had a personal dislike for Jeremiah and thus opposed him, but he stuck out his neck by giving a time period.

Hananiah would be termed “a *false prophet*” because he assumed the role that Jeremiah had, saying, “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,” yet he not only contradicted the message of advice and warning to Judah in the fourth year of Zedekiah but even used the symbol of a yoke. Although the king of Babylon did withdraw his forces for another purpose, he returned five years later, in the ninth year of Zedekiah, to begin a siege of Jerusalem.

**Jer. 28:4** And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Hananiah continued to prophesy, saying that not only would Jeconiah be brought back from Babylonian captivity and the Temple vessels be returned, but also the captives would come back to the homeland within two full years. By making these statements, Hananiah put himself in a very precarious position, especially because the Scriptures state that Jeconiah would *never* be brought back during his lifetime.

**Jer. 28:5** Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD,

Jeremiah now began to speak to Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the Temple.

**Jer. 28:6** Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD'S house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place.

Jeremiah's saying "Amen" probably startled Hananiah. "So be it! The LORD perform your words which you have prophesied, to bring again from Babylon the vessels of the Temple and all who were carried away captive." However, these words were sarcasm. Jeremiah was saying in effect, "Hananiah, *if* your prophecy is correct, the fulfillment will prove it."

**Jer. 28:7** Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people;

**Jer. 28:8** The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.

**Jer. 28:9** The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him.

Jeremiah continued, "The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him." Jeremiah was probably referring to Deuteronomy 18:22, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." If what was prophesied did not come to pass, the prophet was not necessarily put to death. The prophecy was just disregarded and not considered a "thus saith the LORD," for it fell into the realm of conjecture that was proven false.

**Comment:** Deuteronomy 18:20 states, "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die."

**Reply:** Verse 20 refers to what is put forth *dogmatically*. Hananiah spoke with *positiveness* and in great detail about what would happen, and he even added, "Thus saith the LORD." For instance, Pastor Russell thought that the Church would be complete in 1914, but he was not dogmatic. Of course his expectations at that date were proven not to be true, but he did *not* say, "Thus saith the LORD."

**Comment:** The same is true of the date 1994 in *The Keys of Revelation*. The statement was to the effect, “It seems likely that such and such will happen.” The thought was put forth as a *possibility*.

**Reply:** Yes, the prohibition was against presenting dogma rather than conjecture.

“The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.” Jeremiah made this statement to show that God’s *true* prophets gave *judgment* messages. Verse 8 mentions prophecies of war, evil, and pestilence—*bad* things. Verse 9 speaks of *good* things that *supposedly* would occur. This philosophy of counterbalance has to be weighed privately.

Verses 8 and 9 are saying in effect that Hananiah was a *false* prophet. Although he was not the only false prophet of that day, he was singled out because he made a particular point of rebuking and humiliating Jeremiah.

**Jer. 28:10** Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah’s neck, and brake it.

**Jer. 28:11** And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

Previously Jeremiah just made an observation, an off-the-cuff remark. When he said “Amen,” he did not speak a “thus saith the LORD” in rebuke but gave his *own* commentary about Hananiah’s favorable prediction of what would occur within two full years. Jeremiah said in effect, “If your prophecy is correct, it is good news, and so be it.” But then he pointed out the danger: “Hananiah, you are speaking dogmatically in the name of Jehovah by using *His* authority for your statement of hope.”

Hananiah had the esteem of the people and the priests because they liked hearing such nice news. As far as the populace was concerned, Jeremiah had been put in his place. They would have cheered to see someone stand up to and contradict the prophet of doom.

Then Hananiah, who was still standing in the Temple, took the wooden yoke off Jeremiah and broke it. Thus he emphatically dramatized his own prophecy and humiliated Jeremiah. Again saying, “Thus saith the LORD,” he repeated that within two full years, Nebuchadnezzar would be defeated. Jeremiah went away without another reply.

Hananiah had withstood Jeremiah face to face, as it were, by using the same forum. Jeremiah customarily stood in the Lord’s house (the Temple or the Temple gate) or in a city gate and prophesied. Hananiah knew that when Jeremiah stood there, he drew a crowd, so Hananiah beat him to the punch and gave his own prophecy.

**Q:** Did Hananiah just make up these words out of his own head, or was he influenced by the fallen angels?

**A:** We are not given the specifics, so either could be true. A false prophet can speak out of his own imagination, or evil spirits can give the words. In any event, Hananiah was presumptuous in giving a false prophecy. Even knowing Jeremiah’s life and faithfulness in the past, Hananiah was not impressed with either his character or the messages he pronounced.

**Comment:** Here is another insight into Jeremiah’s character. After being humiliated, he simply

withdrew instead of arguing. He did not speak again until the Lord told him what to say.

**Reply:** Yes, Jeremiah's true character was manifested.

**Jer. 28:12** Then the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the prophet, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

**Jer. 28:13** Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron.

**Jer. 28:14** For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also.

Did Jeremiah have to literally make the yokes of iron, or are these yokes to be understood in another way? Jeremiah figuratively replaced the wooden yokes with yokes of iron. God was saying, "I sent yokes of wood originally, but now they have become yokes of iron." In other words, Jeremiah was not supposed to make molds and cast yokes of iron and then send them by messengers to the various nations.

**Comment:** Proof the iron yokes were figurative is that one (singular) wooden yoke was broken off the neck of Jeremiah, but God said to tell Hananiah that he had broken "the yokes [plural] of wood" for the nations and that now "yokes [plural] of iron" would be made for them.

**Comment:** It is interesting that the Lord used the term "yoke of iron" to describe a curse to come upon Israel for disobedience. "Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; ... he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee" (Deut. 28:47,48).

**Reply:** Verses 12-14 show that Hananiah's message was definitely false. The iron yokes were a prophecy of the metal yokes to be put on the captives Nebuchadnezzar would take to Babylon.

"For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar ... and I have given him the beasts of the field also." The domesticated animals that could walk were led back to Babylon on foot—donkeys, camels, goats, etc. Whatever was convenient was taken as booty.

When the king of Babylon was interpreted as the "head of gold" in Daniel's vision, not only was the dominion of a kingdom given to him, but also he was the ruler of the birds of the air and the beasts of the field (Dan. 2:38). Daniel was actually in Babylon in the higher echelon of authority at this time, while Jeremiah was in Judah prophesying about the beasts of the field being given to the king of Babylon.

**Jer. 28:15** Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.

**Jer. 28:16** Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.

**Jer. 28:17** So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

Hananiah was labeled a "liar" by the Lord and told (via Jeremiah) that he would die that very year. Hananiah died just two months later, in the seventh month. He was guilty of making the

people trust *in a lie* by giving them a *false message of hope* and a *false sense of security*. Hananiah had said that his prophecy would come to pass within two years, but he died within two months.

**Comment:** Imagine how Hananiah felt when he heard these words!

**Reply:** Yes, Jeremiah went away quietly and then came back with strong words: “Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.”

**Jer. 29:1** Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon;

**Jer. 29:2** (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;)

Jeremiah wrote a letter to the Jews of the Jeconiah captivity, who were in Babylon, that is, to those who were taken captive at the end of Jeconiah’s reign and just before Zedekiah’s reign. Verses 1-3 are introductory, telling us the circumstances that surrounded the sending of this letter. The actual “words of the letter” begin with verse 4.

The letter was addressed to the captives as a whole, both high and low—from the nobility down to the common people. It was sent to the royal family, priests, prophets, elders, and all the people.

Verse 2 gives us information as to the nature of the captivity. King Jeconiah, the queen, the eunuchs, and the princes of Judah and Jerusalem were taken as hostages. The custom among nations was to take hostages of the nobility of the reigning class with the threat to those who remained in the homeland, “If you do not behave, we will kill you.” Another group of captives consisted of carpenters and smiths and also promising youths with talents. Thus King Nebuchadnezzar took the cream of the land for different purposes. The skilled workmen would serve his own use.

**Jer. 29:3** By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying,

Elasah and Gemariah were the two individuals particularly responsible for delivering a message to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. This message was delivered sometime during the reign of Zedekiah, prior to the fall of Judah.

**Q:** Did Zedekiah, who disliked Jeremiah’s message, knowingly send the letter by the hand of Elasah and Gemariah, or did he just send these two individuals, who happened to take Jeremiah’s letter along?

**A:** The latter was the case. Because of another circumstance that will come up later in this book, we know that Elasah and Gemariah were moved to take the letter.

**Jer. 29:4** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

The contents of the message were addressed to *all* Israelite captives in Babylon.

**Jer. 29:5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;**

**Jer. 29:6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.**

The substance of the letter was, “Do not expect to be rescued or that the king of Babylon will have a change of heart and allow you to return to the homeland, for you will be resident there for many years.” The letter was addressed to *all* the captives. In other words, the instruction was to prepare for a lengthy captivity. The people were to build houses, plant gardens, marry, and bear children, and the captivity would extend through at least two generations. The purpose of the instruction to marry and bear children was to increase their numbers.

**Q:** Did these two messengers have two messages, one message sent specifically to the king of Babylon from Zedekiah and the other message sent from Jeremiah to the captive Israelites?

**A:** Yes. King Zedekiah sent Elasah and Gemariah to Babylon with his own message, and they took Jeremiah’s letter with them as well.

The Lord may have overruled so that there were two messengers. That way each messenger could have a copy of Jeremiah’s letter. One copy was for the nobility, and the other copy, which was for the carpenters, smiths, etc., was probably given to Ezekiel, the prophet (and priest) to the exiles.

**Comment:** In the previous chapter, Hananiah, the false prophet, said that within two years, the captivity would be reversed. Apparently, that message had gotten to the captives in Babylon, and Jeremiah was trying to counteract Hananiah’s false prophecy.

**Reply:** Yes, he was trying to countermand or rebut the false prophecy.

Notice that God’s instruction extended to the grandsons. The Israelites of the Jeconiah captivity were to take wives and to beget sons and daughters. When grown, those sons were also to take wives and beget children. Likewise, the grandsons of the original captives were to marry and bear children, the purpose being “that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.”

**Jer. 29:7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.**

The letter continued. The captives were told to pray for the peace of the city each dwelled in; that is, they were to accept their captivity and submit to their circumstances. Because of his message, Jeremiah had enemies in Babylon as well as in Israel. The Christian, too, is to pray for kings and peaceful conditions if it be God’s will. Like foreigners, we are to obey the powers that be. Although our citizenship is in heaven, we obey the laws of citizenship as long as they do not infringe upon conscience or conflict with God’s time schedule.

**Jer. 29:8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.**

**Jer. 29:9 For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD.**

In continuing to speak for the Lord, Jeremiah warned the captives not to believe the false



prophets and not to fabricate dreams. This instruction indicated that there were also false prophets and diviners among the Israelite captives in Babylon and that they were proclaiming an opposite message, namely, that the captivity would be short. The false prophets hated Jeremiah for speaking the truth.

The people should have known by now that Jeremiah was the true prophet, but they were fickle and wanted to hear smooth things. However, Jeremiah's message comforted the right-hearted element. His advice was practical, instructive, and helpful, for it assured the people that they could build houses, etc., and know they were doing the right thing.

Whenever "thus saith the LORD" preceded a sentence or instruction, it was like saying, "Pay particular attention!" The importance of this letter was indicated by the number of times this "authorization" appeared.

**Jer. 29:10** For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

Seventy years were predetermined by God to be accomplished at Babylon. Many modern translations (and some of the old ones) change the wording to read that the seventy years are "for Babylon," and while this change is permissible in the Hebrew, the word "at" is also permissible, so one preposition does not rule out the other. However, whether "at" or "for" Babylon is the correct rendering is of concern because the meaning is changed considerably. If "for" is the true rendering, then the Babylonian Empire would have endured for 70 years. If the 70 years started from the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the remaining eight years would be added to the 11 years of Zedekiah's reign for a total of 19 years, and such reasoning would leave 51 years of captivity or, rounded off, 50 years. Many Bible Students are now changing the chronology of the *Second Volume* to agree with what is more or less universally accepted, namely, that the 70 years started with the fourth year of Jehoiakim and ended with Cyrus's decree. However, we feel such reckoning is incorrect, and we will give a few reasons.

We believe that "at Babylon" is the correct translation—it was not a scholarly error—and that the Israelites were to remain there for a 70-year predetermined period. 2 Chronicles 36:20,21 reads, "And them that had escaped from the sword carried he [Nebuchadnezzar] away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, *until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.*" The land had to be *desolate* to keep its sabbaths until 70 years were accomplished. No matter how modern translations like the NIV try to change this wording, they cannot really get around it.

The word "at," a preposition, is just a letter in the Hebrew alphabet called *lamed*. The word *lamed* is used perhaps thousands of times in the Old Testament, and in almost all cases, it has something to do with *going in a direction*. It means, therefore, the dative case of being "to," but saying the 70 years "to Babylon" does not sound right. However, there are exceptional cases, of which this is one, where *lamed* refers to something that is *at rest*. In such cases, *lamed* can be translated, before the word it precedes, to mean "at," "during," or "for." Here "at" and "for" are the two prepositions being considered. In verse 10, the preposition "at" is the correct translation. The word "for" cannot be dogmatically used to contradict "at" because "for" is used only one or two more times in Scripture than "at." The word "at" for *lamed* is used so seldom in the Bible that it can be ferreted out, and the number of times it is rendered "for" can be counted on one hand. However, there are thousands of instances when *lamed* is translated "to," meaning "in the direction of," but verse 10 does not refer to direction.

The question is, Why were 70 years determined as the time period for the land to rest? We

believe that the “sabbaths” of 2 Chronicles 36:21 are “jubilee” sabbaths, for to consider them as weekly or yearly sabbaths would not make any sense at all (Lev. 25:9-13). Therefore, we believe the 2 Chronicles text distinctly indicates 70 times 50 ( $70 \times 50$ ), which equals 3,500. The last Jubilee that was perfunctorily performed in Israel was 625 BC. If we add 3,500 years to 625 BC, we have the date for the end of the Kingdom Age. If we subtract 1,000 years from 3,500, we get 2,500 years, and 2,500 is 50 times 50 ( $50 \times 50$ ). The 2 Chronicles text shows that the land of Israel had to lie *desolate* for 70 years in order to fulfill the sabbaths.

Now we begin to think of other things. Indirectly, the Jubilee sabbath proves the 50 times 50 (or 2,500) years. Bro. Russell used 51 times 49, but we think 50 times 50 is more correct, and this reasoning is verified by the “taches,” or loops, that connected the two cherubim curtains in the Tabernacle of Moses (Exod. 26:6,11; 36:13,18). With 50 taches being on each curtain, the number 2,500 was signified (50 times 50).

What about the 1,000 years? During the Kingdom Age, there will not be a Jubilee year where the land returns to its owners because that will all have been done. However, the *principles* enunciated in the Mosaic Law will apply up to the end of the Kingdom Age. The Law of the Kingdom Age will be a New (Law) Covenant, which is basically the old Law Covenant with some changes and the same principles. For example, the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles will be observed, and there will be holy days. But during the Kingdom Age, the land will not be laid desolate completely, for food has to be produced and the population will be increasing. As succeeding generations come forth from the grave, more and more food and houses will be needed.

Therefore, 2 Chronicles 36:21 is saying that the Lord took care of the 20 Jubilees that are future in the Kingdom Age, as well as the 50 Jubilees of the past age, thereby accounting for both at the same time. Thus the land had to be desolate for 70 years, not for just 50 years as the chronology change indicates. No “50” is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 36:21, but “50” is shown indirectly in the Kingdom Age when we subtract 1,000. The 20 Jubilee sabbaths of the Kingdom Age ( $20 \times 50$ ) total 1,000. The 50 times 50 ( $50 \times 50$ ) apply to the earlier 2,500 years, showing that a particular date is involved—not only after the 70 years of desolation but also at the beginning of the Millennial Age. The Jubilee cycles point to the year 1874, and the Kingdom Age will end in 2874.

Incidentally, there will be no calendar in the Kingdom Age. At present, more than 15 calendars are used throughout the world, but that will not be the case in the Kingdom Age—any more than it was in the day of the Pharaohs. At that time, there was no connected chronology, just a reckoning within the years that a particular Pharaoh ruled.

**Comment:** During the unprecedented great Time of Trouble, people will not be concerned about tracking time, so it will be easy to lose the calendar.

Today there are multiple views as to the true chronology. We think Pastor Russell rightly felt that the insurrection at the end of the Kingdom Age will take place because of a lack of understanding as to when the age will technically end. Debates will probably occur. Even in the Bible Student movement, several are thinking differently along the lines of chronology, not just one person whose views are being accepted but other ideas as well. And all kinds of dates and various chronologies are presented in the nominal system. In addition, if one does not keep track of the days each year for the duration of the Kingdom, recording them accurately in a notebook, for example, there will be uncertainty as to the actual end of the Kingdom Age. However, God is a timekeeper and is very mathematically specific in His procedures.

In summary, we would say that the “70 years of desolation” show the 3,500 years until the end

of the Kingdom Age. By subtracting 1,000 (20 x 50), we indirectly prove the year 1874. The Pastor used 51 x 49 (or 2,499 years) and thus was one year off instead of the 2,500 years, but that is splitting hairs, for the math is practically the same from a pragmatic standpoint.

There is another point. The cuneiform tablets that have been unearthed have been unearthed only in *specific* places. There are other places in the Babylonian Empire where tablets have not yet been unearthed. At one time, we read that there are 30,000 cuneiform tablets, and we do not think five people are alive today who can read cuneiform fluently. Who would read, translate, and write them all down? And individuals would have to spend a lot of time in the British museum to interpret the rocks. Also, at least one tablet contradicts the common thinking by giving a longer period of time in the Babylonian record. In Egyptian chronology, for example, some records are deliberately bypassed. The reign of Hatshepsut is omitted from the official calendars. The same is true with regard to the cuneiform tablets, on which many rely. “Stones do not lie” is the thought, but where are the missing stones (and tablets)? We think one of the kings who are commonly mentioned reigned much longer than the three years that are shown on the tablets, for ancient writers show a reign of about 20 years.

God said, “After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.” Hananiah thought the time period would be two years, but Jeremiah was saying that a predetermined 70-year period of desolation would occur before the Jews could return to Israel. We agree with the Bible expositors, generally speaking, that 536 BC marks the end of the Babylonian captivity, but the beginning was 606 BC, when Jerusalem was captured and destroyed, along with the Temple.

**Jer. 29:11** For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

The Hebrew has “an end and expectation.” In other words, the gloom was not perpetual; the Israelites would not be in captivity forever, for God had good thoughts toward them. They would be coming back—but after a much longer period of time than they had ever anticipated.

**Jer. 29:12** Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

**Jer. 29:13** And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Immediately we are reminded of Daniel’s prayer, and verses 10-14 were the basis of that prayer. As *one* individual, he mourned, fasted, and prayed on behalf of the nation. Daniel mentioned Jeremiah in his book: “In the first year of his reign [Darius, the son of Ahasuerus] I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:2). Daniel knew that the 70-year period of desolation was ending. Then he began to pray, based on the writings of Jeremiah plus Leviticus 26, which gave the thought of a return to the land (even though it applied to the end of the Diaspora).

Public prayers should be short, generally speaking. However, we can agonize in private prayer as long as we like. Only on a very auspicious occasion, which would be an exception, would it be appropriate for a public prayer to be long. Of course the guardian angels would be listening and would take the key points of the prayer to the Heavenly Father.

**Jer. 29:14** And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you,

**saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.**

“And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity.” At the end of the 70 years, when the Israelites called on God in earnest prayer, He answered and allowed them to return to Israel. Daniel’s prayer was heard.

“I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD.” Ezekiel, a priest of Levi, was among the captives by the river Chebar in Babylon. The ten tribes, who were in captivity for more than 100 years, were taken to cities in many nations. Verse 14 is saying that when Cyrus issued his decree, it would be applicable to those who were carried to Assyria, as well as to Babylon, because Assyria was now incorporated into the Babylonian Empire. Prior to Babylon, there were Egyptian and Assyrian universal empires. Hence the five universal kingdoms ending with the establishment of Christ’s Kingdom date from the head of gold.

Therefore, verse 14 is saying that permission under Cyrus’s decree to return to the homeland was granted not only to those taken captive of the two-tribe kingdom (Judah) but also to those of the ten-tribe kingdom. However, most of the returnees of the 50,000 who went back to Israel were from Judah and Benjamin. In other words, those taken captive (1) of the ten tribes, (2) of Jeconiah, (3) in a smaller captivity, and (4) in Zedekiah’s day were scattered throughout the Babylonian Empire. Any of the 12 tribes who reacted favorably after the 70 years went back to Israel. Most were from Judah, however.

There are a lot of misconceptions. For example, Noah lived 350 years after the Flood, and Shem lived 500 years after the Flood. Some of the next two generations had life spans of 200 years each. Many think these facts are fables, and certainly secular history books do not record such longevity. However, this longevity, which lasted a considerable length of time, has to be taken into consideration in order to see the likelihood that certain things actually occurred according to Scripture. Even in our Lord’s day, Anna the prophetess was at least 108 years old for her to have been married for seven years and been a widow for 84 years (Luke 2:36,37). Daniel, Moses, and the Apostle John all lived to be more than 100 years of age.

**Jer. 29:15 Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon;**

The Jews in captivity had said, “The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon,” but these were false prophets. In verse 8, God said, “Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you [with falsehoods].” There were few true prophets in comparison with the false prophets, Ezekiel being the only one we know of in Babylonian captivity.

**Jer. 29:16 Know that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity;**

**Jer. 29:17 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.**

**Jer. 29:18 And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:**

A king sat “upon the throne of David” until 606 BC when Zedekiah was dethroned. Jeremiah’s letter continued. God said of Zedekiah, of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of those in the rest of Judah who had not yet gone into captivity, “Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil [particularly in the days that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem].” The implication was that additional Jewish captives would soon be coming to Babylon.

Earlier (in chapter 24), Jeremiah referred to good and evil figs in regard to the nation of Israel. In comparing the two, he said that the good figs would obey his advice and defect to the enemy and thus be taken captive. However, although these Jews were selected to be spared for captivity, those who looked on them in captivity would consider them “vile figs.”

Here Jeremiah said that the evil or “vile” figs would include both those of Judah who were slain and those who were taken captive. Not only would the latter be hurt, but they would be the object of disparaging remarks. They would be “a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I [God] have driven them.” But the hurt would be for their good, for after being humiliated, the Israelites would be a better people and hopefully become “good figs.” The sword, famine, and pestilence were mentioned repeatedly by Ezekiel.

Because of their aggressive and persevering nature, plus their superior background and training by the God of Israel, the Jewish people accumulated money and goods and got into positions of authority in the future Diaspora. However, their enemies looked at them from a negative standpoint, having anti-Semitic feelings, whether justified or unjustified.

God was *the* King of Israel, and whoever sat on the throne was His representative. Prior to the Period of the Kings, He raised up judges in Israel, but then came a time when the people desired a king. Even though He acceded to their desire and Saul became the first king, God was still *the* King of Israel. The one who occupied the literal throne down here had the responsibility of representing Him to supposedly benefit the nation of Israel. Because that representation was abused, the Period of the Kings came to a close. Zedekiah was dethroned, and God turned His back on the nation, leaving the land vacant and desolate of inhabitants.

**Jer. 29:19** Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

God sent His “servants the prophets” unto the Israelites, “rising up early and sending them”; that is, He persistently sent His words through prophets, but the people would not hearken. Generally speaking, the Lord has representatives in the earth at all times, for He watches out for His sheep.

**Comment:** God gives ample warning and time; He does not wait for something to progress right to the point of incorrigibility but gives previous warnings so that the situation can be rectified if the people hearken. It is like catching cancer before it spreads throughout the body.

**Reply:** Yes, it is much easier to do the pruning when a tree is small. A heavy axe or saw is needed for a large tree.

**Jer. 29:20** Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon:

**Jer. 29:21** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and

**of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes;**

**Jer. 29:22 And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;**

**Jer. 29:23 Because they have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD.**

Still the letter to the captives in Babylon continued. Certain individuals were pinpointed—false prophets who undercut Jeremiah's ministry and did so in the name of the Lord. For their sin, Ahab and Zedekiah would be slain before the captives' eyes. Nebuchadnezzar would have heard through spies that many Israelites expected his power to be broken and the Temple vessels to be returned in two years. Hence he considered Ahab and Zedekiah his enemies and made them public examples by roasting them in the fire. Roasting was Nebuchadnezzar's method of dealing with traitors; hence that means was used with the three Hebrew children. It was a method of crucifixion, as it were. On the other hand, Nebuchadnezzar would have heard about Jeremiah and thus was favorably disposed toward him.

This Ahab and Zedekiah were not the usual individuals by those names. The commonality of some of these names is interesting. These two, who professed to be prophets of the Lord, were punished for villainy, adultery, and false prophesying. They had "committed villainy in Israel, and ... adultery with their neighbours' wives." They claimed to speak in the name of Jehovah, yet they engaged in these abominable practices. The lie that was especially grievous in Nebuchadnezzar's sight—and thus probably caused their death—was the same one that Hananiah had told back in Judah, namely, that the king of Babylon would be defeated in two years. Nebuchadnezzar felt this lie was rebellion, and it came from a nation whom he considered characteristically stubborn.

"He [Nebuchadnezzar] shall slay them [Ahab and Zedekiah] before your eyes." In other words, their death was made a spectacle. These two Hebrew false prophets were put to death with a public display. The king made an example out of them, showing what would happen to anyone who spoke against him.

Nebuchadnezzar had a fiery temperament. Not only did he quickly reward those whom he thought were serving him in a profitable manner, but also he visited swift vengeance on his enemies. Considering that he had this impulsive nature, he manifested a generous spirit in giving the three Hebrew children an opportunity to recant. His reluctance to cast them into the fiery furnace proves that they had an exceptional character. For this hot-headed man, whose word was law, to act this way indicates the exemplary standard of the three Hebrew children—how they must have lived and acted during their ministry.

**Jer. 29:24 Thus shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,**

**Jer. 29:25 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,**

**Jer. 29:26 The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a**

prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks.

**Jer. 29:27** Now therefore why hast thou not reprov'd Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you?

Shemaiah, another captive in Babylon, had written poison letters back to the homeland. He sent the messages to the people and the priests in Jerusalem and to Zephaniah, the son of a priest. It is interesting that both Zedekiah in captivity (verse 21) and Zephaniah in Jerusalem were sons of Maaseiah the priest; hence they were brothers. God took cognizance of the fact the letters were rebellious in nature.

What did the letters say? Shemaiah reminded Zephaniah of his responsibility as a priest to imprison any false prophets, and in Shemaiah's eyes, Jeremiah fit that category. Not only did Shemaiah support a false or rival priesthood in Judah, but also he urged those in Judah to reprove Jeremiah. In addition, he implied that Jehoiada was remiss in not imprisoning Jeremiah and the other so-called "mad[men]" prophets. Shemaiah was clearly guilty before the Lord.

"Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou [Shemaiah] hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah ... and to all the priests, saying, The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD [the Temple], for every man [like Jeremiah] that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, ... [should be put] in prison, and in the stocks. Now therefore why hast thou not reprov'd Jeremiah...?" In other words, "You should be officers and carry out your responsibility for Jehovah by putting that mad prophet Jeremiah in prison and in the stocks."

Imagine being in Jeremiah's place and receiving opposition from such prominent enemies—Hananiah, Ahab, Zedekiah, and Shemaiah! Moreover, Jeremiah was of Anathoth, and even his own family did not like him. He would have been considered the black sheep of the family. However, God was aware of everything that was occurring and told in advance what would happen to these men who spoke against His servant Jeremiah. Hananiah died within a year, Ahab and Zedekiah would be roasted by fire, and Shemaiah and his seed would be punished.

**Comment:** Anathoth means "answers," indicating that Jeremiah had the answers, but no one wanted to hear him. Also, the King James margin defines Nehelamite as "dreamer," and Shemaiah was a dreamer.

**Reply:** There are both true dreamers and false dreamers. Some very interesting methods of the Lord are copied by Satanic forces. For example, Joseph had a divining cup in Egypt (Gen. 44:2). Evidently, he could look into that cup and see things about the future. A lot of things in the Bible, side issues, have not been considered in depth, but good precedents have been copied. What is the difference in revealing something in the ear, whereby a person hears the Lord say something? When Jeremiah repeatedly wrote, "Thus saith the LORD," we do not think God appeared to him in a vision about 35 times. Rather, He spoke to Jeremiah—the prophet heard a voice. What is the difference between seeing and hearing something? The point is that there is nothing wrong with the method itself, but who uses the method—whether the individual is a true prophet or a false prophet—is what matters. What is in the medium makes the difference. There is nothing wrong with newspapers, magazines, radio, or television, but how the medium is used can make it dangerous.

**Q:** Is the word "seer" in the Bible normally associated with the occult?

**A:** Yes, in a visual sense. Joseph saw through the divining cup, and he also dreamed. He told his

brothers, "I have dreamed a dream" (Gen. 37:9). The Lord used different methods. Sometimes an individual had a dream at night. Or he had a vision, an appearance, either at night or in the daytime. God has reasons for choosing different methods. However, knowing that the predominant false prophets use these techniques, we steer clear of them because of a proper natural reticence. In Old Testament times, God gave direct information, whereas today we get a "thus saith the LORD" through Scripture. Jeremiah did not have to be careful because he knew the Lord's voice, and he would not allow anyone to come in between him and Jehovah's communication.

**Jer. 29:28** For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long: build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

"For therefore he [Jeremiah] sent unto us in Babylon." Shemaiah was angry that Jeremiah had written to the Jews in Babylon that the captivity would be long. The prophet had written, "This captivity is long: build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them." There was a predetermined time of 70 years so that the homeland would keep its Jubilee sabbaths.

What were the Jubilee sabbaths of rest? Under the Law, if one acquired a large amount of property, he had to divest himself of that property on the fiftieth year, for then it went back to the original family. Did the Jews obey that feature of the Law? No, they wanted to keep what they had worked for. The 50 times 50 (2,500 years) comes from the Jubilee arrangement, for the fiftieth year was a sabbath year, which was also pointed out by seven successive sabbaths. The Feast of the Sabbaths was the same principle as the Feast of Trumpets; that is, they were both preceded by seven. Seven months preceded the real Jubilee trumpet on the tenth day. A lot of blowing on the seventh day meant it was the Feast of Trumpets, but coming soon would be the real Jubilee trumpet, which is the one the Israelites did not keep.

**Jer. 29:29** And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet.

Zephaniah read Shemaiah's letter in the hearing of Jeremiah, even though the letter had been sent in confidence. Zephaniah was probably in sympathy with Shemaiah, but certainly the judgment went back to Shemaiah, the originator of the letter.

**Comment:** Zephaniah may have seen what happened to Hananiah, and now, being frightened, he informed Jeremiah.

**Reply:** There is not enough information to know the nuance or the tone that was used, but by Zephaniah's reading the letter, Jeremiah was informed. There may have been an audience as well. The letter was probably read in a negative fashion, but all we know is that it was made public and Jeremiah was present. The account does not say that the letter was read privately.

**Jer. 29:30** Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

**Jer. 29:31** Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie:

**Jer. 29:32** Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD.



God said in effect that Shemaiah would lose his influence, authority, popularity, and prestige. In addition, neither he nor his posterity would live to see the end of the 70 years and the return to Israel. One lesson is that it is better to be silent than to speak a lie. This is especially true when the advice has damaging consequences. Some retribution comes fast; other retribution hits a succeeding generation.

It took years before these things happened, for Jeremiah prophesied in the days of Josiah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Now his patience was being rewarded, for the judgments were an encouragement. It was not that he wanted to see others die but that the tide was changing. Jeremiah was considered a doomsday prophet, but after all of his hard experiences, the Lord was giving him some encouragement. And not only that, but in subsequent chapters, he would have some good things to say. Being emotional, he would be happy to talk about the New Covenant, even if the fulfillment was way down the stream of time. By these signs, God was outwardly establishing Jeremiah as a true prophet.

The Book of Deuteronomy mentions two situations when a “prophet” speaks. If a person prophesied something relatively bland—that is, not injurious—and it did not come to pass, the people were to disregard it. However, if what a prophet said would lead to the worship of another god, that was a very serious matter. A false prophet, who not only contradicted a “thus saith the LORD” but led others out of the truth to another god, was put to death. That is what happened here. Jeremiah was the true prophet, and the false prophet spoke against him.

That portion of Deuteronomy has to be read and reread multiple times in order to get the proper focus because the nominal Church quotes those verses against anyone in a supposed cult. They claim that if a prediction does not come to pass, the person is a false prophet. But there are differences of actions depending on the circumstance.

**Comment:** Both Hananiah and Shemaiah had to die because they “taught rebellion against the LORD.” It was not just a matter of misunderstanding, for they willfully tried to take others away from God. The nominal Church could falsely accuse us, saying we are taking people away from the doctrine of the Trinity.

**Reply:** Yes, our faith is based on what is said in God’s Word, and we do not want anyone to divert us from the worship of Jehovah or of His Son, Christ Jesus. All kinds of distractions can occur so easily—music, noise, etc.—but the punishment for the distraction is based on the circumstance. There are gradations of reactions by the Lord in regard to things that are of a negative or unprofitable nature. They are dealt with in a different way than something that contradicts Him in any sense of the word.

**Jer. 30:1** The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

**Jer. 30:2** Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.

**Jer. 30:3** For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

Jeremiah was told to write in a book “all the words” God had spoken to him so that they would be preserved for posterity. Here emphasis was placed on the encouraging promises and prophecies—the good news—that would follow in succeeding verses. Much had already been said about the punishments to come on the nation of Israel with only a verse or two occasionally being inserted on the promises of blessings to come. The previous 29 chapters

consisted mostly of warnings and admonitions of dire things that would happen through lack of obedience. Now would come a more substantive succession of blessings that would be fulfilled beyond both the immediate 70-year desolation and Jacob's Trouble at the end of the Gospel Age.

Since the time setting was now during the reign of Zedekiah, the trouble prophesied up to this point would be past history in a few more years, and an unknown future lay beyond the captivity and the 70 years of desolation. Therefore, encouraging promises were given so that future generations would have hope. When this chapter was read later by the returnees from Babylonian captivity after Cyrus's decree, the Jews gave it a more current application. However, by hindsight more than 2,000 years later, we see that the real thrust, or import, is still future—at the end time of the present age and on into the Kingdom.

We feel that when Jeremiah got this instruction, he started to write down “all the words” right away. Baruch was probably his amanuensis, doing the actual recording of the prophecies and the Lord's statements through Jeremiah. Of course the writing was done on a scroll. The word “book” is used to accommodate our thinking, for the people had only parchments back there.

The oldest extant Hebrew manuscript dates back to around AD 900, which is relatively recent. The next oldest manuscript was done by Jerome, who translated from the Hebrew into Latin about 500 years earlier, but we learn through him what the Hebrew manuscript is. It is remarkable that when we study this chapter in the Vulgate, translating the Latin into English, we find that it is substantively the same. The next oldest is the Septuagint, which was done about three centuries before Christ, translating from Hebrew into Greek. Hence we can get information indirectly from the Septuagint, but the problem is that the Greeks who translated the Old Testament in Alexandria, Egypt, were more like modern scholars; that is, they did not take the statements strictly verbatim in the literalized sense but, as with the NIV, took liberties of expressing in current language, in a fluent, easy-to-understand way, what they thought. That is not the same as the literalization of the Word, so something was sacrificed. Thus the Latin Vulgate is almost word for word in this chapter of Jeremiah, whereas the Septuagint contains changes. If Jeremiah's deed is preserved, then perhaps somewhere and sometime his original writing will be found. The location of these, which would prove their veracity, may have to await the Kingdom Age.

“For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD.” In the Old English of the King James, the word “captivity” can be misunderstood. However, it has a good connotation in this context, meaning the fortunes of Israel and Judah would ultimately change back to be on course again so that they would have favor with God. The days would come when Israel and Judah would be brought back to their land. Verse 3 is a reference to the return (1) from Babylon in 536 BC and (2) primarily at the end of the age, in our day.

“And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.” After the Babylonian captivity, the Levites and Jews mostly from Judah came back, with only a small number of Jews returning from the ten tribes. The total number of returnees was approximately 50,000. The very fact that God would bring again the captivity of His people “Israel and Judah” puts the primary fulfillment in our day, for the Jews of the ten tribes, who went into captivity 150 years earlier than the two tribes, were dispersed into the surrounding nations of Europe. Therefore, verse 3 is an end-time prophecy.

**Comment:** The “fathers” refer back to the Abrahamic Covenant.

For the returnees from Babylon in 536 BC to apply this prophecy to themselves was sufficient

for the rewarding of their faith. Being back in the land after the 70 years, they needed this encouragement.

**Jer. 30:4** And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.

**Jer. 30:5** For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.

**Jer. 30:6** Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?

To get the correct slant in verses 5 and 6, we need to understand the pronouns, for there is an anomaly, a contradiction, between “we” and “I.” For instance, to whom does the pronoun “we” refer in verse 5? “For thus saith the LORD; *We* have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.” Some translations insert the word “correction” and change the “we” to “I,” while other translations make the change without any explanation at all. But actually the pronoun “we” is in the Hebrew of the tenth-century manuscripts, the earliest that exist. In studying this chapter, we have to seriously address the issue. It is our belief that the correction is warranted. The translators of the Septuagint felt that “we” should be “ye.” Now we have three options—we, I, and ye—but which is correct?

As we wrestle with the issue, wanting to be sure, we can come to a definitive understanding based on the contextual writing. Notice the use of “I” in verse 6: “Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do *I* see every man with his hands on his loins...?” Based on verse 6, we can go back and change the pronoun in verse 5: “For thus saith the LORD; *I* have heard [or ‘*I* hear’] a voice of trembling, of fear [in the future], and not of peace.” The past, the present, and the future are all *one* in God’s sight. Because of His omniscience and knowing the end from the beginning, He can speak of the *future* as *present* or even *past* tense.

God was dramatizing the situation yet future. “I [God] have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.” He communicated a prophecy to Jeremiah, posing as a seer of the trouble coming on Israel and Judah in the near future. In the sounds of fear, trembling, and anxiety that are heard, it is as if we are brought down the stream of time to Jacob’s Trouble. Notice the emphasis on *sounds*. Moreover, an additional component to these verses is a *double* application, but we have to finish chapter 30 in order to see it, so we will delay an explanation until then.

Verse 6 reads, “Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?” Next we see a number of men in the strange posture of being about to bring forth a child, that is, in great pain with pale faces and hands on their sides. A woman normally has such experiences during labor and childbirth, so this is a very vivid picture of men being doubled over with fear. Notice the emphasis on *sights*.

Incidentally, in time of great fear, the knees get watery so that a person can hardly stand. The knees weaken and the loins have no strength, whereas the muscle from the hip to the knee is usually one of the strongest muscles in the body. Hence this fear is *so outstanding* that the limbs of grown men are affected. A sister once testified that when she was on an airplane, the passengers were instructed to prepare for a crash landing. Right away her knees and loins became weak. And so verse 6 tells of the fear that will come upon hearing news of the invading force entering the land. When the king of Babylon was actually coming down from the north with a tremendous army, the Jews knew that the trouble was real, as Jeremiah had been

prophesying all along. In regard to the statement “all faces are turned into paleness,” fear affects the circulation of the face.

In dramatizing this picture, God was giving an audiovisual preview of what would happen at this yet future time. Even full-grown, mature men would be affected in a startling fashion, becoming like women in a negative physical sense.

**Jer. 30:7** Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

“Alas! for *that* day [the day the Lord is speaking of] is great, so that none is like it.” The sounds and sights are identified as “Jacob’s trouble.” “But he [the Holy Remnant of Israel] shall be saved out of it.” Verse 7 is a reference to *Jacob’s* experience at the climax of the great Time of Trouble. It refers to the taking of Jerusalem, the houses being rifled, and the enemy triumphing temporarily (Zech. 14:2). There will be a time interval between the taking of Jerusalem and the deliverance wrought by God, which will purge out the unclean element of the Jews.

If we were living at the time Jeremiah declared this prophecy, we would immediately associate it with the Babylonian threat coming down. We would think, “This is the trouble, the foreboding day, that the prophet is talking about.” But what makes this future trouble different from that of any past experience—different from the Babylonian captivity and different from the destructions of AD 70 and 135—is that Jacob “shall be saved out of it.” The few who went out and surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar had plenty of trouble, for after their deliverance, they went into bondage. Yes, they escaped death by giving themselves over to the Babylonian army, but they were humiliated and went into slavery. Of course as time went on, there was an easement of their sufferings, but that is not the picture here. In contrast, the saving of the Holy Remnant out of Jacob’s Trouble will be real and whole. That salvation from death will not be followed by pain, misery, and servitude, so the fulfillment of verse 7 is future. Some apply this verse to the Holocaust, but as we consider the context in our private studies, we will see that such an application does not fit.

**Comment:** Realizing that Jacob’s name was changed to Israel makes the following text more meaningful. Romans 11:26 reads, “And so all Israel [the Holy Remnant] shall be saved [out of Jacob’s Trouble]: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

Jacob’s Trouble is the climax of the great Time of Trouble, the “day” that is so great “that none is like it.” “At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Dan. 12:1).

**Jer. 30:8** For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:

In that day, God will break the “yoke” off Israel’s neck and burst the bonds asunder. Back there the Jews thought of Nebuchadnezzar’s yoke, but verse 8 refers to the yoke of Gog from the *land* of Magog. The former Soviet Union was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, that is, Russia proper and satellite powers comprising an empire. Thus Gog (called the Assyrian in the Book of Isaiah) will be the enemy. Also, Haman was an Agagite (Esther 3:1). Since the vowels were supplied, “Agag” is really “Gog”; hence Agag is a type of the future Gog (1 Sam. 15:8-33; Num. 24:7). Verse 8, then, will be an end-time experience. Ezekiel 38 and 39 go into greater

detail in regard to Gog, showing that a multitude of miracles will thoroughly break this yoke.

“Strangers shall no more serve themselves of him [Gog].” In many past experiences, strangers visited humiliation on the Jewish nation, but Israel will no longer be placed in servitude and taken advantage of after Jacob’s Trouble. Gog will have associates, for he is pictured as a leader of other powers that will come down from the north into the Promised Land.

**Jer. 30:9** But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

Israel will serve God and “*David* their king [Jesus],” not others. The name David means “beloved.” In the final picture, Israel will serve The Christ, but the emphasis here is on Jesus.

**Comment:** Verse 9 is another proof that the context is speaking of Jacob’s Trouble. God will raise up David, the beloved, unto Israel, and that did not happen in Jeremiah’s day.

The term “raise up” reminds us of Moses’ words: “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; ... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” (Deut. 18:15,18).

**Comment:** Ezekiel 34:23,24 states, “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; ... and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.”

**Reply:** Yes. In the picture with Pharaoh, Joseph represents Jesus primarily, but his feet being in chains suggests that he is a prototype of The Christ (Psa. 105:17-19). However, to bring in the Church as the main theme would be inappropriate, just as in regard to the Memorial, Jesus said, “This do in remembrance of *me*” (1 Cor. 11:23-25). Elsewhere Paul said that other lessons from the Memorial pertain to us, our death, and our being broken together. The Church is in the picture, but the chief personality is mentioned first, for anything else would detract from Jesus’ uniqueness. Therefore, we think the first lesson Israel will have to see is that Jesus is their true Messiah. The “corporate” aspect, the details, will come later with education.

David, a type of Christ, may be the first Ancient Worthy to occupy the position, or chief office, of “prince” in the future Third Temple, even though Moses is probably a better character. It is interesting that the Israeli flag has the Star of *David*. Also, the everlasting covenant mentions the “sure mercies of *David*” (Isa. 55:3).

**Jer. 30:10** Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.

God called natural Israel “my servant Jacob.” We do not spiritualize this whole account because the thrust is the *land* and *Jacob*. Generally speaking, the term “Jacob” refers to the material, the earthly, the natural Israel of God.

“I will save thee from afar.” Verse 10 refers to the second exodus, or yet future homecoming, when Jews will be regathered to Israel *after* Jacob’s Trouble. They will be saved “from afar”; that is, Jews in other countries will share in that salvation if they are part of the Holy Remnant. This verse is a proof text that all Jews who survive in other nations will be handpicked. Gentiles will ship them back *posthaste* and *with gifts* (Isa. 60:1-7).

The Scriptures use a play on words. “Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.” Ezekiel 38 shows the enemy coming down from the north against a people who are resting securely with unwallled villages and are *unafraid*. The arrival of Gog will cause *great fear*, but after God’s deliverance of Israel out of Jacob’s Trouble, the Jews will truly be at rest and *unafraid*. The Holy Remnant, whether in Israel or in other countries, will experience this rest when back in their homeland after Jacob’s Trouble.

“Peace, be still” (Mark 4:39). Peace will come first to Israel. Very shortly thereafter a calm will come to the rest of the world. In other words, “*World, be still.*” Caution: The “rest” and “quiet” of verse 10 are not to be confused with the *false* rest, or sense of security, that will occur *before* Jacob’s Trouble. Some will mistake the false rest for the true rest.

Verse 10 does not refer to Jews who went back to Israel after the Holocaust because the time sequence is different. In the final analysis, those who returned to Israel at that time were agnostics and atheists as well as Zionists. In other words, they went back through sheer necessity, so there was nothing meritorious in their return. In the future, at the time of Jacob’s Trouble, the salvation will be what *God* does. Whether a Jew is in Israel or in a Gentile country, *God* will save those who comprise the Holy Remnant, and “they shall serve the LORD their God” and Jesus (verse 9). We need to chew, ruminate, and meditate on truths before we assimilate them into our framework of understanding God’s Word.

Confederate armies under Gog will come with a definite objective in mind: to take a spoil (Ezek. 38:10-12). Of course Satan will want to exterminate Israel by this method. At that time, Israel will be calm and relatively prosperous, but the world will be in anarchy. Then Gog will invade Israel and capture Jerusalem. This concentrated host will temporarily be victorious. To continue the sequence: God will deliver Israel, peace will result, and then peace will come to the rest of the world. Note: Gog will be a more *organized* host than the sporadic anarchistic mobs that will wreak havoc in all the Gentile nations.

**Jer. 30:11** For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

The Time of Trouble on the Gentile nations will *precede* Jacob’s Trouble, as indicated by the statement “Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee.” The political polity of all Gentile nations will cease in anarchy (meaning “no government”). These nations will be fully prostrate. Geographic names such as the United States of America, France, England, etc., will probably also be changed but not at first. In the beginning of the Kingdom, the names will be retained for the sake of identity, for when people are resuscitated from the grave, a lot of explaining will have to be done along multiple lines: geography, history, morals, etc. In time, the current names will probably just evaporate and be replaced with different designations.

**Q:** When Satan is loosed in the “little season” at the end of the Kingdom Age, he will “go out to deceive *the nations* which are in the four quarters of the earth,” so won’t the various nations be recognized in some fashion (Rev. 20:8)?

**A:** The Greek word *ethnos*, translated “nations,” means “peoples.”

**Comment:** As the Kingdom progresses, the current geographic names will probably be such an anathema that a person might say, for instance, “I was a resident of the *former* United States.” After understanding the reason for the Time of Trouble, shame will be attached to a *sinful* nation that was previously called a “*God-fearing* country.” The people will want to cast off their

former association.

**Q:** Will there be an identity with the 12 tribes of Israel?

**A:** Yes, but in a mixed sense. Just as God has His plan and the Ancient Worthies will be princes in all the earth, with one here and another there, so the territories will be given some type of name or identity.

Since God will not make a “full end” of Israel, that nation will retain its name. But there is also a secondary thought of trouble and punishment. “I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee [Israel] altogether unpunished” suggests that the other nations will be punished. Punitive judgment will come upon them to bring them to their senses.

Hatred of the Jew is *Satanic*. Satan will get the nations to fight Israel in an attempt to *exterminate the Jews utterly!* He wants to *destroy all Jews*. The implication is that a great percentage of Jews will die in Jacob’s Trouble. God will correct Israel in measure—with a heavy chastening rod—but there will be survivors. *All Jews* who survive the great trouble, both worldwide and in Israel, will be purged of dross and purified and will thus be of the *Holy Remnant*. When they are saved “from afar” (verse 10), “ten men ... out of all ... nations ... shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you” (Zech. 8:23).

In the literal Hebrew translation, “in measure” is “with judgment,” that is, with discrimination. For instance, Amos 9:10 says, “All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.” Isaiah 4:2-4 reads, “In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are *escaped* of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is *left* in Zion, and he that *remaineth* in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.” Daniel 12:1 also shows the Holy Remnant will comprise a select few: “At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” The Jews who are rescued out of Jacob’s Trouble will all be saved, but *not all Jews* will be saved regardless of conduct and faith. Those who “pass under the rod” will be chosen to be the Lord’s, to be identified with the Kingdom on an earthly plane, to be the nucleus of the Kingdom under the Ancient Worthies and the spiritual elect (Ezek. 20:37). “In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite [no false worshipper] in the house of the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 14:21).

With the Scripture “they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn,” the general consensus seems to be that when the Jews see these judgments—whether or not they are sinners—they will be converted (Zech. 12:10). We do not get that impression, for other Scriptures go into detail about the class that will be purged out.

In review, chapter 30 speaks of the good things concerning the future of Israel. The previous chapters were a condemnation of the conduct of the nation in the past, and while God punished the Jews with captivity and ultimately with dispersion throughout Gentile nations because of their disobedience, He also prophesied that in the end time of the present age, He would turn with favor to His people, natural Israel.

We will read verse 11 again: “For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.”

**Comment:** The principle is stated in Hebrews 12:6, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” God has a keen interest in natural Israel. Punishment for their iniquities is part of the process of bringing the nation back into a better relationship with Him.

**Comment:** Jeremiah 10:24 shows the proper heart attitude: “O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.”

**Comment:** The end of verse 11 is more emphatic in the Masoretic: “and will not utterly destroy thee,” rather than “and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.”

There are several reasons why God favors Israel. One reason is its location. Jerusalem will eventually be the capital of the world, and it is geographically the land bridge of three continents. A second reason is that Abraham and other faithful ones of the past showed extreme loyalty to God. Therefore, He favors that people and their posterity. However, at the end of the age when many fatalities occur, the rescue will involve Gentiles as well. The mandatory requirement will be to recognize not only that the “law” goes forth from spiritual Zion but also that the “word of the LORD” goes forth from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3). Those Gentiles who respond properly will correspondingly receive the same blessings that Israel has. There will no longer be different governments in the various countries of earth, for the nations will lose their polity, and there will be just one government under Christ. Therefore, God’s making a “full end of all nations” indicates a radical change in Messiah’s Kingdom. And Israel, too, needs to be punished, for God will correct the nation “in measure.”

In Jewry, there are agnostics, atheists, those who believe in God, and those who are not interested. The same is true of Gentiles. However, God has a book in which are written the names of Jews who will survive at the end of the age (Dan. 12:1; Isa. 4:3). That means a purging will occur because He wants a holy Kingdom to start in Israel, and the government must be without blame and converted to believe in God and also in His Son, Jesus. However, even those who die in the future trouble will come forth from the grave later.

**Jer. 30:12** For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous.

**Jer. 30:13** There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines.

**Jer. 30:14** All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased.

Verses 12-14 describe the nature of Israel’s wound. Her “bruise is incurable,” and her “wound is grievous.” From a *human* standpoint, the situation will be hopeless at the time of Jacob’s Trouble. No other nation (none of her “lovers”) will be able to provide aid. Even now most nations are allies only for *selfish* reasons: political purposes, commercial gain, and/or war benefits. The nations do not love Israel, and any who have sided with her have done so out of selfish motives. *Only God* will be able to cure (help) her.

“There is none to plead thy cause, ... thou hast no healing medicines. All thy lovers have forgotten thee.” The United States and England are two of Israel’s “lovers” in trying to push the peace process and plead her cause with the Palestinians and in supplying money and munitions. However, the history of Israel has been one of anti-Semitism for a couple thousand years, and it will be strongly anti-Semitic again in the near future.



But God said, “I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased.” Back in Jeremiah’s day, when Israel went into captivity following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, it was as though God turned from being the God of Israel to the enemy of Israel. It was like a father spanking a child with the severity proportionate to the misdeed. But the real thrust of these verses is a future aspect with regard to Jacob’s Trouble, when God will wound Israel with the “wound of an enemy” and the “chastisement of a cruel one.” He will use (or *permit*) Gog, a cruel element, to inflict damage so that the dross will be consumed. Those Jews who are spared will be a *favored* class. To a *lesser* extent, this will also be true of those of the Gentile onlookers and enemies who are spared, for generally speaking, the trouble will be on the heads of the wicked (see verse 23).

**Comment:** The principle of God toward Israel is like that with the Prodigal Son in the parable (Luke 15:11-32). When true repentance comes, there will be deep affection in spite of the past.

**Reply:** Forgiveness was extended when the father saw the Prodigal Son coming home. In other words, the act of *returning*, which signified repentance, led to the father’s embracing this son. Stated another way, the father did not embrace his son as a sinner but as a repentant soul coming back and longing for the former relationship.

**Comment:** With regard to Israel’s “lovers” in the past and at present, the nation has made alliances with Gentile nations instead of trusting in God for help from enemies. This is a good lesson for us as Christians. Our heart alliance should be with God and Jesus, not with people and things of the world.

**Reply:** At one time, England was favorable to Israel. For instance, the Balfour declaration in 1917 allowed Jews to go back to the homeland, but some years later, the government of England printed a white paper that favored the Arabs. When England left Palestine, the Jews were unprotected and greatly outnumbered by the Arabs.

**Jer. 30:15** Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee.

The right-hearted will mourn *ultimately*, but historically, the Jews have complained that all that happens to them is unfair. Instead of seeing the need for repentance, they think that they are victims of injustice and that punishments from Gentiles were unmerited, but that is not the case from God’s standpoint. However, as their numbers decrease and decrease during the coming trouble, the holy element will realize that the experience is a judgment on Jews and that the dross is being removed. The repentant, contrite, mourning condition of the Holy Remnant will be manifest. The prayer of “dross” Jews will not be answered—they will die—whereas the prayer of the repentant Holy Remnant will be answered.

**Jer. 30:16** Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey.

**Comment:** God has permitted affliction because of Israel’s disobedience and iniquity. However, the enemies that come against Israel in Jacob’s Trouble will themselves be destroyed.

**Reply:** Yes, Gog will be punished after spoiling Israel. Those of Gog who are spared will see the tables turn and themselves become a spoil. The enemy will experience not only disease but also violent hail, earthquake, thunder, heavy rain, etc.—all *supernatural* occurrences

miraculously timed for Israel's deliverance. They will realize that the *God of nature* has turned on them. Surviving Gentiles will then ask the Jews, "What can we do to help you?" Seeing the resurrected Ancient Worthies, the one-sixth Gentile survivors will feel especially indebted to the Jew (Ezek. 39:2). Spared Jews and Gentiles will both react emotionally.

**Comment:** With regard to the spoiler, Isaiah 33:1 reads, "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee."

The juxtaposition of verses 15 and 16 shows a radical change in the right-hearted Jews. The question "Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable" refers to *true* sorrow, to *repentance*. Following Jacob's Trouble, they will mourn for Jesus as for an only son who has died (Zech. 12:10). They will feel to the core their responsibility in not seeing Jesus as their Messiah. In that mourning, the depth of their sorrow will be very keen. Jehovah is talking in these verses, not Jesus, and the Holy Remnant will realize that they, as a people, put to death *Jehovah's Son*.

But the radical change with Israel will occur not only because of the depth of their sorrow but also because the Father will be acting *paternally* toward them. He will comfort them like a father who talks to a crying child. He will be saying in effect, "With regard to all that has happened, yes, I did it. Because of the multitude of your sins, because your sins were increased, it was necessary for you, as a people, to have this judgment experience to make you humble for the Kingdom. Always keep that fact in mind." When God delivered Israel from Egypt, He said, "Do not forget all of your sufferings and afflictions and then your miraculous deliverance. You should be merciful to the foreigners and the strangers in your midst because I was merciful to you in bringing you out from the house of bondage."

God was saying to Israel, "Your sorrow is incurable, but it will be different in the future." When the tables are turned, instead of being anti-Semitic, the Gentiles will be pro-Israel. It will be like us, as Christians, when we see a sinner undergo a thorough repentance and change of conduct. No matter how we felt about him previously, our whole attitude toward him changes upon seeing that his sorrow and repentance are real. That is what will happen to the Gentiles who live through the Time of Trouble. Being convinced that those of Israel are not what they were before, they will take hold of the skirt of the Jew and say, "We have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23).

**Comment:** Favor is being shown to Israel because of the faithfulness of Abraham. In Genesis 12:2,3, God said, "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Generally speaking, favor has been extended to nations that have cooperated with Israel in spite of selfish motives.

**Comment:** Jesus needed to be crucified, but nevertheless, he said, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24). The same principle has applied to Israel. The Jews needed to be brought to their knees and punished for their sins, but woe unto those who did the punishing.

**Jer. 30:17** For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

The wounds are incurable from Israel's perspective, but God will heal the Holy Remnant

because of their preceding sorrow and repentance. Another reason for the healing is that the adversaries who spoil Israel will themselves be spoiled for their wrong attitude. There will be a lesson for everyone, Jew and Gentile.

Israel has been a curse and a minority people regarded with disdain down through the ages, but when the change comes of their future deliverance, the abundance of the Gentiles will be given to them (Isa. 60:5-7). When God manifests returning favor to Israel by His miraculous deliverance of the Holy Remnant out of Jacob's Trouble, the Gentiles will all want to contribute temporally to their welfare. Moreover, everything will be done to send surviving Jews in other countries back to Israel. When the nations see that there is a God and that Israel's God is the *true* God, they will want to do all they can to help. The same principle was manifested by the Egyptians when, after the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, they said to Pharaoh, "Let the Israelites leave lest we all die," and sent them out of Egypt with gifts.

**Q:** To whom does the pronoun "they" refer: "*They* called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after"?

**A:** The reference is to Gentiles and the former lovers. Earlier Jeremiah prophesied that after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the Israelites would be a byword, a curse, and a reproach (Jer. 25:18; 29:17,18). "He is a Jew" has been said unfavorably. The Jews have wrongly been called an "Outcast." Incidentally, here is a case where the term "Zion" is to be given a natural application, that is, fleshly Israel.

**Jer. 30:18** Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.

Verses 18-20 imply a resurrection. Down through history, those who unjustly criticized and treated the Jew will have to make amends. The word "captivity" in verse 18 means former estate, and the term "palace" means Temple, that is, the Third Temple. Both Jerusalem and the Temple will literally be rebuilt (see *Volume 3*, page 259). Today the Jews in Jerusalem live mostly in the New City, but this is a reference to the Old City and even Ophel, which is not inhabited because of archaeological digs.

"Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces." What is the thought of "*Jacob's tents*"? Since Jacob was the father of all 12 tribes, that name usually refers to natural Israel.

"The city [of Jerusalem] shall be builded upon her own heap." This statement suggests that the city will become a ruin at the time of Jacob's Trouble. An earthquake will lift up the land as a plain from Geba to Rimmon, an area of at least 30 square miles (Zech. 14:4,5,10; see also Ezek. 38:19,20). Not only will the Al-Aksa mosque and Dome of the Rock (Muslim sites) on the Temple Mount be leveled but also Jerusalem. The city will be rebuilt but according to *God's* plan. The measurements, the gates, etc.—how Jerusalem is to be designed—are recorded in the Book of Ezekiel, let alone the measurements for the Third Temple.

"And the palace [the Third Temple] shall remain after the manner thereof." When the Third Temple is constructed at the beginning of the Kingdom, it will not be destroyed henceforth.

Many Christians say, "Why would a literal temple structure be needed in the Kingdom? The Apostle Paul said we are the temple of God." Yes, 1 Corinthians 3:16 does refer to *spiritual* Israelites, to the "temple" in heaven, for God has a plan for those who are to be kings and priests with Jesus Christ. They will see the Father's face and be honored in heaven. But in

harmony with the Lord's Prayer, God will have people down here too: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

**Q:** For the word "heap," the King James margin has "little hill," and Young's *Analytical Concordance* has "hillock." Is the thought that Jerusalem will be on a hill?

**A:** Yes, the city will be on a hill, and the Temple Mount will be higher than the surrounding hills. When the Temple is built as a "house of prayer" in the future, it will be glorious, elevated, and holy (Isa. 56:7; Matt. 21:13). No one will be allowed to serve in the Temple in a ministerial sense unless he has first been tried and proven worthy.

**Jer. 30:19** **And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.**

After the initial grief and shock over realizing that *Jesus*, a Jew, is Israel's Messiah, there will be *great rejoicing* in the land.

"I will multiply them, and they shall not be few." At present, about 6 million Jews are in the small nation of Israel, which is about the size of New Jersey. However, Transjordan, Lebanon, etc., will be added in the Kingdom to make room for a multiplication of that people, especially when Jews come forth from the grave. Moreover, Jews who survive the Time of Trouble in Gentile nations will be shipped back by boat, airplane, and whatever means is convenient. This second regathering back to the homeland will take place after the Kingdom is established.

**Comment:** In harmony with other Scriptures such as Ezekiel 47:22 and Jeremiah 32:39, part of their "multiplication" will come from children who are born in the Kingdom Age.

**Jer. 30:20** **Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.**

"Their children also shall be as aforetime." To understand the word "aforetime," we will read Isaiah 1:24-26, which tells us that in the Kingdom, Israel's judges and counselors will be restored. "Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors *as at the beginning*: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city." In other words, God's dealings at the beginning and throughout much of the Kingdom Age will be similar to the method He used in guiding His people in Old Testament times, when judges and counselors were raised up. In principle, that is true with us also. In auspicious moments when instruction and guidance become necessary, the Lord furnishes that information, but the responsibility lies with us to be hungry, desirous, yearning, or mourning enough to be looking for His providence in this direction. And He promises to supply that need. Here in verse 20, the promise is to supply the need to His *natural* people, and the same principle of operation applies to His *spiritual* children in the present age.

"Their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them." The Old Testament contains a multitude of promises along this line. That principle will operate in the Kingdom, and it operates even now, particularly in this end time, although the swiftness of the judgment promised in Malachi 4:5,6 will become apparent with the introduction of the Kingdom arrangement. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." We

also think of Romans 12:19, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord,” and 1 Timothy 5:24, “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after [in the Kingdom Age].”

If the judges, counselors, and congregation are to be restored, it is natural to think that the Temple will also be restored. Moreover, the New Covenant will be very similar to the old Law Covenant in principles of operation.

**Jer. 30:21** And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD.

“Their nobles [their judges, the Ancient Worthies] shall be of themselves” in the Kingdom Age. The titles “governor,” “judge,” and “noble” are more or less synonymous terms, generally speaking. As Isaiah 1:26 states, Israel’s “judges” and “counsellors” (the Ancient Worthies *plural*) will be restored. However, “their governor [singular] shall proceed from the midst of them.” In other words, the Ancient Worthies will be “princes in all the earth” (Psa. 45:16), but only *one* Ancient Worthy at a time will fill the office of “governor” in Israel. Thus there is no contradiction based on geographic location.

We are speaking now more from the *human* standpoint. In the books of Jeremiah and Isaiah, “Zion” is *natural* Israel. Of course Jesus will be “The [one] Prince of Peace,” reigning spiritually throughout the Kingdom Age (Isa. 9:6). But the suggestion is that the Church class, who will reign with Christ, will be distributed *spiritually* in the atmosphere around the earth much as the Ancient Worthies will be distributed *naturally* down here as princes in all the earth.

The Ancient Worthy who presides in Jerusalem, the future capital of the world, will be a rotating office. In contrast, even though the Church will be with Jesus, he will always have the preeminence above them. Similarly in the Old Testament, Moses was the chief speaker.

The “prince” will sit in the east gate in Ezekiel’s Temple (Ezek. 44:1-3). The high priest for the Temple will be of the Zadok priesthood—Zadok means “priest” (Ezek. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11). Because of Zadok’s faithfulness in David’s day, the additional requirement, or qualification, for the priests in the Kingdom Age, who will serve in the literal Temple, is that they be not merely a Levite and a son of Aaron but also a son of Zadok. The suggestion is that the high priest may also be a rotating office which is filled with different members of the natural Zadok priesthood.

In the type with the Tabernacle in the wilderness, both Aaron and Moses represented Jesus. Moses represented the princely aspect of Christ in the Kingdom reign, and Aaron represented the ecclesiastical aspect. For the spiritual priesthood in glory, the name changes from the Aaronic priesthood to the Melchisedec priesthood, for at that time the office of prince (Moses) and priest (Aaron) will be combined. However, down here the office of prince will be *rotational*, for to give inordinate honor to *one* individual throughout the Kingdom Age would detract from the singularity of Christ as *the* Ruler in truth. We have used the same type of reasoning to show there will not be *one* last individual of the body of Christ—the feet members will die as a *group*—so that Jesus will be left with the singularity of being the first, the Head of the Church.

Verse 21 emphasizes the *civil* element. The Jews will have a “governor,” a rotational office occupied by one Ancient Worthy at a time. Jews who wish to communicate with God when they come forth from the grave will have to go through the “governor,” the Ancient Worthy occupying that office at a given time. The Zadok priesthood will perform the *religious* services, picturing The Christ, but the people will deal with the prince, the governor (the *civil* aspect). Jacob’s dream of “angels” ascending and descending on a ladder shows that the Ancient

Worthies will be the head of the earthly phase of the Kingdom with messengers (the Great Company) going between them and the glorified Church (Gen. 28:12).

“I will cause him [the presiding Ancient Worthy] to draw near.” David may be the first Ancient Worthy to fill the office of “prince” in Israel.

The purity, the sanctity, of God’s institutions has been so sullied that individuals, whether prophet or priest, thought nothing of dishonoring the office because they lacked reverential fear. One occupying the office of priest was even a well-known adulterer. Hence God raised up true prophets to give strong judgment messages.

**Jer. 30:22 And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.**

Jeremiah was privileged to deliver this very favorable message. We do not know the details of his death, but his counsel was not heeded by the vast majority. Even after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, when vinedressers were left in the land, the people did not listen to him but slew Gedaliah and fled to Egypt. Jeremiah prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would pursue them to Egypt and punish them.

Jeremiah’s official tenure as a prophet seems to have been 40 years long. The duration of the ministries of those who were relatively contemporaneous varied. Isaiah’s ministry lasted more than 60 years, and Daniel’s ministry covered at least 90 years. Therefore, Jeremiah’s ministry of 40 years was the shortest. Of the three prophets, Isaiah uttered the greatest number of Kingdom prophecies and blessings to come, both spiritually and naturally, yet he was sawn asunder according to tradition. Evidently, this experience occurred in the last year of the reign of Hezekiah. This suggests that when the Israelites saw the invading force entering the land, they dispatched Isaiah, the one who had prophesied of the Assyrian host coming down.

We will consider the circumstance by reading Isaiah 39:5-8. “Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.” This Isaiah quote gives us a little insight into Hezekiah’s character. Notice his response when Isaiah said his sons would be taken into captivity and made eunuchs. Hezekiah had just heard bad news, but he thought of himself: “I will die in peace.” He had been promised 15 additional years of life, and now his response was selfish. Instead he should have thought of his children and his office. In saying, “Good is the word of the LORD,” he sounded like Eli, the high priest, who spoke similarly when told by young Samuel of coming judgment for his sons’ iniquity. “It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good” (1 Sam. 3:18). In the final analysis, Eli was a reprehensible character because of his extreme weakness in failing to take a stand and discipline his sons.

**Jer. 30:23 Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked.**

“Behold, the *whirlwind* of the LORD goeth forth *with fury*, a *continuing* whirlwind.” Other Scriptures are needed to realize the “continuing” aspect of the trouble. That which will be happening in Israel—the dross being purged and the destruction of Gog—will have a counterpart in *other* nations. The Prophet Joel speaks of Israel in the trouble and also of other nations. Generally speaking, the ringleaders of the wicked will be destroyed *worldwide*.

Jeremiah 23:19,20 is a parallel text, providing two witnesses. “Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.” Again the thought is emphasized that the trouble will be primarily on the heads of the wicked.

**Jer. 30:24** The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.

Notice the end of this verse: “in the latter days [plural] ye [natural Israel, specifically the Holy Remnant] shall consider it.” In the end-time period of the Gospel Age, Israel will be made aware of this message. Parts of this message are given in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, etc., the point being that the Jews will be informed as a people. But to be informed is one thing, and to *heed* the information is another. All down through history, only a *minority* has really heeded the Lord’s instruction. The only exceptions we hear of are *temporary*. For instance, when Joshua commanded the Israelites to march around Jericho for seven days and not talk, their obedience was astounding. But that experience lasted for seven *days*, not seven years; it was not continuing. More recently in the Sixth-Day War, the Jews, lacking ammunition, rolled barrels filled with stones down hills toward the Arabs at night. Hearing the noise, the Arabs fled in fright, thinking they were being attacked by machine guns. For about a week, the Jews themselves, as well as news commentators, attributed the victory to God. A month later the Israeli Air Force was given the credit. And so the majority will not hearken to the message of truth at the end of the age. However, when informed, the Holy Remnant will take the message to heart by considering and obeying the instruction.

“The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart.” Ezekiel 38:16 shows that God’s purpose is to be sanctified in Gog. God’s “fierce anger” will perform “the intents of his heart.” His Word will accomplish its purpose.

**Q:** Will Elisha, picturing the Great Company, give a message to Israel?

**A:** That is true, but the feet members will start the message. The Great Company will pick up and expand the message subsequently, directing it to the Holy Remnant.

**Q:** Does the term “latter days [plural]” refer to a *time period* of a year or more?

**A:** Yes, certain events will happen in a year, two years, three years—a short period of time. The majority in Israel will experience a *false* peace, whereas the Holy Remnant will understand that Jacob’s Trouble is coming.

Now we will return to two earlier verses, which contain the pronouns “we” and “I.” “For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?” (verses 5 and 6). The Jerusalem Bible has an interesting comment, although we believe the wrong conclusion is drawn. It was like saying that in the future, at the time that the king of Babylon would come down to lay waste the city and the Temple, there would be a “we” class, and this class is the Holy Remnant in the antitype. In considering verses 5 and 6 earlier, we said there was a double application but gave only one application. We will consider the second application in more detail at this time.

In the end-time period of the Gospel Age, a believing Jewish remnant will feel that the peace

after the Psalm 83 scenario is not the real peace. They will be sufficiently informed to not forget the still-to-come prophecies of Gog from the land of Magog. The Arabs, the immediate neighbors surrounding Israel, will be dispensed with when the prayer of Psalm 83 is answered. We understand this element to be an enlightened class, namely, the Holy Remnant.

Now we come to the end of verse 24 and read, “In the latter days ye shall consider it.” That statement can be interpreted two ways, but to “consider” means to give *serious* thought to a matter, rather than turning a deaf ear. Jeremiah characteristically predicted doom while the false prophets predicted peace, saying that not only would the king of Babylon be taken care of in two years but also the people in captivity would return to the homeland. Despite what they claimed with emphasis, the false prophets did not speak according to a “thus saith the LORD.”

From this perspective, we quote verse 5 and leave the pronoun “we” intact, as follows. “We [the Holy Remnant] have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.” The Holy Remnant will not be deceived by the false peace at the end of the Gospel Age, for they will “consider.”

In the wilderness wanderings, one of the chief reasons the Israelites sinned is that they *forgot* God’s mighty works. They forgot that He opened the sea before them, yet nothing more dramatic could have happened! Moreover, the Israelites saw the destruction of Pharaoh and his host when the waters closed over them. Also, they were fed with miraculous manna, etc., but because the lessons did not abide, the entire older generation—the ones who should have remembered God’s miracles—died except for Joshua and Caleb. The younger generation went into the Promised Land, so 2 million people left Egypt, and 2 million entered.

**Q:** In this case of the “latter days,” can Jeremiah represent the Great Company, who will deliver a strong message to the Holy Remnant?

**A:** No, we do not think Jeremiah is a type of the Great Company here. In fact, the Scriptures seem to indicate that the true Church, the feet members, will give the subject matter; that is, they will inform the Holy Remnant, but the Great Company will have the privilege of speaking later, at the time of occurrence.

**Jer. 31:1** At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

“At the same time” would be the end of the Gospel Age. Since the previous chapter was a prophecy of the future, verse 1 refers not only to the same time but also to that future time when God will “be the God of *all* the families of Israel,” i.e., the God of all 12 tribes.

**Jer. 31:2** Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.

The trouble will purge Israel. Those left will be cleansed. This verse is a flashback to the wilderness wanderings. In Jacob’s Trouble, only those whom God protects will survive. The destruction will be so great that the land (Israel) will be like a “wilderness” (and will thus need rebuilding). Ezekiel 20:33-37 reads, “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the *wilderness* of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of



the covenant.”

**Comment:** The NIV uses the future tense: “The people who survive the sword will find favor in the desert; I will come to give rest to Israel.”

**Reply:** The NIV takes that liberty, which is the proper thought.

For the word “rest,” see Jeremiah 30:10, “Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; ... for, lo, I will save thee from afar, ... and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.” God will cause Israel to rest *after* the trouble. None will ever again make the nation afraid.

**Jer. 31:3** The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

Verse 3 sounds like the Song of Solomon, where terms of endearment are spoken to the Church. Here Jehovah tenderly addressed natural Israel, i.e., the Holy Remnant. This verse is the nearest the Old Testament gets to speaking of God like a father who manifests compassion toward a child. This mood continues on into the chapter.

“Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting [abiding] love.” God will have the same *abiding* love for Israel in the future that He had in the past. The word “abiding” contains emotion and feeling, showing the love will persist. There is a tenderness here.

“Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” God was referring back to His previous love for Israel when the nation was in Egypt: “The abiding love that I had for you in the past I still have, and now I have drawn thee.” After Jacob’s Trouble, this sentiment will go forth. In other words, verse 3 is a prophecy that mixes in Old Testament happenings and dealings with Israel and brings them into the future, indicating there will be a reoccurrence of this affection.

**Jer. 31:4** Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.

“Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel.” This statement is startling, but the “virgin” is the Holy Remnant—the holy, purified, contrite element. Many would ask, “How can God call Israel a virgin?” but the Holy Remnant will be considered such because they will be a screened and tried class whom God recognizes. Being repentant, they will want to consecrate under the new conditions of that age.

“Thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.” In this scene of happiness and rejoicing, what are “tabrets”? Certainly sound is associated, and the Holy Remnant will be “adorned” with them. In principle, the hem of the high priest’s robe was adorned with blue, purple, and scarlet pomegranates alternating with golden bells (Exod. 28:31-34). When the high priest went into the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement, the people in the Court could not see him, but they knew he was alive (and thus did not die at the critical moment) when they heard the sound of the bells as he moved (compare Heb. 9:27). The sound of the bells indicated that all was well. Of course the occasion before us in verse 4 is one of holy joy (not solemnity as on the Day of Atonement), and that joy and the movement of the body in “dances” are accompanied with the sound of tabrets. In our day, the nearest hand instrument to a tabret is a tambourine, which is like a small one-headed drum with loose metallic disks at the sides that are played by shaking or striking with the hand. The mood of David when he “danced before the LORD” as the Ark of the Covenant was being brought to Jerusalem is comparable to the joy being manifested here (2 Sam. 6:14).

**Jer. 31:5 Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.**

“Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria ... and shall eat them as common things.” Under the Law, firstborn animals and firstfruits were given to God. After this token recognition went to the Lord, the subsequent fruits, grains, etc., were “common” in that the people could eat them. Similarly, a handful of grain was first thrown on the altar. The principle was to *first* give thanks to God.

However, the firstfruits of the vines were inferior for the first three years, being sour and/or immature. In the fourth year, the fruit was good, so at that time, the people made an offering to the Lord before they ate. Once the people could eat, the fruit was considered “common”; that is, it was publicly available. The requirement under the Law was as follows. “And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the LORD withal. And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the LORD your God” (Lev. 19:23-25).

Verse 5 is saying that the Holy Remnant will not have to go through all this ritual because they will have already shown, by their repentance and conversion, that they are accepted by God as a “virgin” class (verse 4). Thus they will be in a fit mood to participate without going through a formal act of conversion. In Israel today, the ultra Orthodox have insisted that converted Jews who came to Israel after manifesting years of devotion in Ethiopia and other places had to go through a formal ceremony, like a catechism. But when the Lord recognizes the Holy Remnant in the future, not only would it be anticlimactic for them to go through such a ritual, but also it would show a lack of appreciation for His miraculous deliverance of them. Previously God will have recognized the Holy Remnant as being *dear* to Him because they are Jews who reacted favorably to His judgments. Therefore, because the Holy Remnant will already be acceptable to Him, they shall plant and eat without having to go through the formality of the third, fourth, and fifth years. Historically speaking, familiarity with the customs and the reasons for the customs helps to give an in-depth perspective of the Kingdom prophecies of the future.

**Q:** Why was Samaria mentioned?

**A:** In verse 1, Jehovah said, “I will be the God of *all* the families of Israel.” Although Samaria is not “all Israel,” it includes all ten tribes because that term was used for the northern kingdom. “Ephraim,” too, pictured the ten tribes because of the multitude of Jews who lived there.

**Q:** Even though we look for a full fulfillment in the future, has a partial agricultural fulfillment taken place since Israel became a nation in 1948?

**A:** No, for this verse is associated with the identity of the Holy Remnant. Jews are living today who will be alive when Jacob’s Trouble comes, but whether they survive the purging that takes place at that time is the question. However, those who are saved out of Jacob’s Trouble will have already passed the test. The very fact they are alive at that time will be the proof. We believe the Jews will have a very crucial time not only during Jacob’s Trouble in Israel, which will be center stage, but also in the other countries. The Scriptures indicate that on a worldwide basis, only Jews who pass the test will live through the Time of Trouble, and the children will also be favored with life because of their parents. The same principle is stated for the Christian: “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your *children* unclean; but now are they *holy*” (1 Cor. 7:14). Hence there

will be a lot of children in the Kingdom because of their recognition through the parent(s).

From another perspective, verse 5 is a picture of *permanent security*. The surviving Jews will plant vines and eat the fruit thereof.

**Jer. 31:6** For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.

This reference to Ephraim is a little unusual because Jeremiah was in *Judah*, yet as the Lord's mouthpiece, he expressed this extraordinary future redemption of a remnant of *Israel*. As the people in Judah heard these words and identified them with the northern kingdom, they would have thought, "What about us? What about Judah and Benjamin?" God knew this was Judah's thinking each time Ephraim was mentioned in this context, and we can be sure those of Judah and Benjamin were listening.

When verse 1 indicates that "all the families of Israel" will be saved, that statement can be misunderstood initially but not when we finish the context, because not all will be saved. Romans 11:25,26 says that after the "fulness of the Gentiles be come in, ... all Israel shall be saved," but the "all" who are saved will be all of the *living Holy Remnant and their children*, not the unbelieving Jews, the unregenerate, at that time. Why not? The reason is that Jerusalem is to be the capital of the world, and the Kingdom will start with a holy nucleus of not only the Church in the heavenly realm and the Ancient Worthies in the earthly realm but even the people. The Ancient Worthies and the Holy Remnant will be so visible that the Gentiles will "take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew" and say, "We have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23). When the Gentiles take hold of that skirt, will they be in Jerusalem? No! They will take hold of the skirt of the Jew who survives the Time of Trouble in their own land. They will associate God with the Jew *in their midst, wherever they are*—Europe, the United States, etc. The Gentiles will then regard the Jew not in an anti-Semitic sense but *with favor*. There will be no Canaanite in the land of Israel, the government, or the Temple (Zech. 14:21). The Old Testament is *packed* with information of this nature. The *living Bible* speaks with POWER!

The prevailing or common view is that the startling miracles when God saves Israel and defeats Gog will convert both unregenerate Jews and those who have responded earlier. However, *many* Scriptures show to the contrary, for the Jews will have to "pass under the rod" to the Lord, meaning that only the holy minority will survive at that time (Ezek. 20:37). Isaiah 4:2-4 talks about the *survivors*. "In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are *escaped* of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is *left* in Zion, and he that *remaineth* in Jerusalem, shall be called *holy*, even every one that is *written among the living* in Jerusalem: When the Lord shall have *washed away the filth* of the daughters of Zion, and shall have *purged the blood* of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the *spirit of judgment*, and by the *spirit of burning*." The Jews will be screened, and only those who pass the test will remain. The language of the Isaiah text could not be more emphatic, but over the years, it has been read quickly with no particular force. The purging is said over and over and over. This conversion will be REAL, just like the person who, during the Gospel Age, falls on his face before God, admitting he is a sinner, and wants to change his course and come to Him through Jesus. The Holy Remnant will do the same thing, and God sees this condition in His people *before* they take the step. That is why their names are written in a book. How interesting that sometime before the very end of the age, the names of the people living who will pass the test are already written in God's book! The names are written in advance not only to show God's foreknowledge of those who will pass the test but also to *guarantee* that they *will not die* in Jacob's Trouble. *No fallen angels or fallen men can harm one member* of the Holy Remnant because their names are in the book. Thus the purpose of writing the names is not just the magnification of God's prescience but also necessity. The

guardian angels have a task in front of them, for they are responsible for the safety of the Holy Remnant and their dependent family members.

