

DAYBREAK



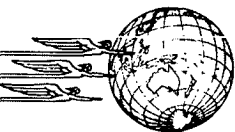
SERIES

JEREMIAH—A MESSAGE FOR OUR TIME



ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER · 1975



AUSTRALASIAN DIVISION OF
THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

September 1, 1975.

Dear Sabbath School Members Around the World:

Christian greetings from your fellow Sabbath School members in the Australasian Division! We salute you from the home bases of Australia and New Zealand, and from the thousands of South Pacific islands that comprise the mission field of this Division.

We thank you most sincerely for the great liberality shown by you in your giving of Sabbath School offerings which have done so much to build the work of the Church in the South Pacific. Papua New Guinea's Mt. Diamond Adventist High School and Fiji's Fulton College are two outstanding testimonies of your past 13th Sabbath overflowing generosity.


Three very needy projects, located in our Western Pacific Union Mission, have been selected to benefit from your 4th Quarter, 1975, 13th Sabbath Offering overflow. In the far north of this Union the people of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands have established their senior school on the remote island of Abemama. Built largely of native materials which have not stood the test of time, this, our most isolated South Pacific school, MUST be rebuilt. The second project needing your support is the Aore mission station in the New Hebrides, where Parker school, our senior educational institution in the New Hebrides, needs to be partially rebuilt, and the Aore Adventist Hospital desperately needs new facilities. The third project we commend to you for support is the commencement of Adventist educational work in our New Caledonia Mission. We must provide Christian education for the children and youth of this fast expanding French mission field, but without your help it would be financially impossible for us to fund this project. We invite you to join us in this challenging venture.

We are most grateful for all that you have done to assist us with past projects, and we know that we can look to you with confidence this coming 13th Sabbath as we plan for the consolidation and expansion of the work of God in the South Pacific.

With cordial Christian greetings,

Yours very sincerely,

Robert R. Frame,
President.

Daybreak  Series

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"As a means of intellectual training, the opportunities of the Sabbath are invaluable. Let the Sabbath-school lesson be learned, not by a hasty glance at the lesson scripture on Sabbath morning, but by careful study for the next week on Sabbath afternoon, with daily review or illustration during the week. Thus the lesson will become fixed in the memory, a treasure never to be wholly lost."

—"Education," pages 251, 252.

I pledge myself to the careful and prayerful study of some portion of my Sabbath School lesson each day of the week.

(signed)

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JEREMIAH—A MESSAGE FOR OUR TIME

Introduction

This quarter's lessons are based on the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry spanned more than 40 years. It embraced the period immediately preceding the captivity of Judah by Babylon as well as the first years of its exile by the Euphrates. Three times during Jeremiah's ministry the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar came from the north and subdued his country; namely, in 605, 598, and 586 B.C., culminating in the utter destruction of Jerusalem.

The kingdom of Israel no longer existed in Jeremiah's day. Israel had been carried into Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C., or more than 100 years before the major portion of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry. At times Jeremiah contrasts Judah with Israel. Sometimes he applies the term Israel to all the tribes.

The messages and experiences recorded in the book of Jeremiah are not arranged in the order in which they occurred. The lessons for this quarter are arranged by subjects and thus may bring together in any one lesson passages from throughout Jeremiah's book.

The life of Jeremiah is intimately interwoven with the history of the kingdom of Judah during its declining years. His book to a large extent recites the adversities that befell his country and himself. He lived amid a people who did not want to heed God's counsel and who perished in rebellion against His will, as foretold to them by the prophet.

We have more information about Jeremiah than about any other Hebrew prophet. A large portion of his book is autobiographical. From these passages we gain an insight into Jeremiah's inner life and catch glimpses of his very soul. He is the most tenderhearted of all the prophets. His heart nearly breaks because of the fate that befalls his people. He wishes that his eyes were a brook that would never run dry. See Jer. 9:1, 2. Even after Judah and Jerusalem had reaped their fateful doom, his sorrow did not abate. The book of Lamentations constitutes Jeremiah's dirge over unrepentant and ruined Judah.

To Judah its fall before Babylon was the day of the Lord, or the day of God's judgment upon them because of their infidelity to Him and their disastrous divergence from His will. The steadfastness of Jeremiah amid the adversity and persecution prior to the fall of Judah before the Babylonians serves as a tacit admonition to God's children on the verge of their final deliverance to remain loyal and true to God. Jeremiah was labeled and treated as a traitor to his country because of his loyalty to God. In the last conflict prior to the final deliverance, God's people will also be treated as traitors to their respective nations because of their loyalty to the King of heaven. Through his living example the prophet Jeremiah encourages you and me to retain our loyalty to God even through persecution and threat of death under the trying and difficult circumstances ahead of us.

The whole Bible is the Word of God to man. But it contains special books replete with lessons for a specific time or period of earth's history. The writings of the prophet Jeremiah have special importance to us who are living at the end of time.

In studying the book of Jeremiah this quarter may God grant that we may find guidance for personal living and decision making today. May we build into our characters principles that will keep us joyfully loyal to God under all circumstances in the future.

THE TIMES OF JEREMIAH



"And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: 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." 2 Chron. 36:15, 16.

The messages and events in the book of Jeremiah cover the final 40 years of Judah before the Babylonian exile. The book is not arranged chronologically, and abrupt changes occur in the sequence of the writing.

With some knowledge of the history of the period the reader will usually be able to fit each incident or message into its correct setting. Without this knowledge he will probably be unable to find any sequence in the events recorded there.

This difficulty in Jeremiah is compounded by the present lessons, because this quarterly consists of **studies** in Jeremiah rather than being a verse-by-verse study of the book.

In order to help the reader to understand Jeremiah, the first lesson deals with the outstanding people and events of Jeremiah's lifetime. Hopefully it will provide some nails on which to hang the pictures with which Jeremiah, seemingly at random, has filled his book.

The **SDA Bible Commentary**, vol. 4, p. 348, has provided a table which gives a date for each chapter or section of Jeremiah as far as it can be determined.

Based on this table, another table has been prepared that arranges the chapters of Jeremiah in chronological order. This table is reproduced here for your assistance in study during the quarter:

Josiah (639-608): chs. 1-6; 14-16.

Jehoiakim (608-597): chs. 17; 7-11;

26; 35; 22:1-19; 25; 18-20;

36:1-4; 45; 36:5-32; 12.

Jehoiachin (597): chs. 22:20-30;
13; 23.

Zedekiah (597-586): chs. 24; 29-31; 46-51 (?); 27; 28; 21; 34; 32; 33; 37-39.

After the fall of Jerusalem: chs. 40-44; 52.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The International Scene, Ezek. 17:12, 15.**
2. **Josiah, Jer. 1:2.**
3. **Jehoiakim and the First Siege, 2 Chron. 36:1.**
4. **Jehoiachin and the Second Siege, 2 Kings 24:6, 8.**
5. **Zedekiah and the Third Siege, 2 Kings 24:17; 1 Chron. 3:15.**
6. **Jeremiah's Fellow Prophets, Dan. 1:1, 3, 4, 6.**



Part 1
THE
INTERNATIONAL
SCENE

Jeremiah began his prophetic work in about 626 B.C. and continued until some time after 586 B.C.

What two superpowers were predominant in international affairs during Jeremiah's life as reflected in Ezekiel 17:12, 15?

Study a map of the Near East in Old Testament times in a Bible atlas or in the back of your Bible. Note the geographical position of Judah in relation to the two superpowers noted above.

The Assyrian Empire was in decline at the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry and was nearly ended with the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C. The Neo-Babylonian Empire under Nabopolassar, father of the Biblical Nebuchadnezzar, filled the power vacuum in the area of Judah left by the decline and fall of the Assyrians. Thus during Jeremiah's ministry the Babylonian Empire began and reached its peak of power.

Egypt, under four successive kings during Jeremiah's ministry, sought to reestablish its power in the area of Judah and plotted the overthrow of Babylon.

The internal politics of Judah depended largely in those years on the way the king of Judah viewed the prospects for military success by Babylon or Egypt. Thus there developed in Judah a pro-Babylonian party and a pro-Egyptian party, with Judah pinning its hope for survival on making alliance with the superpower most likely to be victorious.

In an earlier period, what counsel was given to Judah about alliances and armaments? Isa. 8:12-14; 31:1.

The following quotation from Ellen G. White refers especially to Israel, but reflects Judah's experience also:

"The alliances made by the Israelites with their heathen neighbors resulted in the loss of their identity as God's peculiar people. They became leavened by the evil practises of those with whom they formed forbidden alliances. Affiliation with worldlings caused them to lose their first love, and their zeal for God's service. The advantages they sold themselves to gain, brought only disappointment, and caused the loss of many souls.

"The experience of Israel will be the experience of all who go to the world for strength, turning away from the living God. Those who forsake the mighty One, the source of all strength, and affiliate with worldlings, placing on them their dependence, become weak in moral power, as are those in whom they trust." —Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 1155, 1156.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 570, 571.

Part 2
JOSIAH "The word of the Lord came [to Jeremiah] in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign." Jer. 1:2.

The thirteenth year of Josiah was about 626 B.C. Josiah had become king when only eight years of age and was thus about 21 at the time of Jeremiah's call. Jeremiah described himself as a youth, probably under 21. Both the king and the new prophet were very young men.

What significant work did Josiah do? 2 Chron. 34:3-8.

Note that this destruction of shrines took place just one year before Jeremiah's call. The time was right for a prophetic voice to call men to repentance.

"The reformation under Josiah had cleansed the land of the idolatrous shrines, but the hearts of the multitude had not been transformed. The seeds of truth that had sprung up and given promise of an abundant harvest had been choked by thorns. Another such backsliding would be fatal; and the Lord sought to arouse the nation to a realization of their danger. Only as they should prove loyal to Jehovah could they hope for the divine favor and for prosperity."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 410, 411.

What event opened the way for further reformation? 2 Chron. 34:14, 19, 29-33; 35:1.

What caused Josiah's death? 2 Chron. 35:20-24. Who lamented Josiah? Verse 25.

"When Josiah heard the words of warning and condemnation because Israel had trampled upon the precepts of heaven, he humbled himself. He wept before the Lord. He made a thorough work of repentance and reformation, and God accepted his efforts. The whole congregation of Israel entered into a solemn covenant to keep the commandments of Jehovah. This is our work today. We must repent of the past evil of our doings, and seek God with all our hearts. We must believe that God means just what He says, and make no compromise with evil in any way. We should greatly humble ourselves before God, and consider any loss preferable to the loss of His favor."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1038.

Part 3
JEHOIAKIM
AND THE
FIRST SIEGE

Josiah apparently had pro-Babylonian sympathies, evidenced by his interference with Necho who was going to the aid of the remnants of the Assyrian army, the enemies of Babylon.

How did Jehoahaz, a younger son of Josiah, become king? 2 Chron. 36:1.

"Belonging probably to the anti-Egyptian party, Jehoahaz [also called Shallum] continued his father's policies, and after a reign of 3 months was summoned to Riblah in Syria by Necho, who replaced him by his older brother Jehoiakim. He was then deported to Egypt, where he died."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 537.

How did Jehoiakim become king? 2 Chron. 36:4.

"Jehoiakim seems to have belonged to the pro-Egyptian party, as indicated by the fact that Necho considered him a trustworthy candidate for the kingship in Judah. In order to pay the heavy tribute laid upon him by Necho, Jehoiakim taxed the whole population (2 Ki 23:35). He is described as a wicked king (2 Ki 23:37; 2 Chr 36:5), who quickly undid everything his pious father Josiah had achieved in religious reforms."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 539.

What event occurred three years later? Dan. 1:1. How long was Jehoiakim loyal to Nebuchadnezzar? 2 Kings 24:1.

Jehoiakim apparently counted on Egyptian superiority over Babylon and changed his allegiance back to Egypt, the power that enthroned him.

What insight into Jehoiakim's character is given by the incident recorded in Jeremiah 36? Read Jeremiah 36:2, 9, 10, 21, 23. See also Jer. 26:20-23.

Jehoiakim's defection from Babylon brought, in 598 B.C., the second invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonians captured him, but he died before removal from Judah.

"From the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah had little hope of saving his beloved land from destruction and the people from captivity. Yet he was not permitted to remain silent while utter ruin threatened the kingdom. Those who had remained loyal to God must be encouraged to persevere in right-doing, and sinners must, if possible, be induced to turn from iniquity."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 412.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 422, 423.

Part 4
JEHOIACHIN
AND THE
SECOND SIEGE

"So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead."

"Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months." 2 Kings 24:6, 8.

"In contemporary inscriptions the name appears as *Yaukin*, which might be anglicized 'Jauchin.' This and the related forms Jehoiachin and Joiachin probably represent his throne name, given to him when he became king, while Jeconiah (Coniah) was his personal or private name. Compare how his father Eliakim became Jehoiakim (II Kings 23:34) and his uncle Shal-lum was also called Jehoahaz (II Kings 23:30; I Chr. 3:15; Jer. 22:11)." —*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 2, p. 811.

Jehoiachin reigned for a period of only three months and ten days. At the close of his reign, March 16, 597 B.C., he, his family, and the members of his court were taken into exile to Babylon.

What other people and treasure were removed to Babylon? 2 Kings 24:13-16.

There is historical evidence that sustains the Bible account of Jehoiachin's captivity.

"Several tablets found in the ruins of Babylon, dated in the year 592 B.C.—five years after Jehoiachin's surrender—contain lists of foodstuff provided by the royal storehouse for certain persons who were fed by the king. Among them Jehoiachin is repeatedly mentioned as 'king of Judah,' together with five of his sons and their tutor Kenaiah. These facts—that Jehoiachin is called king, that he received 20 times as much ration as any other person mentioned in these records, and that any reference to his imprisonment is lacking—seem to indicate that he was held by Nebuchadnezzar for the time, in anticipation of the day when he should be restored to his throne, if and when conditions in Judah might make such a course of action advisable.

"At a later time, either in connection with the incidents described in Jer. 29 or at the time of Zedekiah's rebellion, Jehoiachin was definitely imprisoned. This imprisonment continued until the 37th year of his captivity." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 97.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 438, 439.

Part 5
**ZEDEKIAH
AND THE
THIRD SIEGE**

How did Zedekiah become king and who was his father?

"And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah."
2 Kings 24:17.

"And the sons of Josiah were, the firstborn Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum."
1 Chron. 3:15.

Zedekiah took an oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. According to Josephus he maintained his loyalty for eight years. See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 97.

"Zedekiah had a weak character. Though he was occasionally inclined to follow Jeremiah (Jer 38:14-26), he did not have the moral strength to withstand the pressure of the people around him. . . . Zedekiah finally succumbed to the pressure of the anti-Babylonians among his citizens, and trusting in the help of Egypt, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. The result of this faithlessness was an invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, pp. 1174, 1175.

"The siege of Jerusalem began in earnest on Jan. 15, 588 B.C. (2 Kings 25:1), and lasted until July 19, 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25:2; Jer. 39:2), when the Chaldean army finally broke through the walls into the city, where unspeakable famine conditions prevailed. Once the 30-month-long siege was interrupted briefly by the unsuccessful attempt of the Egyptian army to defeat the Babylonians (Jer. 37:5). When the break-through came, Zedekiah made an attempt to escape. In the confused fighting that followed the break-through he managed to leave the city and reach the plain of Jericho, but was overtaken there. Carried to Nebuchadnezzar's headquarters at Riblah, Zedekiah saw his sons killed; then his eyes were put out, and he was sent to Babylon in chains. His chief ministers were executed, and all others were carried into captivity (2 Kings 25:4-7, 19-21; Jer. 52:10).

"Jerusalem was systematically looted and then destroyed. The walls were torn down, and the Temple, the palaces, and all other houses were burned to the ground."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 98.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the primary lesson to be learned from the experiences of Judah's last three kings?

Part 6
JEREMIAH'S
FELLOW
PROPHETS

What future prophet was among the first group of captives taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar? Dan. 1:1, 3, 4, 6.

Jeremiah's prophetic career had begun (626 B.C.) about 21 years previous to the first captivity (605 B.C.). In 605 B.C. Jeremiah was probably approaching 40 years of age, while Daniel was 18. See *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 570.

What prophet was captured in the second siege of Jerusalem? Ezek. 1:1-3; 33:21.

Ezekiel is thought to have been about 25 years of age at this time. See *SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 335. Thus he was of approximately the same age as Daniel.

During the final years of the kingdom of Judah, when it was harrassed by Nebuchadnezzar and there were Jewish exiles in Babylon, God had one of His representatives in each of three critical places. Jeremiah bore his messages to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. Ezekiel communicated his prophecies to the exiled Jews in Babylon. Daniel's mission was carried out in the court of the king who conquered Judah. Thus God had human instruments communicating His messages in three strategic spheres during the early years of the exile.

"The messages of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were designed to make clear the nature and purpose of the Captivity and to hasten the return of the exiles to their homeland."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 546.

These three men chosen by God served Him in widely varying circumstances. Jeremiah, living in war-torn Judah, was looked upon as a traitor to his nation. Ezekiel, living in a settlement of exiled Jews in Babylon, was not regarded seriously by the exiles. The Lord told him that the people looked upon him as an entertainer. See Ezek. 33:32, RSV. Daniel, living at Nebuchadnezzar's palace, was honored by the monarch who had captured him.

"The dark years of destruction and death marking the end of the kingdom of Judah would have brought despair to the stoutest heart had it not been for the encouragements in the prophetic utterances of God's messengers. Through Jeremiah in Jerusalem, through Daniel in the court of Babylon, through Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar, the Lord in mercy made clear His eternal purpose and gave assurance of His willingness to fulfill to His chosen people the promises recorded in the writings of Moses. That which He had said He would do for those who should prove true to Him, He would surely bring to pass."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 464.

JEREMIAH'S CALL

"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." Jer. 1:9.

Jeremiah introduces himself as "the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth." "The fact that the father of Jeremiah was from Anathoth probably identifies him as belonging to descendants of Abiathar, who was deposed from the priesthood at the time of Solomon (1 Kings 2:26, 27, 35)."—**SDA Bible Commentary**, on Jer. 1:1.

The meaning of the name "Jeremiah" has been much disputed. Among other meanings some have suggested "the Lord shouts" or "the Lord hurls." Either one would aptly describe his career, since God hurled him into the tumultuous and disastrous closing days of the kingdom of Judah, when its loyalty was withdrawn from God. In this virtual whirlwind Jeremiah lived as a spokesman for God, fearing less the cruelty of man than disloyalty to God, because he deemed Him supremely worthy of his service.

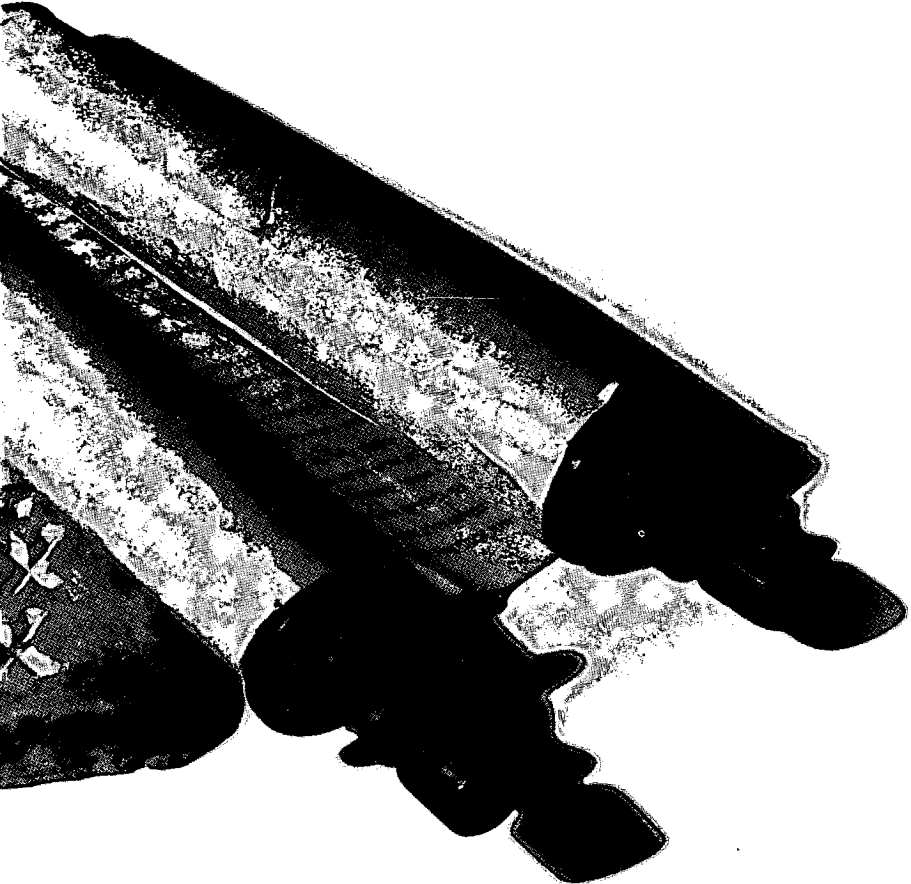
"In the youthful Jeremiah, God saw one who would be true to his trust and who would stand for the right against great opposition. In childhood he had proved faithful;



and now he was to endure hardness, as a good soldier of the cross."—**Prophets and Kings**, p. 407.

The problems Jeremiah faced are ever-occurring. Human nature has changed little since Old Testament days, and men and women are still pulled by contradictory desires. Although we now live in new frameworks or settings, the human problems are basically the same.

The first chapter of the book of Jeremiah presents his call and commission. This chapter is discussed in this lesson and presents really an overview of the prophet's whole career, while he spoke for God to a nation facing national disaster coming from the north. Amid all the



adversities he was destined to face as God's messenger, he was assured of heaven's help and protection.

Jeremiah's ministry to Judah was twofold: during the first part of his ministry he tried to summon his people to a thorough-going reformation to avert, if possible, impending Babylonian captivity. When that was no longer possible, he tried to reduce the suffering, the slaughter of his people, and the destruction of Judah and its cities as much as possible. If Judah had been loyal to Babylon, as the kings of Judah had promised, there would have been no wholesale captivity but only Babylonian dominance. After they had violated their allegiance, if

Zedekiah had surrendered to the Babylonian armies, as Jeremiah advised the king to do, there would have been neither slaughter of people, nor destruction of Jerusalem with the magnificent temple of Solomon. But Jeremiah's pleas were all in vain.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Called by God, Jer. 1:1, 2.**
2. **Foreknown by God, Jer. 1:4, 5.**
3. **Overwhelmed by God's Call, Jer. 1:6.**
4. **God's Enabling, Jer. 1:7, 8.**
5. **His First Vision, Jer. 1:11, 12.**
6. **God's Reassurance, Jer. 1:19.**

Part 1
CALLED BY GOD

"The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: 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. 1:1, 2.

Jeremiah made clear that the words he spoke and wrote were not his own; they were the words of the Lord. He did not venture to speak his own ideas. His messages were inspired by God and were sent to His people and the surrounding nations of that time.

The year of Jeremiah's call, the thirteenth year of Josiah, was 627/626 B.C. Five years later Josiah began his great religious reform, sparked by the finding of the book of the law in the temple. At this time the Jews were living in forgetfulness of God. They had been led into apostasy by King Manasseh and his son Amon.

