

# **JEREMIAH: IMPRESSIONS**

## **A COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH**

The writings of Jeremiah, the prophet of God, are looked at in view of today's situation in our country and with happenings in the church. Parallels are drawn with what happened then in Judah and the rest of the Middle East with what is happening today in our culture.

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## JEREMIAH: IMPRESSIONS

1:1-3 Jeremiah was called to bring a message to a society that was on a slippery slope. It was a time similar to ours.

4-10 God has plans for us even before we are born. We would do well to realize that we can't do what God has called us to do, however, He is able to perform in us all He want to accomplish through us. Our response is to be obedient and go where He sends us and say what He tells us. When God has touched our lives, then we have no excuse because His authority and power are available to accomplish the tasks.

11-16 The almond tree is the first to bloom in the spring and it represents how soon the destruction would come upon Jerusalem. The pot represents the source (nations from the north) from which the destruction would come because the people of Judah had forsaken God.

17-19 We need to speak God's word to the people of our day and not be afraid of what they may do or say. We must stand against evil in every part of our society. We must do this even though it is a lost cause because they will not repent, they will continue to rebel against God. ("Lost causes are the only ones worth fighting for." From *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.)

2:1-3 Many Christians start their walk with the Lord with great devotion and dedication to Him. They enjoy the blessing of God and keep themselves pure.

4-8 Typically, people drift away (stray) from God. It is not a conscious decision but a gradual thing. We forget God and He doesn't even enter our minds when problems arise. The same holds true for the layman as well as the clergyman. In fact, many of those in positions of church leadership have adopted the messages of pop psychology, secular humanism and new-age thinking to the point that they don't know the difference between these and the word of God.

9-12 God will not sit idly by and let His people go. He confronts us with our sin. He challenges us to consider the rationality of what we are doing. Even the heathen do not casually change gods.

13-19 Gill's commentary says that the first sin is "forsaking God" and the second is "having dug their own cisterns." In other words abandoned the truth of God and substituted the philosophies of man. As a result, they were weakened and fell prey to the surrounding nations. We, as a nation, have abandoned our Christian heritage and are drinking polluted water of our own making (double entendre) or we have adopted Eastern religions or Islam or some other foolishness. There is a principle, that people come under the rule of those whose gods they serve.

20-22 The judgement that comes upon a nation or an individual is usually a result of a long term accumulation of unfaithfulness to God. Before judgement comes, the cup of iniquity fills up. God, in His mercy, does not immediately punish us but gives us a chance to repent. God always fulfills his responsibility. It is our neglect and old nature that cause the problems. Human remedy (education, psycho-analysis, antidepressants, etc.) can not help the resultant defilement. The only way guilt can be removed is by the Blood of the Lamb of God.

23-25 The progression of sin is that we drift away from God and into areas of temptation. We then progress to the point that we are actually pursuing opportunities to sin. The progression leads from bad to worse with ever increasing sinfulness to satisfy the lust of the carnal nature.

26-30 When we are confronted with our sins, then we can see the senselessness of what we have been doing. People often criticize Christians for being irrational in their faith; however, nothing is more irrational than living a life of sin that leads to our own destruction. As God tries to draw us back to Himself, we end up accusing God of being unfair in His chastisements. In fact, people typically attack God's messengers and attempt to silence them.

31-37 Many Christians think that once they have made a profession of faith, then they can live anyway they wish to live. If they have truly been born again and the Spirit of God dwells in them, then the "way they wish to live" will be in alignment with the will of God. So in that sense a true Christian can literally "sin all he wants to" since he does not want to sin at all. However, we tend to forget God and walk in presumption rather than walk in faith. We make up our own rules rather than hear and do what God says. Some professing Christians can put the worst crooks to shame in their ability to be "con artists" and deceitful. In all these things, they rationalize their behavior rather than repent of it. God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins if we confess them as sins and repent of them. He is also faithful and just to bring judgement on all sins that we deny or rationalize.

The testimony of most Christians is that the "new life in Christ" is superior to their old life before they met Jesus. If we drift away from God and attempt to "skate around the edge of impropriety" then we will not find such a life any better than the life of the lost person.

3:1-2 When a society leaves God and gets caught up sinful activity, people cast off all restraint. We see this

happening today. Our nation is defiled.

3-5 During the past several years many so-called natural disasters and terrorist's acts have rocked our nation. Yet no one is turning to God to ask why He is angry with us.

6-10 God's prophets have all but become silent since the people have refused to listen. Though many "judgements" are available for all to see and from which to learn, yet people do not repent.