**Q:** What is the background of Ephraim?

**A:** Ephraim is another name for Samaria. Being such a numerous tribe, Ephraim represented all ten tribes. Both Jews and Gentiles were in Samaria, for when the ten tribes were taken captive, Gentiles were brought in. In the Kingdom as well, both Jews and Gentiles will be there. The “watchmen” are some who will watch the goings on when God delivers Israel and then blesses the survivors. Recognizing that God is the God of Israel, they will have a change of heart and cry, “Let us go up to Zion.” At this point, the remnant of all 12 tribes will be of one mind.

Back in Israel’s history, the transplanted Gentiles in Samaria, who observed some of the Jewish religious practices, were looked down on by the Jews. In the future, the Samaritans will recognize God’s dealing with Israel and Jerusalem and will then cease to worship at Samaria (their mountain). Hence there will be a change of heart with them too.

**Jer. 31:7** For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.

In considering verse 7, we will read verse 6 again: “For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.” “Zion” is natural here, for the Holy Remnant are a natural class. The message, “Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God,” will affect the Holy Remnant. Notice verse 7, which is a comment: “For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob.” “Jacob” is usually associated with just the northern kingdom, but inherent in Jacob is the inclusion of Judah. First, “Mount Ephraim” applied to only the ten-tribe kingdom, but the gears are now shifting with the mention of “Jacob,” for he was the father of the two-tribe kingdom as well.

In this prophecy, God will encourage the “watchmen” to “sing with gladness for Jacob.” The watchmen are a class who are in between Jehovah and the Holy Remnant. God is the original speaker. Then the watchmen will become spokesmen to the Holy Remnant. They will say, “O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.” In other words, an encouraging message will go forth to the Holy Remnant to the effect that no matter what the signs are at the time, God will intervene on their behalf. The signs will be gloomy, but the message will proclaim that God promises to save His people, Israel.

**Q:** Why does the account say, “Shout among the chief of the nations”?

**A:** With “Jacob” being a name for natural Israel, verse 7 refers to the regathering of the spared portion of the Holy Remnant in other nations. The spared Jews in Israel will invite the others to come “home.” This invitation to return to Israel will go out to the chief ones, to the anointed ones, to the surviving Jews, who will be in nations such as Russia. It will behoove them to pick up their baggage and return to Israel after Jacob’s Trouble and the Kingdom Age is opened up. Therefore, a regathering takes place prior to Jacob’s Trouble, then Jacob’s Trouble occurs, and finally there will be this second influx into Israel of the Holy Remnant from other nations.

**Jer. 31:8** Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.

**Jer. 31:9** They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will

**cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.**

“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth.” A “great company” of Jews will return from Russia, the “north country.” Also, they will come from all outlying regions and from across oceans, that is, from the east, south, and west. Of course the Holy Remnant will be a minority of the Jews, but because the portion from Gentile countries will outnumber those in Israel, it will seem like a great company.

It is said that there are 2.5 million Jews in Russia, but that number is only an estimate because many have hidden their identity. Hence there is no accurate census of the Jewish population, but among those Jews, certainly some will be of the Holy Remnant. In addition, Jews will return from America, England, and other countries. In fact, with “north” being brought out as a compass point in verse 8, the indication is that most of the Jews comprising the Holy Remnant will come from the north. Similarly with Gog from the land of Magog, the bulk of the enemy forces of Jacob’s Trouble will come from the north.

“Behold, I will bring ... with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together.” The Jews will return from other countries in all conditions—lame, pregnant, blind, etc.—outnumbering the Holy Remnant spared in Israel. Thus the fulfillment of verses 8 and 9 is still future. The encouraging message is that this *second* regathering will happen in time, for all Jews will go back to Israel except the Ancient Worthies.

“They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them.” The surviving Jews will return with weeping and “supplications,” that is, with remorse and contrition and also with gifts as when the Israelites left Egypt at the time of the Exodus. The Egyptians told Pharaoh in effect, “Do you want all of us to perish because of your obstinacy?” and they gave donations to assist the Israelites. Thus the future supplications will be twofold: (1) the Israelites themselves will supplicate, and (2) Gentiles who give gifts and want the Jews to go back to Israel will supplicate. The Gentiles will point out, “What are you doing here? If your God is the God of Israel and has done all these things for you, we are happy to provide transportation.”

“I am a father to Israel.” The term “father,” rarely used for God in the Old Testament, shows that while the Israelites were cast off, they will be grafted back into the Abrahamic olive tree in a real sense (Rom. 11:17-24). When they were cut off, Gentiles were brought in, but Paul mentioned that the Gentiles should not get high-minded because of the ease with which the Jews, the natural branches, could be grafted back into the tree root.

“Ephraim is my firstborn.” Verse 9 reminds us of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Most Jews who have lived in exile for the last 2,000 years have been from the ten tribes. Hence it will be like saying to the spared Jews in other lands, “*Israel* is my firstborn.” “Firstborn,” an endearing term, applies to all spared, purged Jews. God will cause the regathered Jews to “walk by the rivers of waters in a *straight* way.” Pure instructions will come from The Christ, and the spared Jews will walk in harmony with them.

Why is Ephraim mentioned when Manasseh was the firstborn? With Abraham, second-born Isaac was his darling, and with Isaac, second-born Jacob got the birthright. Therefore, the comparisons should not be examined too technically, either with these first- and second-born personalities or with the ten tribes and the two tribes. We think that, numerically speaking, the great majority of the Holy Remnant who come from other nations will be of the ten tribes because they were taken to the large Assyrian Empire and then dispersed in all the earth, whereas those of Judah and Benjamin were just taken to Babylon. The statement “Ephraim is my firstborn” does not negate Judah but simply means that Ephraim is *among* those whom

God recognizes as His firstborn. Since very few of the ten-tribe kingdom went back to Israel from Babylon, those who believe in the Anglo-Israelite theory accurately trace the ten-tribe kingdom through Europe. However, they miss the point with some of the terms. Also, there are distinctions between the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi Jews.

Thus “Ephraim” refers to the right-hearted Holy Remnant class. Paul even said with regard to the Christian that there is a distinction with the *spiritual* Israel of God, the Church. And so there is also a distinction with the *natural* Israel of God who are in heart sympathy with the promises of the Lord. For example, Esau was interested in the *earthly* seed and promises, and Jacob appreciated the *spiritual* seed and promises.

**Jer. 31:10** Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.

Verses 10-14 are God’s message to the Gentile nations after Jacob’s Trouble. Then, in turn, the Gentile nations are to inform “the isles,” that is, their auxiliary neighbors. In other words, an announcement will go forth to the other nations saying that God now recognizes His people and encourages them to come back. The nations who hear what God did with regard to Gog and Magog will urge the Jews to go back to Israel. This announcement to the Gentiles will give legitimacy to the Jews’ return to Israel after Jacob’s Trouble. As a result, they will prod the survivors to return to the homeland.

The God who scattered Israel will gather the Jews and keep them as a shepherd keeps his flock. In this compassionate approach, the door is left open for repentance and a return. The Heavenly Father, the Great Shepherd, will do this regathering after Jacob’s Trouble.

**Comment:** Isaiah 40:11 reads, “He [God] shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

**Jer. 31:11** For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.

“For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob ... from the hand of him [Gog] that was stronger than he.” At this time, God will have redeemed Israel from the “stronger” Gog. Isaiah 40:1,2 will have more significance *after* Jacob’s Trouble than before. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.” The main thrust of these two verses is after Jacob’s Trouble because then “her warfare” will be accomplished; it will be over. No longer will there be an anti-Semitic problem.

We believe the “double” in this Isaiah text has been overruled to have a *current* application so that it would inspire the Pastor in his pro-Zion feelings. This thinking was helpful at the beginning of the Harvest period, but the real fulfillment is future. Jeremiah 31:10, “He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock,” is similar to Isaiah 40:1,2, for the Jews will be welcomed home at that time. With Jacob’s Trouble still ahead, we cannot say at the present time that there will be no more warfare or trouble. In fact, we believe a false peace will be misconstrued as the real peace, whereas the false peace is the preface to Jacob’s Trouble. Israel has to go through one more holocaust, which will be a thorough purging, leaving behind the Holy Remnant.

Isaiah 40:1,2 can be used as a *principle* for *current* action, just as Jesus quoted a future prophecy when he cast out the money changers, saying, “It is written, My house shall be called the house

of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matt. 21:13). Thus the Isaiah text can have a good influence in predisposing the Christian to look to Israel as God’s people and the place from which the word of the Lord will go forth in the Kingdom. But we should keep in mind that the real fulfillment is when Israel’s iniquity will be pardoned. And perhaps there is another mysterious “double” that has been overlooked. If so, it would end with the saving of the Holy Remnant out of Jacob’s Trouble.

**Jer. 31:12** Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

Now we see interesting things. “They [Israel] shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD” (RSV). “Their soul shall be as a watered garden,” that is, a fertile ground that produces character fruitage. The heart has been likened to a flower garden in which seeds are planted. Verse 12 is both literal and figurative. Blessings, blessings, and more blessings will be the experience of the people!

The mention of wheat, wine, oil, and the “young of the flock and of the herd” indicates that conditions will revert to an agrarian society in the Kingdom. With productive land, Israel will be self-supporting. We expect that the high-rise buildings will be leveled. The earthquake at the time of Jacob’s Trouble will level not only the Dome of the Rock but also tall buildings so that the people will go back to a more simple type of living where every man is under his own vine and fig tree. Without pollution, city lights, and the obscuration of vision with skyscrapers, the people will be able to see the stars at night. They will appreciate the glory of God’s heaven.

“They [the Holy Remnant] shall not sorrow any more at all.” The Jews who survive Jacob’s Trouble will be a purified lot, having been more or less tried and proven. Just as the holy angels will not die anymore because they passed their test by not materializing and leaving their first estate to stay down here prior to the Flood, so the Holy Remnant are a class who pass their test. Thus the Kingdom will start with a pure and holy nucleus in Israel. Therefore, it will be appropriate to say to that current generation after Jacob’s Trouble, “You will not sorrow anymore at all.” The situation will be a little different with those who come forth from the tomb in the general resurrection, for they have not been tested yet.

At the end of the Kingdom Age, fire will come down from heaven and destroy those who go up to the “camp of the saints” at Jerusalem, the number of whom is described as the “sand of the sea” (Rev. 20:8,9). This great number will include the incorrigible who go to embassies in the different countries to complain about the length of the Kingdom Age. Their attitude will be, “It is time for us to take over so that we can buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes and sell the refuse of the wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great” (Amos 8:5,6). In spite of all the Kingdom blessings, a number of the formerly wealthy and powerful will want to revert to their previous dishonest practices. Physical violence and insubordination will not be tolerated either at that time or throughout the Kingdom Age. Those who merit Second Death will demonstrate, or manifest, their wrong heart condition by their actions. Others will then see that God is just and righteous in destroying them. Since God can read the heart, He could destroy the Second Death class quickly and peremptorily, but then His perfect judgment would not be so fully appreciated.

**Jer. 31:13** Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

“Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together.” Old and young will dance in joy and purity. In this folk dancing, females will dance as a group with females, and males with males. In other words, there will be no body contact or suggestive movement. As an example, King David “danced before the LORD” (2 Sam. 6:14). A joyous scene is being pictured. The exuberance will be manifest, even with the old people. Our desire is to have such joy and to be made right, which is a process in the present life.

“I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.” There shall be *overwhelming genuine joy* for a formerly suppressed people. What a happy message for Jeremiah, the prophet of doom, to have the privilege of declaring at this period in his life!

**Jer. 31:14** And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.

God “will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness.” In the past, corrupt priests robbed the people, but at this future time, the priests will have success in helping the people. Verse 14 suggests a *literal* priesthood in the Kingdom. The people will be satisfied with *God’s* goodness.

An illegitimate desire at the present time is for priests to like to be treated with awe and reverence and to permit people to genuflect before them. However, the inner joy described here will vaporize such self-interest. The goodness of God will be so great that the priests will not even think along corrupt lines. In whatever capacity is assigned, they will feel honored to be used in a priesthood that represents God. David had the right attitude: “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house [Temple] of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness [to be at home and prosper with the ungodly]” (Psa. 84:10).

“My people shall be satisfied with my [wholesome] goodness,” saith Jehovah. There is much dissatisfaction today, some of which is justified. Many sorrows are legitimate, but whatever the basis of the sorrows, they will all be erased. The time of joy can be described as entering the “Beulah” land (Isa. 62:4).

**Jer. 31:15** Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

**Jer. 31:16** Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

**Jer. 31:17** And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.

Verses 15-17 are a separate expression but in the scenario of Jacob’s Trouble. “Rahel” is Rachel, who was Jacob’s wife and the mother of Joseph and Benjamin.

Matthew 2:17,18 quotes verses 15 and 16: “Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.” When the wise men followed the guiding star, they were led to King Herod, who instructed them to come back and tell him the location of the newborn child destined to become the future King of Israel. Having ulterior motives, Herod wanted to kill this threat. However, the wise men, being warned of God in a dream, departed for their own country by



another route. In anger, Herod issued a decree that all children two years of age and under should be put to death in both Bethlehem and the surrounding area. The voice of lamentation was heard when Herod massacred those infants in trying to kill the Messiah.

Verses 15 and 16 are used to prove the resurrection, for as Rachel was weeping, she was told that her progeny would “come again from the land of the enemy,” that is, from death. Not only are babies not in heaven, but the dead are in the tomb until the time of the general resurrection, when they will come back to the same land (“to their own border”) at the same age as their death. Mothers will again have their babies. God was saying, “Do not weep anymore, Rachel, for your child will be resurrected.” Those in the tomb will come forth in the Kingdom Age.

Zechariah 12:7 states, “The LORD ... shall save the tents of Judah first.” This verse talks about the villages surrounding Jerusalem, which God will save first, before He saves the inhabitants of the city itself. Genetically speaking, the inhabitants in the city, which are a mixed multitude, will experience a more miraculous deliverance than the tents of Judah, which are saved first. The following is conjectural, but we believe there will be two miraculous deliverances of Israel. (1) With the first deliverance, the saving of the tents of Judah, the Jews in Judea will fight. Those Jews have no idea which tribe they come from because there are no birth records at the present time. (2) In the second deliverance, we think Israel will be forced to use the nuclear bomb, but even with a bomb, the critical timing will be miraculous.

Thus there will be two deliverances: (1) outside Jerusalem and (2) inside Jerusalem. The outside deliverance will occur first, and *Jehovah alone* will cause the second deliverance. That is the bottom-line lesson Israel has to learn. While those of Judah will realize God’s providence has spared them, they will be so happy that they will overlook the fact that the real deliverance is when *Jehovah* fights for His people as in days of old. The first deliverance will lead to a false sense of security in Israel, a false peace; the second deliverance will lead to the true peace.

God will save the Holy Remnant in surrounding villages *before* He saves those in Jerusalem. In the first miraculous deliverance, the “tents of Judah” (outside Jerusalem) will fight, and in the second deliverance, those in Jerusalem will be forced to use the nuclear bomb. But even with the nuclear bomb, the timing will be miraculous. Incidentally, radioactive aftereffects are minimal from a neutron bomb.

Today, genetically speaking, most of the Jews in Jerusalem and in other lands are of the ten-tribe kingdom. When the Kingdom is established with the living generation, it will be seen that very, very few are from the tribe of Judah. Thus the representation of the populace comprising the Holy Remnant will be almost entirely from the ten tribes. In fact, of the current living generation, there is little representation of Judah in the earth. It is possible to show how those of Judah disappeared from the scene by going through pogroms, particularly in Israel. This happened not merely at the time of Jeremiah but even more so subsequently. When the Kingdom is established, it will be recognized how few of Judah are in the saved Holy Remnant. Rachel will be comforted in the sense that numerically speaking, that seed will come forth from the tomb. Jews will come out of the tomb where they died, and then they will go to Jerusalem.

“And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.” The Old Testament promise to Rachel that her work will be rewarded and her children will come again from the land of the enemy was given at the time of the Slaughter of the Innocents under Herod at our Lord’s First Advent. At that time, there occurred a great desecration of the progeny of Rachel.

**Jer. 31:18** I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and

**I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.**

This prophecy of the *future* repentance of Ephraim begins with *past* tense: “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.” Repentance is a prerequisite for forgiveness and mercy.

**Q:** Does “Ephraim” represent all Israel?

**A:** Basically speaking, the ten-tribe kingdom went into Diaspora, so of the Jews, the ten tribes have been mostly on the scene down through history ever since 606 BC, when Judah went into captivity for 70 years and the land was made desolate. At the end of the 70 years, the Jews who did not go back to Israel were dispersed into other nations, so the majority of the living generation when this prophecy is fulfilled in the near future will be of the ten tribes. Stated another way, a great percentage of present Jewry is of the ten-tribe kingdom, even though they may not know what tribe they are from.

The Prophet Jeremiah was repeating what God instructed him to declare. God was saying, “Way down the road in the future, I can hear this change of heart condition.” In verses 18-21, we see a return, so these verses are primarily speaking to the Holy Remnant, who will be alive in the end-time period when the second regathering back to Israel takes place, that is, the regathering after Jacob’s Trouble. The sentiment at that time—“turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God”—shows true repentance. The chastisement of the Holy Remnant is likened to either the training of a bullock that was unaccustomed to the yoke or the breaking of a wild horse that was never trained for domestic purposes.

Ephraim has bemoaned the troubles suffered in exile, but prior to and in the final trouble, the Holy Remnant will repent. Being unaccustomed to God’s yoke, the Jews have felt persecuted without searching for the reason. They do not see that they are out of line. At the end of the age, the Holy Remnant will say, “I am unaccustomed to the yoke, but please help me. Teach me. I want to know your ways, O God.”

**Jer. 31:19** Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

Verse 19 expresses the sentiment of individuals who have gone astray in sin, but like the Prodigal Son, there eventually comes a point in time when they stop and reconsider their situation, realizing their undone condition and unworthiness (Luke 15:11-32). The younger son did not come to his senses until he had lost everything. Then he said, “What am I doing? I could not be any lower, for I am in the pigpen eating the food of the swine.” In reflecting on his former situation, he came to the point of decision making, which was the desire to come back into harmony with God. “I was turned” shows the willingness to be turned around and go in the other direction. Ephraim’s bemoaning himself suggests tears, and true repentance brings tears either internally or outwardly.

The process is interesting: stopping in one’s tracks, wanting to go back to the former condition, repenting for the past, and then having the desire for further instruction. A person who is lost in the world and then becomes a Christian, wanting to be in harmony with God, goes through this process.

“I repented; and after that I was instructed.” A drowning man grasps a raft because his present circumstance brings him to his senses. Some have called on the Lord in their dilemma, God has

answered them, and then they forget. It can then take a long time for the experience to sink in. When one does stop in his tracks and look to the Lord for guidance and is willing to turn around, he is given instruction, but what happens? He finds that his condition is even worse than he thought in the first place; that is, he sees that sin is more deeply ingrained than he realized. With many of us who have made the change, if we are honest at heart, we see that there will always be room for improvement. Even though we may have walked many years with the Lord, we find there are character defects to be weeded out. However, the repentance of the Holy Remnant will be done in a relatively short period of time.

“I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” Natural Israel does not even know its own history, but each Jew does know what he personally has done and the mess he has made of his own life. Following Jacob’s Trouble, the Holy Remnant will realize they have been miraculously spared. In the process of instruction, they will learn their own history, getting a crash course on their doings as a people. Smiting the thigh indicates being doubled over with remorse and experiencing a form of deep chagrin. Collectively speaking, these reactions are all part of the process of instruction for the Holy Remnant: (1) repentance, (2) instruction, (3) smiting the thigh upon receiving more information, and (4) being ashamed, even confounded, “because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” The thought of bearing the reproach of their “youth” is that when the Holy Remnant are informed about their history (their past, the abnormalities, and things that have happened), they will also get the good news about Israel’s past relationship with God when the nation was in harmony with Him. They will get both sides of the coin—the bad news about their real condition as well as the good news about the future. By recognizing past wrongdoings, the Holy Remnant will be ashamed and truly repentant, and this attitude will keep them humble.

**Q:** Is smiting the thigh related to placing the hand on the thigh in making a covenant?

**A:** With the making of a covenant, the hand was placed *under* the thigh, whereas this smiting will be done *on the side* of the thigh. The smiting of the thigh shows the recognition of having broken the Law Covenant.

When Jacob was smitten on the thigh, he became halt and lame. He carried that limp for the rest of his life, yet from that moment on, his name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:24-28). The experience became a stepping-stone that served as a continual reminder of the past. It is helpful for us, as Christians, to think, “Where would I be if I had not consecrated—or if I do not remain consecrated?” In the latter case, we would be in a circumstance *worse* than our former situation, for if “the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, how *great* is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23).

We were comparing the smiting of the thigh to one who does not have a Christian background in his upbringing. God calls *repentant* sinners to the high calling, apprising them of the good news and the hope for the future. The hope of the high calling is not laid before a person until, first, he repents. *Repentant* sinners return home. Generally speaking, “turning” is not a head reaction but a heart (emotional) reaction when we start as babes. One who consecrates also thinks of the years he wasted prior to giving his life to the Lord: “Had I only known the Lord earlier and committed my life sooner, what better things would have been done.”

On the whole, the spared remnant will be a contemplative, relatively aged class because a little maturity is involved. For one who is among that remnant, even his family will be spared to a certain extent—as with Rahab the harlot. On the one hand, she is the one the Lord dealt with, but on the other hand, when she informed her family of God’s instruction to stay in the house, they exercised faith by remaining there and thus were saved too. But family members who are beyond this retrieval will not be spared. In other words, even the spared ones, whether children or relatively mature individuals, will be obedient to the situation.

**Jer. 31:20** Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.

“Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?” When he repents, he becomes a “dear son” and a “pleasant child,” broken in spirit and lowly and contrite of heart. Contrition of the soul before the high and lofty One makes a person amenable to instruction and guidance.

“For since I [God] spake against him [in the past], I do earnestly remember him still.” These words, spoken in Jeremiah’s day, pertained to the ten-tribe kingdom in dispersion. Judah should have used the ten tribes as an example of what would also happen to them for continued disobedience. However, when Jeremiah spoke about the ten tribes in the past, Judah became self-righteous; their attitude was, “Look, we have the Temple and Jerusalem, and where are our other brethren, the black sheep of Israel?” Only the few honest-hearted asked, “Are we any better than those of the ten tribes?” Jeremiah would have answered *no*.

“For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him.” With regard to “bowels of mercy,” if we are sorry for ourself or for the condition of someone else with whom we are in full empathy, we double over and cannot stand erect (Col. 3:12). When the father saw the Prodigal Son coming home, we do not think the son was standing erect; the implication is that he was crushed and manifestly dejected, an obvious sign of repentance. “And he [the Prodigal Son] arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). The father *ran* to embrace the crestfallen son, who said right away, “Father, I have sinned against heaven [against God], and in thy sight [against you], and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” His posture would have indicated he was coming back for forgiveness. The older son could not understand the father’s mercy, but mercy should not be exercised *unless there is repentance*. This principle is lost sight of today, when everything is love and mercy. But principles must be met before the exercise of mercy. Incidentally, the *Reprints* are very informative on the subject of “forgiveness,” for they include the modifying factor of repentance. On one occasion, we read a page of quotations from the *Reprints* as our discourse on forgiveness.

Here in Jeremiah 31, the conditions for forgiveness are being met. Ephraim is bemoaning himself, saying in effect, “Thou hast chastised me, and I am like a wild bullock that needed chastisement and experience.” God replied, “I will surely have mercy upon him [Ephraim]” because of his repentance. With the Heavenly Father’s prescience, He can see that the experience at the end of the age will change the Holy Remnant. If an individual’s heart is not right, the same experience will harden his conscience and embitter him.

Israel is God’s “dear son.” As often as He had to speak against Ephraim, He remembers them. This Holy Remnant class was previously wayward, but now would be repentant and trying to walk up the highway of holiness. A good father reproveth a wayward child. Yes, God scolded Ephraim, but now He has good news of mercy for this class.

**Jer. 31:21** Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.

Verse 21 is a more difficult verse because of the *principles*. This verse is an instruction to the Holy Remnant to retrace their steps, to set goals and resolutions, and to go *up* the highway of holiness. They must exert *effort* and be *determined*. God wants them to come back to their former condition as a people, for Israel was originally a “virgin,” and she will be a virgin again.

In other words, where the Jews realize they made mistakes in the past, they should ask for forgiveness, learn the lesson, and retrace their steps to building a better character.

The Holy Remnant will realize what has happened and that there are obstacles in returning, but if they are truly repentant, they will progress and surmount the obstacles by God's assisting grace. When one turns from his former state, the road is not easy. The call in the Kingdom Age is different from that of the Christian in the Gospel Age or even that of the true Jew, who is getting a training. The history of the Christian and the Jew is remarkably similar, although the New Creation is a different calling. The calling down here is somewhat the same, but it has *natural* rewards and honors. *True natural* Israel is a picture of *true spiritual* Israel.

**Comment:** For “high heaps,” the RSV has “guideposts.”

**Reply:** Yes, but these must be met. When one repents, certain habits and characteristics have to be changed. For instance, Joshua and Caleb said, “Yes, the inhabitants of the land are bigger in stature than we are, and the city walls are high. However, all things are possible with God, and He told us to enter the land.” They knew that difficulties lay ahead, but they had the faith to go on anyway, so they spoke with confidence and hope.

“Set thine heart toward the highway.” The Prodigal Son was on the main highway going into sin, so to return was more difficult. To turn around and go upstream is like going against the current. Therefore, those who are sincere make resolutions and guidelines on how to restructure their life, and minimum standards have to be met right away. For example, if a person has debts, the first thing to do is to pay them, even if menial work is the means of doing so. Thus when those who have gone astray come back, they know that certain things have to be done as soon as possible. Then they have the rest of their life—however long or short in the Lord's providence—to work out their salvation and obey the particulars of God's Word as they are understood.

**Q:** Please explain the direction of the highway.

**A:** The highway to destruction is broad, and it is slanted *downward*. When one who is down wants to turn around, he finds a highway going *up*.

**Q:** Verse 21 is symbolic in the sense of saying that one's heart and conduct have to be turned back toward God, but is it also a natural call to return to Israel?

**A:** Yes. After Jacob's Trouble, the spared Jews in foreign lands, the portion of the Holy Remnant in Gentile countries, will be instructed to return to Israel, “to these thy cities.” Because they will then know their lineage, they will know where to go in the land, which will be partitioned with allotments for each of the 12 tribes (Ezek. 48:1-29). These Jews in the Diaspora will return to Israel, so the picture is natural. Of course the Jews who die in Israel will be resuscitated in the same land.

“Turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.” Why will God give this assurance to the Holy Remnant, who are dealt with and bemoan themselves in contrition and repentance? This portion of verse 21 refers to the new slate, the new will. God looks on the heart intent, not on the flesh, and that is why He selected the Holy Remnant; that is, He sees that under present and future troublous conditions, these individuals will be in a readily salvable condition. The others, both Jews and Gentiles who die in Jacob's Trouble, will come forth in the general resurrection of the next age and be given stripes and punishments, but the Holy Remnant class will already have had their stripes. Now, like the father with the Prodigal Son, a changed person, the Heavenly Father will open His arms to the Holy Remnant, who will

start as a “virgin” with pure heart intentions; He will welcome them home.

Ezekiel gave a similar message. The change that will take place in the repentant Jews in Gentile countries will be so observable that all antipathy and anti-Semitic feelings will melt. The Gentiles will think, “These Jews are so changed that they do not seem like the same people. God has done the seemingly impossible.” The Holy Remnant will be role models to a certain extent. Honest-hearted Gentiles will say, “If God can effect such a change in these Jews, then we would like the same thing to happen to us.” That will be especially true when Gentiles hear the report of how God fought for His people as “in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:3).

**Jer. 31:22** How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

“How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter?” refers to Israel’s past history of disobedience. But what is the “new thing” that is created in the earth? “For the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.” There are two alternative interpretations, as follows:

1. A “woman” (Israel) will recognize or *embrace* a “man” (Jesus) as the Messiah. In this case, “man” is the Hebrew *geber*, meaning a “mighty man” or a “strong man.” The weak woman (Israel) will “compass” the *strong* man (Jesus).
2. Sometimes the Hebrew word *geber* is used in a negative context. If so, the weak woman (Israel) will surmount the mighty man (Gog). Previously Israel will be a strong, euphoric nation with nuclear weapons, but at the time of Jacob’s Trouble, it will be weak, defenseless, and unwallied. Evangelicals would probably interpret the strong man as Jesus, but it may be that the defenseless woman (natural Israel) will subdue, quiet, or still the strong man (Gog), especially with five sixths of them dying (Ezek. 39:1,2). Basically, “Gog” means “giant.” Gog’s coming down is alluded to with the Agagites.

**Q:** Is the “woman” specifically the Holy Remnant?

**A:** Yes.

We cannot be dogmatic on the interpretation of the strong man. The question is whether he is favorable or unfavorable. However, there is no problem in identifying the woman.

The horde of Gog will come down to annihilate Israel, but instead Gog will be annihilated except for a small remnant of survivors who will go back to the Gentile homelands and give an eyewitness account. The only suggestion of the number of Jews who survive Jacob’s Trouble in Israel is their passing “under the rod” (Ezek. 20:37). Based on the tithing system of animals under the Law, this terminology may indicate a one-tenth survival rate. Certainly passing under the rod shows a severe purging.

**Q:** Since verse 22 says that God will create a “new thing” in the earth, how would Israel’s surmounting great obstacles in defeating the enemy fit that description, for that nation had a number of astounding victories in the past? To embrace Messiah would truly be a “new thing.”

**A:** The interpretation is a toss-up, so we cannot be dogmatic. The words “all” and “every” are often used in a modified or qualified sense. Therefore, the word “new” may mean “new as far as being a contemporary event,” or it may mean “new historically.” In the latter sense, the strong man would be Jesus, for Israel has historically not accepted him as the Messiah.

**Q:** Is the thought that it would be unusual for a woman to go after a man? Israel as a repentant woman will go back to God by accepting Jesus.

**A:** That is a possibility. Usually *geber* is unfavorable, but literally the definition is “strong man” with the emphasis on *strength*. The Hebrew word *enosh* means a “frail or sinful man”; *adam* means “of the earth, red.” Thus the word “man” has multiple definitions, each with a particular slant.

When the Holy Remnant see Jesus on the Cross, two things will happen right away. (1) They will realize they sinned against the Son of God. Seeing that Jesus really is God’s Son, they will mourn for him as they mourned for King Josiah in the “valley of Megiddon” (Zech. 12:10,11). (2) They will reason, “If Jesus is the Son of God, what have we done to God?” Amidst the cataclysms of nature cascading down on Israel, the hologram revelation will not happen immediately but will take place when the Mount of Olives is split by an earthquake. Moreover, conditions will stabilize following the earthquake so that the Holy Remnant can mourn as a class in quietness. Even the one-sixth survivors of Gog will be confounded and stopped in their tracks by the supernatural appearance of Jesus on the Cross.

Verse 22 is speaking of the Holy Remnant *in Israel*, who will turn to God and recognize Jesus at the time of Jacob’s Trouble. Hence the “woman” in this verse would be the spared Jews in Israel, whereas “Ephraim” refers to the spared Jews in Diaspora, in Gentile countries. In other words, the scene changes from the situation of the remnant in exile to the setting of the remnant in Israel.

Right now we like both thoughts with regard to the strong “man”; both are a “new thing.” The miracles of the past such as Israel’s going through the Red Sea and the sun standing still in Joshua’s long day are considered fables by many. In the end-time period of Jacob’s Trouble, therefore, the whole society will be restructured by the miracles that happen there. Whether the miracle of verse 22 is the conversion of Israel or God’s saving of Israel, both events will happen concurrently. The Jews do not want to hear about another holocaust, so they turn a deaf ear to the thought of Jacob’s Trouble. All down the Gospel Age, their history has been one of persecution and rejection, so the radical change after Jacob’s Trouble when they will be center stage and admired by the Gentiles will be a “new thing.” From being formerly downcast, weak, and unrecognized, they will be most prominently recognized. As to which of the two events is specifically referred to, we are not sure. Both the Holy Remnant’s acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah and God’s deliverance of Israel are a radical situation.

The Hebrew word *sabab*, rendered “compass” in the King James, does not necessarily mean “surround.” It has multiple meanings according to the root word. The thought of being “stilled” is there, especially if the Hebrew word is *shabath*, and “s” can be “sh” depending on the pointing, which was supplied in the tenth century. (The original Hebrew had no points.) Obviously, *shabath* is quite different from *sabab*.

**Jer. 31:23** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.

The fulfillment of verse 23 is future. Although a process has already begun, the bringing again of “their captivity” is like a summation of something already completed. For instance, we see Jews returning to Israel, and one of the purposes of the Zionist movement was to encourage persecuted Jews to go back to a national homeland. But the cry “The LORD [Jehovah] bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness” is certainly future. The world does not currently look to Israel as the “habitation of justice,” and the Temple arrangement, the “holy

oblation” in Jerusalem—whether from the priestly or the civil standpoint—will not be called the “mountain of holiness” until after Jacob’s Trouble (Ezek. 48:10,20,21).

Even the landmarks of Israel will be blessed. The government in Jerusalem will be so pure that both Jews and Gentiles will look to it as the capital of the world, as the epitome of justice, purity, holiness, and righteousness. Jerusalem, the city of peace, will be blessed by those who travel and visit there.

**Jer. 31:24 And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks.**

Verse 24 is an astounding prophecy, for it shows that considerable changes will take place in Israel. We are prone to give figurative explanations to Scriptures such as Micah 4:4, “They shall sit every man under his [own] vine and under his [own] fig tree,” to show that everyone will have his own private dwelling, but verse 24 is *literal*. The people in Judah will “go forth with flocks” in an *agrarian* society. Thus a radical change will take place. The great earthquake that splits the Mount of Olives will cover an area of many square miles and level the buildings in Jerusalem. When the city is rebuilt on its ruins, the construction will be different, for Ezekiel 48:31-34 tells that not only will the number of gates change, but they will be spaced with regularity. Even the measurements are given in advance. God will level the present city and raise the land up high so that the Third Temple will be built on a plateau. Those who formerly lived in Judah will be resurrected back there under agrarian conditions.

Society will revert to an agrarian lifestyle, which is more wholesome than our present artificial way of life. As we age and look back at our youth, we realize that certain values in the past are impossible to have today. For example, cows were milked by hand, and it is hard to study the heavens in many places because city lights obscure the view.

**Jer. 31:25 For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.**

**Jer. 31:26 Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.**

At this point, Jeremiah awoke. Hence this vision was a dream, and his sleep was *sweet*, not a nightmare. Chapters 30 and 31 are good news in contradistinction to earlier chapters.

“For I [God] have satiated [*deeply satisfied*] the weary soul.” The thought is of being *drenched* or *overwhelmed* with satisfaction, and such will be the experience of the “weary soul.” When we think of humanity with its wars, famines, pestilences, poverty, suffering, etc., how wonderful the Kingdom will be in satisfying the longings! People basically want simple things such as health, rest, and happiness. Those blessings will come when the “windows of heaven” are opened for mankind (Mal. 3:10).

“I [God] have replenished every sorrowful soul.” What a statement of blessings awaits their fulfillment in the Kingdom!

Verse after verse earlier in this chapter was about Israel for the benefit of the Jews in Diaspora. Now Jeremiah was talking about Judah. We will repeat what Zechariah said about Judah in regard to the initial setting up of the Kingdom: “The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah *first*” (Zech. 12:7). Once the authority of the Kingdom has been established, then everyone will go into his own bin, and Israel will be divided by tribe. We can be sure that if God goes into such detail with regard to Israel, including measurements, He also has a plan for the other nations, although the Bible does not provide this information. The Bible concentrates on God’s dealings with His natural people and with those who are spiritually called to a “land” above.



**Jer. 31:27 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast.**

Jeremiah's ministry was primarily to Judah, but now the message broadens to include the ten-tribe kingdom. God promised to sow the land with "seed"; that is, He will multiply and fill the whole nation with the "seed of man." In addition to the present regathering of Diaspora Jews to Israel to settle, there will be a second *and more abundant* regathering after Jacob's Trouble. How is seed "sown"? As the Apostle Paul said, a seed has to die before it brings forth. Those in the tomb have already died, and they will come up in the general resurrection—just as seed manifests itself eventually above ground (1 Cor. 15:35-40). Of course what happens in nature in weeks or months takes thousands of years for mankind in God's plan. To God, a thousand years are as one day, but to us, a thousand years seem like an eternity (2 Pet. 3:8).

God will also sow the "seed of beast." Flocks will multiply; cattle will be increased. In olden times, there were hundreds of thousands of sheep in Transjordan, and now that land is practically empty. Of our dozen or more trips to Israel, it was only on the last two or three trips that we began to see cows grazing on Mount Carmel and up near the Sea of Galilee region.

**Q:** Is verse 27 also hinting that children will be born at least in the beginning of the Kingdom? Adam was told to multiply and fill the earth, so if a reasonable number of individuals do not get life in the Kingdom, would some be born as replacements?

**A:** Yes. Isaiah 65:23 speaks of the "seed of the blessed." Also, Ezekiel 44:22 and 47:22 show that the priesthood in the Third Temple will marry and that children will be born for a short time in the Kingdom. Bro. Russell reasoned that reproduction would phase out gradually and that eventually mankind would become like Adam prior to the fall. The Scriptures seem to indicate that this will be the condition of mankind at the end of the Kingdom Age, with those who are resuscitated earlier reaching this condition sooner.

**Jer. 31:28 And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD.**

In the past, God watched over Israel "to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict," but in the Kingdom, He will "watch over them, to build, and to plant." Life in the Kingdom will be agrarian with fruit trees and vegetables. In the Garden of Eden, as far as we know, man lived just by the fruit of trees, and this will be true of those who enter the ages of ages beyond the Kingdom. Only then can man be trusted with leisure time because in fallen man, leisure time breeds sin, self-aggrandizement, inordinate pleasures, the accumulation of wealth, etc. At present, mankind cannot be trusted with everlasting life and health, so the Kingdom Age will be a pruning process and a purgatorial experience for some in cleansing them and making them right and fit to inherit everlasting life like the holy angels, who passed a severe test at the time of the Flood (Luke 20:35,36).

**Comment:** Jeremiah was appointed to tear down and to build up. "See, I [God] have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jer. 1:10).

**Reply:** Yes, God sent him as a spokesman, but very few benefited at that time. Like mankind, the majority of Judah were prone to evil. The path is downward, but in the Kingdom, the path will be upward. After the Kingdom Age, conditions will be quite different.

**Jer. 31:29** In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

**Jer. 31:30** But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

Verses 29 and 30 refer to the sin and weakness inherited through Adam. In the Kingdom, that will no longer be true. Then each one will be punished and die for his own sin. In other words, in the present life, mankind is not judged for life and death based on individual sins, for the sin of Adam has been the curse of the human race. Men die because Adam ate the sour grape, and consequently, his progeny never had the right to life with the exception of Jesus, who came from outside and was made flesh.

Verse 30 shows that there will be death in the Kingdom Age. Unfortunately, many have applied Scriptures that pertain to the age *beyond* the Kingdom to the Kingdom Age. There will be sorrow, death, and pain during the Kingdom, so Revelation 21:4 applies to after the Kingdom is finished. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the *former things* are passed away." During the Kingdom, there will be plenty of deaths of those who prove unworthy of life. Thus the eating of the sour grape by individuals will take place either during or at the end of the Kingdom Age (compare Ezek. 18:2).

**Jer. 31:31** Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

**Jer. 31:32** Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

Verses 31-33 pertain to the New Covenant, which will be made with *natural* Israel (the house of Israel and the house of Judah), not the Church. The Church is *not under* the New Covenant but will be *ministers of* the New Covenant.

**Comment:** Some believe the Church is under the New Covenant in the present age.

**Reply:** To a certain extent, we can understand how some would say the Church is under the New Covenant. For us to have the proper thought, pertinent Scriptures have to sink down into our hearts and minds so that we will not be swayed by particular statements in the New Testament that could be misunderstood. Since the blood *seals* the New Covenant, it has to be *separate from* the New Covenant. At the time of the Memorial, many mistakenly think we are under the New Covenant because they misunderstand some plain statements of Jesus.

The Law Covenant was instituted with the Passover in Egypt, not at Mount Sinai. With the Passover being the first feature of the Law, the Israelites were told to select a lamb on the tenth day of Nisan and then to offer up the animal on the fourteenth day. The next day, the fifteenth, was a day of liberation. The Israelites were given simple rules of obedience in Egypt, whereas the subsequent giving of the Law to the nation at Mount Sinai consisted of moral instruction.

Thus the Law Covenant goes back to before the Exodus, and to a certain extent, it started with the first day of the first month because the calendar prior to Moses' day began in the fall. When Moses appeared at the time of the Exodus with these new instructions, the year started in the spring, which was the true beginning of the year. The nearest thing to a civil year was the Day of Atonement. Hence the civil year began on the first day of the seventh month, and the Day

of Atonement was observed on the tenth day of that month.

“Which my covenant they brake.” As recorded in the Pentateuch, the Israelites broke the Law Covenant ten times in a very serious form.

“I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD.” In what sense was God a husband to the nation of Israel? He was a husband in a *collective* sense, whereas the Church has a personal relationship as *individuals*. Otherwise, Israel’s covenant would be higher than the Church’s.

**Jer. 31:33** But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The New Covenant will be similar to the old Law Covenant but much more comprehensive. “I [God] will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” The writing of God’s law in the hearts of the people will be a gradual work during the entire Kingdom. The world will have to become Israelitish in order to get a blessing and receive the required instruction. Not only will the Holy Spirit operate then too, but there will be a perfect Teacher, and the people’s minds will become clearer and clearer with better memory retention.

We are reminded of Matthew 25:34, where in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus said, “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” The Kingdom arrangement was thought out well in advance to bless not only the seed of Abraham but also those who would be blessed *by* that seed.

Although the New Covenant will be operative throughout the Kingdom, it will be sealed at the end. The role of a mediator is to bring two estranged parties together. Therefore, God will not judge the world directly during the Kingdom Age but will have His Son act as the Mediator instructing mankind. At the end of the Kingdom, after the Little Season, Jesus will remove himself, for then those who live on into the ages of ages will be in harmony, or at-one-ment, with God. The weeding out of the unfaithful must take place before Jesus hands the Kingdom over to the Father. In reality, only those of mankind who are in a salvable condition through obedience will get life. The New Covenant will start with the inauguration of the Kingdom, but Jesus’ role of bringing God and man together is a process.

**Comment:** Ezekiel 36:25-27 reads, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”

**Reply:** Yes. Just as the writing of the gospel of Christ in our hearts in the Gospel Age is a process, so the writing of the “law” in the people’s hearts in the Kingdom will be a process.

**Jer. 31:34** And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Verse 34 is tied in with verses 31-33. The Ancient Worthies will be resurrected perfect in the flesh. Having been fully tested along the lines of *obedience*, they will get life but will need to

learn certain lessons and features of truth.

National or Adamic sin will be forgiven. Some are more culpable than others in regard to Jesus' crucifixion. Hence judgment will be discriminatory. What a man sows, he shall reap. Sins against the Holy Spirit—that is, sins against light—must receive stripes. Even Paul needed stripes, and he was stoned for his part in Stephen's stoning. Anything done *willfully* must be expiated sooner or later. The nation of Israel was under special condemnation under the Law. This *national* sin will be forgiven but not necessarily the sin for *individuals*. As for Old Testament forgiveness laws, there was no sacrifice for willful sins, only sacrifices for sins of ignorance. Even sins of ignorance required "interest," but willful sins needed expiation (punishment).

With instruction so available in the next age, the people will have no excuse for ignorance. All will know God "from the least of them unto the greatest of them." With each being apprised of his own meanness, any high-mindedness will evaporate in those whose hearts are right. Such individuals will become amenable to instruction, and this attitude will lead to a changed life and bring salvation. There will be a weeding-out process during the Kingdom Age as well as in the test of the Little Season at the end, resulting in the goat class going into Second Death. In other words, the process will end with a definite period of time, even down to *one day*, when henceforth there will be no excuse for any errant or devious act. The sheep class, those who get life, will step across that time barrier into the ages of ages.

**Jer. 31:35 Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name:**

**Jer. 31:36 If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.**

**Jer. 31:37 Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.**

God used the stability of nature and its longevity as a comparison for what He will do for the saved, cleansed, and perfected seed of Israel. Notice that the name Israel, meaning the people of God, will be retained.

The title "LORD of hosts" signifies that God controls the heavenly bodies, the oceans, etc., as if they were living personalities. They obey Him *perfectly*. The principle in nature is law and order, regimentation. The sun shines by day; the moon and the stars give light by night. The *proportion* of the sun and the moon are the same because of the distance of the sun. The sun is much larger, but since it is farther away, it appears to be the same size as the moon.

God "divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar." He divides the oceans despite the roaring of the waves. All the various seas have relatively fixed boundaries, even though the waves roar and there are tempests. Tiny man cannot change God's laws. One law is that the moon controls the tides. An example of God's control was when He divided the waters of the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus. The primary thought is that the ocean boundaries or beds are *fixed and enduring*. It could be said that God made covenants with the heavenly bodies and the oceans.

The heavens are infinite from man's standpoint but finite from God's standpoint. Man cannot measure the heavens. Theoretically, if a bullet were shot hard enough out to the extremities of space, it would eventually return to the same spot.

The point is that God has determined to redeem *Israel* as a nation, to favor *His typical people* again—first the Holy Remnant, then the others who will be resurrected. There is no question about it! *Israel* will not cease to be a nation when reestablished.

**Comment:** If *Israel* really understood these promises, many would react differently. God was saying, “If the ordinances that I have established in nature could depart (*and they cannot*), then I would cast you off.” Therefore, God will not cast off *Israel* as a nation.

**Reply:** Yes. Not until the end of the Kingdom Age, when *Israel* is a *saved* people, will they *fully* realize they will never be cast off.

**Jer. 31:38** Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner.

**Jer. 31:39** And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath.

**Jer. 31:40** And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.

Verses 38-40 tell that Jerusalem will one day again be rebuilt. The boundaries will be sure in the Kingdom. The hills are not identifiable today, but the earthquake will *enlarge* these *insignificant* landmarks of Jeremiah’s day. There is disagreement over where the Tower of Hananeel was and Goath and the hill of Gareb. These names will not be used in the Kingdom, for *radical* topographical changes will occur and new names will be given. The “horse gate” is on the southeast corner of the city. These verses are another way of saying that Jerusalem will be built on its heaps (Jer. 30:18). The “valley of the dead bodies” is Hinnom.

“The city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner.” Since this tower no longer exists, God was saying to Jeremiah, “The tower of Hananeel and the gate of the corner, which you are familiar with, will be part of the boundary line of the future city of Jerusalem when it is rebuilt in the Kingdom.” The thought is not that the tower of Hananeel will be rebuilt; the account is just telling the area that will be involved. In other words, the city will be rebuilt upon its heaps, and relatively speaking, it will occupy the same terrain that it did in the fullness of its past glory.

The 513-year Period of the Kings in *Israel* extended from Saul to Zedekiah, who was dethroned in 606 BC. During that time, the boundaries of Jerusalem were more or less the same. The measurements for the future Jerusalem, as given in Ezekiel 48, are very precise. The city will be built on the same heaps, but the configuration will be quite different.

Of course no existing maps show with certainty the detail of these places mentioned in verses 38-40, but we can narrow down the unknown by looking at the known. For instance, verse 40 says, “And [on the east side] the whole valley of the dead bodies [the Valley of Hinnom], and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD.” These places are generally a description of the east side of the present city of Jerusalem. Therefore, verse 40 is describing the boundary line on the *east side* of the future rebuilt city. This statement is affirmed by the wording “unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east.” At one time, this was the highest corner of the city.

Verse 39 reads, “And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath.” Now the *north side* of the future city is being described,

generally speaking. And verse 38 adds, “The city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner.” This tower had to be in one of two places: either the northwest or the southeast corner of the city. Which corner is being identified, we are not sure, but the city is described in a general way. What makes it hard to know are the hill of Gareb and Goath. We could get a much clearer understanding by using other Scriptures, but time does not permit searching out those references. At any rate, these two hills are relatively close together.

**Comment:** The description seems to be going backwards. By starting with the Valley of Hinnom and Kidron in verse 40, we are on the south going on a west-to-east line. Then the description goes up to the north side with the hill Gareb and Goath, which is going west again. And from the northwest corner, the description goes back down south to make the square.

**Reply:** Yes, that is correct, but boundary lines need to be demonstrated on paper. There is a sequence, but it is not entirely either clockwise or counterclockwise. From a point, the description goes in one direction, and then from that same point (without so indicating), the boundary line goes in the other direction. Thus the city is encompassed in its entirety.

Chapter 31 ends with a beautiful promise. When rebuilt in the Kingdom, “it [Jerusalem] shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down *any more for ever.*”

**Jer. 32:1** The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.

The time setting was now the tenth year of Zedekiah, just *one year* before the fall of Jerusalem in 606 BC. The time, which was very near the end of Zedekiah’s reign, was equated to the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.

**Jer. 32:2** For then the king of Babylon’s army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah’s house.

“For then the king of Babylon’s army besieged Jerusalem.” Jerusalem was under siege for a little more than a year. Accounts of this time period are also found in the books of Ezekiel, Kings, and Chronicles. To a certain extent, the multiple accounts help to synchronize Jeremiah and Ezekiel with the chronology recorded in Kings and Chronicles.

Chapter 32 opens with a specific point in time in Jewish history, which coincided with the start of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem. In this setting and background, Jeremiah was shut up in prison, which was in Zedekiah’s own house, i.e., in his own part of the courtyard complex.

**Jer. 32:3** For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it;

At the order of King Zedekiah, Jeremiah was imprisoned for prophesying the defeat of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Of course others had accused Jeremiah of being a traitor and had urged his imprisonment, but the king made the decision.

Zedekiah could not understand why Jeremiah prophesied as he did. “Why are you saying these things?” he asked the prophet. Hence the RSV has a question mark at the end of verse 5.

With regard to the antitype, Jeremiah (picturing the feet members) prophesied that God would give the city (Christendom) to the king of Babylon. (In later chapters, this symbolism will change under a new circumstance, and Babylon will represent Christendom.) At the end of the

age, the “king” will apprehend the Jeremiah class because they prophesy *defeat*. Also, they will advise the unconsecrated to seek righteousness and meekness and to hide themselves, that is, to stay out of the way of the Lord’s chariot. “Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger” (Zeph. 2:3).

**Q:** Was Jeremiah specifically shut up in the court of the prison at this time, or is the account just saying that when Nebuchadnezzar began the siege of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was already in prison?

**A:** The situation was the latter. Jeremiah was put in a cistern. Then he was pulled out of the cistern and confined to house arrest in the prison quarters of the king’s house (or complex), for adjoining buildings were on the king’s premises.

**Jer. 32:4** And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes;

**Jer. 32:5** And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper.

Jeremiah prophesied not only that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed but also that King Zedekiah would be taken to Babylon. The king considered the prophecy about himself to be a personal affront. There was a time when he assumed more of a listening mode, but when he heard this personal prophecy, his attitude changed radically.

The fact there was a Nebuchadnezzar I and a Nebuchadnezzar II in the original Chaldean has caused confusion in the chronology in certain cases. In addition, some manuscripts spell the name of the father of Nebuchadnezzar the same way. Just like “Pharaoh,” “Caesar,” etc., the word “Nebuchadnezzar” is an *office*, not the king’s personal name. (Incidentally, “Kaiser” and “Czar” are a variation of “Caesar.”) Thus it is easy to mix up the son, the father, and the grandfather. The two names are definitely confused in the manuscripts.

**Comment:** There are a couple of hints here concerning Zedekiah’s eyes. When handed over to the king of Babylon, Zedekiah would see this event with his own eyes, but subsequently Nebuchadnezzar would lead him to Babylon. Zedekiah saw his own sons being killed, but his eyes were put out before he made the trip to Babylon.

**Reply:** Yes, the texts about Zedekiah’s fate harmonize. The fact that he tried to escape through a gate in the southeast corner of Jerusalem instead of submitting willingly to capture shows how little faith he had in Jeremiah as a prophet. In other words, Zedekiah tried to run away from the fulfillment that God had spoken through Jeremiah.

“Zedekiah ... shall speak with him [Nebuchadnezzar] mouth to mouth” as well as eye to eye. “And he [Nebuchadnezzar] shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I [Jehovah] visit him.” How did God “visit” Zedekiah? After his sons were put to death, Zedekiah was sent immediately to Babylon, but Nebuchadnezzar did not return to Babylon until later. Thus Zedekiah was put in captivity until Nebuchadnezzar (and the Lord) visited him. Zedekiah died in prison (Jer. 52:11).

**Jer. 32:6** And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

**Jer. 32:7** Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy

thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.

**Jer. 32:8** So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

Jeremiah was given advance notice of what would happen and how he should respond. God told Jeremiah that Hanameel, his cousin, would come to him with a proposition: "Buy my field which is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours" (RSV). Had the Lord not previously informed Jeremiah, the prophet would have declined the offer, saying in effect, "What do you mean? With the property you are trying to sell me being under siege, the land is worthless!" However, Jeremiah was to respond favorably to this seemingly quirky deal. Remember, Jeremiah was under house arrest in the king's court at this time.

Anathoth, Jeremiah's hometown, was the place where the priests lived, including Jeremiah's own family. The priests, even his relatives, were prejudiced against him, yet they had to follow the procedure under the Law for the purchase of land. No doubt the uncle told his son about the procedure and what to say to Jeremiah.

From a practical standpoint, with Jerusalem under siege and the property in Anathoth being outside the city walls, this land was worthless. The army of Babylon was tightening the siege but had not yet taken Anathoth. Nebuchadnezzar was now in the suburbs, and this land that Jeremiah's cousin wanted to sell was between the suburbs and the city proper.

**Q:** In regard to the "right of redemption," Boaz was a kinsman redeemer for Ruth. Does the concept here have a similar spiritual significance?

**A:** Being *natural*-minded, the Jews are not interested in the spiritual promises. Therefore, the deed pertained to *literal* land in Israel, and instead of being worthless, it will be reactivated in some future day.

Under the Law, a person could not transfer property to another tribe. For example, if a person in Issachar had property, he could not sell it to someone in Zebulun. Jerusalem was in between two "shoulders," the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, although the city was mostly in Benjamin (Deut. 33:12). Anathoth was in that area but more in Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin was north of the city.

**Comment:** It seems that the first right of *redemption* was almost like a first right of *refusal*. Before Boaz could get the right of redemption, it had to be refused by the first person in line. If Jeremiah had declined to buy the land, Hanameel could have looked elsewhere for a purchaser.

**Reply:** However, if Jeremiah had refused, Hanameel would not have gotten another purchaser with the siege already in effect and coming closer to Anathoth. The property was worthless because it was a buffer zone between Jerusalem and Nebuchadnezzar's huge army from Chaldea and several nations.

"Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD." When the prophets of the Old Testament were instructed, various methods were used. In this instance, Jeremiah may have received a vision as he slept at night. In the dream, he heard words being spoken but was not sure at first what to do because the instruction did not seem to make sense with the enemy just outside the city. Hearing that his cousin would come and offer to sell him land seemed very unreal to Jeremiah, but when Hanameel actually came, the prophet realized God had been speaking to



him. At that point, Jeremiah did not question further, for he *knew* he had heard “the word of the LORD.”

In daylight hours, the technique of communicating to the prophets was usually the hearing of a voice in the ear rather than receiving a vision. God used various techniques. He spoke both *to* and *by* the prophets at different times in bits and pieces. Thus Jeremiah was probably instructed in a vision about purchasing the land. As soon as Hanameel appeared on the scene, Jeremiah knew without question that he had indeed heard “the [authentic] word of the LORD.”

**Jer. 32:9** And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle’s son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver.

**Jer. 32:10** And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances.

Because of what the Lord had said, Jeremiah bought from his cousin this apparently worthless land in Anathoth, which was just outside the north side of Jerusalem. Jeremiah “weighed ... the money.” It is interesting that a scale was available while Jeremiah was under house arrest. Even though Zedekiah was not disposed to Jeremiah, the prison would have been quite nice because it was in the king’s court. The sale was conducted while the city was under siege by a large army. Of course Hanameel wanted to get the money and flee; he did not intend to remain in Jerusalem with a bag of silver.

**Q:** How would Jeremiah have had money, 17 shekels of silver, while under house arrest?

**A:** Baruch, a respected person in all of his dealings with Jeremiah, was probably in the picture more than the account informs us. Similarly, Theophilus sponsored Luke in the writing of the Gospel and the Book of Acts (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). We do not know much about this generous benefactor and patron of Luke. It is possible that Jeremiah himself had gotten an inheritance, but we are inclined to think that Baruch provided for his finances and his writings, making sure the latter were preserved for posterity.

In regard to the purchase price, 17 is a mystical number that we do not want to go into. However, all of the details are significant, and some of them will be explained correctly in the future. We surmise on the details only where we have two or three other clues in Scripture. Sometimes we make statements that may sound positive and bold, but they are predicated on several other circumstances. With numbers, we are more hesitant to make suggestions. The saying “Numbers do not lie, but liars figure” is true. A person with a mathematical mind can be led astray if he trusts in his own wisdom. When we are immersed in the thinking of God, we are helped, but even then, we have to be careful not to go too far.

**Comment:** For verse 10, the NASB reads, “And I signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses, and weighed out the silver on the scales.”

**Reply:** The deed was witnessed (notarized, as it were) and sealed with a wax or paraffin of some kind that hardened.

**Jer. 32:11** So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open:

**Jer. 32:12** And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle’s son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.

**Comment:** For verses 11 and 12, the NASB reads, “Then I took the deeds of purchase, both the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions, and the open copy; and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the sight of Hanamel my uncle’s son, and in the sight of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, before all the Jews who were sitting in the court of the guard.”

**Reply:** Jeremiah “took the evidence of the purchase, both [1] that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and [2] that which was open,” suggesting that a duplicate copy of the deed was made. In other words, there were *two deeds*: the original sealed one and an open one.

The deed was made out in a formal, legalistic fashion and then witnessed by a number of individuals. (The Lord set the stage for many witnesses.) In the resurrection, it will be meaningful for these witnesses to come forth and tell what happened.

Verse 12 tells us that Jeremiah gave Baruch what we would call an envelope containing the two deeds. Thus the well-respected Baruch, whose lineage is given, was like Jeremiah’s secretary and treasurer. Evidently, too, he was a person of influence who backed up the prophet. Baruch was given the original deed (and the copy) in the sight of Hanameel and in the presence of the witnesses who had signed it and also of the Jews who sat in the prison courtyard. Zedekiah did not like Jeremiah, yet he permitted this transaction. The king was not taking any chances just in case there was something of substance going on here, so at this time, he treated Jeremiah quite well as a prisoner. (Earlier, however, Jeremiah was at the bottom of a cistern, in mire and water, until the eunuch pulled him out.)

**Jer. 32:13** And I charged Baruch before them, saying,

**Jer. 32:14** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.

**Jer. 32:15** For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.

Verses 13-15 tell what God’s purpose was. The deed was made out in duplicate. The official notarized, sealed deed, as well as the open one, was put in an earthen vessel to be hidden by Baruch. But why were there *two deeds*? One reason was to have *two witnesses*—the land purchase was confirmed and reaffirmed. Another reason was for the dramatic effect that will occur when the deeds are found in the Kingdom. The deeds will no doubt be found because the account states explicitly that they were put in an earthen vessel so that they would “continue many days,” suggesting the deeds were recorded for posterity.

When the vessel is found in the Kingdom, the open deed will be seen right away. Subsequently the sealed deed will be opened *officially* in a *legal* environment. If there had been only *one* deed, the sealed one, the seal might have been broken prematurely, rather than to wait for a legal opening with formal recognition by society. Moreover, the unsealing of the original deed will authenticate the duplicate.

**Comment:** Jeremiah did not charge Baruch privately in the name of God but conspicuously in front of multiple witnesses.

**Reply:** Yes. Incidentally, three individuals had special protection in Jeremiah’s day: the prophet himself, the Ethiopian eunuch who pulled Jeremiah out of the cistern, and Baruch.

Since the city was under siege, Baruch probably hid the deeds quickly, thinking he could come back later and retrieve the earthen vessel. A logical place to secrete them would be in what is called today Jeremiah's Grotto, which was not exposed to public view until 200 BC, when the Hasmoneans dug an east-west trench on the north side of the Damascus Gate. In the Garden Tomb area, which includes Golgotha, there are two grottoes, the large cistern that is exposed and a smaller one that is not exposed. When the cover on this grotto is removed, people can look down into it, but all they see is darkness. At present, the Garden Tomb area is so built up with gardens and places for prayer groups that the setting is quite changed.

When the deeds are found in the Kingdom, they will convince the Arabs and the Muslims of the *legitimacy* of Israel, for the property purchase was recorded more than a thousand years before there were any Arabs or Muslims of recognition. As an Ancient Worthy, Jeremiah will be on the scene at the start of the Kingdom. Therefore, the deeds will probably be found early in the Kingdom. It is nice to think that the prophet himself will have the privilege of producing the deed. Time will tell.

**Jer. 32:16** Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying,

**Jer. 32:17** Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:

**Jer. 32:18** Thou showest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name,

After purchasing land from his uncle's son while in prison (under house arrest) in the king's court and delivering the deed to Baruch, Jeremiah prayed majestically and eloquently "unto the LORD" (the prayer continues through verse 25). With the mention of "signs and wonders" in Egypt and in Israel in verse 20, this prayer was like an inspirational prophecy, but what gave birth to Jeremiah's feeling of exhilaration?

**Comment:** He was impressed with God's *foreknowledge* that the signs and wonders in Egypt and Israel were being preserved unto the future day to convince all of the greatness of Almighty God.

**Reply:** Yes. The King James marginal alternate for "There is *nothing* too hard [or impossible] for thee [O God]" is, "There is nothing *hid* from thee." Not only was the Great Pyramid a sign, but with the deed being hidden for posterity to show God's foreknowledge, Jeremiah exulted that he was identified with a feeling of history. He realized that his ministry would be brought into recognition because he was tied in with this deed, which would later be discovered. He felt he was now a part of history—and *good* history! Starting only with chapter 30 did he have good news to prophesy. He praised God for kindly allowing him to be associated with history.

Jeremiah also marveled that the transaction of the property purchase had occurred exactly as foretold. In addition, the preceding chapter had just told of the New Covenant. A little earlier he was blessed with a sweet dream about the Kingdom and the restoration of Israel. Therefore, Jeremiah was very happy under his current circumstance, even though Jerusalem was under siege. He saw that justice had to be requited but that *nationally* in due time, Israel would be restored to favor. With overflowing joy, he was exulting in the greatness of God.

Another reason for his joy is that the surrounding of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar justified

the predictions of judgment he had uttered as the mouthpiece of the Lord. The Chaldeans were about to take over the city, yet the deed was like a surety, an emblem, or a pledge that the land would be returned to Israel in the future. The deed would be preserved for later retrieval, that is, in the Kingdom.

**Comment:** The prayer was like the culmination of the moment for Jeremiah. For years, he had been the prophet with the hard forehead, and he was like an iron pillar and brazen walls against the whole land in proclaiming Jehovah's words (Jer. 1:18). Then, when he was told to give a good prophecy of the future Kingdom and to purchase the field in Anathoth, he was overwhelmed with the greatness of God.

**Reply:** He was unburdening his heart with joy and the vindication of God's promises. Similarly, the death and resurrection of Jesus are a seal, a surety—our guarantee, our anchor of hope—that the promises of the resurrection of the saints, the establishment of the Kingdom, etc., will be fulfilled. Jeremiah was exulting because God means what He says. Whether prophecies are favorable or unfavorable, they carry through to the grandchildren.

Notice that Jehovah is called "the *Mighty God*" in verse 18. He is called "the *Almighty God*" when contrasted with other gods or Jesus. "The Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name, Great in counsel, and mighty in work" (verse 19).

"Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm." A "stretched out arm" can be for good or for evil, for punishment. Here the context pertains to creation. To say that Jesus is God's stretched-out arm in this sense limits God in doing things, not only in the past but also in the present and the future. When God's feet stand on the Mount of Olives, He will be in the picture. Unfortunately, there has been a misunderstanding of the Greek prepositions in the New Testament. To thoroughly study those prepositions would take many months because the Greek has so many uses. Not only are we simple-minded in our thinking, but the English language is very pinpointed. For example, when we say "to," "for," or "because," the vocabulary is ample for making our meaning very clear, but many nuances are misunderstood, even by the translators, in the older language of the New Testament. The exception would be the Reformers and the apostles. Certainly Arius saw the difference between Jesus and God, and so did Paul and John and the seven messengers to the Church.

**Q:** Jeremiah included in his prayer, "Thou showest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them." Since this prayer came after the purchase of the field in Anathoth, did Jeremiah realize the eventual significance of the purchase of the land?

**A:** Yes. The purchase will happen under the New Covenant. Except for a few sprinkles of good news, Jeremiah preached for many years nothing but trouble and condemnation for the unrighteous acts of the nation and their need to repent and return to the old paths of righteousness. He understood that he was participating in a historical act. The sealed deed given to Baruch for hiding would someday be discovered to show what is stated in the Word about God's making a New Covenant with the house of Israel and about this property belonging to him. In the final analysis, the deed will shut the mouths of critical disbelievers.

It is helpful that "LORD" is in all capital letters in the Old Testament when referring to Jehovah. That distinction is not made in the New Testament. As Rotherham said, it would have been better to leave the names untranslated, and the same is true with the Hebrew *sheol*, which is variously translated as "grave," "hell," and "pit." The "scapegoat," too, is better left as "Azazel" (Lev. 16:8,10,26). Such words are mostly nouns. Rotherham himself had to make some very uncomfortable changes of a former understanding where he was warped by

traditional thinking. As he matured, he tried, as a Jew, to rectify the situation by being very accurate in his translation, particularly of the Old Testament.

**Jer. 32:19** Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:

**Jer. 32:20** Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day;

Jeremiah's mention of "signs and wonders in the land of Egypt ... and in Israel" shows he had studied in great detail the Scriptures that were available to him from his predecessor Isaiah. Jeremiah was a Bible student, as it were. Many people, especially evangelists, get so involved in their work that personal Bible study is neglected. They are so captivated by trying to either evangelize or criticize that throughout their ministry, they forget the need to be built up spiritually as an individual. Isaiah 19:19,20 reads, "In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt."

When Jeremiah said that God "set signs and wonders [particularly] in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and [even] among other men [mankind]," one of those "signs and wonders" was his deed. Other signs and wonders include the stone of Eben-ezer (see 1 Sam. 7:10-12), Joshua's stones at the crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land, the Garden Tomb in Israel, and Sodom and Gomorrah under the Dead Sea. Among the signs and wonders in Egypt are the Great Pyramid with its top stone, the Abydos Tablet, various cities, Pharaoh's chariots in the bottom of the Red Sea, and Noah's pyramids. In Turkey are Noah's Ark and the Garden of Eden. The list goes on and on.

Jesus said to the critical scribes and Pharisees, "I tell you that, if these [people] should hold their peace [and not cry out 'Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord'], the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:38-40). Thus it is God's purpose to have signs and wonders testify to His plan and verify the truthfulness of past Biblical events.

**Jer. 32:21** And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror;

**Jer. 32:22** And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey;

These "signs" included the ten plagues and the parting of the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus. After the third plague, all the plagues affected only the Egyptians. In addition, Moses gave signs to convince his own people, Israel, that God had appeared to him in Sinai through the angel in the burning bush.

The deed is symbolic of, or a *token* of, the *greater* land God will give to His "people Israel"; that is, the *land* of Israel will be deeded to the *people* of Israel. Notice that the land will flow with "milk and honey." The land was rich in times past, and it will again be rich in the future. "Milk and honey" picture a horn of *plenty*, a *fruitful* land. Abundant crops will sustain many cattle for grazing and bees to produce honey. Verse 22 is a pastoral promise.

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

The Israelites came in and possessed the land flowing with milk and honey, but because of disobedience, the land lost its lushness. In the future, it will be even more lush than in the past. The rounded hills of Israel are naturally adapted to terraced farming, which produces more abundant food per square mile.

“They have done *nothing* of all that thou commandedst them to do.” What strong language! Jeremiah was speaking in general terms.

**Jer. 32:24** Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it.

“Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it.” As Jeremiah continued his prayer, which started with verse 17, we see the time frame in which he got the deed for the land and offered this prayer. Jerusalem was surrounded by the Chaldeans.

Verse 24 provides another perspective as well. Jeremiah was encouraged that the things he had predicted were coming to pass. He saw mounts and catapults and the preparation for the siege. These were signs that the prophesied destruction would occur as predicted. “What thou [God] hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it.”

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

Jeremiah was outspoken: “And thou [God] hast said unto me, ... Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses.” As the effects of the siege were felt, Jeremiah would have suffered privations along with the populace in Jerusalem. At least he was guaranteed bread and water by the king, for although Zedekiah was displeased with Jeremiah, he did not want to actually take the prophet’s life just in case there was some truth to the prophecies (Jer. 37:21).

The deed was a token of a future return to the land of Israel. God does avenge, but He will also restore *for the nation*. As *for individuals*, it will be up to each one to respond. Verse 25 concludes Jeremiah’s prayer.

**Jer. 32:26** Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

**Jer. 32:27** Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?

**Jer. 32:28** Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it:

God again assured Jeremiah in regard to the deed and the promise to restore the land. Even the best of people have their down periods. Consider Jesus, who was perfect. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “If permissible, I would like this cup to be taken away. Nevertheless, thy will be done.” Everyone has times of stress and *momentary* doubt. Therefore, God comforted Jeremiah with the words “Is there any thing too hard for me? I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and ... Nebuchadnezzar ... shall take it.”

Jeremiah was not fully aware of the time. Even Daniel probably thought for a while that the 1,335 and the 2,300 days were literal. No matter how wise a person is, understanding is developed as time goes by. With maturity, misconceptions get clarified. Nevertheless, Jeremiah’s character was remarkable and also his understanding, as will be seen in later

chapters. We have already seen his obedience and courage, and now we are getting little glimpses into his understanding.

**Jer. 32:29** And the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger.

**Jer. 32:30** For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah continued to speak strong words. God foretold through him that Jerusalem and the houses would be burned. Punishment was coming because the people had burned incense unto Baal on the roofs of their houses. True, the custom was to pray on the roof, but they should have prayed to God.

It will be shown in the future that Jesus is the true Messiah and that other than the books of Moses, much of the Old Testament has been withheld. Not much exposition is given on the other books except for a little storytelling. In regard to our own Christian fellowship, we do not appreciate hearing many stories from the platform. Although stories have their place, they should be used minimally. Just as Jews changed from the Torah to Talmudic teaching, so some in our midst go from the Bible to “thus saith Pastor Russell.” And then from Talmudic teaching, there is a change to rabbinical sayings; i.e., Jews have other types of books in which humorists, artists, etc., are given supposed sanctified approval.

The Old Testament strongly denounces the sins of the Jews. Therefore, if Jews say the New Testament is anti-Semitic, we should point out to them the words of their own prophets.

**Jer. 32:31** For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face,

Jerusalem was a thorn in Jehovah’s flesh from the day it was built. Hence it is good the current city will be leveled by an earthquake and rebuilt according to God’s directions.

**Jer. 32:32** Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

All segments of society were evil. In light of all the sins and evils that have been committed down through history, either the Israelites will be greatly shamed when their eyes are opened to see the depth of their degradation, or they will become hardened in their sin. At that time, those who understand the enormity of their sins will be so humbled and crushed that God will be able to show His mighty power through them. That way nobody, including those who are more noble and would have done better, will get a big head. God does things in His own way to humble us as individuals, for His motives are higher than ours. The best thing we can do is to let Him chart the course in regard to our individual destinies.

Generally speaking, the Jews have blamed the Gentiles for their troubles, but the fault lies with them. The day will come when they will bear their shame. When the Gentiles see this attitude, they themselves will also be humbled. Ezekiel 36:6,7,15 has, “Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I have lifted up mine

hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall *bear their shame*.... Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the *shame of the heathen* any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord GOD." The same principle applies to the truly repentant Christian. For example, when the townspeople saw the radically changed life of John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, compared to the reprobate life he had previously led, they were amazed. They were seeing the *power of God* at work, for John could not have raised himself out of the gutter.

**Jer. 32:33** **And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.**

God sent prophets who rose up early to instruct the people, but they did not hearken. With all the rejection and persecution Jeremiah received from his people, it is a testimony to his character that he did not get sour in his own thinking and actions.

**Comment:** This statement can also apply in principle to so-called Christians, the tare element. They may not be committing grievous sin, but they turn their back by not listening to the instruction of God's Word.

**Jer. 32:34** **But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it.**

Abominations were even brought into the Temple. New implements of worship were introduced, and icons and statuary were added. One king brazenly replaced the altar with a more elaborate one.

**Jer. 32:35** **And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.**

If Scriptures such as verses 32-35 were seriously considered in the synagogues, Israel would want to repent, but the Jewish religious leaders do not stress these lessons. The nominal Jewish mass is inclined to be agnostic and atheistic. A *great evil* was the passing of their *live* infants and children through the fire in sacrifice to the god Molech while singing and clanging cymbals to drown out the sound of the screams. Deriving sadistic pleasure from this type of sacrifice, the offerers believed that the suffering and anguish of a child appeased the angry fire god.

"I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination." Such an abomination never came into God's mind. Hence "hellfire" is a man-made doctrine. "High places" were artificial mounds used to worship false gods.

**Comment:** This practice was specifically prohibited under the Law. "When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods" (Deut. 12:29-31).

**Reply:** Just like smoking, drinking, and drugs, which are developed habits, participating in such abominations can change a person's character. Thus character can be influenced by



environment. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, we would become victims of our environment.

**Jer. 32:36** And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence;

Earlier the false prophets denied that the city would be captured. Now, with the siege mounts actually there, they believed it would occur. Similarly the people in Noah's day scoffed until the Flood came; then all believed. At this point, the people knew Jeremiah was a true prophet.

**Jer. 32:37** Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:

With the people now having a hearing ear and being concerned, God offered assurances of future blessings that would sink deeply into their memories and carry them over the experience of being deprived of their land (verses 37-44). In the future, God will gather back out of all countries those He had dispersed in anger. When they return in this sense, they will dwell safely.

**Q:** Was Jeremiah still in the courtyard of the prison?

**A:** We would think so.

"I [God] will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely." Those who were spared and taken captive to Babylon would remember this promise given through Jeremiah. Here was a *guarantee* that the Jews would one day return to Israel. Thus hope was kept alive, even when they were in exile.

**Q:** In the antitype, verses 37-44 have already started, referring to the regathering back to Israel in our day, although not until the second regathering will God "gather them out of all countries." Was there also a partial past fulfillment in 536 BC?

**A:** Yes. Even among ourselves, there are different perspectives with regard to prophecy. Some tend to apply everything more along a natural line, and others emphasize a spiritual fulfillment. We advocate an in-between view. Also, some give past fulfillments to mystic Babylon, saying that it has already fallen and will never come back into power.

When Nebuchadnezzar came down with his army against Jerusalem shortly before 606 BC, other troops from the provinces of the empire were with him. These subservient satellite powers were represented in the central power of Babylon. When the Jews were released under Cyrus's decree in 536 BC to return to the homeland, they came from the various satellite powers, or nations. Hence they applied their experience to the fulfillment of verse 37.

We are treating these verses from the natural standpoint. As we individually pray about these Scriptures in our leisure time at home, we will see the antitypical fulfillment more clearly. As a group, we spend more time studying the type, for if we do not *first* understand the literal picture, we will get a distorted view of the antitype. Also, to go into detail on the spiritual application in this study would be too time-consuming. In principle, Bro. Russell has already considered the spiritual picture in many places in the *Reprints* and the *Volumes*.

**Jer. 32:38** And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

The Jews who returned from Babylon in 536 BC under Joshua, Zerubbabel, and Ezra felt that verse 38 was being fulfilled, but that was only a partial fulfillment. They rejoiced and were looking for wonderful blessings. However, Daniel, who realized the time prophecies would be fulfilled way down the stream of time, was discouraged. We are very thankful for Daniel's prophecies because they give time periods that help us to know where we are on the stream of time. He was told to go his way, for the time prophecies were locked in his day (Dan. 12:9). However, the "wise" would understand in due time, and Daniel will understand when he is awakened from the tomb (Dan. 12:10,13). With so many of the time periods having expired, we know we are getting down near the very end of the age, but we still need to be informed by Holy Writ as to the duties and responsibilities of the hour we are living in.

**Jer. 32:39** And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

In regard to those who acquiesce to the New Covenant and accept His will, God will give to every individual according to what is best, and they will reverence Him forever. Notice that children will be born in the Kingdom.

At the end of the Millennium, many will go into Second Death, but the new generation—the ones being born—will get life and thus make up for the void. With few exceptions, those born in future ages will not sin because the object lessons will be so great in viewing earth's history and being schooled in righteousness. Fraternization with evil takes a terrific toll. The permission of evil occurs temporarily on this planet only.

Subconsciously, many of us exercise a love greater than God's. To do so is wrong in God's sight. Both our minds and our consciences need regulating.

**Jer. 32:40** And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

When the Jews returned from Babylon, they were inspired, but as time passed, they realized there was more to the fulfillment. Thus each generation had its hopes and its discouragements. For example, after the French Revolution, Protestants were exhilarated, thinking the Kingdom was starting because dungeons were opened and Bibles were being printed in great quantities.

"Fear" has the thought of worship, reverence, awe, and respect. The obedient will fear God in this sense and appreciate the principle of His government. The entire Kingdom Age will be required to write God's law in the people's hearts.

**Jer. 32:41** Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

Here is an insight into God. He will rejoice over the Jews and plant them in their land with His "whole heart" and "whole soul." God has emotions! He will be enthused and have great joy when these conditions come to pass—when the people are contrite and reformed.

God has emotion *with principle*. "Jasper" (the diamond) shows unchangeable principles, while the "sard" signifies a compassionate heart (Rev. 4:3). Both qualities must be operative; neither can be violated.

**Comment:** We are to love God with our whole heart, mind, strength, and soul, but here He

Himself will have that love for Israel.

**Reply:** Yes, verse 41 is a reversal of the love that is commanded of us. We should recognize God as the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). He “so loved the world [and of course the Church too], that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

**Jer. 32:42** For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.

**Comment:** In regard to the statement “I bring upon them [Israel] all the good that I have promised them,” some of “the good” was fulfilled in 536 BC but not “all.”

**Reply:** Today we have hindsight and the Scriptures in their entirety, and hindsight is usually better than foresight as far as perceiving things in a more realistic sense. By our consecration and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can look at the pages of history in a new light, which was impossible for the Jews to perceive back there.

**Jer. 32:43** And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

**Q:** Does the pronoun “ye” refer to the Jews in Babylonian captivity?

**A:** Yes. God can even read the mind of individuals in the future. An example is Psalm 22, which gives Jesus’ thoughts on the Cross hundreds of years in advance. God can foresee events and circumstances, but He does not always *exercise* that ability. He is omniscient, all powerful, and all wise, but He does not exercise all His power all the time everywhere. He can speak about an individual in the future, no matter who that person is, but if He used that capability all the time, His head would be filled with filth. How could He be a holy God with so many distracting thoughts? Therefore, by having safeguards in place, He shuts out certain things *except* where they might interfere with His plan. Thus He does not always exercise His omniscience with regard to every individual, but since He is more concerned with His people, He probably uses that power with the consecrated—and to a considerable extent with a few individuals *prior to* consecration. For example, Paul’s ministry was mapped out before his experience on the road to Damascus. The Lord said of Paul, “He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Paul was dealt with in advance because his consecration and dedication to do God’s will were perceived in advance. Some of us can trace God’s dealings before consecration, but only with apostles and special messengers are the dealings so elaborately plotted in advance.