For how long did Jeremiah continue as spokesman for God? Verse 3.

Jeremiah's ministry stretched over the period from 627/626 B.C. down past the fall of Jerusalem and Judah's last exile to Babylon in 586 B.C. A precise date for the close of his ministry cannot be determined, but he recorded the establishment of a Jewish government in Judah by Gedaliah, Gedaliah's murder, and the subsequent flight of many Jews to Egypt. Jeremiah was compelled to flee with this group, and he spent some time in Egypt. See Jeremiah 43. His ministry consequently lasted well over 40 years. During this period he saw the utter ruin of his nation and its loss of political independence.

"Yet amid the general ruin into which the nation was rapidly passing, Jeremiah was often permitted to look beyond the distressing scenes of the present to the glorious prospects of the future, when God's people should be ransomed from the land of the enemy and planted again in Zion. He foresaw the time when the Lord would renew His covenant relationship with them. 'Their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.' Jeremiah 31:12."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 408, 409.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 407, 408; *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 19.

Part 2
FOREKNOWN
BY GOD

"Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.'" Jer. 1:4, 5, RSV.

God knows the end from the beginning. His knowledge is absolute. His foreknowledge is immediate and unlimited. Just as God had a plan for Jeremiah's life, so He has a plan for the life of every person. "Each has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Each is to work in co-operation with Christ for the salvation of souls. Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 326, 327.

On the basis of God's foreknowledge of the character of Jeremiah, for what work did God set Jeremiah apart? Verse 5.

When we human beings appoint people to office or select them for certain positions, we do so on the basis of their past experience and performance. God does not need to go by past performances; He can judge us just as well by what we are going to do as by what we have already done. He need not hold an unfavorable past against us, as men of necessity must do. He can take a persecutor like Saul and appoint him a spokesman for Himself. As men, we would have needed to see a change in Paul after his Damascus road meeting with Jesus before we could have chosen him to be a minister. Not so with God. He saw into the future and noticed that Paul would be true and reliable as His spokesman.

God, through His foreknowledge, has experience in advance. The same was true in His relationship to Jeremiah; and on the basis of this He called him to the prophetic office. God knew before Jeremiah was born that he would choose to develop a submissive attitude toward His will. On the basis of Jeremiah's foreseen loyalty God ordained him to be His prophet.

"God knows the end from the beginning. He knew, before the birth of Jacob and Esau, just what characters they would both develop. He knew that Esau would not have a heart to obey Him. He answered the troubled prayer of Rebekah and informed her that she would have two children, and the elder should serve the younger. He presented the future history of her two sons before her, that they would be two nations, the one greater than the other, and the elder should serve the younger."—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 87.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 22.

**Part 3
OVERWHELMED
BY GOD'S CALL**

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

"A member of the Levitical priesthood, Jeremiah had been trained from childhood for holy service. In those happy years of preparation he little realized that he had been ordained from birth to be 'a prophet unto the nations;' and when the divine call came, he was overwhelmed with a sense of his unworthiness. 'Ah, Lord God!' he exclaimed, 'behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.'"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 407.

Jeremiah was overwhelmed by God's call. He felt entirely unable to fulfill God's commission. He gave this reason for feeling unequal to the task God was laying upon him: "I am a child." "The Hebrew *ná'ar* [translated child] could be used of an infant, as of Moses in the ark of bulrushes (Exod. 2:6); at the other extreme, it was used of a young man of marriageable age, as of Absalom during his revolt against David (II Sam. 18:5; cf. Gen. 34:19). We cannot therefore derive from this verse the exact age of Jeremiah at the time of his call. The LXX [Septuagint] renders, 'I am too young.'"—*The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), vol. 5, pp. 801, 802.

But even though Jeremiah at his call might have been in his late teens or his early twenties, he was baffled by the burden God was laying on him. His thought was, Who am I, a mere youth without experience and reputation to go and tell my people, the priests, the civil leaders, and the king himself as well as other nations the words of God? Lord, I am but a child compared with these men of experience.

THINK IT THROUGH

Might inexperience sometimes be a valid reason to seek release from a task? If it is, in what ways would the assignment of necessity differ from Jeremiah's commission?

"The path of men who are placed as leaders is not an easy one. But they are to see in every difficulty a call to prayer. Never are they to fail of consulting the great Source of all wisdom. Strengthened and enlightened by the Master Worker, they will be enabled to stand firm against unholy influences and to discern right from wrong, good from evil. They will approve that which God approves, and will strive earnestly against the introduction of wrong principles into His cause."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 31.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 27-31.

Part 4
GOD'S ENABLING

"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. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." Jer. 1:7, 8.

Offering excuses to God's call only betrays our lack of trust or confidence in Him. When a person trusts God, he accepts His call, realizing that God never calls a man to failure but only to success, since "all His biddings are enablings."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333. Jeremiah was to go forth undauntedly, because God gave him the assurance that He would go with him to deliver him.

What did God do symbolically to assure Jeremiah that He Himself would give him the message to proclaim? Verse 9.

"After the call of the prophet, came this solemn act of consecration, symbolizing the communication of new powers of thought and utterance. Thus touched upon the lips (see Isa. 6:6, 7), Jeremiah was assured that there would be no uncertainty as to his message. He was to go forth to speak the words put into his heart by the Spirit of God (see Jer. 5:14; 15:16; cf. Isa. 51:16; 59:21; Matt. 10:20; 2 Peter 1:21)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 1:9.

The very fact that he was not to speak his own words, but God's, must have given Jeremiah reassurance in his call. It is easier to take abuse and censure when we know that we are not doing the work for ourselves, but that we are ambassadors for God.

To whom was Jeremiah commissioned to communicate God's message? Verse 10.

God is not partial. His messages through Jeremiah were to go to surrounding nations as well as to Judah. Babylon was to receive assurance of stability in Jeremiah's day; others were doomed to fall before Babylon, as was his own country. But the present Babylonian victory was no guarantee of permanent security. Babylon's continued prosperity depended on its relationship to God's revelation of truth.

In addition to prophesying destruction and gloom, what hopeful element did Jeremiah's message contain? Verse 10 (last part).

"Thank God for the words, 'to build, and to plant.' By these words Jeremiah was assured of the Lord's purpose to restore and to heal."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 409.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, p. 409.

Part 5
HIS FIRST
VISION

"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. Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it." Jer. 1:11, 12.

After God had called Jeremiah, He gave him a vision as a beginner's test at the start of his prophetic career. As a spokesman for God he was to receive other visions as in Jeremiah 1:13 and 24:3. Visions were a common method employed by God in speaking to His prophets. See Num. 12:6; Amos 7:8; 8:2; Zech. 4:2. God commended Jeremiah for correctly having seen an almond tree.

"There is an interesting word play in vs. 11, 12. The following is an attempt to reproduce this literary device: 'I see the twig of a *wake-tree*. . . . You have seen aright, for I am *wakeful* over my word to perform it'; or, 'I see the rod of a *watch-tree*. . . . for I am *watching* over my word to fulfill it.'"—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 1:12.

**What other vision did God immediately give Jeremiah?
Verse 13.**

"This vision is closely connected on the one hand with the call of Jeremiah, and on the other with the early prophecies which warn of the approach of an enemy from the north (4:6; 6:1; 10:22). It indicates primarily the direction or source from which the evil is to come."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5, p. 807.

**From where was destruction or evil to overtake Judah?
Verses 14-16.**

"Although Babylon was east of Judea, military roads and invasion routes to Palestine approached Judah from the north. It was impracticable for armies to cross the desert directly east of Palestine. Hence the Hebrews frequently referred to Babylon in connection with the north. The direction has reference, not to the location of the home of the invader, but to the route he would follow in entering the land, for invaders from both east and north came from the north. The captives were spoken of as taken to the north country, and it was thence the Lord would cause them to return (see Jer. 3:18; 23:8; 31:8; Zech. 2:6)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 1:14.

FURTHER STUDY

"Babylon" and "Babylonia" in *SDA Bible Dictionary*, pp. 105-109.

**Part 6
GOD'S
REASSURANCE**

What reassurance did God give Jeremiah as he was about to assume his prophetic ministry?

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

God gave Jeremiah no assurance of an easy, peaceful life. But more reassuring than deliverance from conflict was God's promise that He Himself would be with His servant so that his enemies would not prevail against him.

How securely did God promise to fortify Jeremiah against his assailants? Verse 18.

What God was willing to do for Jeremiah in his prophetic work He is willing to do for each of us spiritually. It is God's plan and purpose that His followers be victorious. Only overcomers will finally be found among the redeemed (see Rev. 21:7); there will be no ultimately defeated or vanquished individuals in the city of God.

In view of this divine assurance, what was Jeremiah to do? Verse 17.

Amid fierce opposition Jeremiah would be enabled to stand firm in the proclamation of God's message. He knew he was God's mouthpiece to his people. In this faith he became an immovable rock of truth and steadfastness. "Often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. . . .

"The dealings of Providence bring to the unbelieving, darkness and despair, while to the trusting soul they are full of light and peace. The path where God leads the way may lie through the desert or the sea, but it is a safe path."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290.

THINK IT THROUGH

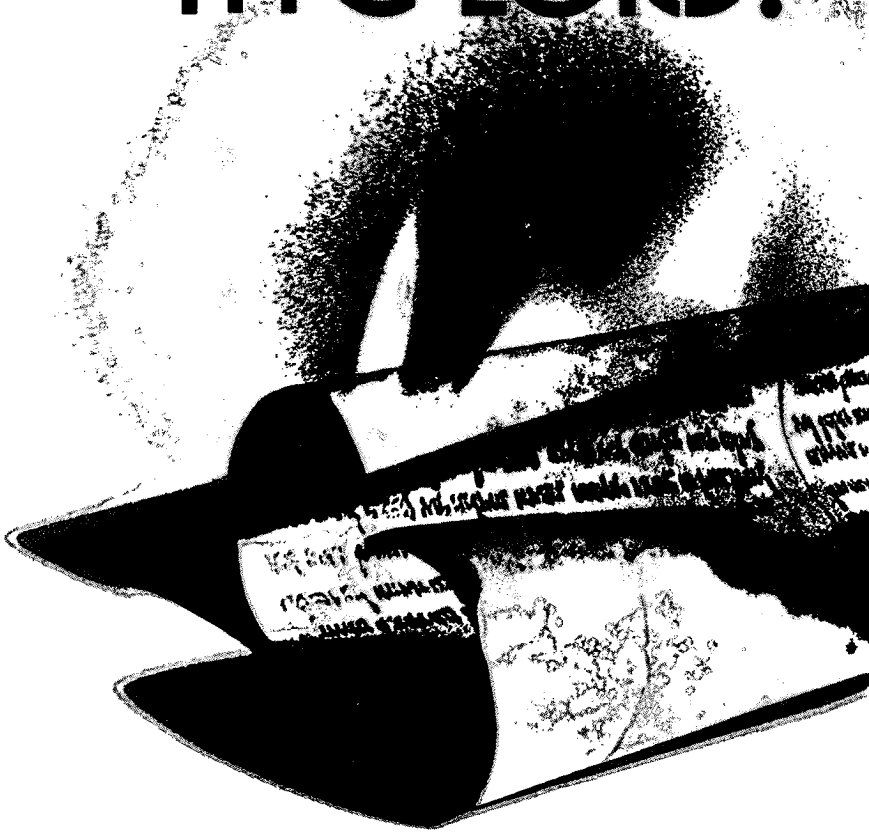
What can I do today to develop a character that will enable me to stand for God's truth when the storm of opposition rages against me?

"Now is the time for God's people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason. The nation will be on the side of the great rebel leader."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 136.

FURTHER STUDY

Evangelism, pp. 361, 362.

“IS THERE ANY WORD FROM THE LORD?”



"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?" Jer. 37:17.

The title of this lesson is the question King Zedekiah addressed to the prophet Jeremiah when he himself, as leader of Judah, was running out of options and time. The Babylonians were besieging Jerusalem—and had been for nearly two years—and the situation was desperate. Destruction impended, and the burdens of state weighed heavily on the king's shoulders.

Jeremiah was in prison. The king knew it and had consented to the imprisonment. Nevertheless he had the prisoner brought before him and addressed this question to him. Jeremiah still had—as he had had—a message for the king.

Jeremiah began to convey messages from God to the kings and people of Judah during the reign of good king Josiah. He continued his ministry throughout the reigns of Josiah's three sons, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah, and his grandson Jehoiachin, who preceded Zedekiah on the throne, until after the destruction of Judah in 586 B.C.

During these troublous last years of the kingdom of Judah Jeremiah lived with his people, pleading with them and their kings to renounce their perverse ways that would inevitably invite total destruction of the kingdom. Even though the kings disliked his advice and refused to heed it, as did also the majority of the people, he was so respected that at least one of them turned to him to learn God's will.

Although called to his prophetic office during the reign of Josiah, the major portion of his messages was given after his reign. (Probably only chapters 1-6 and 14-16 were given during Josiah's reign. See the introduction to lesson 1.) None were apparently delivered during the short three months' reign of Jehoahaz. The bulk of the messages constituting his book was given during the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah.

Jeremiah recorded no specific messages from God to Josiah as an individual. On the other hand his book contains several such messages for both Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. In this lesson we shall study some of these and the reaction of the two kings to them.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Inevitable Doom, Jer. 15:1, 4.**
2. **Jehoiakim, Jer. 22:2, 3.**
3. **The King and a False Prophet, Jer. 28:1-4.**
4. **Zedekiah's Attitude Toward God's Word, Jer. 37:2.**
5. **Jews Safer in Babylon, Jer. 21:8, 9.**
6. **The Word From the Lord, Jer. 37:17.**



Part 1
INEVITABLE
DOOM

How inevitable was God's judgment on Judah even in the days of Josiah?

"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. . . . 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." Jer. 15:1, 4.

The die had been cast. Doom and destruction of Judah was unavoidable. Due to Josiah's humility before God and his zeal for regeneration and reformation, it was but postponed. See *Prophets and Kings*, p. 399.

What were God's specific charges against His people? Jer. 15:6; 16:18.

"What is sin?—It is the result of Satan's administration. It is his work to make of no effect the law of God. He is determined that men shall do what God has forbidden him to do. . . .

"Sin lies at the door of those who do not allow their ignorance to be expelled by the rays of light from God's word. . . .

"Sin is the most fearful thing in the whole universe. So fearful is it that it could be pardoned only by the sacrifice of the Son of the infinite God. If unpardoned, it must be followed by eternal death."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, August 9, 1898.

What was the general sentiment of the people in Judah toward the sinful conditions prevalent? Jer. 14:10.

"Satan is continually seeking to overcome the people of God by breaking down the barriers which separate them from the world. Ancient Israel were enticed into sin when they ventured into forbidden association with the heathen. In a similar manner are modern Israel led astray. 'The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' 2 Corinthians 4:4."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 508.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is my true inner attitude toward that which God condemns?

"Has your character been transformed? Has darkness been exchanged for light, the love of sin for the love of purity and holiness? Have you been converted, who are engaged in teaching the truth to others? Has there been in you a thorough, radical change? Have you woven Christ into your character?" *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 440.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 398-400.

Part 2
JEHOIAKIM

What was God's admonition to Jehoiakim as leader of God's people? Jer. 22:2, 3.

For years Jeremiah had been extending God's call of repentance to the people. Now the prophet went to the king and invited him to lead out in repentance and regeneration with resultant reformation. Although the leader is only one person, he usually occupies a pivotal influence for good or for bad. "The people will seldom rise higher than their minister. A world-loving spirit in him has a tremendous influence upon others. The people make his deficiencies an excuse to cover their world-loving spirit. They quiet their own consciences, thinking that they may be free to love the things of this life and be indifferent to spiritual things because their ministers are so."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 645, 646.

If no change was effected, what would become of the temple and the nation? Verses 5, 6.

It had been God's purpose that Judah would prosper and that Jerusalem and the temple would stand forever. See Jer. 17:25. God's own people were now frustrating His plan for them.

When all the prophecies of Jeremiah, up to that time, were read to Jehoiakim, how did the king react to God's message to him through his prophet?

"And it came to pass, that when Jehudi [the representative of the princes] had read three or four leaves, he [the king] 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." Jer. 36:23.

"King Jehoiakim and his lords, in their arrogance and pride, refused the invitation of God. They would not heed the warning, and repent. The gracious opportunity proffered them at the time of the burning of the sacred roll, was their last. God had declared that if at that time they refused to hear His voice, He would inflict upon them fearful retribution."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 436.

THINK IT THROUGH

How do I relate to the messages in God's Word that condemn certain of my practices and call upon me to reform?

"Those who refuse to receive reproof and to be corrected, will manifest enmity, malice, and hatred against the instrument that God has used. They will leave no means untried to cast stigma upon the one who bore to them the message."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1034.

FURTHER STUDY

Jeremiah 22:1-19; 36; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 176-180.

Part 3
THE KING AND
A FALSE
PROPHET

Who tried to lead King Zedekiah into rebellion against God very early in his reign?

"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, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 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: 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." Jer. 28:1-4.

"Against determined opposition Jeremiah stood firmly for the policy of submission. Prominent among those who presumed to gainsay the counsel of the Lord was Hananiah, one of the false prophets against whom the people had been warned. Thinking to gain the favor of the king and of the royal court, he lifted his voice in protest, declaring that God had given him words of encouragement for the Jews."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 444, 445.

According to an earlier pronouncement from the Lord by Jeremiah, what was the alternative to submission to Babylon? Jer. 27:13, 14.

"Jeremiah, in the presence of the priests and people, earnestly entreated them to submit to the king of Babylon for the time the Lord had specified. He cited the men of Judah to the prophecies of Hosea, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and others whose messages of reproof and warning had been similar to his own. He referred them to events which had taken place in fulfillment of prophecies of retribution for unrepented sin. In the past the judgments of God had been visited upon the impenitent in exact fulfillment of His purpose as revealed through His messengers."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 445.

THINK IT THROUGH

To whose counsel do I prefer to listen: the counsel of him who presents my own cherished plans, or to the person who presents God's plan for me?

"There is constant danger that professing Christians will come to think that in order to have influence with worldlings, they must to a certain extent conform to the world. But though such a course may appear to afford great advantages, it always ends in spiritual loss."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 570.

FURTHER STUDY

Jeremiah 28; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 444-446.

Part 4
ZEDEKIAH'S
ATTITUDE
TOWARD
GOD'S WORD

What was Zedekiah's traditional attitude toward Jeremiah's prophecies?

"But neither he [Zedekiah], nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah." Jer. 37:2.

"Zedekiah at the beginning of his reign was trusted fully by the king of Babylon and had as a tried counselor the prophet Jeremiah. By pursuing an honorable course toward the Babylonians and by paying heed to the messages from the Lord through Jeremiah, he could have kept the respect of many in high authority and have had opportunity to communicate to them a knowledge of the true God. Thus the captive exiles already in Babylon would have been placed on vantage ground and granted many liberties; the name of God would have been honored far and wide; and those that remained in the land of Judah would have been spared the terrible calamities that finally came upon them."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 440.

What request did Zedekiah nevertheless present to Jeremiah through two messengers? Verse 3.

In view of Zedekiah's reaction to Jeremiah's messages, his request is at least interesting. The human mind is a puzzling entity. Although it is capable of logical reasoning, we do not always employ it in a rational way. The mind is under the direction of the will which sometimes chooses not to think from cause to effect, or choose to pursue a reasonable line of thought. Zedekiah's behavior appears illogical to us; nevertheless, many of us undoubtedly act in the same way, refusing to heed God's voice or counsel to us, while we expect Him to help us in our predicaments.

What was Jeremiah's reply to the king's request? Verses 7, 8.

The hope that the approach of the Egyptian army had raised in the heart of the king and his people was quashed by God's message to Zedekiah through Jeremiah. The king and the people persisted in clinging to their own hopes, rather than heeding the revealed will of God.

How inevitable was Judah's doom before the Babylonians? Verse 10.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do you and I also, like Zedekiah, ask God for guidance, help, and protection, while we deliberately refuse to comply with His will on points that are dear to us? Note Prov. 28:9; Ps. 66:18.

FURTHER STUDY

Jeremiah 37; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 440-442, 453, 454.

Part 5
JEWS SAFER
IN BABYLON

Why did God advise the people of Judah to surrender to the Babylonians?

"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. 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. 21:8, 9.

In mercy to the people God asked them to surrender. In the councils of heaven Jerusalem had filled its cup of iniquity. Its destruction was determined. But its inhabitants might still save their lives if they surrendered to the Babylonians.

Who was actually fighting against Jerusalem and stubborn Judah? Verses 4-6.

"God has revealed in His law the principles that underlie all true prosperity both of nations and of individuals. 'This is your wisdom and your understanding,' Moses declared to the Israelites of the law of God. 'It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life.' Deuteronomy 4:6; 32:47. The blessings thus assured to Israel are, on the same conditions and in the same degree, assured to every nation and every individual under the broad heavens."—*Education*, p. 174.

"The desolation of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah is a solemn warning to modern Israel, that the counsels and admonitions given them through chosen instrumentalities cannot be disregarded with impunity."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 417.

"I have been looking over the *Testimonies* given for Sabbathkeepers and I am astonished at the mercy of God and His care for His people in giving them so many warnings, pointing out their dangers, and presenting before them the exalted position which He would have them occupy. If they would keep themselves in His love and separate from the world, He would cause His special blessings to rest upon them and His light to shine round about them. Their influence for good might be felt in every branch of the work and in every part of the gospel field. But if they fail to meet the mind of God, if they continue to have so little sense of the exalted character of the work as they have had in the past, their influence and example will prove a terrible curse."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 483.

"The professed follower of Christ must not be led by the dictates of his own will; his mind must be trained to think Christ's thoughts."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 88.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 1, pp. 264-268; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 455-461.

**Part 6
THE WORD
FROM THE LORD**

During the final siege of Jerusalem what did King Zedekiah again want to know?

"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?" Jer.37:17.

Zedekiah wanted to know what was going to happen. To that end he inquired from Jeremiah secretly without his counselors and princes knowing about it. "The king dared not openly manifest any faith in Jeremiah. Though his fear drove him to seek information of him privately, yet he was too weak to brave the disapprobation of his princes and of the people by submitting to the will of God as declared by the prophet."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 455.

What was Jeremiah's answer from God to the king's inquiry? Jer. 37:17 (last part).

"From the court of the prison Jeremiah continued to advise submission to the Babylonian rule. To offer resistance would be to invite sure death."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 455.

Zedekiah had a desire to follow God's will as unveiled to him by the prophet. But he was weak in moral character and did not have fortitude and moral stamina to stand up before his counselors and the people who were thoroughly pro-Egyptian. The leaders and the people hoped that through an alliance with Egypt, Judah would still regain its independence and past power and glory.

"Those who stand in defense of the honor of God and maintain the purity of truth at any cost will have manifold trials, as did our Saviour in the wilderness of temptation. While those who have yielding temperaments, who have not courage to condemn wrong, but keep silent when their influence is needed to stand in defense of the right against any pressure, may avoid many heartaches and escape many perplexities, they will also lose a very rich reward, if not their own souls. Those who are in harmony with God, and who through faith in Him receive strength to resist wrong and stand in defense of the right, will always have severe conflicts and will frequently have to stand almost alone. But precious victories will be theirs while they make God their dependence. His grace will be their strength. Their moral sensibility will be keen and clear, and their moral powers will be able to withstand wrong influences. Their integrity, like that of Moses, will be of the purest character."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 302, 303.