11-13 God's judgement had already fallen upon the Northern Kingdom. It had been more wicked than Judah and Assyria had conquered them and the people carried away as captives. Judah had seen this but failed to learn from it. They instead sinned more than did Israel. God's judgement against His people was redemptive. He then called them back to Himself. The criteria was confession of sin and (implied) repentance.

14-18 The call to return comes back as a refrain. This time it has a promise of a time of restoration. From the events described we would associate this with the 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth that is yet to come.

19-21 This may refer to what God knew would happen in the post-exile period. While the people could have "finished transgression, put an end to sin, atoned for wickedness, brought in everlasting righteousness, sealed up vision and prophecy and anointed the most holy," they found other ways to be unfaithful. They did not return to idol worship but they did pervert the truth of the nature of God and turned His ways into a rigid system of laws and rules. They operated out of their knowledge of good and evil. This was the attitude that caused the original disunion of man with God.

22-25 The third call to return is a call to recognize the folly of former ways and, in humility, to repent realizing that there is no salvation apart from God's own provision of His Son.

4:1-2 This is part of the message God had addressed to the Northern Kingdom. In verse 3:12 God had invited Israel to return to Himself. These are the concluding conditions of their return. Just changing direction in life is not enough, we must change our direction so that we move toward God. When God called Abraham He promised that "in him all nations of the earth would be blessed." The Israelites would be a part of that blessing if they would rid themselves of idols, stop straying away from God, and align their lives with the life of God. The ultimate fulfillment of this promise would be seen in the coming of the Messiah.

3-4 God's message to Judah was to cultivate the neglected "heart" relationship with God. Because the ground of their heart had been neglected it had become as an unplowed field and it was overgrown with thorns. The other analogy used in the message was a plea for them to put away the carnal nature by circumcising their hearts.

5-6 Without repentance, the nation of Judah could only look forward to the destruction that God was sending upon them from the north. The people would flee to fenced-in cities. They would, in effect, become prisoners in prisons of their own making. In many of our areas, people live in controlled access communities and in the inner cities bars are on windows and doors. Private homes have alarm systems and businesses use closed circuit TV to try to protect themselves.

7-9 In the news of the day we find whole cities devastated by flood waters, communities leveled by high winds of hurricanes and tornados and yet we go on as if it were business as usual. We should be putting on sackcloth and crying out to God. Surely we have come near the point where our officials lose heart, the preachers are horrified and the prophets are appalled by what they see happening around them.

10 The deception of the false prophets deluded the people of Jerusalem into thinking that everything was OK. This is similar to the "feel-good philosophy" and the "hot-tub religion" being spewed out from many pulpits in today's churches.

11-13 When the wind of the judgement of God starts blowing it will come quickly and the time for separating the wheat from the chaff or cleaning up our lives will be too late. We need to repent NOW, not when the storm has been released.

14 The source of the problems of the nation was the condition of the hearts of God's people. The song writer asks and answers, "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!" Unless a people will turn to God, then how can He save them?

15 Dan and Ephraim were to the immediate north of Judah (and Benjamin which was part of the Southern Kingdom). Destruction was to come from the north, so they would be the first to see it coming. It was also in Dan and Ephraim that the most blatant example of idol worship occurred. In Dan, the people set up a golden calf and in Ephraim, Micah made the golden idol and hired a priest to minister in a shrine.

5:1-2 God is merciful and willing to forgive. However, when a situation gets to the point that not even one person has integrity and walks in truth, then He has no choice but to act in judgement. People may talk about loving and trusting God but with many it is a sham. They have heard all the right words and can parrot them back. They go through the motion of playing church but many have never been born of the Spirit; consequently,

they are lost and apart from God with no hope of salvation.

3-5 Some are so dead in their sins and so hardened in their hearts that when warning, redemptive judgements come from God there is no response or perhaps even a further turning away from God. We sometimes make excuses for these as just being unlearned people who could not be expected to know any better. However, it evident that those who should know better do no better than those who know no better.

6 Because of continuing iniquity and refusal to repent, the cup of iniquity becomes full and judgement comes in the form of wild beasts. We don't see much of the beast of the forest but we have beasts in human bodies that act far worse than four legged animals.

7-9 How can we answer the question posed by God "Why should I forgive you?" Many have failed to secure our most precious earthly possession (our children) for the Kingdom of Heaven. We have a generation where few know and follow God. They follow many other priorities and devote themselves to pleasure seeking, but not to God.

As a nation we have been blessed beyond measure with material blessing and yet we take it all for granted and do not acknowledge God as the source of this blessing. Instead, the more we are blessed the farther we run from God.