**Jer. 32:44** Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD.

Here the focus was on Judah, whereas Ezekiel brought in a lot about the ten-tribe kingdom. Jeremiah’s responsibility lay with Judah, for the ten tribes had already gone into captivity at the time of this prophecy. Chapter 32 pertains to the property Jeremiah bought (and the resultant deed) at the time the siege of Jerusalem was beginning to take place.

Legal bounds will be set in the Kingdom to give each man his own vine and fig tree. The people will be assigned to a portion of land, and that land will be deeded to them. That will be their home base, but they will be able (and permitted) to travel. For a small amount of

“money,” the assigned land will be legally deeded; that is, there will be no “squatter’s rights.”

**Q:** Did the Jews buy fields when they came back with Ezra, or is verse 44 a future prophecy only?

**A:** There may have been some purchases, but the Jews were a tributary people in 536 BC. While they were under Persian control, there were periods of brutality and anti-Semitism, but there were also very liberal rulers. As long as the rulers saw no threat, a lot of liberty was allowed, but the Jews were not permitted to buy fields for money and to sign and seal deeds. Moreover, Persians lived in Israel, and they took whatever choice lands they desired. In other words, Jews were in the land, but they could be overruled.

**Q:** Then did the fulfillment of verse 44 start with Petatikva in 1878?

**A:** Yes, the door opened in 1878. Swamps were purchased, and suicide squads of dedicated young people went there and died of malaria in the early settlement of Israel. Thus land was purchased and a seal obtained, yet the Arabs today do not recognize the sale. The fulfillment of verse 44 continues, and we are now in the end-time period of prophecy.

Notice the mention of “the land of Benjamin, ... the places about Jerusalem, and ... the cities of Judah.” A person can walk out of one area of Jerusalem and be in Benjamin in minutes, and if he walks out of the city in the other direction, he is in Judah. Jerusalem is described as being in between the “shoulders” of Benjamin and Judah (Deut. 33:12).

The “land of Benjamin” is mentioned first because Anathoth, Jeremiah’s hometown, was there. Thus verse 44 is another reference to the fact that Jeremiah’s deed is a *token*, or emblem. Subsequently other areas are mentioned: Jerusalem, Judah, mountains, cities, the valley (Shephelah in the RSV), and the south (Negeb in the RSV). Sharon, the plain near water, is Carmel, a north-to-south strip. Shephelah is the next north-to-south strip going inland, and the Negeb (or Negev) is the south (Isa. 33:9; 65:10).

God “will cause their captivity to return.” The Israelites will be restored. The captives will return from captivity (death).

**Q:** God said, “I will cause their captivity to return,” but how many Jews survived the 70-year captivity?

**A:** For one thing, none of the females are mentioned. The Babylonians chose some of them as booty to be concubines and wives. The Muslims today are very much like the Babylonians of the past; they will kill any men, but they are careful with the women. Yes, they abuse their wives, but they do not usually kill them. The Jews multiplied greatly during the 70 years of captivity. Also, with the ten tribes going into captivity earlier, their multiplication occurred over a longer period of time. Of the total number, approximately 50,000 Jews, mostly from Judah, returned to Israel when Cyrus gave his decree in 536 BC. The majority of Jews remained in Babylon because they became comfortable in exile.

**Jer. 33:1** Moreover the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the second time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

As had happened previously, Jeremiah was given a vision in the king’s court where he was still shut up as a prisoner (Jer. 32:1,2).

**Jer. 33:2** Thus saith the LORD the maker thereof, the LORD that formed it, to establish it; the

**LORD is his name;**

The Lord *Jehovah*, the maker of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel, now spoke. The principle is the same with the earth. God made, formed, and established the earth to be inhabited, but in the beginning, before the surface was ordered, all was confusion, for darkness was upon the face of the earth. The *objective* is how the earth will be at the end of the Seventh Creative Day, for the earth was made to be inhabited by a suitable people, tried and proven. The same is true of Israel, of whom God said, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). If Jewish history is judged by present circumstances and the 2,000 years of exile, it would seem that God created His people, Israel, in vain. And here, in Jeremiah’s day, the king of Babylon was right outside Jerusalem, knocking on the door, ready to destroy the Jews. But God has a purpose in mind for His people, and although history seems to be *slow* in development and mixed with much confusion, the end product will be a very desirable people comprising not only natural Israelites but also Gentile proselytes. The answer to the Lord’s Prayer will then be fulfilled: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is [always done] in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). In other words, the Lord’s Prayer will not really be answered until the end of the Kingdom Age. This perfecting will be brought about by Jesus, who will be made King over the earth for that age.

Before Jeremiah went off the scene, he received happy information. The enemy was outside, waiting to destroy the city, but he could see way beyond the immediate trouble. Thus God blessed Jeremiah by crowning his faithful ministry with good news. He was told of the New Covenant, he received a deed to property in Anathoth, and he could see beyond the present scene.

**Jer. 33:3 Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.**

God gave Jeremiah an invitation, which he channeled to the people. Hence those of Judah who had a hearing ear were invited to call on God and receive understanding. Our desire—and the expression of such a desire—precedes our enlightenment. “If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come” is the principle (Isa. 21:12). We should *keep on* inquiring. The “great and mighty things” include both calamities and blessings to come on Israel.

Here God was inviting both Jeremiah personally and those of Judah who might have a hearing ear to call on Him. There were others besides Jeremiah who hearkened. Thus God was appealing to Jeremiah individually and to any of the people who were amenable. To such, this news would be particularly helpful in the current experience of the Babylonian siege.

**Q:** Can verse 3 also be applied antitypically to God’s promise to the Holy Remnant; namely, “All who call upon my name in that day shall be saved out of Jacob’s Trouble”?

**A:** Yes, that would be true in principle. And as Christians, we look beyond the current situation to our personal salvation and the privilege of lifting up the human race in the Kingdom Age if we are of the particular elect body that God is choosing. But the primary application was the natural picture back there. Jeremiah himself was being blessed in giving this uplifting message. He said to those with a hearing ear, “While trouble is knocking at the door, think and hope beyond this experience.” The same principle applies back there, today, and in the future. There is both bad news and good news; another holocaust is coming as well as blessings after the holocaust. We feel personally that Israel has to know about Jacob’s Trouble. That is the last thing the Jews *want* to hear, but that is the very thing they *have* to hear. It will be encouraging to find those who have the faith to respond while the opportunity is available to become identified with the Holy Remnant class.

**Comment:** If only good news is given, then when the trouble comes, the Jews will be very discouraged. But if they are instructed in advance that *trouble must precede* the blessings, they will be prepared.

**Reply:** The same principle applies when a person needs surgery. The patient is told that the operation is serious but that his chances for recovery are excellent. It is necessary for him to go through the ordeal and absorb the experience of the operation before good news can come.

**Comment:** The Pastor spoke similarly in the *First Volume* where he said, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa. 30:5).

**Jer. 33:4** For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword;

**Jer. 33:5** They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city.

The buildings of both the common people and the nobility would be torn down. The siege was already in progress. Three fourths of the city was encircled, and the cordon was being tightened. Here Jeremiah spoke (with words from the Lord) of the defeat in progress. The houses just outside the gate had been destroyed, and the city would be captured shortly.

Jerusalem was the capital of Judea. When the enemy came down, the people in the province of Judea all rushed to the city to defend it. But actually they were rushing into the pot that was to be boiled and stewed. It was in God’s design that the people go to Jerusalem and get squeezed and bottled in so that the city would be filled with dead bodies (except for the few survivors).

The small minority of right-hearted individuals would be spared, but the vast majority would die because of a wrong heart condition, even though they would cry out to God at the last minute. Even an atheist who is drowning will call on God for help—just in case He exists. For a person to be heard, a repentant mode has to precede a prayer for deliverance. Of course the great majority called on God when they saw the city actually being invaded and knew the battle was lost, but that was too late. The other element repented and called out to God earlier.

“Thus saith the LORD, ... They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies.” In other words, the Jews in outlying provinces came to assist the residents of Jerusalem—they came to the aid of their brethren—but the nation needed a lesson. The city would be filled with dead bodies. Hence God purposed the destruction of the city and the death of the inhabitants by sword, pestilence, and famine. Among the Jews already in captivity, Ezekiel prophesied along the same lines, telling of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple, and the people. He likened Jerusalem to a boiling cauldron whose stew meat was the inhabitants. Because of *wickedness*, God hid His face from those of Judah. By reading and then co-relating the accounts, we get a detailed picture of what happened. In back of Jeremiah were Baruch, the Ethiopian eunuch, and a small remnant of Jews.

In time, at the hands of the Medes and the Persians, the Babylonians would have the same experience that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were now having. Hence retribution would come. Of course there is an antitype with the Chaldeans, etc., at the end of the present age. The handwriting is on the wall with professed Christendom (supposedly Christ’s Kingdom), as well as with Gog and Magog’s coming down against Israel. It will appear that Israel is being wiped

off the face of the earth, for Jerusalem will be defeated *momentarily*, but then God will step in and rescue the Holy Remnant. In Jeremiah's day, the "holy remnant" was taken to Babylon.

**Jer. 33:6 Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.**

This message of comfort came abruptly at a low point, for the people of Judah were dispirited. Health and cure would come later. Like a physician, God must cut to heal. Thus Jeremiah was assuring the people that no matter what trouble might ensue, there would come a time beyond that trouble, in the future, when God would restore them.

The content of these verses seems to fit best at the end time of the Gospel Age. The bringing of "health and cure" after Jacob's Trouble will be a *process*. The Kingdom will commence with a Holy Remnant, who will have "health" at the time of the Lord's intervention on their behalf, for they will be contrite and will mourn for Jesus as for an only son. Verse 6 also applies to those who are in the grave and come forth in stages of retrieval.

The Jews' remorse over what the nation of Israel did to the Messiah will eventually make their repentance deeper and more thorough. Moreover, the remorse will greatly humble their pride. Perhaps a much greater percentage of Jews will respond to the truth than of Gentiles. Not only will those who are steeped in sin in the present life reap what they sowed, but if there is a crystallization of character in sin, the individual is less likely to get life in the Kingdom Age.

**Comment:** The Lord's statement "I ... will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth" indicates that the Jews' present condition is the opposite, namely, that the nation of Israel is experiencing war, ignorance, and error.

**Reply:** To date, their ears have not been unstopped, and their eyes have not been opened. Certainly Jeremiah was a faithful minister in declaring the truth as revealed to him by God, but depending on the heart condition of the listeners, it was like talking to a stone wall. Thus a softening process must precede the message in order for it to be absorbed.

**Jer. 33:7 And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first.**

"I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return." Not many of the ten tribes returned after the 70-year Babylonian captivity. In the present regathering of Jews to Israel, no one really knows what tribe he belongs to, but the Jews will know in the second regathering after Jacob's Trouble.

"I ... will build them [Judah and Israel], as at the first." Isaiah 1:26 tells one way in which they will be rebuilt: "And I [God] will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning; afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city." With the phrases "as at the first" and "as at the beginning," we begin to learn the Lord's condescending vocabulary. Although the Bible was written by diverse people, the language of God has a common thread. The thoughts are probably on a much higher plane, but to speak to us down here, God uses a language we can understand. The Period of the Judges followed the Exodus, the 40 years in wilderness, and Joshua's conquering of the land. Therefore, to restore "as at the first" would include the Israelites' coming out of Egypt, their being established as a nation, and their being built up with judges for 450 years.

**Q:** Is the implication that miracles like the plagues, the opening of the Red Sea, and overrulings in the wilderness will occur again?

**A:** Yes. Many miracles will happen in connection with the establishment of the Kingdom. The second regathering of Jews to Israel will be similar to the Exodus from Egypt.

The people did not listen to the prophet of doom in the previous time of prosperity. Now, when they were in dire straits, Jeremiah spoke peace and comfort and told of God's promise to restore Israel and Judah. That is true of the antitype as well. When the great Time of Trouble is about to break, the people will feel hopeless, but at the present time, they do not listen to the truth message. Jeremiah was saying, "Do not give up hope, for the sure mercies of David are coming. God's promises are sure!"

Verse 7 refers to the Jews' return to Israel in two portions: (1) now and (2) after Jacob's Trouble. Israel and Judah will be restored to the zenith of glory as in Solomon's day.

**Jer. 33:8** And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.

The content of the prophecy continues to be the end time for various reasons. At that time, God will cleanse and pardon Israel's and Judah's iniquity, but that forgiveness will be conditional to a certain extent, for the people will first have to bend the knee and confess their sins. Knowing the end from the beginning, God sees that they will do this. Thus, based on His omniscient powers, He can use language that might on the surface seem to contradict principles of divine government. However, conditional nuances will take place that are not explained here, and since the Lord can foresee how thorough the conversion of the Holy Remnant will be, He just tells us about the end result rather than about the whole process.

**Jer. 33:9** And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

Israel, and more specifically Jerusalem, will be "a name of joy, a praise and an honour before *all* the nations of the earth." When eyewitnesses of the deliverance of the Holy Remnant return to their homelands, all nations will hear "all the good" that God does unto Israel. As a result, the Israelites will "*fear and tremble*" for all God's goodness and prosperity to Jerusalem. We are reminded of how Joseph's brethren trembled when he revealed his identity.

At the same time, Ezekiel, who was in Babylon, spoke of the two sticks (Judah and Israel) becoming one. "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them *one stick*, and they shall be *one* in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them *one* nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all" (Ezek. 37:19-22).

The problem of separation dates back to Rehoboam and Jeroboam following Solomon's death. Many Jews have died since that time, and the 12 tribes include those in the grave who will come forth with a background of enmity, jealousy, etc. As an illustration, if two reprobate sinners who were enemies are forgiven by God through various circumstances, the differences between them will evaporate not only because of the joy of getting a new outlook and a new



start by God Himself but also because of looking upon one another in a different light. Having been forgiven, they will realize that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). That attitude will ameliorate or eliminate the tribal differences within Israel.

It is interesting that God spoke to Jeremiah a second time while the Babylonians were at the gates ready to invade the city and slaughter the people. Again He gave Jeremiah prophecies of peace and restoration.

Pictures can be carried only to a point. For example, Adam pictures Jesus but not in every respect, for Jesus did not sin. It is the same situation here. Jerusalem was about to be destroyed, and the antitype is the destruction of nominal Christendom. However, Israel will be restored, and nominal Christianity (the beast and the false prophet) will not.

**Jer. 33:10 Thus saith the LORD; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast,**

The land was not yet desolate but was in the process of being made desolate. No one would molest Jeremiah right now because all could see that God had indeed spoken through him. The people realized that he was a true prophet because what he had predicted and proclaimed publicly for many years was coming to pass.

On an earlier occasion, Jeremiah even wept when he prophesied of the coming trouble, showing he was emotionally distraught. He was so depressed at one point that he felt he could no longer be the Lord’s mouthpiece, but in two different ways, the Lord prodded him. He put his whole heart into the prophecies and spoke with strength but not in a vindictive manner.

After the city fell, the captive Jews would say, “This place is desolate, Jerusalem is destroyed, and the land is ravaged. Even the cattle are gone.” Israel and Judah were made desolate without inhabitant or beast in 606 BC.

**Jer. 33:11 The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.**

At this time, the voice of Jesus and the Church will be heard in Jerusalem; the marriage will have taken place. (Compare the similar language of Jeremiah 25:10.) The voice of joy and gladness will also be heard. The omission in verse 11 of “the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle,” which pertained to Christendom, proves this later verse is a picture of the true Church and the Kingdom. The Law will go forth from Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The people “shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD [Ezekiel’s Temple].”

There is a slight distinction between “the voice of joy” and “the voice of gladness.” In the voice of joy, there is more spontaneity in the expression of happiness. Some kind of *explanation* will attend the voice of gladness, whereas the other might be just a *noise* of joy, happiness, and singing. The voice of gladness is a little deeper in that it enunciates the *reason* for the happiness.

**Comment:** The voice of joy will be heard with the restoration of Israel, but the voice of gladness comes with the forgiveness of sins.

“Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD [the Third Temple]. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.” As we become familiar with the Old Testament, in which God spoke many times on different occasions, we begin to note that He was slow to wrath. The very fact He has allowed His name to be blasphemed is rather startling. Many have concluded that because God does not interfere, He must not exist. Only by studying the Old Testament and seeing how God dealt for centuries with Israel, a fractious people, can we perceive Him as the God of all patience. His patience, His mercy, is *abiding* grace. Yes, there are limits to that patience, but the great Creator could have just gotten rid of the mess down here and gone somewhere else. He could have reasoned, “How ungrateful they are to not even think of me as the Creator!” But instead His Wisdom sees that the permission of evil for a short time is the best thing that could have happened to reveal His own personal character. How would we ever know that God loved the world or His people except through the realization of our own undone condition before He called us? If sin had not been permitted, we could not see Him as being kind, loving, merciful, and patient. Of course what is a short time for God seems to be an extremely long time for us. Actually, however, the time is relatively short for each individual, for it is only the length of his own life—perhaps 80 years—even though the permission of evil covers more than 6,000 years. When man gets health and happiness in the general resurrection, the previous existence will seem like a bad dream in the past.

Also, without the permission of evil, how would we know of the sterling character of Jesus? By dying on a cross, he proved that he was most unusual. There are two ways to appreciate the permission of evil. We can think of it in a scholarly sense, or we can meditate on the subject and see the character of God and Jesus being revealed and understand why the Church will be honored with immortality in the future. All mouths will be stopped if God gives this grace to a humble people of nobodies because others refused the opportunity by having a deaf ear. God has developed a very wise plan. No wonder Jesus said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25). And we are babes! Many noble people have stood for principles and been persecuted but not for *God’s* principles. To please God, one must not only believe that He exists but also diligently seek Him and feel that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Our faith in a future hope is a *reality* that makes sense. May we be faithful to that vision.

There seems to be a lesson that God wants to humble everybody and that no one can gainsay (contradict or declare to be untrue) any grace or goodness He shows in selecting and honoring individuals in the future. Where one fits into God’s program will be seen in due time. The long-term future good news of restoring things “as at the first” is far more meaningful than present short-term experiences and trials.

**Jer. 33:12** Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down.

“Again in this place ... shall be an habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down.” Life in the Kingdom Age will be *agrarian* with pasturage for the animals. Thus the Kingdom will be a blessing to the animals as well. For example, it will be unlawful to kill a pregnant or a nursing animal. “When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat, is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the LORD” (Exod. 22:30; Lev. 22:27; Deut. 22:6,7). After the Kingdom Age, the people will probably eat the fruit of the trees, and the whole earth will become a Garden of Eden over time. There is no mention of Adam and Eve eating cereal and bread, for example.

Several Scriptures in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel give clues that life today is artificial. Running to and fro was predicted, but it is not natural. To the contrary, sitting under a vine and a fig tree is a *contemplative* life with both work and leisure.

**Comment:** Isaiah 51:3 reads, “For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.”

**Jer. 33:13** In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the LORD.

The theme of good, constructive news continued. In the midst of turmoil and confusion with the enemy surrounding Jerusalem, Jeremiah received this message and transmitted it to the people. No doubt those whose hearts were being moved to respond favorably to this message were taken captive to Babylon and not killed.

Verse 13 sounds like Jeremiah 17:26, and the detail shows this verse is literal. Places that are now arid and desolate will become fertile. Primarily Judah and Benjamin are being described here because the judgment was on them and also because Judah was larger than any other tribe. It is possible that Jeremiah pointed in the various directions as he spoke.

**Comment:** The principle of the last going into the grave being raised first in the general resurrection is interesting because we live in an artificial society today. The very ones who helped create this way of life will have to rearrange it. But how happy people will be, for most of us dislike society as it is with the selfishness, stress, corruption, etc.

**Jer. 33:14** Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

God *will do* what He has promised.

**Jer. 33:15** In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

The “Branch of righteousness” will grow up unto “David,” that is, primarily unto Jesus, the Messiah, and secondarily unto the Church. In one sense, Jesus is the Branch, and in another sense, the Branch is collective with subsidiary twigs (the Church) attached to it. Since the covenant was made with David, it seems appropriate that he may be the first prince to officiate at the inauguration of the New Covenant. The term “grow up unto David” is rendered “spring forth for David” in the RSV. Not only was Jesus born of David’s line, but he is the Life-giver who will restore David from death.

Contrary to nature, the scriptural representation is that the Church grows *up* into Christ, the Cornerstone. Jesus himself grew up from a babe unto “David,” the Messiah. Of the stem of Jesse came forth a tender shoot. Messiah will “execute judgment and righteousness in the land.” This statement shows that the Kingdom network of authority will be beneficial in bringing forth fruit and blessing, but the structural part, the governmental aspect, the power, is necessary to produce the result. Verse 15 is a definite reference to Christ—and perhaps to King David too.

Isaiah 4:2 speaks of an *earthly* “branch,” the Holy Remnant. “In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for

them that are escaped of Israel.” When the Kingdom is inaugurated, the Law will go forth from Zion, the *heavenly* Branch, to those of Israel and Judah below (Micah 4:2).

**Q:** Do the phrases “in those days” and “at that time” indicate two specific references to time?

**A:** Yes. Although the process will not be instantaneous, judgment will be executed at a specific time. In other words, Jehovah is pictured as being in a seated position, and then He will arise to “shake terribly [mightily] the earth” (Isa. 2:21). Job 33:14 reads, “God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not”; the implication is that He will speak *with authority* the third time. But the time of that speaking will be preceded by very short “days [plural],” during which many miracles will attend the deliverance of the Holy Remnant. This short process will awaken mankind to see that God has arisen to shake the earth. The welcome pronouncement will follow: “Peace, be still” (Mark 4:39).

**Jer. 33:16** In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

In the King James margin, the “The LORD our righteousness” is *Jehovah-tsidkenu*. In a play on words, Jeremiah 23:6 emphasizes the Lord as *doing the righteousness*, whereas here verse 16 speaks of those who are blessed in becoming the *channel of righteousness*.

Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. To the Church will be given the name “Our righteousness of Jehovah.” However, Jerusalem will be the focal point of the earth through which the heavenly blessings are channeled (see verse 9). The RSV uses the pronoun “it” instead of “she”: “And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’” From the standpoint of the people down here, the *natural* element, the righteousness will pertain to Jerusalem, whence the word of the Lord goes forth. But the righteousness can also be considered as coming from the *heavenly* realm. Both are true, for “out of [the heavenly] Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3). The Law will go from Zion to Jerusalem and then out to the rest of the earth. Both the spiritual and the natural aspect are in verse 16 but from two different perspectives.

**Jer. 33:17** For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel;

**Jer. 33:18** Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.

To understand what *God* was saying in these verses, let us start backwards with verse 18. When this prophecy was uttered, Jerusalem was under siege, so although Solomon’s Temple had not yet been destroyed, certainly meal offerings were not being offered at that time, for the people of Judah were starving. With the food supply cut off, the offerings ceased. Moreover, the Temple was leveled shortly thereafter, and for 70 years, the Israelite survivors were captives in Babylon without a Temple, so there were no continual burnt offerings at that time.

At the end of the 70 years in 536 BC, those who returned to the homeland from captivity gradually rebuilt the Temple. First, the altar and the structure, which is styled Zerubbabel’s Temple, were constructed; then the courts were added later over a period of time. Burnt offerings were offered, etc., but again those services and offerings were interrupted, for the Romans destroyed that Temple and Jerusalem in AD 69-70. And even today the Temple does not exist. Therefore, verse 18 applies to the Kingdom Age, when the Third Temple will be built and animal sacrifices will be reinstated. At that time, there will be a priesthood and burnt offerings “to do sacrifice continually.”

“David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel.” The king at this time in Jeremiah’s day was Zedekiah, to whom it was stated, “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: ... I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him” (Ezek. 21:26,27). Not only were Solomon’s Temple and Jerusalem destroyed, but also, much like the offerings, the kingship ceased as far as having an individual to sit on the throne. After the 70 years of captivity, Israel was a satellite nation under Gentile control that was either strict or a little more liberal depending on who was in authority. Thus there was no mention of a king in Israel after the Babylonian captivity. The civil authority was called “governor” (Hag. 1:1,14; 2:2,21; Mal. 1:8). Therefore, we want to understand what God meant in saying that David would never lack a man “to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel.”

The fulfillment of this promise will commence with the future inauguration and establishment of the Kingdom. Then a nominal king, called the “prince,” will be on the throne, and the Zadok priesthood will serve in the Temple (Ezek. 40:46; 43:19; 44:3,15; 45:7,16,22; 46:2,4,8,10,12,16,18; 48:11,21,22). In the heavenly realm, the Lord will be King, and The Christ will be the Melchisedec priesthood (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1,10,11,15,17,21). This “church-state” arrangement will be authoritative, but there will be representatives down here on earth. The Church will be both kings and priests up above, but Jesus and the Church will operate through earthly representation down here that is separated into the office of prince and the Zadok priesthood. Stated another way, in the heavenly phase of the Kingdom, church and state will operate together (in union), whereas in the earthly phase of the Kingdom, they will be separated into two divisions.

Notice what verses 17 and 18 do *not* say. The word “forever,” meaning “for eternity,” is not included. Bible pictures show that ultimately at the end of the Kingdom Age, all who pass the test in the Little Season will become kings as Adam was before he sinned. At that time, the Kingdom will be given to the children of men (Psa. 115:16). All who are faithful and enter into the age beyond the Kingdom, into the “world without end,” will be kings, so from that standpoint, there would be no problem even by extrapolation (Isa. 45:17).

Priests will not be needed beyond the Kingdom Age, for the function of a priest is to make atonement. If atonement is fully consummated, there will be no need for a priest to offer sacrifices for atonement of one kind or another, such as a thank or a peace offering. The Scriptures clearly teach that once Jesus steps out from his role as Mediator, tried and proven mankind will be at one with God.

The word “never” in verse 17 would be a problem without the King James margin alternate translation, “There shall not be cut off from David,” which indicates an application only during the Kingdom Age, not for eternity. If every man is a king, there will be no need for a throne in the usual sense. However, something else will be done.

The very fact man was first created here is significant. When Adam was made of the earth, he was the first human to appear on the scene, for none of the other universes were or are currently inhabited. Therefore, we believe that audiovisual representations of the happenings here on earth will be continually operative for eternity. After all, if the universe is illimitable from a human standpoint, the population will go on forever and ever, always enlarging, and the history of what Jesus did down here on earth will be perpetuated. Earth’s drama will be enacted again and again for a very long time down here. If the population of this planet is to be transferred elsewhere—and there seem to be some indications to this effect—then the formation and population of earth, the entrance of sin, the need for atonement, the call of Jesus, the necessity for his sacrifice, the call of the Church, etc., will all have to be known as a

part of past history.

When future beings are created, wouldn't they sin like Adam if they were as ignorant as he was? Yes. One reason Adam sinned was his lack of knowledge. In addition, he became too attached to Eve. While the great majority of future beings would live forever, reason says that some would fall away. However, if they see filmed records of what actually happened with the permission of sin on earth, their chances of living forever will be almost as good as those who are accounted worthy to enter into the age beyond the Kingdom (Luke 20:35,36). Although they will not be tested like mankind down here during the Little Season, the knowledge will be so convincing that very few will go into Second Death in the everlasting future. Moreover, such individuals would be cut off right away because sin will not be tolerated. For that very reason, Second Death remains eternal, as the Pastor said.

From that standpoint, the memory of earth's history and the Kingdom arrangement will last forever—just as the smoke of Babylon will ascend forever. Filmed records of the history of earth will be shown into the ages of ages. When yet unborn generations on other planets see what actually happened here, they will vicariously and emotionally enter the experiences in a way that will be very effective and beneficial. As Christians, we believe the Bible by faith, but others will see audiovisual records of the actual persecutions in the dungeons, for example. As a result, they will not be tempted to open Pandora's box of evils. Among many other things, they will see Satan (through the serpent) beguiling Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, implying that it would make her wise. Satan posed as a patron, benefactor, and friend of the sinner. In fact, the Deceiver even deceived himself. How ironic that this Mastermind, who has been the enemy of God, became a victim of *self*-deception!

Incidentally, with regard to the future and interplanetary travel, etc., we can extrapolate just so far. To go too much further, we get a little frightened. We have thought on these subjects, but when we get into "iffy" territory, we want to stop right away.

Other promises show that the kingship scepter will not depart from the lineage of Jesus Christ. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). Jesus was a son of David, and from Mary's lineage, he may even have been a son of Levi.

If the theory is correct that every saint who makes his calling and election sure will have an earthly representative down here, then couldn't Jesus himself, as an individual, also have an earthly representative? This representative will be the *office* of the prince and the *office* of Zadok. In other words, Jesus will not have to come down here personally, for the office will represent him, even though different people will serve at different times.

**Q:** Since the Zadok priesthood will serve in the Third Temple, why does verse 18 mention the Levites?

**A:** Zadok was a *particular* Levite.

**Comment:** It is interesting that not only was David favored with the "sure mercies," but also Zadok was high priest in his days.

The RSV renders "continually" as "for ever." There will definitely be sacrifices in the Kingdom, but will they continue beyond? During the Kingdom, the world will be under a theocracy with iron rule, but after the Kingdom, it will be a (relaxed) republic. Verse 17 suggests that there will be at least a *nominal* representative as "king" here on earth into the ages of ages. Since the Ancient Worthies will get a spiritual resurrection after the Kingdom, the "king" will not be one

of them. Jerusalem will be the capital of the world *forever*, the Temple will exist *forever*, the priesthood will continue *forever*, and the sacrifices will also continue but *very minimally*. The representative who will “sit upon the throne of the house of Israel” in Jerusalem will probably be selected from the Zadok priesthood, and it is likely that the representation will be *rotational*. Thus there will be a *ceremonial* aspect in the ages to come.

**Jer. 33:19** And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying,

**Jer. 33:20** Thus saith the LORD; if ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season;

God’s covenant of day and night is *continual*. He is the Lord of “hosts,” both animate and inanimate. Here He was referring to His law of inanimate objects such as planets, the sun, etc., that determine day and night. “In their season” is a qualifying phrase because of the elliptical orbits that cause the length of days and nights to vary according to the time of year.

**Jer. 33:21** Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.

God made this promise while Jerusalem was under siege and Nebuchadnezzar was about to capture the city. Just as the physical laws cannot be broken, so in the future, one of David’s seed (that is, Jesus) will reign upon God’s throne. What great timing for this promise! Formerly a prophet of doom in time of peace, Jeremiah now prophesied hope in time of trouble.

“Levites” (priests) are mentioned to show that the Temple arrangement will be reinstated in the Kingdom. *Zadok* means “priests.” In David’s day, God made the promise of the “sure mercies of David” and also of future service for the Zadok priesthood.

**Jer. 33:22** As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.

We cannot number the host of heaven or measure the sand of the sea—but God both numbers the stars and knows the name of each one (Psa. 147:4). He has His own celestial chart. To be “unnumbered [indefinite]” and to be “numberless [without end]” are two different things. The point is that the Levites will be very numerous in the future, and God knows the number, even if we do not. The universe is finite to God, but to man, it is infinite. To God, there is a definite number, but to man, the universe is numberless.

God will multiply the seed of the Levites, the priests, His ministers. He will reinstate the priesthood under the New (Law) Covenant. Verse 22 is an indirect confirmation of the thought in the Book of Ezekiel that there will be marriages and children born of the Zadok priesthood. Jeremiah was speaking of the future time when Jerusalem would *thrive* under God’s favor and be greatly blessed. He was saying in effect that the progeny of the Levites would be so prolific that no one would want to take the time to number them.

**Jer. 33:23** Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

**Jer. 33:24** Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them.

The “two families” are the northern and the southern kingdoms, the ten tribes and the two tribes, respectively. The ten-tribe kingdom was cast off first and the two-tribe kingdom later.

**Jer. 33:25 Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;**

**Jer. 33:26 Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.**

If the ordinances, or laws, of day and night could be changed (which they cannot), God would cast off the seed of Jacob. God will take some of the seed of David to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Hence we know that there will be many Ancient Worthies and that they will serve on a rotational basis. Imagine Jeremiah's giving these promises of future mercy while the city was under siege!

"I [God] will cause their captivity to return, and [will] have mercy on them [the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob]." Jesus said, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11). Thus the returning of the captivity refers not only to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but also to their seed, their progeny.

**Jer. 34:1 The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying,**

**Jer. 34:2 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire:**

**Jer. 34:3 And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon.**

Verse 1 identifies the place and circumstance: the Babylonian army was at the gate, besieging Jerusalem. Chapter 34 gives the history of what ultimately became Zedekiah's fate. God told Jeremiah to go to King Zedekiah and tell him not only that the city would be defeated but also that he would speak personally with Nebuchadnezzar and be taken captive to Babylon.

"Thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand." Elsewhere the Scriptures tell us that Zedekiah tried to escape at night outside the walls by the Pool of Siloam, but he was captured. Apparently, he acted on Jeremiah's prophecy. When captured, Zedekiah was taken to Riblah, where his sons and other nobles were killed and his eyes were put out. Afterward he was taken to Babylon. Hence Zedekiah saw Nebuchadnezzar, but he did not see Babylon, even though he went there. Meanwhile, in captivity in Babylon while the siege was going on, Ezekiel pantomimed Zedekiah's capture by Nebuchadnezzar.

There is not much information about Zedekiah subsequent to his imprisonment in Babylon. He seemed to disappear from sight. The only king who reappeared was Jeconiah, who had reigned for only three months before his captivity and imprisonment in Babylon.

**Jer. 34:4 Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword:**

**Jer. 34:5 But thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings**



which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD.

“Thou shalt die in peace [that is, not in battle]: and with the burnings of thy fathers, ... so shall they burn odours for thee; and they will lament thee.” Here we get a little insight into a prevailing custom that would be performed for Zedekiah after his decease. If a king did memorable things, the people built a huge fire and threw incense into it to cause sparkles. The roaring fire represented the king in his vigor doing the memorable deeds, whereas the dying embers signified his death. This was done for Zedekiah because he was the last crowned king of Judah (even though, as a vassal, he had been put on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar) and because things looked hopeless. The Jews lamented his death, since the office of king was no longer occupied. The enactment occurred later when the king died in captivity.

Messiah’s lineage would go through Jeconiah, who was still alive among the captives. However, the people were not aware of this, and thinking the lineage had to go through Zedekiah, they considered the situation hopeless.

**Comment:** A very great “burning” was made for King Asa, but there was no “burning” for King Jehoram (2 Chron. 16:13,14; 21:19).

**Jer. 34:6** Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem,

**Jer. 34:7** When the king of Babylon’s army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defenced cities remained of the cities of Judah.

While Nebuchadnezzar was outside the Jerusalem gates, besieging the city, all the other cities of Judah had already fallen except Lachish and Azekah, which were still fighting.

**Jer. 34:8** This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them;

**Jer. 34:9** That every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, being an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother.

**Jer. 34:10** Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let them go.

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

Verses 8-11 go back and explain one of the reasons Zedekiah’s decease was lamented. The king ordered all the people to free their Hebrew servants. According to the Law, servants were to be freed on a regular basis after a six-year term of servitude. Therefore, the mention of Zedekiah’s order suggests this practice had been neglected for a long period of time. Freeing the servants ingratiated him in the eyes of those who procured that freedom. Afterward, however, the people took the servants back into bondage. Freeing the servants probably meant that a seven-year period was ending while the siege was going on. Thus this chapter continues to be a straightforward running account of things that occurred in connection with

Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem and Jeremiah's role through God's instructions.

Why did the people rescind the covenant made by Zedekiah and put the servants and handmaids back under subjection? Many in the cities of Judah that fell had fled to Jerusalem either to rally for the defense of the nation or to find supposed security. At that point, the inhabitants of Jerusalem felt the king of Egypt would send help, and because they believed rescue was possible, they wanted to have the servants back.

Incidentally, the first arm of Egypt was broken at the time of Josiah. When the kings of Egypt and Babylon had a confrontation, Josiah went out to help Egypt, but he died in the conflict and was greatly mourned by the people of Judah. In that encounter, the king of Egypt was defeated, and Jeremiah prophesied not only that Egypt would get a mortal wound in the breaking of the second arm but also that Nebuchadnezzar would go down there and establish his throne in one of the leading cities to execute judgment. (For details on this portion of history and the breaking of Egypt's second arm, see Ezekiel 30.)

**Jer. 34:12** Therefore the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

**Jer. 34:13** Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying,

**Jer. 34:14** At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear.

**Jer. 34:15** And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name:

Through Jeremiah, God commended the people of Judah for freeing their Jewish servants and handmaids, even though the liberty was granted under some pressure. Hence we are given an insight into God's character. Lessons such as this one should be stored up from the standpoint of God's patience and mercy. Therefore, when He acts in what appears to be a precipitous way, we should study those principles as well, for there are good reasons for His conduct.

**Jer. 34:16** But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom ye had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids.

**Jer. 34:17** Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

God was saying, "You responded readily, and I praise you for that. But you made a mockery of the covenant, for as soon as circumstances changed, you fell right back in the pit. Initially you took a noble stand and proclaimed liberty to your servants and handmaids, but now you have turned around and done the same thing your forefathers did in ignoring other periods of release. Shame on you!"

Notice the sarcasm in verse 17. When the king publicly announced the year of release for servants, the people freed them because it was expedient to do so, but then they had second thoughts and put them back under bondage. God was angry and said sarcastically, "Now I will

make a proclamation of liberty for you to die by sword, pestilence, and famine.”

Despite all the lessons down through history, the Jews still do not see the need for repentance. They ignore the lessons in the Word. In the New Testament, we learn about Jesus—his thinking, his character, what he did and said, and how he acted under various circumstances. In the Old Testament, we are given an insight into the Heavenly Father.

**Jer. 34:18** And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof,

**Jer. 34:19** The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf;

**Jer. 34:20** I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.

This chapter is a study of human nature. Nebuchadnezzar and all his army were fighting against Jerusalem, yet on behalf of the nation, the princes and the priests paused and went through this whole ritual to make a covenant whereby a calf was cut in half, and they walked in between the parts ceremoniously. One part represented God, and the other part represented the people's obligation. Their walking in between signified, "We will fulfill the covenant." This was a way of making a solemn contract and formalizing the people's assent, or oath. The actual granting of liberty did take place, but shortly afterward the people reneged on their word and made the contract a farce.

**Q:** Did the princes, priests, eunuchs, and people all walk between the two parts of the calf?

**A:** While under siege and with famine about to take place, surely all the people of Judah did not perform the ritual, just the princes and the priests representatively. The animals still in their possession were now a priceless commodity, but of these, one was used for this purpose. God initiated this practice with Abraham in giving a prophecy of 3,960 years (Gen. 15:9,10).

One lesson is that we, being fallen by nature, can also be a bundle of contradictions. However, the Lord gives us the *spirit* of a sound mind, which operates with degrees of soundness and helps us to see how much we need cleansing and forgiveness, because every one of us does a lot of contradictory things. We should be very careful about using the word "never," for if we say we will *never* do such and such, we can be almost sure we will get a trial along that line.

We have given our all to the Lord, so as best we can, we should remain faithful unto death to our covenant of sacrifice. At that time, when we can no longer retrace our steps, judgment will be rendered as to where we fit into God's plan. As the hymn says, "We know we've nothing worthy that we can call our own—the light, the oil, the robes we wear, are all from him alone." The Lord looks at our will, intent, desire, drive, and enthusiasm; these are precious to Him. We want a consistency in our character so that we can hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21).

**Q:** Can Judah's reneging on their covenant be considered similar to the Christian's going back on his covenant of consecration and thus falling into the hands of the living God?

**A:** That is true in principle. The Lord does not take lightly the breaking of a vow. As stated under the Law, "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to

pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee” (Deut. 23:21).

From a practical standpoint, the year of release for a servant was according to his *personal* servitude. In addition, the Law provided for a release to be symbolically done on a *national* basis. However, the letter of the Law was to be carried out by the master for each individual servant in his household who had served for six years. Thus there was a counting of seven-year periods to a fiftieth Jubilee year. Not only was land to be returned to its original owners at that time, but also the time periods leading to that year had ceremonial aspects.

“Their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.” Because of the people’s disobedience, wild animals and dogs would eat their dead bodies in 606 BC—whether they died of sword, famine, or pestilence. Their corpses would not be buried.

We are reminded of Jezebel, whose body was given to the dogs to eat. What was the reason? Just as with her decease, there was no memorial stone, so with the destruction of the nominal system, all that will remain is the “smoke of her burning”; there will be no corpse (Rev. 18:9).

**Jer. 34:21** And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon’s army, which are gone up from you.

**Jer. 34:22** 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 an inhabitant.

It seems that King Nebuchadnezzar momentarily relaxed the siege. Perhaps that is when the people took the servants back, thinking they would escape captivity. At any rate, something diversionary occurred. The same thing happened in AD 70 when Vespasian relaxed the siege around Jerusalem before Titus, his son, took over.

“And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies.” When Zedekiah was taken with the princes, his sons were put to death. The fact that Zedekiah’s life was spared suggests he must have had some fragment of goodness. Yes, his eyes were put out, but he was allowed to die in peace in prison. Deeds and statements of kindness and comfort do not go unnoticed. Some are purposely stored up for a future reward, and some are rewarded in the present life. For example, the Ark of the Covenant was put in a personal man’s home for a number of years, and as long as it was there, he had blessings. The Lord does give rewards whether or not we know it.

**Jer. 35:1** The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,

Verse 1 is a flashback of approximately 18 years to the days of King Jehoiakim, Zedekiah’s predecessor. (The last few chapters took place during the siege under Zedekiah’s reign.)

**Jer. 35:2** Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.

Jeremiah was instructed by the Lord to bring the Rechabites to the Temple and give them wine to drink. As here, the phrase “house of the LORD” is usually literal, but it sometimes has a spiritual meaning or both a literal and a spiritual meaning.

**Q:** Why were the Rechabites specially mentioned?

**A:** They were introduced here because of the family, which we will discuss a little later. Wasn't this circumstance a testing? By putting wine before the Rechabites, God was proving them to see whether they would keep a vow that had been made years earlier. We need to think on the principle that is involved, for principles are defined by exercising the mind. The Lord allows certain things to happen to His people to prove whether they really love Him and His commandments (Exod. 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; Psa. 26:2; 2 Cor. 8:8).

**Jer. 35:3** Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites;

The last phrase should be “*even* the whole house of the Rechabites.” Rechab, the *original* head of the family, was dead, so the whole house of the Rechabites consisted of “Jaazaniah ... the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons.” Jaazaniah was more or less the head of the Rechabite family at this time, so all the living relatives were with him, and all were brought into the house of the Lord. (Incidentally, the “Jeremiah” of verse 3 is not the prophet.)

These individuals were mentioned because some of them can be identified if we are studiously inclined. However, the main point is that Jeremiah brought the entire house of the Rechabites into a certain chamber, or room, in the Temple. These were the living descendants, or remnants, of the Rechabite family, who had accompanied the Israelites into Judah.

**Jer. 35:4** And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door:

Verse 4 pinpoints the particular chamber. The physical setup was suited to Jeremiah's preaching from a vantage point a little later on. The chamber was “by” (near) the princes' chamber—hence on the east side—and on the second floor. The chambers were open-faced *inward*. The people entered through the east (or prince's) gate, which was the *main* gate. Being elevated on the second floor, Jeremiah could see and was seen by those in the court as he addressed them.

This chamber was probably identified with the Inner Court because the Rechabites, being religious, were not just ordinary lay people (the public). We believe they can be traced back to the Levites.

The mention of multiple names in verses 3 and 4 is meant for posterity. No idle words are in the Bible, the Word of *God*, even if they are not meant for us as Christians in the Gospel Age. These individuals will be seen in the future in the Kingdom. Everything is being photographed because planet Earth is very important in God's plan. In one respect, the earth is the center of the universe because Jesus died *here*, and the human race began *here*. The Bible is *packed* with information, but we should not get sidetracked into a study of lineage and genealogy.

Back to the main point—the testing of the Rechabites. For this test, Jeremiah gathered the entire family in a particular room of the Temple.

Igdaliah, the party who had charge of the chamber, was “a man of God,” that is, a man who loved the Lord. This chamber was directly above the chamber of the keeper of the door (or gate)—again showing it was close to the main entry gate for the people. More information will be provided in the future to show why Igdaliah was called a man of God and, hence, will be an

Ancient Worthy.

**Comment:** Igdaliah's having a room in the Temple shows he was favored of God.

**Jer. 35:5** And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

Jeremiah "set" (prepared) the wine for the Rechabites; that is, he put "pots [decanters] full of wine, and cups" before them and instructed them to drink. The fact that the test was administered right in the Temple of God, and not in a private home, indicates it was crucial.

We are reminded of another crucial test of a "man of God" who was told to go and deliver a message to King Jeroboam and then return promptly, not stopping to eat bread or drink water (1 Kings 13:1-24). But after the message was given, an old prophet approached the man of God and beseeched him, "Come home with me and eat bread." To convince the man of God, the old prophet lied and said that an angel from God had issued the invitation. Since the man of God had been specifically instructed to return home immediately, without delay, he was wrong to listen to the old prophet. Thus it is possible to be deceived by one who claims to speak in the name of God.

**Jer. 35:6** But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever:

Years earlier the Rechabite sons were specifically commanded by Jonadab, their father, not to drink any wine. Therefore, they now replied to Jeremiah, even though he was a *true prophet of the Lord*, "We will drink no wine." Of course Jeremiah was tempting them as per God's instruction. The Rechabites could have hastily drunk just a little wine since Jeremiah was the Lord's prophet and they were in the Lord's house, the Temple, but NO! By refusing, they were faithful to the commandment of Jonadab, Rechab's "son" of *many* generations previous. The entire family had successively made vows and would not break them.

At the time Jonadab came on the scene, he made the promise not to drink wine, and each son in turn passed the vow on to his son, so that all the Rechabites from then on had so promised. Because of the *intensity* and the *solemnity* of the original vow, none of the Rechabites would let anything deter them from that reverence for their father and the keeping of the vow.

One lesson is that it is important to *live* God's instructions. Only a few words are stated in the Scriptures, but we can see that the original command by Jonadab must have been very emphatic. Another lesson is that an original command or vow has the precedence, the priority of importance. As Christians, we individually made a vow to do God's will. The Apostle Paul warned, "Though ... an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). In other words, we should stop and think before we act or make critical decisions that involve principle. We are not to go by impulse or emotion, which is the tendency with all of us. We all make mistakes from time to time, but the *trend* of the mistakes becomes important.

The obedience of the *entire* family of Rechabites, including wives and children, shows the respect and honor they had for the parent. In addition to being an extraordinary father, Jonadab must have been exemplary in his personal life. On a higher plane, the same principle applies to the Christian, who looks to Jesus as the perfect example.

Ezekiel 18:24 states, "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth,

shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.” In other words, in the day that a person transgresses, do we follow him based on all the good things he has done in the past? No. Of course we are talking about a serious matter, not something trivial.

Christians are faced with some difficult decisions. Those who make the Little Flock do not need a college education, but they must be *thinkers*. They may not be able to speak or read well, but they must understand God’s principles because the bottom line for the Little Flock is *loyalty and obedience to God*.

**Comment:** In regard to the subtlety of the test, the Rechabites could have used a number of factors to rationalize their obedience. (1) Jeremiah was a *prophet* of the Lord. (2) *God* had given the instruction to set wine before them. (3) They were brought into not only the *Temple* but also a *special* room. It was almost as if the Lord had prepared the wine for them, so they could easily have rationalized, and the same is true with us.

**Reply:** Yes, this very severe test measured the mettle of their character. Jeremiah was told to round up every living descendant of Rechab—the entire family—for this test.

When the sons promised their father, Jonadab, they probably took an oath to the Lord. While they obeyed his command, he no doubt wanted verification, and such techniques in the Old Testament were very reverential and meaningful.

**Comment:** Jonadab pictures the Great Company, so it is interesting that the test was so severe.

**Reply:** That is why none of us should be so confident that we put off the armor (1 Kings 20:11).

A lot of symbolism is in this type, for example, the pots of wine. Jonadab (Jehonadab) was associated with Jehu earlier in the Period of the Kings, shortly after the reign of Ahab (2 Kings 10:15-28). Jehu gave instructions to the worshippers of Baal, using the pretense of holding a great feast unto Baal. He said, “Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much. Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice to do to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live.... Proclaim a solemn assembly.” Wanting to destroy all the worshippers, Jehu made certain that all who were present believed in Baal. There is a nuance here with the *whole* house of the Rechabites and the *whole* house of Baal worshippers. Previously in the antitype, the pope, cardinals, bishops, etc., were all dealt with but not the common laity, who were now invited to this assembly. The interplay and nuances in these pictures are one of God’s ways of teaching us, so the types contain much information that is to be gleaned.

**Comment:** Wine was a part of the culture back there, so to give up wine for the duration of one’s life was a hardship.

**Reply:** Yes, the Rechabites said, “We will drink no wine: for Jonadab ... our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever” (verse 6). The call is to come out of mystic Babylon: “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4). To go back to the nominal Church after coming out would constitute drinking the (false) wine of Babylon.

The spiritual lesson of the Rechabites becomes obvious; namely, they represent a dedicated, consecrated element who have taken a vow to drink no wine forever under any circumstance. Those who come out of Babylon are God’s people but not necessarily the Little Flock. Their reward is conditional until death, for one can come out even now, at this late date, and make

his calling and election sure. The Pastor clearly taught that responsibility comes when a person has knowledge and sees the true condition of Babylon. Like Abraham's leaving Ur of the Chaldees, if a person leaves promptly, he is pleasing to the Lord. But coming out of Babylon is only the beginning, for how he meets each test subsequently is another matter.

With regard to the type, after Jehu had already caused much destruction, he met Jehonadab on the way and asked, "Are you in sympathy with what I am doing?" When Jehonadab's reply was yes, Jehu pulled him up into the chariot. In the antitype, the question would be, Are the Lord's people in sympathy with the fall of Babylon? Revelation 18:20 gives the proper sentiment: "*Rejoice over [the destruction of] her [Jezebel], thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.*" We used this Scripture in our younger days when some said we had the wrong spirit. Even up in heaven, there will be rejoicing not over the suffering of the people but over the *destruction of the false religious system*. We must not allow our emotions to in any way impede the fulfillment as it occurs, for we are neither to incite nor to retard the destruction. We are to just let the destruction happen in the Lord's way and time and simply tell the history.

Jonadab, then, represents the Great Company class after Elijah is off the scene. Following the death of Jezebel, when dogs ate her flesh, Jehu said, "This is the word of the LORD, which he [previously] spake [prophesied] by his servant Elijah" (2 Kings 9:36). The Jonadab class will remain behind to wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb in the great tribulation (Rev. 7:14).

**Jer. 35:7 Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.**

**Jer. 35:8 Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters;**

**Jer. 35:9 Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed:**

**Jer. 35:10 But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.**

Verses 6-10 explain the vow, which included all wives and children. In addition to forbidding the drinking of wine, the vow also prohibited them from building houses, planting fields, and having vineyards, and they had to dwell in tents. In other words, the Rechabites were nomads, bedouins, living off the land, wandering from place to place. We are reminded of the Levites, who had no inheritance in the land, although they could partake of wine. This vow was extraordinary in that it was incumbent on the entire family.

Jonadab had said that if the Rechabites followed his advice and obeyed the vow, it would work out for their good because they were strangers in the land. Why would a bedouin type of life be especially beneficial to them? Rechab was the "father" of Jonadab. When the Israelites left Egypt, Rechab was somehow related to the Kenites, who were related to Moses, and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was involved. The Jethro branch, the Midianites, were not Israelites, but they were *sympathetic* to the Israelites and *cooperated* with them. And they were given a portion of land near Bethlehem. Therefore, regardless of marriage, if the Rechabites had owned land, they would have competed with the Israelites, and much friction and strife would have resulted. By living in the outskirts of the suburbs, the Rechabites avoided many problems. Therefore, the vow was helpful to them.



Jonadab lived in the days of Jezebel, Ahab, Elijah, and Elisha. He was a descendant of Rechab but lived several hundred years after the original family had started. In fact, Jonadab lived more than 300 years earlier than this account, and Rechab lived approximately 300 years prior to that—a total of 600 years. In other words, the vow was *voluntarily* taken by the descendants of Jonadab and *faithfully kept* for 300 years; generation after generation kept the vow. Now Jeremiah tempted them, but they still kept their vow. How commendable!

Consider the prohibition: no wine throughout their entire life. What would the Rechabites have used as a substitute liquid, especially when water was not that plentiful for bedouins? They had milk and water.

The Rechabites called Jonadab their “father” instead of saying he was their great great grandfather. Many use this type of reasoning and quote other verses that are somewhat comparable to prove certain points. It is true that “father” can be a broad term referring to ancestral background. For instance, the scribes and Pharisees at Jesus’ First Advent said, “We have Abraham to our *father*” (Matt. 3:9). However, we have to be careful that in using this type of language, we are not trying to *disprove* what the Bible is *proving*. Many chronologists use the term “father” to justify certain claims that they make. We should accept the word “father” as meaning the *immediate* relative, *unless* evidence to the contrary shows that it means “grandfather,” “great grandfather,” etc. In other words, we need justification for changing the meaning of “father” to indicate a much broader term, for otherwise, we would be wresting Scripture. Here we can prove that Jonadab was not the immediate father but that he went back several generations because he lived in the days of Jehu.

**Jer. 35:11** But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

Now, in Jeremiah’s day, the Rechabites went to Jerusalem, being forced into a situation where they felt uncomfortable, but no doubt they continued to dwell in tents in the city. They were in Jerusalem because of the threat of danger from Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans, as well as the army of the Syrians. But back there the city was relatively agrarian. For example, right outside the city walls there were sheep. Thus they could dwell in tents in Jerusalem without violating their oath. Common sense dictated that they go to a place of more relative safety, namely, the environs of Jerusalem itself.

The fourth year of Jehoiakim was the first year of King Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, this king of Babylon was already on the scene.

**Q:** Is there an antitype for the Rechabites’ dwelling in tents in Jerusalem?

**A:** We should be in the boat with Jesus, and water should not be in the boat. Jesus went among sinners, but as an itinerant, going from place to place, he kept himself separate by not cultivating friendships of an unsavory kind. Because of the appeal of his gospel message, publicans and sinners flocked to him, but *he* made the environment, not the others. And so we should be careful not to compromise principle.

**Q:** In the Jehu type, Jonadab pictures the Great Company, but with regard to the Rechabites’ *faithfulness* to their vow, wouldn’t they picture a faithful class?

**A:** Yes. At present, we are just trying to understand the type. On our own time at home, we can go into other applications. If we mix the two now, as we go verse by verse, we will not get

as sharp an image. For many years, we have said that the type must first be understood clearly before we start to draw antitypes or lessons. Many who do not have the historical background make strange assumptions that are not supported in Scripture. Thus we try to stress the natural, the physical, and then the spiritual lessons will come later.

Right away we can see that the Levites, who had no inheritance in the land, were separate from the other Israelites. The Great Company cannot help being *in* the world, but they can separate themselves so that they are not *of* the world. Friendship of the world is enmity with God (James 4:4).

The Bible is low-key and does not romanticize, as Hollywood is prone to do, but Jonadab must have been a remarkable person. Generally speaking, filmmakers distort the pictures of the Old Testament. An exception is Cecil B. DeMille's "The Ten Commandments," which is still a classic. To his credit, he gave more of a spiritual application.

**Jer. 35:12** Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

**Jer. 35:13** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD.

**Jer. 35:14** The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.

**Jer. 35:15** I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time. God began to draw a lesson in regard to the Rechabites' refusal to drink wine. They were obeying the commandment of a great great grandfather, whereas the people of the current generation in Judah ignored the prophesying of Jeremiah, who was speaking in the name of Jehovah. There was a marked contrast between the two. What a rebuke to the people of Judah! For Jeremiah to point out this embarrassing, shameful situation was not evidence of a bad spirit on his part, for love is sometimes disciplinary and corrective. A big subject, "love" does not mean to pat everyone on the back. There are several definitions and applications, and to be properly educated on what our conduct should be under various circumstances, we need a "thus saith the LORD" on different points.

The lesson is that when *God* spoke to the current generation, they did not listen, but when a *man* spoke several generations earlier, the Rechabites obeyed. This contrast should have shocked the people of Judah, for they had disgraced the God of their covenant.

The Rechabite vow was sterner than the Nazarite vow. In the antitype, it pictures a Levitical situation. From an unfavorable standpoint, "wine" pictures wrong doctrine and a worldly spirit. From a favorable standpoint, the Christian drinks the "wine" of the Holy Spirit and rejoices in the truth.

"I [God] have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me." The expression "rising early" is used frequently in the Old Testament. In other words, God always

has a spokesman for any period of history, and that is true both back there and in the Gospel Age. No one can ever use the excuse “Oh, if I had only known, I would have acted differently.” When someone makes this statement in the Kingdom, he will be shown films of his own experiences in the past and his lack of response. Both before and during a circumstance, God provides warnings and exhortations. He knows our secret behaviors—our downsittings and our uprisings (Psa. 139:2). Everything is being weighed—our negative and our positive points—for God judges the heart and the will and knows whether or not we would sin if we had a *new* body. As faithful and zealous as the Apostle Paul was, he did not judge himself—and neither can we (1 Cor. 4:3). We are to do the best we can everyday continually and keep running toward the goal, and then leave the results with God.

God gave Jeremiah a little discourse and said, “Now tell the house of Israel about this incident.” God’s words to Judah were as follows: “I have raised up prophets day and night to you as my people. They have warned and reasoned with you repeatedly, but still you are stiff-necked. Here is another family who are not even Israelites (and thus are not direct worshippers of me), but they had such respect for their father and his character that *for 300 years*, they remained consistently faithful to that arrangement.” What a scorching sermon! It was like Jesus’ saying to strangers, “I have not seen in the whole house of Israel the faith that you have demonstrated.”

**Jer. 35:16** Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me:

**Jer. 35:17** Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.

Verses 16 and 17 are a summation of the lesson of the Rechabites. Being an emotional person, Jeremiah had great concern for his people, yet he had to speak strong words to them, so we can imagine how he felt when he administered the wine test and saw the Rechabites’ example of faithfulness. The entire drama was a backdrop so that he could explain how faithful the Rechabites had been to their father, whereas the Israelites, *with all their blessings*, had not been faithful to God. The faithfulness of the Rechabites was so outstanding that in self-examination, Jeremiah probably asked himself, “Have I done everything for the Lord in the best way possible?”

Again and again Jeremiah demonstrated his earnest interest in his people by trying to change them from their wayward condition. God dealt with natural Israel over centuries of time to prove them, manifesting mercy and forbearance on their behalf.

In the Book of Isaiah, God used the brute beast to demonstrate the same lesson of the Israelites’ failure to hearken. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know [their Provider]” (Isa. 1:3 ). The dumb animals had more sense than the Israelites.

**Jer. 35:18** And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you:

**Jer. 35:19** Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

Verses 18 and 19 provide another slant. “Because ye have obeyed the commandment of

Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts ... Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever." Jonadab's "precepts" involved giving up earthly attractions. We can see how important it is for the will to be centered in obedience, for the Rechabites' strong character and obedience kept them separate from the influences of the world and society. God can use that type of dedication, for He wants strong characters, not putty-like dispositions. The consecrated are diamonds in the rough from the standpoint of both the will and the exterior; they need polishing through disciplinary experiences and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Through Jeremiah, God promised to remember the family of Rechab in the Kingdom arrangement. (We are reminded of the "sure mercies of David" and the Zadok priesthood of the future. Because of Zadok's faithfulness to David, the priesthood for Ezekiel's Temple will stem from him.) God remembers acts of faithfulness and will reward them. Of course if an *individual* was *unfaithful*, he would be exempt from that promise, but the family from Jonadab through that day was promised an everlasting remembrance and honor in the Kingdom.

The word Rechab sounds like Rahab. The "ch" is merely a form of the same Hebrew letter, and "Re" can just as easily be "Ra," for the vowels were supplied by the translators. Rahab had a mysterious previous lineage. Why did she listen to the God of Israel, who had opened the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross? Interesting things happened in the lives of such individuals, but the Scriptures do not go into detail.

What Jonadab did in this setting suggests a powerful spiritual application. The Rechabites or Jonadabites are the male counterpart of Ruth. Both were aliens, not Israelites, who adopted the Jewish religion. Ruth pictures the Gentile Church, those who came from an alien background into the Jewish Church stock. (Gentile branches were grafted into the original olive tree.) Likewise, the Rechabites, alien people who manifested an interest in God, will be adopted into His family and have a perpetual relationship with Him, *spiritually* speaking, in the Church.

**Q:** Do the Jonadabites and the Rechabites picture the Gentile Church, with Ruth being the other witness?

**A:** Yes, but as far as the type is concerned, there is a natural relationship. It is important to realize that Ruth married a Jew. When Naomi's husband and sons died in a foreign land, it was time for decision making. Orpah, the other daughter-in-law, stayed in Moab, but Ruth accompanied Naomi back to Israel. But there was a relationship—just as there was with Rahab and others. They all had a mysterious background in the calling. A deep principle is stated in Acts 2:39, "The promise is [made] unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." A number of Jesus' apostles were identified with his natural family either directly or through an in-law relationship. It is remarkable how many of them lived in the Sea of Galilee area, and even around Nazareth. It is like a chess game with pieces being manipulated back and forth, ulterior motives, and moves being planned far in advance. And so the Lord knows what is happening in the various nations. The Cross of Jesus Christ is the center of eternity. Stated another way, eternity existed before the Cross, and it exists after the Cross. Of course the Heavenly Father was alone for a long, long time before Michael was created in the spirit realm.

**Jer. 36:1** And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

The time setting, the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, was probably just a little later than the previous chapter. However, it was a number of years before the earlier chapters that took place during the siege of Jerusalem, which started in the

middle of the ninth year of Zedekiah. In other words, from the chapter where the king of Babylon was at the city gates, the account goes back in time to almost 20 years earlier and brings up a new subject. We have to go through a lot of material to understand why Ezra collated the Book of Jeremiah in this out-of-sequence fashion.

Jeremiah's ministry was initiated during the reign of Josiah, a good king who was responsive to the prophet's instruction. Now that degeneration had set in, Jeremiah gave the same message all over again, but this time he got no response because Jehoiakim was morally weak. Thus the account goes back in time and talks about a historical note that had previously taken place many years before.

**Jer. 36:2** Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.

Jeremiah was told to get "a roll of a book" (a scroll) and write down all that God had spoken against Israel and Judah and other nations—warnings, admonitions, etc., to do certain things in view of the pending judgment. What was spoken against "all the [Gentile] nations" is recorded in *subsequent* chapters—that is, after chapter 36—yet the admonitions and warnings started *way back in the days of Josiah*. In other words, under Josiah's reign, Jeremiah did a lot of things of which we are just now becoming aware.

Jeremiah was to write down in a scroll everything "from the days of Josiah, even unto this day," that is, from the beginning of his ministry through the very day this instruction came in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. He was to write a review of everything, a running commentary, and put it in a book. For this *tremendous* task, Jeremiah enlisted the help of Baruch, a scholar and close friend, a man of reputation, who did the recording.

We are reminded of the circumstances of the recording of the Book of Revelation. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him [Jesus], to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he [God] sent and signified it by his angel [Jesus] unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw" (Rev. 1:1,2). In other words, the Book of Revelation from cover to cover originated with God, Jesus did the dictating, and John wrote down the message—as Baruch would do. Like Jeremiah as a human being, Jesus was "shut up" as a spirit being; thus the same principle operated between the Father and the Son that operated between God and Jeremiah. As a divine being, the Father could not come down here, for no man can see God and live (Exod. 33:20; John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). And the resurrected Jesus could not come down here, so he needed an earthly stenographer; hence John recorded what Jesus told him in vision.

In the antitype, Jeremiah's scroll tells of things in our day, so the principles enunciated are important for us at this end of the age. There are actual pictures and actual principles, as we will see in succeeding chapters.

**Jer. 36:3** It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

God was saying, "It may be that Judah will hear all the evil I purpose to do to them and repent so that I can forgive them." Of course He knew the people as a whole would not hearken, but to tell that to Jeremiah in advance would have been discouraging. God does not lie—He just said they *might* reconsider and repent.

The people did not listen to what Jeremiah said in the fourth year of Jehoiakim or in the early years of Zedekiah, but when the king of Babylon was at the city gates shortly before 606 BC, that was a different matter. What Jeremiah had predicted was happening. With the king of Babylon right outside Jerusalem with his army, the people agreed to release their servants, but as soon as Nebuchadnezzar relaxed the siege for a moment, they reinstated slavery. The repetition of Jeremiah's message reveals to us the justice, compassion, and patience of God, for He gave ample opportunity for repentance and reform. Even though God is intuitive and knows the end from the beginning, He takes steps to grant opportunity for repentance and the forgiveness of sin.

The people as a whole did not hearken, but perhaps a Jew who had not heard Jeremiah earlier would come on the scene, hear him, and repent. Hence repetition was beneficial for reaching an individual here and there. With regard to those in the wrong heart condition who dwelled in Jerusalem and were tired of the preaching, Jeremiah might have reasoned, "What's the use?" but the repetition had value for a small number of individuals.

**Jer. 36:4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.**

**Jer. 36:5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD:**

**Jer. 36:6 Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD'S house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.**

**Jer. 36:7 It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people.**

Jeremiah dictated to Baruch the words to be written on the scroll. What a fatiguing, time-consuming work! When done writing, Baruch was to go to the Temple, a conspicuous place, and read the scroll to the people. Why was this method followed? Because Jeremiah was shut up in prison and under house arrest in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, he could not deliver the message himself.

Of course the moral instruction is excellent, but in addition, these other details give us more of a feeling as to what was happening. While Jeremiah was in prison, God wanted him to give this message but in the same words that God had previously given him. Moreover, what Jeremiah had previously said in his sermons was now to be put in writing.

To comply with this instruction, Jeremiah had to be like Moses; that is, he had to remember everything he had previously said. Among other things, the prophet would have had a remarkable memory to be able to recall all the statements and dictate them to Baruch. The prophet would have said to Baruch, "I cannot do the writing or deliver the message, for I am locked up in prison, but the Lord wanted me to make this message known."

Incidentally, Baruch probably had some means, for as a prophet and a priest, Jeremiah had no income. Where would he have gotten the "roll of a book" except from Baruch? Also, Baruch had the time to assist Jeremiah.

**Jer. 36:8 And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet**

**commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD'S house.**

As wonderful as Baruch was, he did not have an extraordinary memory like Jeremiah, so he wrote down the prophet's words on a scroll and read them to the people "in the LORD'S house," the Temple. Thus the message from Jeremiah was done by proxy.

**Jer. 36:9 And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.**

**Jer. 36:10 Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house, in the ears of all the people.**

Verses 9 and 10 backtrack and give the details of Baruch's reading the scroll to all the people, explaining just how and where in the Temple the reading took place. The mention of the fourth year in verse 1 and the fifth year here in verse 9 indicates that it took at least a year for Baruch to record what Jeremiah dictated. All this time Jeremiah was in prison.

The scroll was read on a "fast," or "fasting day," when *thousands* of Jews were in Jerusalem (compare verses 6 and 9). The Day of Atonement was the tenth day of the *seventh* month, so that is not the reference here. Possibly this fast in the *ninth* month was historical, pertaining to the beginning of the Flood in the fall when Noah and family were saved in the Ark. A full year of 365 1/4 days elapsed before Noah stepped out of the Ark. Hence the Flood began and ended on the same day. The fast could have been a commemoration of that event. (Incidentally, a change from the solar to the lunar calendar was made in the days of Moses.) It is also possible the fasting day was based on something that had happened in Egypt. At any rate, Baruch was to read the scroll on the first opportunity for a great concourse of people, and in the ninth month, the king proclaimed a fast. The Lord would have known in advance not only that there would be this fast but also that it would take Baruch a certain period of time to record the words of Jeremiah.

Baruch read "in the book the words of Jeremiah ... in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house [Solomon's Temple]." The elevated higher court from which Baruch read was like a pulpit, so he could be seen and heard more distinctly from that location. Also, the higher court had a peripheral wall, and the people usually assembled before a particular gate, for example, the east gate on the Day of Atonement. Porters were set at the three gates. With the Tabernacle, individuals could go into the Court only if they intended to make an offering.

According to the Law of Moses when the Israelites came out of Egypt, the Scriptures that were available were to be read every seventh year, and the reading was an all-day affair. Certain Levites read the Law, and then other Levites explained what had just been read. However, the month and day of the lunar calendar varied somewhat.

**Jer. 36:11 When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD,**

**Jer. 36:12 Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.**

**Jer. 36:13** Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.

Before discussing verses 11 on, we will have a short review. God instructed Jeremiah, who was in prison at the time, to write on a scroll, from memory, all the discourses of warning he had previously uttered during the ministry of King Josiah. Jeremiah had repeatedly warned of trouble about to come on the nation unless the people repented and changed their conduct. Evidently, quite a volume of words had been spoken, and Baruch assisted Jeremiah by recording them on a scroll.

Now Baruch read the scroll publicly to the people in the chamber of Gemariah in the Temple. Among those who heard Baruch's reading was a person named Michaiah, the son of Gemariah. No doubt he was stunned by the nature of the message, so he went down into the scribe's chamber in the king's house where all of the princes were sitting and told them "all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book [scroll] in the ears of the people." In other words, Michaiah gave a summation of what had been read to the public.

**Jer. 36:14** Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them.

**Jer. 36:15** And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears.

**Jer. 36:16** Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words.

The princes, who had not heard the earlier public reading, sent Jehudi to bring Baruch to them for a private reading. Jehoiakim was absent from this assembly of the nobility. Realizing how *powerful* the words were, the princes were frightened and knew they had to inform the king.

**Jer. 36:17** And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?

**Jer. 36:18** Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book.

When asked by the princes, Baruch said he had recorded the words in ink on the scroll as Jeremiah dictated. Because the words had been read to the public, the message could not be bottled up.

**Jer. 36:19** Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

Knowing how the king would react, the princes told Baruch and Jeremiah to hide. But how could Jeremiah hide when he was already in prison? Apparently, the princes were not that cognizant of everything that was going on. Also, Jeremiah was no doubt confined in the king's own prison. We are reminded of Joseph, who was put in the royal prison—not an ordinary prison but one for the notables of the nation.

**Jer. 36:20** And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.



The princes took the roll from Baruch and stored it in the scribe's chamber. Next they went into the court and requested an audience with the king. After waiting for word that the king was receptive to hearing their message, the princes gave him a verbal report of what had happened including the contents of the scroll. The gist of Jeremiah's words was that the city of Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed.

**Jer. 36:21** So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.

**Jer. 36:22** Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him.

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

The king wanted to hear the roll firsthand so he ordered Jehudi to fetch and read it. Jehudi had read only a portion word for word when in anger, the king took a "penknife," cut and slashed the whole scroll, and cast it into the fire. King Jehoiakim certainly had a temper. After all the effort and labor that Jeremiah and Baruch had put into this scroll, it was handed over to the custody of the king and consumed by fire. It is interesting that the fire was convenient because the time setting was the ninth month, that is, winter.

After hearing the scroll read, the princes were obligated to bring the matter to the attention of the king. If they had not informed him, there no doubt would have been repercussions. Of course the king and the princes knew that Jeremiah was the author of the scroll and that Baruch was merely dutifully reading what he had recorded. Incidentally, when this king died, there was no lamentation for him, and his body was not given a decent burial. He was not a king who pleased the Lord.

**Comment:** For "penknife," the NIV has "scribe's knife."

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

**Jer. 36:25** Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.

Three individuals who heard the private reading of the scroll had tried to convince the king not to burn it—but to no avail. In other words, because conditions were worsening in regard to the imminence of Nebuchadnezzar's attack in the not-too-distant future, some in high places were beginning to have a healthy respect for Jeremiah. What he had predicted years earlier was starting to be fulfilled. However, the king was obstinate and would not listen.

"Neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words" were afraid, and they did not rend their garments. There are two reasons for rending garments: (1) in anger and (2) in repentance. In the latter case, ceremonial ashes were also put on the head. By not properly responding, the king and his servants incurred guilt. They had a responsibility to hearken to God's word and messenger, which were higher than the king.

Here we get a little insight into responsibilities; namely, there is *guilt by association*. Elnathan,

Delaiah, and Gemariah were faithful in their responsibility, whereas the king and his servants were not. The three had tried to intervene as the bulk of the scroll was being taken to the fire. Thus a small remnant class took seriously what Jeremiah had been saying all along.

**Comment:** The three who spoke up, trying to make intercession to the king not to burn the scroll, were the exception in risking their lives. They would have known about the king's volatile temper, but they defended Jeremiah's message.

**Reply:** No doubt they used discretionary reasoning, but nevertheless, they showed courage. Only a high echelon of servants, such as the cupbearer, would even be permitted in the king's presence, yet the others did not intervene or tear their garments.

**Jer. 36:26** But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

The king ordered that Jeremiah and Baruch be taken, but God hid them temporarily. Baruch was probably hidden with the help of the small remnant class who sympathized with the message.

**Q:** Was Jeremiah released from prison in order to be hidden?

**A:** Someone may have secretly freed him and then hidden him temporarily, or perhaps the jailer appreciated Jeremiah's attitude and became sympathetic to his cause. If so, it is likely that he hid Jeremiah in a different part of the prison.

**Jer. 36:27** Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying,

**Jer. 36:28** Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.

God told Jeremiah and Baruch to *repeat their work* all over again! Jeremiah was to dictate and Baruch was to write down the same words once more plus additional words (see verse 32). Imagine the *double work*! The fatigue and toil were a part of suffering for righteousness.

We are reminded of William Tyndale, who translated the Scriptures into the common language of the people. When copies were made available, the papal priesthood bought all of them and burned them at St. Paul's Cathedral in London, thinking that would end the matter. However, Tyndale used the money to make an even better edition of the Bible, which got a much wider circulation.

**Comment:** A more contemporary example of writings being burned was Chiniquy's book, which recorded his experiences as a priest in seeing hypocrisy and dishonesty in the Roman Catholic system. Instead of being discouraged when his printing press was burned, he rewrote the book.

**Reply:** Yes, that book was entitled *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*. Chiniquy did not allow age to dim his ardor.

**Jer. 36:29** And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?

**Jer. 36:30** Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

**Jer. 36:31** And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

The king would be punished because he had burned the scroll. Moreover, the succession of kingship would be removed from his line. Jehoiakim himself was to be killed and his corpse dragged through the city streets and dumped outside the gates (Jer. 22:18,19). In the heat of the day, his body was exposed to insects, birds, dirt, etc., and in the frost of the night, it lay unburied, whereas Jews want the body to be buried by sundown. Imagine telling the king these things! For burning the first roll, the king was told that he would be removed from the throne and suffer a horrible death and that none of his posterity would reign.

In addition to Jehoiakim's seed not being on the throne, his servants would be punished for their silence and lack of protest about the burning. Under the Law, if a person was aware of a crime or wrong deed that was committed but remained silent, not taking a stand, he was also counted guilty of the deed. The three individuals who protested (verse 25) acted properly.

**Q:** Verse 29 states, "The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast." Was this a reference to Nebuchadnezzar?

**A:** Yes, for he ruled for 45 years minus the seven years he was demented (Dan. 4:30-33).

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

Notice that words were added to the second scroll. The additional words could have been incorporated later, and thus the recopying, plus the later appendage, could be the entire Book of Jeremiah. The prophet had an interesting life with a ministry of at least 40 years and probably closer to 60 years.

**Jer. 37:1** And king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah.

This chapter is in a different time period, namely, the reign of Zedekiah, whereas the setting of the previous chapter was the fourth year of Jehoiakim. The events of chapter 37 took place at least eight or nine years later. Nebuchadnezzar put Zedekiah on the throne of Judah as a puppet king and successor of Coniah. Being a son of good King Josiah, Zedekiah was of the royal lineage. Nebuchadnezzar showed wisdom and prudence in the selection of Zedekiah. Incidentally, Coniah's other names were Jehoiachin and Jeconiah.

**Jer. 37:2** But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the LORD, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah.

From King Zedekiah on down to the common people, those in Judah did not hearken to Jeremiah's words.

**Jer. 37:3** And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us.

An idiosyncrasy of fallen human nature is that words are said but not meant. Since the king did not hearken, the words “Pray ... God for us” were perfunctory and not really sincere, although a sympathetic cord surfaced in him from time to time.

**Comment:** A number of years had passed since Jehoiakim’s reign. Now a new king was on the throne, and Jeremiah continued to warn. However, nothing changed; the people were still sinning and disobeying God, even though He gave multiple opportunities for repentance.

**Reply:** The brotherhood here in the United States is very sympathetic to Israel, and great things will be done in the future for that nation. However, it is puzzling that to date, no national prayer of mourning has been proffered by the leadership, even in the face of the threatening Arab situation. Thus we can see that while God will favor Israel, the majority are not in the right frame of mind to receive the blessings. Therefore, in due time and through God’s providence, there will be a change of leadership.

**Jer. 37:4** Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison.

Jeremiah was not imprisoned at this time, so he moved freely. He “came in and went out among the people.”

**Jer. 37:5** Then Pharaoh’s army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

When Pharaoh’s army came forth out of Egypt, it became the center of attraction for King Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans because at that time, Egypt and Babylon were the two superpowers. There was continuous friction between the two, and up until Jehoiakim’s reign, Egypt more or less overshadowed Babylon. Since Egypt immediately bordered Israel, the latter looked to Egypt for help from time to time against any foreign power. Now a military confrontation would take place between Egypt and Babylon. In the previous reign of Josiah, there was a similar situation. Thus the jockeying for complete control still existed at this time. When Nebuchadnezzar relaxed his siege of Jerusalem and went forth to head off the Egyptians, the Jews thought Jeremiah was wrong.

**Jer. 37:6** Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

**Jer. 37:7** Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh’s army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.

**Jer. 37:8** And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire.

Jeremiah was to tell King Zedekiah that the king of Babylon intended to subjugate Judah, for he was not content to just have a vassal on the throne. However, Pharaoh’s coming out of Egypt with his army diverted the attention of the king of Babylon.

Imagine living in Jerusalem at that time and seeing Nebuchadnezzar come down and besiege the city as Jeremiah had predicted. Now, all of a sudden, the king of Babylon and his army

vanished from the immediate scene in order to confront Pharaoh and his army, who were approaching for purposes of war. Temporarily the king of Babylon was interested in Egypt, the main enemy. However, the residents of Jerusalem concluded that Jeremiah's prophecies were wrong and that the false prophets, who claimed to speak peace in God's name, had the true message. God's providence saw fit to preserve all 52 chapters of Jeremiah's life and ministry, whereas the false prophets are mentioned in only a few verses. Watching what was happening—the relaxing of the siege and the withdrawal of the Babylonian army—the residents of Jerusalem and Judah concluded that the threat was over and that they could return to their normal life of eating, drinking, and being merry.

But what was Jeremiah's response? "Oh, no. What I predicted in the past will still happen. The king of Babylon may have disappeared, but he will return and destroy Jerusalem and burn it with fire." Of course the Temple would be destroyed too. Timewise, the account was getting close to the end of Israel's national polity in history. The fact that the Lord continued to send messengers who gave warnings shows He was interested in His people and had not turned His back. Just as a parent disciplines his child—and sometimes quite severely—for his good, so that was God's intent with Israel. All the misfortunes were designed to be disciplinary to help educate the Jews to depend upon Jehovah as their Deliverer. Because they had not learned the lesson, a severe experience was necessary—the destruction of the city and Temple.

**Jer. 37:9** Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart.

**Jer. 37:10** 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.

Verses 9 and 10 show the surety of God's Word. Similarly in principle, Jesus said, "I tell you that, if these [Jews] should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:40). *What God has predicted will be fulfilled!* The people thought Jeremiah's predictions were false, but God said, through the prophet, that the destruction would take place, nevertheless. "For though ye [Israel] had smitten [defeated] 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." Even if all the enemy were wounded, yet would they rise up and destroy Jerusalem with fire.

It was hard for Jeremiah to speak in these terms, for he knew he would be misunderstood. This man *cried* for Israel—he was given to tears and prayers for his people—but they did not see him as one who was concerned for their welfare. They thought he was hard, vindictive, wrong-spirited, and unpatriotic, yet he was God's choice for spokesman. Since we are living in the end time, some crucial things will happen in the near future with regard to not only mankind in general but also Israel. Thus hard times are coming, but after that will come good times, that is, God's Kingdom.

**Jer. 37:11** And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,

**Jer. 37:12** Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people.

**Jer. 37:13** And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans.

When Nebuchadnezzar departed from Jerusalem because of the Egyptian army, Jeremiah tried to leave the city by the gate of Benjamin to go to Anathoth. However, Irijah, a guard, apprehended him and accused him of being a deserter, for that is how his action appeared on the surface.