FURTHER STUDY

Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 125; *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 28.

"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." Jer. 7:23.

The Jews in the days of Jeremiah were not irreligious; rather, they were exceedingly religious. But "religion" is not synonymous with Christianity or a living Christian experience. Most pagans are religious; there is hardly any people—primitive or highly cultured—who are not religious. Man is a religious creature.

The Jews in Jeremiah's time were diligent in practicing the forms of religion. As a result of the reformation under Josiah, they gloried in the temple (Jer. 7:4); they had the word of God or the law (Jer. 8:8). But possession of Solomon's beautiful temple, or a church building, and the Bible do not necessarily make their possessors pleasing in the sight of God. There is a difference between being a servant of God and being religious or acting religious, between personal piety and conventional religious conduct. A true commitment to God must touch the self, must move a man in and from the depths of his soul, and must unite his most intimate being with his public acts. If this is not the case, it may be called religion, but it is not true Christianity.

The Jews knew that God was to be worshiped, but their religion consisted in the mere offering of sacrifices and the observance of rituals, rather than rectitude in personal living. True religion embraces love in dealing with one's neighbor and righteousness in all the acts of life. This type of religion is the most difficult for man to practice.

True religion makes innumerable demands and inevitably excludes much of what man holds most dear. For this basic reason the people under the leadership of the priests rebelled against the stern religion of Josiah's reformation. It took from them the self-indulgence which

popular religion so freely granted them, while it demanded obedience to the moral law, abstinence from sins of the flesh, and the practice of social justice. Such a conception of worship was altogether too narrow, too restrictive, too prohibitory for the Jews in Jeremiah's day.

The same conditions exist today. Men seldom find fault with religion so long as it confers benefits, lends social respectability, and demands only outward forms of worship. But when it begins to infringe upon personal habits, demands austere morality, affects one's way of doing business, and intrudes into one's whole way of life, enthusiasm for it often wanes. This was the condition among God's people in the days of Jeremiah.

"Religion is not to be confined to external forms and ceremonies. The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit."—**The Desire of Ages**, p. 189.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Zion Like a Woman, Jer. 6:2.**
2. **Law of God With Judah, Jer. 8:8.**
3. **Security in the Temple, Jer. 7:4.**
4. **Practiced Circumcision, Jer. 9:26.**
5. **Offerings, Jer. 6:20.**
6. **Believed All Was Well, Jer. 8:11.**

A RELIGIOUS PEOPLE



Part 1
ZION LIKE
A WOMAN

What had God's people originally been like in His sight? "I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman." Jer. 6:2.

Zion originally was the name of a part of Jerusalem. Later it referred to all of Jerusalem and sometimes it is used to refer to the whole nation. Hence "the daughter of Zion" here and also in Micah 4:8 refers to God's redeemed people.

In both the Old and the New Testaments the church is often portrayed under the symbol of a woman, "a virtuous woman representing a pure church, a vile woman an apostate church."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 381.

At first Israel was aptly represented by a beautiful, pure woman. Such a woman God found to be a suitable representation of His church.

In another figure of speech to what does Jeremiah compare God's people during their wilderness days? Jer. 2:2, 3.

"In her youth Israel had responded to the wooing of God's love. In poetic figure God is represented as the Lover and Israel as His betrothed."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 2:2.

How does God, through Jeremiah, portray His people's departure from Him? Jer. 3:20.

No neglect on God's part had caused His people's degeneracy. His work for them had been noble and flawless. But through their own choice degeneracy had set in.

"The unfaithfulness of the church to Christ in permitting her confidence and affection to be turned from Him, and allowing the love of worldly things to occupy the soul, is likened to the violation of the marriage vow. The sin of Israel in departing from the Lord is presented under this figure; and the wonderful love of God which they thus despised is touchingly portrayed: 'I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest Mine.' 'And thou wast exceeding beautiful and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. . . . But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown.'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 381.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 381, 382.

Part 2
LAW OF GOD
WITH JUDAH

In what did the Jews, under the leadership of the priests and false prophets, apparently trust as the source of their security and wisdom?

"How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us?" Jer. 8:8 (first part).

Under the leadership of the priests and false prophets, the Jews in Jeremiah's time did not pretend to have put aside the law of God. Rather they confidently asserted that they had the law of God among them. Indeed, Hilkiah the high priest had discovered the book of Deuteronomy in the temple and brought it to the attention of King Josiah. As a result of this, a formal reformation and a return to the law had taken place.

The priests represented the people before God. They functioned as spokesmen and mediators of the sacrificial system. They led in worship. But the priests concerned themselves largely with the ceremonies and rituals of the sanctuary. This centered in public worship and in the maintenance of an alleged right relationship between God and the people through various offerings and other performances.

Despite the objections of the priests and prophets, what charge did God level against them and the people at large? Jer. 6:10, 19; 8:9; 9:13.

Previous to the reformation under Josiah, "through Huldah the Lord sent Josiah word that Jerusalem's ruin could not be averted. Even should the people now humble themselves before God, they could not escape their punishment. So long had their senses been deadened by wrongdoing that, if judgment should not come upon them, they would soon return to the same sinful course. . . .

"But because the king [Josiah] had humbled his heart before God, the Lord would acknowledge his promptness in seeking forgiveness and mercy."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 399.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what way may we pride ourselves in knowing the law of God and yet not really keep it?

"Our standing before God depends, not upon the amount of light we have received, but upon the use we make of what we have. Thus even the heathen who choose the right as far as they can distinguish it are in a more favorable condition than are those who have had great light, and profess to serve God, but who disregard the light, and by their daily life contradict their profession."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 239.

FURTHER STUDY

Counsels to Teachers, pp. 11, 12.

Part 3
SECURITY IN
THE TEMPLE

Besides trusting in their possession of the law of God for their security, in what else did the Jews place their confidence for safety?

"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.

The Jews felt secure from all calamity since they had the temple of Solomon, the dwelling place of God, among them.

"Theirs was a formal religion that was satisfied to substitute external conformity for inner righteousness and truth. They deceived themselves into thinking that because they had the Temple of Jerusalem they had the guarantee of the divine presence and favor and a defense against harm."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Micah 3:11.

Into what had the Jews in their ritualistic worship changed the temple, and what did God propose to do to the temple because of their wickedness? Jeremiah 7:10-14.

Shiloh, about 18 miles north of Jerusalem, was the place where the tabernacle had first been erected upon Israel's occupation of the Promised Land. "The ark remained at Shiloh for three hundred years, until, because of the sins of Eli's house, it fell into the hands of the Philistines, and Shiloh was ruined. The ark was never returned to the tabernacle here, the sanctuary service was finally transferred to the temple at Jerusalem, and Shiloh fell into insignificance. There are only ruins to mark the spot where it once stood. Long afterward its fate was made use of as a warning to Jerusalem."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 514.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the modern equivalent of trusting in the temple as evidence of God's favor and presence? What lessons do you see in Judah's temple trusting?

"From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple. God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 161.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 161-165; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 343.

Part 4
PRACTICED
CIRCUMCISION

"And all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart." Jer. 9:26.

Compare Jer. 6:10; 4:4; Deut. 30:6.

The Jews were set apart from the surrounding nations. One distinguishing feature of this separateness was circumcision, which God gave as a sign to Abraham and his descendants. To Abraham it was given as "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." Rom. 4:11. It was a sign of the covenant that God entered into with Abraham.

During the history of Israel, when had the males in Israel not been circumcised according to the Lord's direction? Joshua 5:5.

"In the rebellion at Kadesh they had rejected God, and God had for the time rejected them. Since they had proved unfaithful to His covenant, they were not to receive the sign of the covenant, the rite of circumcision."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 406.

What command did God give to Joshua after Israel had crossed the Jordan River? Joshua 5:2.

"A short distance from Jordan the Hebrews made their first encampment in Canaan. Here Joshua 'circumcised the children of Israel;' 'and the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover.' The suspension of the rite of circumcision since the rebellion at Kadesh had been a constant witness to Israel that their covenant with God, of which it was the appointed symbol, had been broken."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 485.

Because the circumcision of the Jews was of no avail, what did God through Jeremiah say He would do with them? Jer. 9:25.

Circumcision came to be a cultural symbol, rather than a personal sign of commitment to God's will. To the Jews in Jeremiah's day it had, in most instances, become an entirely physical act and state rather than a sign of the particular Jew's loyalty and devotion to God and His ways, as it had been in the case of Abraham. Thus there was no difference between them and the heathen, and they would together reap punishment from God.

THINK IT THROUGH **What is the Christian counterpart to Jewish circumcision, and what implications do you see in this lesson for church members today?**

FURTHER STUDY *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 138; *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, on Josh. 5:1-11.

Part 5
OFFERINGS In their apostasy what were the Jews still practicing in connection with their temple worship?

"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." Jer. 6:20.

That the Jews were faithfully burning incense and bringing animal offerings to the temple is clear. Although Jeremiah 7:21, 22 can be interpreted two ways; the prophet is not invalidating the sacrificial system. This is evident from other verses like Jeremiah 17:26; 33:11, 17, 18. He is only trying to impress upon the ritualistically correct Jews the worthlessness of external obedience apart from holiness of heart. At best a sin offering or a trespass offering was only an admission of failure and recognition of the need for a sinless substitute.

What did the prophets teach about animal offerings? 1 Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11; Micah 6:7.

"'To obey is better than sacrifice.' The sacrificial offerings were in themselves of no value in the sight of God. They were designed to express on the part of the offerer penitence for sin and faith in Christ and to pledge future obedience to the law of God. But without penitence, faith, and an obedient heart, the offerings were worthless."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 634.

How does the prophet Micah sum up the desires of God with reference to His people? Micah 6:8.

"The many sacrifices of the Jews and the flowing of blood to atone for sins for which they felt no true repentance was ever repugnant to God. He spoke through Micah saying, [Micah 6:6-8 quoted]."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1174.

THINK IT THROUGH **How may we today, without ceremonial offerings like those of the Jews, engage in worthless religious services?**

"Costly gifts and a semblance of holiness cannot win the favor of God. He requires for His mercies a contrite spirit, a heart open to the light of truth, love and compassion for our fellow men, and a spirit refusing to be bribed through avarice or self-love. The priests and rulers were destitute of these essentials to God's favor, and their most precious gifts and gorgeous ceremonies were an abomination in His eyes."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1174.

FURTHER STUDY Jer. 7:1-15; *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 50, 51.

Part 6
BELIEVED
ALL WAS WELL

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

The religious leaders and the false prophets assured the Jews in the days of Jeremiah that all was well. This concept is comprehended in the Hebrew word *shalom*, from which the word "peace" is translated in the above verse. *Shalom* was used to describe far more than absence of war and was "frequently used to comprehend all the good things of life. *Shalom* has been defined as meaning not only 'peace,' but also 'completeness,' 'prosperity,' 'welfare,' 'health,' 'friendship,' etc." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 6:14.

What was the thinking and conviction of the people of Judah regarding their own moral state? Jer. 2:35. See also Jer. 5:31.

The Jews were not conscious of any guilt before God. Had not good King Josiah through his religious reformation rectified any mistakes and made amends for any sins that his grandfather Manasseh and his father Amon had made and perpetuated? They were sure that they deserved God's grace.

At what did the unfortunate Jews express their amazement? Jer. 5:19 (first part); 16:10.

In sheer astonishment they would ask, "When you tell this people all these things they will ask you, 'Why has the Lord decreed that this great disaster is to come upon us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the Lord our God?'" Jer. 16:10, NEB.

Theirs was the common justification, What wrong have we done? That very question itself, common though it may be even among us, puts the emphasis on the wrong place. Stress should not be placed on what is wrong with something. If there is nothing wrong with what we do, we still have done nothing right. Such an attitude is negative at best. Neither does a corpse do anything wrong.

In which respect is the attitude of the Jews in Jeremiah's day similar to the Laodicean attitude expressed in Revelation 3:17?

"There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 154.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, p. 378; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 87-89.

GOD'S PEOPLE ON TRIAL



"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." Jer. 7:3.

In two great discourses or sermons Jeremiah points out the shortcomings of his people. The first one, or possibly two as may be indicated by Jeremiah 2:1 and 3:6, covers chapters two through six. This sermon was given during the reign of Josiah. See Jer. 3:6; 1:2. The second (or third) one, the so-called Temple Sermon, covers chapters seven through ten.

In the first discourse, or series of prophetic oracles, the prophet shows that Israel's history has been one of continuous unfaithfulness toward

God ever since they entered the Promised Land. Israel deserted her God and upon her entry into Canaan began to worship the false gods of the Canaanites. See Jer. 2:4-8. These chapters present a historical survey and point back to the sinful experience of Israel. But every indictment, made by God previously, also had application to Judah in Jeremiah's day. Judah had not changed its ways for the better but continued in the God-forgetful sinfulness of their forefathers, as is plainly stated in the latter part of the discourse.

The first part of the Temple Sermon (Jer. 7 to 10) is in content very similar to Jeremiah 26. If it is based on the same presentation by the prophet, which appears likely, then it was first given in the early part of Jehoiakim's reign. See Jer. 26:1; cf. **Prophets and Kings**, pp. 412-415.

This sermon applied specifically to Judah in the days of Jeremiah. But even here God's people or the Jews were occasionally addressed as Israel as for instance in Jeremiah 10:1 and also occasionally throughout the remainder of the book, since the Jews in Jeremiah's day were the remnant of the original nation of Israel.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Israel and Judah Changed Gods, Jer. 2:11.**
2. **Spiritual and Literal Adultery, Jer. 2:18.**
3. **Abominations Practiced, Jer. 7:31.**
4. **Total Moral Degradation, Jer. 2:5.**
5. **Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, Jer. 38:7-13.**
6. **The Rechabites, Jer. 35:5, 6.**



Part 1
ISRAEL AND
JUDAH
CHANGED GODS

What indictment did God bring against His people?

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

God's professed people, Israel, early changed their gods and worshiped both their own gods of gold and heathen idols. At Sinai they made and worshiped a golden calf (see Ex. 32:1-6); in the Shittim valley across Jordan from Jericho on the very borders of the Promised Land Israel worshiped the gods of the Moabites. See Num. 25:1, 2. In spite of this departure "In every age, . . . because of His infinite love for the erring, God has borne long with the rebellious, and has urged them to forsake their course of evil and return to Him."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 324, 325.

How did the loyalty of the heathen nations compare with Judah's loyalty to God? Jer. 2:11.

"Only in extraordinary cases would an idolatrous nation discard its ancestral religion. Even today many adherents of heathen religions are truer to their gods than are nominal Christians to the one true God."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 2:11.

As God's ancient people turned away from the Lord, how deep did they sink? Jer. 2:33.

"Judah had become so vile that even wicked women could learn from her. The wickedness of God's chosen people not only confirmed the heathen in their idolatry but also taught them new ways of practicing it."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 2:33.

"Israel's sin at Beth-peor brought the judgments of God upon the nation, and though the same sins may not now be punished as speedily, they will as surely meet retribution. 'If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.' 1 Corinthians 3:17. Nature has affixed terrible penalties to these crimes,—penalties which, sooner or later, will be inflicted upon every transgressor. It is these sins more than any other that have caused the fearful degeneracy of our race, and the weight of disease and misery with which the world is cursed. Men may succeed in concealing their transgression from their fellow men, but they will no less surely reap the result, in suffering, disease, imbecility, or death. And beyond this life stands the tribunal of the judgment, with its award of eternal penalties."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 461.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 543-461.

Part 2
SPIRITUAL
AND LITERAL
ADULTERY

How had God's chosen people repeatedly tried to bolster their political position among the nations?

"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?" Jer. 2:18.

Earlier prophets (see Isa. 30:1-7; Hosea 5:13; 7:11, 16; 12:1) had warned God's people against alliances with heathen nations. "But instead of turning away from those practices which had brought weakness to the kingdom [of Israel], they continued in iniquity, flattering themselves that when occasion arose, they would attain to the political power they desired by allying themselves with the heathen."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 280.

"It was by departure from the Lord, and alliance with the heathen, that the Jewish church became a harlot."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 382.

What often accompanied the worship of heathen deities? Jer. 2:20; 5:7; 9:2.

While God condemned Judah's worship of heathen gods as adultery in a spiritual sense, the rites of these false religions frequently included literal adultery with "holy" priestesses in groves consecrated to the god.

Although Judah had observed the idolatry of Israel and its resultant Assyrian captivity, what did the Jews still do? Jer. 3:6-9.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is an idol? Is it possible that even today we might be worshipping idols? How?

Ellen G. White wrote about the Seventh-day Adventists back in 1865: "They have other gods before the Lord. Their taste, their appetite, is their god; and when the ax is laid at the root of the tree and those who have indulged their depraved appetites at the expense of health are touched, their sin pointed out, their idols shown them, they do not wish to be convinced; and although God's voice should speak directly to them to put away those health-destroying indulgences, some would still cling to the hurtful things which they love. They seem joined to their idols, and God will soon say to His angels: Let them alone."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 486.

"They [some men and women] worship their earthly treasure, as the ignorant heathen does his idols."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 477.

FURTHER STUDY

"Asherah," "Grove" in *SDA Bible Dictionary*, pp. 81, 82, 426; *Counsels to Teachers*, pp. 237, 238; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 450, 451.

Part 3
ABOMINATIONS
PRACTICED

What abominable practice of worship had God's people adopted from their heathen neighbors?

"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. 7:31.

The valley of Hinnom was southwest of Jerusalem. During the time of the kingdom of Judah the valley became identified with the worship of Molech.

"To put an end to these abominations Josiah 'defiled' the valley (2 Kings 23:10, 14), making it, according to tradition, the receptacle of carcasses and filth. . . .

"The sacrificing of children formed part of the idolatrous worship of the Phoenicians, Moabites, Ammonites, and others. This horrid practice was taken over by Ahaz . . . and Manasseh. . . . It is not certain whether the children were burned alive or first slain. Since they were offered to Molech as a burnt offering (see Jer. 19:5; Eze. 16:20, 21), it has been argued that the children were first slain."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 7:31.

Before their entry into the Promised Land, God had strictly forbidden His people to engage in these idolatrous rites under severe penalties. See Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:9, 10. For this and other abominations the Canaanites were dispossessed.

What would be the result of God's own people descending to these idolatrous practices? Jer. 19:4-9.

"Children are not to be trained to be the devotees of society. They are not to be sacrificed to Molech, but they are to become members of the Lord's family. Parents are to be filled with the compassion of Christ, that they may work for the salvation of the souls that are placed under their influence. They are not to have their minds all engrossed in the fashions and practices of the world. They are not to educate their children to attend parties and concerts and dances, to have and attend feasts, because after this manner the Gentiles walk."—*Child Guidance*, p. 181.

FURTHER STUDY

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1119, or *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 303, 304; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 57.

Part 4
TOTAL MORAL
DEGRADATION

What challenging rhetorical question does God address to His people in view of their departure from His will for them?

"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?" Jer. 2:5.

Against the background of the original purity and intimacy of the bride's relationship to a loyal husband (verse 2), the present state of degeneration of that relationship into infidelity, adultery, and harlotry appears incomprehensible.

What charge of basic corruption does God repeatedly make against His people? Jer. 5:2, 31; 6:13; 7:8; 8:5, 6; 9:5, 8.

Lying—falsehood, deceit, guile, et cetera—is a foundational sin. There is hope for a thief, an adulterer, a Sabbath breaker, and other violators of God's law, if they are truthful. Such persons can be helped and rebuilt into rectitude. But a liar who covers his fault cannot be redeemed, because he will not admit to reality. He refuses to see things as they are. Lying is the very antithesis of the nature of God, who is truth. See John 14:17; 1 John 5:6. Consequently any type of lying or dishonesty—unconfessed and unrepented—will make us unfit for heavenly companionship. See Rev. 21:27; 22:15.

What were some other sins rampant among God's professed people in the days of Jeremiah? Jer. 3:2; 6:28.

The spiritual life of God's people had become utterly degraded.

What would result from Judah's sinfulness? Jer. 7:32-34.

Spiritual degradation with self-deception had advanced so far that nothing short of the great calamity seen by Jeremiah in vision coming from the north would open their eyes to reality.

"Truth is of God; deception in all its myriad forms is of Satan, and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one. Those who have learned of Christ will 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.' Ephesians 5:11. In speech, as in life, they will be simple, straightforward and true, for they are preparing for the fellowship of those holy ones in whose mouth is found no guile."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 252.

FURTHER STUDY

Child Guidance, pp. 150, 151.

Part 5
EBED-MELECH,
THE ETHIOPIAN

How had the eunuch Ebed-melech manifested his loyalty to God amid the apostate Jews? Jer. 38:7-13.

Ebed-melech was a stranger by race in Jerusalem. He was an Ethiopian in the service of King Zedekiah at the court. According to ordinary human considerations, a man in that station would conform to the sentiments of the court and the country in which he lived and served.

But higher considerations than timeserving ruled this man. He trusted not in man; God Himself through Jeremiah testified of him, "Thou hast put thy trust in me." Jer. 39:18. Thus he was a servant of God, and he was unafraid and boldly went to the king and presented Jeremiah's predicament to him, after the princes had put the prophet into the dungeon, which was really a muddy cistern.

To Jeremiah in his apparently futile ministry to his people, Ebed-melech's faithfulness must have been a source of encouragement. As the ministry of Jesus was drawing to a close and His chosen people rejected Him as their Saviour, a group of Greeks sought Him. See John 12:20-22; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 621. As Jesus saw the request of the Greeks as "an earnest of the results of His great sacrifice," so Jeremiah through Ebed-melech realized that at least some, although heathen, would accept the call to repentance and salvation.

Just before Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and King Zedekiah was taken captive, what message came to Jeremiah concerning Ebed-melech? Jer. 39:15-18.

"Because of his loyalty toward Jeremiah, God promises the Ethiopian that his life will be spared from 'the hand of' the princes of Judah, who were angered by his action regarding the prophet (ch. 38:7-13), and that he will 'not fall by the sword' (ch. 39:18) of the Babylonians, since Jeremiah will undoubtedly intercede for him."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 39:17.

"Whatever may be their profession, it is only those who are world servers at heart that act from policy rather than principle in religious things. We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God. To men of principle, faith, and daring, the world is indebted for its great reforms. By such men the work of reform for this time must be carried forward."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 460.

FURTHER STUDY

Jeremiah 38, 39.

Part 6
THE RECHABITES**To what test did Jeremiah submit the Rechabites?**

"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. 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." Jer. 35:5, 6.

The Rechabites were a faithful remnant in Judah. They were descendants of Jonadab who was associated with Jehu in his destruction of the descendants of Ahab. See 2 Kings 10: 15-17. From Jonadab they had received strict principles of living that they still loyally adhered to after more than 200 years.

"To illustrate the importance of yielding implicit obedience to the requirements of God, Jeremiah gathered some Rechabites in to one of the chambers of the temple and set wine before them, inviting them to drink. As was to have been expected, he met with remonstrance and absolute refusal."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 423.