We have become a nation obsessed with sex which leads to fornication and adultery. Among many of our young people, sex has become a participation sport. It is nothing more than a casual game of conquest. Perversions of all kinds have broken out and polluted the land and the people. And God asks "Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?"

10 The judgement of God on Judah was not total destruction but nearly so.

11-13 The extent of Judah's unfaithfulness was described as "utterly." Apart from the true church, our nation seems to be getting closer to a condition of utter immorality. We wonder, "How could it get any worse?" I'm concerned that we've not seen anything yet.

Many false prophets (some of these are proclaiming from pulpits) lies about the Lord. In their "feel-good" philosophy and "hot-tub" religion they are given many a false sense of security by presenting only part of the picture of God. They have totally ignored that the God of Love is also the God of Judgement and eventually the God of Wrath.

14-17 God is preparing and will raise up proclaimers of the truth and these will declare the word of God regarding the judgements coming upon the world. This time the judgements will not be from a distant nation but from God. All the things in which we now trust will be destroyed and we will find that nothing is of any value apart from God.

18-19 God's judgements on His people are redemptive to bring them back to Himself and away from trusting in anything else. We see also the principle that we will wind up serving the nation whose gods we worship.

20-22 God reminds us in the creation of His mighty power and our dependency on Him. If we will not serve Him from a motive of Love, then certainly we should serve Him out of fear.

23-25 The rebelliousness of the human heart is such that it chooses destruction rather than submission.

26-28 The consequences of people's rebellion is that they end up with leader who are much as themselves in their basic integrity. Such "evil leaders" in effect punish the people because they neglect the "poor and needy" and think only of themselves. God's judgement cannot help but come on such people.

30-31 The condition of the times of Jeremiah is much as it is today -- horrible and shocking. The religious leaders do not know nor proclaim the truth but serve up a watered down substitute. That's what many are looking for in some churches. They don't want to hear the fact that the cup of iniquity is being filled up and that judgement is on its way.

6:1-2 God's warning to His people is repeated many times. If the people will not repent, then the land will perish and the righteous must leave or be destroyed with it. We are to be a "called out" people and separated from the world system that is to be destroyed.

3-8 If the destruction does not start immediately, then it will come later, but it will surely come because God's justice demands it. When we know no end to wickedness and actually celebrate it as is done in the media with the Gay and Lesbian groups, when injustice abounds in the courts and the systems becomes one of winning or losing and not about justice, and when a few reward themselves at the expense of many, then the desolation will come.

9-12 When we reach the point of the cup of iniquity being full, then the judgement of God starts. When it starts it is thorough and it must run its course. When a people become so sinful that God must take action then the judgement affects all in that society. Those who are especially wicked and those who are just "moderately wicked" experience the same judgement.

13-15 All who do not come out and separate themselves will get caught up in the greed and wantonness of a

culture. It will affect the leaders and the man-in-the-street. It affects the clergy and the lay persons. Everyone becomes so desensitized to evil that nothing causes us to blush anymore. And we are told "it's OK." We are just being freed of our inhibitions. The gaping wounds that are crippling us are treated with band-aids. Judges turn criminals loose to steal, rape and kill again. However, eventually, justice will be served. God will not be mocked.

16-17 Every situation in life is a crossroads experience. We have a choice and we must choose which way we will go. Examine alternatives and pick the good way -- God's way. By choosing God's way we find confidence with the realization that what we are doing is right and we don't have to keep searching for a better way. In our human pride, we think we can find something better than what God has appointed and we abandon His ways. When we go our own way, then we typically get into trouble. Because of God's love He sends messengers who sound the alarm to call us back to the right path. Usually, we do not listen because we are so enamored by and caught up in our own way of doing things.

18-19 When God judges His own, it is a witness to the rest of the world. If He will judge His own for rejecting His law, then how much more severe will be the judgement of those who go totally after other gods.

20-21 We "invent" a lot of new "stuff" and think that we are making worship more meaningful. The Israelites would find a sweeter incense to burn in the temple or find a more perfect bullock or ram to sacrifice. We come up with "drama" or "contemporary worship services" or whatever the latest fad is and think we are fulfilling God's will. God doesn't care about these things, He is looking for obedience. When we have taken care of the obedience, then we can be about these other niceties if we have any time left.

Because we ignore what God has said to do, we find that we have problems getting the other things done. Many times nothing seems to go as planned. Seldom do we realize that these are obstacles that God has placed in our path to get our attention. We just push ahead and doggedly carry out our own plans anyway.

22-23 If the obstacles do not work and we continue in our own way, then God will send something that **will** get our attention. In Judah's case, He sent an invading and conquering army.