The territory of Benjamin bordered Jerusalem. The city was between the shoulder of Judah more to the south and the tribe of Benjamin immediately to the north. Therefore, with Jeremiah's starting to exit the gate to the north and Nebuchadnezzar's having come from the north through Benjamin to besiege the city, Irijah drew the wrong conclusion, namely, that the prophet was falling away to the Chaldeans.

But why had Jeremiah wanted to leave Jerusalem? Knowing the city and Temple would be destroyed, he manifested confidence and faith in God's word by leaving. Hence motives can be extremely difficult for an onlooker to understand. If a person does not like somebody, he can misconstrue even the best of actions. From the perspective of the Jewish populace at that time, Jeremiah had only evil motives in leaving through a gate on the north of the city, but in fact, he was showing his faith. He believed the city would be destroyed, yet he wanted to be nearby.

**Jer. 37:14** Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes.

**Jer. 37:15** Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison.

Jeremiah denied that he was deserting, but Irijah did not believe him and took him to the princes. Being angry with Jeremiah, the princes smote him and committed him to a subterranean chamber in the house of Jonathan.

If one is in Jerusalem today and goes out the Damascus Gate, he has to travel only a tiny distance to be in the land of Benjamin. Also, Jeremiah's family lived in the Levitical city of Anathoth, which was only a couple of miles north of Jerusalem. Therefore, Irijah and the princes should have given Jeremiah the benefit of the doubt, for Anathoth was his home territory. Of course his family members were not sympathetic to him—they thought he was a black sheep—but he was faithful from God's standpoint. Jeremiah was a loyal, true Israelite, having the interest of his people at heart, but he based his obedience on the God of Israel.

**Jer. 37:16** When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days;

"Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins [cells], and ... remained there many days." Jeremiah was under house arrest, and his condition changed during the "many days"—probably two years—that he was there. He was shifted around but was always under subjection. Later on, he ended up in a pit.

**Jer. 37:17** Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

As recorded earlier in verse 3, Zedekiah showed his sensitive core by asking Jeremiah to pray for Judah. (There is some good in bad people, and there is some bad in good people.) Now Zedekiah's prudence is seen, for he asked in a private meeting in his house, "What is the news? Is there any further word from the LORD?" Ostensibly, Jeremiah was proven wrong when

Nebuchadnezzar withdrew from Jerusalem to fight Egypt, but upon hearing of Egypt's defeat in the confrontation between the two powers, Zedekiah was worried that the king of Babylon would return.

Therefore, wanting a prophecy of his personal fate, Zedekiah summoned Jeremiah from prison. Notice that the prophet did not compromise but said Zedekiah would be captured. When a king called in a prophet for a private audience, the temptation would be to change the message to favor the ruler. However, Jeremiah replied in effect, "The news is still bad. You will be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon."

**Jer. 37:18** Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison?

**Jer. 37:19** Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?

Next Jeremiah asked Zedekiah why he had been put in a dungeon. "Have I offended you, your servants, or the people of Judah? What have I done? Where are the false prophets who spoke peace?" Jeremiah, who in fact was the offended one, could not understand why his sincerity was not seen. He suffered not only for God but also for his own people. Jeremiah was very patriotic, yet he got nothing but slaps and imprisonments; he was even put in the stocks as a public spectacle and spat upon. Other individuals whom God has favored have received similar treatment. For his faithfulness, Jeremiah will be well blessed in the Kingdom.

**Jer. 37:20** Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.

**Jer. 37:21** Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Jeremiah entreated King Zedekiah not to send him back to imprisonment in the house of Jonathan the scribe lest he die there. Obviously, Jonathan hated Jeremiah. Zedekiah granted Jeremiah's request by putting him in the more open court prison.

"Bakers' street" was where the bakers had their ovens. The king promised Jeremiah a pita bread each day—that was his only food. This daily ration was to continue until there was no more bread in Jerusalem.

**Q:** Since Nebuchadnezzar had not yet resumed the siege around Jerusalem, does Zedekiah's guarantee that Jeremiah would have "daily a piece of bread ... until all the bread in the city were spent" indicate he now believed the prophecies of the coming destruction of the city?

**A:** Yes, he was worried.

**Comment:** Shortly before the Israelites entered the Promised Land under Joshua, Moses said, "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them" (Num. 33:55,56). In Jeremiah's day, God drove the Jews of Judah out of the land.

**Reply:** Yes, the prophets figuratively got up early in the morning and spoke until sunset. In other words, throughout Israel's history, God supplied true prophets, for He was dealing with the nation (Amos 3:2). Jeremiah was a loner in Judah, but he was not a loner in testimony, for Ezekiel and Daniel were contemporary prophets in Babylon. Mankind seems to have to learn the hard way. Accordingly, the permission of evil, though temporary, is needed to show man that without God, he is nothing.

**Jer. 38:1** Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying,

This Gedaliah was not the individual who was later appointed governor to remain in the land with the vinedressers. These four princes—Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Jucal, and Pashur—heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to the people. They had prominent positions in the king's cabinet, as it were.

**Jer. 38:2** Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live.

Part of Jeremiah' pronouncement was, "He that remaineth in this city shall die ... but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey." In other words, "If you do not desert to the foe, you will die in one of three ways—sword, famine, or pestilence." To be a "prey" was to be a willing captive subject to the Babylonian power and then usually to become a servant in the foreign land. Jeremiah's words to permit capture seemed traitorous to the leaders and the people. They were to abandon all goods and just go to Babylon with their lives. This advice seemed wrong, especially when the siege was relaxed.

Since the people wanted to fight the enemy, Jeremiah's advice was contrary to their natural reaction, particularly because they knew the Chaldeans were cruel. An example of such cruelty was Nebuchadnezzar's command to heat the furnace seven times hotter for the three Hebrews who refused to recant (Dan. 3:19,20).

**Jer. 38:3** Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.

The Lord's advice through Jeremiah continued: "Resistance is futile, for Jerusalem will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon." Victory was assured for the enemy. The four princes were listening while Jeremiah spoke these strong, hard words to the people.

**Jer. 38:4** Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

In anger, the four princes reported to Zedekiah the advice of Jeremiah to submit and surrender to Nebuchadnezzar when he returned. In essence, they called Jeremiah a traitor and said he was worthy of death. However, they should have understood Jeremiah, for certainly he had shown sympathy for the nation and its welfare in numerous ways in previous incidents. But instead they said, "He weakeneth the hands of the men of war ... and ... all the people, in speaking such words unto them: ... [he] seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt."



**Jer. 38:5** Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you.

What was Zedekiah's reply? "Jeremiah is in your hand, for I cannot do anything against you."

**Comment:** The king's response shows his weak character. As king, he could have made a positive decision to support Jeremiah.

**Reply:** He had a vacillating temperament, and the opinion of others was important to him.

**Comment:** He was basically saying, "I want nothing to do with the matter. Do as you wish." Earlier he had sought Jeremiah's advice in secret and granted the prophet's request not to return him to the prison in Jonathan's house, putting him instead in the court prison and promising him daily bread. Now, like Pilate with Jesus, he did not take a firm stand.

**Reply:** In addition, with the enemy at the city gates, the government was in shambles. Under normal circumstances, with the government in place, the king's subjects would have been fearful to speak to him this way. Thus Zedekiah was saying to the princes, "There is not much I can do to hinder you." By saying in effect, "Do as you see fit," he was relieving himself of the responsibility. His words did not necessarily mean he was wholly in sympathy with their intentions, but nevertheless, he was weak in character, for no matter what the circumstance, the princes wanted to do injury to a just man.

**Jer. 38:6** Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

The Hebrew word *bor*, rendered "dungeon," refers to something deep and underground. A more fitting rendering is "cistern" (see the NIV, for example). Cisterns were a primitive form of solitary confinement. Jeremiah's experience reminds us of Daniel in the lions' den and of Joseph's being cast into an open pit. The brothers ignored Joseph's cries for help as they callously ate a meal.

The king weakly allowed the princes to put Jeremiah in the cistern, letting him down with cords into the mire to shut him up. (The cords would become significant later.) He sank down into the mire, or mud. The word "cast" is used to indicate that on the one hand, they did not gently lower Jeremiah, and on the other hand, the princes made sure he did not die in a fall, for they wanted him to suffer.

We believe that Jeremiah was confined in one of two cisterns north of the city near the Nablus road and in the vicinity of the Garden Tomb. Imagine being in his place. Alone in mud and complete darkness in the deep cistern, he would have felt the isolation—the separateness and the helplessness of not being able to communicate. Even if he yelled, the sound probably reverberated back to him. For preaching the truth and being loyal to God's word, he certainly suffered for righteousness' sake.

This incident reminds us of Jonah, who was in the belly of the whale—a seemingly hopeless condition. From that circumstance, he cried to the Lord for deliverance. Although the account here does not mention prayer, Jeremiah no doubt prayed during this psychological trauma. Meanwhile, the attitude of his enemies was, "Out of sight, out of mind."

It is interesting that this cistern was in the very locale where Jeremiah was earlier, but now he was in the court of the guard, not just in the court. As already stated, we believe the place was

outside the city. Today Jerusalem is quite different from the way it was in Jeremiah's day, around 610 BC, because that tremendous gully was filled in during the second century BC. The land was a gradual rise, whereas today one goes out the Damascus Gate, which has fill-in material. The gate in Jeremiah's time had a different name and was at a much lower level.

**Comment:** Earlier Jeremiah had said, "If I go back to the prison in Jonathan's house, I will die," yet this current situation seemed much worse.

Those who have seen the exposed cistern north of the city can testify that it is about 45 feet deep. It is next to the unexposed cistern in the Garden Tomb, although one can pull off the lid and look down. We believe that Jeremiah's deed was later hidden in one of these two cisterns.

**Comment:** For much of Jeremiah's ministry, he was *imprisoned* by the very people he loved—the ones he was trying to save from the impending catastrophe at the hand of the Chaldeans. However, he was given *liberty* when Nebuchadnezzar actually conquered Jerusalem.

**Reply:** Such are the quirks of fallen humanity. The king of Babylon no doubt heard about Jeremiah's warnings to the Jews to submit. Those who heeded the prophet's advice may have been the very ones to tell the king how Jeremiah had predicted, through a message from the God of Israel, that the Babylonians would come down and destroy Jerusalem and how he had urged the people to desert. As a result, the Babylonians extended leniency to Jeremiah.

We will digress for a moment. Ezekiel had been taken captive to Babylon about 11 years earlier. While he was in captivity, the Lord spoke through him of this same circumstance but in a rather peculiar way. When we read the prophecies in the Book of Ezekiel, we are generally more interested in getting to the point, but in doing so, we sometimes lose the manner in which the Lord operated.

Jeremiah went to a city gate or the Temple and spoke bluntly and openly to the people, stating things as they were. For example, he instructed them to build houses, for they would be in captivity for 70 years. Meanwhile, Ezekiel was in exile where the Israelites already in captivity were dealt with relatively leniently. But in order to speak publicly, Ezekiel had to stir up interest through demonstrations and pantomimes. Accordingly, several years before the time setting of this thirty-eighth chapter, Ezekiel started a series of actions that stirred up interest in the fate of Judah (and Israel as a nation). First, he bent over and sighed and moaned. Then he stood up and faced Jerusalem and said a sword of judgment was coming to destroy the city and take the people captive. The few who saw Ezekiel act this way and heard him speak spread the news that he was in real anguish. Then interested Jews asked about the details.

In the next vision, Ezekiel sharpened his sword. (If he did not have a literal sword, the action was done in pantomime.) Subsequently Ezekiel explained that the king of Babylon would be going down to the city of Jerusalem. However, there was no definitive detail.

The third vision brought the attention of more and more people because Ezekiel drew a road that led to a right and left division. He thus demonstrated that Nebuchadnezzar would come to a fork in the road with one fork being Ammon and the other being Jerusalem. To make a decision, the king consulted his gods and used the entrails of animals. His intention was to go first to Ammon, but the indication repeatedly pointed to Jerusalem, so that is where the Chaldean sword went. The Lord, through Ezekiel, said that in doing the cutting, the sword would cause a separation of the people of Judah into two classes. The evil class would all be destroyed, and the other class, a minority, would be spared and go into captivity.

Back in the homeland, Jeremiah was saying the same thing. "If you desert to the foe, your life

will be saved. If you stay in Jerusalem, you will die by sword, famine, or pestilence.” The ones who were spared were a relatively righteous element, a “holy remnant” class, as it were. They were more disposed to hearken to the word of the Lord, even though to surrender to the bitter and hasty Chaldeans seemed to be against reason. This class was very small indeed, for only 832 out of about 2 million Jews were taken captive in 606 BC (Jer. 52:29).

Now we return to the account in chapter 38. The question is, What would the Lord do about Jeremiah’s situation in the cistern? The next few verses tell of the outcome.

**Jer. 38:7** Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king’s house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

**Jer. 38:8** Ebed-melech went forth out of the king’s house, and spake to the king, saying,

**Jer. 38:9** My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city.

Ebed-melech was a eunuch in the employ of King Zedekiah. His name indicates that before he was taken captive, he had a high position in the land of Ethiopia (or Cush). A black man of high intelligence, he was originally from Upper Egypt, and specifically Nubia, according to some Bible notes. As a people, the Nubians are tall with intelligent-looking faces and a very pleasing dark color to their skin.

Upon hearing that Jeremiah had been put in the dungeon (or cistern), Ebed-melech left the king’s house to find and speak to Zedekiah, who was sitting in the Benjamin Gate on the north side of Jerusalem. (The corresponding gate today would probably be the Damascus Gate.) Risking his own position by showing sympathy for Jeremiah, the eunuch said, “My lord the king, these men [the four princes] have done evil ... to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger ... for there is no more bread in the city.” The four princes intended to kill Jeremiah inch by inch—a slow suffering death—in the mud at the bottom of the cistern (verse 4). However, God worked through the eunuch, who had the gumption and courage to speak to the king on Jeremiah’s behalf.

**Jer. 38:10** Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.

**Jer. 38:11** So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

**Jer. 38:12** And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

Following Ebed-melech the Ethiopian’s request, King Zedekiah let him and 30 other men remove Jeremiah from the dungeon. The release was accomplished in haste by using old rags and worn-out clothes and a cord with which to pull Jeremiah up. The 30 men were probably already in the Benjamin Gate with the king when the eunuch arrived.

Earlier the king’s house, or residence, was way to the south and down a hill, but in this period of time, about 500 years later, the king’s residence was nearby in the northern sector of the city. Therefore, Ebed-melech and the others quickly obtained cast-off rags and clothes.

**Q:** Is there any significance to the number 30?

**A:** Jesus was baptized at 30 years of age, a Levite of Aaron became a priest at the age of 30, and Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Hence the number 30 is significant in various places in Scripture. There may also be a significance here, but we are hesitant, and even a little afraid, to delve into numerology. If a person has a fertile mind, he can easily get off base in playing with numbers. If a “kinship” relationship exists in two or more cases, then there is more reason to pursue a significance to a number.

**Comment:** Since Jeremiah had sunk into the mire, multiple people were needed to pull him out.

**Reply:** Also, the old clothes and rags were needed to provide soft cushioning under Jeremiah’s armpits so that the cord would not cut him. In other words, Ebed-melech and the 30 men wanted to pull Jeremiah out of the cistern with the least discomfort possible. What a contrast to the rough manner in which Jeremiah was cast into the cistern!

All of us need to pray to the Lord that under similar circumstances, we do not become a coward. Consider Peter, who was a brave man, yet he started to sink in the storm on the Sea of Galilee. The point is that fearsome circumstances can arise to weaken a person.

**Q:** Were the rags and old clothes needed because Jeremiah had sunk so deeply into the mud?

**A:** To have mud even up to the knees or a little above would require effort and strength for removal. Mud is like quicksand, which pulls the person down. It is to Ebed-melech’s credit that his sympathy for Jeremiah was a motivating factor. Realizing the problems that would be involved in pulling the prophet out, he thought of a plan in advance. Once he got the go-ahead signal from Zedekiah, he made sure that old clothes and rags were provided—and in haste. Also, he knew what to do to extract Jeremiah in the least painful manner possible.

**Jer. 38:13** So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Jeremiah was removed from the cistern and returned to the court of the prison, which had more open cells and was on ground level. (This was at least the third time he was put there.) The prophet was about 60 years old at this time.

**Comment:** Lamentations 3:52-58 expresses Jeremiah’s feelings in the cistern. “Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off. I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.”

**Reply:** Yes, years later Jeremiah recorded his previous experiences, reliving them as he wrote. The cistern contained no water, but it did have mud. Not only did Jeremiah have a claustrophobic experience, but also the dampness, the enclosure itself, and the stone would have caused him to perspire profusely, so that “waters flowed” over his head. The cistern was probably depleted of water because of the siege.

**Comment:** Psalm 40:1,2 reads, “I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.”

**Reply:** David wrote that Psalm, but the principle applies. The Lord's people have both high and low experiences—both sunshine and clouds—for their development and tenderization.

**Comment:** Jeremiah's experience was like being pulled out of the quagmire of sin and death.

**Reply:** That is why Psalm 40 applies to the Christian, who is cognizant of his nothingness and his constant need of the Lord. Weighed down with his faults, frailties, and sin, he is in need of deliverance.

**Jer. 38:14** Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that is in the house of the LORD: and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me.

Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah and took him into the Temple. The prophet had been locked up and chained in the court of the prison that used to be outside the present Damascus Gate, but at this time, it was incorporated within the environs of Jerusalem on the northern (Benjamin) side.

Zedekiah was the last king of Judah before Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in 606 BC. The enemy was at the city gate, Jerusalem was under siege, and a great famine had been going on for some time. It took about 1 1/2 years for Jerusalem to capitulate and be invaded by the king of Babylon. Just before the fall of the city, while the enemy was outside, Zedekiah wanted advice from Jeremiah, who was temporarily loosed from prison. The king said in effect, "I am going to ask you about a certain matter, and I do not want you to withhold anything from me." Jeremiah was accustomed to speaking in this manner, even though the temptation would be to give overdue deference to the feelings of the king. However, Zedekiah wanted decorum to be put aside so that he would get the unvarnished truth.

**Jer. 38:15** Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?

Jeremiah replied, "If I tell you what you do not want to hear, won't you put me to death?" The implication was that his answer would be bad news. Jeremiah added, "If I give you counsel, won't you refuse to hearken?" He was testing the sincerity of the king. Zedekiah said he wanted the plain truth, but would he accede to it and give it due consideration?

**Jer. 38:16** So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life.

Zedekiah swore secretly unto Jeremiah, "As the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put you to death or turn you over to those who seek your life." Under normal circumstances, to rebuke a king brought the death sentence.

The king's reference to the soul shows that it is separate from the body and the breath. The soul is a person's entity, or personality, which God records and preserves at death. This preservation occurs with both the consecrated and the unconsecrated.

**Jer. 38:17** Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house:

**Jer. 38:18** But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.

Through Jeremiah, a proposition was put forth, the triple emphasis being that it came from "the LORD," "the God of hosts," "the God of Israel." If the king would surrender and go out to the enemy, God would keep him and his family alive and not let Jerusalem be burned. This shows how well God knew Zedekiah's character, that is, that the king would not yield. Jehovah committed Himself to a conditional promise. What had Jeremiah been predicting for 40 years? Because of the people's adultery, greed, violence, oppression of the poor, worship of false gods, etc., he had been prophesying that the city and the Temple would be destroyed. But in spite of all the dire prophecies, the Lord now gave an open door of opportunity to the king: "Zedekiah, if you submit, none of these things will happen." How astounding! However, the Lord knew in advance that Zedekiah would refuse. This incident will be brought to Zedekiah's attention in the Kingdom to remind him that he had an opportunity to avert the trouble of 606 BC. At that time, no man will be able to open his mouth against God, for each person's past will be reviewed with understanding. Jehovah is the God of all patience. He is merciful and fair and will even conditionally change His mind if we change our mind.

**Comment:** In principle, there is a parallel for us as Christians. How many times does God send us a messenger or a clear message as to the course to pursue, but we stubbornly persist with our own thinking? When this happens, we pay the consequences.

**Reply:** Yes, decision making is important. Zedekiah failed in this respect. The *God* of Israel said to the *king* of Israel, "If you obey this advice, I will assuredly see to it that the lives of you and your family are spared."

**Jer. 38:19** And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me.

Here we get a little insight into the character of the king. His reaction was not that unusual, for even though he was unfit for the office of king, he was really an example of how the average person would react under the same circumstance. Zedekiah said, "I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me [if I surrender as they did]." These Jews had followed Jeremiah's advice by already surrendering to the Chaldeans, but being weak, Zedekiah was afraid these other Jews would mock him if he, *the king*, deserted to the enemy. In addition to being worried about his personal safety, he felt he would be scorned down through history.

An end-of-the-age antitype is as follows. Some of the feet members will have a private audience with civil authorities who will realize the sincerity but be afraid to heed the counsel.

**Jer. 38:20** But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live.

Jeremiah pleaded with Zedekiah, "Those Jews will *not* deliver you into the hands of the Chaldeans to kill you. Obey, and your soul shall live." In essence, Jeremiah was giving the king a second chance—but to no avail. Being emotional and given to tears, Jeremiah would have spoken with the following emphasis, "Obey, I beseech thee." He had repeatedly prayed for his people and begged them to listen to the Lord's words, and now he was entreating the king.

A little earlier the people released servants from bondage. They had been ignoring the sabbatical arrangement for release, but in their fear of the enemy, they felt that there was no

point in keeping the bond servants and that perhaps the granting of liberty would help them. But as soon as the Babylonians temporarily withdrew from Judah to counteract the Egyptians, the Jews rescinded the liberty and made the servants go back to their masters. This reaction shows how hypocritical the people were, let alone the king.

Generally speaking, people are readily influenced by what others think of them. They will do all kinds of things to be popular. Truth and obedience to God are laid aside.

**Comment:** Pride was Zedekiah's enemy. Because of pride, he feared being mocked by his people. Pride truly went before a fall in his case (Prov. 16:18).

**Jer. 38:21** But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the LORD hath shown me:

**Jer. 38:22** And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, and they are turned away back.

God showed Jeremiah what would happen if Zedekiah refused to surrender. The women of Zedekiah's house would be led out by Nebuchadnezzar's army and taken captive to Babylon. And in the future, while in Babylonian captivity, they would say the very thing Zedekiah feared; that is, Zedekiah's name would become a byword. The women would talk about his refusal to obey the Lord to spare the city, the Temple, and the lives of those in his household. As the women in captivity reviewed the past, they would say of Zedekiah, "Your friends and associates dissuaded you from obeying God as spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah. Instead you obeyed the counsel of your immediate friends. You are a coward. As a result of your disobedience, we are captives, and the city and Temple are destroyed."

Figuratively speaking, Zedekiah's feet were stuck in the mire. The king was so weak that even with encouragement from God, the *true King* of Israel, he could not extricate himself from the mire. God is patient and merciful, but there comes a point of no return that cries for judgment. Fortunately, these people will be awakened from the tomb in the Kingdom Age and given an opportunity for life, but they have already formed a character in the present life. If that person has two strikes against him in the present life, what are his chances in the Kingdom? Even though he will be given opportunities, it will be difficult for him to overcome a bad character.

**Jer. 38:23** So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

Jeremiah continued to speak: "They [the Babylonian army] shall bring out all thy [Zedekiah's] wives [including concubines] and ... children to the Chaldeans." Moreover, "thou [Zedekiah] shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken ... [to] Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire." Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "*You* are responsible for the city's being burned with fire." He laid the responsibility solely on the shoulders of the king. If Zedekiah did not surrender, he would not escape, the women would be captured, and Jerusalem would be burned. God said of him, "Thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end ... Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezek. 21:25-27). Despite these failings, Zedekiah had a conscience that was workable, as shown by the fact he called Jeremiah to come from prison and give him advice. There was a tender spot in him.

There is something good in the worst of us, and something bad in the best of us. Everyone needs development and encouragement so that he will shun the evil and espouse the right. Jesus was exalted because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity (Psa. 45:7; Heb. 1:9). *Both* qualities are needed, whereas today the prevailing theory in the world and in the Christian Church, both nominal and real, is love. However, love has to include this other element of hating iniquity. Of course we should be very careful in matters of judgment, but we must have both qualities if we want to be of that elect class. How can we be a future judge of the world unless we imbibe the correct principles now. For example, the Law taught that one should not judge in favor of either the poor or the rich. A judge is not to allow sympathy for the poor to sway his decision if a poor person is the responsible party who has inherently done wrong. Conversely, a judge is not to be inhibited by the wealthy and the powerful. He is to be no respecter of persons in matters of judgment. Jesus said, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge *righteous judgment*" (John 7:24). The Christian needs to learn the process of decision making according to God's principles.

**Jer. 38:24** Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die.

**Jer. 38:25** But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee:

**Jer. 38:26** Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there.

When Jeremiah was taken out of prison, it was seen that he was leaving under escort and going in for an audience with the king. Wouldn't the curiosity of the observers have been aroused, especially with the city under siege? This was a pressure-cooker situation, and the king astutely foresaw what would happen. In other words, he had intelligent faculties; the problem was his weak character. Therefore, Zedekiah gave the prophet instruction on what to say to the princes. Jeremiah was not to tell anyone of his audience with the king, but if the princes inquired, he was to say the audience pertained to his not wanting to be returned to Jonathan's house.

**Jer. 38:27** Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived.

When the princes questioned Jeremiah, he replied as the king had requested. The reply silenced the princes, and they left Jeremiah alone. Earlier Jeremiah had actually petitioned Zedekiah about not being returned to Jonathan's house (Jer. 37:20). The question would be, Did Jeremiah do wrong in obeying what the king said?

**Comment:** He was obeying the king, the head of the nation, and not really compromising principle.

**Reply:** Yes, the responsibility lay with the king. Jeremiah's conscience would be relieved because Zedekiah assumed that responsibility.

**Q:** Then if we were encouraged to lie by authorities, what should be our reaction?

**A:** That would depend on whether a principle was involved. For instance, when Peter and the other apostles were brought before the council for interrogation by the high priest because of



their preaching, they replied, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:27-29). How we would react is a matter of decision making. The level of maturity of the individuals whom God is calling to be judges helps them to make proper decisions. Each case has to be considered on its own merits and nuances—just like any case brought before a judge. The Lord’s people are counseled not to fear; they are to fear God, not man. Jesus said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:5,6). If we have that confidence, we would not be apt to violate principle. So far as is reasonably possible, we are to obey the powers that be, that is, as long as they do not impinge upon or conflict with God’s rules in Scripture (Rom. 13:1).

**Q:** The Lord hates a lying tongue and encourages us to tell the truth wherever possible, so wouldn’t it be wrong to obey a civil authority that tells us to lie?

**A:** Generally speaking, that would be true, but there are exceptions.

**Comment:** A good example of an exception is the Hebrew midwives in Egypt who lied about the condition of the male babies born to the Israelites. Their excuse for not killing the babies was that they were born too quickly (Exod. 1:15-20). Another example is Rahab’s lie to protect the two Israelite spies. Her lie was approved of the Lord, for it was a proof of her faith (Josh. 2:3-7; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25).

**Reply:** Yes. Not only is Rahab listed as an Ancient Worthy, but also she is included in Jesus’ lineage (Matt. 1:5). On a panel on this subject many years ago, the speakers all felt that Rahab did wrong. As Bible students, we need to study the Word of God so that we will know the exceptions. In the natural world, for instance, every helicopter and plane that goes up in the sky seemingly defies the laws of gravity, but that is not the case, for a *superior* law (the higher principle) overrules. Along another line, if we were hiding brethren to protect them, would we tell inquiring authorities where they were? We would lie under that circumstance, sacrificing our own life to help the others. Under a certain circumstance, therefore, higher laws overcome or overrule lower laws, but they do not disannul them. Every situation has to be weighed, and sometimes these things can be prudently avoided by the way words are couched. Many unnecessary troubles and experiences can be averted by the use of tact.

**Comment:** The princes who inquired about Jeremiah’s audience with the king would have included the four who had sought his death earlier for advising surrender (Jer. 38:1-4). They also had put him in prison in the house of Jonathan (Jer. 37:15). Clearly they were enemies of God, so it was permissible for Jeremiah to lie.

**Reply:** Normally we would not have time to reason that way, for the need for many decisions comes suddenly. The Adversary cleverly springs at us when we least expect his intrusion and when we are under certain strain and stress in thinking. For instance, the Scriptures tell us not to commit suicide, but if we see someone drowning and we are a strong swimmer, wouldn’t we risk our life to save him, even if the current is strong? If we died under that circumstance, we would not be considered guilty of committing suicide. Similarly, people sometimes die when they rush into a burning house to rescue a child who is in danger.

**Comment:** Jeremiah’s reply was not a lie but merely an avoidance of part of the conversation.

**Comment:** Jesus’ words to his apostles in Matthew 10:18,19 are a good text to keep in mind. “Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.” There are occasions when God’s children are in a predicament and the power of the Lord intercedes and assists on their behalf

to do and say the right thing.

**Reply:** To say the right thing might mean their death, or it might mean their rescue depending on the circumstance. However, Matthew 10:18,19 is not comparable to Jeremiah's situation. There the prophet himself had to make a decision. Jeremiah used wisdom in making his reply, for otherwise, Jonathan might have gotten hold of him again. In regard to our personal decision making, we will be judged as to whether we are fit to be judges in the next age (1 Cor. 6:2,3). Weighty decisions require quite a lot of maturity, but if a person is very, very zealous and naive, the Lord overrules in different ways. Sometimes He overrules mistakes that are made. Because He can judge the heart and the motives, He can determine the culpability of an individual. Obviously, to recant what we believe or to worship a false god is flagrantly wrong.

Many people may misjudge our actions, and we, too, may misjudge the actions of others because of not knowing, in detail, the circumstances that are involved. For that very reason, a judge cannot give a proper decision unless he knows both sides of an issue. If a person knows only one side, probably 50 percent of the time, his decisions will be wrong because that side comes from a friend or a family member or because a particular person speaks more coherently or seems more sincere. Unfortunately today, the juries are lenient in many cases because they are emotional, and sometimes the judges are warped in their thinking. In any event, a judge is to listen to both sides and render a decision based on the facts, not being a respecter of persons. Also, extenuating circumstances we are not aware of may require a more lenient judgment. All these factors have to be considered.

Isaiah 11:3 speaks of Jesus in the Kingdom Age. "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes." In other words, Jesus will not judge according to what occurs—even if there is a photograph or a film of an actual incident. "Neither [will he] reprove after the hearing of his ears." He will disregard the words of someone who is trying to adversely influence or undercut the testimony of another person. Just as God's Holy Spirit rests upon Jesus, so those who get the divine nature will, to a certain extent, get an intuitive knowledge. If we are in close harmony with the Heavenly Father and have obeyed Him over a period of time, His Spirit is more apt to be in us as we meditate on Him, His character, and His acts. Then we will be more apt to choose the right path when we come up against difficult situations.

In summary, we feel that God excused Jeremiah for the words he uttered to the princes. As practicing Christians in the present life, we are tentatively being considered for an office. Whether or not we get the heavenly prize remains to be seen, for only a very small minority of the consecrated will become members of the Little Flock. And so it is not a matter of confidence, teaching ability, mental ability, or the heart, for our verdict will be according to *the Word*. The Bible instructs the head and the heart, and *both* are needed in proper judgment, for emotional judgment is apt to be irrational and intellectual judgment is cold and calculating. Both qualities are needed, as shown in the Book of Revelation, which says that God has the softness of the sard stone, which is easily carved, malleable, and touchable and is a reddish or flesh color, the color of the heart (Rev. 4:3). The Bible describes a perfect man as having a "heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26). God is also pictured as a diamond, the hardest stone, which cuts through all other stones. The diamond is adamant, inflexible (showing justice), and brilliant (indicating wisdom). Thus the sard stone shows love, compassion, pity, mercy, long-suffering, etc., and the diamond represents justice and wisdom. Both qualities are needed. When called, every one of us was lopsided on one side or the other. God's Word helps to give us not a sound mind but the *spirit* of a sound mind, meaning that He can make of us something better than we are now (2 Tim. 1:7). We have come out of the miry pit, and God will shape, polish, and develop us in a process throughout our Christian walk. We hope to have a wonderful outcome and be a member of the Little Flock, but that decision is *God's* prerogative. He begot us with the "word of truth," which is the *Father's* word (James 1:18).

The lesson for the Christian is that we are not to compromise principle. Sometimes we must comply with an order that would not be compromising principle. Jeremiah was not wrong here to obey the king, the head of the nation, even though, strictly speaking, what he said was not the truth, and we are to obey the powers that be unless a principle would be violated.

**Jer. 38:28** So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was there when Jerusalem was taken.

Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until the day Jerusalem was taken. Incidentally, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were both prophets and priests. Jesus was Prophet, Priest, and King.

**Jer. 39:1** In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

The siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar began in the ninth year of Zedekiah, in the tenth month.

**Jer. 39:2** And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up.

The siege ended 1 1/2 years later—in the fourth month of King Zedekiah’s eleventh year. Thus can be seen the effectiveness of the Babylonian army in breaching the city of Jerusalem, for the fortifications were strong. There was a double wall around Jerusalem, and the enemy broke through both walls in at least one place. Certainly the Lord prospered the Chaldeans in conquering the city.

**Jer. 39:3** And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon.

After the outer wall had been breached, the notable Babylonian princes entered and sat in the middle gate, a position of prominence. This action momentarily discouraged any further resistance, for it showed authority and confidence.

The number of princes who are named is stated as six in the King James, as four in the RSV, and as three in the NIV. Since vowels were supplied and could be pronounced differently, we do not know if the repeat of “Nergal-sharezer” was one or two individuals. The actual number is uncertain, for it depends on whether some of the names were to be coupled with a title.

**Q:** Was Jerusalem deforested at this time?

**A:** The area around the city was denuded by the Babylonians in 606 BC to make battering rams. Subsequently there was new growth, but the Romans cut down those trees for the same purpose in AD 69-73. The Jews ate their children during both times of extremity, as foretold in Leviticus 26:29.

**Jer. 39:4** And it came to pass, that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king’s garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain.

**Jer. 39:5** But the Chaldeans’ army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of

## **Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him.**

King Zedekiah saw the stationing of the Babylonian princes in the middle city gate as a golden opportunity to flee the city. This action was not noble on his part, for as with a sinking ship, the captain is supposed to be the last to leave, even to the point of going down with the boat. This “middle gate” may have corresponded to the present-day Damascus Gate. The terminology “by the gate betwixt the two walls” shows that Jerusalem had two walls at that time.

Thus Zedekiah thought of his own personal safety and fled with his close confidants and bodyguards on the night of the day that Nebuchadnezzar’s army entered Jerusalem. They exited by way of the king’s garden (on the south) near the Pool of Siloam, fleeing toward the plain (the valley, or the lowland, going to Jericho and the Arabah). They passed the Mount of Olives, Bethany, and Bethphage, and continued on toward Jericho. The Chaldeans pursued and overtook Zedekiah and company in the plains of Jericho and brought them back.

**Comment:** How ironic! Earlier Zedekiah feared what the people would think if he followed Jeremiah’s advice, but now he was not concerned about how they would view his fleeing (Jer. 38:19).

**Reply:** Yes. We should ask ourselves the following questions. Are we influenced by the opinions of others? Do we do things because of what others might think of us? It is true that we should consider this factor—but *not if a principle is involved*.

In Babylon, four years in advance of the actual event, Ezekiel portrayed, in pantomime, this secret exit by Zedekiah from Jerusalem (Ezek. 12:1-16). He showed that Zedekiah and his associates would tunnel out at twilight but that they would be overtaken in a “net” (a trap) and that Zedekiah would lose his eyesight and be taken to Babylon. Before going to Babylon, however, Zedekiah was taken direct to Riblah, which was north of the Sea of Galilee and in the land of Hamath, where Nebuchadnezzar gave judgment.

In prophetically imitating Zedekiah, Ezekiel covered his face so that he could not see the ground. This act dramatized the fact that Zedekiah would be blinded before being taken to Babylon. Hence Zedekiah got to Babylon but did not see it. “And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes” (Ezek. 12:12).

Every fear of Zedekiah’s came to pass because he refused to surrender to the Babylonians. Earlier God had promised him that if he merely surrendered as a person, his life and the lives of his family would be spared and Jerusalem would not be destroyed. Of course he would have been humbled as a prisoner of Nebuchadnezzar, but that also occurred with his disobedience.

**Jer. 39:6** Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar killed Zedekiah’s sons in front of him. Clearly this was retribution. All the nobles of Judah were also slain.

A son of Josiah, Zedekiah was installed as a puppet king by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:17,18; 1 Chron. 3:15). Hence the last three kings of Judah were puppet kings, relatively speaking. Since Zedekiah was only 21 years old when he began to reign, his “sons” could have been nephews. If they were truly sons, they were teenagers or younger.

Even with the unconsecrated, there is a recording of both the good and the bad things that are done to those whom God likes and is interested in. The good deeds, as well as the injustices, will be recompensed sooner or later. Accordingly, we believe Zedekiah's life was preserved because he saved Jeremiah's life. Otherwise, the prophet would have been put to death. The life of Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian eunuch, was preserved for rescuing Jeremiah from the cistern.

**Q:** Were the “nobles” the ones who had put Jeremiah in the cistern?

**A:** Yes. Thus we can see that retribution takes place. It is actually better for a person to get retribution in the present life so that when he is raised from the tomb, he will have a little better start. “Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men[’s sins] they follow after” (1 Tim. 5:24).

**Jer. 39:7** Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon.

Zedekiah was blinded, bound in chains, and taken to Babylon. Zedekiah is a picture of the Jewish people, who have not accepted Christ. Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me [first] draw him,” and no man can come to the Father unless he acknowledges Jesus (John 6:44).

**Comment:** How humiliating for Zedekiah to also be put in chains, for after his eyes were put out, where could he have gone without chains?

**Reply:** The Scriptures say he died “in peace,” meaning his life was spared and he did not die a violent death (Jer. 34:5). However, the thought is not that he would have peace of mind.

There will come a time when, from *God's* standpoint, the Church has been all selected, yet some will remain in the flesh for a short time. The principle was illustrated when He said to Abraham (through the Logos), “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” (Gen. 18:17,18). In other words, prior to Abraham's death, God asked, “Shall I hide from Abraham my intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, seeing that he will be faithful?” Thus there will come a point in time when the door to the high calling is ended and no more are called. Obviously, the door is still open at the present time, but the time will come when people are starving and in want, with everything being disorganized. At that time, we can be sure the door is closed because people who are hungry and thirsty cannot think rationally. The Pastor taught that the destruction of Babylon would be a proof the door is closed, but what will conditions be at that time? There will be no more immersions, but the Great Company, who *previously* were called, will live on for a while.

Meanwhile, if we are rightly exercised, our experiences and trials are preparing us for life beyond the veil. We go on in our Christian walk despite shortcomings and mistakes, but there will come a cut-off time when we either attain the Little Flock or remain behind to, hopefully, be rescued as part of the Great Company. Revelation 22:11 refers to that time: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” God has great patience in waiting for the selection of His people, who are described by the Apostle James as the “precious fruit of the earth” (James 5:7).

**Jer. 39:8** And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

The king's house and the houses of the people were destroyed by fire, and the walls were broken down.

**Jer. 39:9** Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained.

Nebuzar-adan, Nebuchadnezzar's general, "carried away captive into Babylon" three categories of Jews:

1. "The remnant of the people that remained in the city" (the survivors in Jerusalem)
2. "Those that fell away" (those who had followed Jeremiah's advice by departing from Jerusalem earlier and surrendering to the enemy)
3. "The rest of the people that remained [in Judah]" (the survivors of those captured in other cities prior to the fall of Jerusalem)

In all, the number of survivors totaled only 832, not counting the women (Jer. 52:29). What is so devastating is that the whole fate of Judah was on the shoulders of Zedekiah, but instead of obeying and surrendering, he tried to escape and was captured. Jeremiah had predicted the very thing that happened—namely, Nebuchadnezzar broke through the city wall—but still Zedekiah did not follow God's advice through the prophet. Even at that late time, Zedekiah could have gone out to them as an individual and submitted. His fleeing shows what a power the flesh has over a person unless the Lord is his guide and guardian.

**Comment:** Proverbs 16:32 reads, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

**Reply:** To capture a city requires tremendous effort and energy, yet he who rules his own spirit is greater.

**Jer. 39:10** But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

Nebuzar-adan selected out the "poor" and allowed them to stay on the land as vinedressers so that the land would not be utterly sterile. He felt that there would be no danger of insurrection from them and that in gratitude, they would obey.

**Comment:** Leaving the poor behind and giving them something they did not have before would seem to be a good political move.

**Reply:** Nebuzar-adan would not have dared to make this decision without the king's backing. Therefore, this captain of the guard was following Nebuchadnezzar's policy. We can see the wisdom of this policy from the enemy's standpoint, for through taxation, Babylon could benefit from a land that had agricultural commodities. With regard to the Babylonian Empire's being the head of gold, King Nebuchadnezzar was shrewd, even if he was cruel to those who crossed his will.

**Q:** How long were the vinedressers there in Judah? Would this policy affect the chronology of the 70 years' desolation?

**A:** No, because the vinedressers were there for only a couple of months before they

assassinated Gedaliah. Therefore, the chronology date of 606 BC was not affected at all.

**Jer. 39:11** Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying,

**Jer. 39:12** Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.

**Jer. 39:13** So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushasban, Rabsaris, and Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylon's princes;

**Jer. 39:14** Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people.

Verses 11-14 tell how the Lord dealt with Jeremiah as a person. Before Jerusalem was taken, Nebuchadnezzar had told Nebuzar-adan to treat Jeremiah well and to grant him safety and let him do what he wanted. Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar was aware of Jeremiah's prophecies and counsel for submission. As ruthless as Nebuchadnezzar was, he was merciful to Jeremiah and regarded him kindly.

**Comment:** Not only had Jeremiah's prophecies come to the ears of Nebuchadnezzar, but also he realized that the prophet had insight from his God.

**Reply:** Yes, King Nebuchadnezzar gave Jeremiah a wide latitude of choice in commanding Nebuzar-adan: "Look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee." According to the king's orders through Nebuzar-adan, a committee of Babylonian princes exerted *effort* to find Jeremiah. The very fact all of them hastened to give a glad hand to Jeremiah shows the centralized authority that Nebuchadnezzar exercised. His word was law.

Gedaliah was the Jew selected by Nebuchadnezzar to be in charge of the vinedressers. Jeremiah's desire to stay in Jerusalem and environs with the remnant, the poor of the land, was granted, even though the king had promised to treat him well in Babylon.

As shown elsewhere, it was God's will that Jeremiah remain in the homeland, for the suggestion was given to him from two sources: first the captain and then the princes. When the princes found Jeremiah in the court of the prison and released him, they evidently took him to Mizpah, which we believe is Mount Scopus in the environs northeast of Jerusalem. From that mount, there is a good view of the Holy City. Jeremiah was given an escort to the place of his choice, and the captain of the guard, who had initially released him, privately advised the prophet that to remain with Gedaliah would not be a bad choice. Thus Jeremiah was positioned in the direction of Gedaliah, who was stationed and had his court at Mizpah, or Mount Scopus, because Jerusalem was in ruins. Mizpah was like a temporary mini-capital. The poor of the land were to look to Gedaliah for instruction as to how to behave, and of course he was in harmony with doing the wishes of the king of Babylon. In principle, he was a puppet governor.

**Comment:** Earlier the father of Gedaliah had been instrumental in saving Jeremiah's life (Jer. 26:24). "Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death."

**Reply:** There were two Gedaliahs at that time, and the other one, the son of Pashur, was an enemy (Jer. 38:1).

**Jer. 39:15** Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

**Jer. 39:16** Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee.

**Jer. 39:17** But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid.

**Jer. 39:18** For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

Earlier, while Jeremiah was still “shut up in the court of the prison,” the word of Jehovah came to him. Now, at the time of Jeremiah’s release and going to Gedaliah, this previously spoken “word” is called to our attention. God’s message for Ebed-melech was, “I will be with you, so do not be afraid. You will be taken captive, but because you obeyed my voice and were sympathetic to my cause as manifested in Jeremiah, you need not be concerned about the treatment you will receive from the Babylonians. Your life shall be for a prey unto you because you have put your trust in me.”

The Chaldeans were brutal to those they conquered. For example, they habitually took infants by the heels and bashed their skulls against concrete walls. Their hard language, with its guttural pronunciation of words, matched their practices toward an enemy.

Thus, through Jeremiah, God assured the Ethiopian that he would be spared for his earlier kindness to the prophet in the slimy cistern. It had taken courage for Ebed-melech to speak out on Jeremiah’s behalf. Now the prophet’s advice was to trust in God and not be afraid, for Ebed-melech would lose all of his personal possessions but not his life. The Lord would protect him from undue persecution. Incidentally, when Ebed-melech was in King Zedekiah’s court, he must have had a relatively honored role. It was customary to emasculate such individuals so that there would be no shenanigans with the concubines and they could be trusted as a close servant of the king.

**Comment:** Ebed-melech was rewarded for the big “cup of cold water” he gave to Jeremiah (Matt. 10:42).

Character lessons and prophetic pictures are in the Book of Jeremiah, but they should not be carried too far. For example, since Jeremiah did not die when the trouble came, he does not represent the feet members here. We must use caution in assigning spiritual antitypes unless there is good cause. Each picture has to be carefully analyzed lest we become too type conscious.

**Jer. 40:1** The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon.

**Jer. 40:2** And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.

**Jer. 40:3** Now the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come



upon you.

**Jer. 40:4** And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.

Prisoners were taken from three sources: a few Jews survived in Jerusalem, some deserted to the foe, and some survived in the towns of Judah. Then came the sorting out of the poor of the land and the appointment of Gedaliah to remain behind and act as the custodian of King Nebuchadnezzar in preserving the land.

Meanwhile, Jeremiah was taken out of the court of the prison in Ramah, which was just north of Jerusalem and close to Anathoth, his hometown, and the present-day Damascus Gate. Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, did the actual loosing of the bands from off the hands of Jeremiah and gave him advice.

Nebuzar-adan loudly informed Jeremiah (and the people) that judgment and capture had come upon them because of the people's *sins*. Thus he and Nebuchadnezzar and others of Babylon had known for years of Jeremiah's preaching. Jeremiah had taken much guff from the Jews through four kings. Now Nebuzar-adan dealt *respectfully and kindly* with him. The prophet was at least 60 years old at this time.

Jeremiah was given the choice to go to Babylon and get treated well or to stay in the Jerusalem area under Gedaliah. He chose to remain behind in Mizpah with Gedaliah, and as stated in the previous chapter, the princes of the land escorted him there. It is helpful to keep in mind that Jeremiah in Judah, Ezekiel in exile among the captives, and Daniel in the king's court in Babylon were all in contemporaneous circumstances. During the Gospel Age also, the Lord has had different segments of society bear the prophetic message of the seven stages of the Church.

Jeremiah's telling the people of Judah to submit and go to Babylon and build houses implied they would be reasonably treated there because the Lord would be with them. Moreover, with Daniel and the three Hebrew children being in the government and having the king's ear, the Jews in captivity benefited. In fact, they were given so much opportunity in exile that, relatively speaking, only a few returned to the homeland in 536 BC. The Lord's hand was clearly in the whole arrangement. At first, it seemed the Lord's hand was also with Gedaliah, but that was not the case because the land had to be utterly desolate and without inhabitant for 70 years.

**Jer. 40:5** Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go.

**Jer. 40:6** Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

The captain of the guard not only twice gave Jeremiah a choice, assuring him of good treatment in Babylon, but also suggested that it might be wise to go with Gedaliah. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar must have been adamant about treating Jeremiah well. In addition, Jeremiah was given *food* and a *reward* (or present)—and all this in front of the Jews in chains, who had refused to listen to him. Then Jeremiah went to Mizpah to dwell near Gedaliah.

**Jer. 40:7** Now when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and

their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon;

**Jer. 40:8** Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

These names are mentioned for future reference in the Kingdom, for they will help to identify family relationships. The names serve another purpose as well; namely, without a driving interest to know the Lord's Word, a person will get tired and give up, or perhaps go to another part of the Bible, when he comes to such details. Then the person will lose out on history and on some of the prophecies.

**Comment:** This Ishmael (son of Nethaniah) becomes significant in the next chapter. Obviously, he was very angry at what Gedaliah was saying at this point.

**Reply:** Yes. We are now getting into an area that is interesting from the standpoint of character and a study of human nature.

**Jer. 40:9** And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

**Jer. 40:10** As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken.

**Jer. 40:11** Likewise when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan;

**Jer. 40:12** Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much.

The year was still 606 BC, and it was the harvest period but prior to the seventh month. Thus different crops were coming in. With the enemy arriving from Babylon, the army of Judah had left what they were doing and fled to places of refuge. Now a small mixed element of Jews returned from other lands to dwell near Gedaliah at Mizpah. Some of these aspired to positions of leadership, planning to regroup the nation. They returned from Ammon, Moab, and Edom—far away. Some of these Jews had been deserters from the fighters, and others had just fled years earlier in view of the predicted trouble. The returning Jews (many were former soldiers plus ambitious leaders) outnumbered the poor of the land.

**Jer. 40:13** Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah,

**Jer. 40:14** And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not.

**Jer. 40:15** Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let

**me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish?**

**Jer. 40:16 But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.**

Of the returning Jews, Johanan and “all the captains of the forces that were in the fields” of Judah went to Gedaliah in Mizpah. As spokesman, Johanan privately told Gedaliah of a plot to assassinate him and even gave the name of the perpetrator, saying that the king of Ammon hated the Israelites and was sending Ishmael for this purpose. Johanan offered to slay Ishmael secretly, but Gedaliah did not believe there was an assassination plot.

As we proceed, more information will be provided about these three personalities: Gedaliah, Johanan, and Ishmael. It will be seen that the king of Ammon sent Ishmael to kill Gedaliah. Johanan did not tell a lie, but he had ulterior motives. The character of each individual, plus more about Jeremiah, will come out as we continue the account.

In wanting Ishmael to assassinate Gedaliah, the king of Ammon may have seen that this would be a good opportunity to save his own life. His attitude would have been, “We will let you go if you return and assassinate Gedaliah.”

Neither Ammon nor Moab was favorable to Israel. In fact, they delighted in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the king of Ammon’s wanting to assassinate Gedaliah was another strike against him. The desire of Ammon and Moab was to wipe Israel off the map, much as a certain segment of Arabs and Muslims feel today. They were like vultures sitting on the fence, waiting for their moment of opportunity. They did not have the strength to conquer Israel, but once Nebuchadnezzar had defeated the nation, they wanted to finish the job, as it were.

**Jer. 41:1 Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah.**

Ishmael and Gedaliah are the two main characters. It was now the seventh month of the eleventh year; hence the year was still 606 BC and only three months later (see Jer. 39:2). Much had happened in those three months: Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple was burned, captives were taken to Babylon, and Jeremiah was in Mizpah with Gedaliah, the puppet governor Nebuchadnezzar had set over the poor of the land. Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam, who had saved the prophet’s life earlier.

Realizing that Ishmael was a Jew of the royal seed, and hence a prince, helps to determine his ulterior motive, for if a person of the royal lineage married a king’s daughter, he could take the throne in a legitimate fashion. He had fled to Ammon when Nebuchadnezzar came, and now he returned to Israel to assassinate Gedaliah, who had generously said that all Jews who had fled could return to Israel. Gedaliah had chosen to ignore the warning from Johanan about the evil intentions of Ishmael (Jer. 40:16).

**Q:** Did Ishmael feel that he was the royal heir and that Gedaliah, who had been installed by Nebuchadnezzar, was an illegitimate ruler?

**A:** Yes. By murdering Gedaliah, Ishmael wanted to take his place, and he had the backing of Baalis, the king of Ammon. Jealousy was also a factor. Indirectly, it can also be seen that Gedaliah was a friend of Jeremiah.

Supposedly the king of Ammon had told Ishmael to slay Gedaliah, but Ishmael could have made the original suggestion (Jer. 40:14). When Jerusalem was being destroyed, he had fled and hence was one of the escapees. Ishmael had gone to Ammon for refuge, whereas others had fled to the wilderness and caves in Judea or to Moab, for example. When these individuals heard that Gedaliah had been set as a puppet protector and welcomed the return of the escapees, they came out of their hiding places. Of course some had good motives, for they had simply fled for their lives and now wanted to return. But Ishmael, a traitor at heart, and the ten men with him took advantage of Gedaliah's generosity and hypocritically "did eat bread together" with Gedaliah in Mizpah.

**Q:** Was Ishmael married to a king's daughter?

**A:** Several king's daughters were with Gedaliah. In addition, a skeleton authority of Chaldeans was underneath Gedaliah to make sure nothing got out of hand. Thus king's daughters, Chaldean guards with a few soldiers, and other individuals were there with Gedaliah.

**Jer. 41:2** Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

**Jer. 41:3** Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, and the men of war.

Then Ishmael and the ten men with him killed Gedaliah with the sword, as well as all the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him to keep order. Ishmael did this nefarious deed secretly, slaying all the important personages in Mizpah. What a foolish precipitous act! Out of the largeness of his own heart, the king of Babylon had set one of the Jewish race over his own people as a puppet governor, and now even the Chaldean representatives and soldiery were dead. Because of too much ego, Ishmael was like a wild man in his thinking. He was unbalanced to even think he could get away with such an act.

**Jer. 41:4** And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it,

**Jer. 41:5** That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring them to the house of the LORD.

On the second day after the secret slaying of Gedaliah, 80 men came from the north, from Shechem (Nablus today), Shiloh, and Samaria. Their beards had been shaved, their clothes were torn, they had cut themselves, and in their hands were offerings and incense to take to the Temple. They knew the Temple had been destroyed but wanted to go to the Temple site.

**Comment:** Under the Law, the Jews were forbidden to "cut themselves." This practice was followed in pagan rituals.

**Reply:** Yes, there was nothing wrong with shaving the head or wearing sackcloth, but to cut their flesh was excessive. However, it was to the credit of these 80 men that they at least wanted to go and reverence the spot.

**Jer. 41:6** And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.

**Jer. 41:7** And it was so, when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, and cast them into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that were with him.

**Jer. 41:8** But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbore, and slew them not among their brethren.

The falseness in Ishmael's character is seen, for he went out with crocodile tears, pretending to sorrow over the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. To slay people who were coming with noble intent and were truly bemoaning the destruction of the Temple made Ishmael's insincere and heinous act doubly obnoxious. He wanted *nothing* to interfere with his plan to take over. Thus his madness came out in various ways. In his ego trip to slay Gedaliah, he failed to take into consideration someone else who was also of the royal seed, as will be seen.

This slaying took place on the very next day after the slaying of Gedaliah, showing that Ishmael acted quickly. He had just eliminated everyone in Mizpah when some arrived from the outside, so he went out and killed 70 and cast their bodies "into the midst of the pit." This pit was a very deep cistern that had been constructed years earlier by good King Asa of Judah to catch water (see verse 9). In other words, Ishmael threw the carcasses into the cistern to hide the evidence of the slaughter.

In review, when Ishmael heard that 80 men were coming on a pilgrimage, he hypocritically said he would show them the way to Gedaliah. Then he slew all but ten men. The ten wisely offered their "treasures" of produce for self-preservation. Evidently, they thought quickly, and "necessity is the mother of invention," as the saying goes. Ishmael was so filled with ambition that he wanted to appropriate to himself whatever he could take advantage of. Thus he spared the ten because they had wheat, barley, oil, and honey to give him if they were allowed to live.

The 80 Jews had come from Shechem, Samaria, and Shiloh to give an offering to God in the house of the Lord, but since the Temple had been burned, they would have to improvise. They were in mourning with their heads shaved, etc., over the destruction of Jerusalem.

**Q:** Is there any significance to the fact that only 70 of the 80 men were killed?

**A:** We do not like to get into numerics, for we have a tendency in that direction and have seen how it has harmed other Christians, not only in our brotherhood but also in other professed Christian circles. Being entranced with the intellectual field of numbers can absorb all our time and thinking and get us away from character and moral development. Numbers are fascinating, but in due time, God will reveal the true significance and lessons to all.

**Jer. 41:9** Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men, whom he had slain because of Gedaliah, was it which Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with them that were slain.

A very deep cistern was dug by King Asa of Judah when King Baasha of Israel, the northern kingdom, had threatened to come down. The hill, called Mizpah, was used as a fortress and a means of securing Jerusalem. Now Ishmael "filled it [the cistern] with them that were slain."

**Comment:** The NIV reads, "Now the cistern where he threw all the bodies of the men he had killed along with Gedaliah was the one King Asa had made as part of his defense against Baasha king of Israel." In destroying the evidence, Ishmael also slew the witnesses.

**Reply:** With the 80 men arriving so soon after the slaying of Gedaliah and those with him, there was probably evidence at Mizpah that something amiss had happened, and questions would be asked; hence the slaughter continued.

**Jer. 41:10** Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that were in Mizpah, even the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

Then Ishmael took the rest of the people of Mizpah and the king's daughters captive and departed for Ammon, intending to "go over to the Ammonites." Ishmael fled with the intention of seeking refuge from any momentary repercussions that might follow his actions. However, he did not escape because in the meantime, the army of Babylon was going down the other side to wipe out the Ammonites and the Moabites, intending to take only select captives back to Babylon.

**Jer. 41:11** But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done,

**Jer. 41:12** Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that are in Gibeon.

Ishmael's one-day delay changed the situation because Johanan, who was south of Jerusalem, received word of what had happened to Gedaliah and the others, and he and those with him had just enough time to intercept Ishmael in his fleeing. Thus, in spite of Ishmael's trying to hide the evidence, word leaked out.

**Jer. 41:13** Now it came to pass, that when all the people which were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, then they were glad.

**Jer. 41:14** So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah.

The people with Ishmael and his ten men, such as the king's daughters, were now in a position to change sides and go with Johanan. It appears that Johanan was of the royal seed but in a way that is not too clear in the etymology of the account. He was a respected older person.

**Q:** Was Jeremiah one of the people Ishmael took captive? The last mention of the prophet is in Jeremiah 40:6, "Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah ... to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land."

**A:** Jeremiah and Baruch were with Gedaliah initially, but the account is silent as to their whereabouts when Gedaliah was slain. It is possible that Ishmael had set spies in Mizpah to let him know the propitious moment for slaying Gedaliah, that is, when Jeremiah, Johanan, and Baruch were not present. Upon Ishmael's arrival, Gedaliah had invited him and his ten men to a feast, and there is no mention of Johanan's being there at the time (verse 1).

**Comment:** The next mention of the prophet is in Jeremiah 42:1,2, "Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan ... and Jezaniah ... and all the people ... came near, And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us

unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant.”

**Reply:** It is really immaterial where Jeremiah was in the interim, but the prayer he offered later is very important because character lessons are brought out with regard to Johanan and those confederate with him.

**Comment:** As we discussed in an earlier chapter, when the king of Ammon saw that Nebuchadnezzar had weakened Israel, he thought he could come in, seize the spoil, and take over. With Ishmael having royal Jewish blood and intending to kill Gedaliah and elevate himself, the king of Ammon was happy to make an alliance for his own selfish purposes. Ishmael and the king of Ammon each had ulterior motives.

**Reply:** Yes. Moreover, Ammonites and Moabites on the surrounding hills when Jerusalem was under siege tried to assist the king of Babylon by pointing out fleeing Israelites.

**Jer. 41:15** But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites.

Ishmael escaped from Johanan with eight of the ten men who were originally with him in Mizpah; the other two were probably killed (verse 1). They went to the Ammonites for refuge. Although the account does not say what happened to Ishmael, it is likely that he was killed when Babylon conquered Ammon.

**Jer. 41:16** Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, even mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon:

When Johanan, the captain of the guard who had originally warned Gedaliah about Ishmael, and the captains of the forces plus others confronted Ishmael, the people left Ishmael gladly and went with Johanan. The people included “men of war,” women, children, and eunuchs.

**Jer. 41:17** And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt,

**Jer. 41:18** Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

The people departed with Johanan and moved temporarily to a new location, to Chimham, which was a caravan stop near Bethlehem. This stop was on the main route to Egypt, which was the intended destination, for Johanan knew that the slaying of Gedaliah would bring repercussions. He feared that the king of Babylon would come down in anger and not try to discern who was guilty and who was innocent but would slay them all.

Now certain decisions would have to be made. In the final analysis, the land was desolate for 70 years despite the intervening turmoil.

**Jer. 42:1** Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near,

**Jer. 42:2** And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be

**accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:)**

**Jer. 42:3 That the LORD thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.**

Johanan, Jezaniah, and all the people had been involved in the puppet government that was set up by the king of Babylon, and they had rallied to the good-natured Gedaliah. When he was slain, plus the Chaldeans and the soldiery, these individuals knew that repercussions would be forthcoming. Hence they went to Jeremiah for advice, saying, “Let ... our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us ... even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many ... ) That the LORD thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.” With the word “supplication” meaning an earnest and humble entreaty, they were speaking way above their intention. They had opposed Jeremiah all along, and now, suddenly, they sought advice. They recognized Jeremiah as a prophet, as God’s representative, through whom they would have to go to get information. Incidentally, notice that the word “remnant” signifies “a few of many,” not a great number.

**Comment:** The people called Jehovah “the LORD thy [Jeremiah’s] God,” not “the LORD our God.” They realized Jeremiah was closer to God.

In light of what subsequently happened, we question the people’s sincerity, but imagine being in Jeremiah’s situation. From his standpoint, their coming to him seemed to be good news. Their words suggested a repentant attitude, and they were apparently in a listening mode, ready to accept advice. They recognized that their number was small and that they were very much in need of help and direction from God.

**Jer. 42:4 Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you.**

Jeremiah replied, “Behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words; and ... whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it ... ; I will keep *nothing* back from you.” Notice that Jeremiah said “*your* God” in response. Perhaps he was a little nervous in this situation because of the people’s past reactions. At any rate, Jeremiah said he would hold nothing back but would declare to them the whole message from the Lord. Earlier Zedekiah had said to Jeremiah, “I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me” (Jer. 38:14).

**Comment:** Eli made a similar statement when the young boy Samuel was given a message from the Lord: “What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee” (1 Sam. 3:17).

**Jer. 42:5 Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us.**

**Jer. 42:6 Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.**

What was the people’s response? The NIV has, “May the LORD be a true and faithful witness



against us if we do not act in accordance with *everything* the LORD *your* God sends you to tell us. Whether it is favorable or unfavorable, we will obey the LORD *our* God, to whom we are sending you, so that it will go well with us.” The people were almost taking an oath, and they even changed the pronoun. Their words are a reminder of what the Israelites, the nation, had said at Mount Sinai when the Law Covenant was given by Moses: “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do” (Exod. 19:8). In both cases, the people did not live up to their words.

Supposedly the people were in a receptive mood, which was a radical difference. They were saying to Jeremiah, “We commission you to go to the Lord on our behalf. Tell all that He says, and we will obey so that it will be well with us.”

**Comment:** When the people asked Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord for them, he replied, “I will do what you are asking, and I will keep nothing back from you.” They had every opportunity along the way to repent, but now they were digging their own grave.

**Reply:** In this situation, Jeremiah was almost like a mediator between God and men. As the Logos, Jesus had this role, and whatever God told him, he said. Based on his character and faithfulness, we know that when Jesus spoke a “thus saith the LORD,” he neither added nor subtracted words. Jeremiah was also a faithful witness, and in light of what happened, it is good that he said, “I will keep nothing back,” for the statement shows he had no ulterior motives. He said in effect, “I will not add or subtract anything to the judgment from the Lord. My motives are pure.”

**Comment:** There is a parallel with consecration. When we make a vow of consecration, we cannot go back on the agreement.

**Reply:** Yes. This account is a study of human nature and of what we are *not* to do.

**Comment:** The people sounded sincere in saying they would do whatever Jeremiah advised, so it is hard to tell whether the insincerity came later or whether it really existed from the start. With regard to Jeremiah, he probably wanted to believe they were sincere because for years, they had consistently ignored or opposed his prophecies. Now it seemed that they realized he was a true prophet and that they had learned a lesson. Therefore, he would have hoped there was real repentance, yet the phraseology indicates he was still being cautious.

In review, Johanan, the captain who had rescued the surviving Jews from Ishmael, and the others had gone to Jeremiah, asking him to inquire of the Lord as to how they should proceed. It is important to remember that *Johanan and the people had initiated* the proposition. Moreover, they promised to obey *all* the instructions *regardless*, and Jeremiah promised to report *all* that the Lord would tell him. In the final analysis, all who made this promise had an ulterior motive.

**Jer. 42:7** **And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah.**

Before Jeremiah got an answer from God, there was a ten-day delay, which would seem like a *long time* under the circumstances. The ten days gave the people time to *predetermine* what they would do, thus manifesting their *wrong* heart condition and Johanan’s true character, which resulted in *double-dealing*. What are some other reasons for the delay?

**Comment:** The ten days tested the depth of the people’s trust, patience, zeal, sincerity, and commitment.

**Comment:** Before Jeremiah took the petition to the Lord, he may have taken time to fast and pray about the matter.

**Reply:** Although nothing is said to that effect in the account, that could be the implication.

**Comment:** God may have waited for Jeremiah's benefit.

**Comment:** Psalm 27:14 reads, "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

There were several profitable reasons for the ten-day delay. Not only did it afford Jeremiah the opportunity to prepare himself to be a proper medium of exchange between God and the people, but also it showed how quickly the focus of attention of fallen human nature can fade. Only rare individuals indeed possess a long attention span. One of the most remarkable individuals in the Old Testament was Daniel, who prayed and fasted for three weeks (Dan. 10:2,3). He did not simply want information; he was not just curious. We should search our own hearts to see what our motive is in study and in the quest for information. In the present account, Jeremiah was a good example, and Johanan and the others with him, who had proffered the request, were bad examples.

**Jer. 42:8** Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest,

**Jer. 42:9** And said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him;

**Jer. 42:10** If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you.

Jeremiah could have communicated with Johanan alone, for he was the leader of the remnant, but instead he summoned all of them. By this method, they all shared in the responsibility to hearken to the message from the Lord.

Verses 9-18 give the answer from God, which begins as follows: "Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, ... If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I [will] repent me of the evil [the calamity, or judgment] that I have done unto you [whereby the city and the Temple were destroyed]." Johanan, the captain of the forces, and all the people never expected the advice to be, "Remain in the land." God was not sorry the judgment had occurred, but He would rethink the situation *if* there was *true* repentance and obedience. The *mechanics* were correct in that Johanan and the others had supplicated and presented an earnest request through Jeremiah, the true prophet, so the Lord answered them according to that outward petition.

The words "repent" and "evil" had these other meanings in the King James English of 1611. The thought is not that God changes His mind. As Jesus said, "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay" (Matt. 5:37). What God and Jesus say is absolutely true.

**Comment:** The fact that the 70 years of desolation could not begin until the land was completely desolate means this group of people had to be out of the land, yet God gave them the option of staying there. If they had heeded the advice to abide in the land, the 70 years would have changed.

**Reply:** That is true, but God knew the character of these people. He knew they would flee to Egypt. In other words, He called their bluff. God made a similar proposition to Zedekiah,

which, if the king had obeyed, would have turned back the prophesied destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem (Jer. 38:14-18). The sincerity of what we say is also tested. Therefore, we should be “swift to hear” and “slow to speak” (James 1:19).

**Comment:** The Scriptures advise against making a hasty vow, for “better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay” (Eccl. 5:5).

**Jer. 42:11** Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.

God continued to give advice through the prophet: “Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid ... saith the LORD: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.” Again the sincerity of the people was being tested, for they had said, “Whatever the Lord advises, whether favorable or unfavorable, we will obey.” Only God has the omniscience to know in advance what a response will really be. Because of Jesus’ faithfulness on the Cross, he probably has a considerable amount of intuitive understanding, but only the Heavenly Father possesses the capability of omniscience to the *full* extent of knowing what will happen *anywhere and anytime*. There are no sudden surprises with God, even though He condescends to accept certain modes (such as mockery, for example) in trying to come down to our plane of thinking and to get through to our dull senses.

**Q:** Wouldn’t this statement about the people being afraid of the king of Babylon also indicate that during the ten days, the Adversary may have put thoughts of fear into their minds? That can happen with us too. While we are waiting for an answer to prayer, the Adversary may interject thoughts that we need to repel. Otherwise, we are not prepared to receive the answer in the right way.

**A:** Yes, the Adversary usually strikes during a time of waiting and testing. When we are in an indecisive mode, he tries to influence us in his direction.

**Comment:** The Adversary worked through Pharaoh at the time of the plagues. During a plague, Pharaoh said the Israelites could leave, but when the plague stopped, he changed his mind. God granted multiple opportunities, but Pharaoh’s heart grew increasingly harder.

Intellectuals judge God even on these issues. Not realizing that Almighty God is all powerful, they criticize Him and have a feeling of superiority because of their education and learning. The trickle-down effect of such thinking is affecting the general public as well. Fortunately, in giving our life to the Lord, we are at least in a mode where we realize who He is, and we have to sink deeper into His thinking and will.

**Jer. 42:12** And I will show mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.

“And I [God] will show mercies unto you, that he [the king of Babylon] may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.”

**Jer. 42:13** But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the LORD your God,

Notice that in giving a *negative* hypothetical reply, Jeremiah used the term “*your* God.” Thus verse 13 contradicts the statement of verse 10.

**Comment:** Obviously, God knew how Johanan and the others would react because if they had

been sincere, they would not have needed this warning about disobedience.

All this detail, which spells out what God would do, brings out the contrast. Just as black shows up better against a white background, so the consequences of the people's disobedience showed up better when contrasted against the results of obedience. Thus the ten-day delay emphasized the people's insincerity and their refusal to obey. Because of our fallen human nature, we sometimes make statements that are the opposite of what we do, and this causes us to realize that in our flesh "dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). By His mercy, God looks on the heart's intent, on the desire of the inner man, and not on the flesh. Consider our mind, for example. Do we always have pure thoughts? Do we ever have ulterior motives? We need to pray for more of the Lord's Holy Spirit.

**Comment:** A lesson for us is that with knowledge comes responsibility. If Johanan and the people had left for Egypt before asking God for advice, the departure would not have been disobedience, but once they asked for advice, they were responsible for obeying it.

**Jer. 42:14** Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell:

**Jer. 42:15** And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there;

**Jer. 42:16** Then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die.

**Jer. 42:17** So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them.

If the remnant refused to obey the Lord's counsel to stay in Israel and willfully went to Egypt, they would die there by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. Of course God knew the remnant would rationalize their disobedience by saying the opposite—that they would not see war or suffer hunger in Egypt. Such conditions have been true of Egyptian history, generally speaking, for that country was off the beaten path. Therefore, Egypt has had much more peace than nations to the north. Also, Egypt was very powerful for a few centuries, so other nations were not interested in trying to conquer that land.

The wording of verses 15-17, which tells of the punishments that would ensue for disobedience, is exactly the same as that given to the inhabitants of Jerusalem when Zedekiah was king. They would die by the sword, famine, and pestilence.

"And none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them." The thought is that none of the *disobedient* would escape, for Jeremiah, Baruch, and others—a total of 745 survivors—were spared and taken into captivity. None would survive of the class who willfully and aggressively said, "No, we will not stay in Israel, but we will go to Egypt." They would all die by one of the three specified methods.

**Jer. 42:18** For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more.

The Lord's answer through Jeremiah ends with verse 18. "Ye shall see this place [the land of Israel] no more."

Now let us review the events that had happened. After the killing of Gedaliah, when the remnant petitioned Jeremiah to take their situation to God in prayer, they said, "Whatever God tells you, we will abide by the letter of His advice." There was a ten-day delay before the Lord gave an answer, which Jeremiah communicated to the people.

We are interested in the motives of the participants. The remnant had originally promised obedience, so why did their attitude change so radically? What was their initial motive? What were they thinking? Apparently, they never dreamed the advice would be to stay in the land and the Lord would protect them. Why did they think that Jeremiah, of all people, would be influenced to think as they did? After all, throughout his entire ministry, he had faithfully and steadfastly declared the word of the Lord, which was always contrary to the sympathy of the public. What led the remnant to now think Jeremiah would share their thinking?

For one thing, the prophet did not go to Babylon but stayed behind with Gedaliah. Also, Jeremiah did not reprove the remnant for the slaying of Gedaliah. Therefore, Johanan might have thought that because Jeremiah remained with them, there was a rapport and sympathy between them. He did not stop to think how unreasonable it would be for this man, who had opposed their thinking for approximately 40 years, to change his attitude now. In other words, Johanan considered Jeremiah to be part of the remnant. He did not realize that Jeremiah spoke only what he was taught to speak. As the Logos, the spokesman for God in Old Testament times, Jesus spoke and gave advice strictly according to God's instruction—nothing more, nothing less.

There were times when God did not give Jeremiah specific instructions. In one or two such instances, he emotionally blurted out something that did not specifically come from the Lord, but that was not his habit. (Being *perfect*, Jesus curbed his ministry prior to the Gospel Age and kept it in *perfect* obedience to God, and that discipline helped him mightily in the development of his character.) Evidently, because of Jeremiah's silence and lack of communication, Johanan and the others concluded that he thought as they did. They did not appreciate the fact that he was a loner who had his own thinking in harmony with the Lord's will.

**Comment:** There is a practical lesson here for us as Christians. At times, we try to discern the Lord's will in a matter, but when it is shown to us, we go ahead with our own thinking because the answer is not what we would like it to be.

**Reply:** Probably each of us has made such mistakes in the past. When the Lord showed us His will, we did not see it as such, even though the providence was quite plain. The problem or danger is getting lost in our own thinking. As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

**Q:** Was fear of Nebuchadnezzar Johanan's motive in asking Jeremiah to pray for advice?

**A:** Both fear and confusion of thinking were there—just as with us at times. Also, Jeremiah was a priest, so if the remnant was thinking of starting a colony in Egypt, they would want a priest. Earlier in Israel's history, approval and religious backing were sought from a person who had the ephod, even though he was not the high priest. Therefore, Johanan and the others might have looked at Jeremiah as being the only priest to accompany them to Egypt. Thus the people had various motives and did not listen strictly to what Jeremiah said, even though God made His will plain enough.

**Comment:** The ten-day waiting period was a factor too. Initially, at least some of the remnant may have thought they would do whatever the Lord said, but during the ten days, natural fear took over.

**Reply:** Time is a test for the Lord's people, both professed and true. The unconsecrated do not see the necessity for, or God's wisdom in, the permission of evil. They have not entered into a condition of fullness and openness of heart to listen to the Lord's advice. Hopefully, as we obey the Lord little by little, we grow in understanding and strength, so that as greater tests come, we will respond properly. Meanwhile, Satan fastens his fangs on our weaknesses according to the flesh and causes incidents to test us. Other experiences test our faith and trust in God that He is dealing with us. From time to time, it is good to reflect on our initial drawing and how God called us and then to review how He helped us in various trials. Instead of giving up and having doubts, we should consider how the Lord has led us to the present time. Then we are ready to step forward into the future and the unknown. The anchor of faith in the Most Holy has to be secure in order for us to hold onto that lifeline.

The remnant here with Johanan did not have such past experiences. All along they were negative in their actions and thinking, so when the test came and God said, "Do not be afraid," His words did not have much meaning. Since they had not responded properly in the past, they had no basis for a favorable reaction.

**Comment:** For the remnant, the nail in the coffin was their refusal to obey after their promise to do whatever the Lord told them through Jeremiah. Deuteronomy 23:21 reads, "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee."

**Reply:** In the past, a well-known person who was consecrated for years questioned whether God had accepted her consecration. To reason along this line is the height of stupidity. This person sought advice both from us and from another person. We asked her, "When you came into the truth, did you *at that time* think the Lord had accepted your consecration?" When she responded, "Yes," we said, "That still applies." However, the other party sympathized with her, and we feel such sympathy is dangerous.

**Jer. 42:19** The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day.

**Jer. 42:20** For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your God, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God; and according unto all that the LORD our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it.

**Jer. 42:21** And now I have this day declared it to you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you.

**Jer. 42:22** Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn.

In verses 19-22, Jeremiah was speaking, faithfully reviewing what God had said. This repetition was not vain, for God and Jeremiah were the two witnesses.

**Comment:** Verses 10-12 tell what the Lord wanted the remnant to do, that is, to stay in the land and not be afraid. Then verses 13-18 tell what would happen if they disobeyed and fled to Egypt. The number of verses devoted to the punishment proves what they were thinking.

**Comment:** The remnant should have been startled into obedience when God revealed through Jeremiah their thoughts and intentions.

**Reply:** The word “dissembled,” which means they concealed their real intentions, indicates that their request for prayer was insincere. They never thought Jeremiah would say to stay in the land. Hence their promise to obey regardless of the answer was not a true statement.

**Comment:** The King James marginal rendering for verse 20 is, “For ye have used deceit against your souls.”

**Reply:** What is not honest ends up being deceitful.

**Comment:** The NIV has, “I warn you today that you made a fatal mistake when you sent me to the LORD your God.”

God said that if the remnant hearkened and stayed put, He would protect them. But God knew in advance what they would do, so He said that if they disobeyed and went to Egypt, they would die of the sword, famine, and pestilence. He challenged them in order to show the true condition of their hearts, for in adamantly stating they were going to Egypt, Johanan and the people revealed they had dissembled at the time they made the proposition. It was hypocritical for them to say they would obey the Lord regardless of the answer and then not do it.

Seeing that Johanan’s character was unreliable, we can now understand why Gedaliah did not believe his warning. Johanan warned Gedaliah for ulterior motives and not because he was so righteous. As for the people, the element of *fear*, plus *misguided instruction*, swayed those who were not established in principle; they followed an unrighteous leader like sheep. Jeremiah made it clear that he had told everything God had said unto him. God had stated previously that the land of Israel would be utterly desolate for 70 years, so He knew, before these events happened, what would occur to empty the land.

Jeremiah 52:28-30 tells the number of survivors who were taken to Babylon in the three captivities. “This is the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand Jews and three and twenty: In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons: In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons were four thousand and six hundred.” The total number of survivors, who are summarized below, was 4,600. Incidentally, the female survivors, who outnumbered the males, were not included in the count.

1. Jehoiachin captivity - 3,023 survivors. The Jehoiachin captivity took place at the end of his reign in 617 BC. After reigning for only three months, he was taken to Babylon.
2. Zedekiah captivity - 832 survivors. This captivity took place in 606 BC, when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.
3. Nebuchadnezzar’s pursuit of the Jews who fled to Egypt - 745 survivors. This captivity occurred in 601 BC. In other words, after Gedaliah was killed, it took five years before the king of Babylon came down in response to the killing of the puppet governor he had set up and the Chaldean warriors and other people.

**Jer. 43:1** And it came to pass, that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had sent him to

them, even all these words,

**Jer. 43:2** Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there:

**Jer. 43:3** But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon.

Johanan and the leaders accused Jeremiah of speaking a *lie*. Not only did they feel he had ulterior motives, but also they downgraded Baruch, who had read Jeremiah's messages to the people while the prophet was in prison. They felt that Baruch had urged Jeremiah to tell the remnant to stay in the homeland so that the Chaldeans would slay them. The accusation was totally unjustified based on Jeremiah's previous character and his predictions that had come to pass. As an illustration, if we had heard the Lord Jesus Christ speak in the flesh, would we have recognized him as such? The answer is probably yes, because we have responded to his message in the current life, but many could see one whom God sent and not even know it, for they judge by appearance, attitude, a little infirmity, or some other superficial reason.

Baruch's still being alive at this time means that he, too, was spared and that Jeremiah had a companion in his tribulations. Because Nebuchadnezzar had shown kindness to Jeremiah previously, and apparently to Baruch too, he would spare them again regardless of whether they followed the others to Egypt. However, the people would die.

The "proud men" were those who especially opposed Jeremiah. The leaders in the nominal system who similarly oppose the feet members will become *targets of retribution* after the feet members are off the scene.

Verse 2 shows the responsibility of leading personalities. When Azariah and the others made the accusation "Thou speakest falsely," the people supported them. Since the Lord could read the heart, *none* survived. All who wanted to go to Egypt in spite of warnings from the Lord incurred responsibility. Similarly, God reads the heart of Jews today, and accordingly, the Holy Remnant will be handpicked for survival, their names having been recorded in advance "in the book" (Isa. 4:3; Dan. 12:1).

**Comment:** The fact that the leaders turned against Baruch indicates he was outspoken.

**Reply:** Whenever Jeremiah instructed Baruch to do something, the scribe complied. During Jeremiah's imprisonment, Baruch was especially helpful, becoming the spokesman.