What contrast did the Rechabites present to the Jews in general in Jeremiah's time? Jer. 35:12-14.

"God sought thus to bring into sharp contrast the obedience of the Rechabites with the disobedience and rebellion of His people. The Rechabites had obeyed the command of their father and now refused to be enticed into transgression. But the men of Judah had hearkened not to the words of the Lord, and were in consequence about to suffer His severest judgments."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 424.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what particular ways do we today need to realign our lives in order to be in harmony with God's will?

"If the directions of a good and wise father, who took the best and most effectual means to secure his posterity against the evil of intemperance, were to be so strictly obeyed, God's authority should be held in as much greater reverence as He is holier than man. He is our Creator and commander, infinite in power and terrible in judgment. In mercy He employs a variety of means to bring men to see and repent of their sins. If they will continue to disregard the reproofs He sends them, and act contrary to His declared will, ruin must follow; for God's people are kept in prosperity only by His mercy, through the care of His heavenly messengers. He will not uphold and guard a people who disregard His counsel and despise His reproofs."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 175, 176.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 423, 424; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 174-176.

“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.” Jer. 15:16.

During the last half of the seventh century B.C. God had several messengers in the kingdom of Judah. Nahum announced the destruction of Assyria because of its sinfulness. This served as a warning also to Judah in her departure from God. Habakkuk specifically prophesied that the Chaldeans or the Neo-Babylonians would overrun Judah because of its sins. Zephaniah likewise exhorted Judah to repentance and change of its ways lest it perish in its God-forgetfulness.

“The silent yet powerful influences set in operation by the messages of the prophets regarding the Babylonian Captivity did much to prepare the way for a reformation that took place in the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign. This reform movement, by which threatened judgments were averted for a season, was brought about in a wholly unexpected manner through the discovery and study of a portion of Holy Scripture that for many years had been strangely misplaced and lost.”—**Prophets and Kings**, p. 392.

From the very beginning of his reign Josiah “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.” 2 Kings 22:2. When he was sixteen

years old, in the eighth year of his reign, the young king began to seek the Lord: four years later he began to purge his country of idolatry. See 2 Chron. 34:3. Under this influence Jeremiah grew up. The following year Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office in the thirteenth year of Josiah’s reign. Five years later Hilkiah the high priest found the book of the law in the temple. This prompted the king to initiate a thorough religious reform throughout both Judah and Israel. In this he was aided by the prophetess Huldah. See 2 Kings 22:14.

The king read the book of the law, Deuteronomy, in the hearing of the leaders and the people. See 2 Kings 23:1-3. “The royal reader was deeply affected, and he delivered his message with the pathos of a broken heart. His hearers were profoundly moved. The intensity of feeling revealed in the countenance of the king, the solemnity of the message itself, the warning of judgments impending—all these had their effect, and many determined to join with the king in seeking forgiveness.”—**Prophets and Kings**, p. 400.

Without a doubt Josiah’s devotion to God and the renewal of the covenant entered into by king and people made a deep impression upon Jeremiah’s mind. The book that became the king’s guide in religious reform became Jeremiah’s inspira-

JEREMIAH AND THE WORD



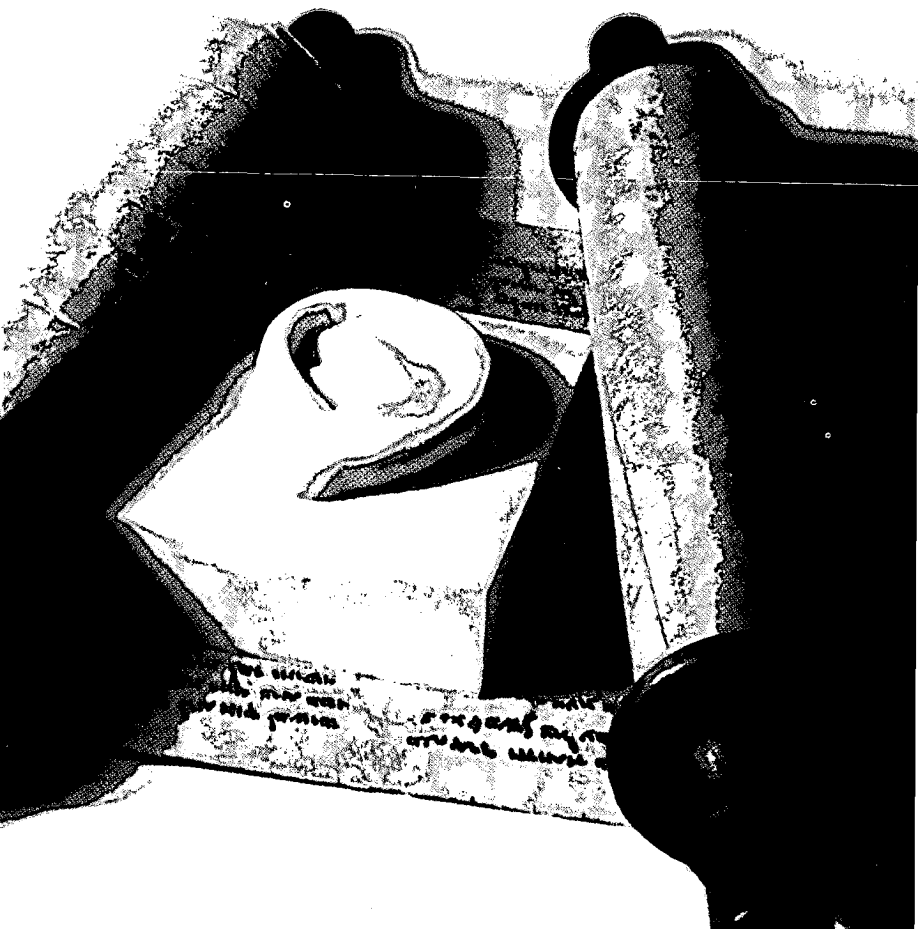
tion and joy.

Before Jeremiah taught the knowledge of God to the people of Judah, his own heart had been saturated by its messages and brought into full harmony with God. Its principles became the basis of his religious teachings and practice. Jeremiah was deeply influenced by concepts from the book of Deuteronomy; his quotations or allusions to Deuteronomy are more frequent than to any other books; no other prophet or Bible writer harks back so frequently to Deuteronomy as does Jeremiah. Jeremiah steeped himself in its teachings. To him they became "the joy and rejoicing" of his heart. This familiarity and love for the Written

Word made Jeremiah readily susceptible to God's personal messages to him.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **God's Word Came to Jeremiah, Jer. 2:1.**
2. **Jeremiah Finds the Word, Jer. 15:16.**
3. **Tried to Flee From the Word, Jer. 20:7, 8.**
4. **The Word, a Fire Within Him, Jer. 20:9.**
5. **Urges Sabbath Reform, Jer. 17:19-22.**
6. **God's People Rejected the Word, Jer. 6:10.**



Part 1
GOD'S WORD
CAME TO
JEREMIAH

How does Jeremiah ordinarily introduce his messages or sermons?

"Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying." Jer. 2:1.

In chapter 1 alone Jeremiah mentions seven times that he was not speaking his own words but only presenting what had been given him by God (see verses 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 14). In introducing his first message in chapter 2 he again makes clear that the words he is going to speak are not his words but God's.

How is the intimacy between God and Jeremiah revealed? Jer. 12:1.

Jeremiah does not limit himself to the mechanical proclamation of the messages God conveys to him. He feels free to discuss problems with God that he fails to understand and to argue propositions with his heavenly Parent that perplex and trouble him. In other words he levels with God. This is an indication of his intimate friendship with God.

What intimate, personal advice did God give Jeremiah? Jer. 16:1, 2.

God's restriction on Jeremiah touches the very vitals of human life and desire. Jeremiah learns God's will for him. As a committed believer he chooses to obey God's will rather than follow his natural human inclinations.

"Vss. 1-9 clearly document the prophet's loneliness, here spelled out in biographical detail. Like Paul, Jeremiah refrains from marriage 'for the present distress' (I Cor. 7:26). So assured is Jeremiah of the coming catastrophe and of his prophetic mission that he forgoes the desirable and normal pleasures of family and home. So universal is the calamity bearing down upon the people that he will not . . . [beget] children to suffer its outrages."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5, p. 946.

THINK IT THROUGH

How does God's word come to us today?

"God's work of refining and purifying must go on until His servants are so humbled, so dead to self, that, when called into active service, their eye will be single to His glory. He will then accept their efforts; they will not move rashly, from impulse; they will not rush on and imperil the Lord's cause, being slaves to temptations and passions, and followers of their own carnal mind set on fire by Satan. Oh, how fearfully is the cause of God marred by man's perverse will and unsubdued temper! How much suffering he brings upon himself by following his own headstrong passions!"—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 86.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 668.

Part 2
JEREMIAH
FINDS THE
WORD

"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." Jer. 15:16.

God desires to speak to every individual. Very seldom, however, does He speak to men in an audible voice as He apparently did often to Jeremiah. But He longs to speak to us through His Written Word, His providences, through other people, and through His Holy Spirit.

But God's speaking does not necessarily imply that we hear. God is constantly trying to speak to us, but it is necessary for us to be close to Him in order that we might hear and understand. Jeremiah's closeness to God consequently enabled him both to hear and to understand God's word to him. Neither is it sufficient to hear God's voice speaking to us through different media. It is possible to hear words but fail to understand. The message conveyed must register in our personal understanding of it. Jeremiah did not merely hear God's voice and message; he understood it and accepted it. He also brought his will into conformity to God's will and obeyed God.

As Jeremiah found the word of God, what did he do with it? Verse 16 (first part).

Eating the word symbolizes, not merely reading the word, but taking it into the mind and meditating upon it. As food eaten is useless unless one's digestive organs can prepare it for assimilation by the blood, so the word of God is also useless unless it is taken into the mind and becomes a subject for meditation. As the nutrients of digested food are assimilated by the blood and carried to different parts of the body to be used either as building material or energy, so the word, prepared by meditation, will be implemented in actions and decisions of daily life.

As Jeremiah ate and digested the word, how did he react to it? Verse 16 (middle part).

As he symbolically ate the word, it became the joy and rejoicing of his heart. He embraced God's word with love.

"Let not the days pass by and precious opportunities be lost of seeking the Lord with all the heart and mind and soul. If we accept not the truth in the love of it, we may be among the number who will see the miracles wrought by Satan in these last days, and believe them. Many strange things will appear as wonderful miracles, which should be regarded as deceptions manufactured by the father of lies."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 53.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "The Sower Went Forth to Sow," pp. 43-52.

**Part 3
TRIED TO
FLEE FROM
THE WORD**

As Jeremiah contemplated the opposition and rebuffs his message aroused, what was he tempted to believe?

"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. 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." Jer. 20:7, 8.

Jeremiah had just spent a night of pain and humiliation in the stocks. He was tired and prone to be discouraged. See verses 2 and 3.

When God called Jeremiah to the prophetic office, He had promised to defend and protect him. See ch. 1:18, 19. On this occasion this promise had apparently not been fulfilled. This perplexed Jeremiah. The temptation assailed him that a demonic spirit had deceived him, since the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto him and a daily derision.

Facing these adversities and haunting doubts, what did Jeremiah decide to do? Jer. 20:9 (first part).

Jeremiah was not the last one trying to flee from his gospel commission. John Mark left it temporarily because he failed to endure the hardships encountered. See Acts 13:13. The apostle Paul preached since necessity was laid upon him. See 1 Cor. 9:16.

Luther confessed, "Nothing is keeping me in the ministry of the Word except my obedience to the will of another, namely, the will of God. Of my own free will I would never have gone into it or remained in it, so great is my awe!"—*Luther's Works* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), vol. 14, p. 281.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways am I shunning God's will for me, because it appears too difficult or impossible?

"The Duke of Wellington was once present where a party of Christian men were discussing the possibility of success in missionary effort among the heathen. They appealed to the duke to say whether in his judgment such efforts were likely to prove a success commensurate to the cost. The old soldier replied:

"Gentlemen, what are your marching orders? Success is not the question for you to discuss. If I read your orders aright, they run thus, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Gentlemen, obey your marching orders.'" —*Gospel Workers*, p. 115.

FURTHER STUDY

Gospel Workers, pp. 111-116.

Part 4
THE WORD
A FIRE
WITHIN HIM

How was Jeremiah affected when he tried to refrain from preaching God's message?

"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 thought he would free himself from the divine commission he had received. He had taken all he could endure of humiliation, of scorn, and of mockings; he did not want to be a laughingstock any longer. He resolved to proclaim the word no more. But to his utter amazement he found he was unable to leave his prophetic ministry. He was a captive of the word of God.

What promise had God earlier given Jeremiah as to the effectiveness of his words in contradiction to the words of the false prophets? Jer. 5:14.

God's words through Jeremiah were not to be lightly discounted, although now laughed at by the people. "Instead of proving to be wind, God's word in the mouth of Jeremiah is represented as becoming a fire that would suddenly and irresistibly consume the scoffers as fire consumes dry wood (see Jer. 1:9, 10; 23:29; cf. Ps. 83:14, 15; Isa. 9:18, 19)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 5:14.

"It is time that the watchmen upon the walls of Zion understood the responsibility and sacredness of their mission. They should feel that a woe is upon them if they do not perform the work which God has committed to them. If they become unfaithful, they are endangering the safety of the flock of God, endangering the cause of truth, and exposing it to the ridicule of our enemies."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 379.

"God will move upon men in humble positions to declare the message of present truth. Many such will be seen hastening hither and thither, constrained by the Spirit of God to give the light to those in darkness. The truth is as a fire in their bones, filling them with a burning desire to enlighten those who sit in darkness. Many, even among the uneducated, will proclaim the word of the Lord. Children will be impelled by the Holy Spirit to go forth to declare the message of heaven. The Spirit will be poured out upon those who yield to His promptings. Casting off man's binding rules and cautious movements, they will join the army of the Lord."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 26, 27.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 373-377; *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 27.

Part 5
URGES SABBATH
REFORM

How were the Jews apparently keeping the Sabbath in the days of Jeremiah? Jer. 17:19-22.

"On one occasion, by command of the Lord, the prophet took his position at one of the principal entrances to the city and there urged the importance of keeping holy the Sabbath day. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were in danger of losing sight of the sanctity of the Sabbath, and they were solemnly warned against following their secular pursuits on that day."
—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 411.

What would have been the reward of following Jeremiah's counsel and keeping the Sabbath commandment?

"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; 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." Jer. 17:24, 25.

What did God foretell would befall Jerusalem if the people continued to break the Sabbath commandment? Jer. 17:27.

"This promise of prosperity as the reward of allegiance was accompanied by a prophecy of the terrible judgments that would befall the city should its inhabitants prove disloyal to God and His law. If the admonitions to obey the Lord God of their fathers and to hallow His Sabbath day were not heeded, the city and its palaces would be utterly destroyed by fire."
—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 411, 412.

Jeremiah's contemporary, Ezekiel, a captive in Babylon when Jeremiah wrote this, said that one of the chief offenses God held against Israel after their deliverance from Egypt was that Israel "despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths." Ezek. 20:16.

"Every nation upon the earth was watching the people for whom God had done so much. If they had followed him, he would have exalted them, and made them a praise in the earth. They would have been regarded as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 6, 1897.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 349-368; *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 702-704.

Part 6
GOD'S PEOPLE
REJECTED
THE WORD

How did the Jews at large regard the will of God as expressed in His law in contrast to Jeremiah's attitude toward it?

"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." Jer. 6:10.

Compare Jer. 7:26; 16:12; 19:15.

"Jeremiah appears to be overcome with a sense of the futility of his mission. Because of the obstinacy of the people all his preaching seemed vain."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 6:10.

"But Jeremiah protests. To whom could he speak, or give warning? The people were so far gone in the induration of their wills and hearts that they could no longer heed the word even if it were spoken. Just as they were uncircumcised of heart (4:4), so also were they uncircumcised of ear. . . .

"This callousness and indifference on the part of the people, not to say their scorn, was undoubtedly disconcertingly frustrating to a young man of Jeremiah's sensibilities and prophetic temper."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5, pp. 859, 860.

As God through Jeremiah showed them His will, what was the reaction on the part of God's people? Jer. 6:16.

Righteous indignation welled up within Jeremiah. "Zeal for God's cause was figuratively consuming the prophet."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 6:11.

THINK IT THROUGH

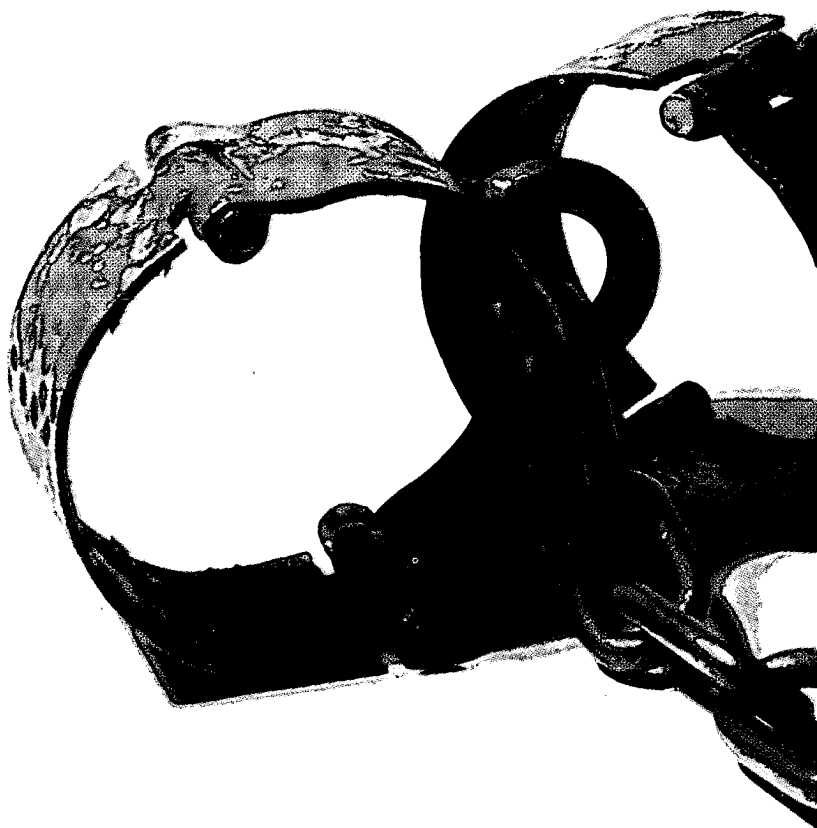
What is my attitude if someone points out my shortcomings or divergence from God's will?

"It is true there is an indignation that is justifiable, even in the followers of Christ. When they see that God is dishonored, and His service brought into disrepute, when they see the innocent oppressed, a righteous indignation stirs the soul. Such anger, born of sensitive morals, is not a sin. But those who at any supposed provocation feel at liberty to indulge anger or resentment are opening the heart to Satan. Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 619, 620.

JEREMIAH, A TRAITOR?



"As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you." Jer. 26:14.

"For forty years Jeremiah was to stand before the nation as a witness for truth and righteousness. In a time of unparalleled apostasy he was to exemplify in life and character the worship of the only true God. During the terrible sieges of Jerusalem he was to be the mouthpiece of Jehovah. He was to predict the downfall of the house of David and the destruction of the beautiful temple built by Solomon. And when imprisoned because of his fearless utterances, he was still to speak plainly against sin in high places. Despised, hated, rejected of men, he was finally to witness the literal fulfillment of his own prophecies of impending doom, and share in the

sorrow and woe that should follow the destruction of the fated city."—**Prophets and Kings**, p. 408.

Jeremiah was a steward of the mysteries of God. There was no trace of the hireling in him. Personal considerations mattered not. In compliance with God's advice he had refrained from getting married. In a crisis hour of his nation's history his life and energies were wholly devoted to doing God's will and speaking His words. As a true steward his life was expendable in the fulfillment of his divine trust.

Because of his constant loyalty to God, his nation and its rulers came to look upon Jeremiah as a traitor to his country.

Religion and patriotism evoke two of the most deeply rooted loyalties in human nature. When both can exist in the heart of a person without conflict, fortunate is the man. When they collide, fearful is the emotional strain to which a person is subjected. In the experience of Jeremiah these two loyalties clashed, because neither the kings—after Josiah's death—nor the people were inclined to heed the will of God.

Jeremiah was a servant of God and a citizen of the kingdom of Judah. Thus he had a dual citizenship: his first and primary citizenship was in heaven and his second on earth. But he resided on earth.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Judah and Shiloh, Jer. 26:6.**
2. **Plot Against Jeremiah, Jer. 11:1-4, 8.**
3. **Jeremiah Beaten, Jer. 20:2.**
4. **Jeremiah Imprisoned, Jer. 37:11, 12.**
5. **Ready to Die, Jer. 26:14, 15.**
6. **Loyal to God, Jer. 37:10.**



Part 1
JUDAH AND
SHILOH

What fate did Jeremiah predict for Jerusalem and the temple because of Judah's unrepentant sinfulness?

"Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth." Jer. 26:6.

This prediction was part of Jeremiah's Temple Sermon in chapters 7 to 10, which is briefly summarized in chapter 26. The prediction amounted to a prophecy of defeat and destruction of Judah before her enemies.

"They [the people of Jerusalem] understood this reference to Shiloh and the time when the Philistines overcame Israel and the ark of God was taken. . . .

"The sons of Eli were slain, Eli himself lost his life, the ark of God was taken from Israel, and thirty thousand of the people were slain. All this was because sin was lightly regarded and allowed to remain among them."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 166. See 1 Sam. 4:10-22.

What was the reaction of the people, the priests, and the prophets to Jeremiah's speech? Jer. 26: 8, 11.

"When the priests and the people heard the message that Jeremiah delivered to them in the name of the Lord, they were very angry and declared that he should die. They were boisterous in their denunciations of him, crying: '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.' Thus was the message of God despised and the servant with whom He entrusted it threatened with death. The priests, the unfaithful prophets, and all the people turned in wrath upon him who would not speak to them smooth things and prophesy deceit."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 167.

Who intervened and saved Jeremiah on this occasion? Jer. 26:16.

"God's chosen servants should meet with courage and patience the trials and sufferings that befall them through reproach, neglect, and misrepresentation. They should continue to discharge faithfully the work God has given them to do, ever remembering that the prophets of old and the Saviour of mankind and His apostles also endured abuse and persecution for the Word's sake."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 437.

FURTHER STUDY

1 Samuel 4; Jeremiah 26 in the Bible and comments in the *SDA Bible Commentary; Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 165-168.

Part 2
PLOT AGAINST
JEREMIAH

For what did Jeremiah at the command of God reprove the people of Judah? Jer. 11:1-4, 8.

"Wherever he ministered he met the people with the earnest plea, 'Hear ye the words of this covenant,' words which would bring them a full understanding of God's purpose to extend to all nations a knowledge of saving truth."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 466.

What did God apparently reveal to Jeremiah? Jer. 11:18, 19, 21.