24-26 God always gives adequate warning. The people of Judah knew what was happening with the Babylonians and their conquests. They could see that they might be next. It was to the point that they warned each other of the possible danger of the enemy. However, they did not look to God for salvation nor did they repent of their evil.

27-30 The message of the prophet was to be as a blazing fire. "Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them." [Jer 5:14] This time the fire would be an attempt to refine the people, rid them of the impure. But sometimes the impurity cannot be removed with simple refining and the metal has to be rejected.

7:1-2 The message Jeremiah delivered did not originate with him, but was God's word. The message was for a specific group of people. By standing in the gate, people could not help but hear the message that God had for them. God sent the message to those that came to worship in the Temple rather than to people were worshipping false gods and idols on the hilltops.

3-4 God called for action: "Amend your ways and your doings!" To whom was God talking? The religious people! Time after time we see the call of God going out to those who are His rather than the heathen. If God could just get the Christians to do what they are should do and go where they should go and teach what they should teach, then the problem of the heathen and the unbelievers would find a solution.

God's promise to Israel was if they amended their ways He would cause them to "dwell in this place." The meaning of this promise has several interpretations. First, and most obvious, would be that the impending disaster of the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity would not happen. Instead, they would continue to occupy the land of Israel. An alternate interpretation would be that "this place" referred to the Temple and that the relationship between God and Judah would be such as David described in Psalms 23 -- "and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord, forever." There is another translation of the Hebrew words that says, "I (meaning God) will dwell in this place." In other words, in response to the repentance of the people that God would manifest Himself to them as in the time of the dedication of the temple when the cloud filled the temple. Is this not what God tells us today? If we will surrender to Him and receive Him, then He will come and indwell our own temples (our bodies).

Jeremiah warned the people to not put their trust in anything other than the word of God. Some were trusting in the fact that the temple was there in Jerusalem; therefore, no real danger could befall them. God was trying to tell them that the building was not the Temple of the Lord unless the Lord was in the Temple. As Christians we need to hear this same message. Just saying that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit does not make it so--it is the indwelling presence of God through His Spirit that makes it so.

5-7 God left no doubt as to what "amend your ways" was all about. He spelled out in specific terms what He

expects from His people in their relationship with each other. This kind of relationship with our fellow man can happen only when people are in right relationship with God.

8-11 These people were guilty of practicing every sin prohibited by the Ten Commandments and then they would come into the Temple and expect that because they practiced certain religious exercises that everything would be OK.

12-15 The error of such thinking could be plainly seen in the history of their own nation. Just look at Shiloh: the Ark of the Covenant was there and the Tabernacle, but the place was overrun and the Ark captured by the Philistines, because of the sins of the people. God warned them through Jeremiah that the same thing could happen to Jerusalem.

What does all this say to us as Christians? If we continue to turn away from God, then there is a price to pay. On the other hand, if we "amend our ways" then God has great blessings for us.

16-19 After Jeremiah had issued the call to Judah to repent, that was all he was to do. God forbid him to even pray for Judah. The repeated calls for repentance went unheeded and even the children were being misled to worship false gods. If our children are brought up under pagan or just secular influence, then it will be difficult for real repentance to occur.

The basic problem of the people was rebellion against the authority of God. It was not ignorance of God. Rebellion does not hurt God it hurt those who rebel.

20-23 The response of God to rebellion and refusal to repent is that judgement will come. The people of Judah remained a "religious" people and brought sacrifices to the temple. God's attitude was that they might as well sacrifice and then eat the meat themselves. They were "into religion" for what they could get out of it. They had become their own gods. We are reminded again that it is not just sacrifices and religious observance but obedience that God is looking for.

24-28 If we follow God's direction, then our society will advance and become better. If we do not then everything deteriorates. Our nation made much progress when we were able to be identified as a Christian nation. We have deliberately turn aside from that distinctive because of the rebelliousness of the secular humanists. In doing so, our society is now in a state of degradation. God warns us of the consequences of what we are doing and where we are headed but to no avail. Our leaders have abandoned the truth and the people have followed. The rule seems to be "Lie at first and rationalize later."

29-31 Jerusalem is told to mourn and show her remorse by shaving her head. The wrath of God was coming upon that very generation. It was not just the present generation that had sinned, but the ones that had gone before them also. Their sins were added to the others to fill up their cup of iniquity. Part of their sin was to bring worship of false gods into the Temple of God. We see secular humanism, humanistic philosophy, and even Eastern Mysticism creeping (a good word picture) into some of our traditional churches. The word of God is not given any more credibility than the last book of some liberal psychologist.

32-34 This warning against Judah sounds very similar to the judgement of the last days which could easily apply to our world. Devastation in certain areas will be so great that people will change the names of the location to commemorate what had happened.