**Jer. 43:4** So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah.

**Jer. 43:5** But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations, whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah;

**Jer. 43:6** Even men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah.

**Jer. 43:7** So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD:



**thus came they even to Tahpanhes.**

In disobedience, Johanan and “all the captains of the forces ... took all the remnant of Judah [men, women, children, and king’s daughters]” to Tahpanhes in Egypt. No doubt Johanan intended to marry one of the king’s daughters, hoping to be king of the nucleus of Israelites in Egypt so that at a later date, he could refound the nation.

There is no recorded history of Tahpanhes, relatively speaking, yet today this area of Egypt is a picture of wild confusion with all kinds of monuments and much swampland and quicksand. We have never gone there on a tour because we felt it was too dangerous for the brethren, but we very much wanted to visit that area because a lot of information is among the ruins. Many things have happened in Tahpanhes since Jeremiah’s day and up until the First Advent, such as the diversion of canals and the making of a fortress, or great wall. Because of the diversion of streams, that which once was stable ground became a bog or marshland in subsequent history.

**Comment:** Verse 7 marks the beginning of the 70 years of desolation of the land, for the remaining inhabitants of Judah left and went to Egypt. “They obeyed not the voice of the LORD.” The 70 years started at this time and not when Jerusalem was destroyed or when the Jehoiachin captivity occurred or when Gedaliah was left in the land with vinedressers.

**Reply:** Yes, once the remnant stepped into Tahpanhes, the 70 years began, technically speaking. However, the year was still 606 BC.

The *true* prophets of the Lord are not recognized. Even after the prophecies of Jeremiah were accurately fulfilled regarding Jerusalem’s destruction and Nebuchadnezzar, Johanan and company still would not obey. They wanted Jeremiah to tell them to go to Egypt, and when he did not do so, they went there anyway. This incident is a lesson on the *instability* of human character *without faith*—and, conversely, the *strength* of human character *with faith*.

Although Jeremiah does not really represent the feet members in this setting after the destruction of Jerusalem, there is an end-of-the-age lesson. Just as Jeremiah laid a decision before the people and they *went contrary to it*, so the message of the feet members will be to “kiss the Son” (Psa. 2:12), but the leaders will ignore it.

**Jer. 43:8** Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying,

**Jer. 43:9** Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brickkiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh’s house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah;

**Jer. 43:10** And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them.

**Jer. 43:11** And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword.

When Johanan and the Israelites left Judah and went to Tahpanhes, Egypt, Jeremiah struggled to take “*great stones*” and put them in the clay residue in the brick kiln at the entry of Pharaoh’s house. Then Jeremiah covered over the stones to hide them. He prophesied that King Nebuchadnezzar would conquer Egypt and set up his throne there and one by one cause the Jews to pass before him to be designated for death, captivity, or the sword. Jeremiah said Nebuchadnezzar would *easily* capture Egypt. The Jews thought they would be safe down there,

but NO! The account implies that a congregation of Jews was watching Jeremiah hide the stones. He would have chosen a suitable occasion to dramatize this prophetic lesson.

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, ... Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them.” By leveling out the floor of the kiln and using the high brick “silo” as a backdrop, Nebuchadnezzar would have a perfect temporary throne—and on the exact spot where Jeremiah had enacted the drama with the great stones. The “pavilion” was a picture of *judgment*, similar to the idea of the Pavement on which Pilate sat to judge Jesus (John 19:13).

The prophecy continued. “And when he [Nebuchadnezzar] cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are [marked out by the king] for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword.” Those who were appointed to the sword died in resisting Nebuchadnezzar’s army. The ones slated for captivity were only those individuals who were not in sympathy with going to Egypt in the first place. It was predetermined by the Lord that they would not be slain but would be taken to Babylon, where they would be resident with other Jews. As far as Jeremiah was concerned, there are two schools of thought, and we favor the thought that he went to Babylon. One reason is that Daniel later referred to his writings: “In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:2). Thus Jeremiah’s writings were preserved in Babylon, and Daniel got them. Incidentally, it is interesting that in the Christian Age, the Bible went into the Latin language, and Papacy kept it for many years.

**Jer. 43:12** And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace.

**Jer. 43:13** He shall break also the images of Beth-shemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.

“And I [God] will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he [Nebuchadnezzar] shall burn them.” The king of Babylon burned the statues that were too large to carry back to Babylon.

How would Nebuchadnezzar “array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment”? The illustration is of one who picks up his long garment, slings it over his shoulder, and goes on. In other words, the king of Babylon took whatever he wanted and left with the riches of Egypt. To carry away the Egyptian gods as “captives” further humiliated the Egyptian people. The gods were put on display in Babylon to show that Egypt had been conquered. Nebuchadnezzar took six years to plunder the land, going inland as far as Nubia.

**Comment:** The NIV reads, “As a shepherd wraps his garment around him, so will he wrap Egypt around himself and depart from there unscathed.”

**Comment:** Beth-shemesh means “house of the sun.” Nebuchadnezzar broke the images of the house of the sun. Since Egyptians worshipped the sun god, this destruction was meaningful.

**Reply:** Moses probably received his training at Heliopolis, which was not far from the Tahpanhes area. *Helio* means “sun.” Thus the next area after Tahpanhes that Nebuchadnezzar conquered and plundered was Heliopolis, and then he continued up the east side of the Nile. Of course Heliopolis is a Greek name that came later with the Empire of Greece, showing that

some of the place names changed.

The noses of many statues in Egypt were cut off. We believe that mutilation was done later by Cambyses of Persia. The Sphinx was marred by him as well, and not by Napoleon as many believe. Napoleon was a preserver of antiquities, not a destroyer. He took scientists with him and medical men to study the artifacts and statues of Egypt, whereas Cambyses had a completely different temperament. Cambyses was buried by a sandstorm with about 50,000 men somewhere under the sand in Egypt; to this day, no one knows where he is. He had gone out to consult an oracle when the calamity occurred.

“The houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he [Nebuchadnezzar] burn with fire.” He burned the inner components of the temples, which were garnished with wood.

**Comment:** The emphasis on destroying statues and burning temples shows that men have realized the impact of religion on the people. If a nation’s gods were taken, the people’s spirit was broken.

**Reply:** When we drove up into Canada many years ago, we were startled to see such poor people farming the land, yet there was a great big cathedral in each tiny town with poverty all around. Like a bloodsucker, the Roman Catholic Church was draining the people. In principle, these were great monuments to Beth-shemesh.

**Jer. 44:1** The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying,

Jeremiah continued to speak to the remnant of Jews in Egypt. Noph is another name for Memphis, a large city and religious center in Egypt.

**Comment:** The NIV sums up the place names of verse 1 by saying, “This word came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews living in *Lower Egypt*—in Migdol, Tahpanhes and Memphis—and in *Upper Egypt*.”

**Reply:** Yes, Pathros was in Upper Egypt.

**Jer. 44:2** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein,

**Jer. 44:3** Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, ye, nor your fathers.

At this time, which was the end of the Period of the Kings, Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah were desolate and without inhabitant. God had brought the destruction because of the people’s wickedness and their worship of heathen gods. Evil rises up and up, until eventually God’s fury comes up into His face as, for example, in the near future when Gog will come against the land of Israel (Ezek. 38:18). Jeremiah 43:7 and 44:2 mark the point in time when the 70 years of desolation began, for the land was *emptied of Jews* when Johanan and the people departed Israel for Egypt.

**Jer. 44:4** Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.

**Jer. 44:5 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.**

Again and again God sent prophets to warn Israel not to do “this abominable thing” that He hated, but “they hearkened not ... to turn from their wickedness” of burning incense unto other gods. God tolerated this condition for a long time because He did not interfere with His own plan of times and seasons. Then, when the propitious moment came, He made known His feelings to those who were victimized by the experience.

**Jer. 44:6 Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day.**

Even though calamities came on the Jews, they did not learn the lesson. Jeremiah had tried to reason with them but to no avail, so the calamities had to come. Now punishment would reach the Jews in Egypt in the various towns where they settled and were once again worshipping false gods. Nebuchadnezzar would humiliate the Egyptians too by destroying the temples of their false gods.

The Jews continued to commit the same sins. Jesus pointed out the principle at the First Advent, when he said that the scribes and Pharisees were doing the same things their fathers had done and had not learned the lesson. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.... O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matt. 23:29-31,37).

**Jer. 44:7 Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; Wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain;**

**Jer. 44:8 In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?**

Jeremiah was addressing the remnant Jews who had fled from Judah after the assassination of Gedaliah and gone down to Egypt for supposed safety. The advice from the Lord was to stay put, but the Jews feared Nebuchadnezzar and did not have enough faith. Already they were following the heathen Egyptian religion, burning incense unto other gods. They were given ample warnings throughout the period of their history, but they persisted in committing the same evils against their *own* “souls.” Back in Judah, the Jews had baked cakes to the queen of heaven, so they were continuing in the same type of satanic worship (Jer. 7:18). Therefore, a severe judgment would come at the hands of the king of Babylon. “Man and woman, child and suckling” would be cut off, making them “a reproach among all the nations of the earth.”

**Jer. 44:9 Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem?**

**Jer. 44:10** They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers.

**Jer. 44:11** Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah.

**Jer. 44:12** And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.

**Jer. 44:13** For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence:

**Jer. 44:14** So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.

The denunciation continued. The coming punishment was worded the same as the punishment in 606 BC—death would come by sword, famine, and pestilence. Instead of realizing their being spared was a blessing and an evidence of mercy, the remnant Jews remained hard-hearted and disobedient. They deserved the same punishment as those who were taken captive in 606 BC.

“None of the remnant ... shall escape or remain.” In the Old Testament, “all” and “none” are often used to mean *almost all* or *practically none*. This same chapter subsequently shows that a *tiny* remnant (of the remnant) was spared.

**Jer. 44:15** Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,

An important character lesson is that the responsibility rested more on the men as the head of their respective families.

**Jer. 44:16** As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee.

The Jewish men and women in Pathros—a great multitude—adamantly refused to hearken to Jeremiah’s message. They had been received in Egypt, and assimilation took place very readily.

**Jer. 44:17** But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

The people had promised to heed what came out of *God’s* mouth through Jeremiah, but now they were doing what came out of their *own* mouths. They said, “We are burning incense and pouring out drink offerings to the queen of heaven as we did previously in Judah and Jerusalem, for then we prospered and had plenty of food and saw no evil.” Imagine Jehovah’s listening to these brazen and rebellious words!

**Jer. 44:18** But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.

The people continued to speak: “But since we stopped burning incense and pouring out drink offerings to the queen of heaven, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and famine.” In Egypt, they returned to the iniquitous conditions they had previously enjoyed.

**Jer. 44:19** And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?

The main point of verse 19 is the phrase “without our men.” Verse 15 started with the statement “Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods....” Now the women were using the men as a crutch. Just as Adam blamed Eve in the Garden of Eden, so the women blamed the men (their husbands). One lesson is that in the marriage relationship, men, especially elders, are responsible for their wives, for they are in positions of leadership. They should not overlook incongruities. A lot of nuances in the Word are overlooked if we read too fast. In the spiritual relationship, the man should be more exemplary in the family relationship, if possible.

**Comment:** The NIV supports this thinking. “The women added, ‘When we burned incense to the Queen of Heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, did not our husbands know that we were making cakes like her image and pouring out drink offerings to her?’”

**Comment:** One almost feels sorry for Jeremiah because he had to preach both before and after the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah, both in the homeland and in Egypt and elsewhere.

**Reply:** Yes, his character was most unusual.

The condition being described in verses 15-19 did not occur when the remnant first entered Egypt and Jeremiah buried the stones at Tahpanhes, prophesying that the king of Babylon would come down to judge the Jews at that very location (Jer. 43:8-10). The time setting was now some years later.

Adamantly refusing to hearken, the people blamed their problems on not worshipping the queen of heaven continuously. What a dreadful attitude! Their words were similar to the murmurings of the Israelites shortly after being led out of Egypt by Moses with great miracles. Now they were blaming God for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

What is the counterpart in the Gospel Age? The professed Church of Christ is contradictory in that it mixes in heathen customs, dates, doctrines, etc. God’s prophets, or messengers, in the Gospel Age have been ignored and/or persecuted, and the nominal Church continues in its evil practices. The Bible has been made subsidiary to tradition and men’s teachings.

**Jer. 44:20** Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying,

**Jer. 44:21** The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it not into his mind?

“Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, ... The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in ... Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it not into his mind?” Jeremiah reminded the people that God was not ignorant of their words.

Earlier Jeremiah addressed the Jews as a group, zeroing in on the leaders who voiced the protest—the more responsible ones who had a rebellious spirit. Now he addressed all the people. The 745-person remnant within the larger remnant was taken back to Babylon as captives, for they were in a salvable condition. All the rest perished—every single one.

**Jer. 44:22** So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.

The evil doings were such a stench in Jehovah’s nostrils that He “could no longer bear” them. No wonder the land of Israel became “a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant”!

**Jer. 44:23** Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day.

These heathen practices were done *openly, with no shame*, right in public. Because the Jews had burned incense to the queen of heaven and had not obeyed God or walked in His Law, “this evil is happened” unto them; that is, the city and the Temple were destroyed and the land was evacuated with the few survivors being taken to Babylon.

Similarly, Catholic statues are right out in the open. The queen of heaven, or Ashtoreth (Venus, Astarte, etc.), is the counterpart of the Virgin Mary today. The Israelites made cakes to her and poured out drink offerings. Catholicism says one cannot get to Jesus except through Mary, the mediatrix.

By considering the days in Judah when incense was offered to the queen of heaven as the good old days, the Jews inferred that the days when they were faithful to Jehovah were the bad old days. What lopsided thinking on the part of the Lord’s professed people! They were blind, for what they saw was the opposite of reality. They put light for darkness, and darkness for light.

**Comment:** In the antitype, Israel represents the nominal Church, so if only a few thousand were saved out of millions, we should realize the seriousness of the Christian walk. God’s standard is very, very high.

**Reply:** Yes, we were born and “shapen in iniquity” (Psa. 51:5). Lingering weaknesses that try to pull us toward the world and the flesh must be crucified. For doing so, we get compensatory blessings. The Lord graciously promises a reward for self-denials and every step of obedience. The Israelites took a few steps, but as time went on, they slowed down and stopped. It is no wonder that they did not conquer the whole land and still had enemies after the six years of being under Joshua’s leadership. Only the Little Flock fully conquers the land in spirit.

**Q:** Is one lesson that the bulk of the nominal element died, and of the remnant that remained, there was a smaller remnant? Does the latter represent the Little Flock within the larger Great Company?

**A:** There are lessons along that line. In the Third Temple, for example, the Great Company is

pictured by the Levites at the gates because they were influenced by sociality with the people. The Zadok priesthood, which represents the Little Flock, will enter into the real promises. With regard to character formation, every step of willful disobedience, pride, etc., has to be undone. To retrace wrong steps is more difficult than just pursuing the right course to begin with. What a man sows, he will reap (Gal. 6:7).

**Q:** In antitype, would this be an end-time picture of the destruction of mystic Babylon and the burning of the tares? Does the prominence of the queen of heaven in the type indicate that Mary will have a big role in the future?

**A:** That could be, but we are considering the natural picture. The spiritual picture has so many connotations that we would need to have a separate study.

**Jer. 44:24** Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt:

**Jer. 44:25** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.

**Jer. 44:26** Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord GOD liveth.

**Jer. 44:27** Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them.

In spite of the pressure brought to bear against him, Jeremiah was uncompromising in his preaching. It will be interesting to see what position he occupies in the Kingdom.

Men and women were equally disobedient, although men took the leading role. God knew that the Jews would not repent, that they would continue to worship the queen of heaven. In verses 26 and 27, He generally gave them over to wrath for their evil doing. They would no longer be able to say, "The Lord GOD liveth," an expression the Jews used frequently in Old Testament times. They would be stopped from using that expression by going into death from the sword or famine. God would "watch over them for evil" in that His judgment would reach the rebellious *majority*, and they died there in Egypt.

**Comment:** The principle will be the same with the burning of the tares in the near future. There will come a point in time when God no longer permits His name to be loosely used. The tares will have to cease their professions as Christians.

**Reply:** Broadly speaking, the desolation of Judah in this picture represents the destruction of mystic Babylon, which falsely claims to be of God. From the slaughter of Gedaliah to the judgment on the remnant, there is an end-time antitype, with the worship of the queen of heaven (the Virgin Mary) persisting even into Egypt (the world).

**Comment:** Verse 25 is sarcasm. Jeremiah said on behalf of God, "Ye will surely accomplish your vows [to burn incense and pour out drink offerings to the queen of heaven]."



**Jer. 44:28** Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs.

A *very small* remnant would eventually return to Judah. The number that went to Babylon will be discussed later, but verse 28 is saying that a very small number of them would live through the 70 years of desolation to return to Judah for the rebuilding of the Temple. The few survivors would realize the truthfulness of Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the Jews.

In verse 26, God swore that His "name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt." Now in verse 28, He was saying, "We will see whose words shall stand, my words or those of the disobedient remnant." The great Jehovah, who made heaven and earth and the things therein, condescends to reason with both natural and spiritual Israel. How pathetic it is that mankind does not realize the wonderment of His dealing with a bunch of clay down here! He invites man to come and reason with Him (Isa. 1:18).

**Comment:** God had said that all would be consumed, but here He stated that a "small number" of the remnant would be taken to Babylon and eventually return to Judah. God's wisdom is shown by the fact that those who escaped the sword would testify as to what had happened; namely, the people did not believe Jeremiah but listened to the false prophets, and now everything that had been prophesied by the word of the Lord had come to pass.

**Reply:** Had *all* the Jews who were left in Judah with Gedaliah desired to go to Egypt, they *all* would have perished. Those who did not give assent in their hearts to the predominant view, as expressed by Johanan and the other leaders, were spared for captivity in Babylon. Thus God recognized this small number in the midst of the mass, this remnant of the remnant, which was 745 males.

Some Jews were already in Egypt prior to the arrival of the vinedressers, so evidently, about 2,000 Jews were involved. The time setting was now 601 BC, five years after the destruction of Jerusalem in 606 BC. However, the 2,000 Jews were quite a contrast to the 2 million or so Jews who were in Judah prior to 606 BC.

The word "sojourn" in verse 28 indicates that the remnant who went to Egypt with Johanan intended to stay there awhile and then ultimately return to Judah. They thought they would be safe from Nebuchadnezzar while in Egypt, but God said otherwise.

**Jer. 44:29** And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil:

**Jer. 44:30** Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.

Jeremiah gave a "sign" that God would punish the Jews. Earlier he had hidden stones in the brick kiln, saying that Nebuchadnezzar would sit there as a conqueror, giving life or death verdicts to the Jews who had survived up to that point. In addition, Jeremiah predicted that the existing Pharaoh would be overthrown. The Jews were foolish to have trusted in Egypt for security instead of in God.

Personal names are given in the account so that when these real people come forth from the tomb in the Kingdom Age, they will be known by their names. Also, they will be astounded

that all this information was written in the Book of Jeremiah. The intended purpose is to glorify God and His omniscience, not to make us all historians. Those who made monstrous claims in contradiction and opposition to the word of the Lord will experience shame in the Kingdom. God said, “The words that go out of my mouth will not return unto me void but will accomplish my purpose” (Isa. 55:11 paraphrase). If such individuals then harden their heart, there will be no excuse, and the destiny will be extinction.

“Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies ... that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar.” Although Zedekiah’s life was spared, his eyes were put out, and he died in captivity.

**Jer. 45:1** The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,

**Jer. 45:2** Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch;

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

It is interesting that chapter 45 consists of only five verses. This separate treatment is certainly in order, for a radical change of time from 601 BC is involved. The message was originally given to Baruch about 19 years before the destruction of Jerusalem, or 24 years earlier, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Way back there, God had instructed Jeremiah in regard to his friend Baruch. Of course Jeremiah conveyed this personal message to Baruch. Ezra would have had a good reason for collating the chapters in this out-of-time-sequence fashion.

Baruch was taking dictation from Jeremiah about the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of the land for 70 years. (The 70 years began in 606 BC, after the remnant of vinedressers had fled to Egypt.) Baruch had said, “Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.” Why was Baruch grieved back there when he was taking Jeremiah’s dictation? He had had a personal grievance because the whole land would become desolate and despoiled and because his *own personal goods* would be lost. In other words, he was concerned and troubled about the future and how it would affect him. This thinking was in Baruch’s heart, and he had probably expressed it to Jeremiah, his friend and mentor. Therefore, God now had a message for Jeremiah to give to Baruch.

**Jer. 45:4** Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land.

Notice that God builds up and breaks down, and He plants seed and uproots seed, with the one preceding the other. Verse 4 ends on an unhappy note, for when one builds, he expects to dwell in the building, and when one plants, he expects to benefit from the fruits of the seed. Instead there would be a complete reversal of hope.

Baruch had many sorrows. He had to read the dictation when Jeremiah was in prison. Added to his personal sufferings and persecutions was the realization that he would lose all of his possessions. God said, “I planted all—everything is mine—and I will destroy it, but you will escape with *your life*. However, in whatever place you go, you will not be able to accumulate goods: in Jerusalem, near Bethlehem, in Egypt, or in Babylon.” Baruch had been a man of means.

As we had read earlier, when Jeremiah told the remnant of vinedressers that the Lord’s answer

was to stay in Judah and not go to Egypt, they made the accusation “Baruch put you up to this.” For them to make this statement shows that Baruch went to Egypt with the vinedressers after Gedaliah was assassinated.

The people considered Baruch responsible, as well as Jeremiah, so both were persecuted. As stenographer, Baruch recorded and had the record of the whole Book of Jeremiah. When he went to Babylon, the scrolls were put in the temple archives. Years later, with the permission of a subsequent king, they were removed from the archives. Cyrus, king of Persia, issued the decree for Jews to return to the homeland, and still later Ezra got the “books,” or scrolls, and collated them. In the process, the Lord used Ezra to give the time frame and make slight amendments to tie the record together. For example, there was no city of Rameses in Moses’ day, but Ezra added that name so that future generations would understand the reference.

As we continue, we will find some points about human character that we have to battle in our own heart. No matter how favored the Lord may be with each of us as individuals in the truth, we have to watch and safeguard motives.

Even though Baruch faithfully recorded Jeremiah’s words, some of them, such as the coming 70-year desolation, did not sink in. Secretly, he had thoughts that were somewhat similar to those of the remnant, who wanted to sojourn in Egypt and then return to the former situation in Judah. The motive he entertained was a little negative. However, since the Lord chose Baruch to be allied with Jeremiah, we know that his character was noble, even though certain dangers existed. When a person associates himself with others, he may harbor all kinds of secret motives that could be dangerous, such as money, popularity, influence, and recognition. Evidently, the Lord saw that Baruch’s positive traits outweighed his negative ones. He did a good work in assisting Jeremiah and also provided needed companionship.

**Q:** Does Baruch represent the Great Company?

**A:** That seems to be the case.

**Jer. 45:5** **And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.**

What “great things” did Baruch seek for himself? Presumably he wanted to preserve his wealth and position in life, but God said, “Do not seek these things, for my determination is to bring evil upon all flesh. I will not cater to your personal whims. However, I will spare your life wherever you go. You should be content to be taken into Babylonian captivity.”

**Comment:** God said, “Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places [plural] whither thou goest.” Here is a clue that Baruch’s life was spared not only in Egypt but also in Babylon.

**Reply:** Yes, verse 5 informs us that Baruch was in Egypt and that his life would be spared by his being taken captive to Babylon. With Jeremiah, the account is intentionally silent for various reasons, but we believe that he, too, went to Babylon.

**Comment:** The phrase “for a prey” indicates possession. Baruch was not to look for temporal rewards, for destruction would come on Judah and Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, but God did give him his life for a possession.

**Comment:** Baruch is a good type of the Great Company. God was saying, “Do not trust in earthly things, for they will perish, but if you serve me faithfully, I will give you your life.”

**Comment:** God was trying to impress upon Baruch the gift of life, and that is what the Great Company will realize after the feet members go off the scene. They will be grateful for God's mercy in granting spiritual life for washing their robes in the great tribulation (Rev. 7:14).

**Reply:** Baruch was honored in that his life was spared, but he was not particularly praised.

**Jer. 46:1 The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles;**

The intent of the prophecies starting in this chapter and extending to the end of the book (that is, through chapters 50 and 51 pertaining to Babylon) was to speak against the *Gentiles*. More specifically, chapters 46-49 pertain to Israel's immediate Arab neighbors—and hence to the Psalm 83 setting in the antitype, which will occur before the destruction of mystic Babylon (Christendom) in chapters 50 and 51. From here on, there will be prophecies about other nations and no more details about Jeremiah's life. Each chapter pertains to a different Gentile power: Egypt, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, and Elam. Chapter 46, then, is a break point in the Book of Jeremiah.

**Jer. 46:2 Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah.**

Of the Gentile nations against which judgment would be brought, Egypt was mentioned first. Here we are given history of the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when a battle took place way up north near the Euphrates River at Carchemish. (The time setting was the same for the previous chapter.) In this battle, which was fought between King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and Pharaoh-necho of Egypt, the Egyptians were defeated, and good King Josiah was slain. In the early chapters of Jeremiah, we heard that a message was sent to the various nations, and now we will learn the contents of that message. When ambassadors of the various nations came to Jerusalem to consult on business, Jeremiah used the opportunity to put a wooden yoke on each one and give a judgment message to deliver to the respective king, telling what the God of Israel intended to do to that nation.

King Nebuchadnezzar fought Egypt in two major battles. Ezekiel had predicted that Egypt's two arms would be broken (Ezek. 30:21-26). (1) In 624 BC, the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the first arm of Egypt was broken up at the Euphrates River near Carchemish. The general of any army would have liked to capture Carchemish because it was situated in a critical position in what is northern Lebanon today. Succeeding verses give details of what happened during that confrontation. (2) In 601 BC, which was the fifth year after 606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt and broke the second arm.

**Jer. 46:3 Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle.**

**Jer. 46:4 Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, and put on the brigandines.**

To attract the attention of the people, Jeremiah would have delivered this message loudly and dramatically. Back there God advertised His truth by this method, and as a result, news spread throughout the nation via the grapevine. Jeremiah spoke and acted out the motions as if he were literally seeing the battle preparations. The people were to pay attention and get the point, but of course whether or not they would obey was another matter, for God does not tamper with free will, which is almost like our native conscience of right and wrong.

Who was doing all this preparation? The Egyptians were preparing in their homeland for war against the king of Babylon. In addition, two major allies of Egypt were also preparing. (“Brigandines” were coats of mail, or armor.) Incidentally, God blessed both Jeremiah and Baruch with splendid memories so that they could recall the pertinent and important points of His word.

**Comment:** Even though Jeremiah gave the prophecies in Judah, ambassadors took them to the various nations, so word got back to Nebuchadnezzar that this prophet was speaking a judgment message against Judah.

**Jer. 46:5** Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: for fear was round about, saith the LORD.

**Jer. 46:6** Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.

Now Jeremiah became a seer. He described Egypt making great preparations to battle offensively, intending to do away with the king of Babylon and to establish a world empire. Shields were polished, horses were harnessed, coats of mail were put on, etc., in anticipation of a great *Egyptian* victory. In confidence, the Egyptians went up to the critical battleground of Carchemish, but what would happen? They would flee in *fear, panic, and mass hysteria*. All their preparations would be to no avail against the king of Babylon, the big colossus. Fleeing Egyptians would be overtaken and killed, even though they were *mighty* men of war. They were beaten down, and not many escaped. Thus they perished in the north near the Euphrates.

Imagine Jeremiah’s giving this dramatic prophecy in advance! It was given *prior* to the fourth year of Jehoiakim, in the reign of Josiah, about what would happen in that year. When King Josiah died, Jehoahaz became king but reigned for only three months before he was replaced by Jehoiakim.

Therefore, Jeremiah made these predictions during the reign of Josiah. The Book of Jeremiah does not tell much about the 18 or so early years of Jeremiah’s ministry during Josiah’s reign. He began his ministry around the middle of that king’s reign, yet the book starts with what was said during the reign of Jehoiakim. Not until later chapters, such as here, are some of the things prophesied during Josiah’s reign brought to light.

Seven or eight years after Nebuchadnezzar achieved this victory over Egypt, he turned his attention to Judah and went down to Jerusalem, that is, during the reign of Jehoiachin. The regrouping of his forces and the handling of the captives and the booty required some time. When Nebuchadnezzar came back down, he took 3,023 leading personalities captive to Babylon.

Unfortunately, history is not taught. History is needed for a time frame, and geography is important for a land frame, both of which provide a basis for understanding. Otherwise, everything is confusion. For example, the chronologies of Egypt and Israel are all out of whack unless scriptural clues are used to properly sequence them. What good is the collection of a lot of facts if they cannot be connected?

**Jer. 46:7** Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers?

Egypt would come up “as a flood”; its waters would be moved “as the rivers.” The Nile was the lifeline of Egypt. Thus Jeremiah was saying, “The Nile is down there, but its waters—

Egypt—will be going up to Carchemish as a flood.” Egypt would flood its banks, as it were, because militarily they thought they could defeat the king of Babylon. Instead, when the Egyptian men of war got to this critical area, they turned around and fled.

**Jer. 46:8** Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, and will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof.

The waters of Egypt would rise up like a flood and move like the rivers. Rivers move, and in this case, the Nile was figuratively removed from its bed to flow north up to the Euphrates and Carchemish. The boast would be, “I ... will cover the earth; I will destroy the city [Babylon] and the inhabitants thereof.”

The two superpowers at this time were Babylon and Egypt. The Old Testament does not tell much about Egypt except in dribs and drabs, but if these small amounts are pieced together, there is tremendous information. One reason the information is not in a compact form is that Daniel started the four universal empires with the king of Babylon. Egypt, the previous world power, is out of the picture.

**Jer. 46:9** Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle and bend the bow.

Jeremiah continued to describe preparations for the coming battle near the Euphrates. Allies of Egypt (Ethiopia, Libya, and Lydia) collaborated with the Egyptians to fight this battle. God said, “Come up [into the trap].” In other words, Egypt and its allies went into a trap and were defeated. Nebuchadnezzar, the “head of gold,” was one of the world’s greatest kings, but history ignores him (Dan. 2:32,38).

**Q:** Why are the names Cush, Put (Phut), and Lud used in some translations?

**A:** Those are the Hebrew names, but the reference is the same. In the years after the Flood, Noah’s three sons—Ham, Shem, and Japheth—went in different directions. One of Ham’s sons went to India, and the name Cush changed to Kash. Later another son of Ham went south; he bypassed Canaan, went into Egypt, and established a kingdom in what we call Ethiopia.

Again the prophecy was dramatic: “*Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth.*” The Ethiopians and the Libyans were particularly noted for their expertise in handling the shield, and the Lydians skillfully handled the bow.

Incidentally, prior to the printing press, the Eastern world far excelled the Western world in progress and development. As Christianity developed, it brought light and civilization to the Western world.

**Jer. 46:10** For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

“This is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate [dripping] and made drunk with their blood.” In addition to the literal fulfillment back in Jeremiah’s day, this account is a picture, or type, of the end time of the Gospel Age, “for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.” This dramatic battle affected the *whole civilized*

world as it existed in the prophet's day; hence a "world war" was prophesied at a critical juncture of history. The Minor Prophets speak of the day of God's vengeance in the near future, and Jeremiah's prophecy helps to throw a little light on the same future day of vengeance. Notice, however, that in saying this was a day of *vengeance* for God, the antitype cannot be Gog and Magog, for this battle arises as a flood from the *south*.

Earlier in the Book of Jeremiah, as well as here, Babylon pictures a non-Christian, communistic power for the most part. In later chapters, Babylon represents *Christendom*. These prophecies are not sequential—they just show a common capture of these nations.

**Jer. 46:11** Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured.

Egypt was told to go up to Gilead in Transjordan and take balm. Gilead was famous for this medicinal balm, or salve. Egypt was not cured from her previous wounds (when the king of Babylon broke one "arm"), nor would she be cured from the wound to come (the breaking of the second "arm") in the next war with Nebuchadnezzar. Even though Egypt had allies this time, the nation would be defeated (Ezek. 30:21,22).

Egypt was called "O virgin, the daughter of Egypt." Judah, too, was called a "virgin" daughter (Lam. 1:15). In vain would Egypt "use many medicines," for she would not be cured. In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, about eight years of his reign remained plus 11 years of Zedekiah, for a total of 19 years. Therefore, with the five additional years, the second arm of Egypt was broken about 24 years later. Egypt was defeated and still licking sores from the breaking of the first arm, so the nation could not be cured before Nebuchadnezzar came down and dealt the death blow, breaking the second arm.

From another perspective too, Egypt was called a "virgin." This title was given in sarcasm, for the Egyptian religion stressed cleanliness. In other words, Egypt had a *form* of godliness.

**Jer. 46:12** The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are both fallen together.

The nations would be made aware of this battle and of Egypt's humiliation. "The mighty man [Egypt] hath stumbled against the mighty [Nebuchadnezzar], and they are both fallen together." Even though Babylon would win, it would feel the effects of the battle.

It is important to note again that the antitype of this chapter is not Gog and Magog because the invasion is from *south to north*, not from north to south as in Gog's coming down against Israel. This was a day of vengeance, not *the* day of vengeance. For now, we will just say that a time frame of 3 1/2 years leads up to Jacob's Trouble. Therefore, the antitype is the end time of the Gospel Age but not the final battle. A lot of events will take place before Gog and Magog come down.

**Jer. 46:13** The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt.

**Jer. 46:14** Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee.

The fact that God's Holy Spirit gives specific place names attracts our attention and alerts us that this prophecy has great importance. In the future, when God's Kingdom is established and the people of this generation come forth from the grave and look back, they will attest to the

truthfulness of these prophecies. It will be seen that mankind has had this wonderful book, the Bible, in its presence but has ignored it and gone off in other directions.

Jeremiah prophesied of the destruction of three literal cities of Egypt when Nebuchadnezzar would invade and smite the land: Migdol, Noph (Memphis), and Tahpanhes. Migdol is the last big town near the border before the Gaza Strip. Memphis was once the capital and main city of Egypt. Tahpanhes was where Jeremiah hid the stones in the lime kiln. Why were these three cities specifically mentioned?

This prophecy embraced the breaking of both arms of Egypt, which God had said would happen. The first arm was broken in the previous battle. This second battle would also end in defeat for Egypt, constituting the breaking of the other arm.

**Comment:** Jeremiah 44:1 mentions these same three cities as places where Jews were staying and worshipping Egyptian gods.

“Stand fast, and prepare.” The Egyptians would do all they could to defend themselves, but defeat would come anyway.

**Jer. 46:15** Why are thy valiant men swept away? they stood not, because the LORD did drive them.

No matter how valiantly the best soldiers of Egypt fought, God would make sure they were swept away in defeat. God would prosper Nebuchadnezzar in this instance. Egypt’s humiliation was predetermined because of their iniquities in trying to do injury to God’s people, Israel, and their land.

**Jer. 46:16** He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another: and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword.

God would make “many to fall.” With regard to the flight of Egyptians from the sword of the king of Babylon, we are given a personal insight into the sentiments of the soldiery: “Arise; let us get out of here while we can and go back to Egypt.”

The first confrontation (the breaking of the first arm) took place way up north near the Euphrates in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. The Egyptians were defeated, tired of battle, and thought they could go home to rest and survive. Egypt, a powerful advanced nation of that day, was known as the land of peace because it was so out of the way that much preparation was needed by any enemies who went down there. Armies were more interested in Asia Minor and the area up towards Russia and Europe. Thus Egypt was blessed by having the Nile River and very fertile ground along its banks. A person could just push seed into the ground with one foot and cover the seed with mud with the other foot, and lo and behold, the crops prospered with virtually no effort.

**Jer. 46:17** They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he hath passed the time appointed.

Egypt was a world empire prior to Babylon, but now, with the fulfillment of this prophecy, Babylon would be the universal empire, for God was prospering Nebuchadnezzar. Egypt became a bag of wind compared to its previous glory with gold, temples, chariots, etc. The time appointed for Egypt’s power had passed.

**Jer. 46:18** As I live, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts, Surely as Tabor is



**among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come.**

Jehovah, “the LORD of hosts,” swore by Mount Tabor and Carmel by the sea (near Haifa), saying, “Surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel [is] by the sea, so shall he [Nebuchadnezzar] come.” In other words, *this would surely happen!* Tabor and Carmel are striking landmarks. The first time Egypt’s arm was broken, all the damage was done in the north by the Euphrates River. The second time, when the other arm was broken, was an invasion into Egypt. Then the cities of Migdol, Memphis, and Tahpanhes were laid waste.

**Comment:** If the remnant of Judah had been submissive under Gedaliah and stayed peacefully in the land, God would not have destroyed the second arm of Egypt.

**Reply:** The killing of Gedaliah was a real insult to Nebuchadnezzar that required retribution.

**Q:** Does the prophecy of chapter 46 include the breaking of both arms of Egypt?

**A:** Yes. The breaking of the first arm was a defeat up near Carchemish; the breaking of the second arm took place in Egypt about 24 years later, in 601 BC.

Present-day Israel has high-rise buildings, unsightly architecture, deforested areas, etc. No wonder the Lord will wipe away modern civilization in the Time of Trouble and get back to simple living in the Kingdom. Incidentally, Tabor is usually called the Mount of Transfiguration.

**Comment:** The 24 years between the breaking of the first and second arms of Egypt covered a large portion of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.

**Reply:** Yes. He reigned for 45 years, beginning in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. His father, Nabo-pileser, also had an empire, which is called the first Babylon. The Bible concentrates on the second Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. When his father died, Nebuchadnezzar was down in Jerusalem dealing with Jehoiakim. Things happened in the third or fourth year of Jehoiakim (depending on how the year is broken), in the eleventh year of Jehoiakim, and in the eleventh year of Zedekiah. These three different dates are likened to three World Wars.

**Jer. 46:19** O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant.

Again Egypt was called a “daughter.” The Bible purposely ignores some parts of history. For example, at one time, the Lord dealt with Caphtor, of which we have no knowledge (Deut. 2:23; Jer. 47:4; Amos. 9:7).

Both the Israelites and the Egyptians would go into captivity (*few Jews and many Egyptians*). Noph would be laid waste without inhabitant. For 40 years, Egypt was desolate (see Ezekiel 29:9-12). Egypt has been a poor nation ever since that 40-year period.

**Jer. 46:20** Egypt is like a very fair heifer, but destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north.

Egypt was like a “very fair heifer,” that is, like a contented female cow with a soft and pleasant life. She gave milk and nurtured young calves. Being isolated, protected, and separated from the other nations by a scorching desert, Egypt prospered and was very fertile, but judgment was coming from the north at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

From another standpoint, a young heifer is full of life and quite rambunctious. How promising the state of development of that cow is—whether or not the heifer will prosper—can be

assessed by looking at her at that stage. Here the heifer (Egypt) would not prosper because of the coming destruction. The word “destruction,” referring to King Nebuchadnezzar, is rendered “gadfly” in the RSV and the NIV.

**Jer. 46:21** Also her hired men are in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, and are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, and the time of their visitation.

“Also her hired men [allies] are in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, and are fled away together.” Not only did Egypt’s allies flee the battlefield up near the Euphrates, but also they fled back to their hinterland when the king of Babylon invaded Egypt lest they suffer utter destruction themselves. Both Egypt and her allies were humiliated.

Egypt’s “hired men” were her allies (Ethiopia, Libya, and Lydia), which included hired workers, or mercenaries. “Fatted bullocks” are large, well-bred males that are ready for the slaughter. Verse 21 is saying that the Egyptian fighters would be defeated.

**Comment:** Tombs of bulls that were worshipped can be visited today in Saqqara, Egypt, which is not too far from Cairo.

**Reply:** These tremendous-sized bulls were put in underground graves. Each huge sarcophagus stands full-sized and upright. The tombs were discovered by a French archaeologist, and a person can walk right by the place and never see it unless he knows it is there. There is simply a hole in the flat desert and no buildings. The underground area is the length of a football field, with stall after stall after stall. Most of the stalls were looted because the bulls were buried with gold necklaces and all kinds of jewelry. The flesh of the bulls corrupted, leaving only the bones and treasures.

The 24 years between the breaking of the two arms was not much of a hiatus. Meanwhile, Nebuchadnezzar was very active in the first half of his reign, laying siege to Tyre, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, Gaza, Philistia, and other places.

**Q:** Do the references to “a very fair heifer” and “fatted bullocks” allude to the “sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates” (Jer. 46:10)?

**A:** Yes, the “sacrifice” took place in God’s “day of vengeance.”

**Jer. 46:22** The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood.

The RSV reads, “She makes a sound like a serpent gliding away; for her enemies march in force, and come against her with axes, like those who fell trees.” The Babylonians would come against Egypt with ferocity—chopping off heads, etc. In their humiliation, the Egyptians tried to slink and sneak away like snakes. The picture is one of preparedness. The enemy forces were fully prepared with all necessary weapons and implements. The forest is both figurative and literal, for a petrified forest is evidence of large trees in Egypt in the past.

There is an interesting point about the fallen spirits. Three of us consecrated our lives together and were immersed off an island up in Connecticut many years ago. Earlier in the sister’s life, prior to consecration, she did not believe there were such beings as fallen angels, but something happened to wake her up. After consecration, her husband, who had had dealings with Houdini and a similar party before consecration, was visited by a woman who had dealt with seances. He wanted this woman to go away, but before she did, a voice spoke from the

floor, replying to her. The sister was scared to death, and after the woman left, she said to her husband, "Did you hear what I heard?" He said, "Yes." They had both heard the voice but had pretended it did not exist in the woman's presence. The fallen angels have voices like the serpent that stood upright in the Garden of Eden. After possession by Satan, the serpent went on its belly, spiritually speaking. Here the "voice" of the Egyptians in defeat was one of humiliation. The voice was lowered like that of Satan when he used the serpent. The serpent was humiliated with the loss of its legs.

**Comment:** As an illustration, the implication is that a voice came up out of the earth to the witch of Endor in Saul's presence (1 Sam. 28:7-15).

**Jer. 46:23** They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and are innumerable.

The Babylonians came down like a locust plague, causing great destruction. There was no place for the Egyptians to hide, for the forests were cut down. The invading host was innumerable. This is an *overall* picture of World War III and of Babylon (communism) defeating Egypt (Christendom). A *worldwide* nuclear holocaust will totally disrupt society. People will scrounge for *survival* and not think about going to church, etc. (Note: This paragraph came from the earlier 1981-1983 study.)

**Jer. 46:24** The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north.

**Jer. 46:25** The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings: even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him:

No is in Upper Egypt (the Thebes-Luxor-Karnak area). Pharaoh and his subjects and large statues and idols (gods) would be affected. The heathen statues and temples were destroyed. The despoliation embraced all of Egypt (Ezek. 29:2). Egypt had several "kings," the Pharaoh being the chief one.

**Jer. 46:26** And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD.

After 40 years, Egypt would again be inhabited but would remain a base land; no longer would it be a superpower. In other words, in addition to the destruction, the land would be laid waste without inhabitant. Israel and Moab were also made desolate without inhabitant. Hence we can see what type of conqueror Nebuchadnezzar was. He either killed those he defeated or took them captive, and there were few of the latter category. Nevertheless, after this destruction and desolation, the Egyptian captives, the number of whom is not given, would return to their land in time.

**Jer. 46:27** But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid.

**Jer. 46:28** Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

Verses 27 and 28 are like a parenthetical footnote. Through Jeremiah, God turned His attention away from Egypt to comfort Israel. "I will save thee [Israel] from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid." These two verses are a reference not to 536 BC, the end of the 70 years, but to *our day*. Nevertheless, the Israelites back there derived some comfort from these words. A permanent peace will come after God delivers Israel from Gog.

While many Jews have gone back to Israel in the Harvest period, especially since 1948, they are not at rest and at ease at the present time because they are surrounded by hostile Arabs. However, there will be two periods of rest and ease. The first is a false peace in the near future, and the real peace will come afterward. The false peace, which will occur when the Arabs immediately surrounding Israel are dealt with, will be misunderstood by the Jews as the real peace. As a result, there will be a false confidence prior to the Gog and Magog setting and Jacob's Trouble.

**Comment:** Isaiah 19:25 tells of the future blessing of the Lord on Egypt and Assyria: "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."

**Reply:** Yes, a time will come in the near future when the traditional enemies of Israel are at peace with her; former enmity will cease. The forces of Gog will come down from Russia with other motives in mind and a different type of animosity. In contrast, the Palestinians have a deep-seated rancor for the Jews, as well as a misconception of their own history, which started around AD 600. They mistakenly try to go back to Ham, Cush, and Cainan.

Verse 28 expresses Israel's hope. There will come a time when God delivers Israel once and for all time. That will happen when He saves the Holy Remnant out of Jacob's Trouble.

God "will make a *full end* of all the [other] nations," but He will not make a full end of Israel; that is, He will make a *full end* of their national polity, or type of *government*. The *Overland Monthly* states that with the smiting of the image, *all* governments will cease. All nations will become proselytes to Israel and lose their present identity. They will get some kind of nomenclature, but we think the names will be quite different. Similarly, the names of the planets will be changed, for God has His own nomenclature (Psa. 147:4).

"I [God] will ... correct thee [Israel] in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished." Again the account refers to the very end of the age. The original Hebrew is a little stronger than the King James rendering, for Israel will be *purged* at that time, with a small remnant being saved out of Jacob's Trouble. The Holy Remnant will have the right heart condition; it is said of them, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth" (Psa. 110:3).

Note: The *Berean Manual* is in error in commenting on this chapter, for it quotes interpretations from *other* prophecies. We should remember that these comments were not compiled by the Pastor.

**Jer. 47:1** The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.

Jeremiah continued his prophecies against the Gentiles. These prophecies, which were appended to his previous prophecies about Israel and Judah, are summarized as follows:

Chapter 46 was against Egypt.

Chapter 47 was against the Philistines.

Chapter 48 was against Moab.

Chapter 49 was against Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, and Elam.

Chapters 50 and 51 were against Babylon.

All of these Gentile nations, whose fate was prophesied, were near Israel. With one or two exceptions, the names of the cities in these nations are not meant to be spiritualized, that is, until we get to Babylon, which has a twofold application.

In chapter 25, Jeremiah made all the nations drink of the cup of Jehovah's fury. In chapter 27, the prophet constructed wooden yokes for the Gentile kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. And Ezekiel prophesied in the days of Zedekiah against Ammon, Moab, Tyre, Egypt, the Philistines, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Lydia, etc. (Ezekiel 25-32). All of these prophecies were given prior to Gedaliah's assassination and the fleeing of the remnant of vinedressers to Egypt. In the meantime, Babylon besieged Tyre and Sidon, and because of strong resistance, it took Nebuchadnezzar more than ten years to defeat them. Thus there was a division of the Babylonian army, with one segment going to Jerusalem.

Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah were all puppet kings in Judah. We focus on the end of Zedekiah's reign when Jerusalem and the Temple were utterly destroyed, but a lot of activity took place in which Egypt and Babylon were the two superpowers. The peoples in between were threatened in one way or another.

Chapter 47 is a prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines. In verse 1, God told Jeremiah to prophesy against the Philistines *before* Pharaoh, king of Egypt, smote Gaza. Then, starting with verse 2, the account seems to radically change, for it talks about a flood coming down *from the north* with noise, chariots, and a wild commotion, whereas Egypt would attack Gaza *from the south*. However, the chapter talks about the destruction of the Philistines and not about Egypt.

**Jer. 47:2 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl.**

A "flood" (King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon) would arise out of the north to overflow the land of Philistia and its inhabitants.

**Jer. 47:3 At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands;**

Verse 3 describes the coming of the Babylonian armies with the noise of stamping hooves, the rushing of chariots, and the rumbling of wheels. Imagine seeing an audiovisual presentation of all this activity! The Babylonians were famous for their chariots.

"The fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands." The Philistine fathers would be so panic-stricken by the suddenness of the attack that they would even forsake their own children in wanting to escape.

**Jer. 47:4 Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the LORD will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor.**

Why did Jeremiah mention Tyre and Zidon (Sidon), which were identified with Phoenicia? They were brought into the account because they were under siege at the same time that Nebuchadnezzar attacked the Philistines. Having cast in their lot with Tyre and Sidon, the Philistines were supplying weapons and goods. Because the Philistines were helpers, the Lord

was against them as well, for it was God's determination that Tyre and Sidon be utterly destroyed. The siege was long; it did not happen overnight. The Bible is seemingly quiet on the siege and related events unless we coordinate a clue here and a clue there, in which case we sense that a lot was happening at that time. However, to center attention too much on the siege would detract from the focal point of each prophecy. Here the concentration of energy and judgment was against Philistia, but others were in the picture in an indirect way, as shown in chapter 25 and here in chapters 46-49 of Jeremiah. And chapters 50 and 51 will treat the most important judgment of the Gentile nations: Babylon.

In regard to place names, Tyre and Sidon are well recognized today. Gaza (the Gaza Strip) and Ashkelon also exist at the present time (verse 5). But what about Caphtor? For "the country of Caphtor," the RSV has "the coastland of Caphtor." At one time in its history, Egypt sent a naval force against Crete, which is an island in the Mediterranean Sea. The economies of cities on the coast were based on a mercantile profession, but Phoenicia, up north, was the leading city with a worldwide trade. Philistia was in league with Phoenicia, so the Lord withdrew Philistia's support by destroying it.

After the long, long siege of Tyre and Sidon and their destruction, no compensation was given to the Babylonians, who had come down as the Lord's executioner. Hence the foot soldiers were promised a "salary" when they destroyed Egypt, for the wealth of that nation would more than compensate for whatever personal hardship and loss of goods they had experienced. Secular history is silent on this matter because historians have confused the Persians with the Babylonians; that is, they have given more credit to Persia than to the king of Babylon, but Nebuchadnezzar was the big power at that time.

**Jer. 47:5 Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?**

"Baldness" meant the land of Gaza would be stripped of possessions. The inhabitants of Gaza and Ashkelon would "cut" themselves in trying to get their gods to answer and help.

**Comment:** For verse 5, the RSV reads, "Baldness has come upon Gaza, Ashkelon has perished. O remnant of the Anakim, how long will you gash yourselves?"

**Jer. 47:6 O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.**

**Jer. 47:7 How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it.**

Verses 6 and 7 suggest this prophecy was *dramatized* like an ode. Traveling men went about with this message to help Jeremiah. To dramatize the slaughter, one of them would talk to an imaginary sword he held in his hand, and another would answer. And the slaughter was necessary—it had to be accomplished in the future. The message was that at some time in the future, a sudden overwhelming attack would come from the north. The sword could not rest and be put in its "scabbard," or sheath, until it had fully accomplished the destruction of Ashkelon and the "sea shore" (Caphtor), as appointed by the Lord.

**Q:** The judgment was against nations that are Israel's immediate Arab neighbors today. Is the antitype the Psalm 83 setting prior to the destruction of mystic Babylon?

**A:** We are inclined to think along those lines, for the forces of Gog in Jacob's Trouble will come from the north. However, in one way, Christendom is like a subliminal picture in the

background.

In 606 BC, the Moabites and the Ammonites looked down from the hills and gloated over the destruction of Jerusalem. In addition, they pointed out fleeing Jews to the Babylonians. Their desire was to see the Jews exterminated, and that same deep-seated spirit exists today with the Palestinians. How can a treaty be made with such people? The cancer has to be cured and disciplined supernaturally.

**Jer. 48:1 Against Moab thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Woe unto Nebo! for it is spoiled: Kiriathaim is confounded and taken: Misgab is confounded and dismayed.**

This long chapter, containing 47 verses, pertains to the prophesied judgment against Moab. Some of the place names can still be identified, whereas others do not exist today according to our known vocabulary in the Western world. Much of Moab is without inhabitants at the present time. Many ruins are seen, but the land is desolate for the most part.

Kiriathaim, which is located up on a high hill on the King's Highway, is like a natural place to dominate the entire region. Because of its unique position, it was one of the larger cities in ancient times. Misgab is rendered "stronghold" or "fortress" in other translations and thus was probably not a town.

**Jer. 48:2 There shall be no more praise of Moab: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from being a nation. Also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen; the sword shall pursue thee.**

**Jer. 48:3 A voice of crying shall be from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction.**

**Jer. 48:4 Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard.**

**Jer. 48:5 For in the going up of Luhith continual weeping shall go up; for in the going down of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction.**

Chapter 48 is a prophecy against Moab, its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar being foretold. Many place names are given including (Mount) Nebo, Madmen (Madeba), and Horonaim (a mountainous area). The enemy would show no pity. Parents and children would be slaughtered in a lightning-fast raid of pillage and destruction. The Moabites would wail *greatly*.

Moab is in present-day Jordan. Heshbon was on the boundary line of Ammon and Moab, being partly in southern Ammon and partly in northern Moab. The Scriptures show that farther north toward Ammon, there was a time when the soil was very fertile so that it sustained hundreds of thousands of sheep. That is not the situation today.

"There shall be no more praise of Moab." What kind of praise was in Moab? The people felt secure because of their physical location, for they could, with a minimum amount of force, jeopardize the caravans that traveled on the King's Highway between Egypt and Damascus. Nature had carved out this highway on a plateau. From their position up above on the hills in a cave like a bunch of bandits, the Moabites could see the caravans coming and assess how well fortified they were. Being familiar with the area, they knew just where to do the ambushing and raiding. Even if the enemy was stronger, the Moabites could make a sudden raid, take what they wanted, exit quickly, and hide in the terrain. Hence the Moabites gloated in their position of security and plunder. They did not need employment, for their "occupation" was looting caravans.

It would be interesting to know how the Babylonians got the Moabites out of their entrenched positions and destroyed them, taking the remaining survivors captive to Babylon. Moab ended up being a desolate land without inhabitants like Israel and Egypt. Again there is no recorded history of this event.

**Q:** With the background picture of Christendom, do these nations represent the nominal systems that will be destroyed?

**A:** From that standpoint, Moab and Ammon were sons of the two daughters of Lot, one picturing Catholicism and the other being Protestantism. Similarly, the northern kingdom of Israel is a picture of Catholicism, and the southern kingdom represents Protestantism. All of mankind are being educated in one way or another. The permission of evil is designed to teach certain lessons, so eventually, when everything is sorted out in the Kingdom and in subsequent ages, it will be seen how wonderfully and awesomely the Lord has been educating future generations. The temporary permission of evil will benefit everlasting creations of the future, showing that man needs God's help and direction and that he must give his will over to the Heavenly Father to survive. God is the Emperor of the universe, and it behooves all His subjects to obey and honor Him implicitly because of His position. The Pastor reasoned that if we have love, mercy, etc., doesn't the Creator have the very pinnacle of these qualities? Faith says yes. Therefore, we should obey Him not out of fear but because He is the awesome Creator with all these wonderful qualities.

**Jer. 48:6 Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness.**

The "heath," the tumbleweed, grows in the desert. When it dries, it snaps off and rolls around and around in the wind. Of the great number of seeds, a minuscule amount survives to produce a new weed. Thus the plant lives, dies, and blows about in the wind, passing on a few seeds to another generation.

The fleeing of the heath in the wilderness is like the previous illustration of fathers fleeing from their children. The noise of defeat and the awesomeness of the enemy army coming into a place the Moabites never expected was terrifying.

From another standpoint, verse 6 can be considered practical advice: "When these things begin to come to pass, flee for your life as fast as you can, leaving your possessions behind. Be like the tumbleweed in the wilderness, which has no coverings or possessions."

**Jer. 48:7 For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests and his princes together.**

"For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken." The Moabites stored their booty in the mountainous terrain. Chemosh was not only the sun god, the chief god of Moab, but also a city, which no doubt had an idol and temple to this god.

**Jer. 48:8 And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape: the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the LORD hath spoken.**

No city would escape Nebuchadnezzar, "the spoiler," or destroyer. Even the valleys and the plains of Moab would be destroyed.

Nebuchadnezzar was unusual. On one hand, he was cruel, having a history of burning people in a furnace, and on the other hand, he was a genius, building the hanging gardens, for example.



**Jer. 48:9 Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away: for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein.**

“Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away.” This was sarcasm. Ordinarily the land was easy to defend because the terrain was mountainous and the cities were like fortresses. Now even the Moabites, who were holed up in the “safe” mountains, were advised to flee.

**Jer. 48:10 Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.**

**Comment:** The NIV reads, “A curse on him who is lax in doing the LORD’S work! A curse on him who keeps his sword from bloodshed!” The RSV has, “Cursed is he who does the work of the LORD with slackness.”

**Reply:** Heathen Babylon was the means of God’s retribution upon Moab for earlier cruelty to Israel. Therefore, the sword was not to be held back. In interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel said, “The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (Dan. 2:37). In other words, Nebuchadnezzar prospered as the head of an empire because God’s providence determined that he was the right man for the work to be done at that time. The vast majority of the Moabites were to be slain, with only a small number being taken captive to Babylon.

**Comment:** Saul was disobedient in not killing every man, woman, child, and beast according to the Lord’s instruction. His excuse was that he kept the animals alive for a sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:15). Saul had nice qualities initially, but weaknesses overtook him later.

**Comment:** In the antitype, the Arab nations will be defeated by Israel in the near future.

**Reply:** Yes, and there is also the hint of a correspondency to the Lord’s great army in the near future, the command being, “Do this work with fury; destroy!” The Gentile nations correspond to the nations of Christendom.

**Jer. 48:11 Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.**

Moab settled on its lees, being confident and self-satisfied. The people sat confidently for years, but lessons and changes were coming.

“Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.” Moab needed a bath, for the nation had body odor. Again this was sarcasm.

Moab “hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel.” With Moab not having experienced captivities, persecutions, sorrows, or troubles, its conceit was not broken or humbled. That kind of spirit has a bad effect on one’s character, for in the present life, the Christian is developed by such experiences. As the Apostle Paul said, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

When all these characteristics are considered, we can see why Moab is likened to the Great Company, who are complacent and not fully developed. The Great Company are described as “a cake not turned [over],” i.e., a half-baked cake, a cake fried on only one side (Hos. 7:8). Even though one is of that class, he can have a tendency toward boastfulness and pride and think he

is of the Little Flock. In the Book of Job, Elihu, who represents the Great Company, tried to lecture Job, who pictures the Little Flock. After the supposed three comforters gave their talks against Job, belittling him and questioning his stance, then along came the young man Elihu, who felt his reasoning was superior and original, but actually, he used the same arguments as the other three. Meanwhile, Job had to endure the demeaning of his character and works.

The Moab class severely needs correction. But from the good standpoint, prophecies indicated that Moab would eventually be restored from captivity. Just as Israel is promised the land of Gilead, so Moab will be allocated territory in the northern half of the land east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. Moab is guaranteed that territory in the future. Thus in the antitype, Moab will end up as one of the tribes that gets a spiritual resurrection, while the 9 1/2 tribes west of the Jordan have a natural application. But the false confidence of Moab as a nation has a spiritual counterpart in the Great Company. Those of this class are true Christians, but their sincerity does not mean they will be members of the Little Flock, for God makes the decision as to the destiny of each of the consecrated. As long as one is faithful unto death, he is guaranteed a spiritual resurrection, but the *degree* of faithfulness will determine whether he is more than an overcomer or just an overcomer (Rom. 8:37). In a nutshell, Moab pictures a class of overcomers but not more-than-overcomers.

**Q:** If Moab pictures the Great Company, what or whom does Ammon represent?

**A:** Ammon pictures a Second Death class, but we have to keep the natural and the spiritual separate and distinct. From the natural standpoint, Ammon will be restored, but some of the Ammonites will be in Gilead, which is a long territory. In the Kingdom, the primary portion of Jews will be in Israel proper on the west side of the Jordan River, but there will also be natural Jews (the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh), as well as Ammonites, Moabites, and Jordanian Arabs on the east side of the Jordan.

Many of us accepted the truth when we found out that there was no hell as a place of torment and that all will have an opportunity for life. We appreciated the message of truth because it is good, wholesome, and real—but more will be required of the Little Flock.

**Jer. 48:12** **Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles.**

In the midst of the Moabites was another class called “wanderers.” This not-so-favorable element within Moab would lack focus or a goal, and the result would be turmoil. After the king of Babylon came down and took care of Judah, destroying the Temple and Jerusalem, he went on to Moab, whose hills were like an unconquerable natural fortress with many places to flee to and hide. The Lord prospered Nebuchadnezzar’s going to Moab to the extent that he got the people out of every nook and cranny. The land was laid desolate, and the few who survived were taken back to Babylon. Stated another way, those who survived were emptied into Babylon and then taken to other provinces such as India—somewhat like what happened to the ten-tribe kingdom except that their scattering was toward Russia and into Europe, whereas the Jews from Judah were providentially kept in Babylon and not dispersed. These startling events are not recorded in secular history.

The situation was something like a chess game with Divine Providence operating. The lesson will be marvelous for all of God’s creatures in the future. When people look back, they will see wondrous things.

**Q:** Spiritually speaking, how do “wanderers” empty Moab’s “vessels, and break their bottles”?

**A:** In the type, the “bottles” were the homeland of Moab. In the antitype, the breaking of the “bottles” indicates that the Great Company will get their change to spirit nature. An individual, a person’s humanity, is a bottle. The vessel is to be broken. For example, the death of three classes of feet members is shown by the smashing of the pitchers (the vessels) in the type of Gideon and the 300.

The “wandering” pictures the Great Company’s being turned over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. This experience is also shown by the scapegoat’s being taken out into the wilderness. The “breaking” of the bottles pictures the Great Company’s resurrection change. Spiritually speaking, therefore, Moab is a picture of the Great Company.

**Jer. 48:13** And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Beth-el their confidence.

Moab was being compared not with Judah but with the ten-tribe kingdom, which had centered their hopes in golden calves, one at Dan and the other at Bethel. The worshippers kissed the hindquarters of the calf, the principle being the same as when Catholics kissed the toe of the pope. Thus Bethel and Dan were places of rival worship set up by the ten tribes. Just as the ten tribes were taken into captivity as punishment, so Moab would be desolated.

The name Bethel means “house of God.” Accordingly, Christendom as a whole has considered the Catholic Church or various Protestant churches as the house of God. The thought has been that the worshippers must have a building, a choir, large attendance, etc., but such trappings are for the flesh.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

**Comment:** 1 Kings 11:7 speaks of Chemosh, the sun god: “Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.”

**Reply:** Solomon built these heathen altars for his heathen wives.

**Jer. 48:14** How say ye, We are mighty and strong men for the war?

**Jer. 48:15** Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

“Moab is ... gone up [that is, north] out of her cities.” The men were unknowingly going into the mouth of the lion (King Nebuchadnezzar), as it were. They were going into a trap. In pride, self-confidence, and self-conceit, “chosen young” Moabite men would go up to a battle in which they were no match for the enemy. Hence they would be sitting ducks for the slaughter. In this manner, the broad-stroke destruction took place. To a certain extent, the current generation determined Moab’s future, but God Himself, “the King,” was directing the battle.

**Jer. 48:16** The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hasteth fast.

Wisdom would study the matter carefully and not just haste into battle. However, the Moabites acted rashly, and the calamity, the slaughter, would soon come.

The king of Babylon came down primarily along the Mediterranean coast and defeated in

succession Philistia, Egypt, and then Moab, which was in another direction and on the other side of the Dead Sea.

From a natural standpoint, the males in the United States are very soft at present because of the nation's affluence and lack of adversity. When the Time of Trouble comes, want and starvation will be felt much more severely here than in many less-advantaged nations. The inexperienced men of Moab had a false sense of confidence that would end up in slaughter.

**Jer. 48:17 All ye that are about him, bemoan him; and all ye that know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod!**

Moab was a "strong staff" because of the natural mountain fortifications, and it was a "beautiful rod" because of the high-altitude cities that were nestled among the mountains. Moab had a lot of wealth: silver, gold, and booty from the caravans that its inhabitants ambushed. Thus we get some idea of the past glory of Moab up on the hills.

**Jer. 48:18 Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from thy glory, and sit in thirst; for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee, and he shall destroy thy strong holds.**

The Moabites would have to come down from the mountain heights to the level of the desert. In coming down from the north, the king of Babylon took the upper road, the King's Highway. The Moabites were surprised at the zeal and determination of the Babylonian army, and when they deserted their cities and went down to the valley either to fight the enemy or to flee, Nebuchadnezzar first utterly destroyed their cities and then took care of the people below. Other places in Scripture indicate that he even had some of his men go up into the caves.

**Jer. 48:19 O inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way, and espy; ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth, and say, What is done?**

What high drama! As the inhabitants of Moab came down out of the mountains to flee, an imaginary spectator described the setting and called out, "What is happening? Where are you going?" We can be thankful that God has not revealed this drama to the world, for then it would have been polluted by Hollywood. Through the enlightenment of the Lord's Spirit, we enter into the setting and can sense the high drama.

**Jer. 48:20 Moab is confounded; for it is broken down: howl and cry; tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled,**

"Moab is confounded [in great confusion]; for it is broken down." Arnon is a river and also a city on the river where people were living. A message would be told in Arnon that Moab was defeated.

**Comment:** Numbers 21:13 reads in part, "Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites."

**Reply:** Yes, Arnon was a northern boundary line of Moab on the desert floor. A city was there with the water.

Most of Moab was elevated, but the city of Arnon was down in the valley. Therefore, verse 20 is saying that destruction would take place up on the King's Highway, and after the Babylonian forces had finished dealing with the fortifications, they would go down and fight against the chief city of Arnon on the river Arnon.

**Jer. 48:21** And judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Mephaath,

Moab was confounded and spoiled, and “judgment is come upon the plain country.” This prophecy was worded as if the destruction had already occurred.

**Jer. 48:22** And upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim,

**Jer. 48:23** And upon Kiriathaim, and upon Beth-gamul, and upon Beth-meon,

**Jer. 48:24** And upon Kerioth, and upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near.

Verses 18-24 list a number of places, all of which were part of Moab. Bozrah bordered Moab and Edom, the land of Esau (Isa. 34:6). Moab and Ammon were Lot’s offspring by his daughters.

**Jer. 48:25** The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the LORD.

Moab’s “horn,” or “arm,” was cut off in the sense that its power was broken.

**Jer. 48:26** Make ye him drunken: for he magnified himself against the LORD: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision.

**Jer. 48:27** For was not Israel a derision unto thee? was he found among thieves? for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy.

Moab was slaughtered as retribution for the people’s derision of Israel when Israel was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar. Moabites and Ammonites were up on the hills, watching as Nebuchadnezzar burned and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and they pointed out fleeing Israelites so that the Babylonians could hunt them down. In other words, they enjoyed seeing the destruction of Judah. The same mentality exists today, for in recent times, when missiles were launched into Israel, Palestinians were on the rooftops cheering. They delighted to see the destruction of Israel. That wrong spirit goes way back in history and seems to be almost in the bloodstream of the Arabs. Retributive judgment will come first on the Arabs and then later on the Muslims in Jacob’s Trouble.

**Comment:** We are reminded of the enmity between Jacob and Esau.

It is interesting that the Lord gave Jeremiah such detail on the names of towns in an area the prophet was not familiar with. In the Kingdom, when the world becomes apprised of the true history of Israel and surrounding nations, the people will be startled to see the detailed accuracy with which these prophecies were fulfilled. Prophecies about Moab, Ammon, and Egypt have a spiritual counterpart, but the city names were recorded for the benefit of mankind in the future so that they will appreciate the omniscience of God. He sees the future as a past event. Prophecy is history not yet fulfilled, and history is prophecy fulfilled.

**Jer. 48:28** O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole’s mouth.

Those who sought refuge in the mountains would mourn like doves and be contrite.

These chapters of judgment on Arab nations, the Psalm 83 setting, are basically a *natural*

prophecy with some spiritual overtones. As has been shown, Moab is also a picture of the Great Company.

**Jer. 48:29** We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.

Moab was “exceeding proud” with loftiness, arrogancy, pride, and haughtiness of heart; the nation was comfortable in its sense of false security. Similarly, the Great Company is comfortable in its knowledge and is not aggressive in overcoming to the extent of getting the prize of the high calling. Moab was like a vessel of stagnant water in need of being emptied into other vessels. The water of reservoirs is sometimes blown up in the air to aerate, circulate, oxygenate, and purify it. Spiritually speaking, Moab was sitting on its lees, on its behind, as it were, instead of getting exercise.

From one standpoint, Moab and the other Gentile areas surrounding Israel (Egypt, Ammon, and Philistia) are characteristic of the nations of Christendom. Their traits are comparable.

**Q:** In the spiritual picture, Moab as a nation pictures the Great Company, but what is the thought in verse 26, which speaks of Moab as being drunk and wallowing in its vomit?

**A:** Quite early in his ministry, Jeremiah gave a judgment message to all the nations. That lesson was civil, not spiritual—it was a *natural* prophecy—but when only Moab and Ammon are considered, particularly from the standpoint that only Lot and his wife and two daughters escaped the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot represents the Great Company and his wife pictures a Second Death class. There is much history that we cannot go into at this time, so we will just say that Moab and Ammon were the progeny of Lot and his two daughters. In the future, when true history and the Bible are explained in great detail with visual aids, it will be seen that history repeats itself in various forms. We do not believe that these pictures are meant to be understood spiritually in that kind of detail at the present time. Otherwise, we would be students of history more than Christians doing an inner work in our hearts. Basically, this prophecy of Moab is *natural with some spiritual overtones* but not in detail.

Of course the city of Bozrah stands out because the Prophet Isaiah spoke of it, and Arnon has a historical basis going back to the days of Joshua. But most of the cities are not that meaningful at present. A lot happened long before Jeremiah’s day, a lot happened when he was alive, and a lot has happened since.

**Comment:** If Moab represents the Great Company, the ridiculing of Judah does not seem to fit the antitype, but if, strictly speaking, Moab is not a type, then just parts of the account could be likened to the Great Company class.

**Reply:** When Moab is treated in generalities, that is the more spiritual application. When it comes to detail, very few people know history, so it would be useless to pursue that avenue.

**Comment:** The original question was on the admonition to make Moab drunk because “he magnified himself against the LORD” (verse 26). Perhaps this characteristic ties in with the Great Company’s being in the nominal systems and drinking improper doctrine. Then the admonition would be to flee out of the cities (verse 28).

**Reply:** The Great Company will be deceived in the near future, and one who is deceived is not clear-minded, implying a measure of intoxication (Matt. 24:24). The Great Company class have one foot in the world and one foot in the Christian Church, and that double-minded condition is dangerous. If one is faithful to his covenant of loving the Lord unto death, he will get life, but

it is easy to slip into unfaithfulness and go more and more downhill (Luke 17:28-33). Thus the characteristics of being proud, comfortable, overconfident, and in need of nothing are the Laodicean spirit (Rev. 3:17). We usually apply Laodicea to the nominal Church, but we must also take the lessons to heart and not inordinately criticize the nominal Church. We must watch to make sure that the spirit of the nominal Church does not come into our hearts and midst and thinking and practice. The judgment message on Moab alerts us to dangerous generalities and characteristics. A prominent danger is feeling superior in knowledge, thought, character, and influence. For instance, one who has a good education is in danger of being high-minded, a person who has a lot of money may feel superior, and a popular speaker must guard against pride. We must guard our hearts and our attitudes. Influence is good *if* it is used in the right way. Money can be helpful *if* it is properly used. However, subtle dangers confront those who have more of this world's "goods" in one way or another.

In summary, this prophecy against Moab is basically natural, and for this reason, we feel that in studying prophecy, we should zero in on the natural application first and then the spiritual *if* such an application is feasible and reasonable.

**Jer. 48:30** I know his wrath, saith the LORD; but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it.

**Jer. 48:31** Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab; mine heart shall mourn for the men of Kir-heres.

**Jer. 48:32** O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer: thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach even to the sea of Jazer: the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage.

**Jer. 48:33** And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the winepresses: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting.

**Jer. 48:34** From the cry of Heshbon even unto Elealeh, and even unto Jahaz, have they uttered their voice, from Zoar even unto Horonaim, as an heifer of three years old: for the waters also of Nimrim shall be desolate.

The details of these verses are very meaningful but not to us, for we would have to be thoroughly familiar with the land and where these places are and their significance. The Bible is written with such depth that it is easy to go astray and become a scholar more than one who wants to know more about God, Jesus, and making our calling and election sure. However, we think these verses will be mighty powerful in the future when they are explained infallibly in the Kingdom and true history is shown.

The "vine of Sibmah," the "men of Kir-heres," the "weeping of Jazer," etc., will all have meaning, whereas at the present time, they could be a distraction. What is helpful to us now is seeing attitudes and conditions of heart and mind that are dangerous. God's displeasure brings such to naught.

**Q:** Was Jeremiah doing the weeping after he got the message of what would happen? Was he crying and doing the mourning?

**A:** Yes, Jeremiah was weeping. God chose the perfect instrument for this prophecy because Jeremiah was an emotional person. He entered into the prophecy and uttered it *with feeling and power*; it was not just a monotone warning.

“Joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab.” Moab was a very rich country agriculturally, but the great fertility was removed from the land.

Kir-heres means “the rising sun.” Heshbon was a city just over the border in Ammon, so it served as a boundary. The cities give us a general geographic understanding around 600 BC, when the prophecy was fulfilled in a natural sense.

A place name that stands out is Zoar, which is first mentioned in Genesis 19:18-23 in connection with Lot. Also of interest is the term “an heifer of three years old,” so there are some points we notice as Christians. Today the Israelis think Zoar is in Israel, but that Zoar is an odd little hill in the Arabah, the depression or dry valley south of the Dead Sea. The hill comes to a peak with a tiny platform on the top. However, the Zoar of verse 34 is in the land of Moab, on the lower eastern side of the Dead Sea.

**Q:** In the RSV (and also the NIV), the “heifer of three years old” is given as a place name: “from Zoar to Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah.” Could that be correct?

**A:** Both are correct, the place name being an alternate meaning if the vowels are changed. The thought of a heifer reminds us of Genesis 15:9, where God said to Abraham, “Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” When the animals’ ages are added ( $3 + 3 + 3 + 1 + 1 = 11$ ) and multiplied by 360 (the number of days in a lunar year), the result, 3,960 years, is a time prophecy ending in 1914. As a result of World War I, the machinery (the Balfour Declaration) began for the Jews to get back into their land. But that time prophecy is different from the prophecy about Moab. In other words, from south to north to the mountain range near the Dead Sea, there would be destruction. The cry would be like that of a heifer three years old.

However, with a three-year-old heifer being common to both Abraham’s sacrifice and Moab, we can follow the same principle of using a lunar year of 360 days. Multiplying  $3 \times 360 = 1,080$  gives us a time prophecy of Moab’s destruction, but the question is when to start the 1,080 years. The Exodus was the *practical* beginning of Israel (although we usually reckon the start from the death of Jacob). Moab existed earlier, but they, too, had their *practical* start at the Exodus. Egypt returned to its land after 40 years, but it was restored as a poor, base country (Ezek. 29:9-11), and Israel returned after 70 years. Moab would also return (see verse 47). The Bible prophesies history *in advance*.

**Jer. 48:35** Moreover I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the LORD, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his gods.

**Jer. 48:36** Therefore mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and mine heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres: because the riches that he hath gotten are perished.

Jeremiah said, “Mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes.” The lower notes of a flute are mournful. Sorrow would be the experience of the beholder when this prophecy was fulfilled. God was speaking in verse 35, but the pronouns in verse 36 refer to Jeremiah. (There is a scriptural precedent elsewhere for this type of change with pronouns.) Hearing bad news can affect the heart.

**Jer. 48:37** For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth.

In great sorrow, the Moabites would cut their hands and wear sackcloth. “Cutting” was



prevalently done in Molech worship as a sign of religious feelings, worship, and adoration. Before understanding that “the just shall live by faith,” Martin Luther beat himself in trying to please the Lord (Rom. 1:17).

The beard is a sign of nobility, and if a person was rich, he had someone else cut his beard. Therefore, for a person to completely cut off his own beard was a sign of anguish. In addition, the enemy grabbed a beard and hacked it off to humiliate the person.

**Jer. 48:38** There shall be lamentation generally upon all the housetops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, saith the LORD.

**Jer. 48:39** They shall howl, saying, How is it broken down! how hath Moab turned the back with shame! so shall Moab be a derision and a dismaying to all them about him.

Moab would be shamed, broken as a vessel, and made a derision, resulting in great sorrow and affliction. With all the destruction taking place, the women would lament on the housetops. Generally speaking, when barbaric things were done in warfare, many of the women were spared (and sometimes the babes too), and we believe that was the case in Moab.

**Jer. 48:40** For thus saith the LORD; Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab.

“Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab.” God was speaking. The Babylonian Empire was described as a lion with *eagle’s* wings, and Nebuchadnezzar himself was called a “lion” (Dan. 7:4; Jer. 4:7). Here the king of Babylon was likened to an eagle that would *suddenly* open its wings and capture Moab, the prey. When an eagle, with its extraordinary sight, spots prey miles away, it flies with the glaring sun at its back. As it gets near the prey, the opening of the wings causes a great shadow and confusion so that the bewildered prey is easily captured.

From another standpoint, the Moabites were up in the mountains, and an eagle is known for making its abode in high places, for example, in the side of a cliff or in a tall tree. In capturing Moab, Nebuchadnezzar’s forces were likened to an eagle. While the Moabites felt secure in their position and even had some warriors, they were basically farmers. Hence they were no match for Nebuchadnezzar, and he overwhelmed them.

**Jer. 48:41** Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surprised, and the mighty men’s hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

The surprise attack took all the starch out of Moab’s resistance, so that the hearts of the mighty men were like “the heart of a woman in her pangs.”

**Jer. 48:42** And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the LORD.

**Jer. 48:43** Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall be upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the LORD.

**Jer. 48:44** He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, even upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

**Jer. 48:45** They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon because of the force: but a fire

**shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones.**

**Jer. 48:46 Woe be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives.**

When the king of Babylon came down to wreak destruction, he went first to Judah because the Lord caused the false occult symbols to direct him there. After destroying Jerusalem and the Temple, he went to Ammon, next to Moab, and then to Edom.

“A fire shall come forth out of Heshbon [in Ammon].” When the Moabites saw the destruction of Ammon, they got scared, fearing they were next, and that is what happened. No matter where the Moabites fled, punishment would be visited on the men, and some of the women and children would be taken captive.

**Jer. 48:47 Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the LORD. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.**

The “latter days” can be considered now, at the end of the current age, and also in the resurrection in the Kingdom, for people will come forth from the tomb in their homelands. Thus there are two phases of the latter days: (1) before Jacob’s Trouble and (2) after Jacob’s Trouble.

**Comment:** It is nice that after 46 verses of the prophecy against Moab because of their sins, the chapter ends with one verse of hope. The NIV says, “Here ends the judgment on Moab.”

**Reply:** God will bring again the captivity of Judah, Egypt, and other nations as well.

**Jer. 49:1 Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD; Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities?**

Jeremiah gave a judgment message against another Gentile nation: Ammon. Just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, 2 1/2 tribes stayed east of the Jordan River: Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. The 2 1/2 tribes were satisfied with the land of promise being on the far (or east) side of Jordan, so they brought the matter to Joshua’s attention. When Joshua took the matter to the Lord, they were told that the 2 1/2 tribes could inherit that land if the men participated with those of the other tribes in conquering the land west of Jordan, or Israel proper. Hence at that time, the territory was called Gad; it was also called Gilead at certain times in history.

Verse 1 suggests two takeovers. First, Gad displaced the Ammonites, and later the Ammonites, who were indigenous to the area, regained the land. Now the question was, “Why then doth their [the Ammonites’] king inherit Gad?” In other words, “What will be done about this situation, for the Ammonites dwell in what belongs to Gad?”

**Jer. 49:2 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD.**

**Jer. 49:3 Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together.**

Rabbah, Heshbon, and Ai were all chief cities of Ammon. The judgment was to be against all three of these fortified cities. Verse 2 is saying that Israel would once again occupy Gad and that the Ammonites would be soundly defeated through destruction by fire. Verse 3 tells that Ai had already been spoiled and Heshbon was next. Jeremiah told the women of Rabbah to lament and wear sackcloth and hide, for capture was coming. The leaders, religious and civil, would be spoiled. The formerly secure Rabbah would be in disarray and panic.

**Q:** Rabbah's being burned with fire and becoming a desolate heap had a past fulfillment, but in regard to the future fulfillment of Psalm 83, these terms indicate that Israel's strike on its Arab neighbors will be decisive. Is there a suggestion here that nuclear power might be used?

**A:** That is a possibility. Of course the imminent individual back there who would cause the land to be desolate was Nebuchadnezzar.

**Q:** Is Rabbah approximately where Amman is today?

**A:** That is possible, although the location cannot be precisely determined. Probably Heshbon is the more proper location of Amman because of its situation on a hill, whereas Rabbah was in a valley.