"Anathoth had been assigned to the priests (Joshua 21:18) and was the home of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1). The 'men of Anathoth' were therefore priests; even more, they were close relatives of Jeremiah (see ch. 12:6). It had been difficult for Jeremiah to realize the depth of Judah's apostasy (ch. 11:9-11 . . .). Now, God warns Jeremiah of the secret plot on his life (ch. 11:18, 19, 21), and as the prophet learns of their conspiracy against him personally he begins to understand their attitude toward God (v. 20; see chs. 12:1; 17:18)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 11:21.

Why did the people of Anathoth want to kill Jeremiah?

"Therefore thus saith the Lord of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Prophesy not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand." Jer. 11:21.

Jeremiah had accepted God's commission and was a true spokesman for Him regardless of consequences. He was a true prophet, and prophets are a strange brand of people. They do not hesitate to do the will of God or proclaim His purpose because of possibly disastrous consequences. They are conscious of a job to be done for God, and they do it, leaving the consequences with God.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what way do you see Jeremiah as a prototype of God's people in the last days?

"Conscientious obedience to the word of God will be treated as rebellion. Blinded by Satan, the parent will exercise harshness and severity toward the believing child; the master or mistress will oppress the commandment-keeping servant. Affection will be alienated; children will be disinherited and driven from home."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 608.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 603-612; Jeremiah 11 in the Bible and comments in *SDA Bible Commentary*.

Part 3
JEREMIAH
BEATEN

In chapter 19, under the symbol of a broken earthen vessel, Jeremiah foretold the total destruction of Judah due to her sins.

How did Pashur, the priest, express his hatred of Jeremiah on account of his message?

"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." Jer. 20:2.

"The prophet's words, instead of leading to confession and repentance, aroused the anger of those high in authority, and as a consequence Jeremiah was deprived of his liberty. Imprisoned, and placed in the stocks, the prophet nevertheless continued to speak the messages of Heaven to those who stood by. His voice could not be silenced by persecution."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 432.

Not being intimidated by Pashur's cruel treatment, how did Jeremiah reiterate his doleful message to him privately? Jer. 20:3-6.

The average individual in Jeremiah's position might have deemed himself fortunate to escape the stocks and further beating. But Jeremiah was not primarily concerned to save his skin. His first concern was to deliver God's warning message that the people of Judah—in this particular case, the priest Pashur—might repent and turn away from their perverse ways. Thus they would spare themselves and their country from the awful calamity Jeremiah envisioned as a result of continued sinful obstinacy.

"The spirit of opposition to reproof, that led to the persecution and imprisonment of Jeremiah, exists today. Many refuse to heed repeated warnings, preferring rather to listen to false teachers who flatter their vanity and overlook their evil-doing. In the day of trouble such will have no sure refuge, no help from heaven."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 437.

"The fearful and unbelieving, who are punished with the second death, are of that class who are ashamed of Christ in this world. They are afraid to do right and follow Christ, lest they should meet with pecuniary loss. They neglect their duty, to avoid reproach and trials, and to escape dangers. Those who dare not do right because they will thus expose themselves to trials, persecution, loss, and suffering are cowards, and, with idolaters, liars, and all sinners, they are ripening for the second death."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 630.

FURTHER STUDY

Jeremiah 20 in the Bible and comments in *SDA Bible Commentary*.

Part 4
JEREMIAH
IMPRISONED

While the Babylonians were besieging Jerusalem, “the Egyptians endeavored to come to the rescue of the beleaguered city; and the Chaldeans, in order to keep them back, abandoned for a time their siege of the Judean capital.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 452.

During this temporary withdrawal of the Babylonian army from Jerusalem, what did Jeremiah plan to do? Jer. 37:11, 12.

“For many years Jeremiah had stood before the people as a faithful witness for God; and now, as the fated city was about to pass into the hands of the heathen, he considered his work done and attempted to leave, but was prevented by a son of one of the false prophets.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 453.

Of what was Jeremiah accused and with what result? Jer. 37:13-15.

The son of the false prophet “reported that Jeremiah was about to join the Babylonians, to whom he had repeatedly urged the men of Judah to submit. The prophet denied the lying charge, but nevertheless ‘the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison.’”—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 453, 454.

Why did King Zedekiah keep Jeremiah in prison?

“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; 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; 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.” Jer. 32:3-5.

In trying to defend Jerusalem against the attacking Babylonians, Zedekiah, from a strictly human viewpoint, did not want a prophet at large inside its walls proclaiming daily the futility of the city’s defense against the attackers.

During the battle of Britain during World War II the British likewise isolated individuals who did not have faith in its successful defense.

Ellen White has counseled the church that “we should not work in a manner that will mark us out as seeming to advocate treason.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 394. And yet the time will come when “those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order . . . causing anarchy and corruption.”—*The Great Controversy*, page 592.

FURTHER STUDY

Jeremiah 19; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 396, 397.

Part 5
READY TO DIE

After Jeremiah had announced God's judgment on Judah, and thereby aroused the animosity of the people toward him, what was his attitude?

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

Jeremiah was not what we usually call diplomatic in his pronouncements. His message was clear and direct. All his listeners understood it. Hence their hatred of him and their determination to put him to death. Verse 8.

Although prepared for his fate, what was Jeremiah's warning to the people? Verse 15.

"Had the prophet been intimidated by the threatening attitude of those high in authority, his message would have been without effect, and he would have lost his life; but the courage with which he delivered the solemn warning commanded the respect of the people and turned the princes of Israel in his favor. They reasoned with the priests and false prophets, showing them how unwise would be the extreme measures they advocated, and their words produced a reaction in the minds of the people. Thus God raised up defenders for His servant."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 418.

Who interceded for Jeremiah's life? Verse 16; cf. verse 24.

"The elders also united in protesting against the decision of the priests regarding the fate of Jeremiah. They cited the case of Micah, who had prophesied judgments upon Jerusalem, saying, '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.'"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 418.

THINK IT THROUGH

What am I personally doing today to develop a fortitude like Jeremiah's that will enable me to stand staunchly for God even in the face of threatened death for my loyalty to Him?

"It is better to die than to sin; better to want than to defraud; better to hunger than to lie."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 495.

"Those who would rather die than perform a wrong act are the only ones who will be found faithful."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 53.

FURTHER STUDY

Jeremiah 26; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 415-418.

Part 6
LOYAL TO GOD

Why did Jeremiah advise his king and countrymen to surrender to the Babylonians?

"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." Jer. 37:10.

To Jeremiah God had unveiled some of His omniscience. Jeremiah knew the futility of trying to resist the Babylonians; God had given to them both Judah and the surrounding nations.

In view of this divinely granted insight, what was his advice to both king and countrymen? Jer. 21:8, 9; 38:2, 17.

"Here was exhibited the long-suffering mercy of God. Even at that late hour, if there were submission to His requirements, the lives of the people would be spared and the city saved from conflagration. But the king thought he had gone too far to retract. He was afraid of the Jews, afraid of becoming a subject of ridicule, afraid for his life. It was too humiliating, at that late day, to say to the people: 'I accept the word of the Lord as spoken through His prophet Jeremiah. I dare not venture to war against the enemy in the face of all these warnings.'

"With tears Jeremiah entreated the king to save himself and his people. With anguish of spirit he assured him that he could not escape with his life, and that all his possessions would fall to the king of Babylon. He could save the city if he would."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 183.

Jeremiah was not a traitor, since he openly advised both king and people to surrender rather than continue the unequal struggle, but without a doubt he did weaken "the hands of the men of war that remain in this city [Jerusalem], and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them." Jer. 38:4.

THINK IT THROUGH

How will I relate myself to God's entrusted message if its proclamation will entail suffering?

"There will come a time when, because of our advocacy of Bible truth, we shall be treated as traitors; but let not this time be hastened by unadvised movements that stir up animosity and strife."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 394.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 394, 395.

JEREMIAH'S EMPHASIS ON HEART RELIGION



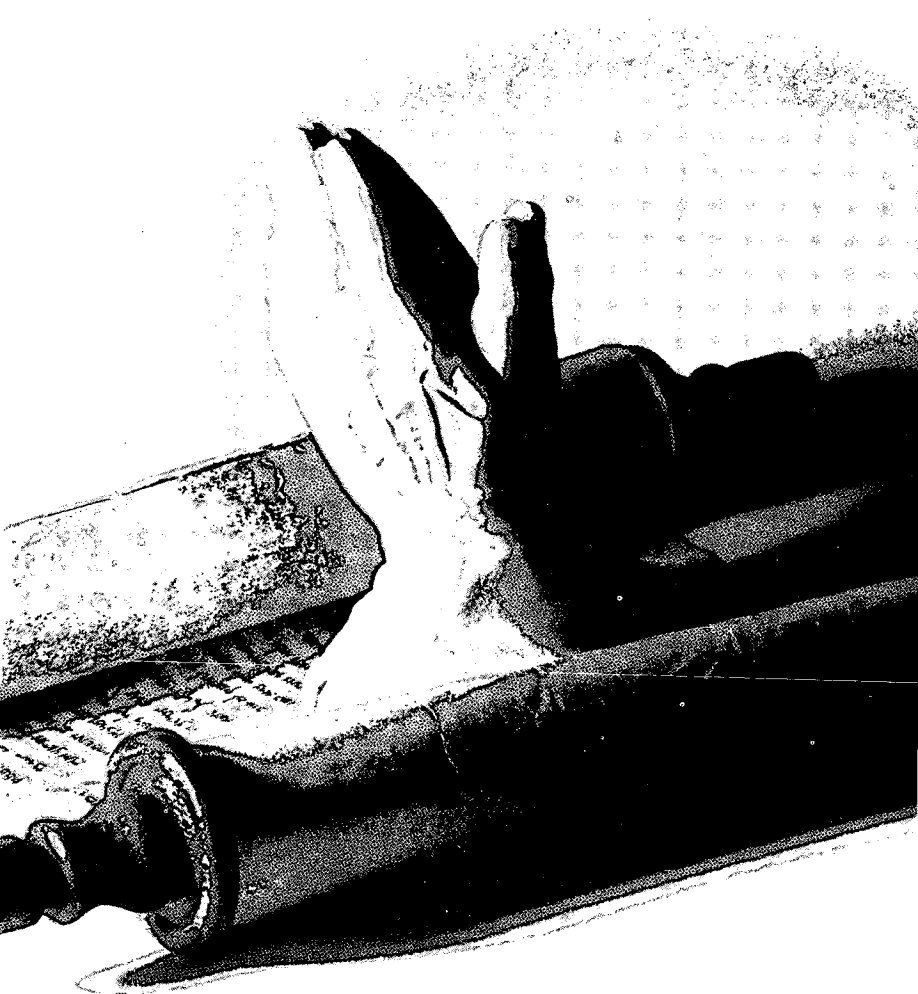
**“I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”
Jer. 17:10.**

God had found Jeremiah, and Jeremiah found God and also His word. After having been called to prophethood as a young man, Jeremiah responded and made the Lord his personal God. Through the surrender of his will to the Lord Jeremiah made Him and His will the highest interest in his life.

After he had found a personal Saviour and a Friend in God, he tried

to present this fellowship as something desirable to his countrymen. It should have been of particular value to them especially since earthly values were crumbling under the progressively more persistent political pressure from Babylon, and finally from the disastrous onslaughts of the Babylonian army.

From the very beginning Jeremiah pleaded with his people that they forsake their sins and return unto their God: “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multi-



tude of mountains: truly in the Lord
our God is the salvation of Israel."
Jer. 3:22, 23.

Making man good is not a human accomplishment. The most perfect code of laws or the best rules cannot bring this about. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jer. 13:23. Goodness cannot be imposed from without. Reformation does not suffice. It must be regeneration. This is a gift of God, while God Himself

writes His law upon the human heart. From there it flows out in behavior.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Common Bases of Human Glory, Jer. 9:23.**
2. **True Bases of Glory, Jer. 9:24.**
3. **God's Way, Jer. 10:23.**
4. **The Searcher of Hearts, Jer. 17:10.**
5. **The Blessed Man, Jer. 17:7.**
6. **God Can Be Found, Jer. 29:11.**

Part 1
COMMON BASES
OF HUMAN
GLORY

During the shaky reign of Jehoiakim, of what were apparently some of the Jews still inclined to boast?

"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. 9:23.

God, through Jeremiah, wanted to point out to His people that the usefulness of their political wisdom and human foresight were coming to an end. Their own military prowess would collapse, and in vain would they hope for help from Egypt. Their wealth of gold, silver, and brass accumulated in the temple would turn into liabilities, attracting the greedy Babylonians rather than being assets to be used for the purposes for which they were accumulated.

Name one particular person in the Bible who did glory in his wisdom, wealth, and power as displayed in his capital and kingdom. Dan. 4:29, 30.

"It is not surprising that the successful monarch [Nebuchadnezzar], so ambitious and so proud-spirited, should be tempted to turn aside from the path of humility, which alone leads to true greatness. In the intervals between his wars of conquest he gave much thought to the strengthening and beautifying of his capital, until at length the city of Babylon became the chief glory of his kingdom, 'the golden city,' 'the praise of the whole earth.' His passion as a builder, and his signal success in making Babylon one of the wonders of the world, ministered to his pride, until he was in grave danger of spoiling his record as a wise ruler whom God could continue to use as an instrument for the carrying out of the divine purpose."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 515.

THINK IT THROUGH

On what do I as a person usually base my confidence and security, or in what do I glory?

"We need to shun everything that would encourage pride and self-sufficiency; therefore we should beware of giving or receiving flattery or praise. It is Satan's work to flatter. He deals in flattery as well as in accusing and condemnation. Thus he seeks to work the ruin of the soul. Those who give praise to men are used by Satan as his agents. Let the workers for Christ direct every word of praise away from themselves. Let self be put out of sight. Christ alone is to be exalted. 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,' let every eye be directed, and praise from every heart ascend."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 161, 162.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 3, p. 479.

Part 2
TRUE BASES
OF GLORY

What should be the Christian's source of rejoicing or boasting, if there should be any at all?

"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." Jer. 9:24.

Ellen G. White comments thus on this verse: "Scarcely can the human mind comprehend the breadth and depth and height of the spiritual attainments of him who gains this knowledge."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 531.

The knowledge referred to here Ellen G. White calls experimental knowledge. It consists of a personal experience with God rather than in theories or abstractions. Such is the knowledge only of the person who has tried the Lord and learned that He is good. Such knowledge God values. "The value of man is estimated in heaven according to the capacity of the heart to know God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 354, 355.

"So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 63.

How does the apostle Paul reiterate Jeremiah's inspired counsel? 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17; Gal. 6:14.

"Paul realized that his sufficiency was not in himself, but in the presence of the Holy Spirit, whose gracious influence filled his heart, bringing every thought into subjection to Christ. He spoke of himself as 'always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.' 2 Corinthians 4:10. In the apostle's teachings Christ was the central figure."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 251.

THINK IT THROUGH

If I glory in the Lord, how does this glorying express itself in my experience?

"Are you in Christ? Not if you do not acknowledge yourselves erring, helpless, condemned sinners. Not if you are exalting and glorifying self. If there is any good in you, it is wholly attributable to the mercy of a compassionate Saviour. Your birth, your reputation, your wealth, your talents, your virtues, your piety, your philanthropy, or anything else in you or connected with you, will not form a bond of union between your soul and Christ."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 48, 49.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 251, 252.

**Part 3
GOD'S WAY**

How did Jeremiah express his inability even to order his own life in a way prudent and pleasing to God?

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Jer. 10:23.

Growth in Christian experience is a growth in maturity. A committed Christian is willing to ask God for direction and submit to His leading rather than insist on his own way.

How was this growth to be illustrated in the experience of the apostle Peter, according to the words of Jesus? John 21:18, 19.

"Jesus thus made known to Peter the very manner of his death; He even foretold the stretching forth of his hands upon the cross. Again He bade His disciple, 'Follow Me.' Peter was not disheartened by the revelation. He felt willing to suffer any death for his Lord. . . .

"To Peter the words 'Follow Me' were full of instruction. Not only for his death, but for every step of his life, was the lesson given. Hitherto Peter had been inclined to act independently. He had tried to plan for the work of God, instead of waiting to follow out God's plan. But he could gain nothing by rushing on before the Lord. Jesus bids him, 'Follow Me.' Do not run ahead of Me. Then you will not have the hosts of Satan to meet alone. Let Me go before you, and you will not be overcome by the enemy."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 815, 816.

How had Isaiah expressed the same thought as Jeremiah? Isa. 55:8, 9.

THINK IT THROUGH

To what extent have I in my experience acknowledged that I am unable to order the course of my life in a way acceptable and pleasing to God? Have I been willing to accept His guidance?

"Christ in His life on earth made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will. As we commit our ways to Him, He will direct our steps.

"Too many, in planning for a brilliant future, make an utter failure. Let God plan for you. As a little child, trust to the guidance of Him who will 'keep the feet of His saints.' 1 Samuel 2:9. God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 479.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 420, 421.

Part 4
THE SEARCHER
OF HEARTS

"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." Jer. 17:10.

Jeremiah here points up God's mysterious penetration into the hidden secrets and motives of man. God knows our inmost selves.

How does Jeremiah describe man's heart? Jer. 17:9.

Among the ancient Hebrews the heart was looked upon as the seat of mental activity, as is the brain in modern times. The seat of emotion on the other hand was to them the reins [kidneys], or the bowels. As the New Testament was also written by Hebrews, the New Testament writers carry this Hebrew idiom even into their Greek writings. The only exceptions to this are the apostles Paul and Peter in Romans 12:2 and 2 Peter 3:1, where they speak of the mind rather than the heart as the seat of mental activity.

"When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 72.

"There is a record also of the sins of men. 'For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.' 'Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' Says the Saviour: 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36, 37. The secret purposes and motives appear in the unerring register; for God 'will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.' 1 Corinthians 4:5."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 481.

THINK IT THROUGH

God searches our hearts. As we search our own hearts, what do we find in them?

"No man can of himself understand his errors. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' Jer. 17:9. The lips may express a poverty of soul that the heart does not acknowledge. While speaking to God of poverty of spirit, the heart may be swelling with the conceit of its own superior humility and exalted righteousness. In one way only can a true knowledge of self be obtained. We must behold Christ."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 159.

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, pp. 473-477.

Part 5
THE
BLESSED MAN

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Jer. 17:7.

"As a wise master builder, Jeremiah at the very beginning of his lifework sought to encourage the men of Judah to lay the foundations of their spiritual life broad and deep, by making thorough work of repentance. Long had they been building with material likened by the apostle Paul to wood, hay, and stubble, and by Jeremiah himself to dross. 'Refuse silver shall men call them,' he declared of the impenitent nation, 'because the Lord hath rejected them.' Jeremiah 6:30, margin. Now they were urged to begin building wisely and for eternity, casting aside the rubbish of apostasy and unbelief, and using as foundation material the pure gold, the refined silver, the precious stones—faith and obedience and good works—which alone are acceptable in the sight of a holy God."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 409, 410.

Whose ideas were the majority of the Jews still following rather than trusting God and submitting to His guidance and direction for both personal and political life? Jer. 11:8.

The Jews were God's covenant people. They belonged to God in a special and different way than the surrounding nations. They had pledged God their obedience. But they thought they could enjoy the privileges of the covenant apart from their compliance with their promises. They foolishly claimed the fulfillment of God's promises irrespective of their conduct. At times they would fall into the insidious error of regarding external obedience to the law, irrespective of the inner disposition of the heart, as a satisfactory response to God's will. But often they went beyond that and openly rebelled against God by walking after "the imagination of their evil heart."

To what is the person likened who has put his trust in God? Jer. 17:7, 8. See also Ps. 1:1-3.

The person who trusts God may enjoy constant peace of mind. Naturally, as human beings limited in knowledge, we do not always understand God's leadings. But God does not ask us primarily to understand; He asks us to trust Him. As we trust God, we may grow in grace and bear fruit "as a tree planted by the waters." The Jews in Jeremiah's day, by not trusting God, suffered the reverse of this experience.

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, pp. 513-516; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 330.

**Part 6
GOD CAN
BE FOUND**

"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." Jer. 29:11.

God desires to do us good. Even in this life He likes to lead us beside still waters and let us rest on green meadows, as far as this will contribute to our eternal welfare.

If we wholeheartedly have committed our lives to God and vowed in our inmost souls that our desire is to be found in the place of His choice for us, He will direct us in such a way that we shall reach our ultimate goal of a home in His kingdom.

Ellen G. White wrote of an experience of Abraham:

"The Lord in His providence had brought this trial [famine] upon Abraham to teach him lessons of submission, patience, and faith—lessons that were to be placed on record for the benefit of all who should afterward be called to endure affliction."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 129.

How did Jeremiah express his willingness to be corrected by God? Jer. 10:24.

There is hope for any one of us when we are willing to be corrected. This attitude expresses humility and teachableness.

THINK IT THROUGH

When trials assail a believer, what is the evidence that he believes God's choice is the best for him?

Ellen White wrote to a brother enduring trials:

"You know the history of Joseph and of Daniel. The Lord did not prevent the plottings of wicked men; but He caused their devices to work for good to those who, amidst trial and conflict, preserved their faith and loyalty.

"The furnace fires are not to destroy, but to refine, ennoble, sanctify. Without trial we should not feel so much our need of God and His help; and we should become proud and self-sufficient. In the trials that come to you I see evidence that the Lord's eye is upon you and that He means to draw you to Himself. . . .

"Jesus loves you, and I am made glad as I read of the experience through which you are passing, not because you are a sufferer, but because this is an evidence to me that the Lord Jesus is testing and proving you, to see if you will come to Him, to see if you will put your trust in Him and find peace and rest in His love. I am praying for you, that you may come to Him, the Fountain of living water. This is the experience that every one of us must have if we ever dwell with Christ in the mansions that He has gone to prepare for us."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 123, 124.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 57; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, "The True Motive in Service," pp. 100, 101.

BABYLON— ANCIENT AND MODERN



"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." Jer. 27:6.

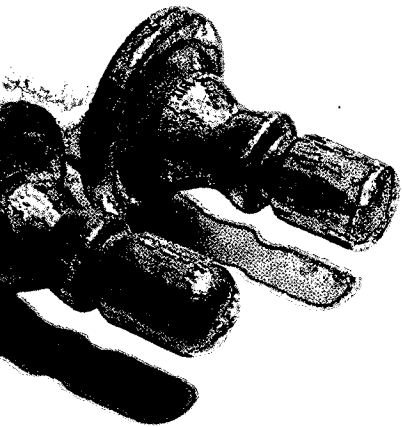
In the first chapter of his book, Jeremiah is noncommittal as to which nation shall overtake and bring destruction to Judah. He only states that disaster will overcome his nation from the north. Jer. 1:14. Possibly God had not revealed to him at that early date that the emerging nation of Babylon was to be the scourge of his and the surrounding countries. But later he repeatedly named Babylon as God's instrument for chastising his nation.

God uses nations as well as individuals to execute His will. "In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."—**Education**, p. 173.

The events of history, although at times bewildering to us, are not an uncontrolled medley. The God of heaven is still in control. "The power exercised by every ruler on the earth is Heaven-imparted; and upon his use of the power thus bestowed, his success depends."—**Education**, p. 174.