Verse 3 reminds us of Zedekiah's being taken prisoner with his sons, wives, princes, and the priests who were confederate with him when they were captured down near Jericho. The same principle that occurred with Judah was operative in these other countries.

**Jer. 49:4** Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me?

Verse 4 is a flashback prior to the battle and defeat prophesied in verses 1-3. The Ammonites were overconfident and unafraid in their security, fortifications, and wealth. Their valleys were fertile and full of verdure and crops. "Who shall come unto me?" they asked with confidence and pride.

**Jer. 49:5** Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts, from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wandereth.

The Ammonites would be driven out, expelled *with force*. "None shall gather up him that wandereth." A "wanderer" is a deserter. In any battle of large, reasonably equal armies, a strategy could occur as follows. The front line engages in battle, and a few shock troops are kept in reserve to be directed toward any penetration of the line, that is, to reinforce a weakness. However, in this case, the reserve troops would desert; they would disobey orders, and the Ammonite king would not be able to get the support he was counting on.

Verse 5 is only a simple explanation that Ammon was to be devoid of inhabitants and that those who would escape actual death would go into the desert and perish. At least temporarily, the picture would be bleak.

**Jer. 49:6** And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD.

Although the same in principle, the prophecy against Ammon is terse compared to that against Moab. Another similarity is that the Ammonites who went into captivity would be restored to

their land.

We usually think of “captivity” in a reverse order from the favorable way the Lord uses the word. To “bring again the captivity” can also mean that God will bring the individuals back from the captivity of the grave. From another standpoint, individuals can be in captivity to the Lord. As Christians, we hope to be in captivity to Him forevermore. The turnaround for the world is implied in these prophecies. The nuances will be manifestly pictured and dramatically understood in the Kingdom so that there will be no misunderstanding.

Egypt, Israel, Moab, and Ammon would all be brought back from captivity *but not Babylon* (see Jeremiah 50 and 51). Chapters 46-49 give an *overall view and general lessons of the coming experiences of Christendom*. We should not particularize because Christendom will be destroyed forever.

**Jer. 49:7 Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished?**

Edom would suffer the same fate as Moab and Ammon. It is interesting that Teman is associated with Edom, which was known for wisdom. Reading these terms in Bible prophecies helps us to identify their location with a little more distinction. Eliphaz, one of Job’s counselors, came from Teman, a city in Edom (Job 4:1).

These men of the desert, who were noted for their wisdom, had Middle Eastern understanding along natural lines, of which history today tells us little. There were very learned people in the past, but since our culture is Western, we lose a lot of the meaning. Their wisdom along natural lines was real.

The next several verses, which describe the destruction and end of Edom, are similar to the destruction and end of Esau personally. (Esau was a son of Isaac.) Edom was situated at the southern end of the Dead Sea. Moab and Ammon were a little farther north.

**Jer. 49:8 Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him.**

“I will bring the calamity of Esau [Edom] upon him [Dedan].” Edom is the land of Esau.

This Dedan is different from the one of Ezekiel 38:13, which prophesies that observer forces from Sheba (picturing the United States), Dedan (France), and Tarshish (England) will be in Israel at the end of the age. In other words, in Old Testament times, a Sheba and Dedan were in this location, and another Sheba and Dedan were in Africa.

**Jer. 49:9 If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough.**

**Jer. 49:10 But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not.**

Verse 9 is a form of sarcasm. Would not grape gatherers normally leave some gleaning grapes on the vine? After all, if we picked grapes and took the time to gather every last grape off a vine, other grapes would remain unharvested. Time is too important to pick all the grapes. And even if the grape pickers did not have altruistic motives, the Law said that the corners of a field were to be left for the poor of the land to glean. God was saying that when King Nebuchadnezzar came down from the north, he would not act in the normal way, for he

would strip the vine and take *everything*.

A thief is another example. He makes sure that he fills his bag with valuables and leaves the rest behind. But the king of Babylon would take *all* the silver, gold, etc.—everything precious and all the commodities. He would strip the land of Esau “bare,” leaving no inhabitants or goodies. “He [Esau] is not.” The land would be denuded of people, for any survivors would be taken into Babylonian captivity.

In the antitype, Edom pictures Christendom. Just as Esau sold his *birthright*, the Abrahamic promise, so Catholicism was a golden cup in the hand of the Lord but lost the stewardship because of improper use. True spiritual Israelites inherit the stewardship.

Esau (Christendom) will be stripped. In the type, the people tried to hide in rocks and caves, but they were searched out. “He is not” means extinction. Accordingly, the beast and the false prophet will go into Second Death (*permanent* extinction).

At the end of the age, “grapes” will be thrown into the great winepress of the wrath of God. *All* will be stripped off the land. Grape pickers and thieves usually leave something but not in the case of Christendom. Egypt, Moab, Ammon, and Israel would return from captivity, but that statement was not made in regard to Edom because of the antitype. The natural Edomites will come forth from the grave in the general resurrection but not the nominal Church systems.

**Jer. 49:11** Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

The antitype continues. “Fatherless children” and “widows” will survive. The tares are being bundled to be burned later. Not all will literally die, but the systems will cease so that one will no longer be a Protestant or a Catholic. Another picture alludes to grapes; still another, to a slaughter in Christendom. The “fatherless children” are the Great Company, who will flee Babylon in the wintertime of the antitypical Sabbath day (Matt. 24:20). They will survive as Christians, whereas the tares will cease their professions.

Even though Esau lost the birthright, he was given some comfort in receiving a natural blessing from Isaac, his father. It is interesting that there were 12 tribes of Israel and 12 tribes of Esau.

**Jer. 49:12** For thus saith the LORD; Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it.

“Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken.” When Jeremiah mentioned earlier about drinking the “cup,” Edom was one of the nations in the actual fulfillment (Jer. 25:17,21). When he sent out wooden yokes to those nations that were on the judgment list, Edom was included. Edom “shalt not go unpunished.” The king of Babylon went to Petra, even though it was a discomfiting area, because the Lord wanted this prophecy to be fulfilled.

The clause “art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished?” applies to Edom. Similar wording elsewhere applies to Israel in the end time, showing that numerically speaking, the Holy Remnant will be a *small* element (Jer. 30:11; 46:28).

**Jer. 49:13** For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a

**desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.**

Bozrah, the capital of Edom, and its suburbs would become desolate. Bozrah pictures the Roman Catholic Church, the capital of Christendom (Isa. 34:6; 63:1). For example, Babylon was an empire, a nation, a province, and a city.

**Jer. 49:14 I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle.**

**Jer. 49:15 For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men.**

When the king of Babylon came down from the north, people of other nations joined him and became confederate with his army. (The same is true of Gog, who will come down from the north at the time of Jacob's Trouble.) The others were called "heathen" because they were not Babylonians and because outsiders were viewed as foreigners. These other confederate peoples, who were part of the northern army, had a bone to pick with Bozrah.

We should not spiritualize Edom except where the antitype is apparent. Bozrah, the capital of Edom, is to be considered spiritually in Isaiah 34:6, which mentions lambs, goats, and the fat of rams. Basically, Jeremiah 49 tells what happened when Nebuchadnezzar literally came down and destroyed Edom. However, little statements are sprinkled in the account that have a double application.

"I will make thee small among the heathen." Today Edom is quite desolate except along the sides of the road going to Petra.

In regard to the Battle of Armageddon, a report, rumor, or premonition of foreboding evil will eventually come on the nominal Church system so that the people will sense a coming judgment. The *universal* Catholic Church will become *as nothing*. The fall of mystic Babylon will lead to anarchy.

**Jer. 49:16 Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldst make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD.**

Satan is the son of pride, and Papacy is his organization. Edom felt secure (just as Papacy sits in the temple of God), but destruction cometh!

**Jer. 49:17 Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof.**

Egypt, Israel, Moab, Ammon, and Edom all had a period of desolation. "Every one that goeth by ... shall hiss [whistle] at all the plagues thereof." In former days, many people could whistle because the sound, which could be heard quite a distance away, was useful. Here the thought is that the desolation of Edom was so bad that people whistled loudly in amazement.

Notice the word "plagues." Edom received plagues, and so will mystic Babylon.

**Jer. 49:18 As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.**

Edom would be overthrown like Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom and Gomorrah have had no

inhabitants ever since their destruction because they are underneath the Dead Sea. For the duration of Edom's captivity to the king of Babylon, that area was without inhabitants like Sodom and Gomorrah. In the antitype, the two cities suggest Catholicism and Protestantism, respectively.

**Jer. 49:19 Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?**

Nebuchadnezzar was the "lion" in the type, and he came up "like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong." The Jordan River overflowed its banks at certain seasons of the year.

"But I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her?" When the king of Babylon came down as a flood, Moab, Ammon, and Edom were very much concerned. He came to a place north of the Dead Sea where the land was shaped like a "Y," and the question was which fork to take. He planned to attack Moab and Ammon first, but when he consulted the gods and the entrails of animals, the signs all indicated Jerusalem. Even necromancy pointed to Jerusalem, for the Lord overruled the demons. As a result, the lion turned "suddenly" and went down the fork toward Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and the Temple while the Moabites and the Ammonites watched and gloated from the hills. However, as the prophecies foretold, a yoke would be put on Moab and Ammon as well, and their defeat was next.

"Who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?" The Edomites were confident because of the nature of the terrain, but nothing is impossible for Jehovah. He can use even a feeble person to overcome a giant.

From a human standpoint, a shepherd has to know all the nooks and crannies for survival. The sheep need pasturage and water, so he has to be familiar with the land. Like shepherds, those who lived in Edom certainly knew their own land. In that position of security, they felt it was impossible for an enemy to conquer them. But their counsel was brought to naught because the Lord would teach the ignorant "heathen" how to get up to the crevices, root out the Edomites, and denude the land. God chose the "lion" of judgment; that is, God used King Nebuchadnezzar to effect these judgments.

**Q:** Verse 19 is repeated almost verbatim in the next chapter: "Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?" (Jer. 50:44). Is Cyrus the shepherd in chapter 50, which pertains to Babylon?

**A:** Yes. The Edomites had their thinking, but God has His own purpose and thinking. There seems to be a play on words here. The Edomites were confident in their own wisdom, but what seemed impossible from their standpoint was an open book from God's standpoint. If the Lord was with the enemy, *nothing* could frustrate His purpose.

The spiritual application shows that God's judgment will be particularly on Christendom, but the heathen nations will have a time of trouble too. Cyrus (Jesus in antitype) is God's "shepherd." The antitype of the "lion" is the Lord's great army, which will come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan. (Jordan means "a judging down.") Stated another way, the Time of

Trouble will “swell,” or overflow. Anarchists will strike out particularly against the leaders.

**Jer. 49:20** Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them.

The inhabitants of Edom felt secure in their position. For years, caravans loaded with rich goods going from Damascus to Egypt were like sitting ducks on the narrow road below, as the Edomites on the mountains prepared to attack. Because of the terrain, an army could not go down to Edom in the normal sense, so Nebuchadnezzar sent a diversionary force. That segment of Nebuchadnezzar’s army was effective, just as David was effective against Goliath. What seemed to be humanly impossible was accomplished, as the Lord had predicted through Jeremiah.

Notice the emphasis on the words “*counsel* of the LORD” and “his *purposes*, that he hath *purposed*,” in contradistinction to the supposed wise counsel and counselors of Teman. When the nominal system falls in the antitype, some nobodies who have been deceived and used will be so bitter that they will cause great destruction. These “least of the flock” will draw out the leaders and destroy them.

**Jer. 49:21** The earth is moved at the noise of their fall, at the cry the noise thereof was heard in the Red sea.

The noise of Edom’s fall would be so loud that it would be heard in the Red Sea. From a *natural* standpoint, the harbor of Edom is Aqaba on the Red Sea. Therefore, “at the noise,” those who were in boats in the vicinity of the mouth, or north end, of the Red Sea would certainly know about the fall of Edom. This language is similar to that pertaining to the fall of mystic Babylon. What seemed to be impossible would be witnessed.

That part of Edom—Aqaba, which was like a major city—was influential in the south. Those in the sea in boats who heard the noise of the fall of Edom would take this news wherever they went. Likewise with regard to the fall of Babylon in the next chapter, the news would be carried abroad from Phoenicia.

The noise of the trouble would be *extensive*. In the antitype, the “Red sea” symbolizes anarchy *worldwide*, not just in Christendom. Revelation 15:2 reads, “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” The more-than-overcomers, the Little Flock, will be apart from the trouble.

**Jer. 49:22** Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

Nebuchadnezzar, the Lord’s eagle, would spread his wings over Bozrah. Similar wording was used with Moab (Jer. 48:40). The people of Bozrah would experience a trauma. “At that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.” The king of Babylon was likened to a lion with eagle’s wings (Dan. 7:4). The reference is to the immense scope of his army, which caused fear in his enemies and enabled him to mount up as an eagle, as it were. This crude army, with all its weapons, horses, etc., could even get up on the top of a mountain. The Lord used the king of Babylon to accomplish His purpose. The tremendous army was spread out below, but a segment was sent to the top of the mountain with eagle’s wings to defeat those who felt they were unconquerable.



In the antitype, when those in Christendom see the handwriting on the wall, their hearts will fail them for *fear*. Thus far in the Book of Jeremiah, *two nations* have strongly pictured Christendom: Edom and Israel. Edom will not be recovered, spiritually speaking.

**Jer. 49:23 Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad: for they have heard evil tidings: they are fainthearted; there is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet.**

Jeremiah continued to prophesy against Gentile nations. This time the judgment was against Damascus, Hamath, and Arpad. The very fact these three Syrian cities were mentioned together suggests they were relatively contiguous in the prophet's day. Damascus is the capital of Syria today. (Incidentally, Assyria is not to be confused with Syria.)

"They have heard evil tidings: they are fainthearted." Hamath and Arpad would be troubled because of the news of an impending attack. "There is sorrow on the sea." The King James margin reads, "There is sorrow *as on* the sea." As the waves of the sea are continuous, so the trouble could not be quelled. "It [the trouble] cannot be quiet"; a tumult was brewing that would eventually be a severe judgment on these powerful cities.

**Jer. 49:24 Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail.**

Seeing that Judah and various Gentile nations were falling like kingpins, Damascus would wax feeble and fear what was coming. Paralyzed with fear, the inhabitants of the city would not be able to act normally.

Egypt's army was defeated when it went out to war against Babylon. That defeat constituted the breaking of the first arm of Egypt, which was like an omen of what would happen later. The final judgment occurred when the second arm was broken, and that breaking took place internally, that is, inside Egypt. Having seen the defeat of this great power and then the defeat of these other nations, one after another, the people of Damascus realized their city was next. They turned to flee, but their flight options were limited because Damascus was landlocked.

"Anguish and sorrows have taken her [Damascus], as a woman in travail." Likewise, the anguish and grief of the people of Moab and Edom were as the birth pangs of a woman (Jer. 48:41; 49:22).

**Jer. 49:25 How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy!**

Damascus was the city of praise and joy. It was rich in vegetation, had a good climate, and claimed to be the oldest city in the world, but why was Damascus the city of *God's* joy? There are several reasons. (1) Naaman the leper came from Damascus, Syria, to Elisha to be healed of his disease. As the prophet instructed, Naaman washed seven times in the Jordan River, and with the seventh dipping, his leprosy was cured (2 Kings 5:1-14). The seven washings are typical, showing that there will be seven stages in the Kingdom Age. (2) The Apostle Paul's conversion took place near Damascus, and subsequently he preached boldly in that city (Acts 9:3-5,27). (3) Along another line, Elisha was in Damascus when the sick Ben-hadad, king of Syria, sent Hazeal to the prophet to inquire about his health (2 Kings 8:7-9).

Apparently, Damascus was favorable in times past, before Jeremiah's day, and it will be favorable again in the future in a way that is unknown to us at present. Perhaps because of the prominence Paul will have in the Kingdom Age as the chief of the apostles, his past association with Damascus makes it a city of joy from a *prophetic* standpoint. Similarly in principle, we

associate Moses with Mount Sinai and Jesus with Bethlehem.

**Jer. 49:26** Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD of hosts.

Because Damascus was an enemy of Israel, it would be humiliated. Her men of war would be slaughtered.

**Jer. 49:27** And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

A fire may have been started in the city wall and then spread to the king's palaces, which were inside the wall. Ben-hadad was the title of the king of Syria. Its use was comparable to titles such as Caesar during the Roman Empire, Czar with the Russians, Pharaoh in Egypt, and Kaiser in Germany.

**Jer. 49:28** Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the LORD; Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east.

Kedar was in Gilead near the Jordan River. Thus it is logical that when Damascus received judgment, this sister area would have the same experience. With Kedar being a nomadic center of power, its people were bedouins in the deserts. Hazor, a well-fortified city on a mountain, was also a center of a bedouin type of people.

The identification of the destroyer as Nebuchadnezzar shows that verse 28 had a past fulfillment. Through Jeremiah, God was talking to the king of Babylon: "Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east."

**Jer. 49:29** Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them, Fear is on every side.

All of Kedar's possessions and flocks would be taken, even though they had little to begin with. "Fear" would envelop them.

The mention of Kedar's curtains reminds us of the Song of Solomon, where the Bride class says, "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon" (Song 1:5). The curtains were black on the outside and luxuriously ornamented on the inside depending on the wealth of the occupant. To a person standing outside, the black-curtained tents looked ordinary, but inside was great wealth (verse 31).

**Jer. 49:30** Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the LORD; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you.

"Flee ... far off, dwell deep." This expression was sarcasm, meaning, "Flee as far as you can—into the deep recesses of the desert—but it will do you no good. You will not escape!" This verse shows the tenacity of Nebuchadnezzar's troops in their purpose.

**Jer. 49:31** Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the LORD, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone.

**Jer. 49:32** And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil: and I will scatter into all winds them that are in the utmost corners; and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the LORD.

Nebuchadnezzar was commanded, "Arise, get up unto the wealthy people who dwell at ease." He was told to go to these bedouins and get their wealth (oils, perfumes, frankincense etc.). Having camels, which are known as ships of the desert, the bedouins could flee, yet the king of Babylon would be able to apprehend them. Even if the people fled to the remotest place, he had the capability to search them out.

The nomads lived in tents, yet they were "wealthy" because of the goods they transported. For "multitude of their cattle," the NIV has "large herds," and it is amazing that sheep and goats can graze sufficiently in these barren desert areas. The bedouins liked the desert life and seeing the stars at night. Their way of life had "neither gates nor bars," for they dwelled alone. They felt walls were unnecessary, for who would go out in the desert to get them? However, Nebuchadnezzar was determined to conquer them, and he excelled at whatever he put his hand to do. Knowing the bedouins would flee, he and his army went around the fertile part of the land and waited for them on the other side.

**Jer. 49:33** And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dragons, and a desolation for ever: there shall no man abide there, nor any son of man dwell in it.

Hazor, which was recognized as a strongly fortified city, would become "a dwelling [place] for dragons," and it is a ruin to this day. The word "dragons" carries the thought of giant lizards (wild desert animals) or "jackals" in the NIV.

"There shall no man abide there, nor any son of man dwell in it." Verse 33 shows complete desolation. Desert life took over the city and made it a real ghost town. The history of these places is of relatively little value to the Christian, but the lesson will be extremely valuable in the Kingdom Age.

**Jer. 49:34** The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying,

Elam is Persia (Iran and Iraq today). This prophecy about Elam came in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign, whereas the preceding prophecies against Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zoar, Damascus, etc., were more or less recorded in Jehoiakim's day. These prophecies against Gentile nations were purposely separated out from those against Judah.

Elam and Media are often coupled, but Media became a part of the Persian Empire. For a short period earlier in history, Media was more powerful than Persia, but the second horn (Persia) grew even larger (Dan. 8:3).

**Jer. 49:35** Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might.

**Jer. 49:36** And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come.

**Jer. 49:37** For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them, even my fierce anger, saith the LORD; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them:

**Jer. 49:38** And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the LORD.

Elam fought with bow and arrow (archery). But Elam would be scattered to the four winds and its leaders utterly consumed.

For chapter after chapter, it was prophesied that all these Gentile nations would fall. Each, in turn, would be given the “cup” to drink (Jer. 25:15). When the bedouins of Kedar and Hazor got on their camels, they fled to Elam, but in the meantime, Nebuchadnezzar dispatched his forces to Elam and conquered that land. Thus when the bedouins arrived, they were in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and could not get away.

After the defeat of Elam, what Gentile power was left? Babylon remained, and it was prophesied that Babylon (Sheshach) would drink the cup of Jehovah’s anger last (Jer. 25:26). The Lord used Nebuchadnezzar to visit judgment upon other Gentile nations, and this king had unbelievable capabilities to ferret out the people, subjugate them, and take captives back to his empire.

What was the duration of the Babylonian Empire? Nebuchadnezzar reigned 43-45 years. After his decease, the empire did not last much longer, so the “head of gold” was short timewise but most unusual.

**Jer. 49:39** But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD.

After Elam’s total destruction, a restoration was promised, and there was a striking fulfillment through the Persian Empire. The few captives who were taken to Babylon went back to their homeland and started all over again. Today these places are occupied by their descendants but with different names. Iran and Iraq exist today where Elam was, and part of Iraq was formerly Babylon. The capital city of Babylon was an archaeological site that Saddam Hussein wanted to restore. Thus intellectual Arabs have a great deal of historical information of which we know little, for our depth of understanding pertains to European history and Western civilization. The next two chapters, prophesying the doom of Babylon, are of much greater interest to the Christian because of the symbolism in both the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation.

**Jer. 50:1** The word that the LORD spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

The “word that the LORD spake” came to Jeremiah during the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah. Jeremiah was to declare this word “against Babylon [the capital, the chief city] and against the land of the Chaldeans [and its inhabitants].” Babylon was a city, a province, and an empire, and this judgment message was against the capital and the country of Babylon excluding its satellite or auxiliary powers. In other words, the message was against the chief culprits: the city of Babylon, from which the governmental control emanated, and the land of the Chaldeans, who were known as a strong, harsh people (Hab. 1:6).

**Jer. 50:2** Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.

At the time Jeremiah gave this message, Babylon was still an empire, but Jehovah was saying through the prophet that the judgment on Babylon was irrevocable. The judgment could not

be changed, and it was just a matter of time until it was executed. For instance, after hearing all of the testimony in a trial and the verdict of the jury, the judge gives the sentence and sets the date for any execution. Here God was giving the sentence, and *nothing* could change it, even though the execution was still some years future. Thinking of these ramifications helps us to remember the details of Scripture.

Notice that this message was to be *published*, and the instructions could not be more emphatically stated: “*Declare ... publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not.*” The Prophet Jeremiah was so concerned for this warning message to get out that he felt a personal responsibility, and God gave him the words to speak. Being emotional and indignant over wrongs, Jeremiah was chosen as a prophet in the first place because he was wholly in sympathy with the message. Hence God used him as a mouthpiece.

Bel and Merodach were chief gods of Babylon, representing Catholicism and Protestantism, respectively. Babylon was sometimes addressed as a male and at other times as a female, and the choice of pronoun was significant. “Her [Babylon’s] idols are [to be] confounded, her images ... broken in pieces.” With the feminine pronoun, the focus or emphasis is on Babylon *ecclesiastical*. The Book of Revelation similarly uses a feminine designation in referring to the Roman Catholic Church as the “*mother of harlots*,” the harlot daughters being Protestantism (Rev. 17:5). In regard to the end-time experience, the “*mother*” is Babylon *ecclesiastical Catholic*, and the “*daughters*” are sometimes lumped together as Babylon *ecclesiastical Protestant*.

At one time, Babylon was a golden cup in the hand of the Lord, but that is no longer the case. In the denunciation of mystic Babylon, attention is first centered on the religious aspect, symbolically or spiritually speaking. Jeremiah 50 and 51 have two prophetic fulfillments. (1) The *natural* fulfillment, which was future from the time of Jeremiah’s writing, was fulfilled in 536 BC, when Media-Persia overthrew literal Babylon. (2) The *antitypical* fulfillment has two aspects: spiritual (ecclesiastical) and civil.

**Jer. 50:3** For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.

Babylon is the present-day Iraq. “Out of the north” would come the judgment on Babylon. Russia and Turkey (Asia Minor) are north of Babylon (Iraq). Therefore, out of the north would come a power to destroy Babylon.

**Q:** Since Media-Persia was *east* of Babylon, does this description of the enemy’s coming “out of the north” apply only to the future destruction of mystic Babylon?

**A:** That may ostensibly seem to be the case, but at the time of Jeremiah’s preaching, General Cyrus was conquering supposedly unconquerable places in Asia Minor (such as Sardis) *in the north*. In the Book of Isaiah, God prophesied of Cyrus as His agent. (In the spiritual application, Cyrus represents Jesus.) “That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel” (Isa. 44:28–45:3).

After conquering Sardis and other places to the north, Cyrus, a relatively young man and a

very successful general, marched down (or south) to Babylon. (Incidentally, the empire of Media-Persia was formed through the marriage of the son of Media and the daughter of Persia.) Cyrus was more or less the right-hand man of Darius the Mede, the king.

“Out of the north there cometh up a nation [a people, an army] against her [Babylon as a woman], which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.” Imagine being in Jeremiah’s shoes and prophesying utter defeat to the strongest nation or empire! Although Jeremiah did not personally go to Babylon and publish this message in the streets of the capital city, he sent a representative from Judah named Seraiah, who was a *very meek and peaceful* man. Jeremiah gave Seraiah a scroll containing this *strong judgment message* and told him to go to Babylon and read it *publicly*.

To prophesy that the land of Babylon would be made “desolate” meant it would be *without inhabitant*. Imagine giving that message to powerful Babylon with its strong, high walls! At the time of the fulfillment more than 70 years later, the king and his cohorts were so confident and felt so impregnable that they were having a feast while under siege. The diverting of the river Euphrates by Cyrus and his army radically affected the city of Babylon, and Babylon (that part of Iraq) is still in ruins today, even though Saddam Hussein, an admirer of Nebuchadnezzar, wanted to rebuild the city as a tourist attraction.

When Seraiah uttered this prophecy in the fourth year of Zedekiah, some of the Jews who were captive in Babylon heard it. More than 70 years later, when the fulfillment was imminent, the Jews *with faith* remembered that Jeremiah had accurately predicted the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, upon recalling this new message, they got out of the city of Babylon *in advance*—not necessarily immediately but when they heard a large army was approaching Babylon from the north, threatening the world’s leading power. Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall *the very night* that Cyrus and his army entered Babylon and the city fell (Dan. 5:25-28,30).

During his First Advent, Jesus used a similar method of warning his disciples to leave Jerusalem before the trouble of AD 69-70. He said, “When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed [surrounded] with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out.... For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-22). Some of the disciples delayed and thus did not have time to get out when the city was put under siege by the Roman army. But then the emperor in Rome died, and General Vespasian, who was in charge of the siege, left the Jerusalem area and returned to Rome because he was a leading contender to become emperor. Vespasian left his son Titus in charge. In the resulting confusion of the change of leadership, the siege was relaxed for a week or so, and those who believed Jesus’ words left everything and got out of Jerusalem as fast as possible. When Titus reestablished control, he renewed the siege with strength. Down through history, the Lord has repeatedly used this principle of operation, informing His people in advance. Those Jews who had faith got out of the city and, generally speaking, escaped the catastrophe.

When the Medes were victorious, Babylon received just retribution for what Nebuchadnezzar had done years earlier to Egypt. He left Egypt desolate and without inhabitant. (Information on this period of history is furnished in the Bible, not in history books.) Israel and Judah were also besieged by Nebuchadnezzar and made desolate. Jeremiah chapters 46-49 tell of the defeat and destruction that he caused to Moab, Ammon, Edom, Elam, and other peoples. The very one who had inflicted such treatment on others would now receive the same experience, with his land being left desolate.

Another principle was illustrated with John the Baptist. His good news was that Israel’s Messiah

was coming, but he also said that a fire of trouble would come upon the nation. An evil person would not want to hear that Messiah was coming, for the implication was judgment. However, one who had been longing for God's will to be done would rejoice. Being frightened, the soldiers and the people asked, "What shall we do?" Then John the Baptist gave advice. The Prophet Malachi, in the last book of the Old Testament, had said, "Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1). John the Baptist advised the people to square their debts and not provoke enemies, and he told the soldiers to be satisfied with their wages (Luke 3:10-14). He suggested meekness and docility just like Zephaniah: "Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger" (Zeph. 2:3). This advice applied back there as well as in the future. Those not thoroughly consecrated who obey these principles are in a better position to survive the trouble, for the trouble will fall chiefly on the heads of the wicked. The Apostle James wrote that retribution, a swinging of the pendulum, will come and cause suffering on many who now are wealthy with earth's goods (James 5:1-5).

**Comment:** The judgment pronounced against Babylon here in the end of the Book of Jeremiah is a reminder of a statement made to the prophet in the first chapter: "Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jer. 1:9,10).

**Reply:** Yes, the words of the Lord had that effect when they came from the mouth, or instrumentality, of Jeremiah.

In the destruction of Babylon, in both type and antitype, all inhabitants were (and are to be) removed, "both man and beast." Literal Babylon was not to be restored (at least not until the Kingdom). The complete destruction in the type pictures the utter destruction of the beast and the false prophet in the antitype—there will be *no restoration*.

Thus far the verses covered provide just an introduction to Jeremiah 50. Now we will come to more personalized experiences.

**Jer. 50:4** In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God.

**Jer. 50:5** They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

When the judgment mentioned in the first three verses actually occurred, the Jews who were in the precincts of the city of Babylon and its suburbs had a double uprooting. Of course those Jews who lived outside the metropolis of Babylon did not have to move at the time the Medes were attacking. The "weeping" was of two kinds: (1) While still in Israel years earlier, the Jews were told to go to Babylon and build houses and have children because they would be there for a while. The desolation of the land was to last for 70 years. (2) Now, at the end of the 70 years, a new generation was on the scene and settled in their homes in Babylon. The question was, What would they do? In verse 6, Jeremiah gave the reason for their dislocation in returning to Israel as being their parents' fault. Aside from a few centenarians, the Jews who returned at the end of the 70 years were the children of those who had been taken captive.

From the literal standpoint, two years after Babylon fell, Cyrus said that the Jews could return

to their homeland and establish a modest temple (he specified *half* the dimensions of Solomon's Temple). Each of the Jews then had to decide whether or not to return to Israel. Realizing that Babylon's power had been broken, the Jews had to ask, "Should we return to Israel, or should we settle under the empire of Media-Persia?" Most of those who went back were from Judah, but some from the ten tribes returned as well. However, the vast majority of both the ten tribes and the two tribes remained in Media-Persia. Those who did return to Israel went back weeping and desiring to seek the Lord.

**Comment:** We know a few Jews returned to the homeland in their old age because they mourned when they saw Zerubbabel's Temple, knowing its glory was so inferior to that of the former Temple of Solomon (Hag. 2:3). As children, these Jews had seen Solomon's Temple and then returned as old men.

The "going and weeping" occurred for several reasons: (1) The Jews had moral compunctions that as a nation, they were guilty in being taken captive to Babylon in the first place. (2) They wept from the standpoint of having to leave their possessions in Babylon, taking only what they could carry on their backs or on a donkey. (3) Those Jews who took heathen (non-Jewish) wives had to separate and leave them behind. Thus the weeping and mourning were very humbling. Those who obeyed by journeying back to a homeland they had heard about but had never seen and by separating themselves from foreign wives comprised a remnant from among the captives that was relatively holy. Only approximately 50,000 Jews returned to Israel.

The returning Jews "shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward." Did the Jews who were raised in captivity know anything about geography? No, they had to ask directions. They only knew they had to get back to Israel. Cyrus not only gave permission to return but also helped the Jews with money and goods. He even offered to have soldiers accompany them for protection, but Ezra declined, saying the Lord God was their protection. The Jews who returned to Israel were blessed. The instruction was stern, but it was for their own good. God raised up two prophets who encouraged them, and the people began to prosper.

**Comment:** Daniel prayed three times a day with his face toward Jerusalem. His actions show that the faith element tried to keep their eyes toward Israel and Jerusalem.

**Reply:** Their roots were the God of Israel. The prayer life of Daniel illustrates the value of daily prayer and meditation and searching the Scriptures, as it were.

What happened naturally has a spiritual counterpart, and the spiritual counterpart helps us to see the natural. For instance, the call to come out of Babylon and to return to Israel was natural, as was the destruction of Babylon. When we go to the antitype, the call for God's people to come out of mystic Babylon is a call to come out to the Lord. Let us consider those who are married. A husband who hears the truth and the call to come out of Babylon may have a Catholic wife, or vice versa. What will the called individual do in such a situation? The Apostle Paul gave advice on that principle. For instance, if an unconsecrated husband is content to let his consecrated wife worship as she will, even though she is not in the orthodox religion, and is willing to keep the marriage intact, the wife should not seek to be loosed (1 Cor. 7:12-14). However, the consecrated one has to preserve his or her freedom. If separation becomes necessary, that situation is permissible depending on whether or not the spouse was agreeable. And of course there are individuals, both male and female, who were not married at the time they consecrated.

The call to come out of Babylon is an *individual* call. For the truth's sake, one may have to leave his father, mother, sister, brother, friend, or anyone else who stays behind and obey as an individual. Christians get rooted in spiritual Babylon; they are comfortable there with their



social friendships that are enjoyable, good, and wholesome for the most part. For one to come out of Babylon means to leave friendships and thus to suffer a loss. Taking a stand and leaving mystic Babylon is very searching. The call is to come out so “that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4). To spiritually come out of Babylon is to move from one *condition* to another. Sometimes very tender ties have to be broken. Then comes the Christian walk, the journeying to “Jerusalem which is above” (Gal. 4:26).

“Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.” The Jews had misgivings, and they knew their judgment experience in Babylon had come upon them as a nation because they had forsaken God.

This was now 70 years later. The returning Jews asked for directions for the route back to Israel (Zion). Ezra was a strong, outstanding leader who got the Hebrews to cut off wrong practices (to put away foreign wives, for example); moreover, he got them to renew their covenant and consecration to the Lord. In the antitype, when mystic Babylon falls, the Great Company class must renew their consecration in order to get life. Their roots will be gone, and a decision will await them. If rightly exercised, they will realize they have been remiss with the Lord and will renew their covenant. In this setting, Israel pictures Catholicism and Judah represents Protestantism. The majority of those who are consecrated (and thus those who will be the Great Company) will come from Protestantism at that time. The tares will cease their profession as Babylon falls, and this consecrated class will be left.

**Jer. 50:6** My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.

The Israelites had “turned away ... on the mountains.” Groves with heathen idols were on the mountains. In the days of Solomon, the northern boundary of Israel was the river Euphrates, and what is now the Lebanon area was especially noted for heathen worship.

**Comment:** These verses are not in sequence. The time setting of verse 5 is the Israelites’ return to the homeland after Babylonian captivity, and verse 6 goes back to conditions in Israel prior to Babylonian captivity.

**Reply:** Yes, it is important to have the time setting in mind. Verse 6 is discussing Israel’s previous history and saying that the reason the nation was taken to Babylon in the first place was because of their leaders. In the Gospel Age, the Lord warns, “Be not many masters [teachers—RSV], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). The reward for faithfulness may be better, but the judgment is more severe.

“They have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.” A mountain, an elevated position, is compared to a hill, a small mountain. From a natural standpoint, the cedars of Lebanon were renowned. In that country were two different mountain ranges, luxurious with big trees at the lower levels, called Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. The hills in Judah were not as high, but there were groves, nevertheless. In the Jerusalem area, the site of groves was the Mount of Evil Counsel, which was the southern end of the Mount of Olives. The point is that the Israelites looked for higher places for their groves. Their forgotten “restingplace” was Jehovah.

From the antitypical or spiritual standpoint, “mountains” are individual religious systems or denominations. The people (professing Christians) forget their “restingplace” (the Lord) and instead trust in their denominations. The Great Company will have to refocus their attention on God. In the type with literal Israel back in Jeremiah’s day, the people forgot their homeland.

The “shepherds,” the *leaders*, were *primarily responsible* for the Lord’s flock going astray. The people gradually lost their chief love and lowered their standard, going “from mountain to hill.” The spiritual counterpart is obvious. In this fiftieth chapter of Jeremiah, we will be going back and forth between the natural and the spiritual fulfillments.

**Jer. 50:7** All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.

Enemies devoured the Israelites, saying sarcastically, “We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD.” How ironic that the heathen people should blame Israel for sinning against God! The Israelites needed to have their noses rubbed in the dirt, as it were. It was good for the Israelites to be reminded by their enemies that they were suffering because of previous disobedience to their God. A similar excuse was used in the persecution of the Jews; that is, their enemies in the so-called Christian nations blamed them for crucifying Christ and thus justified the persecution during the Diaspora. The Jews were labeled as “Christ killers.”

Many have testified that if they did something in the workplace that was discordant with their profession as a Christian, others remarked, “And you call yourself a Christian?” We are observed by others. For example, we say grace or may read the Bible at lunchtime or witness to a coworker. Truly we are a spectacle to men as well as to angels (1 Cor. 4:9).

**Comment:** Many Christians have thought there is no hope for the Jews because they crucified Christ.

**Reply:** Yes, that has been the case for many centuries. However, with the circulation of Bibles increasing by the millions since the French Revolution, most Catholics and Protestants have Bibles and a smattering of information that was not available previously. As a result, they are generally more forgiving toward the Jewish people. Even the pope tried to ask for forgiveness for Catholic persecution of the Jews. The increase of knowledge, coupled with the trickle-down effect of the gospel, has changed some thinking.

After the Little Flock is complete, trouble will come on the remaining consecrated of the Gospel Age because they were not faithful enough. The Great Company will have to die eventually. The scapegoat picture shows that they will be searched out by the Adversary.

**Jer. 50:8** Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he goats before the flocks.

“Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans” is something like “Come out of her, my people.”

“Be as the he goats before the flocks” is a reference to leaders. At the slaughterhouses in Chicago, the cattle have to go up ramps and into bins that keep narrowing and narrowing. An animal is selected to be a leader. It is not slaughtered but is trained to lead the other animals to slaughter. When the animals smell blood, they become frightened, and in this fearful condition, they resist going into a claustrophobic-type area. However, the animal with leadership qualities leads the other animals to the area of slaughter. At the last minute, the leading animal goes off the chute into a bypass, which is then closed. The animals keep moving forward, being pushed from behind and having no place else to go. That leadership exists with goats, sheep, and cattle. And so Jeremiah was saying, “If you flee out of Babylon with your family, you can help others by setting an example. If your neighbor sees you pull up stakes and go like a he goat, it is likely

that he will follow your lead.” Normally, a goat is considered from the unfavorable standpoint of obstinacy, but in this case, its movement in a leadership role is favorable. The he goats go “before the flocks” in a good sense.

**Comment:** We think of the Lord’s goat in a favorable sense. A spiritual application in an earlier study of the Book of Jeremiah was as follows: “Verse 8 is advice, a *warning*, that is inserted. There are two exits from mystic Babylon: a *voluntary* departure and a *forced* departure. Those who leave in advance—those who come out of Babylon before it falls—can be of the Little Flock (the ‘he goat’ class). The rest of the consecrated, who are called the ‘flocks,’ will have the spirit of Babylon whether they are in present truth or whether they are still literally in the denominations. In other words, the end of verse 8 is saying, ‘Be as the he goats [the Little Flock] *before* the flocks [the remainder of the consecrated, the Great Company].’”

**Reply:** Yes, there is a spiritual counterpart. Those who set the example from *God’s* standpoint, not man’s standpoint, can be misconstrued. Today a Christian is considered to be one who is very careful, gentle, and polite. It is true that goodness, kindness, and tenderness should be one aspect of the Christian, but these qualities are not what identify a Christian. To think otherwise is to put the cart before the horse. Consider Jesus’ words to the scribes and the Pharisees: “Ye generation of vipers! Ye whited sepulchers!” He talked tough to the classes that needed it. The human concept sees only the soft and gentle side, but there is a time to be silent and a time to speak—a time to express righteous indignation (Eccl. 3:7).

**Jer. 50:9** For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her [Babylon]; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

Verse 9 continues the thought in verse 3 about a people coming out of the north against Babylon. People from Mount Ararat and other indigenous areas to the north were confederate with the Medes and the Persians.

“Their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.” In other words, Cyrus obtained victories because the Lord blessed him. Prophecies about Cyrus were recorded in the Book of Isaiah years before he was born, yet God spoke to him as if he already existed, asking, “Why do you think you have been so successful in doing the impossible—in conquering Sardis, for instance? It is because I went and opened the gates of the enemy for you to go in” (Isa. 45:1,2 paraphrase). When Cyrus came on the scene years later, no doubt Daniel brought this information to his attention, pointing out what the God of Israel had told Isaiah about Cyrus 200 years earlier. (Incidentally, Daniel lived a long, long time—at least to the second year of Cyrus.) No wonder Cyrus encouraged the Jews to go back to their homeland and sent temporal goods with them. Although Cyrus also allowed other nations to return to their homelands, he would not have shown the same enthusiasm. With them, his attitude would have been good riddance.

The Bible contains other prophecies of personages who would appear on the scene many years later. About 300 years before King Josiah was born, it was prophesied that a man named Josiah would defile and burn down the rival altar at Bethel in the northern kingdom and that he would kill the idolatrous priests and put their bodies on the altar and dig up graves to take the bones of the dead and heap them on the altar (1 Kings 13:1-3 is the prophecy; 2 Kings 23:15-18 is the fulfillment). The account shows that Josiah personally accompanied his men and supervised the burning of the altar at Bethel and the high places. He was intent on removing idolatry from the whole nation of Israel.

When Josiah saw a particular sepulcher at Bethel, he asked, “Whose grave is this?” It was the sepulcher of a man of God from Judah who had prophesied to Jeroboam years earlier, according to God’s instruction, of the later destruction of the altar. Upon hearing the prophecy, Jeroboam had put forth his hand against the man of God. Immediately Jeroboam’s arm froze. Then he entreated the man of God to pray that the arm would be healed. When Jeroboam’s arm returned to normal, he let the man of God return in peace. However, the man of God subsequently disobeyed. He had been told to deliver the harsh message to Jeroboam and then return home directly, not letting anyone deter him for any reason. But when an old prophet of the Lord not far away intercepted him with the message that an angel had said the man of God should eat with him, the man of God did so. As a result of disobedience, the man of God died and was buried there. The prophet of the Lord told his own family that when he died, his body should be put in the same grave with the man of God, for he felt that grave would be left alone (see 1 Kings 13:4-32). And that is what happened when Josiah came—he emptied all of the other graves but left the grave of the man of God alone.

Although Alexander’s name is not mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, he had an experience similar to that of Cyrus. When Alexander the Great reached Jerusalem with his armies, the high priest, Jaddus, opened the city gates; came out in all of his regalia; and called attention to Daniel’s prophecy about the “king of Grecia.” As a result, Alexander did not destroy Jerusalem but entered peaceably and then left to go down to Egypt (Dan. 8:20,21).

One third of Scripture is history, and we cannot discard it. Another third of Scripture is moral doctrine—what is right and what is not right, and what our responsibilities are. The last third of Scripture is prophecy, which is *future* history.

Back to verse 9 of the Jeremiah account. “Their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.” In other words, God would prosper the destruction of Babylon by the enemy. In the natural application, Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian came from the *north* about 538 BC to destroy Babylon along with confederate nations. While diverting the waters of the Euphrates River, this foe ostensibly used arrows to fight against Babylon.

From the spiritual standpoint, the Lord will make use of the antireligious element to pull down spiritual Babylon. An element foreign to mystic Babylon will come in and destroy it. God will prosper the anarchy and the trouble to accomplish His purpose. In fact, that time period is called “the day of the LORD’S wrath” (Zeph. 1:18). Just as the Lord directed the sling stone of David to go through the chink in Goliath’s armor and sink into his forehead, so God will use an unconsecrated element and give them providential assistance in pulling down mighty mystic Babylon from its throne.

**Jer. 50:10 And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD.**

Chaldea was in Babylon, and the Chaldeans were the more radical element. In the antitype, foes from the north at the end of the age will be the radical element. Cyrus is a symbol of Christ, and “north” indicates divine judgment.

Jeremiah prophesied that in defeating the Chaldeans, the conquerors would be satisfied with the spoil and with destroying the enemy whom they hated. The wrath of the Medes would be appeased. The booty of natural Babylon was great, and the multitude of merchandise, gold, and wealth would become the property of the enemy. The same will be true of mystic Babylon.

**Jer. 50:11 Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of mine heritage, because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls;**

Jeremiah was speaking of the Babylonians, who got rich on “mine [God’s] heritage,” that is, on Israel from both a natural and a spiritual standpoint. Mystic Babylon has gotten fat and rich on the goods of this world.

A calf is the young and tender stage; a heifer, which is a cow that has not produced a calf, is like the intermediate (teenage) stage; and a bull is a mature male animal. Calves grow quickly into heifers, which develop to about the size of a mature animal, but heifers are not fully mature. They eat and eat grass and get fatter and fatter.

The heifers “bellow as bulls.” A bull is penned separately from the heifers, and it is used for breeding purposes. Despite the great size and power of a bull, it can be easily led by a nose ring. The bellow of a bull, a huge and mature animal, is loud and powerful.

**Jer. 50:12 Your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be ashamed: behold, the hindermost of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert.**

The Revised Standard Version reads, “Your mother shall be utterly shamed, and she who bore you shall be disgraced. Lo, she shall be the last of the nations, a wilderness dry and desert.” Literal Babylon was the “mother” back in Jeremiah’s day, and the Roman Catholic Church is the “mother” of mystic Babylon.

The nominal Church, Roman Catholicism, has been Satan’s instrument during the Gospel Age. As stated earlier, the pronouns referring to Babylon go back and forth between female and male. Here Babylon is likened to a mother. When mystic Babylon is disgraced in the future, many will desert her to try to avoid the dishonor, persecutions, and problems.

“The hindermost of the nations” means that Babylon, who was the foremost of the nations, will become the hindermost. The spiritual fulfillment is still future. Many people admire the pope as the greatest man alive today. He is considered an example of influence and leadership along international lines, but the question is, *What kind of influence and leadership?* Of course the pope and Papacy are the male standpoint, but from the religious or female standpoint, the Roman Catholic Church is considered the mother church. The ecumenical movement continues, and the mother church wants to join with the Protestants—oh, yes—but wants recognition as the leader. The Roman Catholic Church wants to welcome back the Protestants with open arms, and the Church of England is amenable to that approach, wanting to go back to “mom,” as it were. A strange psychology exists.

**Comment:** Jezebel’s own eunuchs threw her out the window. This type shows that some of Catholicism’s own people will see the light and help with the destruction.

**Reply:** Up until relatively recent times, some dreadful evils occurred in the nunneries and monasteries. Today we are not hearing such reports and testimonies. Vows are taken before God to support the institution, but afterwards some who have a tender conscience ask, “What have I gotten into?” Also, it takes time for an individual to grow and become aware of what is happening. Similarly, it takes time for a Christian to grow before he realizes the error that is around him. Consider the circumstance of a nun. If her conscience is awakened in later years, it is hard for her to leave because she has no profession, is unmarried, has shaved her head, etc. However, in the near future, when it is openly seen that the evil conditions and violations of principle are not the error of individual priests but that the *very institution itself* is the Antichrist, then the conscientious element that has taken vows to support the church will be shocked into action and will participate in the destruction of the false system. The point is that some inside the church, as well as some on the outside, will be instrumental in tearing down the system.

Martin Luther had difficult experiences as a monk and had to reason on whether he could break his vows to the Catholic Church. Fortunately, he took a correct stand.

**Comment:** Just as the Apostle Paul turned his zeal and energy in an opposite direction once his eyes were opened, so it will be with the eunuch class.

**Reply:** Yes, and that is where the Jehu picture is very informative (2 Kings 9:1–10:28). That type is probably the most detailed in Scripture about the fall of mystic Babylon. When Jehu on the outside calls to the eunuchs on the inside to throw Jezebel out the window, the eunuchs will respond to the opportunity and cooperate with the destruction. Only her skull, palms, and feet will remain. In another picture, just “the smoke of her burning” will be perpetuated (Rev. 18:9,18; 19:3). The Bible is such a wonderful book; it is pathetic how little understanding there is.

Babylon “shall be a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert.” Babylon has no future.

**Jer. 50:13** Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues.

Jeremiah prophesied that Babylon would become *wholly desolate without survivors*—a leveled city without inhabitants. Moreover, the city would not be rebuilt. The complete destruction in the antitype is shown by two pictures: (1) the casting alive of the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20) and (2) the smiting of the image (Dan. 2:34,35).

Retribution had to come upon literal Babylon. As Babylon had caused other nations to become “wholly desolate” and without inhabitants, so the same experience would befall her. The spiritual counterpart of retribution with mystic Babylon is obvious.

**Jer. 50:14** Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the LORD.

**Comment:** A discourse on the history of what happened in the captivity of Babylon mentioned that the city was taken from the inside out. We know that Cyrus and his army diverted the river Euphrates and entered the city on the riverbed, going under the iron bars or gates.

**Reply:** Yes. The besieging of the city from the outside was a diversionary tactic. Presumably Cyrus had the city under siege, but meanwhile he and his army were quietly preparing to divert the river into another channel. When ready, they diverted the river at nighttime. Thus the Babylonians were completely unaware of what was happening. However, even from the outside, while the city was under siege, the arrows were finding their mark, yet the inhabitants of Babylon felt secure behind their high, broad walls, thinking the enemy would never be able to scale them. As already stated, the siege was merely a distraction while the real work of digging a new channel for the river was going on. Bars extended down into the river, and the Babylonians never dreamed that the waters would dry up so that the enemy could just march in under the bars. In the final analysis, the bars meant nothing. The Bible is the best source of information on the fall of Babylon, for very little of the history has been recorded in books.

The continued use of the feminine pronouns “she” and “her” apply to Catholicism. As we proceed, masculine pronouns will be used, which have another connotation. The pronouns indicate that this prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah has a different intent than the prophecies in chapters 46-49 in regard to Edom, Egypt, Elam, Hazor, Damascus, and so forth. Those chapters were not as much of a type, whereas with chapters 50 and 51, the emphasis is on the *antitype*. As gruesome and meaningful as the type of Babylon was, the important part is the antitype. What did Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church do in the Inquisition? They tortured true

Christians, burned them at the stake, etc.

**Comment:** At Belshazzar's feast, Daniel reminded the king of the humiliating experiences his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, had had at the hand of the Lord and said, "Thou ... O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this" (Dan. 5:22). Similarly, the leaders of the Catholic Church have had the Bible in their hand and have known certain truths but have kept them hidden. The principle is the same; namely, they raised themselves up instead of humbling themselves.

**Comment:** In regard to the clause "She hath sinned against the LORD," God used King Nebuchadnezzar to punish Judah, but Babylon overextended itself with cruelty.

**Reply:** The divine judgment upon Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple were necessary, but King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed from another standpoint and manifested great cruelty. The situation became a very complex mix of not tampering with the free moral agency of the king, who acted with a vicious purpose. For instance, the Babylonian army killed babies by holding their heels and bashing their heads against stone walls. Of course God did not justify such barbaric behavior, but He allowed Nebuchadnezzar to come down and prosper because it was necessary for Jerusalem to be leveled and vacated. Nevertheless, retribution on Judah did not justify the cruelty.

**Jer. 50:15 Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.**

Those who had been victimized by Babylon were told to "shout against her round about." Babylon was like a prison house of the captives taken from the nations that were made desolate. The captives had been warned by Jeremiah to get out of the capital city, for it would be destroyed. Those who obeyed shouted as they witnessed the destruction from outside the city.

This verse is a reminder of Joshua and the walls of Jericho, which fell when the people shouted. The blowing of the trumpets in unison by the priests (picturing the feet members) will sound the keynote for the destruction of mystic Babylon. Although with literal Babylon, it took some time for the walls to come down, the capital became a completely deserted ghost city. In the type, the city was desolate for a long, long time. Of course in the antitype, the desolation will be forever.

"Her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down." With no mention of an earthquake, the falling of the walls is probably figurative. The point is that the walled city, which was a fortress, a shield, and a foundation to keep out the enemy, became a hollow shell with no one inside. The walls became meaningless.

**Q:** Weren't the walls at least 75 feet thick? Therefore, it would have taken time for them to come down.

**A:** Yes, they were approximately 330 feet high and 80 feet thick. The width was so great that two large chariots could pass each other on the top of the wall.

"For it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her." The retribution of Babylon was the vengeance of JEHOVAH. Again notice the pronouns "she" and "her." Of the Roman Catholic Church, mystic Babylon, Revelation 18:6 says, "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works:

in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.” What went out of her mouth as boasting will come back as ridicule and scorn.

The Babylonians had a system of irrigation that made the empire very prosperous, but after Babylon was destroyed, the desert took control. Over the centuries, many cities of the empire were covered over.

**Jer. 50:16 Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land.**

To understand the antitype more precisely, we must go back to the type. Usually the type is not considered in depth, but here is an example where such understanding helps.

The cutting off of the sower from Babylon and “him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest” refers to the workers, the laborers, who were the captives from other nations. The captives did the work in the fields, the sowing and the harvesting. The Babylonians, that is, the normal indigenous residents of Babylon, were privileged, and the captives did the servile and laborious work. When the captives left the city in obedience to Jeremiah’s message, the leadership and the Babylonians still in the city had a supply of stored food for an emergency. Similarly, and unbeknownst to most people, our government has not only gasoline and oil reserves but also food packed away in warehouses. Recently, for instance, 12 to 15 boats were on the Hudson River up near West Point just loaded with food, but now the boats are gone. Tons of grain—perhaps a million tons—were part of the cargo for future exigencies that might arise in time of war. Where that food is now the public does not know, but we can be sure it is stored somewhere else.

Babylon felt secure because its citizens had food stored up for an emergency, and the siege of Cyrus and his army was an emergency. Thus the Babylonians felt they could outlast Cyrus in the siege. Earlier Israel withstood a siege for a year and a half, and Babylon could easily withstand a siege of three or four years. Meanwhile, where would the army get its food for such an extended period of time? However, when the city of Babylon was gutted and the food was taken away, the Babylonians inside the city walls had nothing. And the captives on the outside, who were slave labor, were unemployed, so what would they do? The resulting situation made many of the captives want to return to their homeland—whether they were Jews or Moabites or Ammonites or of another nationality. Judah experienced more difficult conditions than the ten tribes of Israel because the latter were scattered in Assyria, Elam, and other areas. Therefore, when the Babylonian Empire fell and Cyrus issued his decree permitting the Jews to return to Israel, the vast majority of the ten tribes had deep roots in foreign lands and did not go back. Those of Judah reacted differently, however. It was as if they were trained to go back. The 50,000 who returned to Israel from Babylon were almost all from Judah, not the northern kingdom.

“For fear of the oppressing sword they [the captives] shall turn every one to his people [to where their roots were originally, that is, to Judah].” If we put ourselves in the place of those who obeyed Jeremiah and left the city of Babylon, we would see the city being destroyed and only a limited supply of food remaining. We would think, “It might be worth returning to the homeland.” And we would fear that the enemy who was destroying Babylon might subsequently turn on us. The situation called for a lot of decision making as to what to do. Jews who were rightly exercised saw the decree of Cyrus as a providence, and they (mostly from Judah) returned to Israel. “They shall flee every one to his own land.”

In the antitype, the call to come out of mystic Babylon began in 1878, early in the Harvest



period. Many obeyed and accepted present truth. Millions of *Volumes* were *sold*; they were not given away free. In fact, Bro. Russell advised selling the *Volumes* and not being too generous. When people pay for something, they are more apt to read it, whereas a gift is easily put away and ignored.

Those who obeyed the call to leave Babylon came out into present truth, a different type of arrangement. In the final analysis, two sets of people leave Babylon: (1) Those who respond to the invitation and obey the call come out on their *own initiative*. (2) The Great Company, however, will be driven or *pulled* out at the time of mystic Babylon's fall. Of that time Matthew 24:20 says, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day [that is, pray that your flight is not in the winter time of the antitypical Sabbath Day]."

Back in the type, there were two returns to Israel. When Cyrus issued the decree, Zerubbabel, Joshua (the high priest), Zechariah, and others returned to the homeland. In addition, another list is given of later returnees. The time gap between the two returns was not that great. The whole time period, from the decree of Cyrus allowing the Jews to go back to the homeland through the return with Ezra and then the return under Nehemiah, covered about 82 years. Reading the Bible helps us to see some of these distinctions. In fact, there is no history of this period except that which is in the Bible.

Those who left mystic Babylon in the early part of the Harvest period were richly rewarded. The subtleties of today make separation and attaining the reward of the high calling difficult. We are breathing the tobacco smoke of Christendom, as it were, and it is in our lungs and clothing. To separate now, spiritually speaking, is far more difficult than it was in the time of the Pastor, when many very zealous individuals went out as colporteurs selling *Volumes*—and they stayed out until all of the *Volumes* were sold! To go door to door today even for just tracting, we have to obtain permission from the town hall, so we are living in a harder time in some respects than even in the period of persecution. Decision making was very positive during the Dark and Middle Ages. Christians knew that they would be deprived of their homes, that there could be a knock on the door and they would be taken off to a dungeon. That distinction is no longer true. Today if we say we are a Christian, the reaction of others is, "So what? I am a Christian too." As a result, the Christians who are left are becoming more and more Great Company and not Little Flock. As John the Baptist said of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). At the time of mystic Babylon's actual fall, the consecrated still in the nominal systems will be pulled out, as shown by the two angels who pulled Lot, his daughters, and his wife out of Sodom at the last minute.

The Jeremiah account we are considering here is just a general picture showing that those who had been used of Babylon for her support were now on the outside viewing her demise. The Jews in that circumstance were beginning to wonder what to do, and their hearts were turned to go back to their own land. In the first return of Jews to the homeland with Zerubbabel, there was the fear of being waylaid and robbed en route. However, Ezra's courage and complete reliance on the Lord were outstanding. When the king offered to send centurions along to protect the returning Jews, Ezra was embarrassed to accept the help, and thus declined, because he had been bragging about the Lord. In this period of history, both Jeremiah and Ezra stand out.

**Jer. 50:17** Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones.

"Israel [Jews from both the northern and the southern kingdoms who were away from the homeland] is a scattered sheep; ... Nebuchadrezzar ... hath broken his [Israel's] bones." The

populace and the wealth of the ten tribes were more abundant, but the real backbone or skeletal framework of the nation was Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon. First, “the king of Assyria” (two Assyrian kings at two different times) took away the ten-tribe kingdom, but when the king of Babylon took away Judah, the two-tribe kingdom, the nation was broken and destroyed, flesh and bones. Most of the Jews were killed; only a pitifully small minority were taken captive.

**Jer. 50:18** Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria.

“The God of Israel” was the God of both the ten-tribe and the two-tribe kingdoms. God said, “I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria.” How did God punish the king of Assyria? He accomplished the punishment through the instrumentality of Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar. At one time, Babylon was more or less a satellite kingdom under Assyrian control, but the satellite became more powerful than the great Assyrian Empire by conquering it. Babylon became the head of gold on the image Daniel saw in a dream (Dan. 2:37,38). In other words, Assyria was a world empire before Babylon, and here in verse 18, God was saying, “As I punished the king of Assyria in the past, so now I will take care of the king of Babylon and his land.” A little more is written in secular history on Assyria than on Babylon.

**Jer. 50:19** And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead.

With Carmel being in northern Israel *west* of Jordan and with Bashan also being in northern Israel but *east* of Jordan, this verse shows a reuniting of Israel. In the days following the decree of Cyrus, there was a literal going back to the homeland with some restoration along these lines. However, the antitype, which applies to *natural* Israel, will be more meaningful. In a generalized application, the Great Company will come out of mystic Babylon at the very end of the age, but the going back to Israel in the type changes from a picture of nominal *spiritual* Christendom to nominal *fleshly* Israel. And so today we see a regathering back to natural Israel but only on the west side of Jordan. Just above, or north of, Carmel is the border with Lebanon with the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Therefore, this prophecy shows a still future regathering on *both* sides of the Jordan.

Normally, instead of saying “Bashan,” we say “Gilead.” And today with “mount Ephraim,” we think of the city of Nablus. In the Nablus area are the mount (Gerizim) of blessing and the mount (Ebal) of cursing (Deut. 11:26-29).

**Comment:** Here is another indication that the land east of Jordan will ultimately belong to Israel.

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

The real fulfillment of this verse is still future following Jacob’s Trouble.

**Comment:** The Revised Standard Version uses the word “remnant” at the end of this verse: “For I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.” In regard to the end time, this term applies to the Holy Remnant of Israel, whose iniquity will be pardoned.

**Reply:** Yes. The RSV takes a proper liberty in this case. God was saying, “I will pardon them [the Holy Remnant] whom I reserve.” The statement in Romans 11:26, “And so all Israel shall

be saved,” sounds as if there will be a mass conversion of the majority, but a number of other Scriptures show that only a small remnant will be brought through Jacob’s Trouble. However, that small remnant will be *wholly* converted. A time feature is involved, for certainly Israel’s iniquity has not yet been forgiven. When Gog and Magog go down against Israel, the nation will be purged. Only the names of those who are “written in the book” will live through the trouble (Isa. 4:3; Dan. 12:1). The others will deace one way or another—sword, famine, natural death, unnatural death, etc.—so that they are off the scene when the Kingdom is inaugurated.

**Comment:** The events listed here seem to be sequential.

**Reply:** Yes, there is a broad sequential picture. First comes the fall of the religious systems of Christendom, which will take a little time. Then comes the fall of civil power, and Jacob’s Trouble will follow. Viewed from above, this period of about three years, or a little longer, will be like a drop in the bucket—sudden, quick, all at once—but there is a time distinction, or time feature, with regard to the closing events of the Gospel Age.

**Comment:** The following is a related Scripture: “Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things” (Micah 7:14,15).

**Q:** Verse 19 reads as follows in the NIV: “But I will bring Israel back to his own pasture and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan; his appetite will be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and Gilead.” Does this verse refer back to Israel’s being a “scattered sheep” who desire grazing and feeding? Verse 6 says, “My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray.” Is there a general antitypical significance with nominal Christians being scattered sheep who do not have the Lord’s pasture because they are not feeding on His Word? Lions will come in and take them away, but in the Kingdom, they will come out of the grave and hear the Lord’s Word and be satisfied with the good food.

**A:** The peculiar thing is that Christendom with England, France, and the United States is the empire to the west, as contrasted with the Middle East and the Far East. Physical things happened to natural Israel, Babylon, Assyria, Nineveh, etc., which were all centered in the *middle belt*, in between the Western civilization and the Asiatic world. When the natural regathering takes place in Messiah’s Kingdom in the future, that which is ecclesiastical to the west and that which is in the middle belt will merge together so that the religious and the natural will all come from Jerusalem. The “word of the LORD” will go out from Jerusalem to all people (Isa. 2:3). The religious center will no longer be to the west but will be centralized in the middle belt. Not only is Jerusalem the center of three continents, but as the capital of the world, it will be the dominating center of the Kingdom in the next age.

There will be a natural regathering back to Israel of a class that the Lord has been *slowly* weaning and bringing to a completion. We call this class the “Holy Remnant.” The fall of mystic Babylon will have a sudden aspect, and then, once the ecclesiastical systems are out of the way, that which has been slowly developing will be accelerated.

**Jer. 50:21** Go up against the land of Merathaim, even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod: waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the LORD, and do according to all that I have commanded thee.

The enemy of Babylon—i.e., the Medes and confederate people out of the north (see verse 9)—was to “waste and utterly destroy” Babylon. Merathaim, meaning “rebels,” and Pekod, which

has the thought of “visitation,” were regions in Babylon. Therefore, the enemy coming down against Babylon was to destroy more than just the capital city; the *province* surrounding the city was to be destroyed as well. This command served as an instruction to the captives within the city not only to remove themselves from within the walls of Babylon but also to further remove themselves by returning to their homelands.

Merathaim and Pekod were other areas of Babylon that were marked for destruction. Presumably many of the Israelite captives occupied these areas. The warning was that not only the city of Babylon but also the whole area was to be laid waste and made desolate without inhabitant. During the centuries, the city was covered over with sand, and the area became a desert. Only in the last 50 or 75 years were the ruins unearthed, and Saddam Hussein wanted to restore Babylon to its former glory. Incidentally, we believe that earlier the three Hebrew children were over different parts of the province that contained Merathaim and Pekod, and of course Daniel was in the capital city.

**Q:** With not just the capital city but the entire area being destroyed, what is the antitype? Is the significance that not just the Vatican but every aspect of mystic Babylon will be destroyed?

**A:** When the church ecclesiastical ceases, there will be no religious representation anywhere. Babylon, the capital, is comparable to Rome in the antitype. The influence of Papacy as a religious government, plus the church ecclesiastical, will disappear forever. Never again will there be a religious deception. In the deception in the Little Season at the end of the Kingdom Age, Satan will win the approval and admiration of many people along another line.

**Jer. 50:22** A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction.

Notice, “a *sound* of battle is in the land.” In the future in the Kingdom when the Bible is reviewed for posterity, there will be sound effects (screams, buildings being smashed, etc.). The *actual* events have been preserved on film and will be replayed over and over again. Seeing the events will be startling to mankind and will keep the people informed. All of the media will be instructional and edifying. The upbuilding influence will counteract the evil of past ages. Just as in the present life, the people want diversion and relaxation, so they will have a similar desire in the Kingdom, and the replaying of the Bible will fill that desire. In that day, the title will probably be “The *Living Bible*.” Verse 22 does not mean much now, but in the future, it will be *very powerful*. Not only will the brutality of the Babylonians be seen and the hardness of the language of the Chaldeans be heard, but the retribution they received will also be on film.

**Jer. 50:23** How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!

The “hammer of the whole earth” was Babylon. The play on tense is interesting. Present, past, and future tenses are all mixed together as part of the enactment of the drama prophesied by Jeremiah *before it happened*, and in the future, mankind will see the enactment *as it actually did happen*. When the dramatic details are seen in the Kingdom, the people will marvel that the Bible was a best-seller in the Christian world yet ignored by all but a few individuals here and there. The details will also show how little we know at the present time. The main purpose of the Bible is the calling out of a Church class who are to be kings and priests in the next age. With the little information that is available now, the Holy Spirit does a cleansing, purifying, and upbuilding work in the lives of the consecrated. The revelation of details of truth in the next age will glorify God and humble mankind. The saints in glory will be joyful to see the accuracy and the fulfillment of the Word in all of its details.

**Q:** Is Papacy the antitypical “hammer”?

**A:** Yes. In the time of its great power, Papacy exercised ruthless prerogatives against kings and common people. Christianity was a veneer for cruel rulership on Papacy's part. Antitypical Babylon beat down its enemies like a hammer. In (and with) *great* power, it was cruel.

**Jer. 50:24** I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the LORD.

A snare is a trap. An animal walking in a forest may hit a branch that releases or triggers a device such as a noose which pulls the animal up into a tree. Belshazzar's feast is an account of revelry on the same night that Babylon was captured and its inhabitants were slaughtered (Daniel 5). During this great feast, King Belshazzar defiled the gold and silver Temple vessels of the Lord by drinking wine from them and ridiculing the God of Israel. The king and his lords were so confident in the high and broad walls of the city and in the food storage facility that they were having a feast and drinking wine on the very night the waters of the river Euphrates were diverted. Thus the unaware inhabitants of Babylon were trapped when Cyrus and his army marched into the city.

While preparations were going on and the channel was being dug to divert the waters, the army of the Medes used a diversionary tactic with archers presumably trying to overcome the city with their arrows. Meanwhile, the Babylonians were completely oblivious to the noise, the digging, and the preparations that took place over a period of time. When the moment came for the waters to be diverted, Babylon was caught in the "snare."

The suddenly diverted waters flooded and overwhelmed certain areas of Babylon. The Bible narrative contains statements to the effect that the land was an arid waste and also that it was flooded. The question naturally arises, How could the land be both dry and flooded? The city of Babylon and the land beyond, which had been irrigated and used to grow food, became dry, and formerly dry land was flooded by the Euphrates. Therefore, the warning to the Jews was not only to get out of the city but also to keep moving and not settle down outside the city.

**Jer. 50:25** The LORD hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this is the work of the Lord GOD of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans.

In the type, God used Cyrus and confederate peoples as His instrument or "weapons of his indignation" against Babylon. A nobody to start with from a very remote region, Cyrus became a leader who gathered forces as his military victories continued. He was so successful in capturing cities of Asia Minor such as Sardis that his army kept growing. In the antitype, Cyrus represents Jesus, and those "confederate" with Jesus are the Church, the Little Flock.

Jehovah is called "the Lord GOD of hosts." Just as all the heavenly bodies in the astronomical realm—the heavenly "hosts"—are under His perfect control at all times, so here, ingeniously and without tampering with free moral agency, Cyrus and the powers associated with him were engineered by the Lord. For instance, if God wanted an army to go in a certain direction, He could overrule the weather or environmental conditions. The same principle was manifested when He hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 7:13). God did not interfere with Pharaoh's free moral agency but knew how Pharaoh would react under certain conditions. God overruled so that the individual with the "right" temperament for the pouring of the ten plagues would get on the throne of Egypt at a particular time. Any other claimants to the throne were removed from the picture in one way or another.

And so in Cyrus and the confederate forces, the Lord had human "weapons" for His wrath. The Pastor used this principle in explaining what he called the "Lord's Great Army" (Joel 2:11).

That army of unconsecrated individuals will fulfill His will in the near future. Even Satan fulfills God's will in the sense of being the executioner. God does not interfere with the free moral agency of Satan, for Satan has hardened his own character in evil. Interestingly, Shakespeare seemed to sense that God has that supreme intellect and ability.

**Jer. 50:26** Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left.

Some of the forces with Cyrus came from the Ararat area, a remote region, an "utmost border" from the north (Jer. 51:27). "Open her storehouses" meant that the enemy would take food from Babylon and exploit the goods of the land. The Babylonians thought the food storehouses were for their own preservation, but the enemy took the food.

What is the thought of "cast her up as heaps"?

**Comment:** The NIV reads, "Break open her granaries; pile her up like heaps of grain."

"Destroy her utterly" meant that the land would be laid waste, not only of inhabitants but also of food and everything of value. Idols and things considered to be of no use were put into the refuse pile. Cyrus and his army took what they wanted for a spoil, and the rest was heaped together and burned.

**Comment:** A note in the NIV says the Hebrew word for "destroy utterly" in verses 21 and 26 is a special word used specifically in connection with God: "The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the LORD, often by totally destroying them." Young's *Analytical Concordance* says the word means "to devote to God or destruction."

**Reply:** In a couple of instances in the Hebrew, the *same* word that is a most holy and a most reverential word can also be a curse, an anathema. The *context* determines the meaning. The "devoted" thing can be either an accursed thing or an offering that one gives properly and acceptably to the Lord.

**Comment:** That term was used with Achan after the fall of Jericho when everything was supposed to be destroyed. Achan's sin consisted of taking some of the goods into his tent as personal booty (Josh. 7:1).

**Jer. 50:27** Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter: woe unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation.

**Jer. 50:28** The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple.

Although the average Christian can absorb very little, what makes Jeremiah 50 and 51 of interest is that there is so much detail about Babylon. It is as though the account is saying, "Much, much more will be told about Babylon in the future than we can get from reading the narrative. All of the details will be explained at a future date with complete accuracy. Everything will be made plain."

"Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter." The Babylonians were marked for destruction, and so much so that they were being corralled to go to destruction. Cattle that are to be slaughtered are corralled into a kind of "sluiceway" and/or forced through a little gate and then hit on the head with a sledgehammer. The illustration was figuratively showing that not one of the Babylonians would escape. How very dramatic!

**Q:** Do the “bullocks” have a relationship to the hierarchy in Papacy?

**A:** Although “bullock” can mean an adult animal, the original Hebrew word has to be checked to see what stage of the animal is being referred to. There is a difference between a mature bull, one of medium age, and a tender young one. Sometimes “bullock” means a very young animal, and in other places, it means a more mature animal.

The account here is saying that just as animals are corralled and marked for slaughter, so every Babylonian was to be wiped off the face of the earth. In fact, after the destruction of Babylon, there was no more Babylon—just ruins.

**Comment:** The reason for the prior question about the bullocks is that there seems to be a differentiation in verses 27 and 28. All of the bullocks are slain, yet there are escapees.

**Reply:** When Jerusalem was laid waste, only a few hundred Jews out of a couple million survived. And with the destruction of Babylon, the ones who escaped were Jews. The Jews in Babylon were given information in advance about the coming destruction. To a prince who was going on a mission to Babylon with other notables on other business, Jeremiah gave a scroll containing these curses and told him to read it publicly. Surely the prince did not open the scroll and read it before the king of Babylon. No, the scroll was read to benefit the Jews in captivity, warning them to get out of the city before it was too late. In other words, “This city is marked for *utter* destruction. The best thing is not only to get out of the city but also to get out of the land. Go back to your homeland.” The Jews did flee the capital city. Some of them obeyed further and returned to Israel when Cyrus issued the decree, and others went to other lands. Daniel knew about this prophecy and warning, for he later quoted Jeremiah. Likewise at the First Advent, Jesus warned about the trouble coming on Jerusalem and said to get out of the city.

“The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion”; that is, when the Jews got back to the homeland, they were to tell of their experiences in Babylon—almost like a testimony meeting. The returned exiles had much to share not only about the families who had been separated but also about the destruction of Babylon. They were to declare how *accurately* Jeremiah had prophesied and how everything he had said as the word of the Lord was fulfilled. The multitude of testimonies would be awesome, confirming that the word of the Lord is like silver purified seven times (Psa. 12:6).

What “vengeance of his [God’s] temple” were the returned Jews to declare in Zion? Because the Babylonians destroyed God’s holy Temple in Jerusalem in 606 BC, retribution came in 536 BC when the temples of the gods Bel and Merodach were destroyed by the Medes (Jer. 50:2). The 90-foot-high statue on the Plain of Dura was of the god Bel (Dan. 3:1). Therefore, what the Babylonians did to the Lord’s holy Temple, the Lord did to their holy(?) temples. “The vengeance of the LORD our God” came upon Babylon and upon their religious idols.

**Q:** If “the voice of them” in verse 28 refers to the Jews (God’s people) who returned to Israel from Babylon, then in the antitype, would the pronoun “them” refer to just the Great Company or to the Great Company and the Little Flock?

**A:** In the type, the Lord forewarned the Jews then living to get out of Babylon lest they die because the city was doomed for destruction. When the Jews did remove themselves from the capital city, they were further informed to separate even more and return to the homeland. Those Jews who did go back to Israel after the destruction of Babylon testified to each other (and to their later progeny) the details of their deliverance. Thus, just as with the Passover, a

record was historically preserved of what had happened. For the spiritual application, we are brought down to the closing scenes of antitypical Babylon, to the time of its destruction. We will now consider verse 28 from that standpoint.

“The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple.” Verse 28 has not been fulfilled from an antitypical standpoint. The time period in which this “voice,” or message, will be delivered by the escapees pertains to the fall of symbolic or mystic Babylon (Christendom, Papacy, Catholicism). At that time, a message will be declared in “Zion,” that is, in *natural Israel*.

**Comment:** The fleeing and escaping are reminiscent of Lot, who was pulled out of Sodom at the last minute. The second part of verse 28 pertains to the message “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,” which the Great Company will give to natural Israel *after* the Little Flock is off the scene (Isa. 40:1).

**Reply:** That is basically what the verse is saying.

**Q:** Won't the Little Flock declare in Zion “the vengeance of his [God's] temple,” as stated in Revelation 18:20,24? That text reads, “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her [mystic Babylon].... And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” Wouldn't God's “temple” be the true Church?

**A:** That is the usual explanation, but it is not correct because the Church in glory, the saints, who will already have been raised at this point, will be fully aware of what is happening down here on earth and will not need enlightenment. All of the Very Elect class must be complete and glorified *before* the actual fall of Babylon. Therefore, those comprising the Little Flock will not have to instruct one another in heaven. Of course after the Kingdom is established, they will be responsible for giving instruction down here, but that is a different scenario.

After Babylon falls but before the Kingdom is established, another class down here will declare in Zion “the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple.” In the fall of Christendom, the collapse of the civil powers will not immediately follow the fall of the nominal religious systems. And Jacob's Trouble will not be over at this time. Therefore, the Great Company will declare to natural Israel a message of the *imminence* of Gog and Magog's coming down from the north and what the final result will be. They will tell the Jews not to fear. The Holy Remnant will be given a comforting message to the effect that those Jews who are right with God—those whose consecration is real—will witness a miraculous destruction of the enemy. The intent of the enemy from the north will be to wipe out Israel, but the outcome will be the opposite. The enemy will be utterly destroyed except for a small remnant.

We will consider further the phrase “the vengeance of his [God's] temple.” At present, the Temple Mount is occupied by an alien power, the Arabs. Although the Israelis have not legally ceded the Temple Mount to the Arabs, they wink the eye for the sake of peace and to avoid a holy war, a jihad. Not only has Israel agreed not to violate the Al-Aksa mosque and the Arab services, but also Orthodox rabbis do not want their membership to go on the Temple Mount at all until Messiah comes. Tourists can visit the Temple Mount only at certain hours. The point of these stipulations is to compromise with and to pacify the Arab element, whereas it is *God's* holy mount, the mount on which *His Temple* will be built. Al-Aksa and Dome of the Rock are two alien buildings that will be removed from the mount in God's due time. In the future when God delivers the Holy Remnant, He will also deliver (1) Jerusalem and (2) the Temple Mount.

**Comment:** “*Flee and escape*” are key words, for they imply *urgent* circumstances yet future, as



opposed to the instruction to “Come out of her, my people,” which has been going on since 1878 under generally calmer conditions (Rev. 18:4).

**Reply:** Yes, the spiritual call to come out of Babylon, which is still going on, is an *invitation*, whereas the Great Company class will be *pulled or yanked out* after the Little Flock is complete and off the scene.

The fact that the Great Company will give a message to natural Israel indicates they will have more light than at present. An interesting article or talk was given in detail some time ago on a secondary application for Benjamin. In regard to the primary application, when the brothers took Benjamin to Egypt, Joseph (picturing Christ) laid before Benjamin a fivefold portion, which represents the reward the Church will get. However, there followed an incident with Joseph’s divining cup. (Instead of hearing a voice in the inner ear like many of the prophets, Joseph had a divining cup of prophecy through which he could visually see future events. In other words, Joseph was instructed by God through the divining cup.) Joseph had this cup intentionally placed in the knapsack of Benjamin. Then Joseph told his steward to pursue the brothers and search for the missing cup, which of course was found in Benjamin’s possession. When we get to this *revelment* stage in the antitype, the account will be turning from the enlightened Little Flock understanding and merging into the Great Company understanding. As the Pastor showed, the Great Company will be utilized to give a message after the Little Flock is gone.

The Great Company is to give a message to Israel when the nation is dwelling with unwallled villages during the false peace period prior to Jacob’s Trouble (Ezek. 38:11). At that time still future, when the Little Flock is complete and after Babylon has fallen, the responsibility of enlightened Christians who remain in the flesh will be to give a message to Israel (“Zion”). These consecrated ones, who are dearly loved by the Father because they accepted Christ in the present age and committed their life to serve God, will become the favored class after they wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb in the great tribulation (Rev. 7:14).

**Jer. 50:29** Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel.

**Comment:** This verse sounds like Jehu’s rounding up all the servants of Baal and not letting one escape.

**Reply:** Yes, and before that event, as shown in 2 Kings 9 and 10, Jehu killed King Jehoram (Papacy), King Ahaziah (Protestantism), Jezebel, the 70 sons of Ahab, and the brothers of Ahaziah, and then came the Jehonadab stage. The time sequence fits beautifully, including Jehu’s pulling Jehonadab into the chariot. Jehonadab was a Rechabite, and the Rechabites were a consecrated, devoted, and faithful element. Jehonadab was beside Jehu when the last phase of slaying occurred with regard to Christendom in the antitype. Here Jehonadab *was pulled* into the chariot, and in another picture, Lot *was pulled* out of Sodom, which was a radical change. To a certain extent, the Great Company class will lead a charmed life in the fall of Babylon, for they will not perish but will be delivered. Earlier the target of the enemy will be the Little Flock class. Similarly at the First Advent, the target was Jesus. The religious leaders thought that if they could still the voice of Jesus Christ, the entire movement would cease.

In verse 29, the “Holy One of Israel” is Jehovah. In the type, the “archers,” who were the Medes, the enemy of Babylon, received endorsement and encouragement from the Jews who had fled from the city of Babylon. None of the inhabitants were to escape.

“Recompense *her* according to *her* work; according to all that *she* hath done, do unto *her*: for *she* hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel.” The feminine pronouns show that the antitype applies to Catholicism. The type pertained to the Medes.