LESSON OUTLINE

- 1. Babylon, a "Battle Axe," Jer. 51:20.**
- 2. Nebuchadnezzar as God's Servant, Jer. 27:6.**
- 3. Nebuchadnezzar's Failure, Dan. 4:10-12.**
- 4. Babylon to Disappear, Jer. 51:63, 64.**
- 5. Babylon, a Symbol of Apostasy, Jer. 50:38.**
- 6. God Desired to Save Babylon, Jer. 51:9.**



Part 1
BABYLON,
A "BATTLE AXE"

"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." Jer. 51:20.

Read also Jer. 51:21-23; 50:23.

By divine inspiration Jeremiah calls Babylon a "battle axe" or a "hammer" (RSV). God used this hammer for the accomplishments of His purposes. About one hundred years earlier the prophet Isaiah had spoken of Assyria as "the rod of mine anger" (Isa. 10:5), "used by God for a season as the rod of His anger for the punishment of the nations."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 349.

To what does inspiration liken Babylon's greatest ruler, Nebuchadnezzar? Dan. 4:20-22.

"To Nebuchadnezzar the king the true object of national government was represented under the figure of a great tree, whose height 'reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all;' under its shadow the beasts of the field dwelt, and among its branches the birds of the air had their habitation. Daniel 4:11, 12. This representation shows the character of a government that fulfills God's purpose—a government that protects and upbuilds the nation."—*Education*, p. 175.

"An idolater by birth and training, and at the head of an idolatrous people, he [Nebuchadnezzar] had nevertheless an innate sense of justice and right, and God was able to use him as an instrument for the punishment of the rebellious and for the fulfillment of the divine purpose."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 514, 515.

What had Habakkuk prophesied about the relation of Babylon to Judah? Hab. 1:6-12.

"Through His [God's] chosen mouthpiece He revealed His determination to bring chastisement upon the nation that had turned from Him to serve the gods of the heathen."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 385.

"To each [ruler on earth] the word of the divine Watcher is, 'I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me.' Isaiah 45:5. And to each the words spoken to Nebuchadnezzar of old are the lesson of life: 'Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.' Daniel 4:27.'"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 502.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 384-386.

Part 2
NEBUCHAD-
NEZZAR AS
GOD'S SERVANT

By what term does God, through the prophet Jeremiah, refer to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon?

"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." Jer. 27:6.

God gives opportunities to men to do work for Him. Nebuchadnezzar, like Cyrus (see Isa. 44:28 to 45:4), was a ruler whom God used and hence called him His servant here and also in Jeremiah 25:9.

What had God given into the hands of Babylon, or to Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled Babylon at its height of power? Jer. 27:3-6.

"Ambassadors came from the various nations named to consult with the king of Judah as to the matter of engaging in battle with the king of Babylon. But the prophet of God, bearing the symbols of subjection, delivered the message of the Lord to these nations, commanding them to bear it to their several kings."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 169.

Besides these heathen nations surrounding Judah, which nation had God also given to Nebuchadnezzar? Jer. 25:8, 9.

"The history of nations speaks to us today. To every nation and to every individual God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being tested by the plummet in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 536.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what respect did Nebuchadnezzar fulfill God's plan for him, and in which respect did he not?

"The terms 'My servant,' 'Israel,' 'the Lord's servant,' mean anyone that the Lord may select and appoint to do a certain work. He makes them ministers of His will, though some who are selected may be as ignorant of His will as was Nebuchadnezzar."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 138.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 503, 520, 529.

Part 3
**NEBUCHAD-
NEZZAR'S**
FAILURE

Several times God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar, and on each occasion he acknowledged God as the Supreme Ruler. "Such had been the case after his dream of the great image. His mind had been profoundly influenced by this vision. . . .

"Nebuchadnezzar's noble conception of God's purpose concerning the nations was lost sight of later in his experience; yet when his proud spirit was humbled before the multitude on the plain of Dura, he once more had acknowledged that God's kingdom is 'an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.'"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 514.

When Nebuchadnezzar again lost his humility before God, under what figure did God speak to the proud king and present the true rule of national government? Dan. 4:10-12.

"In mercy God gave the king another dream, to warn him of his peril and of the snare that had been laid for his ruin. In a vision of the night, Nebuchadnezzar saw a great tree growing in the midst of the earth, its top towering to the heavens and its branches stretching to the ends of the earth."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 515.

Under this image God wanted to impress upon Nebuchadnezzar the fact that he was not the ultimate source of his power, riches, and glory. As the tree he saw depended on favorable soil, sunshine, and moisture for its growth, so Nebuchadnezzar was to recognize that God was the ultimate Giver of all his possessions.

How did Nebuchadnezzar fail to recognize God as his wisdom, strength, and the Giver of his power? Dan. 4:30.

"Instead of being a protector of men, Babylon became a proud and cruel oppressor."—*Education*, p. 176.

Through the adversity of sickness Nebuchadnezzar had a change of mind. "The once proud monarch had become a humble child of God; the tyrannical, overbearing ruler, a wise and compassionate king. He who had defied and blasphemed the God of heaven, now acknowledged the power of the Most High and earnestly sought to promote the fear of Jehovah and the happiness of his subjects. Under the rebuke of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, Nebuchadnezzar had learned at last the lesson which all rulers need to learn—that true greatness consists in true goodness. He acknowledged Jehovah as the living God, saying, 'I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.'"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 521.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 514-521.

Part 4
BABYLON TO
DISAPPEAR

Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar had been "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency." Isa. 13:19. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2) it had been aptly symbolized by the head of gold of the metal image.

According to Jeremiah, how completely was Babylon to disappear from among the nations of the earth?

"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: 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." Jer. 51:63, 64.

The kingdom of Babylon was not merely to be conquered by another nation and deprived of its political dominance, but it was to disappear from the face of the earth. Jeremiah illustrated Babylon's disappearance by instructing Seriah to tie a stone to a book containing the woes against Babylon and to throw it into the Euphrates River. There it would sink as Babylon would also "sink to rise no more."

Why was this fate to befall a nation and a city on which God had initially bestowed His favors? Jer. 50:24, 29.

Although Babylon defeated Judah and the surrounding nations in accordance with God's will, it did so not from love of God and His will, but from motives of self-aggrandizement.

For what acts in particular would Babylon be requited? Jer. 51:24.

"Every nation that has come upon the stage of action has been permitted to occupy its place on the earth, that the fact might be determined whether it would fulfill the purposes of the Watcher and the Holy One. Prophecy has traced the rise and progress of the world's great empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. With each of these, as with the nations of less power, history has repeated itself. Each has had its period of test; each has failed, its glory faded, its power departed."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 535.

"Any injustice done to saint or sinner will then [in the judgment] be rewarded accordingly. Christ identifies His interest in all the afflictions of His people."—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 219.

FURTHER STUDY

Jeremiah 50, 51; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 531-535.

Part 5
SYMBOL OF
APOSTASY

"Many of the expressions of chs. 50; 51 descriptive of the desolation of literal Babylon appear again in Rev. 16 to 19 in John's delineation of the fall of mystical Babylon. . . . A careful study of these expressions in their historical setting can prove of aid in clarifying the meaning of the same expressions in their setting in the book of Revelation."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 50:1.

With what was historical Babylon filled?

"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." Jer. 50:38.

Religious superstitions and idol worship flourished in historical Babylon. "In the book of Revelation the great Antichristian power is described under the figure of ancient Babylon (see Rev. 17; 18)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 51:6.

Of the development of *mystical* Babylon Ellen G. White wrote: "The darkness seemed to grow more dense. Image worship became more general. Candles were burned before images, and prayers were offered to them. The most absurd and superstitious customs prevailed. The minds of men were so completely controlled by superstition that reason itself seemed to have lost its sway."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 57.

When the call of deliverance came to the Jews in Babylon, what were they to do? Jer. 51:6; 50:8; cf. Rev. 18:4.

Why were God's people anciently to leave Babylon, and why are God's people today to leave spiritual Babylon? Jer. 51:6, 7; Rev. 18:3, 4.

"As God's people formerly came out of literal Babylon in order that they might return to Jerusalem, so His people today are called out of mystical Babylon in order that they may be accounted worthy to enter the New Jerusalem. Presumably, all who are truly His people will hear His voice and heed His call."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Rev. 18:4.

The Jewish historian Abram Leon Sachar says: "The rank and file had been weaned too long from Palestine to make genuine sacrifices for it. Their homes, their business, their friends, their interests, were all in Babylon. . . . Only zealous nationalists would uproot themselves from such an environment . . . for an abstract love of a fatherland removed by three generations from them."—*A History of the Jews* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 84.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 57-60; *SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jeremiah 50 and 51.

Part 6
GOD DESIRED
TO SAVE
BABYLON

"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." Jer. 51:9.

Babylon had been prospered by God under Nebuchadnezzar. Its demise and destruction was not God's plan, any more than was Israel's and Judah's political and national disintegration. It was its failure to capitalize on its opportunity to do God's work. He gave Babylon its chance. This failure precipitated its fall before Medo-Persia.

God through Jeremiah says, "We would have healed Babylon." This admission is comparable to the sorrowful pronouncement of Jesus when He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, . . . and ye would not!" Matt. 23:37. God would like—He is yearning—to save both men and nations, but He is limited by men's choice or by your choice and mine.

"The crown removed from Israel passed successively to the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. God says, 'It shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.'"—*Education*, p. 179.

What impression might you gain from reading about the apparent inevitability of Babylon's destruction in such prophecies as Isaiah 13:19?

God manipulates neither individuals nor nations. "The prophecies do not shape the characters of the men who fulfill them. Men act out their own free will."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Nov. 13, 1900. A person does this individually, a nation does it collectively.

"God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 541.

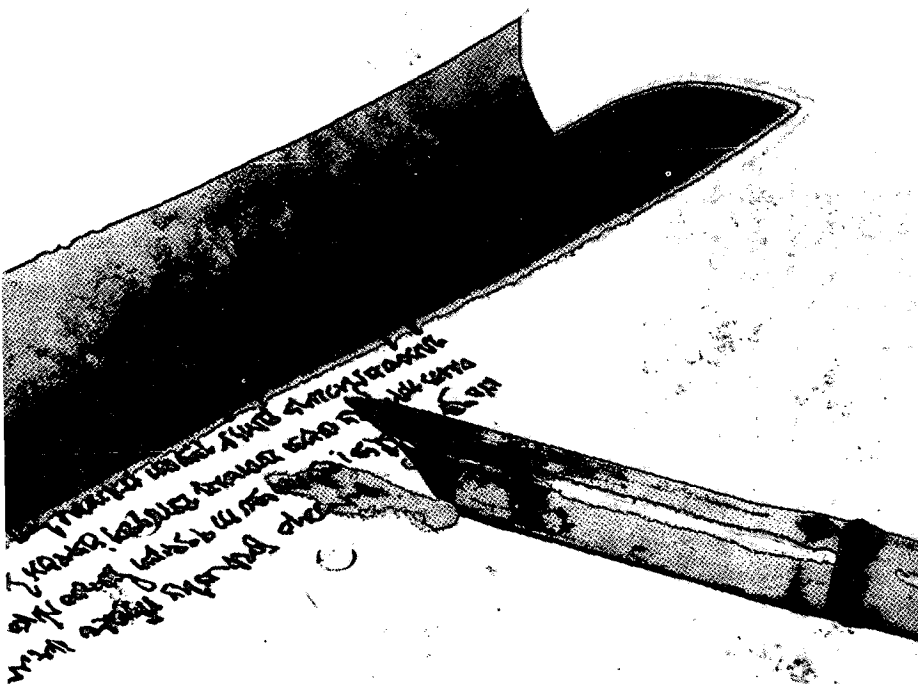
THINK IT THROUGH

What parallels exist between ancient Babylon and the mystical Babylon of history and prophecy?

FURTHER STUDY

Education, pp. 182-184; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 535-538.

JEREMIAH'S SORROW FOR HIS PEOPLE



**"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 peo-
ple!" Jer. 9:1.**

Jeremiah knew the stubborn sinfulness of his people. He had seen and heard their refusal to return to God in heartrending repentance. He therefore knew that inevitable doom would befall them and the nation as a result of their stiff-necked attitude, their evil, and their disloyalty to God. At the prospect of this calamity his heart broke. He expressed his anguish of soul in the most graphic language.

Many of us have loved, and may still love, some form of sin. Cherishing some form of sin may so far have been pleasant and convenient to us. Forms of sin like lying may have been useful tools that we have used, if for no other purpose than to attempt smoothing social relations.

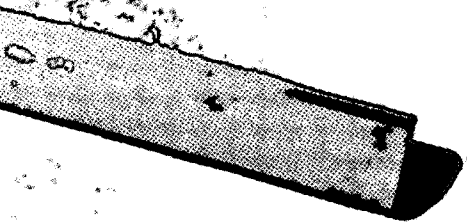
Likewise, we may have pampered sinful desires of the body. It may have been an apparently innocent one like indulgence of appetite, but nevertheless contrary to God's will for our eating and drinking.

Jeremiah recognized the awfulness of sin under any appearance. He knew that departure from the will of God in the least particular is sin. Because of this he sorrowed over his people in choosing sin. Jeremiah's sorrow did not cease even after sin had reaped its harvest in the fall of Jerusalem before the Babylonians.

It has been said that of all the Old Testament prophets Jeremiah resembles Jesus most. He lived with his people. In this way he could empathize with them. His sorrow is like that of Jesus over the Jewish nation of His day. It is love and affection for people that makes the sorrow for their mishap so deep and heart-breaking. Jeremiah, like Jesus, loved his people deeply.

LESSON OUTLINE

- 1. Inevitable Doom, Jer. 8:20.**
- 2. Anguish at Revealed Destruction, Jer. 4:19.**
- 3. Unending Sorrow, Jer. 9:1.**
- 4. Preserved Through God's Mercy, Lam. 3:21-24.**
- 5. Jerusalem's Sorrow, Lam. 1:12.**
- 6. Hope of Restoration, Lam. 5:21.**



Part 1
INEVITABLE
DOOM

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Jer. 8:20.

In this verse Jeremiah expressed his bitter lament over the failure and doom of his people. "In Palestine the grain harvest begins about April. The fruit harvest comes about August or September. When the grain crops failed, there was still the hope there would be a yield of grapes, figs, olives, etc. For Judah, however, the fruit-gathering season—the last opportunity—had passed, and there was no deliverance. Her doom was now inevitable."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 8:20. It is because he is completely identified with his people that the prophet is heartsick and his grief is so complete.

What rhetorical question does Jeremiah ask to emphasize the hopelessness of his people? Verse 22.

"He saw that sin is a cancer, a malignant disease which goes down to the very nooks of our being. He saw that there is no physician this side of God who can do anything for it. Did you ever feel the pathos of his piercing question—'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?' Gilead was a region which lay on the prophet's eastern horizon. It was over Gilead that the sun rose every morning to illuminate little Anathoth and big Jerusalem. It was the land which symbolized hope. In Gilead grew herbs and trees and flowers from which balsams were made to supply the physicians of that Eastern world. Is there no balm even in Gilead? Is there no physician, no prophet, no priest, no healer, no teacher who can cure a sick heart? And the answer is 'No.' There is no remedy on earth for a heart which is desperately sick."—Charles E. Jefferson, *Cardinal Ideas of Jeremiah* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 141.

"Come, my brother, come just as you are, sinful and polluted. Lay your burden of guilt on Jesus, and by faith claim His merits. Come now, while mercy lingers; come with confession, come with contrition of soul, and God will abundantly pardon. Do not dare to slight another opportunity. Listen to the voice of mercy that now pleads with you to arise from the dead that Christ may give you light. Every moment now seems to connect itself directly with the destinies of the unseen world. Then let not your pride and unbelief lead you to still further reject offered mercy. If you do you will be left to lament at the last: 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.'" —*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 353.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 8, pp. 247, 248.

Part 2
ANGUISH AT
REVEALED
DESTRUCTION

"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. 4:19.

Before the overthrow of Judah by the Babylonian armies occurred, God showed its destruction to Jeremiah in a vision. In the verse quoted above Jeremiah expressed his own horror at the fate awaiting his nation; but the verse also expresses the sentiment of his people.

How complete did his country's destruction appear to him as he saw it in vision? Verses 23-26.

To the prophet the revelation of Judah's destruction was overwhelmingly dreadful. Ordinary scenes of destruction did not suffice to portray the desolation that would befall his nation. The only adequate description was that applied to the earth in the beginning: "Without form, and void." Gen. 1:2.

Although overwhelmed with pain at the dreadful prospect awaiting his country and people, Jeremiah recorded his vision without rebelling, since he accepted it as the just judgment of God.

How does the prophet describe the character of his people that provoked this calamity? Verse 22.

No one is so blind, as he who does not want to see, nor so unknowing as he who does not want to know. God's professed people in the days of Jeremiah *did not know* God. Compare Jer. 2:8; 5:4, 21; 8:7. Jeremiah 9:6 gives the key to their spiritual blindness: "They refuse to know me, saith the Lord."

The overthrow of Judah is also descriptive of the final days of trouble that are to fall on "an impenitent world" and of the end of the world. See *SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 4:19.

THINK IT THROUGH

Inasmuch as these verses also depict the end of the world, how do we react to the insights we have received regarding the approach of the end?

"Angels are now restraining the winds of strife, that they may not blow until the world shall be warned of its coming doom; but a storm is gathering, ready to burst upon the earth; and when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.

"The Bible, and the Bible only, gives a correct view of these things. Here are revealed the great final scenes in the history of our world, events that already are casting their shadows before, the sound of their approach causing the earth to tremble and men's hearts to fail them for fear."—*Education*, pp. 179, 180.

FURTHER STUDY

Education, pp. 179-181.

Part 3
UNENDING
SORROW

"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!" Jer. 9:1.

As Jeremiah considered the sin of his people with its inevitable result of national ruin and total destruction, he broke down with grief. Even though physical destruction had not yet befallen his nation, he had so clearly foreseen it that his sorrow was as deep in anticipation of it as it was upon its fulfillment. Jeremiah's sorrow reveals the greatness of his soul. The depth of his sorrow upon the fulfillment of the collapse of his nation is expressed in Lamentations 2:11.

Overwhelmed with sorrow over his people, what did Jeremiah wish he could do? Jer. 9:2.

Is there any person who at some juncture in his life has not sensed a fleeting thought of getting away from it all? As Jeremiah noted the rampant duplicity and immorality of his people, he wished he could run away. Pierced with sorrow, he thought he could not endure to be in the presence of his morally corrupt and doomed people any longer. But he did not follow the enticing inclination and flee from it all; he had accepted God's call and been promised strength and courage adequate for the task with the guarantee of preservation of life from God Himself. See Jer. 1:19.

How had David expressed the same desire as Jeremiah, when he was in a desperate plight? Ps. 55:6-8.

"We need to beware of following the instinct that prompts us to escape from circumstances. If that desire becomes habitual, it is a morbid sign. Our work, our home, our relationships, our responsibilities, are a discipline essential to the development of Christian character. Rather than 'fly away,' we should 'call upon God' (v. 16)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Ps. 55:6.

THINK IT THROUGH

What occasions in my life cause me to feel like leaving it all? What can I do in these situations that is in harmony with faith in Jesus?

"By adherence to principle in the transactions of ordinary life, the mind becomes accustomed to hold the claims of duty above those of pleasure and inclination. Minds thus disciplined are not wavering between right and wrong, like the reed trembling in the wind; they are loyal to duty because they have trained themselves to habits of fidelity and truth. By faithfulness in that which is least they acquire strength to be faithful in greater matters."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 223.

FURTHER STUDY

Psalm 56; *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 692.

Part 4
PRESERVED
THROUGH
GOD'S MERCY

"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." Lam. 3:21-24.

The preceding verses of this chapter contain outcries and implied complaints against God for the calamities that have befallen Judah. But in verse 21 the mood changes. The prophet's mind rises above mournfulness to the steadfast love of God that never ceases. The first part of the chapter may be termed a prayer of complaint. Although a prayer, it is surcharged with questions and doubts. This condition or state of mind is frequently found in earnest Christians. Such people love God and would like to believe that what has befallen them is all for their best eternal good. But so far they cannot perceive this.

This apparently was Jeremiah's attitude in the first part of this chapter. But then his mind broke through the clouds of doubt and soared to the lofty heights of full trust and committal in the assurance of God's everlasting love. He recognized that God's mercies never end. Even affliction is only a means permitted by God to befall His children in order to bring them into a more intimate relationship to Him.

What was Jeremiah's advice to his people so that they as individuals might still experience personal forgiveness? Verses 39-42.

Jeremiah here appealed to the people that if there must be sighing, let it be sighing over sins that have produced the unfavorable conditions rather than over the sufferings. The prophet wanted the people to search their hearts and conduct, be convicted of wrongdoing, and repent and turn from it and return to God. Then God would forgive their sin even though the consequences of their wrongdoing could not be removed.

"'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.' Have any of us duly considered how much we have to be thankful for? Do we remember that the mercies of the Lord are new every morning and that His faithfulness faileth not? Do we acknowledge our dependence upon Him and express gratitude for all His favors? On the contrary, we too often forget that 'every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.'"—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 315.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 315-319.

Part 5
JERUSALEM'S
SORROW

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Lam. 1:12.

In this verse Jerusalem is personified. In his personal sorrow Jeremiah portrays Jerusalem sitting like a woman, bereaved and lonely, lamenting her state. Desolate and viewed with contempt by her neighbors, she pours out her heart in anguish and an appeal for sympathy.

Never had a city and a country been so favored by God as Jerusalem and Judah had been. In Jerusalem God had designed to show His glory. Judah's spiritual blessings had been unexcelled. No one who had not experienced these privileges could sense the anguish of heart caused by their loss. There is a law of balance operative in life, making the opportunities enjoyed commensurate with the sorrow felt at their loss. With less opportunity there is less grief at their loss.

Of all the dolorous statements the most plaintive is, "It might have been." It was Jeremiah's awareness that calamity need not have befallen his people that made his pain so poignant.

The finally lost will sense this hopeless sorrow when "at the day of judgment there comes to the lost a full realization of the meaning of the sacrifice made on Calvary. They see what they have lost by refusing to be loyal. They think of the high, pure association it was their privilege to gain. But it is too late. The last call has been made. The wail is heard: 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.' Jeremiah 8:20."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 16.

"In the time of the end the people of God will sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. With tears they will warn the wicked of their danger in trampling upon the divine law, and with unutterable sorrow they will humble themselves before the Lord in penitence. The wicked will mock their sorrow and ridicule their solemn appeals. But the anguish and humiliation of God's people is unmistakable evidence that they are regaining the strength and nobility of character lost in consequence of sin. It is because they are drawing nearer to Christ, because their eyes are fixed on His perfect purity, that they discern so clearly the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Meekness and lowliness are the conditions of success and victory. A crown of glory awaits those who bow at the foot of the cross."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 590.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 7, pp. 20-22.

**Part 6
HOPE OF
RESTORATION**

"Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old." Lam. 5:21.

The entire last chapter of Lamentations is a prayer by Jeremiah for restoration. This prayer climaxes in verse 21.

Lamentations or expressions of sorrow for a calamity that has befallen us because of our shortcomings and sins are profitless unless they lead to repentance. As a matter of fact, personal disaster resulting from personal neglect is downright sinful. God may bring good out of evil by using the disaster to generate active repentance and a determination to let God direct one's life in the future.