**Jer. 50:30** Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD.

The prophecy was that “her young men” would fall in the streets and “her men of war” would be cut off. The destruction of literal Babylon was very sudden, and so it will be in the antitype. Babylon’s defenders will wilt and lack stamina because their hearts will not be in the work. Some of Babylon’s staunchest supporters will desert, and every man will look out for himself. Many will be literally killed, and others will deny the Catholic faith. This cutting off is the burning of the tares.

There was a time when Papacy (the man) died (being “wounded to death”—Rev. 13:3), but the Catholic Church (the woman) lived on. But if the woman dies, the man will have to die too.

**Jer. 50:31** Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord GOD of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee.

In the type, the “most proud” Babylonians made boastful and haughty declarations, but they would fall. In the antitype, Catholicism has boasted and said in her heart, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow” (Rev. 18:7).

**Jer. 50:32** And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

Notice the change to masculine pronouns. Incidental to the fall of mystic Babylon, many other things will happen, of which this is a detail. In the type, Babylon would be not only laid waste but also left without any inhabitants or survivors. In the picture of the smiting of the image, each of the first three universal empires continued on in another form after it lost world dominance, but the fourth universal empire will lose its entity and become truly extinct.

“I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.” The destruction came first upon Babylon, the capital city (Papacy in antitype); then upon the outlying suburbs; and finally upon the empire.

**Q:** In antitype, is the fulfillment of the destruction and the “fire ... round about” to be carried out by the Lord’s Great Army?

**A:** Yes, although the real fulfillment of the Lord’s Great Army will be in Jerusalem. However, there will be precursor formulating factors.

**Jer. 50:33** Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go.

**Jer. 50:34** Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name: he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.

Evidently, many of the Jews wished to return to the homeland, but they could not because they were in bondage to the Babylonians. In fact, the Lord had told them prior to 606 BC,

“When you go to Babylon, you will be there for 70 years. Build houses and do not think of coming back until the 70 years expire.” Even after the destruction of Babylon, two years elapsed before Cyrus issued the decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland. Those who had businesses in the city of Babylon lost everything when they fled to the suburbs, and there they continued to be detained for an additional two years. The waiting period increased their desire to go back to Israel.

History shows that a victorious king often gave amnesty to the prisoners, and that is what Cyrus did. Verses 33 and 34 refer to the two-year period between the destruction of the city of Babylon and the decree of Cyrus on behalf of the Jews.

**Jer. 50:35** A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men.

**Jer. 50:36** A sword is upon the liars; and they shall dote: a sword is upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed.

Chaldea refers to the territory, the province, whereas Babylon was the capital. All of the inhabitants were affected: princes, wise men, and inhabitants. The “sword” indicates death, that is, more than just trouble and violence.

**Jer. 50:37** A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.

In the type, those who had horses and chariots had money, authority, and rank and hence were powerful and influential. Everything would cease: individuals, works, mechanics of operation, and so forth. In the antitype, “horses” are doctrines. The entire nominal religious system of Christendom will fall—doctrines, relics, scapulas, clerical robes, titles, etc. Again the feminine pronoun “her” pertains to ecclesiasticism.

“A sword is ... upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women.” Who are the antitypical “mingled people”? From one standpoint, they are the various denominations—the daughter systems whose views are nominally Protestant, even though they have some differing doctrines. The supporters are nominal Christians, or tares.

**Q:** In a former study, the “mingled people” were explained as the consecrated and the unconsecrated. Of course the unconsecrated would be tares, but would the “consecrated” be those who are unfaithful to their consecrations and thus go into Second Death?

**A:** Yes, the Judas class, as well as those whose conduct does not match their profession of consecration, will not get life. And those who do not come out of Babylon will suffer “plagues.” There are two types of plagues: the seven plagues and the three plagues (Rev. 16:1-12,17; 18:8). The three plagues (death, mourning, and famine) pertain to the destruction of the harlot.

As we get into the end time, a lot of soul searching will take place to know just where we stand with God. Taking spiritual inventory and reviewing past conduct will become more meaningful at that time. As we see judgment coming on others, we will ask, “Is judgment coming on me?” In the time setting of verse 37, the Little Flock will be complete. Therefore, the Judas class, in the more particular sense, will not be on the scene here, but those who, *in principle*, are of that class try to have one foot in heaven and one foot on the earth. If the foot on the earth is not pulled up quickly, the individual will not get life. The consecrated ones who respond properly and make the right decision at that time will come out of the great tribulation, washing their

robes in repentance and making them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). They will get life, and life is a real treasure. Since we are nine-tenths dead—and perhaps more—we cannot at present appreciate what real life is and its value. Many for a little sop here on earth will forfeit their eternal destiny. Just for a meal, Esau gave his inheritance to Jacob. We must get rid of the compromises and cut off the tendrils.

The “mingled people” became “as women”; that is, they were panic-stricken in the type. In antitype, fear will also be a factor.

“A sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.” In the type, the enemy looted the treasures of Babylon. The antitype is similar. Even the Vatican will be ransacked.

**Jer. 50:38** A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.

With the literal picture, Cyrus diverted the waters of the river Euphrates from Babylon, thus stopping her commerce, the lifeblood of the city. Evidence from other Scriptures verifies that there is an antitypical fulfillment, which we will now consider.

The “waters” are the people, nations, and tongues and their support, especially financial. Revelation 17:15 gives the definition: “The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” Notice the tense in the first part of verse 38: “A drought *is* upon her waters; and they *shall be* dried up.” The antitypical waters have not dried up yet. However, there are *initial stages* in the drying-up process.

The reason for the drying up is that Babylon “is the land of graven images.” The image on the Plain of Dura was famous in the type. In addition, there were other statues, large and small, in the province and throughout the empire of Babylon. The word “graven” means that the images were made by human hands. Under the Law, even the steps to an altar had to be natural whole stones, unhewn by human hands. In the days of Solomon, the ordinance was amended. Earlier the Prophet Jeremiah used sarcasm about the dumb idols that could not talk or walk, yet they were worshipped. “For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good” (Jer. 10:3-5). The antitype of hewn or manufactured steps to an altar would be catechisms, litanies, printed (not spontaneous) prayers, etc. God wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

**Q:** In the past, Babylon was a golden cup in the hand of the Lord to bring truth. Does the drying up mean that when Babylon falls, the voice of the Lord will no longer be heard in her (Rev. 18:23)?

**A:** That is part of the explanation.

“They are mad upon their idols.” The people treated their idols as if they were living beings. They knelt and prayed to dumb idols that could not speak. These actions of the people were a form of insanity.

**Comment:** In Athens, Paul said, “I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious [that is, too religious or overreligious],” for the people even had an idol with the inscription “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” (Acts 17:22,23).

**Comment:** With the Roman Catholic faith in certain countries, the people madly pin money on statues of the Virgin Mary on All Saints' Day. The people are spiritually drunk, unbalanced, and irrational.

**Reply:** People today travel to a place in Yugoslavia, where they wait for hours and hours for a vision of the Virgin Mary.

**Comment:** In the contest with the false prophets of Baal, Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud: for he [Baal] is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked" (1 Kings 18:27).

**Reply:** Yes, Elijah was saying sarcastically, "Raise your voice, for Baal is not hearing you."

**Jer. 50:39** Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.

In other words, Babylon would be no more inhabited by humans, and wild beasts would dwell there. The word "therefore" indicates the effect of the drought and the drying up of the waters.

**Comment:** Instead of having graven images of animals, the Roman Catholic Church has graven images of deceased human beings who are supposed to be saints. It is rather humorous to think that in many cases, statues are made without knowing what the person looked like.

**Reply:** The Scriptures do not prohibit the making of a statue, but man must not bow down to the statue. After all, God required animals to be made in connection with the Temple of Solomon. For instance, 12 oxen supported the large laver, and graven animals were on the walls. Therefore, it was the worshipping of the images or statues *as a personality* that was so offensive. Certainly the statue on top of City Hall in New York City of a blindfolded woman holding a scale to illustrate justice is permissible, but that statue is not worshipped. Kneeling before and praying to a statue is strictly forbidden. Orthodox Jewry is a little unbalanced on this subject, for they forget that two conditions constitute the prohibition: (1) making the statue and (2) praying to it.

**Comment:** The sin is in worshipping what is created by human hands rather than the Creator.

"It [Babylon] shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." The Hebrew *olam*, translated "for ever," can mean just a long period of time and does not necessarily mean for eternity. For thousands of years, for a long time, "from generation to generation," Babylon was a desolate waste. "For ever" is to be thought of in a modified sense. The next verse is helpful too.

**Jer. 50:40** As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

Where are Sodom and Gomorrah today? Their ruins are buried under the Dead Sea. When Abraham generously gave Lot a choice, Lot chose Sodom and Gomorrah as a residence because the land was so fertile. On the surface, it appeared that Abraham got the bad end of the deal, but that was not actually the case. Prior to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, the waters of the sea had an exit and were not dead. Verse 40 does not preclude a change in that land area in the future, for the waters of the Dead Sea will be freshened in the north (Ezek. 47:8-11). The waters will be revived with moderation, and there will again be an exit. Fish comparable to those in the Mediterranean Sea will swim in the Dead Sea.

For thousands of years, Babylon has been a waste, a dry and barren desert, because the waters of the Euphrates were diverted by Cyrus into new channels. However, in the future, water may again flow there, since the Hebrew *olam* (“for ever”) is not necessarily for perpetuity.

**Comment:** Would the spiritual application of desolation mean forever in the sense of eternity?

**Reply:** Yes, the spiritual application is a different picture. Never again will Papacy exist. Once the beast, the harlot, and the false prophet are destroyed, never again will there be a religious deception. Also, the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was sodomy, among other things, and that sin will cease for ever and ever.

Whenever God speaks, there is a cadence. Sometimes we can see it, and sometimes we cannot because of our limitations in understanding. We can consider a little about the way God speaks. In Jeremiah 49:19, in talking to Edom, God said, “Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?” The same words are used in the next chapter (Jer. 50:44). In chapter 49, the “habitation of the strong” was Edom, but in chapter 50, it was the well-fortified city of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was able to capture the seemingly impregnable Edom, which was up on a mountain crag. His skill and ingenuity are not recorded in secular history, but he must have been brilliant. The clause “I will suddenly make *him* [singular] run away from her” reads in the fiftieth chapter, “I will make *them* [plural] suddenly run away from her.” The rest of the verse is duplicated in chapter 50.

And there are other interesting points, for instance, the terms “the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple” (Jer. 50:28). These words (and the cadence) are repeated in the next chapter: “the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple” (Jer. 51:11). When we read the Bible many times, God’s cadence stands out. But to devote a lot of study to cadence, which is mathematics, is not profitable spiritually. However, chronology, which is a different matter, is important because it is the baseline upon which all prophecies are hinged.

Another point to be noticed is the content of the message. In the various accounts in Scripture, three primary pictures are equated to nominal Christendom: (1) Edom, (2) Babylon, and (3) Sodom and Gomorrah. All students of the Bible in nominal Christendom realize we are in the end time and they use Scriptures, but they do not use these three as pictures of nominal Christendom. It helps, first, to zero in on the literal events and then, second, to draw spiritual lessons. A characteristic of Jesus was to use the words “Verily, verily.” The Apostle Paul repeated certain phrases that identify the words as his. The words and/or phrases are a part of them just as the language here is a part of God. The Heavenly Father speaks in a certain recognizable way—but to a limited degree because of the greatness of His thinking. The principle with God is, “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:9).

**Jer. 50:41** Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

**Jer. 50:42** They shall hold the bow and the lance: they are cruel, and will not show mercy: their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array, like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon.

**Jer. 50:43** The king of Babylon [Belshazzar] hath heard the report of them [the Medes and Cyrus] , and his hands waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in

**travail.**

Verses 41-43 are connected. News reached Babylon that a potential enemy, Cyrus the Great, intended to come down from the north and conquer Babylon. Although Cyrus had only a limited number of men in his army, his successes had been very great, for example, his conquest of Sardis, a place that had been considered impregnable. Now Cyrus was coming southward, and when ominous reports reached Belshazzar, the king was frightened in regard to the Babylonian Empire. Belshazzar felt secure as far as the capital city of Babylon was concerned, but if he remained in the city withstanding a siege for a couple of years, he could not defend his empire.

The picture is complex. At the time of the feast, King Belshazzar was overconfident and drunk and was making sport of the gold and silver Temple vessels, but prior to the feast, he had great fear (Daniel 5). Stated another way, at first Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, was fearful of the impending trouble, but then he was bolstered with a false sense of security through wine, etc., at the feast.

“Behold, a people shall come from the north.” North of Babylon were Russia and Eastern Turkey. After the king of Babylon heard the report that Cyrus was coming down, there was a delay, perhaps because of the merger, through marriage, that was planned by the Medes and the Persians. Rather than be enemies, the political decision was to join forces.

The Bible describes the ominous threat from the north as riding “upon horses, every one put in array, like a man to the battle.” It was a big force, but the Hebrew indicates those comprising the force were knit together as one. This *unified* force marching down from the north against “the daughter of Babylon” was a powerful enemy. In antitype, nominal Christendom will see problems coming. Already leaders of the Religious Right are concerned about the deterioration of morals in the United States, about immigrants who are coming in and outnumbering the local inhabitants, about ongoing racial problems, and so forth. They want to stop these problems, but more time is needed before they can act. Those of the Religious Right are correct in opposing women becoming religious leaders and the ordination of homosexuals, but they are wrong not to look to *God’s Kingdom* as the remedy. Because they are doing what they think is right, they will be very unreasonable in the future. They will be thoroughly convinced that it is God’s will for them to intervene, but actually God is showing that these are symptoms of Christendom’s decadence.

“They shall hold the bow and the lance: they are cruel, and will not show mercy.” The bow and the lance were characteristics of the Medes.

**Q:** In antitype, who are the people that “shall come from the north”?

**A:** As a precursor or initial phase, the Lord’s Great Army will come down from the north into Europe, even though that term applies specifically and dramatically to their subsequent attack on Israel. The second chapter of Joel describes how in the anarchy coming on Christendom, the Lord’s Great Army will go in windows and doors. The land before them will be like the Garden of Eden, but when they march through, they will leave behind burning, smoking ruins. At that time, the Lord’s slain will be upon the mountains all over the world (Isa. 34:1-3). However, Israel will be the focal point, the center stage, in the climax of the trouble. The prophecy with regard to Israel is definitive.

The Lord’s Great Army will first go to Rome and sack the Vatican. Then hooks will be put in the nose to turn Gog back from the destroying work in Europe and cause Gog to go down to Israel (Ezek. 38:4). The main picture of Gog is the setting in Jacob’s Trouble. As Gog marches

down to Israel, others will join as one unified force.

**Q:** In verse 41, what are the “coasts” of the earth?

**A:** The NIV has “ends” of the earth. The “coasts” would be the outer peripheral areas. When Cyrus went up into Ararat and conquered the inhabitants, those people admired him and many followed under his leadership. What was a little well-knit organized army under the control of Cyrus grew in numbers through admiration and also for survival.

In antitype, when the Lord’s Great Army comes from the “coasts” of the earth, no mercy will be shown in the animosity against those of nominal Christendom, many of whom are well intentioned but not properly instructed in God’s Word. The destruction of the religious systems will be *complete and permanent*.

**Q:** Is the thought that the people who come from the north will start from a certain area, but eventually many others will join in?

**A:** Yes, the Lord’s Great Army will come down as one unified force. Diversity usually means problems but not in this case. There is a basic sadistic tendency in human nature that, if catered to, results in great cruelty.

**Jer. 50:44** Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?

“He shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan.” The Jordan River is in Israel. Whenever the Jordan flooded and overflowed its banks, the lions dwelling in the forests and thickets near the river left their dens, went out into the civilized area of Israel, and wreaked havoc in their search for food. They preyed on cows, sheep, and sometimes even humans. The lions appeared suddenly from their habitat because the Jordan River flooded rapidly after a torrential rain up in Mount Hermon. Likewise, the fall of Babylon would be sudden with an element of surprise. The army of Cyrus was described as a lion coming out of nowhere, out of the north.

In antitype, the downfall of mystic Babylon will be sudden, and the element of surprise will be involved—just as in the type. The city of Babylon was busy with commerce and traffic while Cyrus was building up his army. By the time the people of Babylon heard about Cyrus and his army, they were a real threat to the Babylonian Empire.

“Behold, he [Cyrus] shall come up [*suddenly*] like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them *suddenly* run away from her.” When an enemy people “roar” with a *unified* voice, it has a weakening effect upon the victim. The roar indicates *unison and unanimity* of feeling. Mob hysteria is frightening to behold. This great unified force would come in battle array as one man and one lion—it would be like *one* body coming down.

The Lord introduced *His* thinking in the middle of verse 44. “I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd [or prophet] that will stand before me?” Why was this seemingly incongruous thought inserted in the account? The reason is that God was foretelling what would occur. As a certainty, God’s Word does not return to Him void (Isa. 55:11). His prediction would be fulfilled, and what “shepherd” or prophet would contradict or countermand what God was saying? In other words, no matter how unified and strong



Babylon was, when Cyrus and the Medes came down, the picture would change entirely. “Who will appoint me the time?” indicates God has a time schedule. Our problem is in understanding that schedule, although we should try. God does not discourage the study of prophecy. We may know the year but not the “day” or the “hour” (Matt. 24:36).

God’s prophecies are steadfast and will surely happen. Christ’s Kingdom will displace the present governments. We pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Even though that prayer will not be fulfilled until the end of the Kingdom Age, the spirit of the prayer is entirely proper both now and throughout the Kingdom. The start of the Kingdom will be the precursor of bringing mankind into harmony with God so that they will be able to enter His arrangement and dwell with the everlasting fire, having clean hands, etc. (Isa. 33:14). A *process* of development is needed, and God has mercifully given the Kingdom Age for mankind to become acclimated to this future condition. If man were introduced too quickly to the perfection of the Kingdom, he would perish. Even the Ancient Worthies will be given time, for although their hearts were right, they have a lot to learn. The Kingdom will be merciful not only for the human race in general but also for the Ancient Worthies, who will come forth physically and mentally perfect. Their faith has been thoroughly tested, but they need education and experience before they get their final reward.

**Jer. 50:45** Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Babylon; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them.

“Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Babylon.” Jeremiah delivered this prophecy to Seraiah, who, when he got to Babylon, was to get up on the city gate, wall, or other prominent place and proclaim the message (of this very chapter) to the people. By nature, Seraiah was very meek and quiet, but he was told to deliver the message (Jer. 51:59). When he began his speech, the Holy Spirit took over and assisted him, so that he spoke loudly, forcibly, and with strength. When finished, he publicly cast the scroll into the Euphrates. And where was this river? It went right through the center of the city. How convenient! Seraiah did not have to exit the city and go down to the riverbank to throw the message into the water. He simply rolled up the scroll; cried out, “Thus with violence shall Babylon fall”; and then threw the scroll down from the parapet into the water below. Indeed he cast the scroll into the very river that was dried up later. How dramatic!

**Q:** Hadn’t Cyrus already entered Babylon at this point in time?

**A:** No. We should keep in mind that this fiftieth chapter was a *prophecy* of threats and warnings of *future* portent. One third of the Bible is history, one third is prophecy, and one third pertains to character development. All three are needed. The Lord has His way of informing His people, and He has promised to guide them. “The meek [those who are teachable] will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psa. 25:9). How we react to instruction and providence—whether we take the right path—is the question. When we take a wrong path, we should back up and start over again. The overall leading of the Lord will guide His people.

“Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them.”

**Comment:** The NIV reads, “The *young* of the flock will be *dragged away*; he will completely destroy their pasture because of them.” The RSV has, “Surely the *little ones* of their flock shall be dragged away.”

**Reply:** These translations give the proper thought, for the reference is to the Great Company

class. The Little Flock, who will be off the scene *before* Babylon falls, will be instrumental in the fall of Babylon from beyond the veil. We are reminded of Lot, who was dragged out of Sodom. In both type and antitype, those who refuse to leave Babylon perish. True Christians who do not respond properly and leave mystic Babylon at this future critical time will suffer her plague of death, extinction. There will be no more popes, cardinals, or priests in the system.

At one time, Russia was an intellectual superpower, but what happened? Over the years, the Jews have been migrating from Russia. There has been a slow draining of the Jewish intelligentsia and vitality from that country. Basically, the Russian people are descendants of Genghis Khan and thus are a very brutal, no-nonsense people. Stalin spared the top-notch medical doctors, who were Jews, so that they could take care of the ruling elite. In fact, Lenin and Trotsky were Jews.

**Comment:** The Inquisition gives us a sense of the brutality of Papacy, whereas modern history makes it seem as if Papacy has undergone a transformation or reformation for the better. Believing that prophecy will be fulfilled and that Papacy will revert back to persecuting tactics, we can see how those who do not eventually isolate themselves from that system will be fully culpable. Papacy's edicts and actions will be of the same character as in the Dark Ages. Then it will be seen that the judgment on mystic Babylon is just.

What will temporarily delay this judgment is the hour of power (Rev. 17:12). The enemy who comes in to destroy will be stopped momentarily because of edicts that are passed. When the hour of power ends, the nominal systems will be overwhelmed. Edom, Babylon, and Sodom and Gomorrah all picture the same thing, spiritually speaking, but each from a different camera angle, as it were.

**Q:** Is the thought that in antitype, just before mystic Babylon falls, those Spirit-begotten who are still in the nominal Church systems but have the right heart attitude will be extricated by the Lord's providence?

**A:** Yes, when the remaining consecrated in the nominal systems see that the supposed changes and reformations of character are only a veneer and that the Inquisition spirit is again operative, they will be responsible for getting out. If they refuse to leave, they will merit a judgment of Second Death.

**Q:** Please explain again the phraseology of being "dragged" out.

**A:** True Christians still in Babylon will be escorted or pulled out with a sense of urgency. It will be a time of crucial decision making. To get life, they must *act* and not reason too long. The Great Company is a mercy class, a rescued class, of virgins who were foolish at one time. God appreciates that they responded initially to Christ and gave their heart wholly. Very, very few of earth's inhabitants take this step of dedication, and God does not forget those who do. In the final analysis, one may not measure up to being of the elite class, but God does not forget those who commit their lives to Him and remain loyal at heart. He also remembers their works (Heb. 6:10).

**Jer. 50:46** At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

Spiritually speaking, verse 46 is describing the fall of mystic Babylon. Details are furnished in Revelation 18:9-11,15-17, as follows: "And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning. Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas,

that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.... And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.” Panic will ensue.

**Jer. 51:1 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;**

The literal destroying wind is usually thought of as the sirocco, a very dry wind, usually from the east, that is detrimental. Some Scriptures in the Book of Jeremiah have only a natural application, some have only a spiritual application, and some have both a natural and a spiritual application. In explaining many prophetic matters, Bro. Russell excerpted a verse or verses from a setting that has had a past natural fulfillment and gave a spiritual application; that is, he ignored the natural and gave just a spiritual explanation or fulfillment. However, if we consider and verify the natural fulfillment first, then we are better able to discern any spiritual application that might exist.

Here the “destroying wind” is figurative, literal, and spiritual. After the diverting of the waters and the destruction of Babylon, the land dried up like a wilderness and became uninhabitable by man, for all the crops that were irrigated from the Euphrates in its original course were left devoid of water. The inhabitants who were indigenous to the territory, plus the captives, had to move elsewhere. Therefore, the literal dry wind happened later because a desert naturally brings forth or gives birth to the sirocco.

**Q:** Does the destroying wind also refer to the invasion of the Medes?

**A:** Yes. In the type, the wind had, first, a figurative meaning with the invading enemy and then, later, a literal meaning with the sirocco. The spiritual application is that a “destroying wind” of *truth* doctrines will come against mystic Babylon.

**Q:** With the clause “Against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me,” are two different groups being discussed?

**A:** Babylon was the capital city, but it was also the province, the suburbs. When the city and its inhabitants were destroyed, the people outside the city were left. Cyrus, the general, concentrated his energy on the capital city, for its defeat meant there would be no resistance from those in the province. However, the people outside the city still had the spirit of enmity against the Lord and against the Jews and were in sympathy with those in the capital who had risen against God.

In the spiritual application, the “destroying wind” is a figurative “storm” from the north coming down on mystic Babylon. We immediately think of Gog from the land of Magog, and “north” pictures God’s vengeance. In the type, God was behind Nebuchadnezzar to visit punishment on Israel, but now we have a completely different picture with Babylon being the focal point. Against the enemies of the truth in the near future will come God’s judgment.

Spiritually speaking, the “wind” indicates doctrine. “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every *wind of doctrine*, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14). The Apostle Paul was warning truth people to be on guard against error. In regard to the nominal system, however, the “destroying wind” is *true* doctrine. With Papacy and clericalism, the multitude of claims and

hoodwinking of the past has deceived the public into believing that Catholicism is the true church and that the pope is the true vicar of Christ. When doctrines are proclaimed that show Papacy is Antichrist—just the opposite—that truth will become a destroying wind. In the near future, not only will one of the underlying facts be the drying up of the “waters” (the revenue and support of the people), but also the “wind” of true doctrine will help to turn people against the false religious system. The harlot’s mask will be removed from her face, and her skirts will be lifted up to show her nakedness (Jer. 13:22,26; Nahum 3:5). At the time of Babylon’s fall, the Little Flock will be off the scene, so the truth will be spoken by the Great Company, and the public will recognize the system as false and be in harmony with its destruction. In the type, Jehonadab climbed up in the chariot with Jehu (2 Kings 10:15,16). In summary, the “destroying wind” is the true doctrine from God that will prosper in undermining the false claims, which the people have swallowed in thinking they are the truth. *Error* has supported the Roman Catholic Church.

**Comment:** In the Jehu picture, not only were the leaders and the religion of Baal destroyed but also the worshippers.

**Reply:** Yes, the destruction started with the heads, Kings Jehoram and Ahaziah, and went all the way down to the general populace.

**Comment:** Therefore, the thought would be that the “destroying wind” will come “against them [in the city of Babylon] that dwell in the midst of them [in the province] that rise up against me [the Jewish God].” The trouble came because the Babylonians opposed the God of Israel.

**Reply:** Yes, that is the thought.

In the near future, truth will have a part in undermining the base of Papacy’s false claims. Even now the system is starting to retract certain claims. It is remarkable that the pope admits there was papal persecution in the past. Of course the system still denies that ecclesiastical leadership was responsible for the persecution and blames the problem on a few overzealous individuals who supposedly misconstrued official church policy. In time, however, true history will be revealed.

The destroying wind will eventually result in the emptying of the land—just as when the literal waters were diverted, it took time for the crops to fail. The fall of Babylon occurred overnight, but the repercussion, or aftereffects, lingered, so that in time the land became a desert. The cities in Iran and Iraq are located on rivers but not where the Euphrates River used to be. Baghdad is a new capital that has water and a means of sustenance, but it is in a different location from the former city of Babylon, which is still a dry, parched area.

**Jer. 51:2** And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about.

In the type, the “fanners” were the enemy—not only Darius, Cyrus, and the Medes but also others who were confederate with them. Darius the Mede was responsible for the fall of Babylon, but he used Cyrus as his general. In the antitype, some of the “fanners” in the destruction of mystic Babylon will be Jehu and Gog, the Lord’s Great Army.

**Q:** On their way down, did the Medes conquer the surrounding areas of the Babylonian Empire first and then take the city?

**A:** The Medes did conquer on their way down, but they completely ignored the territory south

of the capital. The Medes were so intent on destroying the capital that they bulldozed anything in their way and ignored the rest. They did not take the time to subjugate the entire empire because conquering the capital was their priority. After that victory came the mopping-up exercise to make sure the empire was under the control of the Medes.

The King James uses the illustration of a fan or wind blowing away the chaff of error. The illustration is of a harvest—the harvest of the vine of the earth (Rev. 14:19).

**Jer. 51:3** **Against him that bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against him that lifteth himself up in his brigandine: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host.**

The RSV reads, “Let not the archer bend his bow, and let him not stand up in his coat of mail. Spare not her young men; utterly destroy all her host.” We are reminded of the judgments God issued against enemies of Israel. Men, women, and children were slain.

**Q:** Based on other translations, is the thought that because the attack on Babylon came suddenly, the archers did not have time to prepare for battle, bend their bows, and put on armor?

**A:** Yes, that was part of the picture. Any efforts of defense were futile. The inhabitants of Babylon were comfortable in their partying and feasting until the last minute, and then it was too late to prepare for battle. So confident were the inhabitants in their false sense of security that even the watchmen probably joined the festivities. The leaders of the empire, as well as the inhabitants, were unaware that the city was being invaded.

Sometimes the young men were spared as booty, or spoils of war, so that they could become servants, and the young women were forced to become maids or concubines. But in this case, all were slain.

The Revised Standard Version broke the ice or set the pace in changing some of the archaic words and phrases to a more up-to-date translation. The New International Version, which gets more credit, came along later and did a refining work in the translation.

**Jer. 51:4** **Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and they that are thrust through in her streets.**

The “slain” fell in both the surrounding land and the city itself. In the type, the slaying was the day of Jehovah’s vengeance on behalf of His people, Israel, leading the way for deliverance from Babylon (see verse 6).

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

Verse 5 shows an act of God’s mercy on behalf of His people, Israel, who did not merit this salvation. After they got the lesson, God gave them an opportunity to return not only to the land of Israel but also to Him. On the one hand, the 70 years of captivity were a period of schooling and retribution for what they had done wrong, but on the other hand, the years were designed for their good so that they would return a repentant people—like the Prodigal Son, hopefully. God’s *mercy* freed Israel.

**Comment:** Strong’s defines “forsaken” as “discarded [as a divorced person].” The Jewish Publication Society uses the word “widowed”: “Israel is not widowed.” Thus is seen the relationship between Jehovah and His people.

**Reply:** “Forsaken” can have various implications, and the thought of “widowed” is certainly justified by other Scriptures and even elsewhere in the Book of Jeremiah.

God’s motive in the destruction of literal Babylon was to show that Israel and Judah were not forsaken. Israel had to be punished for earlier sins, but Babylon went overboard and was too cruel to the Jews, so retribution became necessary.

**Jer. 51:6** Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD’S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.

This verse does not refer to Revelation 18:4, the *invitation* calling God’s people to come out of Babylon, starting in 1878. The calling here is a *command* to “flee out of the midst of Babylon” and to “deliver every man his soul: [so that he] be not cut off in her [Babylon’s] iniquity.” This verse refers to the deliverance of God’s people from a sin-sick “Sodom and Gomorrah” environment.

It is interesting that this prophecy was uttered not at the time of the destruction of Babylon but *before*. If Jews in exile in Babylon heard Seraiah deliver this prophecy from the top of the wall as a “thus saith the LORD,” they could not flee even if they wanted to because they were captives. But hearing that message in advance and then telling it to other Jews meant the people were prepared when the events did come to pass. Jews in the city realized they had to get out, for the warning was very specific that everyone in the city of Babylon would be killed. If Jews who were merchants, for example, obeyed not only the message of Jeremiah but also the message of Ezekiel, they stopped their businesses and fled Babylon. The bulk of the captives were relegated to tilling the land and providing food, so many had to bring their produce into the city to sell it. When word came that an army was actually approaching Babylon from the north, the Jews remembered the warning of Seraiah, the man on the wall, and got out of the city and went to the countryside, the suburbs—and thus were out of immediate danger. But then a message was given to get out of the land entirely and return to the homeland. That message of leniency, which manifested itself in the largesse of Cyrus, was not limited to the Jew. Although Cyrus issued the decree in a way that was slanted particularly to the Jew, it extended to some of the other foreigners (non-Jews) as well. These others (Egypt, Moab, Ammon, etc.) could go back to their respective land, but the Jews were favored with money, goods, and even the offer of an armed escort. The Jews who realized the message to flee was from Jehovah and rightly responded did return to Israel, and God’s blessing was especially on them.

**Comment:** The theme of verse 6 to flee out of the midst of Babylon in the time of her fall was picked up from the previous chapter in verse 28, “The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple.” Verse 6 is a second witness to flee Babylon in a crucial time.

**Reply:** Jeremiah 50 and 51 can be treated from the standpoint that in the type, a *remnant* went back to the homeland. The antitype, or spiritual application, is at this end of the age. By first studying the literal application, we can better understand the spiritual lessons. In fact, *the failure to study the natural picture has led to spiritual confusion*. If we do not understand the literal application, we come away with only the general lesson that God is against mystic Babylon. Bible Students know that Babylon is doomed for destruction, that Papacy will cease, but how many know the details? If we are satisfied with less understanding, that is all we will get. The Bible is *thick* with details, which are meant to be considered in depth.

**Comment:** Verse 6 states, “This is *the time* of the LORD’S vengeance.” This time setting is no longer an invitation to gracefully come out of Babylon but a necessity to flee for one’s life.

**Comment:** The NIV reads, “Flee from Babylon! Run for your lives! Do not be destroyed because of her sins. It is time for the LORD’S vengeance; he will pay her what she deserves.”

**Q:** Is the timing of verse 6 the same as Revelation 18:8? “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.”

**A:** Yes, generally speaking, because *death* will be the first of the three plagues. Mourning and famine, the last two plagues, will occur after the demise of the nominal religious systems. The three plagues have nothing to do with the seven plagues of Revelation 16.

**Comment:** This fleeing from Babylon is comparable to the time when Lot, picturing the Great Company, was grabbed by the arm and pulled out of Sodom, being miraculously spared in the destruction. Babylon’s sins will have reached unto heaven, and God will remember her iniquities at that time. Here verse 6 in Jeremiah said the purpose of fleeing is so that a soul will “be not cut off in her iniquity.”

A great deal of detail and advice is given in advance to be acted upon when the wheels are going into motion. We know that the Little Flock will be complete before Babylon’s actual fall, for their cutting off will occur during the short, desperate “hour” of Babylon’s power. The hour of power will be an emergency rule in which all except the Very Elect will cooperate, for they will see the supposed necessity for a strong government (Matt. 24:24). However, in that strong government, people’s consciences will not be recognized. The attitude of the authorities will be, “Either you are 100 percent with us, or you are against us, no matter what the reason.” For one to say at that time, “I will not lend support because I am serving my God,” will not be tolerated. In real times of desperation, dictatorial policies are enacted in a rude, harsh manner.

**Comment:** Verse 6 will become more meaningful to the Great Company when the Little Flock is off the scene and the time of Babylon’s actual fall is imminent. To save their “soul,” the Great Company will have to flee Babylon and then, after washing their robes white in the blood of the Lamb in the great tribulation, literally give their lives for the truth.

All of this advice was declared from the wall by Seraiah a number of years before the trouble occurred—about 75 years earlier. Some of those Jews who heard the message were still alive when the fulfillment came. Of those who fled Babylon, some (mostly from Judah) returned to Israel, and others (primarily from the ten tribes) went up into Asia Minor and became known as the “ten lost tribes of Israel.” This latter element fled north through Turkey and into Europe, even into England. Generally speaking, the *history* in the Anglo-Israelite theory is much more advanced than that in the present-truth movement, but concepts are wrong. Spiritually speaking, the Anglo-Israelite theory is very damaging, as the Pastor has shown. Those who are running for the high calling can get offtrack. Many from Judah and the Levites, the priesthood, returned to Israel. Those from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah comprised the majority of the 50,000 Jews who went back at the time that the judgment on Babylon was literally carried out.

Verses 59-64 of this fifty-first chapter are an appendix to the Book of Jeremiah. Just previously, beginning with chapter 46, the prophet had given messages of destruction regarding surrounding nations and then Babylon. These prophecies were written in advance of the destruction, in the fourth year of Zedekiah. Hence, just as in the antitype, the advice to flee Babylon was given well in advance. First, the Israelites were to go submissively to Babylon and build houses for 70 years, but when opportunity came at the end of the 70 years to leave, they either heeded the advice or entered the destruction.

After Seraiah literally read the prophecies of destruction to the Gentile nations (chapters 46-51), he was to throw the writings in the river Euphrates and thus destroy them (see verse 63).

**Jer. 51:7 Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.**

This verse stands out more along mystical lines, that is, as having a *spiritual* application rather than a literal one. Mystic Babylon has had custody of the Scriptures, but what happened? The Scriptures were kept in a casket, as it were, locked away from the public and buried in the Latin language. In the past, only religious leaders were allowed to have the Bible, and they quoted the parts that were convenient to justify their leadership. In time, the dribs and drabs of information that leaked out from the casket enabled some of the people to realize truth. The crumbs of information—sometimes just scraps of paper and bits of information by word of mouth—began to accumulate as time went on, and the people were fed enough to survive spiritually.

“The nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad,” inebriated. The liquid, or “wine,” inside the “golden cup” was the problem; it was a mixture of truth and error. Babylon mixed a *little* truth with *much* error, so that those in the system became stupefied and could not reason or discern between right and wrong, between truth and error. (Even if there had been much truth in the golden cup, which was not the case, the addition of a little arsenic would create a deadly effect.) The situation was a measure of wheat versus three measures of barley, harlot's food, for a penny (Rev. 6:6). Thus there was three times as much error as truth. The barley-wheat mixture that was fed to the people caused great leanness and famine of mind and soul. But in spite of this mixture, God's Holy Spirit enabled true Christians, those who were Spirit-begotten, to survive spiritually (the “oil” and the true “wine” were not hurt), so that they could even die joyfully in persecution to show their love and devotion to the Lord.

**Comment:** Babylon not only was a “golden cup” but also was the head of gold on the image in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:32). Babylon was the greatest of the universal empires in the dream.

**Comment:** Two notes on verse 7 from the *Expanded Biblical Comments* read as follows: “As heathen philosophies were joined with Christianity, a poisonous draught was mixed and poured into the ‘golden cup’ of truth, making all nations drunk.” “So strong is the power of this intoxication that its inconsistencies are not discerned by those [who are] intoxicated.”

**Reply:** It is impossible to reason with a drunk. One cannot get anywhere.

**Jer. 51:8 Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.**

Babylon will fall SUDDENLY. The suddenness is certainly taught in Scripture. Who is to “howl” and “take balm for her pain”? Verses 8 and 9 pertain to the Great Company.

In the fulfillment of verse 8, Babylon will have already experienced her sudden fall. But in the next verse (verse 9), the time slot is different. The usual application, as given by the Pastor in the *Fourth Volume* and elsewhere, is that the principle of trying to take balm for healing the cancer of Babylon was to no avail. He tried to show in his writings that there was a radical difference between the Truth movement (the message he introduced) and all previous reform movements such as those of Tyndale, Luther, Wycliffe, etc., who tried to reform, heal, convert, and restore the priesthood of the nominal system to its original purity. Only later in Luther's life, when he was passing off the scene, did he realize the futility of trying to reform Papacy.



The howling here and the taking of balm for Babylon's pain will occur as a result of Babylon's fall. The usual interpretation is that these reactions occur before the actual fall, but verse 8 gives the *aftereffects* of Babylon's fall.

The point is that the Pastor's explanation had a logical fulfillment in the past with efforts to heal Babylon, but the context of verse 8 pertains to the *Great Company class*. This interpretation becomes clearer and clearer with the passage of time because we are *beyond* the general Harvest period. We are in a *gleaning* period and coming very close to the actual fall of Babylon, which is immediately in front of us. Verse 8 is talking about those who had been in Babylon and then came out, and now they find themselves in a new situation. The *invitation* during the general Harvest was, "Come out of her, my people," and the initiative had to be taken by the parties who heard present truth. But the Great Company class, shown here in verse 8, will finally be *forced* by conscience to come out of Babylon. The Spirit-begotten ones who do not come out at that time will suffer Babylon's three plagues to occur at her destruction (Rev. 18:8). Those who do not come out as we get further and further into this present day of confusion will incur responsibility. The ones who finally wake up at the last minute will be pulled out similar to the way Lot was pulled out of Sodom.

**Jer. 51:9** We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies.

**Comment:** The attitude of trying to heal Babylon is common even today among many of the Roman Catholic faith. They look to Vatican II as a reformation of the system, and they still think their church is the Lord's institution. There is fidelity to the institution in spite of its shortcomings because they think it will change.

**Reply:** Another example is the Society with its great flaws and faults during Judge Rutherford's day, but the members felt it was the Lord's organization. That kind of party spirit, whether political or religious, is wrong. An empathy of wanting to belong makes excuses by attributing the problems to the people in leadership and governmental positions rather than to the institution.

**Comment:** The pope recently used that type of reasoning in regard to the Holocaust. He said the persecution of the Jews was caused by some overzealous children and not by the Roman Catholic Church.

Isaiah spoke similarly: "LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen" (Isa. 26:16-18). A godly element in the nominal Church, who are dedicated to serving God, will finally see—after much effort, agony, and trouble—that the anticipated results cannot be achieved. They will then realize they are in the wrong place and will get out; that is, they will be forced out by their conscience and by providence. Conditions will get so bad that they will find Babylon is not the place for them. Those comprising this portion of the Great Company, or secondary element, do not respond to the *invitation* to come out, but they will flee eventually.

Several verses in Jeremiah 50 also deal with this righteous class, and now the fifty-first chapter continues the theme. We are reminded of "just Lot," who resided in Sodom. He was wedded to the city, even though his conscience was vexed with the filthy conduct of the wicked (2 Pet. 2:7).

He did not leave voluntarily, but when he was eventually on the verge of leaving, the Lord sent two angels to yank him out along with certain family members (Gen. 19:1,15,16).

Verse 9 is referring to a sincere class in the nominal Church system who have tried desperately to reform it. After the Little Flock is complete but just before the destruction of Babylon, they will say, “We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go.” There are *two* falls of Babylon: the fall from favor and the fall of destruction. Anyone who honestly reviews the history of the nominal Church during the Harvest period, which began in 1878, can see that conditions are getting worse and worse. Those on the inside can especially see the machinations that are developing. The Lord used the experience of the natural Jew in connection with the literal fall of Babylon as a warning to the Spirit-begotten still in Babylon after the Little Flock is complete. When the Jewish captives in the city heard about the coming destruction, they were in a predicament and had to make a decision to stay or leave. The predicament will be the same for the consecrated still in Babylon when its actual fall is imminent. The warning will be, “If you stay in the city, you will perish.” Jews who left the city of Babylon subsequently found they had to go even farther, that is, back to the homeland. In the type, Lot fled first to Zoar and then went eventually to the mountain (Gen. 19:18-22,30).

In the Truth movement, those who are righteously inclined—and properly so—have a constant desire to go back to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, to go back to the primitive truth. Just as the natural Jew, by providences, was weaned from Babylon and then went back to Israel when Cyrus issued the decree, so a similar principle will operate with the Great Company at the time setting of verse 9. The Lord’s people, the consecrated who remain behind but are rightly exercised at that time, will want to go back to the true teachings of the gospel instead of the traditional teachings of the nominal system. By God’s providence, they will see the necessity to return to the basic teachings of Scripture.

“Her [Babylon’s] judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies.” Babylon’s evil deeds have piled up to heaven and demand judgment.

“Let us go every one into his own country.” The explanation starts with the type. When Cyrus issued his decree, all captives could return to their homeland.

**Q:** Does the clause “Let us go every one into his own country” refer to both the Great Company still in Babylon and the tares? The Great Company will go to God, and the tares will go back to the world.

**A:** Yes, each class will go to “his own country.” Many moral but *unconsecrated* people who profess to be Christians are also trying to heal Babylon. In the near future, everyone will flee to his own country; that is, tares will flee to the world, and the Great Company will renew their consecration to God. The tares will cease to be professing Christians; they will no longer pretend to be wheat. With their hopes and beliefs destroyed, they will desert the nominal Church system.

When Babylon falls, *organized (orthodox) religion* will cease. The Great Company will come out and retain personal beliefs. They will be protected *in or during* Babylon’s fall and later go into the wilderness as the scapegoat class. In the interim, the Great Company will have an opportunity to wash their robes.

The Song of Solomon shows that the glorified Church will say, “We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts” (Song 8:8). The Little Flock will have a role in protecting the Great Company in Babylon’s fall and assisting in her development.

**Jer. 51:10** The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

Verse 10 expresses the sentiments of the Great Company class, a consecrated, godly element: “The LORD hath brought forth *our righteousness*.” The account is referring to the deliverance of the “just Lot” class. In their being pulled out of Babylon, the Great Company will not die. They will have an opportunity to wash their robes, and they will recognize that opportunity (Rev. 7:14). They will also recognize that they are not of the Bride class, for the fall of Babylon will be a definite proof to those familiar with present truth that the Little Flock is complete.

When the Great Company first realize they lost out on becoming part of the Bride class, they will weep and mourn, but later they will be strengthened and have hope and rejoice. The sentiment of the Great Company at that time will be, “The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness”; that is, they will realize that the Lord spared them in the fall of Babylon, and they will renew their consecration and rededicate themselves. The Great Company will have knowledge, which the world, in its confusion, will not have. Habakkuk prophesied the feelings of the Great Company class in the in-between time after the Little Flock is complete but before the Kingdom is inaugurated: “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock [that is, the Little Flock] shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls [no Ancient Worthies yet in office]: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. 3:17,18).

Since the first half of verse 10 pertains to the Great Company class, we must now explain the last half: “Let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.” As taught in other Scriptures as well, the thought is that the Great Company will declare a message to Israel. The God of Israel is the Christian’s God too. After the feet members are off the scene, the Great Company will have the responsibility of giving a message to natural Israel.

**Comment:** From the standpoint of verses 9 and 10, at this point in time, the Great Company will realize it is their responsibility not to give a message about the high calling but to proclaim a message to Israel.

**Reply:** Yes, the Lord’s goat will have been consumed, so it will be time to deal with the scapegoat. At that time, the Great Company will be recognized as a class, whereas previously all of the consecrated were called in the *one* hope of the high calling (Eph. 4:4). When that hope ceases, two other hopes will remain: one for the Great Company and the other for natural Israel in the imminency of the establishment of the Kingdom.

Another illustration is Daniel’s interpretation of the handwriting on the wall just hours before Babylon was destroyed. The king gave Daniel a scarlet robe and a gold neck chain, picturing that the death and change of the feet members will precede the actual fall of mystic Babylon (Dan. 5:25-31). Daniel then left the city. Surely the three Hebrews (Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego) also fled from the city in time. By morning, the enemy had entered and inundated the city of Babylon like caterpillars. Daniel symbolically died, but the Jews who were outside of the city when it fell picture the Great Company class.

**Comment:** Jeremiah 50 and 51 will become more meaningful after the Little Flock is off the scene. These verse-by-verse explanations will be needed at that time.

**Reply:** Yes, verses 8-10 will be especially meaningful in the near future when the predicted events start to happen. We are given the interpretation now, but it is not that meaningful at present. Some in present-truth circles believe the nominal Church will not come into power,

some feel we will just glide into the Kingdom, etc., but when the actual events are occurring, then all of the brethren will be able to understand. For example, once the feet members are persecuted, the actual fall of Babylon will be recognized as imminent.

**Q:** After seeing the destruction of Babylon, the Great Company will say, “The LORD has vindicated us” (NIV). Will they then give a message to Israel because they will realize that the coming down of the enemy host of Gog into Israel is one of the next events to occur?

**A:** Yes, the calling will be different at that time, both spiritually (Great Company) and naturally (Israel). The change will be so marked, so clear-cut, that it will be like going through a door.

**Comment:** Elisha will pick up the mantle of Elijah and smite the Jordan.

**Reply:** Yes. However, in between the fall of Babylon and the message to Israel will be a mourning period for the Great Company and the washing of their robes. A period of joy and power will come when the Lord consoles them. The Great Company will reason, “We did not make the high calling, but God has providentially spared us, for we were not persecuted in the fall of Babylon.” The feet members will be persecuted earlier, when Babylon is in power, but as the system loses power and support from the people, that type of persecution will end.

Lot did not die in the destruction of Sodom but was extricated. However, his wife pictures a Second Death class because she disobeyed very precise instructions and looked back longingly. Then will come a new calling, a new arrangement, for the Great Company.

**Jer. 51:11** Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.

Notice that there are two vengeance: “the vengeance of the LORD” and “the vengeance of his temple.” The fall of Babylon is a vengeance. The judgment against Babylon is the smashing, or smiting, of the clay portion of the feet in the image. A short time period—perhaps less than three years—will separate the destruction of the clay (nominal religious systems) from the destruction of the iron (civil powers). The fulfillment and/or development of the image, starting with Babylon, which is pictured by the head of gold, has taken more than 2,500 years, so the few intervening years between the fall of the ecclesiastical systems and the fall of the civil powers, when measured against the long time period, can be considered *sudden*. For 2,000 years, the stone has been in process of being cut out of the mountain, but when the stone is complete, the time will be short for the smashing of the image. A mighty angel will raise the great millstone up high to get the momentum and then cast it down with violence (Rev. 18:21). Down through the Gospel Age, the millstone has been grinding and developing the true Church with persecutions, sufferings, and oppositions, but soon “that great city of Babylon shall be found no more at all.” We can imagine the tremendous splash that a heavy millstone would make if cast from a height into the sea.

**Q:** What is “the vengeance of his temple”?

**A:** Back in the type, the vengeance was on natural Babylon, but it did not end with the city. The land had to be desolate and without inhabitant as a corresponding retribution for what Babylon had done to Egypt, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and Israel. Literal Babylon was decimated for hundreds of years. Spiritually speaking, the judgment (the desolation and the destruction of mystic Babylon) will be forever because Christ will take over with the true Church.

Nebuchadnezzar destroyed not only the city of Jerusalem but also the Temple. From the

standpoint of the true spiritual class, mystic Babylon suppressed the truth during its history. Instead of being a helping hand, the Roman Catholic Church became its own teacher. “Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Rev. 2:20). When we go back and spiritualize the prophetic picture of verse 10, we see a Great Company class that has been delivered and has a message to give natural Israel. Other Scriptures show the message will be endorsed and blessed, for the message is what the Lord will want at that time.

Now we will consider the *natural* future picture. The Temple Mount is presently under Muslim control. The site for the Third Temple is occupied by two buildings: Al-Aksa and Dome of the Rock. Therefore, God’s Temple platform is being violated by two religions: spiritually by Catholicism and naturally by the Muslim religion. The Muslim world has been desecrating and dominating the true religion, the Jewish religion, and poor Israel has only a tiny strip, the Wailing Wall. Israel won the war under Moshe Dayan, but then he compromised. The Israelis entered the Temple platform, pushed out the Muslims, and were victorious, but then they allowed the Muslims to come back in. Of course God foreknew what would happen, but that is where the current trouble began.

In the future judgment at the end of the age, the Temple has to be vindicated. In the natural picture of the past, the treatment of the majority of Israelites who were held in bondage as slaves by the Babylonians had to be requited. In addition, the Temple building itself was holy. Jesus chased out the money changers because they violated the Temple, and the Temple Mount is being violated today. The Muslims will have to pay a price of vengeance because they are occupying God’s footstool. Therefore, vengeance is coming from two standpoints; namely, the vengeance on Christendom and the vengeance with regard to the Temple Mount.

“Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it.” In the type, weapons were prepared by the Medes; they made “bright the arrows” and gathered the shields. Notice that the Medes, not the Persians, were given the priority in the visitation of judgment on Babylon. Darius the Mede reigned at the time Babylon was conquered.

In antitype, Darius represents the Heavenly Father, and Cyrus, his general, pictures Jesus. The arrows were intended for vengeance and destruction in the type. In antitype, the “arrows,” or weapons, will be made bright for the coming battle and judgment of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. Doctrines of *demons* will come out of the mouths of these three entities to gather the nations to Armageddon. From one standpoint, the nominal Church systems are responsible for the gathering work, but from another standpoint, *God* is responsible in allowing the gathering work to prosper, thereby bringing the matter to a head so that it can be dealt with. “And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of *God Almighty* [the Father]... And he [God] gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (Rev. 16:13,14,16). Satan will actually be God’s executioner. The same principle will operate at the end of the Kingdom when the nations are deceived in the “little season.” All, including Satan, who are worthy of Second Death will be destroyed as a result of that test (Rev. 20:3,8,9). From then on, the earth will truly be cleansed and the answer to the Lord’s Prayer realized, with God’s will being done on earth as in heaven. At the start of the Kingdom Age, the *process* toward having a perfect earth will begin, but not until the end of the Kingdom, after the Little Season, will God’s Kingdom truly come.

Another example of Satan’s being God’s executioner is the crucifixion of Jesus. However,

Satan's *seeming* success was victory for Christ. Once Jesus faithfully paid and secured the Ransom even unto death, the establishment of God's Kingdom and the redeeming work were guaranteed. Again and again God uses the work of the enemy to accomplish His purpose, just as the permission of evil fits in beautifully with His plan. God is not responsible for the evil; He has merely permitted it. He foresaw what would happen, and He allowed it because He could see that the final results will be a vindication of the divine character and plan.

“The *LORD* hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for *his* device is against Babylon, to destroy it.” With natural Israel, the result will be for their good. And with true spiritual Israel, both the Little Flock and the Great Company, all will work out right.

**Comment:** According to Young's *Analytical Concordance*, making bright the arrows has the thought of cleansing.

**Reply:** So much is happening. All of the prophecies not yet fulfilled are coming down to a focal point, and that focal point is like the atom, which is composed of electrons, microns, quarks, etc., that are hard to see except with the aid of a supermicroscope.

**Q:** Does the “spirit of the kings of the Medes” refer to The Christ in antitype?

**A:** Yes, but the Father will raise up that spirit. Although our understanding may be only fragmentary, there are many, many pictures and complexities, but they all harmonize and dovetail beautifully. The pictures will become clearer and clearer, for the light will shine brighter and brighter, no matter who is on the scene. The light will continue to grow regardless of personality.

**Jer. 51:12** Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the *LORD* hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon.

Who is to “set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes”? To whom is this instruction addressed?

**Comment:** The RSV reads, “Set up a standard *against* the walls of Babylon.”

**Comment:** The enemy who is preparing an ambush would be down in the field, not up on the walls, as the King James states.

**Reply:** That is good reasoning to determine the meaning.

What are the “walls of Babylon”? Of course the literal walls were of tremendous height and width, allowing two chariots going in opposite directions to pass. But symbolically speaking, the “walls” are the civil powers. The time element with regard to the destruction of the walls is important, for the Scriptures show that the civil powers will fall later than the spiritual powers.

**Comment:** Rotherham's translation reads, “Against the walls of Babylon lift ye up a standard, strengthen ye the watch, station the watchmen, make ready the ambushes.”

Notice that God was doing the commanding. In the type, the Medes were the enemy. The city of Babylon was taken not by a breaching of the walls in a forcible manner per se but by a drying up of the riverbed. For the river to dry up means there were two entrances, that is, where the river entered and where it exited. The Bible gives the clue that Cyrus entered on the east side of the city with the “kings of the east”; that is, the Medes came from the north but

presumably entered the east side of Babylon (Rev. 16:12). The digging of the canal to divert the Euphrates River was surreptitiously accomplished over a period of months of intense labor. Once the river was diverted, Cyrus set up a guard at the two apertures so that the enemy could enter but none of the Babylonians could escape from the city. All inhabitants were to be slain. The walls were not broken down initially but after the city was taken. Just as with Jerusalem, and according to custom, the fortress city walls were broken down, especially near the gates, lest a rebellion arise in the future and the same facility be used. Hence the walls could not be repaired hastily by the conquered people, and any extensive activity would be noticed by the dominating power. The breaking down of the walls after taking the city of Babylon harmonizes with several other pictures of the antitype, Christendom, for the sequence is that the nominal Church will fall first and then the state.

**Comment:** God prophesied in advance about Cyrus coming in under the city gates. “Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron” (Isa. 45:1,2).

**Reply:** Cyrus “opened” the two gates by diverting the waters of the Euphrates. Isaiah also told about the securing of the two gates, allowing Cyrus and his army access to Babylon but making sure none of the Babylonians could leave. “The gates shall not be shut.”

**Comment:** According to Herodotus, the literal walls of Babylon were 350 feet high, more than 80 feet wide, and 56 miles in circumference. Those dimensions are mind-boggling.

Verse 11 stated that God “raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes”; that is, the Lord put in the heart of the Medes to conquer Babylon. Therefore, in the type, verse 12 refers to the action of the Medes against Babylon. In the antitype, the Medes are primarily a picture of the Father (the King of the Medes) and Jesus (General Cyrus), who was used as the agent in connection with the downfall of Babylon. Of course the Church can be included in the picture because others were with Cyrus in both the type and the antitype.

“Set up the watchmen.” Based on certain manuscripts, some have debated whether the Hebrew word translated “watchmen” is singular or plural. It is probably plural. The word suggests that allies or others, who were like under-kings, were associated with the king of the Medes, but the primary responsibility was with the king. To state the matter another way, Jesus is likened to a King, but the Little Flock will be with him as other kings. The title “King of kings” does not mean Jesus is King over earthly kings or over others who were not inherently associated with him, for the other “kings” are the true Church (Rev. 19:16). Therefore, Jesus is the King of associated kings. In the type, other kings were with the king of the Medes. The king distributed power and thus was the head of associates.

**Comment:** In regard to the walls being destroyed after the city was taken, Jeremiah 51:58 states, “The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire.” This verse proves that the destruction of the walls happened last.

“The LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon.” Whatever Jehovah says is as good as done, even though it has not actually happened until the prophecy is fulfilled.

Jeremiah had ordered Seraiah, the prince, to read chapters 50 and 51, and it is remarkable that Seraiah accomplished all of the reading without being stopped. Moreover, the people heard him. The Ishtar gate of Babylon would have been the most appropriate place for the reading

because it was not only the most prominent gate but also the entry gate for those who would go upstream from the city.

**Jer. 51:13** O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.

Babylon is being addressed. “O thou that dwellest upon many waters.” Actually there was only the one river, the Euphrates, in the literal city of Babylon. However, the name “Euphrates” means “much water.” In ancient times, the Euphrates was considered broad and voluminous, and its waters flowed quite rapidly. Therefore, the “many waters” can be “much water” in volume and breadth rather than multiple streams. The Euphrates, upon which Babylon figuratively sat, was used for both defensive and commercial purposes.

**Comment:** The fact that the mention of the Euphrates in Genesis 2:14 is associated with the world of mankind shows what an extensive reach of influence Babylon had over the civilized world at that time.

**Reply:** Yes, Babylon’s influence was great both in sending out goods and in receiving revenue. She was “abundant in treasures.”

“O thou that dwellest upon many waters” reminds us of Revelation 17:1, where “one of the seven angels which had the seven vials” containing the seven last plagues said of mystic Babylon to the Apostle John, who represents the feet members, “Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the *great whore that sitteth upon many waters.*”

“Thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.” The waters were a source of revenues coming in and merchandise going out. When the waters were diverted, the revenues and commerce stopped.

**Comment:** This terminology, “Thine *end* is come, and the *measure* of thy covetousness,” reminds us of Daniel’s interpretation of the handwriting on the wall. He said, “MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians” (Dan. 5:26-28).

**Reply:** Yes, the very words “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN” were measures of quantity weights. “PERES” means “divided.” The handwriting was a message of doom.

The inhabitants of Babylon felt secure from the siege of the Medes. The siege was part of the brilliant strategy of Cyrus to distract the Babylonians. Also, God directed the arrows of the besiegers so that they found their mark with the Babylonian defenders on the wall. Therefore, Babylon’s attention was focused on the siege, and the inhabitants were unaware of the divided portion of the enemy host that was digging the canal. Usually an enemy tried, by slow attrition, to wear down the inhabitants of the city under siege. Eventually the food supply ran out, and then famine and disease set in. At that point, strong walls became meaningless. The siege was time-consuming, whereas the fall of Babylon was to be sudden.

**Jer. 51:14** The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee.

When the Euphrates River was diverted, Cyrus and his army acted quickly. Other translations more accurately use the word “locusts” instead of “caterpillars.” In a locust plague, the insects are seemingly everywhere.



“The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself.” God does not swear by Himself very often, so His intense interest in bringing about the fulfillment of the destruction of Babylon is indicated here.

“And they shall lift up a shout against thee.” Historical accounts are very fragmentary, but when Cyrus and his army entered Babylon, their attack was a surprise. The Babylonian leadership was mostly drunk at King Belshazzar’s feast, or orgy. While those defending the city saw what was happening, the leadership did not. Therefore, the entry into the city came as a surprise—at a low level underneath the city gates in the dry riverbed. *Suddenly* the enemy was in their midst *like locusts*, and then the enemy host *shouted* in unison. Just as a lion roars to paralyze its prey, so the shout shattered the morale of the defenders of Babylon, and they were easily overcome.

**Comment:** We are reminded of the shout in unison when Gideon and the 300 broke their earthen pitchers. The enemy fled in great confusion.

**Reply:** There is complexity and yet harmony in the multiple pictures. Both Gideon and Cyrus picture Christ. The harmony amidst complexity brings conviction. Of course the pictures are very dramatic when they are considered separately, but the testimony of two or three witnesses convinces us we are on the right path of interpretation and understanding.

In the antitype, the “locusts” signify a multitudinous destroying element. Mystic Babylon will be confident it can withstand the siege, but all her defenses will come to naught. As the people rise up and plunder Papacy, the impregnable walls will be like grass devoured by locusts.

**Jer. 51:15** He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.

**Jer. 51:16** When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

Verses 15 and 16 show the greatness and the majesty of Jehovah and His capabilities as seen in His control of the elements of nature. As the Lord *of hosts*, He controls all the heavenly bodies, some of which are so large that we have difficulty comprehending them. Although inanimate, the heavenly bodies are like intelligent beings underneath His control. His “great army,” as it were, will both be the destroyers and do the destroying work.

“When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth.” In a *designed* cycle, water from the oceans evaporates into clouds, the clouds go over land and deposit the water, the water runs into rivers, and the rivers flow into oceans.

The insertion of verses 15 and 16 is especially significant in the antitype. Mystic Babylon, which has its center in Rome, is very far-reaching. The indoctrination of the clerical element is one aspect, but the power and the control of Catholicism have become so embedded over centuries of indoctrination that to root out this empire and cause its collapse could not be achieved by human means. There was a time when Papacy, the beast, was nonexistent, but the woman, the clerical element, lived on. The longevity of the Roman Catholic Church has been one of its biggest boasts: “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow” (Rev. 18:7). Therefore, verses 15 and 16 were inserted to show that what no human general could really do to kill this beast empire, God can accomplish. Since God can control the hosts of heaven and the

elements of nature on earth, He will easily accomplish the destruction of mystic Babylon. He is saying, “Not only do I swear by myself that Babylon will be destroyed, but also I guarantee it.”

**Comment:** Hitler admired the extent and the organization of Papacy throughout the world. In fact, his admiration is one reason there was cooperation between the Vatican and the Third Reich. The Vatican has an exceptional intelligence network.

**Reply:** Hitler was not religious himself, but he admired and took lessons from the operation of the Vatican.

**Jer. 51:17** Every man is brutish by his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.

**Jer. 51:18** They are vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

Verses 17 and 18 contrast the foolishness of man and man’s wisdom with the greatness of God in verses 15 and 16. It is hard to understand how scientists and astronomers cannot believe there is an intelligent Creator. They are so astute in their reasoning and logic along certain lines and so completely blind along another line. Man, with all of his intelligence, is like a brute beast as far as real understanding is concerned. Darwin and other evolutionists do not realize that the similarities they see when they look at all the different animals, birds, etc., are evidence that God created them—and not proof that one species evolved into another. The animals are *separate* creations made by the *same* Creator.

Scientists, who thought there were 100,000 genes in the human genome, are very surprised to find that there are only between 30 and 40. Theories that were built upon the 100,000 figure now have to be adjusted. The scientists are surprised because when they look at the worm and the fruit fly, for instance, the genes number in the thousands, but those in a human being are only around 30. God put all of these units in place, so He has control. The worm did not evolve into a higher creature, and that creature did not evolve into another, etc. The fact that molecules show the same pattern of unity does not prove evolution but a Creator. In short, there is logic and there is illogic, or confusion. In the Kingdom, many of today’s so-called authorities not only in the religious realm but also in scientific circles will experience a lot of shame. Only a fool says in his heart there is no God (Psa. 14:1).

**Comment:** The Scriptures repeatedly call attention to the heavens as being a testimony of the majesty of God and an evidence of His power. For example, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Psa. 19:1). The heavens are one of the clearest testimonies the entire human race has, yet many learned scientists, of all people, do not make that observation. Evolutionists think man came from the brute, but the truth is that in knowledge, they are the brute.

**Reply:** A lot of strange things are happening. When we examine ourselves, we find many inconsistencies. The fight of the Christian is to struggle out of anomalies and to concentrate on the goal and be like the Apostle Paul, who said, “This one thing I do” (Phil. 3:13).

**Comment:** The statement “Every man is brutish by his knowledge” sounds like Solomon’s repeated theme in the Book of Ecclesiastes that “all is vanity.”

**Reply:** It took Solomon an entire lifetime to conclude that he was a failure. Ecclesiastes and portions of the Book of Proverbs were his confession. For several reasons, we do not see him as an Ancient Worthy, but getting life is another matter entirely. The judgment before Christ

was different from the judgment subsequent to Christ.

Man has brutish knowledge—such a *low-level* concept of God—in order to make idols. From both the Bible and history books, we know that Nebuchadnezzar was a brilliant human being, yet he tolerated the worship of dumb statues of Merodach and Bel and others. With all of man's understanding, such foolishness still exists. Although idols, statues, and graven images cannot walk, talk, or breathe, they are set on pedestals, and the worship of them has sometimes been made mandatory under sentence of death. Those who issue such decrees incur responsibility, and the decrees manifest their own mentality and brutish understanding. For example, many worship statues of the Virgin Mary and burn candles, and there is always a money box nearby for donations. In certain countries, a statue of the Virgin Mary is carried through the streets of a city, and people are expected to pin dollar bills on it. Statues of the Virgin Mary are prayed to as if the statue is a telephone for talking to the real Mary.

**Comment:** It is interesting that in spite of all his knowledge, insanity came on Nebuchadnezzar for seven years as a punishment. He was made to eat grass like a brute beast, his hair grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws (Dan. 4:33).

**Reply:** At the end of the seven years, Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses, and that will be true of mankind at the end of the Kingdom Age. Those who pass the test of the Little Season will glorify God for having been raised to perfection from their former sin-sick condition as brute beasts.

**Comment:** Jeremiah 10:3-5,8 reads, "For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.... But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities."

**Reply:** Jeremiah was reproving those who worshipped a dumb idol, the creation of their own hands, and not the living God.

**Jer. 51:19** The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts is his name.

This verse is an exact repeat of Jeremiah 10:16. "The portion of Jacob is not like them [the idols and false gods]; for he [God] is the former [Maker, Creator] of all things: and Israel is the rod [or scepter] of his [God's] inheritance: the LORD of hosts is his name." A "rod," or scepter, is a symbol of authority or of an office and of the one who has been selected to be the ruler. In this case, the rod was given an imprimatur by the Lord of hosts Himself. Jehovah's name was stamped on that scepter, thus justifying Israel's role in the future.

This account seems to be quite out of context with the destruction of Babylon, since back there the Lord used heathen powers (Cyrus the Persian and King Darius of the Medes), not Israel, to bring Babylon to ashes and liberate the captives. Verse 19 stands out because the fulfillment *yet future* is stronger than the past fulfillment. In other words, this verse alerts us that succeeding verses have an added dimension of thinking pertaining to the end of the Gospel Age.

The only way verse 19 had a fulfillment back there is to say that not only did Jeremiah, the Lord's mouthpiece, predict Babylon would be the instrument to destroy the city of Jerusalem and the Temple and thus humble the Israelites, but also he gave an indication of subsequent liberation. In that sense, we could say Babylon fell by Divine Providence, as predicted by Jewish

prophets. In a peculiar sense, Israel was indirectly involved in Babylon's destruction because Israel's God predicted the events exactly as they occurred. However, verse 19 and the following verses contain too much information to have had a primary fulfillment back in Old Testament times. Therefore, the fulfillment of this prophecy is future. From this standpoint, we will examine the details.

**Jer. 51:20 Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms;**

“Thou [Israel, that is, the Holy Remnant] art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces [divide] the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms.” In the Book of Isaiah, the Assyrian Empire was pictured as God's battle “axe,” or instrument for judgment against Israel. “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger.... I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.... Shall the axe [the Assyrian] boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood” (Isa. 10:5,6,15). God also used King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as an instrument of destruction against Israel.

However, verse 20 is describing an instrument of destruction not against Israel but against *others*. The details in succeeding verses do not fit a past application either to the enemy force (the Medes) that came against Babylon or to Israel. The point is that, based on prophecies in other books of the Bible, if we extrapolate these verses to the future, we get an added dimension not found in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, etc. Something very peculiar is inserted in the following detailed listing, and the peculiarity is accredited to the fact that God will use *Israel* as a judgmental instrument. In describing the judgment, which will be very severe, the account frequently uses a Hebrew word that means “shatter.”

Jeremiah 50 and 51 not only had a past application on literal Babylon but also will have a future application on mystic Babylon, particularly on the religious element. Bringing Israel into the picture helps to establish a time frame. The time when Israel takes a more predominant role is still future because now the nation is having problems and is suffering ignominy. Israel is not aggressive at present, but in the future, God will use that nation for judgment purposes on other nations. Israel will be perceived as the Lord's battle-axe when the Holy Remnant is delivered out of Jacob's Trouble. At first, that period of trouble will seem to be negative for Israel, but the Scriptures show that a Holy Remnant will be delivered out of Jacob's Trouble.

Mankind will be unaware that God is directing the coming trouble. The people will see only the *aftereffect* of the trouble. For example, an earthquake tremor is not seen, but the result is. Let us consider the smiting of the image. The stone that will smite the image is The Christ, Head and body members, but *at the moment of impact*, this definition will change. The stone will then become *Israel*. We have presented this thought for many years, but we need the scriptural proof here in the fifty-first chapter of Jeremiah. The world will not see God, Jesus, or the Church, but they will see the *effects* down here on earth. The God of Israel will be working in Israel, and mankind will have to come into harmony with the New (Law) Covenant, which will be made with Israel. In order to be blessed, the nations must become identified *with and come into* that covenant relationship. Only through the New Covenant will the nations receive the real blessings of the Kingdom such as restitution.

When Gog and Magog come down to Israel at the time of Jacob's Trouble, the enemy will at first seem to be victorious. The city of Jerusalem will be taken, the houses will be rifled, and the women will be ravished (Zech. 14:2). All that had been anticipated of the Lord's deliverance will

seem to go down the drain with Israel's apparent defeat—but then a remnant will be saved in a most remarkable manner. In fact, the Jews comprising the Holy Remnant will know they have been miraculously spared. News, or rumors, of their deliverance will start to trickle back to the other nations. While some of the Holy Remnant will be scattered about in other lands as well, their deliverance will not be nearly the dramatic proportion that is concentrated in the front-stage operation in Israel. Not only will the Holy Remnant perceive their deliverance in Israel, but also the enemy will realize they *cannot* destroy those Jews. The title of the fictional book *Death Takes a Holiday* will become a historic reality, for those who are written for survival in God's book *will not die* (Isa. 4:3; Dan. 12:1). Indeed the Scriptures show that some Jews will be peculiarly spared.

The Ancient Worthies will appear on the scene at the “midnight” hour of Jacob's Trouble (Psa. 119:62). Since the preponderant number of Ancient Worthies will have a Jewish background, the world will think of them as Jews, even though Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Isaac are among them. When Jacob is saved out of the trouble, dead bodies will be all around (Jer. 30:7). In fact, only one sixth of the Gog force will survive, and it will take seven months to bury the dead (Ezek. 39:2,12). Gog's defeat will be seen as a military defeat, but who will accomplish it? The defeat of the enemy and the victory of Jacob will be the *Lord's*, for Jews will not have weapons of war in that battle. God will miraculously fight for them as He did in the day of battle in olden times (Zech. 14:3). Calamities of nature will prostrate the enemy. When the world hears what has happened and that the God of Israel is *the God* and that He has *made Himself known*, they will think of Israel because it is a *place down here* that they can see and stand on. The Apostle Paul says that the ethereal is more real than what is physically or literally seen, but to the natural man, the reverse seems true (2 Cor. 4:18). *Faith* does not need sight, but mankind does. Seeing, feeling, tasting, etc., bring conviction to the natural man.

In Jacob's Trouble, saviors (plural) will come with the Savior to deliver Israel (Obadiah 21). The real defeat of the forces of Gog and Magog will be *spiritually* accomplished, but the world will see the defeat from another standpoint. They will “take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you” (Zech. 8:23). Of course those who hold the skirt will have different motives. One motive will be fear. The downtrodden from Third World countries will have gone through so much trauma that they will consider the skirt good news, and they will hold it to break their chains of bondage.

Now the understanding of verse 20 begins to open up. “For with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms [of earth].” When the stone (The Christ) smites the image, then Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome will be destroyed, as well as all of the nations indirectly related to the image, such as portions of China, Africa, and Australia. What does the Lord say about Israel? “Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee” (Jer. 30:11). God will smite the image through The Christ. However, mankind will perceive the destruction as being accomplished by Israel. They will see that a marvelous victory has occurred in which Israel is vindicated, honored, and accepted.

Subsequent verses show that the smiting of the image by the stone is only the beginning. After the stone breaks the nations, the component parts of the nations will be broken in pieces. The breaking will go down to another level and another level. And what is this breaking? It is the work of the Kingdom, starting with the Lord's deliverance of natural Israel, and from Israel will come the message of salvation.

**Jer. 51:21** And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider;

The “horse and his rider” and the “chariot and his rider” pertain to Gog, the enemy invasion force that will intend to not only destroy Israel but also erase the memory of that people. However, Gog from the land of Magog will be utterly defeated.

**Jer. 51:22 With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid;**

Now the destruction switches from the military mode and goes down to everyday life. “Man and woman” will be broken in pieces. Then the detail of the man and woman are given: old and young, and young man and maid. How will this be accomplished? Other Scriptures show that conditions will change in everyday life in the Kingdom. For instance, for a while, the husband-wife relationship will still exist, but by the end of the Kingdom Age, it will cease. People will come forth from the tomb separately, since the husband-wife relationship is broken at death. There will be a radical difference in society when Christ reigns. Whether one has had a happy marriage relationship or a tenuous, troubled, or abusive marriage relationship, marriages will cease, and the people will come forth as children of Adam. The Pastor had remarkable vision, but he never carried it through. The initial coming forth may be male and female because that is how they died, but gradually the male and female genders will become one gender: a male gender. The man will soften a little, and the woman will become a little firmer. By the end of the Kingdom, the changed human race will be like the angels of heaven—they will all be males (sons) of God.

In the Kingdom, the nations will no longer exist as they are today because they will be under the New Covenant. What the names of the nations will be the Scriptures do not tell us, but there will be some kind of identification.

As we can see, these details are describing *future* happenings, not a past fulfillment. In the Kingdom, the people will be in an orientation or learning mode. At the end of the Kingdom Age, when all of the people will have come forth from the grave and learned the Kingdom rules and requirements, been purified, and withstood the test of the Little Season, with the incorrigible being destroyed, friendships will be everlasting into the ages of ages.

When people are resuscitated, they may come forth where they previously lived or died, but the geography will be changed. Every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree, that is, have his own property and peace and security (Micah 4:4). Earth’s surface will be apportioned to individuals.

**Jer. 51:23 I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers.**

Verse 23 continues to tell about a *radical* change in society in the Kingdom, a *most thorough reform*. The military will cease, with weapons being converted into farm implements. And human relationships will change. For instance, the breaking in pieces of the “shepherd and his flock” indicates that all false religious leaders and associations will cease, for religious control will be under The Christ. The “husbandman and his yoke of oxen”—that is, employment and agriculture—will be shattered and changed. There will be order, but not the old order. Still another category that will be broken to pieces is “captains and rulers,” which would be the civil rulers, police and fire departments, education departments, etc.

There has to be a radical change initially because people coming forth from the tomb will be completely bewildered. Gradually they will have to adapt to the new situation. We should keep in mind what has already been pointed out, namely, that all of the changes will be accredited to

Israel. The law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3). The New Covenant is a Jewish covenant. “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:31). The people will have to adapt to a *new* situation. The Lord’s Kingdom is not a renovation of the old but the *complete blowing away* of the old. The old will be blown into the wind and gone when the image is smitten, and in its place will be the stone, which grows and grows and grows until it fills the whole earth. This is the process that will take the word from Jerusalem into the other nations. The mechanics will operate down here, but the actual governance, direction, and oversight will be spiritual.

The stone will grow until it fills the whole earth, and in that filling, all will become Christ’s Kingdom. Eventually, at the end of the Millennium, Christ’s Kingdom will become the Father’s Kingdom so that God is “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). Then, at the end of the Kingdom, will come the answer to the Lord’s Prayer, which is addressed to our Father in heaven (Matt. 6:9). In other words, after Christ has converted the world and every knee bows and every tongue confesses to the glory of God, Jesus will hand over the Kingdom to the Father (Phil. 2:10,11).

**Q:** In verses 20-23, do the pronouns “thou” and “thee” refer to Israel as God’s rod?

**A:** Yes, the reference is to Jacob and Israel.

The Book of Jeremiah will be more and more understood as we get nearer the end of the age. The truth is supposed to be getting brighter and brighter now, no matter who is on the scene. What happens is that the light will go to the next room, but if we do not go into that room, we will not understand. The light is progressive to those who follow it. However, we must be very careful with “new light” and make sure it is only *added* light, not strange light. We need prayer, the Bible, and help from God so that we go in the *right direction* in our decision making. Being consecrated, each one of us has that responsibility. Jesus warned that all except the Very Elect will be at least temporarily deceived (Matt. 24:24). If we are interested in understanding the times in which we are living, then we have to realize that truth is progressive and that not everything has been explained in the past.

**Jer. 51:24** And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.

The clause “And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea” refers to all the ramifications of the Babylonian Empire including the different nations that were subjugated and brought underneath Babylonian control. Not just the city, the province, and the nation of Babylon but the *entire empire*—all were included in the type. Therefore, the signification in the antitype is a *worldwide* picture. All of the kingdoms, or nations, will be affected by a radical change that is accredited to Israel.

**Q:** Will you please clarify the natural application for verses 19-24. Verse 1 of this chapter says, “I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind.” As the Lord had used Babylon in the past to destroy others, wasn’t He now using the Medes to destroy Babylon? In verse 11, the Medes are actually mentioned: “Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device [purpose] is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.” Verse 20 reads, “Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms.” Then verse 28 states, “Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes.” Both before and after the discussion of the “battle axe,” the account tells how the Lord used the Medes to destroy Babylon. Therefore, doesn’t verse 20 also refer to the Medes in the

natural picture?

**A:** Perhaps there has been a misunderstanding. We have no problem with the natural picture, but verse 19 is inserted as if to say, “Stop for a moment. There is *another application*.” There was a natural application in the past, but this verse alerts us to look for another application in the future. We will consider some other Scriptures.

“And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem” (Zech. 12:5,6). This account, which mentions Judah, shows the devouring of “the people round about, on the right hand and on the left.”

Next we will turn to Micah. “And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver” (Micah 5:7,8). This account mentions “Jacob,” a term that can be used for Israel as a whole, for the ten tribes, or even just for Judah.

Now we will consider two different aspects of the “remnant of Jacob.” (1) The remnant of Jacob is favorable; it is like dew on the ground—a wonderful and refreshing blessing. (2) The remnant of Jacob is described “as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.” This prophecy was not fulfilled in the past, but it will happen in the Kingdom. The thought is that the old order is doomed to utter destruction. For instance, there will be a radical change in the animal kingdom. The lion will eat straw like the ox, and a child will be able to play on the hole of an asp, the implication being that the snake will have no more poison (Isa. 11:7,8). Dust will be the serpent’s meat (Isa. 65:25). There will also be a radical change in the human kingdom, eventually even in diet but, generally speaking, in the relationship of one with another.

The initial impact, or crash, of the stone against the image will blow everything to smithereens, but the crash will be followed by a growing stone, the Kingdom, that fills all the earth. The Kingdom will start with the smashing, but then it will *replace*. The deceased billions will come forth from the grave as they died. However, since marriages cease at death, husbands and wives will come forth, be tutored, and walk up the highway of holiness separately. Near the end of the Kingdom Age, when all of mankind is out of the tomb and walking on the highway of holiness, the earth will be filled with this new order. At the end of the Millennium, after the incorrigible have been purged in the Little Season, the Kingdom will come in the sense of *complete fulfillment*. The present order of society will be changed *quickly and radically* at the introduction, or beginning, of the Kingdom, but with different orders of people coming forth from the grave during the Kingdom, instruction and changes will continually be taking place.