It is evident from the verse that Jeremiah fully recognizes that God alone, through His grace, can enable a sinner to repent and return to God. Man in himself is unable to effect this change, since man in his natural state is "dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. 2:1.

Who and what, according to the apostle Paul, brings a person to repentance? Rom. 2:4.

"The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 176.

THINK IT THROUGH

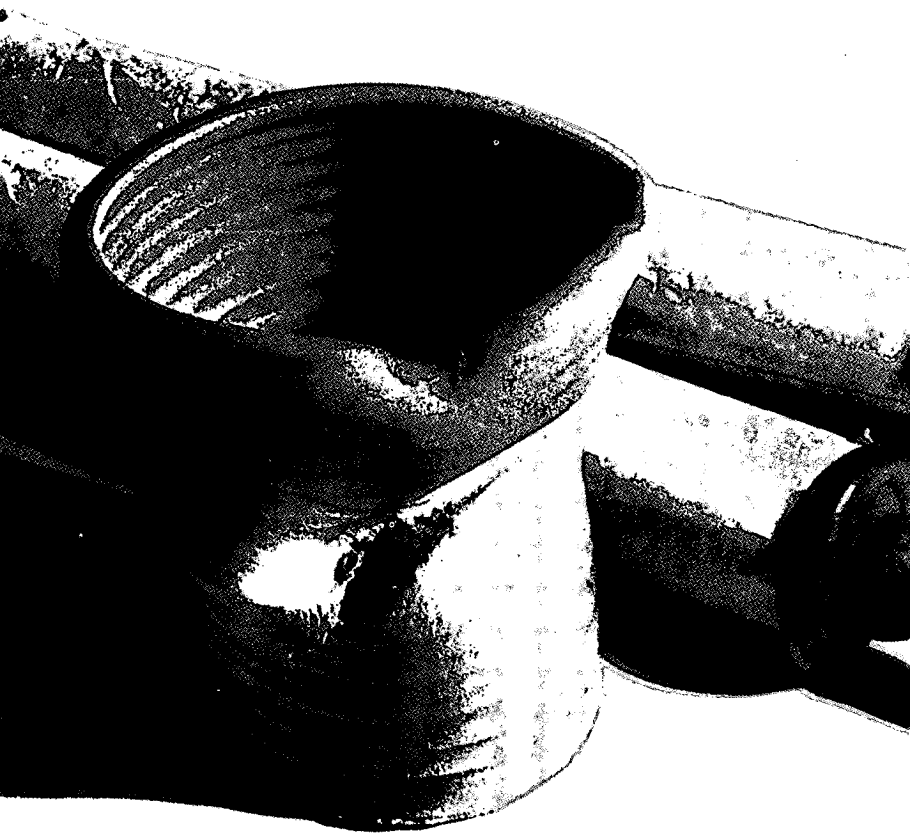
When I recognize wrong attitudes in myself, what can be done to change them?

"The victory is not won without much earnest prayer, without the humbling of self at every step. Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. The stronghold of Satan would not be broken. The will must be placed on the side of God's will. You are not able, of yourself, to bring your purposes and desires and inclinations into submission to the will of God; but if you are 'willing to be made willing,' God will accomplish the work for you."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 142.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "Repentance," pp. 23-36.

JEREMIAH'S PARABLES



“For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil to give you a future and a hope.” Jer. 29:11, RSV.

Jeremiah often used parables to communicate his message. Some of these were acted parables such as the parable of the linen girdle, or the broken earthenware bottle, or the purchase of a plot of land in Anathoth. Some parables were more conventional, and one that we shall study was based on a vision.

The mood of most of his parables is pessimistic. The linen girdle, the wine bottle, the broken bottle, and the wooden yoke foretell Judah's destruction as a nation and its servitude under Babylon. The incident of the potter is also a gloomy parable

since, although the potter was willing and ready to remold the clay, Judah, as clay, refused God's remolding so that He could no longer mold and fashion them after His will. See Jer. 18:12. The two baskets of figs are evenly divided between God-acceptance and God-rejection. Only the acted parable of the purchase of his land is definitely optimistic. It emphatically demonstrated that Judah was still to be inhabited.

It was to be expected that the parables should portray the doom of Judah. The Jewish nation was treading on the very brink of national destruction. They had passed the point of no return with reference to the Babylonian captivity. At the time of Jeremiah it was only a question of how complete their humiliation in defeat was to be; victory was no longer an option. Jeremiah had been sent by God to proclaim to Judah its imminent destruction before the invader from the north. If they accepted his warning message, their humiliation before the Babylonians needed not to be so deep, nor the destruction of Jerusalem and the country so devastating. Even this captivity was to be a redemptive experience.

LESSON OUTLINE

- 1. The Linen Girdle, Jer. 13:1-11.**
- 2. The Potter, Jer. 18:1-10.**
- 3. The Earthen Bottles, Jer. 13:12-14; 19:1-13.**
- 4. The Cup of Fury and the Hidden Stones, Jer. 25:15-38.**
- 5. Two Baskets of Figs, Jer. 24:1-10.**
- 6. The Wooden Yoke, Jer. 27:2-11.**



Part 1
THE LINEN
GIRDLE

"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. So I got a girdle according to the word of the Lord, and put it on my loins. And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, 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. 13:1-4.

Read also verses 5-11.

The linen girdle, or rather waistcloth or loincloth, was a garment. Elijah wore one made of skin. 2 Kings 1:8.

What did the loincloth represent? Verse 10.

Being made of linen it was *white*. This color was to remind Israel that they had been chosen by God to develop a character worthy of a "holy nation" (Ex. 19:6; Lev. 20:26; Rev. 19:8). The "getting" or buying was a reminder to the people that they had been redeemed or purchased by God.

What was the intended relationship of the loincloth to its owner and wearer? Verse 11.

Israel, espoused to God as Lord and Master, was originally like an unsoiled loincloth. As the garment was to cling to its owner and wearer and bring him glory, so God's covenant people were to cling to Him, and as the priest's dress was "for glory and beauty" (Ex. 28:40; Lev. 16:4), so God had chosen Israel and Judah to glorify Him before the nations of the earth.

The priests were never to forget their holy calling and office. Not only were their hearts to be clean, but also their bodies. Thus there were many and frequent Levitical washings both of body and garments.

Jeremiah was told to "put it not in water" (verse 1). Being worn next to the body, the loincloth became soiled. This soil was to signify the moral condition of Israel and the lack of the "clean water" of repentance. See Ezek. 36:25.

As the girdle was hidden "in a hole of the rock" by the Euphrates (verse 4), so God's unrepentant people were to be in captivity in Babylon by the Euphrates because they had failed in their holy calling. After leaving the loincloth and returning "after many days" Jeremiah found it marred, rotting, and unfit to wear.

THINK IT THROUGH **What principle in the parable of the loincloth is applicable to life today?**

FURTHER STUDY *Christ's Object Lessons*, "The Lord's Vineyard," pp. 284, 285, 288.

Part 2
THE POTTER

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. 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." Jer. 18:1-4.

Read also verses 5-10.

This parable is the classic instance of the Bible teaching of conditional prophecy. The setting of the parable is the relationship of Judah and God. It also contains lessons for the personal experience of believers.

Note that the marring of the vessel was not the fault of the potter. Rather, some foreign substance in the clay frustrated the potter's effort and ruined his work.

To what did God liken His people? Verse 6.

God was willing to work with Israel and remake them so long as they were willing and pliable in His hand.

The potter does not decide how many times he can return the clay to a lump and remake it into another vessel. Rather, it depends on the material, and how quickly it hardens.

Upon what does condemnation and calamity, or repentance and salvation, ultimately depend? Verses 8-10.

As Jeremiah watched the potter at work on his wheel, he heard God speak. Verse 5. He perceived the symbolic significance of the potter and the clay, teaching that God would change His plans for Judah if Judah would change by repentance.

"The Potter cannot mold and fashion unto honor that which has never been placed in His hands. The Christian life is one of daily surrender, submission and continual overcoming. Every day fresh victories will be gained. Self must be lost sight of, and the love of God must be constantly cultivated. Thus we grow up into Christ. Thus the life is fashioned according to the divine model."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1154.

FURTHER STUDY

Our High Calling, p. 335; Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1154.

Part 3
THE EARTHEN
BOTTLES

Two parables dealing with earthen bottles are discussed in this part. They are found in Jeremiah 13:12-14 and 19:1-13.

"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? 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. 13:12, 13.

The wine bottle or jar represents the people of Judah. As it is filled with wine, so the people will be filled with intoxicating wine. All are to be drunk. In their confused state of mind they will then utterly destroy themselves as they stumble into vice and moral corruption; with leaders having blurred minds, they are incapable of perceiving the will of God or of making intelligent decisions.

What was God planning to do with the Jews symbolized by the earthen bottle filled with wine? Jer. 13:14; cf. Jer. 19:10, 11.

Read also Jer. 19:1-9.

Jeremiah enumerates some of the transgressions of Judah (Jer. 19:3-9) in the ears of the elders of the people at the east gate. From there "the persons with him could look down into that valley where idolatry and child sacrifice had been practiced."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5, p. 968. His appeal to them was to repent and return to God.

The breaking of the earthen bottle in the parable in Jer. 19:1-13 follows immediately upon the refusal of the people of Judah to repent and return to their God.

It angered the people. The clay had hardened so that God could not make them again. It was a rebuke to them and especially to the priests who carried on the religious rituals.

The parable of the potter had been one with hope of reconstruction; the parables of the bottles were portrayals of destruction. The clay in the potter's hand, although marred, was still moldable; in the earthen vessels the clay was dry and hard. It could no longer be molded but only broken.

"The Lord in mercy sends words of reproof to save the erring, but they will not submit to be corrected. They insist that they have done no wrong, and thus resist the Spirit of God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1016.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 431, 432.

**Part 4
THE CUP
OF FURY**

What is Jeremiah bidden by God to take from His hand and give to all the surrounding nations?

"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them." Jer. 25:15, 16.

Read also verses 17-38.

The wine cup of fury symbolizes that the nations are to be filled with dread and despair before the victorious armies of Babylon. See Jer. 51:7.

Upon which nation was God's punishment through Nebuchadnezzar to fall first? Jer. 25:29.

Israel and Judah were God's chosen people. Theirs had been unmatched opportunities. To them God had given His law and revealed His will. They had known that they might have been raised up to heaven, as it were, if they had obeyed God's will.

"The day of doom for the kingdom of Judah was fast approaching. No longer could the Lord set before them the hope of averting the severest of His judgments. 'Should ye be utterly unpunished?' He inquired. 'Ye shall not be unpunished.'"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 450.

Which other parable spelled utter doom also for the Jews who went to Egypt after the fall of Judah? Jer. 43:8-13.

This is another acted parable. It signified the campaign of the king of Babylon in Egypt. In this way the message was given to the Jews that, although they had sought refuge and security in Egypt, they were still to come under the dominion of Babylon.

"God was able to use him [Nebuchadnezzar] as an instrument for the punishment of the rebellious and for the fulfillment of the divine purpose. 'The terrible of the nations' (Ezekiel 28:7), it was given Nebuchadnezzar, after years of patient and wearing labor, to conquer Tyre; Egypt also fell a prey to his victorious armies."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 515.

"The psalmist represents the presence of the Infinite One as pervading the universe. 'If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.' [Ps. 139:8]. We can never find a solitude where God is not."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 1153, 1154.

FURTHER STUDY

Jeremiah 44.

Part 5
TWO BASKETS
OF FIGS

"The Lord showed me this vision: Behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the Lord. One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten." Jer. 24:1 (last part), 2, RSV.

This vision was given after Jehoiachin—here called Jeconiah (cf. Jer. 37:1; 2 Kings 24:8)—with the princes and the craftsmen had been taken captive to Babylon.

What did the two baskets of figs in Jeremiah's vision represent? Jer. 24:5, 8. See also Jer. 29:16, 17.

God is not speaking categorically in this parable with reference to the spiritual quality of the Jews represented by these two baskets. Not all the Jews brought into captivity were morally good or better than those left behind in Judah. Jeremiah says that God had rejected Jehoiachin—here called Coniah (see Jer. 22:24-30)—so he was certainly not a good fig. On the other hand Jeremiah himself chose to remain in Judah with the Jewish remnant (see Jer. 39:13, 14; 40:1-6), rather than go to Babylon when offered the option by Nebuchadnezzar. And Jeremiah was not a bad fig even though he chose to remain in Judah.

In generalities rather than specifics, the prophet in this vision saw that the Jews left in Judah are falsely thinking they are better than the recent captives. They trust in religious forms connected with the temple worship rather than in a saving relationship to God. "Thus the conventions of orthodoxy, and the temple itself, are substituted for the direct relation with Yahweh. Their false center of worship corrupts their images and falsifies their lives. They are thus the bad figs. Nothing corrupts like a false conception of a true religion."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5, p. 997.

THINK IT THROUGH **What valid application can you make of this parable to your life?**

"When He permits trials and afflictions, it is 'for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.' Hebrews 12:10. If received in faith, the trial that seems so bitter and hard to bear will prove a blessing. The cruel blow that blights the joys of earth will be the means of turning our eyes to heaven. How many there are who would never have known Jesus had not sorrow led them to seek comfort in Him!"—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 10.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (on Matt. 5:4), pp. 9-13.

Part 6
THE WOODEN
YOKE

Early in the reign of Zedekiah what parable did Jeremiah enact?

"Thus saith the Lord to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck." Jer. 27:2.

Read also verses 3-5.

According to the RSV this took place during the reign of Zedekiah rather than during the reign of Jehoiakim. As the *SDA Bible Commentary* on Jeremiah 27:1 points out, "Several Hebrew manuscripts read 'Zedekiah' which is undoubtedly the correct reading, as clearly proved by vs. 3, 12 (see ch. 28:1)." This is also supported by *Prophets and Kings*, p. 443.

For whom did Jeremiah act this parable, and what was it to indicate? Jer. 27:6-11.

"From the first, Jeremiah had followed a consistent course in counseling submission to the Babylonians. This counsel was given not only to Judah, but to many of the surrounding nations. In the earlier portion of Zedekiah's reign, ambassadors from the rulers of Edom, Moab, Tyre, and other nations visited the king of Judah to learn whether in his judgment the time was opportune for a united revolt and whether he would join them in battling against the king of Babylon. While these ambassadors were awaiting a response, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, [to enact this parable]. . . .

"Jeremiah was commanded to instruct the ambassadors to inform their rulers that God had given them all into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and that they were to 'serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come.' Verse 7.

"The ambassadors were further instructed to declare to their rulers that if they refused to serve the Babylonian king they should be punished 'with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence' till they were consumed."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 442, 443.

THINK IT THROUGH

What was the purpose of the Babylonian captivity? What is the equivalent of this captivity in my life?

"The lightest punishment that a merciful God could inflict upon so rebellious a people was submission to the rule of Babylon, but if they warred against this decree of servitude they were to feel the full rigor of His chastisement."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 444.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 168-172.

“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. 24:6.

When Jeremiah entered upon his prophetic ministry, Judah’s fate was already sealed. Habakkuk and Zephaniah had foretold the captivity by the Babylonians. But the “threatened judgments were averted for a season” by King Josiah’s reformation. See **Prophets and Kings**, p. 392.

To Jeremiah, God revealed details about Judah’s humiliation at the hands of the Babylonian conquerors. Their captivity in Babylon was to last for 70 years. See Jer. 25:12 and 29:10. They were not even to think of a speedy return from Babylon, rather they were to settle down in the land of their captivity, “build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.” “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” Jer. 29:5, 7, RSV.

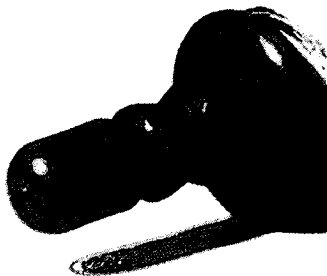
This message from Jeremiah brought discouragement to the people. Their doom seemed unbearable. But even amid adversity it is God’s plan to instill hope. This God did through Jeremiah. Intermingled with his messages of doom were promises of hope and restoration. These promises cluster particularly in chapters 30 to 33. In time sequence the first two chapters of hope and restoration follow immediately upon the dismal prediction of captivity in chapter 29 (see introduction to lesson 1), and the other two chapters of hope follow soon

after. In the adversity of captivity Judah was to learn what she had failed to learn in independence and prosperity; but while they suffered, God wanted His people to retain hope.

Chapters 30 to 34 have occasionally been called the “book of hope” in contrast to the rest of Jeremiah which has often been referred to as a “book of gloom.” In these chapters of consolation Jeremiah depicted to them their regathering from the land of captivity and their glorious and prosperous reestablishment in their own country. The plans of God for His people went beyond the exile; the prophecies of restoration included both Israel and Judah—God’s original heritage—settled in Canaan.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Assurance of Restoration, Jer. 30:3.**
2. **Jeremiah Demonstrates His Own Faith, Jer. 32:6-8.**
3. **Nothing Too Hard for God, Jer. 32:16-25.**
4. **Conditions After Restoration, Jer. 32:37.**
5. **Captivity Necessary, Jer. 25:7.**
6. **God’s Action Based on Love, Jer. 31:3.**



PROMISES OF RESTORATION



Part 1
ASSURANCE OF
RESTORATION

What encouraging promise did God give to His people?

"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." Jer. 30:3.

In chapter 29 Jeremiah foretold the captivity of his people. This was a gloomy message to an already discouraged people. But God does not leave His people in despair; in chapter 30 God imparts hope by His promise of restoration.

Who would be included in the restoration? Jer. 30:3; 31:1.

The restoration from captivity would not merely embrace the children of Judah, taken and held captive by the Babylonians, but also the Israelites. These were taken captive by the Assyrians more than 100 years before the first Babylonian captivity. See 2 Kings 17:1-23. On restoration, Israel and Judah would again be united and become one nation.

In contrast with His dealings with their heathen oppressors, how would God deal with His people? Jer. 30:11.

The Israelites and the Jews were not to disappear as a people from among the nations. In spite of their captivity God was not to "make a full end" of them. They were to be restored and live on as a people even though their oppressors were to disappear from the face of the earth.

It was God's purpose that the promises of Isaiah 27:6, that "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit," should be fulfilled. This promise, along with that of Genesis 12:2 which says that "I will bless thee . . . ; and thou shalt be a blessing" should have been largely fulfilled "during the centuries following the return of the Israelites from the lands of their captivity. It was God's design that the whole earth be prepared for the first advent of Christ."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 703, 704.

"They [the Jews] were carried into captivity to Babylon, and there remained for many years. Yet they were not forsaken of the Lord. His prophets were sent to them with reproofs and warnings. The people were awakened to see their guilt, they humbled themselves before God, and returned to Him with true repentance. Then the Lord sent them messages of encouragement, declaring that He would deliver them from their captivity and restore them to His favor."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 468.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 703, 704.

Part 2
JEREMIAH
DEMONSTRATES
HIS OWN FAITH

What business proposition did God reveal would be presented to Jeremiah in the prison? Jer. 32:6-8.

Jeremiah knew God, and God through His Holy Spirit informed him what was going to happen. Then his uncle's son arrived and presented his proposition to Jeremiah, just as God had informed him.

How did Jeremiah, in response to this business proposition, demonstrate his own faith in the surety of restoration from the Babylonian captivity?

"And I bought the field at Anathoth from Hanameel my cousin, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales." Jer. 32:9, 10, RSV.

Jeremiah understood it to be God's will that he purchase this piece of ancestral property.

From a human point of view this investment in land already in the possession of the enemy appeared to be sheer foolishness. Who would be stupid enough to buy real estate in an area that is overrun and captured by the enemy? But Jeremiah did this very thing in accordance with God's will.

Of what was this purchase to be an evidence or assurance on the very verge of Judah's utter defeat before the Babylonians? Jer. 32:15.

Jeremiah himself would derive no profit from this piece of property. He was not a young man at the time of Zedekiah's ascension to the throne, and he himself had predicted that the captivity in Babylon would last for 70 years. But for Jeremiah the will of God was sufficient reason for this purchase.

"Men who act by revelation have not to ask for reasons before acting. Obedience is their *role*; afterwards they may ask for light. Christians have to commit their way unto the Lord, and trust where they cannot trace. They are led by a higher reason, which cannot err."—H. D. M. Spence, Ed., *The Pulpit Commentary* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1913), *Jeremiah*, vol. 2, p. 55.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what specific ways can a Christian's faith, or lack of faith, be demonstrated in business transactions?

"Let God untangle the snarled-up threads for you. He is wise enough to manage the complications of our lives. He has skill and tact. We cannot always see His plans; we must wait patiently their unfolding and not mar and destroy them. He will reveal them to us in His own good time."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 348.

FURTHER STUDY

Jeremiah 32; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 466-469.

Part 3
NOTHING TOO
HARD FOR GOD

As Jeremiah contemplated God's revealed restoration of His people amid the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, what temptation assailed him? Jer. 32:16-25.

"Nebuchadnezzar's armies were about to take the walls of Zion by storm. Thousands were perishing in a last desperate defense of the city. Many thousands more were dying of hunger and disease. The fate of Jerusalem was already sealed. The besieging towers of the enemy's forces were already overlooking the walls. 'Behold the mounts,' the prophet continued in his prayer to God; 'they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it . . . ; and, behold, Thou seest it. 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.'"
—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 471.

What was God's answer to Jeremiah's nagging doubts about the reestablishment of His people in the Promised Land?

"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" Verse 27.

"The prayer of the prophet was graciously answered. 'The word of the Lord unto Jeremiah' in that hour of distress, when the faith of the messenger of truth was being tried as by fire, was: 'Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?' Verses 26, 27. The city was soon to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans; its gates and palaces were to be set on fire and burned; but, notwithstanding the fact that destruction was imminent and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were to be carried away captive, nevertheless the eternal purpose of Jehovah for Israel was yet to be fulfilled."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 471.

How was this regathering of God's people from captivity to be remembered by them in the future? Jer. 16:14, 15; 23:7, 8.

"Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 330.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 469-472; *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 32, 33.

Part 4
CONDITIONS
AFTER
RESTORATION

What was God's plan for the returning captive Israelites and Jews?

"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." Jer. 32:37.

How was this security to be reflected in the general activities and industry of the restored Israelites? Jer. 31:4, 5; 32:15.

It was God's plan that such peaceful conditions might be restored to the land of the returned captives that they might plant vineyards and reap and enjoy the fruit of their labors. Instead of living in gloomy dread of assaulting enemy armies, they were to be able to dress themselves for joyous living. Under such conditions real estate would again be valuable, in contrast with its worthlessness as they faced deportation to an enemy country.

Which ruling house did God state would again be firmly established on the throne of Israel? Jer. 33:15, 16.

When Jeremiah wrote this, the house of David wobbled on the throne of Judah. Jehoiachin had been taken captive to Babylon; his uncle Zedekiah had been elevated to the throne on his promise of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. At such a time Jeremiah—obviously not always a prophet of gloom and tears—painted before the frightened and distraught Jews a new day of hope with a good and strong king of the same royal house seated on the throne of reunited Israel. "If Jerusalem had only lived up to what God designed that it should be, its future would have been most glorious."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 33:16. But "these promises were conditional on obedience. The sins that had characterized the Israelites prior to the captivity, were not to be repeated."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 704.