“And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts” (Hag. 2:22,23). Neither Jacob nor Judah is mentioned, but the pronoun “I” is used, meaning the Lord. For those down here on earth, God will be an *invisible* Lord. Zerubbabel represents Jesus as a



Governor, but he, too, will not be seen. The Kingdom will start in Israel. The people, who will come out of the tomb the way they went down into it, will come up into this new and completely changed order.

The point is that just as Babylon destroyed Israel as a hammer and was a “destroying mountain,” rupturing the whole society of Israel, so the Medes and the Persians did the same thing to literal Babylon (Jer. 51:25). God used the Medes as His instrument of retribution for what Babylon had done to Israel. But now we are down at the end of the Gospel Age, more than 2,000 years distant from that scene, and we have a corrupt earth with a similar situation of bondage, servitude, and false religions not only in Christendom but also in other nations. The corrupt society will be ruptured suddenly, but the people from past kingdoms will be dealt with during the Kingdom Age. Those coming forth from the grave will not know what has happened. The majority do not even know the name Christ, so they will have to start from scratch. All of this work is part of the *growing* of the stone to fill the earth. And the growing will take place down here, not in heaven. Therefore, from the *visual* perspective, the people will be thinking more of the Jew. Instead of anti-Semitism, the feelings will be the *opposite*. To get blessings and make progress, the people will have to join the Jew, taking hold of his skirt. From that standpoint, “the governors of Judah [will be] like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf,” as well as a terror like lions among the Gentiles (Zech. 12:5,6; Micah 5:7,8). The term “Gentiles” includes all who are not Jews. All of the other nations and their false religions will be broken up.

We were trying to say that there is *another* application, which is of more interest to us because of the time we are living in, but past history is helpful, even though spiritual things are spiritually discerned. The Apostle Paul said it is impossible for the natural man to understand spiritual things, but the consecrated have an advantage because, having once been in the world, they know both the natural and the spiritual (1 Cor. 2:14,15). Based on their background and experience as natural men, they have some street savvy to a greater or lesser extent. Therefore, the consecrated have two things: the natural and the spiritual, the latter being what really matters. Paul said that we can understand and deal with natural men because we were once in their place. The fact that once we were blind but now we can see spiritually makes a big difference. Past experience can be beneficial, even though it was harmful to us when we walked after the flesh. Now we are in newness of life, walking according to the spirit.

In summary, then, verse 19 was thrown in just to get us to stop and consider that there is another lesson for *the Christian* to learn. The Jews back there surely understood the prophecy of their liberation from Babylon by the Medes. They were familiar with that history because they were living it.

Now we will resume our consideration of verse 24: “And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.”

**Comment:** It is interesting that God specifically used Babylon to punish Israel, yet because of the evil done against Zion, Babylon was punished.

**Reply:** The Babylonians destroyed the Temple, God’s sacred edifice, and the city of Jerusalem, God’s capital. In the spiritual picture, the same thing will happen. For instance, Papacy thinks the capital of Christianity is Rome, and the system has desecrated the true spiritual temple. The pope sits in the temple of God as if he is a god (2 Thess. 2:3,4). The retribution on spiritual Babylon will be similar to what happened to literal Babylon. Literal Babylon’s retribution came because of the defilement of a literal government, capital, and Temple. Antitypical or mystic Babylon has done the same thing. The government has changed, the Catholic Church

interprets Scripture, and church councils are considered to be not only equal to the Word of God but even above the authority of the Bible. Because of these evils, retribution must come on spiritual Babylon as it did on literal Babylon. Just as natural Israelites were defiled in the past, so true spiritual Israelites have been defiled by the nominal systems, Catholicism and Protestantism, mother and daughters, as emphasized by the clause “I will render *unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea.*”

**Jer. 51:25 Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain.**

**Jer. 51:26 And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD.**

A paragraph mark should be placed in front of verse 25 to show a change in thought and a separation from verses 19-24.

“I am against thee, O *destroying mountain*” is a reference to the Second Pyramid. The Great Pyramid is called a mountain both in Scripture and in history, and that is the *true* mountain. For two reasons, the Second Pyramid appears to be superior to the Great Pyramid. (1) Its base is situated on slightly elevated ground. (2) It has what appears to be a capstone, whereas the Great Pyramid is flat on top. Up until recent times, a picture of the Second Pyramid was often erroneously shown as the Great Pyramid. In the Kingdom Age, the Great Pyramid will be refurbished externally, and the Second Pyramid will be leveled and the stones powdered.

Zechariah 4:7 is a prophecy of the destruction of the Second Pyramid: “Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof [of the Great Pyramid] with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.” God has determined that the detraction of the Second Pyramid will be removed. The destruction of the Second Pyramid and the building up of the Great Pyramid will occur relatively contemporaneously. From another standpoint, this process will happen all during the Kingdom Age, that is, when people come forth from the grave and see that Papacy was the false or Antichrist system and that The Christ, Head and body, are the true “Messiah.” The Second Pyramid and the Great Pyramid are symbols. Just as the Jews, Babylon, the Medes, the Persians, etc., are literal as well as symbolic, so it is with the two pyramids. For example, the top stone of the Great Pyramid is a symbol of Christ.

**Q:** Does the top stone represent just Jesus, or can it be The Christ?

**A:** Eventually the top stone will represent The Christ, but we do not want to take away the primacy of Christ at the present time. Jesus is our top stone now. The exterior casing or surface stones on the four sides of the Great Pyramid represent the Little Flock, and the core masonry represents the world of mankind. Bro. Russell used horizontal strata to show, in descending order, The Christ, the Great Company, the Ancient Worthies, Israel, and the world of mankind.

**Jer. 51:27 Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars.**

In the type, God rallied the forces of the north (Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz) to come down against Babylon.

Remember that Seraiah had publicly proclaimed the message of Jeremiah 50 and 51 while

standing on the tower, as it were, in the fourth year of Zedekiah. As Jeremiah's long ministry was drawing to a close, the prophet predicted the doom of Babylon at the moment when conditions seemed to indicate the opposite. Early in his ministry, Jeremiah prophesied the fall of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple and the victory of Babylon, but now, near the end of his ministry, he predicted that the situation would be reversed and Babylon would fall. Those who heard Jeremiah's message, as delivered through Seraiah, knew about Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz.

The literal "captain" who was appointed was Cyrus, a representation of Jesus. Another interesting picture with Cyrus is the restoration of the Temple vessels to Israel, but that was a completely different setting.

"Cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars." An ominous part of a locust plague, at least in this country, is seeing the many, many cobwebs start to form. The webs get larger and larger until they are just *filled* with the insects. When their nests are burned, thousands of caterpillars tumble out onto the ground. If the plague were not controlled, how *ominous* the multitude of caterpillars would be! As the caterpillars mature from stage to stage, they represent destruction in advance. And so the preparation of the enemy, described as "rough caterpillars," was frightening to behold. The horde coming down had a psychological effect.

This prophecy was uttered in the fourth year of Zedekiah, so it was given 77 years in advance; that is, 77 years later the Babylonians saw the horde coming down with Cyrus. But what did the Babylonian leadership do? Many of the common people in the land were terrified, but not the leaders, who were confident in the walls and the food supply in the capital city. They felt they could withstand the siege despite the multitudinous forces. But eventually the "caterpillars" invaded the city.

**Comment:** Caterpillars were mentioned earlier in this chapter: "The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee" (Jer. 51:14).

The Babylonian leadership was deceived because Cyrus separated out a large number of his invading host to dig the new canal for the diversion of the waters. Therefore, the leaders of Babylon did not realize the size of the enemy and felt secure despite the siege and the shooting of arrows that found their mark. In the meantime, the channel was being dug. The siege diverted the attention of the Babylonians from what Cyrus actually had in mind. Darius the Mede may have been the mastermind because he is credited with conquering Babylon, as shown by Daniel. He had a tremendous empire with more than a hundred different nations underneath him. Darius was old at this time, and two years after the fall of Babylon, we hear no more about him. Instead Cyrus, picturing Jesus, took control; Cyrus burgeoned in history as the character on center stage.

Incidentally, the Ashchenazi influence, descendants of Japheth, ultimately went into the north, into Europe, in contradistinction to the Sephardic people, who started with Shem and in time went to the south. The Sephardic people went into Italy, Spain, and northern Africa. The people of Minni may eventually have gone into Asia: China, Korea, and Japan. But in verse 27, we are talking about conditions that existed around 536 BC.

**Jer. 51:28** Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion.

"Prepare against her [Babylon] the nations ... and all the land of his [Darius's] dominion." Darius, representing God, had the dominion when Babylon was taken.

**Jer. 51:29** And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant.

**Jer. 51:30** The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken.

The colon after “women” is proper to indicate a change in thought; that is, “they [the enemy coming in] burned her [Babylon’s] dwellingplaces.” First, the Babylonian victims are being described; then the actions of the enemy are given. To become “as women” meant the Babylonian men were so weakened in their fear that they could not fight.

**Comment:** To make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitant was exact retribution for what had been done to Israel and Jerusalem 70 years earlier.

**Reply:** Yes, and the land turned to desert as time went on.

Babylon’s “bars are broken.” Figurative language is used here to refer to a literal incident. The bars of the city gates were broken in effect because they extended only about two feet down into the water of the Euphrates, allowing the water to flow. The river went through Babylon from one side to the other, splitting the city in half. Never dreaming that the water would be entirely diverted into a new channel, the inhabitants of Babylon thought the two-foot bars were adequate. But Cyrus and his army marched into the city underneath the gates, thus figuratively breaking them. The protective bars were made null and void in that they no longer prevented enemy invasion. They were ineffectual in protecting the city.

**Comment:** This reaction was retribution, for in Babylon’s earlier conquests, Nebuchadnezzar and his army had caused the men of other nations to become similarly fearful. For example, “Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail” (Jer. 49:24).

**Reply:** Yes. A sister has testified that she was on an airplane when an announcement came over the intercom to prepare for a crash landing. Her legs started to jump up and down uncontrollably. The effect was psychological because death seemed imminent. A woman is usually more emotional than a man. A man is not necessarily stronger in other ways, but the constitutional makeup of a man and a woman is not quite the same. Some people are affected in the stomach by traumatic experiences, and they double over as if they are going to have a child. The brain controls certain muscles, but in times of panic, the brain is dulled and involuntary muscles, which are supposed to be secondary, take control, causing unexpected reactions. A slang expression is that one’s knees become as water. Therefore, when the men of Babylon saw the enemy actually in the city, they were totally unprepared.

**Jer. 51:31** One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end,

Verse 31 is describing a “pony express” system within the city of Babylon. In former years in the United States, the mail was delivered by men on horseback carrying the mail. A rider traveled as fast as possible to the next stop, where another rider took over, etc. Because of the large size of the capital city of Babylon, runners were needed as messengers. One would run at top speed and deliver the message to the next runner, etc., until a runner got to the king, who was in a central location of the city. Now the king was told that the enemy had come in under the gates and taken the city.

While verse 31 follows verses 29 and 30, it was not sequential in fulfillment. The enemy produced the effect of completely surprising the mighty men so that they were not prepared for battle and became as women. The enemy entered the city from the east, coming in like caterpillars in numbers. As the army entered, some began to torch everything in the city, and others were intent on getting the king. By killing the king, they would destroy the communication or control center, the “computer,” as it were, for he gave all the orders. Meanwhile, there was a rampage of destruction because the Medes were determined not to leave any human being alive.

Belshazzar’s feast of drunken revelry was going on at the time the enemy entered the city. Daniel had just interpreted the handwriting on the wall. When the king heard the explanation, he appointed Daniel as “third ruler in the kingdom” and appropriately robed him for this honorable office (Dan. 5:29). The timing shows that before the utter fall of mystic Babylon, the true Church will be complete. The Daniel class will go beyond the veil and be figuratively clothed with robes of glory.

The one post running to meet the other shows *suddenness*. Likewise, the fall of mystic Babylon, when the stone strikes the image, will be *sudden*. However, the suddenness does not preclude a process subsequently.

After the capital city had been destroyed, the next event was the emptying and the destruction of all the people in the land of Chaldea. The land was also made desolate.

**Jer. 51:32** And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.

The “reeds” in the river Euphrates were burned. The diversion of the waters was a silent work at nighttime. The water level went lower and lower until the riverbed was empty. Certainly the princes and the officials at the feast were completely unaware that the riverbed was dry and that the enemy could now enter the city. Reeds, which formerly grew in the river, were set on fire. The Babylonians were adversely psychologically affected by seeing the burning of the houses and the reeds. The burning added to the consternation, confusion, and disarray of those who previously thought Babylon could not be destroyed.

**Jer. 51:33** For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshingfloor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.

To paraphrase, “The daughter of Babylon brings to mind a threshing floor.” When a threshing floor is used, the activities that take place include the crushing and the winnowing of wheat and the blowing away of chaff. Mystic Babylon has been threshing the true Christian, and in the near future, the Lord will give back to Babylon her just dues and thresh her.

Another way of viewing verse 33, according to the Masoretic translation, is that instead of the wheat being threshed on the floor, the threshing floor is crushing the wheat. The hard floor has served its purpose in developing the Lord’s people, but once the Little Flock is complete, there will be no more need for the threshing floor, and God will do away with it. Even though the threshing floor served an *evil* purpose, God saw that *good* would result because it provided a testing ground for His true wheat.

**Comment:** The analogy of a harvest reminds us of Revelation 14:15, “And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and

reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

**Reply:** Yes, there are two harvests. The harvest of the wheat (the Little Flock) precedes the harvest of the earth, the judgment upon mystic Babylon.

“Yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.” All of this prophecy was publicly proclaimed by Seraiah in the fourth year of Zedekiah, seven or eight years before the destruction of Jerusalem and more than 70 years prior to the destruction of Babylon, yet this prophecy reads as if the destruction of Babylon had a past fulfillment.

**Jer. 51:34** Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.

Verse 34 reminds us of what Jesus said when the Apostle Paul was on the way to Damascus: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Saul responded, “Who art thou, Lord?” Jesus said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 9:4,5). The Lord’s people were being persecuted, but Jesus likened them to him. Here we have the same principle with Jehovah. When injuries were done to the Israelites, His people, it was as if Jehovah Himself were being crushed. Therefore, verse 34 shows that God has emotions. We usually think of Him as being so great, so austere, and so serene that we do not consider His emotional side. The Scriptures tell us, “The Father himself loveth you” (John 16:27).

**Comment:** Verse 34 is a little confusing because verse 35 reads, “The violence done to *me* and to *my* flesh be upon Babylon, *shall the inhabitant of Zion say.*” In verse 35, Israel is the one speaking. And in verse 36, God says, “I will plead *thy* cause,” as if speaking about Israel.

**Reply:** It is true that the account can be viewed from either perspective. Nevertheless, God was emotionally in this narrative. Even though the persecution was being done to His nominal people, God Himself wanted to requite what Babylon did to them. God was the King of Israel, and it was *His* city, *His* Temple, and *His* nation. What was done to these places was done, as it were, to Him.

**Q:** Is the thought that the king of Babylon devoured and crushed God and made Him an empty vessel, etc.?

**A:** The verse has nothing to do with God’s own form or being. He was saying, “What you have done to others—to *my* city, *my* Temple, *my* nation”—is an insult to me. When Jesus asked Paul, “Why do you persecute me?” Paul was persecuting, imprisoning, and putting to death Christians, Jesus’ *followers*, but Jesus said the persecution was against *him*. The application of the pronouns to Israel in verse 34 is correct, and that is the more apparent, generally understood aspect. We were just trying to bring out another aspect, namely, how the God of justice, the Lord of hosts, views the persecution. What has been done in the past and what is presently happening in Israel are an insult to God that will bring retribution.

**Comment:** The NIV uses “us” and “our” in verses 34 and 35: “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured us, he has thrown us into confusion, he has made us an empty jar. Like a serpent he has swallowed us and filled his stomach with our delicacies, and then has spewed us out. May the violence done to our flesh be upon Babylon, say the inhabitants of Zion. ‘May our blood be on those who live in Babylonia,’ says Jerusalem.”

**Comment:** The Hebrew according to the King James margin is “my.”

The Heavenly Father has controlled emotions. As has been pointed out, “the Father himself *loveth* you” (John 16:27). But then *principled* love was expressed in the text “God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). For those who consecrate in the present age and follow Jesus, there is a big difference between “God so loved the *world*” and “God so loved the *Church*.” From Jesus’ standpoint, the pearl of great price is the Church, and it would be the same from God’s standpoint (Matt. 13:45,46). “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his [God’s] eye” is the principle (Zech. 2:8). If one of the Very Elect down here is criticized, ridiculed, disparaged, etc., the Heavenly Father says it is like sticking a finger in His eye. Of course that statement is not literally true, but the expression indicates that the “persecuting spirit” bothers Him. Nevertheless, God controls Himself because He knows all will work out for good. Those who render the criticism and ridicule will receive retribution, for the operating principle is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

**Comment:** “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee” is the principle (Gen. 12:3).

**Comment:** The retribution principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth seems to imply the ultimate great unity of all things. In other words, doing wrong to another person is like doing wrong to me because we are all connected.

**Reply:** Jesus stated the principle by saying to Saul, “Why persecutest thou me?” Therefore, the pronouns “I,” “me,” and “my” can be viewed as referring to God. Verse 34 has the usual application in regard to Israel’s sentiments plus this other dimension.

**Jer. 51:35** The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say.

We are reminded of the incident when Jesus was before Pilate and the people were demanding Jesus’ crucifixion. Pilate thought scourging would appease the crowd, but the people cried out, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). And that has happened down through the Gospel Age. Even if the words had not been uttered, Jesus’ blood would still have received retributory judgment. The Jewish people would not have spoken thus if they thought there was any possibility Jesus’ blood would actually be on them and their children. The same principle applies when people curse and take God’s name in vain in order to be heard and attract attention. The Scriptures tell us, “Every idle [and pernicious] word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36). Habitual wrongdoing and wrong speaking carry a penalty. With the consecrated who are faithful to whatever degree, judgments come before their demise, although the judgments are not always recognized as such. For instance, answers to prayer may be forgotten or not even recognized. Sometimes the problems that Christians have in their life are the result of their own wrongdoing. For Christians, the penalty must be paid in the present life.

**Jer. 51:36** Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.

God promised to plead the cause and take vengeance for Israel (as well as for Himself) for the demeaning. He said, “I will dry up her [Babylon’s] sea, and make her springs dry.” With literal Babylon, the “sea” and “springs” refer to the Euphrates. In Old Testament times, the word “sea” had a broader meaning than we give it today. For example, the large laver for Solomon’s Temple, which was 30 cubits (45 feet) in circumference, was called a “sea,” that is, a body of water (1 Kings 7:23). Therefore, a river or any large quantity of water could be called a “sea.” Of the four rivers that came out of Eden, the Euphrates was the largest. We should keep in mind, as has been pointed out, that this prophecy was given several years before Jerusalem

and Solomon's Temple were even destroyed.

**Jer. 51:37** And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant.

"Babylon [the city and its environs] shall become heaps [ruins]." Over the years, Babylon was covered with sand. Archaeologists discover many ancient cities by digging where there is a mound or hill of sand. "Dragons" are jackals. Just as Israel was made "an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant," so Babylon would have that experience. The word "hiss" really means "whistle." As people passed by the ruins of Jerusalem in traveling from one nation to another, they whistled. Incidentally, whistling, a form of signaling, was much more common in the agrarian lifestyle of the past than it is today.

**Comment:** The NIV translates this verse, "Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, a place where no one lives."

**Reply:** Yes, but keep in mind that the "hiss" was a sound. Some people used the Lord's name in vain, and others gave a whistle, as if to say, "Wow!"

**Jer. 51:38** They shall roar together like lions: they shall yell as lions' whelps.

**Jer. 51:39** In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD.

Verse 39 brings Belshazzar's feast to mind as a fulfillment. Those at the feast were unaware that the waters were being diverted and that Cyrus and his army were entering the city.

**Jer. 51:40** I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he goats.

In slaughterhouses for sheep, for example, a ram is chosen to go down the channel, and the other sheep follow. Then just before the ram reaches the slaughtering machine, an exit gate opens and shuts quickly so that only the ram can escape to subsequently repeat the process again and again, leading many sheep to slaughter. A "he goat" leads goats, a ram leads sheep and other rams, and a steer leads other steers. The animals who follow the lead goat, ram, or steer are not aware of what is happening. They run down and get boxed into a situation unknowingly. Even if the animals sense danger, they are willing to follow the leader.

The analogy is that the Babylonians were in a mental fog through drinking and revelry and did not realize that the enemy was coming in through the riverbed. God brought the Babylonians to the fate of utter confusion, defeat, and slaughter.

**Jer. 51:41** How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!

"Sheshach" is another name for Babylon. "How is the praise of the whole earth [Babylon] surprised [because its rulers had confidence in the high, thick walls and the abundant food storage]!" When Papacy gets its hour of power in the near future, the system will have the same spirit of confidence in its power that was exhibited during the Dark Ages. The surprise element will be the result of their complete unawareness of what is really happening—their demise! Papacy will be so confident that it will be having a "party" at the time of its downfall.

**Comment:** "Sheshach" is used only twice in the Bible. The word was probably taken from one of Babylon's goddesses. As Christians, we are identified with our belief in Christ. Babylon was



identified with the heathen goddesses that its people worshipped. Antitypical Babylon is also identified with a false worship, especially the worship of the Virgin Mary.

**Reply:** The statue on the Plain of Dura was of Bel, a god of Babylon. Along with the goddess Sheshach, Merodach was a Babylonian god, and both were out in the province. In other nations, Sheshach was called Ashtoreth or another name.

“How is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!” Revelation 18 comes to mind. “And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning. Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.... The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate” (Rev. 18:9-11,15-19). Various segments of society will experience shock when they see mystic Babylon fall. The demise of the system is necessary to make way for the establishment of Christ’s Kingdom.

There is no question that Jeremiah 51 pertains to Papacy and Christendom because of preceding verses. Hence in this chapter, “Sheshach” *does not refer to the anarchists*. However, the “Sheshach” of Jeremiah 25:26 is a reference to Russia, for this “Sheshach” will drink *after* the fall of mystic Babylon, represented under “Jerusalem.”

The *Expanded Biblical Comments* say of Jeremiah 51:41 that Babylon, the religious element, will fall last. The quote, taken from *Harvest Gleanings*, equates Jeremiah 25:26 with Jeremiah 51:41, but this article was written prior to the *Reprints* and when Barbour was coauthoring. The rest of the article contains *many errors* and was probably not written by Russell but by Barbour. Moreover, *Harvest Gleanings* contains other references to Jeremiah 51:41, and one is excellent but not quoted in the *Expanded Comments*. Either *all* pertinent comments should be quoted or *none*, but not just prejudicial selective quotes.

Sheshach in Jeremiah 25 is a different picture. With Israel and Babylon being the antagonists, Israel represents Christendom. Judah and Jerusalem, picturing the nominal systems, were to be destroyed by Sheshach (or *Russia* in antitype, the king of the north). The point is that Sheshach was God’s method of destruction in that picture.

But in Jeremiah 51, the two antagonists were Babylon and the Medes (and confederate nations), who came down from the north to be God’s instrument of destruction on Babylon. Babylon pictures Christendom, and spiritually speaking, the Medes represent the true Church. Hence *in antitype*, the “Babylon” of Jeremiah 25 is not the same as the “Babylon” of Jeremiah 51.

The “mother” of Jeremiah 50:12 is Babylon, the Chaldeans: “Your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be ashamed: behold, the hindermost of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert.” The verse *seems to say* that Babylon (the “hindermost”) would be the last to be destroyed. In fact, many translations say the “last,” but the King James Version is better. “Last” can imply finality, the last in sequence, the last in time, or the least. “Least” is the correct thought in Jeremiah 50:12; that is, Babylon is the *most disreputable* system

that has come on the earth because it took the Lord's name.

Jeremiah 25:21-26 gives an enumeration of Edom, Moab, Ammon, etc., etc. All were to drink *before* Sheshach. Here in Jeremiah 51, the Medes were in power and were destroyed *after* Babylon. Hence these are *two different pictures*, which cannot be mixed. Similarly, the picture of Elijah's seeing the wind, earthquake, fire, and still small voice and the account of the smiting of the image cannot be mixed because the wind is *first* with Elijah and it is *last* (it blows the chaff away) in Daniel 2.

**Jer. 51:42** The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof.

Since the Hebrew language is limited, the word translated "sea" is used broadly and takes on varied meanings. The *lack* of water was instrumental in connection with the downfall of the literal city of Babylon. Also, there seems to be an intimation that in the diversion of the water from the capital city, the water went into the plain and then eventually found its way back into the main stream. No doubt the diversion caused considerable destruction outside the city. Therefore, water was instrumental both in drying up and in flooding.

Of course this verse was introduced because of the higher antitypical significance in back of the natural picture. The "sea" represents the masses, who will be instrumental in the downfall of Babylon. The "sea" coming up indicates that mystic Babylon will be inundated with the angry masses, with mob violence. When the water was cut off in literal Babylon, the army of Media-Persia *quickly* inundated and captured the city; i.e., Babylon seemed to be literally flooded.

**Comment:** Isaiah 57:20 likens the wicked to a "troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

**Comment:** When the people (the "sea") realize they have been deceived by Papacy, they will angrily turn on the system and destroy it.

**Comment:** Revelation 18:21 mentions Babylon's fall into the sea. "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."

**Reply:** Yes, a mighty angel will lift up "a great millstone" (Babylon) and cast it into the sea.

**Comment:** We sometimes characterize the masses who will destroy mystic Babylon as the Lord's Great Army.

Several things are implied depending on what part of the drama we are considering. The diverted water will flood, or overwhelm, mystic Babylon. The water that was deprived of affording revenue, commercial traffic, protection, etc., to the city proper is usually explained spiritually as the cutting off of support, financial and otherwise, to the nominal Church system. Mystic Babylon has waxed rich from the revenues and support of the masses, who have been deluded. Thus we have a seeming paradox, but both perspectives are true.

**Jer. 51:43** Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby.

The result of the destruction of literal Babylon is that it became "a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness." *Complete* destruction and desolation are shown. Once Papacy is destroyed, no one will pass through it anymore. Literal Babylon went from *great* wealth and prosperity to

*nothingness, and so will mystic Babylon.*

**Comment:** The end of Revelation 18:21, quoted earlier, describes what verse 43 is saying. Antitypical Babylon “shall be found *no more at all.*”

**Comment:** The fact that “her cities” (plural) became a desolation indicates there was a large suburban development, even in the proximity of the capital city. And of course the empire extended quite far.

**Jer. 51:44** And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

“Bel,” the god of Babylon, represents one perspective of the Papacy. The blasphemous teachings of the system will have to be repudiated (“swallowed up”).

**Comment:** Revelation 18:5,6 describes the retribution: “For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.”

“The nations [peoples] shall not flow together any more unto him.” The water that coursed through literal Babylon was a means of revenue, commerce, and transporting goods.

“The wall of Babylon shall fall.” The stones in the walls were utilized somewhat like the casing stones of the Great Pyramid in Egypt. The casing stones were removed to provide building materials elsewhere in Cairo. Just as ravens dispose of carcasses in the road or in the land, so the people took advantage of the supplies that were left when Babylon was conquered. Eventually over the years, the walls deteriorated and the blowing sand covered the ruins. Spiritually speaking, those who support Babylon are, in one sense, also the wall. That wall of protection and support will cease.

**Jer. 51:45** My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.

In the type, the instruction “My people” was addressed to the Jews in advance of Babylon’s destruction. Those who obeyed delivered “every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.” This admonition was given prior to the destruction of literal Babylon, and a similar admonition will be given just prior to the destruction of mystic Babylon.

**Comment:** Then, spiritually speaking, this admonition will go out to the consecrated who remain in Babylon after the feet members are off the scene and the fall is imminent.

**Reply:** Yes. Those who obey at that time will leave Babylon just before its fall. We have considered the type of Lot’s being pulled out of Sodom at the last minute. His leaving Sodom was almost synonymous timewise with the destruction but had to just precede it.

Verse 45 is slanted to the Great Company still in Babylon after the Church is complete. At the time of Babylon’s fall, the Great Company will come out relatively unscathed. At least for a time, the wrathful element will make a distinction between the hypocrites and those who are sincere. The Little Flock is promised an escape from the “fierce anger of the LORD,” the great Time of Trouble (Luke 21:36). These verses are not referring to the call to come out of Babylon in 1878 but to a time in the near future when retribution will come upon mystic Babylon.

**Q:** Wasn't this message delivered by Seraiah in the fourth year of Zedekiah, which was more than 70 years before the fall of literal Babylon?

**A:** Yes, but no one at that time fully realized what the admonition meant. If we had been Jews living in Babylon, we would have seen a Jew named Seraiah get up on the wall, and we would have known that he was an emissary from Zedekiah. Upon hearing the message, we would not have left Babylon right then and there, but as events began to happen over the years and the downfall of Babylon was at hand, we would recall the message that had been delivered earlier. Similarly, the invitation to Christians to come out of Babylon lest they receive of her plagues began to go forth in 1878, but it has continued and is still applicable today. However, a time will come immediately prior to the fall of Babylon when the remaining consecrated will realize the advice that was given and, if rightly exercised, will act upon that advice. Events that are happening will awaken them to the realization.

**Comment:** In principle, we are reminded of Jerusalem in AD 69, when the Roman armies were gathering.

**Reply:** Yes, Jesus had warned the early Christians in Jerusalem: "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto" (Luke 21:20,21). The *urgency* of fleeing was emphasized. "In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.... I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Luke 17:31,34-36). General Vespasian had set a siege around Jerusalem, but when the Roman emperor died, Vespasian rushed back to Rome as a contender for the throne. He left Titus in charge, but in the change of authority, the siege was momentarily relaxed for a couple of days, giving Christians an opportunity to obey Jesus' advice and flee immediately. Those who remembered Jesus' advice and obeyed went out *quickly*. The Great Company will similarly flee at a crucial time at the end of the Gospel Age.

**Comment:** The wording of verse 45 is significant, for it indicates a time of extremity: "Deliver ye every man *his soul* from the fierce anger of the LORD." The situation will be a matter of life and death, the principle being, "Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:32,33; Mark 8:35).

**Reply:** Yes, those of the consecrated who do not come out of Babylon in the future when this period comes to pass—that is, after their eyes are opened following the completion of the Little Flock—will lose their life forever in Second Death.

**Jer. 51:46** And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.

Bible commentaries usually skip over this verse, but it needs explanation. The first part of the verse mentions a fainting heart and fear of a rumor. When death is suddenly approaching, if the victim is paralyzed with fear, he is a goner—just like in the animal kingdom. To not lose faith, one must have the Lord's spirit, or power, and the promises of the Holy Scriptures. If we let go of the anchor of hope that is in the Most Holy, we will lose everything, for that is our salvation (Heb. 6:18-20). We must not abandon the hope of our consecration, of our giving our will to God, and of Jesus' being our Advocate and Savior.

“A rumour shall both come *one* year, and after that in *another* year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.” Although the words “one” and “another” are supplied, they are definitely indicated according to the Hebrew vocabulary, which is much smaller than ours.

What is the “rumour” that will come one year and then in another year? The word “rumour” is significant, for a time period is associated with it. Verse 46 ties in with other pictures. There will come a time when the *immediacy* of certain future events will cause the Great Company to recognize their drowsy condition and lack of “oil.” The sense of doom will be impending. In other words, prior to Babylon’s fall, the immediacy of the destruction *will be felt*.

A two- to three-year period is suggested before the climax; that is, the rumor will be abroad for two to three years. The spiritual class will realize they should abandon the system; some will and some will not. Those rightly exercised will be *strengthened* to get out of Babylon.

When the destruction occurs, the eunuchs will throw Jezebel out the window from inside the system. Jezebel, the woman, is not Papacy but the Roman Catholic Church and faith—*ecclesiasticism*. The churches will not fall simultaneously all over the world, but the people will see the downfall *beginning* to happen. As the erosion starts to take place, people will wake up. Certainly the fall of mystic Babylon will require more than a year; it will take about two years or possibly a little longer. During the three days (*years*), more or less, of the Elijah-Elisha type, other events will be happening in addition to the fall of the ecclesiastical systems (2 Kings 2:17).

**Q:** Will the “rumour” be associated in some way with Elisha’s constantly querying Elijah about when the latter would depart?

**A:** The three days occurred later with the sons of the 50 prophets, who have a twofold application. Inquiry manifesting interest will be made by (1) unconsecrated individuals associated with the consecrated of spiritual Israel and (2) the Holy Remnant of natural Israel.

As time goes on and events occur, the light gets clearer. Then we can look back with hindsight and see what was or was not the case, such as the year 1914 and other dates that have been suggested.

**Q:** Was there any natural application to verse 46?

**A:** Probably there was, but no history has come down to us. When Cyrus was in the process of besieging Babylon, a very large city, the Babylonians surely saw the assemblage taking place. The siege was an intentional distraction on the part of Cyrus so that the new channel for the river could be dug secretly. As the Jews saw the cordon being drawn around the capital, those who recalled Seraiah’s earlier message fled from the city.

God’s people still in Babylon after the feet members receive their change will be called to come out and not to faint in heart. With the realization that Babylon’s doom is sealed (verse 44) will come a responsibility on the part of the remaining consecrated to leave the system.

Two different pictures show two different degrees of enlightenment of the Great Company. Elisha represents those with a present-truth background, and the foolish virgins picture all of the Great Company.

“Violence in the land, ruler against ruler” is a description of anarchy. Already we see the seeds of dissatisfaction of the potential eunuch class. Independent, free-spirit Catholic scholars in

Europe have grievances against the Papacy, and some have been defrocked, prohibited from giving the sacraments, etc. Because of the laws of the land and the freedom of the press, their mouths cannot be stopped at present.

Regarding the future turbulence, rumors will be in the news media about increasing trouble and lawlessness against ecclesiasticism in certain areas. The rumors will become so pronounced that they will cause fear in those who live in more stabilized societies. For the consecrated, the principle will be, “Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread” (Isa. 8:13).

**Comment:** At Belshazzar’s feast, the rulers were partying when the messenger arrived to say the city had been taken. The party ended abruptly.

**Jer. 51:47** Therefore, behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.

**Jer. 51:48** Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD.

In the type, the graven images of Babylon were desecrated. As far as the capital city was concerned, everyone within its confines was put to death by the enemy. In the province, the situation was different. The Babylonians were generally put to death, but what about the many captive peoples from various nations? As the Medes began to dismantle the structure of the Babylonian Empire, opportunity was given for the captives to return to their homelands. Although particular attention was given to the Jews and they did “sing,” others also happily returned to their homelands, their roots. Meanwhile, the “whole land [of Babylon] shall be confounded [in confusion].”

Based on Psalm 75:6, “north” is symbolic of divine judgment: “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south [and, therefore, inferentially from the north].” While the spoilers came from the north, they entered the city on the east, where the river came into the city. Spiritually speaking, the entrance will also be from the east. “And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east [the glorified Church in association with Jesus] might be prepared” (Rev. 16:12). The stone that will smite the image is The Christ, Head and body members.

“Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon.” Which “heaven” and “earth” will sing? As an illustration, Nebuchadnezzar is complimented in the Scriptures for his wisdom in taking the elite, the intelligentsia, as it were, from all of the nations he captured and using them in his government. For example, Daniel and the three Hebrew children were utilized for consultation, and they were so blessed of God that they excelled and were put into a high governmental role. They thus had one foot in the civil realm and the other foot in the ecclesiastical realm because of the circumstances and providences of God. Elite captives from other nations were employed in civil areas such as science. Because of this practice of Nebuchadnezzar to utilize the abilities of the handpicked captives in areas of jurisdiction and high influence, Babylon became a great empire. And the Babylonian Empire was different from the other universal empires in that Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome did not follow this practice. The point is that when Babylon was defeated, the captives in “heaven” and in “earth”—that structure of society—were “singing” happily because they were free from Babylonian control.

Spiritually speaking, the singing would correspond to Revelation 18:20, “Rejoice over her, thou

heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.” The Little Flock will be off the earthly scene at this time, rejoicing with the Lord because mystic Babylon has fallen. In addition, the spiritual class still down here, the Great Company, will rejoice—eventually. The downfall of Babylon will be a very sobering situation with a disruption of society and confusion, but it will indicate that the establishment of the Kingdom is *very near*. At first, the Great Company class will weep over the realization they have lost the crown, but then they will wonder, Where do we fit in? The answer will depend on how one acts at that time. And so, not initially but in time, those of the Great Company who flee out of Babylon at the last moment and are rightly exercised will rejoice while still down here.

**Q:** Verse 47 speaks of judgment coming upon the graven images and the whole land being confounded and all the slain of Babylon falling. In antitype, is that verse saying, in a very succinct way, that the Vatican will be sacked, the churches desecrated, and the tares slain?

**A:** Yes, that would be true. A sample judgment occurred in Russia when Lenin and Trotsky took over during the Communist Revolution. Churches were left standing, but the interiors were smashed, and gold and any valuables were taken, leaving a mess of confusion. In the process, the Communists discovered many deceptions. For example, sacred objects revered by the Greek Orthodox Church (in Russia) were made of sawdust, and “miracles” were performed by mechanical contraptions. The more the Communists uncovered the deceptions, the more violent they became. In Luther’s day also, some of the people who no longer believed in Catholicism began to act improperly, and Luther lost control of the very Reformation the Lord had used him to inaugurate.

**Jer. 51:49** As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.

Verse 49 shows that retribution was enacted upon literal Babylon. As Babylon persecuted God’s people, Israel, so it would be destroyed and the people slain. The antitype is obvious regarding Christians of the Gospel Age and mystic Babylon.

**Jer. 51:50** Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

In the natural picture, the Jews who “escaped the sword” were outside the city of Babylon in the surrounding area. They obediently left as instructed, but they were to “go away, [and] stand not still,” that is, go back to Israel.

For the spiritual counterpart, we think of Lot, his two daughters, and his wife, who were pulled out of Sodom. Lot asked, “Instead of going to the mountain way over there, may we flee to Zoar, a little city nearby?”

The Great Company class will “escape the sword” in mystic Babylon’s fall. They will get out *just before* Babylon is destroyed. In their flight, the Great Company will be instructed to go beyond the suburbs, as it were; that is, they are to get as far away from Babylon as possible.

“Let Jerusalem come into your mind” means the Great Company is not only to remember the God of Jerusalem but also to “let [the *heavenly*] Jerusalem come into your mind.” Having consecrated their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Company class are spiritual. Although they will not make the Little Flock, they will get life and a heavenly resurrection, and they must keep their spiritual reward in mind as a goal and destiny. Even though the Great Company will not make their calling and election sure, the Lord is very much interested in this class, as shown by multiple pictures that dovetail wonderfully.

**Jer. 51:51 We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces: for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD'S house.**

Verse 51 describes a state of confusion in both type and antitype. The Jews were confused in Babylon because Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 606 BC, and “strangers,” the Babylonians, had entered the “sanctuaries of the LORD'S house.” Therefore, when Cyrus issued the decree allowing them to return to Israel, they were to obey and to have faith and trust that God would direct them. Ezekiel's mission, among other things, was to give hope along a material line because Jewish people are practical and pragmatic. Their lack of faith and their desire for natural things have been a hindrance to them spiritually. Verse 51 expresses their reflection.

In the spiritual application, the Great Company will realize their lack and also their need for more of the Holy Spirit. Whether they are in or out of mystic Babylon, they will awake to their condition and be shamefaced and personally weep to realize they are not of the Little Flock. This will be a time of great sobriety for them, as they ask, “Where do we stand?” Their decision will become a matter of eternal life or eternal death. To get life, they will have to wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb in this tribulation period (Rev. 7:14).

**Comment:** The attitude of the Great Company will be, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jer. 8:20).

At that time, the Great Company will be shamefaced not in regard to what people around them think but in regard to their *own failure* to make their calling and election sure. It will be a *personal* reaction as to where they stand with the Lord. “Strangers” will have destroyed the nominal spiritual temple and city, and all these things will flood their minds. “The land is desolate. We must go back, but what should we go back to?” It will be a very turbulent period for the Great Company, but instruction and advice will be available. When they get that instruction, they will realize, “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9 paraphrase). Their goal will then be to participate in the marriage supper. The Lord loves His people, but He does have qualifications for the office of Little Flock—and none of us can be sure whether we are qualified to actually fill that office. The Scriptures counsel, “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off” (1 Kings 20:11). In other words, while we are still down here in the flesh, we should not get high-minded and think we have made the Little Flock. Some Christians are very confident and even rejoice at the time of death, but such an attitude is no guarantee of winning the prize. What is important is the *Lord's* thinking on the matter. Having the proper attitude is very humbling. However, the prize is there for the taking, and we are *to run* with that hope.

**Comment:** The “strangers” who “come into the sanctuaries of the LORD'S house” are the tare element that not only is allowed membership in the nominal Church but also is often (or usually) put in charge. At this point in time, the Great Company will realize they have let down the barriers and permitted errors in doctrine and conduct to go on in their midst. The following two Scriptures are pertinent. “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Rev 18:2). “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3,4). The Great Company will realize they have permitted uncleanness in both doctrine and conduct. Stated another way, they will realize they accepted strange and wrong teachings from false teachers.

If we do not understand the natural picture in detail, we will miss something in the spiritual



picture. In fact, that is the very purpose of the nitty-gritty details of history that are recorded in the Old Testament in reasonably plain language. We are to search the Scriptures daily so that we become more and more informed.

**Comment:** The Jews who were faithful should have desired to return to Israel, even though their Temple had been destroyed. Christians who backslide but desire retrieval have a similar longing to return to the Lord.

**Reply:** Yes, we must keep that anchor of hope, for Jesus is our all. We are nothing without him—in fact, less than zero. The Scriptures furnish advice for having an ecclesia arrangement, and a loose organization exists that we call the Bible Student movement. However, this nice “sanctuary” situation will be disrupted in the future, and at that time, consecration will become even more of an individual matter. When this separation takes place after the Little Flock is complete, the remaining consecrated—those who will ultimately be of the Great Company—will be isolated individuals who hang onto God, but then they will begin to find out there are others. Instead of the ecclesia arrangement of today, the arrangement will be completely different. The consecrated will be brought together by mutual hopes and thoughts. Many in the nominal system think of Israel, and Israel will become a unifying factor. The consecrated will speak comfort to Zion in a special sense at that time, and the message will result in Christians meeting Christians—coming out of the woodwork, as it were.

At present, we live in a nice, comfortable zone in the Bible Student movement, and we have many blessings in our association. In addition, the Internet provides communication, but the arrangement will be entirely disrupted sometime before the age ends.

**Comment:** Psalm 137:5,6 applies in both a natural and a spiritual sense: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

**Jer. 51:52** Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images: and through all her land the wounded shall groan.

The spiritual fulfillment of verse 52 will occur right after Babylon’s fall. In the natural picture, the Jews who fled Babylon escaped the sword and were now outside the city. Thus far the Medes had destroyed only the city, but next would come the destruction of the structure of the Babylonian Empire (the outlying areas) and its gods and “graven images.” The implied message to the Jews from the Lord was, “I have taken care of the capital. Do not think of putting your nest elsewhere in Babylon. You obeyed and came out of the city. Now keep going and return to the homeland. Do not stay here.” Many of the captives were affluent by the end of the 70 years, so the temptation was to remain in that locale.

This verse is almost a natural deduction, for certainly in the destruction of literal Babylon, the images would be destroyed. First, the destruction of the graven images reminds us of how the chief idols of Egypt fell over at the time of the tenth plague. A god in Luxor was so large that even though it was in a seated position, it could be seen for miles. Today the tourist can visit that tremendous statue and see it still lying in a toppled condition, the result of the judgment just prior to the Exodus (Exod. 12:12). Second, when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant and took it to their temple, a judgment of hemorrhoids came upon them, and their fish god, Dagon, fell flat on its face (1 Sam. 5:2-4).

“And through all her land the wounded shall groan.” In the taking of literal Babylon, orders were given to slay all those in the city. In the spiritual picture, many (pictured as eunuchs, dogs who ate Jezebel, and Jehu) will forsake Babylon and participate in her destruction. All who stay

in Babylon and try to shore her up will be “wounded” in one way or another: socially, financially, etc. The Great Company will be extricated from Babylon lest they die in the plagues and not get life. The two flights from Babylon are (1) a *voluntary* flight earlier and (2) a *forced* flight at the time of her downfall. Of the second flight, Jesus said, “Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day” (Matt. 24:20).

**Jer. 51:53** Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD.

“Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength” reminds us of the millstone being lifted up in great power (Rev. 18:21). The millstone represents mystic Babylon, and spiritually speaking, Jeremiah 50 and 51 deal primarily with the religious aspect.

**Comment:** Obadiah 4 describes the lifting up: “Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.”

**Reply:** That text applies to Edom, which is another picture of Christendom.

**Comment:** Verse 53 also reminds us of the sentiments of the people who were building the Tower of Babel: “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4).

**Reply:** Yes, that event is related, for “Babel” was Babylon. The various Scriptures integrate and harmonize beautifully.

“From me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD.” In the type, God’s wrath avenged Israel for what had been done to His Temple, His city, and His people. Of course there is an antitype as well.

**Jer. 51:54** A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans:

“A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon.” Revelation 18 describes the great commotion and repercussions that will occur when Babylon falls. Babylon’s voice of authority will change to a cry of panic. “And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.... The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off” (Rev. 18:9-11,15-17).

“Great destruction [cometh] from the land of the Chaldeans.” The whole world will know of the literal fall of symbolic Babylon. At that time, news communications will still be relatively intact, for the anarchy is a little way off. The fall of Babylon will be the *beginning* of the real end time.

**Jer. 51:55** Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice;

**when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered:**

Jehovah will destroy “the great voice” out of Babylon.

**Comment:** Papacy is described as having the voice of a lion: “And the [papal] beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, ... and his mouth as the mouth of a lion” (Rev. 13:2).

**Reply:** A lion is noted for its roar, which has a paralyzing effect on its prey.

The “Man of Sin” chapter in the *Second Volume* lists some boastful pronouncements made down through the Gospel Age by popes and individuals representing that system. The authority, emoluments, and honors belonging to God or to Jesus that Papacy took unto itself constituted real blasphemy in God’s sight. “Blasphemy” is defined as attributing to oneself honors and prerogatives that belong to Deity. Although the everyday cursing by the unconsecrated is sinful enough, the more grievous type of blasphemy is appropriating to oneself what belongs to God. An example is when the pope has people kiss his toe. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little” refers to Jesus, but Papacy blasphemously applies this text to the pope (Psa. 2:12).

**Comment:** An outrageous claim of a past pope was, “We declare, we define, we pronounce it necessary for human salvation that every human being be subject to the Roman pontiff.” But even this week in the news, the pope mimicked what Jesus did in washing the apostles’ feet. Thus he usurped the place of Jesus.

“Her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered.” With Papacy’s blasphemous claims, particularly during the Dark Ages, the repercussive effects upon the world were very, very real, whereas today such pronouncements would not have the same power and significance. The Lord would be disturbed in any case, whether in the Dark Ages or now, but the public at present does not feel the power of that voice. Nevertheless, Papacy is much more honored today than it was 70 or 80 years ago. There has been a radical change from the First World War until now. A big change has been taking place that will reach a crescendo during the hour of power soon to come. That hour will end with the “waves” (people) roaring “like great waters” and uttering their voice.

**Jer. 51:56** **Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the LORD God of recompences shall surely requite.**

There is a principle here. Notice that those who stay in Babylon at the time of her downfall, especially those who try to defend the system, will do so unto death. Every person who defends the system at that time will have to answer for his deeds. “Every one” of them will be individually treated; “every one of their bows is [will be] broken.”

When a person was killed in olden times, his carcass remained on the battlefield, and then, next, his bow was broken. A bow as a weapon of war was very resilient. It could be bent, but to break it was almost impossible. Great strength was required to pull back the bow so that an arrow would travel fast and hard enough to penetrate armor or an individual at a distance, but to break a bow was nearly impossible.

Therefore, verse 56 shows the disgust and the hatred of the enemy for Babylon. Figuratively speaking, not only will the enemy want to leave the corpse, but also he will want to leave the broken bow beside the body as a witness to the judgment upon the system. Of course the judgment will really be from the Lord, as the Lord will choose those who render the judgment.

On one level, The Christ, in the invisible heaven, will be involved in the destruction of Babylon, but this verse treats the destruction from the perspective of those who are down here. We usually refer to this destroying force as the Lord's Great Army. God will prosper this army of discontents and rebels so that Babylon will be destroyed.

Those with the "bows," those who will be slain, are the defenders of Babylon. But when we view Babylon's fall from the opposite perspective, from the perspective of the attackers, every arrow will find its mark. The fall of Babylon will be played back on television in the future. *Real history* is far more interesting and beneficial than any kind of fiction. The creation, fall, and restitution of man on this planet is only the beginning, for earth is the only planet presently inhabited with human beings. Therefore, throughout eternity, earth's drama will be told over and over again. In addition, with man being able to study science, botany, etc., for eternity, there will not be a dull moment. When we witness about the Kingdom, many say, "Oh, to live forever would be monotonous." Such a statement shows that the human race is nine-tenths dead in the present life, for the people as a whole do not see how valuable and important life is.

**Jer. 51:57** And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

We are reminded of Belshazzar's feast. In the symbolic picture, the leaders of Christendom will be drunk with power and their seeming success in the hour of power. For one "hour," they will rule as in the Dark Ages. Being flushed with victory, they will defile the gold and silver vessels of the Temple by drinking from them. The vessels picture the truths that develop the Little Flock and the Great Company, and these truths will be misused and misappropriated.

"Her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men ... shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake." Since the Scriptures teach that the human race will have an awakening from the tomb, what is meant by the term "perpetual sleep"? The fall of Babylon will be remembered, for the "smoke of her burning" will rise "for ever and ever" (Rev. 18:9,18; 19:3).

**Comment:** The categories of position within Papacy will "sleep a perpetual sleep": princes, wise men, captains, and rulers.

**Reply:** Yes, never again will there be an institution of Papacy with its popes, cardinals, bishops, and priests.

The LORD of hosts is "the King," or Emperor, of the universe. Jesus is a King of kings. The saints who comprise the Little Flock will be kings and priests. Moreover, we see a progression. During the Kingdom Age, Christ will be King, but at the end of that age, when Christ gives the Kingdom over to the Father, Jehovah will be King. "Thy [God's] kingdom come. Thy [God's] will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Not until the end of the Kingdom will God's will be done in earth, for until that time, there will be deaths, insubordinations, the reappearance of Satan in the Little Season, etc. Conditions on earth will not be as in heaven until after the Little Season and the end of the Kingdom Age. Only then will God be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24-28). With the Lord's Prayer, the usual thought is that God's Kingdom will begin with the inauguration of Christ's Kingdom, but if we analyze the work of the Kingdom, we will see that the answer to the prayer cannot come until later.

After many years, we have become more and more impressed with the admonition "Never say never" because we will be tested for uttering such words. A number of brethren have been tested for making such strong statements. As children, we need to learn to be slow to speak

and swift to hear (James 1:19).

**Comment:** The Apostle Peter is an example. After saying, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended,” he was tested, and he denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:33). No doubt he meant those words, but the flesh is weak.

**Reply:** Jesus could see that Peter had loyalty of spirit, so he prayed for Peter, and the prayer was effectual.

**Jer. 51:58 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.**

Babylon had great glory. The walls of the city were 335 feet high, 85 feet wide, and 14 miles long on each side with 25 gates, yet the city was utterly leveled and destroyed and is buried under the sand. The inhabitants had water and food supplies to last five years. Hence even under siege, they felt very confident, especially in the security of their walls. However, in the final analysis, the walls proved to be the weakness, for the waters were diverted and Cyrus and his army came in under them. And so in the antitype, the very people who are the strength of Papacy (Christendom) will tear it down and thus prove to be its weakness. Incidentally, stones were taken from the walls of Babylon, floated down the river on barges, and then used to build other cities along the Euphrates River.

**Comment:** Since the walls represent the civil powers that defend Christendom, this verse indicates that the religious systems, pictured by the city itself, will be destroyed first and then the civil powers subsequently.

Lenin regarded nominal religion, orthodoxy, as an opiate that has drugged the people. From the standpoint of the Kingdom Age, many of the strongest popes and supporters of Catholicism are in the tomb. As they come forth, they will expect the same power and honor. They will need to be humbled and re-educated if they are to get life. All kinds of tearing down will be done—civil, ecclesiastical, and personal—for a common leveling. Therefore, from the perspective of those who have gone into the tomb and the various generations that will come forth, it will take time for all the “walls”—the “mountains” (kingdoms)—to be leveled.

**Comment:** Habakkuk 2:13 is a good cross-reference for laboring in the fire. “Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?”

**Comment:** There seems to be a picture here of trying to extinguish a fire with buckets. All will weary themselves in the effort.

**Reply:** That is a good thought in addition to the breaking apart of camaraderie.

**Q:** Does the “fire” convey the thought of anarchy?

**A:** No, because there will still be civil authority for a while after the fall of mystic Babylon. However, that civil authority will be along another premise. After all, there was civil authority before Papacy ever developed. Satan prefers license as long as he is in control, as long as he is the prince and the other devils give absolute fealty to him. The other fallen angels can do their own evil works and acts, as long as they do not interfere with his government. If Satan says no, they must obey him. Whatever Satan wants to preserve, the others must not oppose. He is a *tremendous, powerful* being—so powerful that even the other devils obey him—and he rules his

subjects with a high hand.

It has been incorrectly concluded by some in the Bible Student movement that the reason for the trouble in the world is anarchy in Satan's forces. They say that Satan is being bound and that the trouble is being caused by the other demons because his power is weakening. However, the Scriptures indicate otherwise. For instance, the Great Company class will be dealt with by Satan (1 Cor. 5:5). The Great Company will be put into the hands of the prince of the demons, and he will cause their demise. Azazel is one of the personal names of the Adversary in the Old Testament (Lev. 16:20-22,26; see King James margin). He has a number of other titles as well: Lucifer (before his fall), Satan, and Beelzebub.

**Jer. 51:59** The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. And this Seraiah was a quiet prince.

**Jer. 51:60** So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon.

**Jer. 51:61** And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words;

**Jer. 51:62** Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever.

Verses 59-64 are a new incident, as shown by the paragraph mark. King Zedekiah reigned for 11 years. This incident happened in the fourth year of his reign and thus seven years before Israel was taken captive and 77 years before Babylon was destroyed.

The reason for listing Seraiah's father and grandfather may have been to show a family relationship with Baruch. The main tie-in would have been the grandfather, Maaseiah. Jeremiah 32:12 reads, "And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison."

**Q:** Since Seraiah and Baruch had the same father and grandfather, were they brothers?

**A:** The question is more complicated than it seems. Seraiah was either a brother or an uncle depending on the side of the family tree. Without going into that time-consuming study, we will just say that Baruch and Seraiah were related.

Jeremiah *commanded* Seraiah to deliver in Babylon a strong declaration of disfavor. He could not have talked this way if Seraiah had been a very high government official.

Seraiah was called "a quiet prince." It would seem that the King James translators had some justification for describing Seraiah this way. Seraiah did not go *with* Zedekiah to Babylon, but he went *on behalf of* or *for* Zedekiah. The King James preposition should be "for," not "with." Seraiah "went *for* Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon in the fourth year of his reign." The prepositions in Hebrew are much different than in English. Even the English language has a variety of interpretations, but the Hebrew has many more.

**Comment:** The King James margin calls Seraiah a "chamberlain."

**Reply:** Since Israel was a satellite of Babylon, Seraiah was probably bringing some form of

goods (gold, silver, incense, etc.) as tribute to the king of Babylon. Seraiah would have been a chamberlain in that sense, and he was chosen to bring the gift to the king of Babylon to pacify him and remain in his goodwill. Incidentally, although Zedekiah had been placed on the throne as a subject of King Nebuchadnezzar, he was taken from the royal lineage of Josiah. His original name was Mattaniah, but Nebuchadnezzar changed his name to Zedekiah and made him a puppet king (2 Kings 24:17).

Thus Seraiah went on a mission to Babylon, but he was given a side mission by Jeremiah, who, speaking on behalf of the Lord, commanded Seraiah to deliver a strong message against Babylon. Jeremiah handed Seraiah the “book,” or scroll, and instructed him, “Do not open this scroll until you get to Babylon” (verse 61 paraphrase). But then Jeremiah gave a summary of the contents of the scroll. “When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see [by breaking the seal], and shalt read all these words; Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever.”

What was in the “book”? The scroll contained the words of chapters 50 and 51. To read this message loudly and clearly would take about 20 minutes or a half hour. Jeremiah probably even told Seraiah how and where to deliver the message. Seraiah was to declare the message from the high gate. By the time the people reacted, Seraiah would have finished the message and been able to escape down the stairway.

Seraiah talked to the people of Babylon from the chief place, and when they heard this strong message, they were aghast. Meanwhile, King Nebuchadnezzar was not present, and by the time the news got to him and he issued orders, Seraiah had finished the message and left.

Not only did Seraiah need courage to give this message, but also he must have respected Jeremiah’s authority. For example, he may have heard Jeremiah prophesy the death of certain enemies within a year, and the prediction came true. When Jeremiah said, “*Jehovah* instructed me to tell you to deliver this message,” Seraiah accepted the responsibility. Jeremiah would have said, “Do not worry. God will make sure you finish the message.”

**Q:** Was Seraiah called a quiet prince because the declaration of such a *strong* message in a *loud* voice was contrary to his personality?

**A:** The Hebrew seems to indicate one who is gracious, one who has a reputation for being constructive. Whether that means an office or the personality of the individual we do not know for sure. We prefer to combine both thoughts.

Seraiah was obedient. Although by nature, he did not give fiery messages, he was *specially emboldened* to speak at this time. The message was delivered with great force and courage. Moreover, the message was attributed to Jeremiah, who was the real spokesman. The experience of Seraiah in regard to his docility by nature but his boldness when giving the message is significant.

A truly courageous person is one who is very much aware of the danger but who properly and correctly goes ahead anyway. Others, such as Muslims who perform suicide bombings, are martyrs, but their actions are performed without thinking. Hundreds of thousands of Christians who were martyred in the past did not make the Little Flock. More is required.

The advice to the Jews was to leave Babylon because the enemy was coming down from the north, and those who remained in the city would be killed. But then additional advice was given to those who left Babylon. They were to go farther, that is, back to the homeland. In

other words, two steps were to be taken: (1) leave Babylon and (2) journey to the homeland. The same two steps apply to the Christian. The invitation is to come out of Babylon, but we want to get to the homeland, to heaven, to our spiritual reward. Many who come out of the nominal system are satisfied, and they do not think too much about the calling.

When up on the high wall, Seraiah prefaced the reading of chapters 50 and 51 with the words “O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever” (verse 62). Mixed peoples in the city of Babylon were listening to the message—Israelites, Edomites, Moabites, etc., plus native Chaldeans. When Seraiah said right away, “O Jehovah,” the Israelites were startled favorably with interest, and the others were startled in a negative way. Thus the introduction was very fitting: “*Thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever.*” If we feel the POWER of Scripture, it is exciting. It is as if we were there!

**Jer. 51:63** And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates:

**Jer. 51:64** And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

Seraiah finished reading the message, bound a stone to the scroll, and cast the scroll into the Euphrates. To be most effective, Seraiah had to go to the most prominent gate in Babylon to read the message: the Ishtar gate. That gate was up high, and it straddled the river Euphrates. People entered the city through both sides of the gate. Not only did the people down below hear the message, but also they could see Seraiah cast the scroll into the river from the height. Through the earlier instructions, God had set the stage. The Bible is written low-key, but what drama! The problem is the dull minds of all humanity.

The scroll with the stone bound to it fell like a millstone to dramatize a *perpetual* destruction. Again we are reminded of Revelation 18:21, “And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”

**Q:** Verse 60 says that Jeremiah “wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon” for Seraiah to deliver. But since Baruch was a scribe, would he have first written down this message of chapters 50 and 51? Is the thought that these words were written twice, that Baruch did the recording and then Jeremiah made a copy?

**A:** Yes, for otherwise, the record would not be preserved for us today. We are reminded of Tyndale, who translated the Bible two or three times. When one translation was destroyed, he made a better translation. The diligence of God’s people in all ages is a great inspiration.

How did Seraiah conclude his message? Looking up, the people saw the scroll descending from a high position, and as it splashed into the water, Seraiah shouted in a loud voice, “*Thus shall Babylon sink!*” What an effectual drama! The people would have rushed back to their families and reported what this unknown person high up on the city gate had said and done in the name of Jehovah. The news would have spread like wildfire among the whole community. All Jews in Babylon would have known that same day, as it were, what had been spoken in the name of the Lord. Incidentally, when Cyrus and his army marched into Babylon on the dry riverbed 77 years later, their entrance would have been under this very city gate.

**Q:** Could we say that those who give their lives with the right attitude will be truly leaning on



the Lord and acting in *His* strength, as opposed to those who act on impulse and emotion in their *own* strength? Those who act properly at the end of the age will be prepared in heart and mind and leaning on the Lord for the strength and the words.

**A:** Yes, motives are very important. Testimonies have been recorded about Christians who were known for years by the citizenry as being gentle, timid, docile, etc., but when those Christians were burned at the stake, they were different persons. The citizenry marveled to see these Christians give their lives with such calmness and courage in the face of terror and torture. That was a real witness.

**Comment:** There is a saying: “Courage is not the absence of fear but the mastery of fear.”

“Thus far [only] are the words of Jeremiah.” In other words, the next chapter was appended later as a historical addendum. The information is interesting as a clarification. Incidentally, the fifty-second chapter is missing in the Septuagint.

**Q:** Since much of chapters 50 and 51 has an antitype at the end of the age, could we say that in a vague way, Seraiah is a picture of the feet members? Responsibility is shown. We study the Book of Revelation and become filled with information. The question is, What will we do with that information? A smiting message will be given by the feet members.

**A:** Yes, that is an obvious inference in the spiritual application. Elijah’s smiting of the Jordan is a parallel picture.

**Jer. 52:1** Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

This last chapter of the Book of Jeremiah does not state that Jeremiah was the author, but we believe he was involved in either a direct or an indirect way. Because of the nature of the comments in this chapter, we will notice certain unusual and interesting things as we proceed.

Chapter 52 consists of historical facts and is devoid of prophecy. Although it supplies some facts that are not recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles, a large portion of this chapter is a duplication of comments made at the end of 2 Kings (see 2 Kings 24:18–25:21). Thus this chapter verifies the historical account, the principle being that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses is a matter established. That principle is very, very important.

Zedekiah was only 21 years old when he began to reign, and he had reigned for 11 years, until age 32, when Jerusalem was destroyed. His mother was the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah, a different Jeremiah than the prophet of this book.

**Comment:** Since Zedekiah was dethroned at such an early age, his sons, who were put to death, could not have been more than young teenagers at the most.

**Jer. 52:2** And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

Zedekiah did that which was evil.

**Jer. 52:3** For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

**Comment:** The first portion of verse 3 reads as follows in the NIV: “It was because of the LORD’S anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence.”

How did Zedekiah rebel against the king of Babylon? He had taken an oath in the name of Jehovah to be subordinate and obedient to Nebuchadnezzar, but instead he secretly connived with Egypt to revolt against the king of Babylon. This rebellion was costly to Zedekiah as a person.

**Jer. 52:4** And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about.

Nebuchadnezzar began the siege of Jerusalem in the ninth year, tenth month, of Zedekiah’s reign. The king of Babylon came “and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about.” It took time to build the forts. Ramps with siege towers on them were also made so that the Babylonian army could shoot arrows down into the city and breach the wall.

**Jer. 52:5** So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

The siege continued unto the eleventh year of Zedekiah’s reign.

**Jer. 52:6** And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.

The king of Babylon had a siege around Jerusalem from the ninth year to the eleventh year of Zedekiah’s reign, that is, for approximately 1 1/2 years. At that point, the famine was severe in the city. With no food left after a long siege and daily rations, the city fell. Meanwhile, the Prophet Ezekiel, who was among the captives in Babylon, dramatized what was happening back in Judah (Ezekiel 4). To indicate famine, he ate heavy, coarse bread with water for many days in rationed quantities.

**Jer. 52:7** Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king’s garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain.

Jerusalem was broken up as a result of the famine. The Chaldeans invaded the perimeter of the city, especially from the north.

It is rather strange that Zedekiah and his men of war fled out of the city, leaving the rest of the people to fend for themselves and perish at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Among the survivors were Jeremiah, Baruch, and the Ethiopian eunuch, who were up near Jeremiah’s Grotto just outside the city gate and wall.

Zedekiah and “all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king’s garden; ... and they went by the way of the plain.” Zedekiah and his men fled by night through the king’s garden, exiting at the southeastern corner of the city and going down to Jericho. At this time in history, Jerusalem had two walls. Eventually the city had three walls, and the third wall became very important.

**Jer. 52:8** But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

The Chaldeans pursued and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho (the Arabah) on the north extremity of the Dead Sea, about 18 miles from Jerusalem. Zedekiah's men were "scattered from him," suggesting that some of them escaped to other places.

Other accounts tell that Ammonites and Moabites who lived up on the hills sent couriers to Nebuchadnezzar, informing him that Zedekiah and those with him were fleeing from the city. Ammon and Moab were subsequently punished by God for this action. In fact, they were the next peoples to be defeated by the king of Babylon, and he desolated their land as well.

**Jer. 52:9 Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him.**

The Chaldeans took Zedekiah to Riblah (in Lebanon), where Nebuchadnezzar was.

**Jer. 52:10 And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah.**

Part of the prophecy was that the seed of Zedekiah would come to naught, and this happened when Nebuchadnezzar ordered the king's sons to be slain before his eyes.

**Jer. 52:11 Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.**

Nebuchadnezzar ordered Zedekiah to be blinded, bound in chains, and carried off to Babylon, where he was imprisoned until his death; that is, Zedekiah died in captivity. As retribution, the last thing Zedekiah would remember *seeing* was the murder of his sons.

When Zedekiah arrived in Babylon, Jeconiah, a former king of Judah, was already there in captivity. Later Jeconiah was honored and raised up, and still later he was honored to be part of Messiah's lineage.

**Jer. 52:12 Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, which served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem,**

**Jer. 52:13 And burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire:**

In the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, entered Jerusalem and burned the Temple, the king's house, and all the other houses. The city was leveled to prevent any future rebellion. There was great determination to utterly destroy Jerusalem.

**Jer. 52:14 And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about.**

Last of all, under the orders of Nebuchadnezzar, the walls of Jerusalem were broken down. This was a more onerous task, but such destruction had the effect of removing *all* hope of restoration. Jeremiah later penned lamentations, songs of sorrow, regarding this humiliation.

However, the breaking down of the walls does not mean they were leveled completely, for that work would be time-consuming, and these were fighting men. Rather, they burned and

demolished all the gates and destroyed the walls that supported the gates. As proof the walls were not totally leveled, when Jews returned from captivity in AD 536, they *restored* the walls from what *remained*. Individual homes were in close proximity to various sections of the wall, so Nehemiah said that each family was responsible for restoring the damage in the nearby portion of the wall.

**Jer. 52:15** Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive certain of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude.

**Jer. 52:16** But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left certain of the poor of the land for vinedressers and for husbandmen.

Who were “the rest of the multitude”? Nebuzar-adan took captives not only from Jerusalem but also from suburbs of Judah that were under siege. Of the survivors in the suburbs who were given to agricultural pursuits, Nebuzar-adan left a few in the land as vinedressers and husbandmen and took the rest to Babylon. Some were left to tend the trees so that *if* Israel learned lessons, then someday they could return, and the soil would be somewhat prepared. Whether they would return depended on obedience.

Here is a little insight into the character of Nebuchadnezzar. We know that he roasted people alive in furnaces, yet he was very intellectual with great engineering capabilities. In addition, he took as captives the cream of the crop of the various nations, and put them into his “scientific” corps, in positions of government, or among his wise men. For example, the three Hebrew children were incorporated into this latter high-ranking category that had the ear of the king on many occasions. Thus, with all of his cruelty, Nebuchadnezzar exercised wisdom and utilized the abilities of the captives, taking the elite into his government. Many other kings of those days just killed the enemy indiscriminately. For instance, King Sennacherib of Assyria, a great general, put all of the enemy to death and built hills of their skulls.

Thus Nebuchadnezzar was unusual in that he had two such opposite characteristics. The Christian, in trying to be Godlike, strives to have the perfect balance with justice and love, which is the ideal. The diamond (called the “jasper”) and the sard stone are used in Revelation 4:3 to picture these two attributes of God: “And he [God] that sat [on the throne] was to look upon like a jasper [diamond] and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.” The sard stone, showing the softer side of God’s character, is beautifully adapted to carving and thus represents reasonableness, pliability, mercy, and compassion. However, that love is under perfect control; He is tender and merciful to the contrite, the meek, and the humble. The diamond pictures God’s brilliance, His tremendous intelligence and wisdom. In addition, the diamond can cut. Hence God’s character is a *perfect* blend of hardness with reasonableness, mercy, and pity.

Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold, had this blend in an *inordinate* fashion, being cruel but having a reasonable side. Not only from the world’s standpoint but also from the Lord’s standpoint, the feet of the image, picturing Rome (particularly the Holy Roman Empire), are seen as iron and clay combined. The iron shows inflexibility, and the clay, or baked mud, is imitation stone (Dan. 2:34,41-43). This contrasting composition of the feet occurs before the image is smitten. The glory of the image is portrayed by the head of *gold*, and the image increasingly deteriorated downward, ending with the *iron and clay* feet.

**Jer. 52:17** Also the pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that was in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon.

**Jer. 52:18** The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away.

These spoils of warfare were taken to Babylon. The two brass pillars of the Temple were broken up for transport, along with the brazen sea (the Laver), cauldrons, shovels, snuffers, etc., that were used in the Court. The brass was utilized for building purposes in Babylon.

**Jer. 52:19** And the basins, and the firepans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; that which was of gold in gold, and that which was of silver in silver, took the captain of the guard away.

Silver and gold vessels from the Holy and the Most Holy were also taken to Babylon and were used later at Belshazzar's feast.

What is the reason for all the detail in verses 17-23? In the Kingdom when God shows the Temple as it was, and then the burning of the Temple followed by the vessels being taken to Babylon, these words will be the striking *narration*.

**Jer. 52:20** The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brasen bulls that were under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the LORD: the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

"The brass of all these vessels was without weight." When we consider the size of the pillars and the thickness of the brass, plus the large, round "sea" (the Laver), etc., the amount of brass "was more than could be weighed" (see NIV). The sea, the main water vessel of Solomon's Temple, was a huge reservoir with spigots at the bottom, from which the priests drew water in tremendous quantities for washing and ritual purposes. In addition, there were ten smaller lavers (1 Kings 7:38).

Underneath the sea were 12 brazen bulls, which were also of great size (1 Kings 7:25). The bulls faced outward, with three facing each direction—north, south, east, and west. These life-size bulls were made of solid brass. The 12 bulls represent the 12 apostles.

Knowledge is a helpful tool as a means to an end, but we need to have the drive that the Apostle Paul spoke about: "This *one thing* I do" (Phil. 3:13).

**Jer. 52:21** And concerning the pillars, the height of one pillar was eighteen cubits; and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof was four fingers: it was hollow.

**Jer. 52:22** And a chapter of brass was upon it; and the height of one chapter was five cubits, with network and pomegranates upon the chapters round about, all of brass. The second pillar also and the pomegranates were like unto these.

**Jer. 52:23** And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; and all the pomegranates upon the network were an hundred round about.

The hollow brass pillars were 18 feet in circumference and 27 feet high. Chapters on top of the pillars were each 7 1/2 feet high. The names of the pillars were Boaz and Jachin. The description of the pillars is interesting from an architectural standpoint. Depending on which part of the chapters is being discussed, they were either five or three cubits high (compare 2 Kings 25:17).

**Jer. 52:24** And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

Seraiah was the chief high priest, and Zephaniah was the second priest. This may or may not have been the same Seraiah, the quiet prince who was mentioned earlier (Jer. 51:59). Thus there were two high priests at this time, one being an alternate in case of illness or emergency. This practice was followed in Jesus' day with Annas and Caiaphas.

Three keepers were in charge of the large, heavy Temple door of the Inner Court. (Solomon's Temple had many gates, or entrances, to the Outer Court but not to the Inner Court.) These gatekeepers had prestigious offices.

**Jer. 52:25** He took also out of the city an eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and threescore men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city.

**Jer. 52:26** So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah.

**Jer. 52:27** And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land.

The Temple priests, a eunuch, seven men who had been close to Zedekiah, etc., were taken to Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah in the land of Hamath and slain. This selectivity showed trust in Nebuzar-adan, for no doubt Nebuchadnezzar had commanded that the princes and certain individuals be brought to him so that he would have the pleasure of putting them to death. The king wanted to make a public example of them at Riblah.

**Jer. 52:28** This is the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand Jews and three and twenty:

**Jer. 52:29** In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons:

**Jer. 52:30** In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons were four thousand and six hundred.

Three dates of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and three captivities are given, as follows:

<u>Nebuchadnezzar's Reign</u>	<u>Captivity</u>	<u>No. Taken</u>
1. 7th year in 617 BC	Jehoiachin captivity	3,023
2. 18th year (11 years later) in 606 BC	Zedekiah captivity	832
3. 23rd year (5 years later) in 601 BC	In Egypt after Gedaliah's assassination	745

The eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar is sometimes called the nineteenth year because of the difference in reckoning in the Hebrew year versus the Chaldean year. In all, 4,600 males were taken captive to Babylon out of Judah, and with each successive captivity, the number of

survivors got smaller. About 50,000 males (plus women and children) returned to Israel under the decree of Cyrus 70 years later, that is, in 536 BC. The custom back there was to count the males, the men of war, for the women were taken as booty.

For 50,000 males to go back to the homeland when the majority, a greater number of perhaps 150,000 or 200,000, remained in Babylon was no problem in multiplication. For example, Jehoiachin, who was in the first captivity, had eight children while in Babylon. If we multiply 4,600 x 8, the result would be 36,800 Jews in just the earlier years of captivity. Moreover, the Jews were told that when they got to Babylon, they were to build houses and have children.

And there is another point. The relative minority of 50,000 were mostly of Judah and Benjamin, but what about the Israelites who were taken captive 125 years or so earlier? Jews from the ten tribes were taken to Assyria and dispersed into various lands that were later under the authority of the king of Babylon. When the Jews of both the ten tribes and the two tribes are considered, there could easily have been a million in exile, with most being of the ten tribes, who had about 200 years to multiply.

These verses furnish dates. For example, 606 BC marked the beginning of the 70 years of desolation, for not only did the Zedekiah captivity take place then but also the assassination of Gedaliah and the fleeing of the vinedressers to Egypt. Very few people are given to mathematics, but that science has its place. In fact, it is pictured as the basis of the tree of secular scientific knowledge. Spiritually speaking, justice is the foundation of God's throne, and justice is mathematical in religious judgment: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, etc. Numbers are important in connection with understanding certain fine details of prophecy, and as needed, the Lord raises up someone in different lands to edify His people in the proper direction.

“In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons.” These captives of Judah had obeyed Jeremiah by fleeing from Jerusalem and submitting to Nebuchadnezzar. They were taken before Jerusalem was breached, for once the Chaldeans entered the city, all the inhabitants were slain. Through Jeremiah, God had advised the people of Judah, “If you go out and submit to the authority of the king of Babylon, I guarantee you will not lose your life. If you desert to him, you will become a captive and a slave, but at least your life will be spared.”

With regard to the ten-tribe kingdom, the Pastor properly condemned the Anglo-Israelite theory, but as far as scholarship is concerned and knowledge in other avenues, reliable evidence points to the dispersion of the ten tribes into Germany, Romania, Poland, England, etc., for there is a Jewish influence in governing circles and in the society of thinking in these nations. Scholars like Adam Rutherford who hold the Anglo-Israelite theory have a profound knowledge of facts in math and other scientific subjects, but far more important than history and chronology are truth itself and being active in the development of Christian character and running for the prize of the high calling.

**Q:** The thirty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity was 26 years after the fall of Judah and the 11-year reign of Zedekiah. Jeremiah 52:29 states that Nebuchadnezzar, in the *eighteenth* year of his reign, carried away 832 captives from Jerusalem. However, verses 12 and 13 of this same chapter tell that in the *nineteenth* year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzar-adan burned the Temple, the king's house, and all the houses in Jerusalem. How do we harmonize the difference between these two years?

**A:** The eighteenth year is when the Jews who deserted to the enemy were taken captive, their lives being spared. In other words, *before* the fall of Jerusalem, those who followed Jeremiah's advice and deserted to the foe were spared. This element included women whose faith

surmounted their fear. Thus Jeremiah's years of hard work and tribulation brought forth some fruitage; the purging resulted in a holy remnant of Jews, who were subsequently taken to Babylon. At the First Advent, Jesus came to a prepared people—they had been prepared by a process to accept him as the Messiah—yet only a few became disciples. A pathos is involved, for the Jews at that time rejected their opportunity. Similarly, many have had opportunity to come out of mystic Babylon, but they did not avail themselves of it. Since the message went forth in 1878 for God's people to come out of Babylon, each of the Spirit-begotten has had at least two opportunities since that time to leave the nominal system (Rev. 18:4). In the future, those who stayed will not be able to say they should have been of the high calling. Those consecrated ones may have had the heart qualifications and done the service work, but they failed to heed their opportunity to come out. In the future, no one will be able to gainsay what God has done in the past because the record will speak for itself. The lives of all the consecrated are recorded. By God's mercy, we hope to be found faithful unto death. In time, it will be seen that God had a good reason for favoring and selecting each of the 144,000.

**Comment:** God had said earlier of Jehoiachin, "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. 22:30).

**Reply:** Yes, there was a radical change, for Jehoiachin had eight children after being released from prison in Babylon. The Hebrew makes allowance for his forgiveness, which God foresaw, even though he was given a tongue-lashing.

**Jer. 52:31** And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison,

**Jer. 52:32** And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon,

**Jer. 52:33** And changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life.

**Jer. 52:34** And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

After Jehoiachin, who was of the royal lineage, had been in the dungeon for 37 years, he was removed and honored at age 55. King Evil-merodach, in his first year, did this honoring, which gave a seed of hope to the Jews in captivity. After his release from prison, Jehoiachin was evidently put under house arrest, which gave him more liberty, and in addition, he had eight children (1 Chron. 3:17,18). Moreover, he ate at the king's table, and Evil-merodach spoke kindly to him and set him above the thrones of the other kings in captivity in Babylon—the kings of Egypt, Moab, Ammon, etc. And the king of Babylon gave Jehoiachin "a continual diet," guaranteeing "every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life."

Here we begin to see the influence of Daniel in the Babylonian Empire, in addition to the honoring of the three Hebrew children. It is possible that Evil-merodach honored a death wish of Nebuchadnezzar, that is, to elevate Jeconiah.

A lot of skewing and fabrication has occurred in the cuneiform tablets, just as the history of Egypt was doctored by successive Pharaohs. Because the tablets are a written record, they are improperly regarded as though they were a law. God's Word is law, being truly "in stone,"



whereas fraudulent chronology records could easily be chiseled into stone tablets. Incidentally, as the wording “all the days of his life” in verse 34 seems to imply, we believe that Evilmerodach reigned much longer than secular history accredits him, for those histories were purposely skewed by later writers. Even today in our country, history is being colored and adulterated from what it was a hundred years ago. A lot of fudging is going on, such as the defaming of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and others who are deceased and cannot defend their reputations.

Clearly, God’s providence was on Jehoiachin in spite of the humiliation he suffered. One proof is that his name appears in Messiah’s lineage in Matthew 1:11,12, “And Josias begat *Jechonias* and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: And after they were brought to Babylon, *Jechonias* begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel.” Something took place in the interim years when Jehoiachin was in prison. Perhaps he did much praying and shed a lot of tears. God does not change His principles, but He is merciful to those who are repentant. Certainly Jehoiachin experienced a radical change, for he was removed from prison, elevated to the king’s table, guaranteed an income for life, put in Messiah’s lineage, etc. It will be interesting to learn the details and the unwritten history in the future. The Lord can take care of people in adversity and hard circumstances. His care may not be seen at the time, but afterward, when the trial is over, one can look back and trace His leadings.

Jeremiah probably went to Babylon eventually, *after* staying with the vinedressers and *after* going to Egypt, where Nebuchadnezzar pursued the rebellious vinedressers. While in Babylon, Jeremiah seems to have written the Book of Lamentations, which describes the feelings of the Jews in captivity. Also, Jeremiah’s going to Babylon would have made Daniel even more aware of the 70 years of punishment.