"By the Babylonish captivity the Israelites were effectually cured of the worship of graven images. After their return, they gave much attention to religious instruction and to the study of that which had been written in the book of the law and in the prophets concerning the worship of the true God. . . . The seasons of prosperity that followed gave ample evidence of God's willingness to accept and forgive, and yet with fatal shortsightedness they turned again and again from their glorious destiny and selfishly appropriated to themselves that which would have brought healing and spiritual life to countless multitudes."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 705.

FURTHER STUDY

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, pp. 30-32.

Part 5
CAPTIVITY
NECESSARY

What had the people refused to do while living in the Promised Land?

"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." Jer. 25:7.

"From the time of their entrance to the land of Canaan, they departed from the commandments of God, and followed the ways of the heathen. It was in vain that God sent them warning by His prophets. In vain they suffered the chastisement of heathen oppression. Every reformation was followed by deeper apostasy."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 28.

What was the spiritual condition of Judah at this time? Jer. 30:12, 15; 15:18.

"Judah had been forsaken by her lovers [allies (see v. 14)] . . . , and now she stood alone, for she had forsaken her God."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Jer. 30:13.

How was God to chastise them? Jer. 29:18, 19.

This miserable state should not have come as a surprise to Judah. Through Moses, God had long before foretold that such would be their experience if they departed from His will. See Deut. 28:47, 48.

"Had Israel been true to God, He could have accomplished His purpose through their honor and exaltation. . . . But because of their unfaithfulness, God's purpose could be wrought out only through continued adversity and humiliation."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 28.

"Like Israel of old they [some Christians] question, 'If God is leading us, why do all these things come upon us?'

"It is because God is leading them that these things come upon them. Trials and obstacles are the Lord's chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success. He who reads the hearts of men knows their characters better than they themselves know them. He sees that some have powers and susceptibilities which, rightly directed, might be used in the advancement of His work. In His providence He brings these persons into different positions and varied circumstances that they may discover in their character the defects which have been concealed from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to correct these defects and to fit themselves for His service. Often He permits the fires of affliction to assail them that they may be purified."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 470, 471.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 28.

Part 6
GOD'S ACTION
BASED ON LOVE

What did Jeremiah assure his people was the basis of God's dealings with them?

"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." Jer. 31:3.

"God is love." 1 John 4:8. All His dealings with men are founded on His love. He is looking out for what is eternally best for them at all times. On this basis some happenings may occur that are not pleasant at the moment. He did not want to destroy His people; He wanted to re-create them.

How did God assure His people of His long-range benevolent purpose for them, in contrast with His purpose for their captors, despite their present adversity? Jer. 46:28.

"Thus was the church of God comforted in one of the darkest hours of her long conflict with the forces of evil. Satan had seemingly triumphed in his efforts to destroy Israel; but the Lord was overruling the events of the present, and during the years that were to follow, His people were to have opportunity to redeem the past."—*Prophets and Kings*, page 474.

Temporarily the enemy may have appeared totally victorious, while God's people were to be scattered among the nations. But not so. The nations which appeared to have the upper hand and were apparently victorious were ultimately to be removed from the face of the earth, while Israel was to continue. God would not "make an utter end" of His people "but correct thee [them] in measure." Even today the Jews still exist as a separate and distinct race, while the Babylonians of yonder years disappeared not merely as a nation, but as a distinct people.

"They [Israel] were brought into subjection to Babylon, and scattered through the lands of the heathen. In affliction many renewed their faithfulness to His covenant. While they hung their harps upon the willows, and mourned for the holy temple that was laid waste, the light of truth shone out through them, and a knowledge of God was spread among the nations. The heathen systems of sacrifice were a perversion of the system that God had appointed; and many a sincere observer of heathen rites learned from the Hebrews the meaning of the service divinely ordained, and in faith grasped the promise of a Redeemer."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 28.

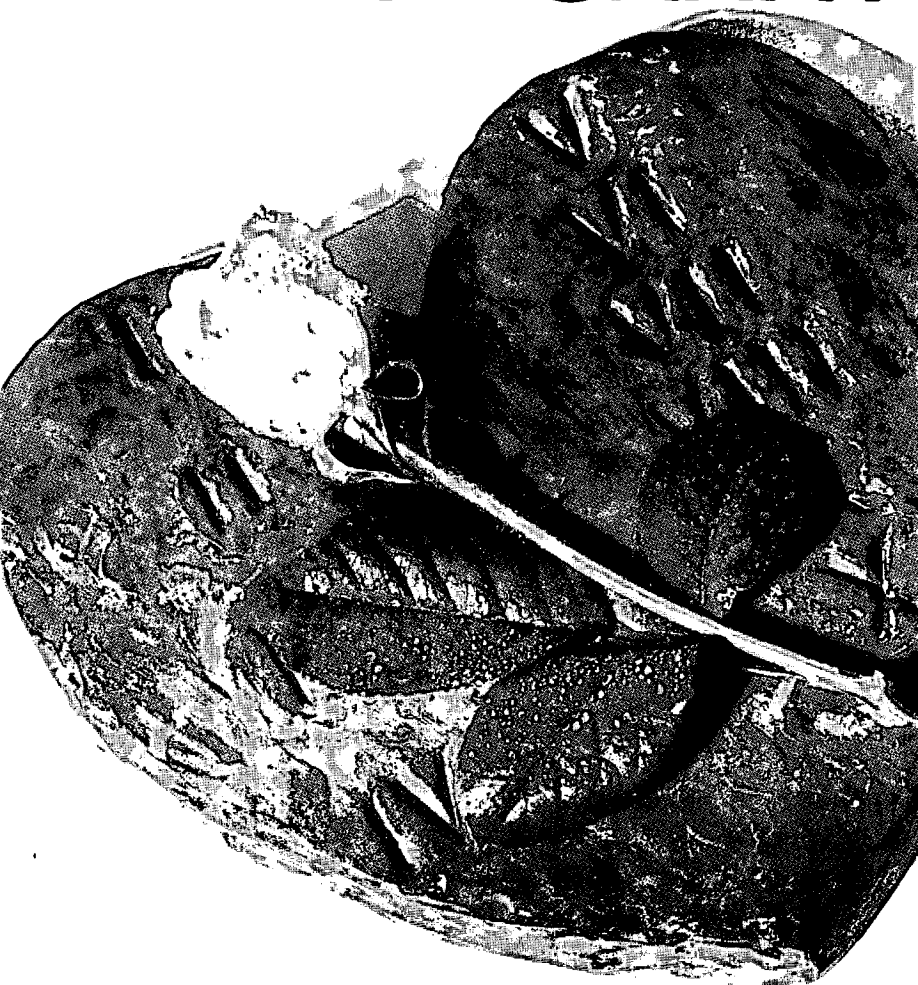
THINK IT THROUGH

From the experiences of Judah in captivity and restoration, what lessons are applicable to me today?

FURTHER STUDY

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 34; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 29.

THE COVENANT



"I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me." Jer. 32:40, RSV.

In the writings of Jeremiah the covenant is one of the prominent themes. His day was a critical time for the covenant between God and His people. The disasters that were befalling them, with more to come, were a fulfillment of the curses recorded in Deuteronomy against those who would break the covenant. The central thrust of Jeremiah's life was to persuade the people and their leaders to give even belated loyalty to God and thus avoid the harshest features of the covenantal retribution. In this he was unsuccessful.

In these circumstances Jeremiah introduced the prospect of a new

covenant beyond the days of exile. This promise is of interest to Christians because we view the offer of salvation today as being made under this new covenant. The new covenant promises of God through Jeremiah to the Jews should ideally have been literally fulfilled upon their restoration from captivity.

It has been God's eternal purpose that His law should be written in man's heart. The psalmist's statement about our Saviour in Psalm 40:8 should have been true of every human being: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." This was God's original plan. But Satan frustrated God's designs.

God purposed to carry out His original plan for man through His chosen people in the Promised Land. In this He was thwarted. He again hoped to carry out His plan through them after the restoration from the exile. Again His plans were frustrated.

What He was unable to do through the nation of His chosen people, He is now doing through His church.

This lesson on the covenant is primarily a look at the covenant in the book of Jeremiah with some applications to the Christian life. It is not intended as a complete study of the doctrine of covenants or an exposition on the new and old covenants. It can be helpful for the student to look at the covenants from the viewpoint of Jeremiah's day and then also from that perspective to look back and ahead; and this the present lesson seeks to accomplish.

LESSON OUTLINE

- 1. Origin of the Covenant, Jer. 11:1, 2.**
- 2. King of the Covenant, Jer. 11:3, 4.**
- 3. Rejection of the Covenant, Jer. 11:7, 8.**
- 4. Conditions in Judah, Ezek. 8:10, 11, 15, 16.**
- 5. New Covenant—I, Jer. 31:31, 32.**
- 6. New Covenant—II, Jer. 33:14-16.**

Part 1
ORIGIN OF THE
COVENANT

"The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Jer. 11:1, 2.

Read also Jer. 11:3-5.

This passage has special significance in the light of Josiah's reform. The book of the covenant (Deuteronomy. See *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 392, 393) had been found in the temple (2 Kings 22:8), and the king and the people covenanted to "perform the words of this covenant." 2 Kings 23:3.

With the passage of time Josiah died, Jehoiakim had recently been enthroned king of Judah and allegiance to the covenant had waned. See *Prophets and Kings*, p. 414.

Now, some 13 years after the book of Deuteronomy was found, God sent Jeremiah to call Judah back to the covenant.

When had this covenant originally been made? Jer. 11:3, 4.

The covenant made at Sinai with Israel was itself a renewal of the covenant made with their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In its simplest terms, what was the purpose of the covenant? Verse 4, last part.

At the time of the giving of the law the Lord called for Israel's obedience to His covenant so that Israel might be "a peculiar treasure: . . . a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Ex. 19:5, 6. The message was carried from God to the people by Moses. "Their answer was, 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.' Thus they entered into a solemn covenant with God, pledging themselves to accept Him as their ruler, by which they became, in a special sense, the subjects of His authority." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 303.

The statement "I will be their God and they shall be my people," or one similar to it, is covenantal language. Jeremiah uses it seven times in his book. Three of the references mention the covenant explicitly, while in the other four references the covenant is clearly understood.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the meaning today of the statement, "so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God"? Jer. 11:4. What significance do you see in the use of similar language in Revelation 21:3?

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 303-305, 314.

Part 2
KING OF THE
COVENANT

Who decided the terms of the covenant?

"Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not heed the words of this covenant which I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." Jer. 11:3, 4, RSV.

"Ancient covenants were of 2 kinds, those between equals and those between lord and vassal. In a covenant between equals there was mutual agreement on conditions, privileges, and responsibilities (Gen 21:32; 26:28; etc.). In a covenant between lord and vassal, conqueror and conquered, superior and inferior, the lord or conqueror specified the conditions, privileges, and responsibilities accruing to both parties, and the vassal or subject nation submitted to the conditions imposed upon it. . . .

"Throughout Scripture, however, the term 'covenant' most commonly describes the formal relationship that existed between God on the one hand and Israel as the chosen people on the other. Obviously, this was not a covenant between equals, but between the infinite God and finite man. God Himself determined the provisions of the covenant, made them known to His people, and gave them the choice of accepting or rejecting the covenant. Once ratified, however, it was considered binding upon both God and His people."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 229.

According to the terms of the covenant, how were the people to relate to their Divine King? Verse 4, last part.

According to the terms of the covenant, what was included in God's responsibility to His people? Verse 5.

"The principles set forth in Deuteronomy for the instruction of Israel are to be followed by God's people to the end of time. True prosperity is dependent on the continuance of our covenant relationship with God. Never can we afford to compromise principle by entering into alliance with those who do not fear Him.

"There is constant danger that professing Christians will come to think that in order to have influence with worldlings, they must to a certain extent conform to the world. But though such a course may appear to afford great advantages, it always ends in spiritual loss. Against every subtle influence that seeks entrance by means of flattering inducements from the enemies of truth, God's people must strictly guard. They are pilgrims and strangers in this world, traveling a path beset with danger. To the ingenious subterfuges and alluring inducements held out to tempt from allegiance, they must give no heed."—*Prophecies and Kings*, p. 570.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 499-504.

Part 3
REJECTION OF
THE COVENANT

How did the ancestors of the people of Jeremiah's day relate to the covenant?

"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. 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." Jer. 11:7, 8.

There were repeated times of apostasy in Israel. The first was the worship of the golden calf during the covenant formalities. Then came the backsliding at Baal-peor followed by the checkered experiences of the days of the judges. After the monarchy divided, the northern kingdom developed an idolatrous religion, and Judah eventually went the same route.

"During the 4 centuries of Judah's history the worship of God was frequently accompanied by the worship of pagan gods for whom shrines and cult places were erected from the time of Solomon to the end of the kingdom (1 Ki 11:4-8; 14:22-24; 2 Ki 21:1-7; etc.). Although the country did not experience the depths of idolatry found in the northern kingdom, Judah was practically a semipagan nation during the period of the kings. Some kings, such as Asa (1 Ki 15:12-14), Jehoshaphat (ch 22:43-46), Hezekiah (2 Ki 18:1-4), Josiah (ch 22:1-20), made serious attempts to stamp out idolatry and pagan cults. These reforms, however, were temporary, and the people lapsed into paganism once more. This was the chief reason for the nation's downfall."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 609.

The question facing Judah when the message of Jeremiah 11 was given was, Will the reformation of Josiah continue, or die? The answer was not long delayed.

How did Jeremiah's contemporaries relate to the covenant during Jehoiakim's reign? Verses 9, 10.

"The Lord had through Moses set before His people the result of unfaithfulness. By refusing to keep His covenant, they would cut themselves off from the life of God, and His blessing could not come upon them. At times these warnings were heeded, and rich blessings were bestowed upon the Jewish nation and through them upon surrounding peoples. But more often in their history they forgot God and lost sight of their high privilege as His representatives. They robbed Him of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 20.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 293-297.

Part 4
CONDITIONS
IN JUDAH

During Zedekiah's reign, what three scenes were given to Ezekiel of conditions in Judah? Ezek. 8:10-16.

Tammuz was a Babylonian god who, according to myth, annually died and was resurrected. The weeping mentioned in verse 14 indicates participation by these women in the annual rites of Tammuz.

What idolatrous practice did Jeremiah refer to?

"While their children remember their altars and their Asherim, beside every green tree, and on the high hills." Jer. 17:2, RSV.

Asherah, singular of Asherim, was "a Phoenician goddess of vegetation," and "the female counterpart of Baal."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, pages 81, 82. She was frequently symbolized by trees or upright sticks, and it is probably to these that the plural Asherim refers in the above reference.

What social conditions were prevalent? Jer. 5:7-9; 23:11, 14.

What was God's evaluation of Judah's condition as the exile neared? Jer. 30:12; 2 Chron. 36:15, 16.

According to the covenant, the Lord was to be Judah's God. But they chose Baal, Asherah, Tammuz, and others. Judah's life-style was to be in harmony with the Lord's commands, and they were to be His people. They chose instead to live like the heathen. The land in which they lived was theirs only by a provision of the covenant, and when they broke the covenant and for a long period of time refused to repent, God had them removed from the covenant land. The covenant had come to an end.

There is the strongest possible contrast between Judah's apostasy and the intentions God had for His people. In the following quotation Ellen G. White summarized these intentions:

"Those nations that rejected the worship and service of the true God were to be dispossessed. But it was God's purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn unto Him. To all the world the gospel invitation was to be given. Through the teaching of the sacrificial service, Christ was to be uplifted before the nations, and all who would look unto Him should live. All who, like Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased, they were to enlarge their borders until their kingdom should embrace the world.

"But ancient Israel did not fulfill God's purpose."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 19.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 448-451.

**Part 5
NEW
COVENANT—I**

What is said of the covenant in promises of the restoration of Judah recorded in Jeremiah 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: 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." Jer. 31:31, 32.

Northern Israel had gone into captivity some 125 years earlier, and Judah was approaching a similar fate. In this "book of hope" Jeremiah recorded God's promise of a new covenant. The previous one was broken; and, if there was to be a covenant between God and His chosen people, He must reinstitute it. This He promised to do. The goal of this new covenant was to be the same as the Sinaitic covenant: "I . . . will be their God, and they shall be my people." Jer. 31:33, last part. The Lord pointed out that the new covenant was to be different from the one made after the Exodus from Egypt.

What specific characteristics were to be included in the new covenant? Jer. 31:33, 34; 32:40.

Note the emphasis on what was to happen internally to the covenant people:

1. Law within them.
2. Possess a knowledge of God.
3. Fear of God within.

And on God's part He was to forgive their sins and do them good. The purpose of the fear of God was "that they shall not depart from me." The purpose of the law within was to make them God's people. These were the very heart of the previous covenant and thus the very points of failure that brought it to an end. God had never intended them to succeed without this internal law, knowledge, and fear. God's words were to be in their hearts. Deut. 11:18. They were to obey with their heart and soul. Deut. 26:16. The law was to be kept in love to God. Deut. 11:22. It was not the provisions of the covenant, then, that would be new. These provisions were really a prediction that the new one would succeed where the other failed.

What, then, was to be new about the new covenant? It was new, first, because it was a reinstatement of the former covenant. A voided contract must be renegotiated to be valid. So with the covenant.

**Part 6
NEW
COVENANT—II****Who was to come in the days of restoration?**

"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. 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 shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." Jer. 33:14-16.

Jeremiah did not record this promise in direct connection with the new covenant, but both are given as features of the time of the restoration of Judah. It is the coming of the Messiah, here promised, that also makes the new covenant really new. While the gospel was previously preached through sacrifices, the Messiah could now be expected on earth bringing salvation in ways that His people could better understand.

"Christ's death and resurrection completed His covenant. Before this time, it was revealed through types and shadows, which pointed to the great offering to be made by the world's Redeemer, offered in promise for the sins of the world. Anciently believers were saved by the same Saviour as now, but it was a God veiled. They saw God's mercy in figures."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 932.

"Lessons must be given to humanity in the language of humanity. The Messenger of the covenant must speak. His voice must be heard in His own temple. He, the author of truth, must separate truth from the chaff of man's utterance, which had made it of no effect. The principles of God's government and the plan of redemption must be clearly defined. The lessons of the Old Testament must be fully set before men."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 700.

What is the foremost promise of the new covenant? Jer. 31:34.

"The blessings of the new covenant are grounded purely on mercy in forgiving unrighteousness and sins. The Lord specifies, I will do thus and thus unto all who turn to Me, forsaking the evil and choosing the good. 'I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.' All who humble their hearts, confessing their sins, will find mercy and grace and assurance."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 931.

THINK IT THROUGH

What do we have to do to avail ourselves of this provision of the new covenant?

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 681, 685.

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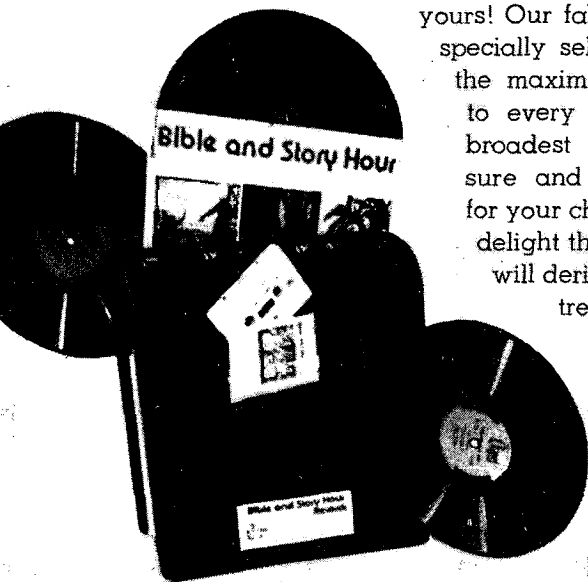
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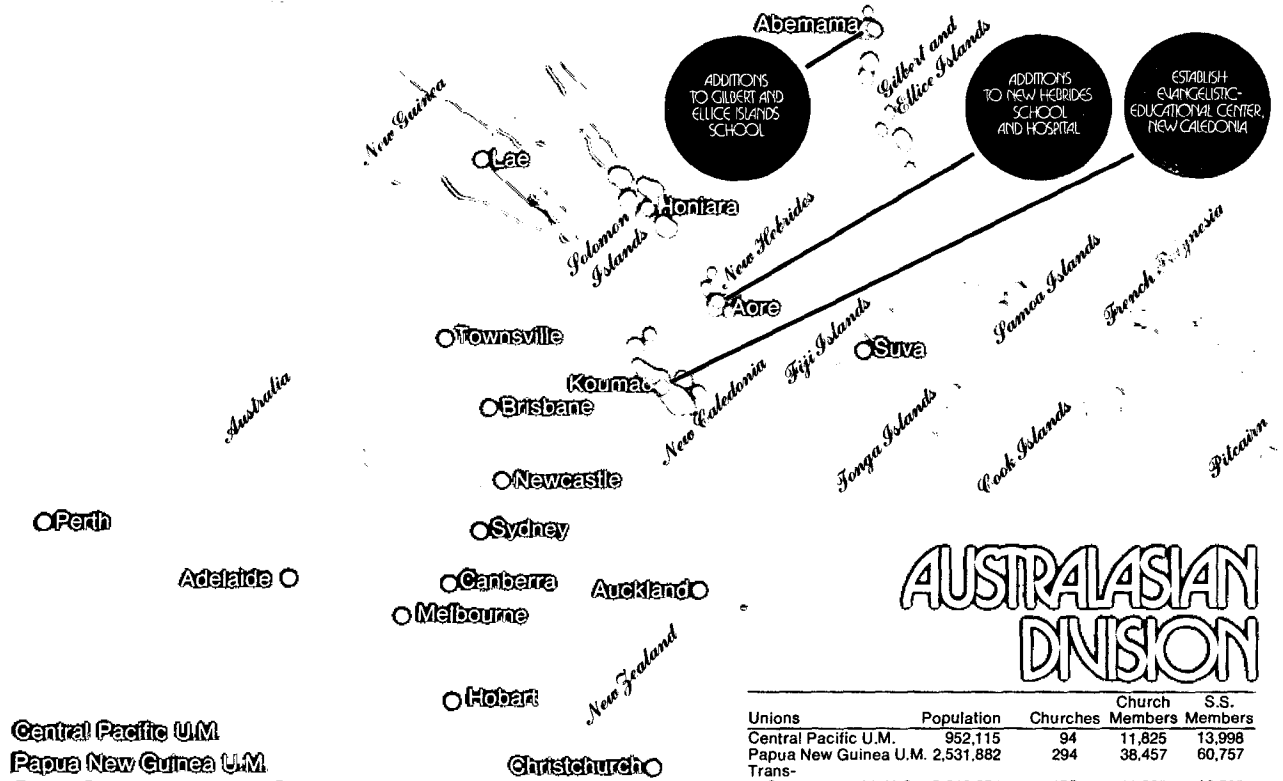
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Trans-Commonwealth U.C.	7,219,254	175	16,836	16,565
Trans-Tasman U.C.	8,868,810	221	26,903	27,435
Western Pacific U.M.	455,172	135	13,062	21,213
Totals	20,027,233	919	107,083	139,968

(Figures as of June, 1974)

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