The writings of Jeremiah regarding Judah before and during the Babylonian captivity are applicable to the times in which we are living. There are too many similarities. The stage is set in the Seventh Chapter as to the cause of the problem: 7:28 Therefore say to them, `This is the nation that has not obeyed the LORD its God or responded to correction. Truth has perished; it has vanished from their lips. 7:34 I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the land will become desolate. In Chapter 8, the rest of the story is spelled out.

1 ¶ "At that time, declares the LORD, the bones of the kings and officials of Judah, the bones of the priests and prophets, and the bones of the people of Jerusalem will be removed from their graves.

1 The horrors of what happens when a people no longer have the protection of God is pictured by Jeremiah. We see the horrors of war and the tyranny of Godless people in power on the news and in documentaries and we are appalled. The desecration of graves and the bodies of ancestors was unthinkable to the Jews.

2 They will be exposed to the sun and the moon and all the stars of the heavens, which they have loved and served and which they have followed and consulted and worshiped. They will not be gathered up or buried, but will be

like refuse lying on the ground.

2 Lives of people who seek their own way are devastated by the very things they pursued when they had a choice. We can see the effects of wrong choices in the smoker who gets lung cancer, the person who abuses alcohol with broken lives and ruined health, the so-called alternate lifestyle person who contracts AIDS – you get the idea. The Jews turned their backs on God and worshiped the sun, moon and stars and now their dead bodies -- their bones were laid bare before the very things they worshiped.

3 Wherever I banish them, all the survivors of this evil nation will prefer death to life, declares the LORD Almighty.'

3 The undisciplined life leads to a life that is so miserable that people wish to die rather than live. Jesus warned us that the devil came to steal, kill and destroy but He came that we might have life and have it abundantly. When you have a chance to make a choice, it is important that you choose correctly – to choose righteousness over iniquity, to choose mercy over judgement, to choose forgiveness over holding grudges – The choices you make when you still have a choice will determine what will happen when it is too late and there are no more choices to be had.

4 ¶ "Say to them, `This is what the LORD says: "When men fall down, do they not get up? When a man turns away, does he not return?"

5 Why then have these people turned away? Why does Jerusalem always turn away? They cling to deceit; they refuse to return.

4-5 None of us is able to live a perfect, error-free life. However, we should not continue on in error once we see the right way. If we actually look for way to be more sinful, then we have no hope. Isn't this where we are as a nation, today? Do we not see people looking for ways to be more wicked rather than looking for ways to avoid sin? People clamored for package stores, and then they wanted liquor by the drink, now some are wanting to legalize marijuana. We started out allowing abortion when it was early in a pregnancy or when there was something that threatened the life of the mother. Now they are doing abortions on partially born infants. The amazing thing is that we in the church are not jumping up and down and voting the scoundrels out of office. We could mention the kind of language that is becoming acceptable in our society, the proliferation of pornography that is available on cable TV or the internet – and the list goes on and on.

6 I have listened attentively, but they do not say what is right. No-one repents of his wickedness, saying, "What have I done?" Each pursues his own course like a horse charging into battle.

7 Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration. But my people do not know the requirements of the LORD.

6-7 Not only do people not “walk the walk” they don't even “talk the talk” anymore. Years ago, people would at least pretend to do what was right. Many have heard the truth but their interests lies in other things and they do not really know the message -- they hear but they do not really comprehend it. Even in the church, the confession of many Christians is not one of victory and faith in the omnipotent God of the Universe, but of fear and defeat. We have failed to be about the business of being transformed into the character of the new nature. The truth of the assertion of many who profession to be Christians is contradicted by their continued walk in the ways of the old nature -- the way of the world. The only time they have behavior that is like the new nature is when they deliberately set their mind to do so. This proves that they are still operating under their own strength and living under law and not grace. If they have truly been converted then they would do the work of Jesus “naturally” and would not even realize they were doing it.

8 "How can you say, "We are wise, for we have the law of the LORD," when actually the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely?

9 The wise will be put to shame; they will be dismayed and trapped. Since they have rejected the word of the LORD, what kind of wisdom do they have?

8-9 Those in our churches today have Bibles but they do not know what the word of God

says. They have read and listened to watered-down commentaries for so long, that the power of the word of God lies dormant and impotent in them. Too many preachers interpret the word of God based on their own limited experience rather than just taking God at His word. I have heard preachers say that we are delivered from the **penalty** of sin but NOT from the **power** of sin. If people believe such a lie then they will be defeated Christians. Many will preach and teach that God has changed, that we should not expect miracles today. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we do not have faith in what God can do, then we are not likely to experience it. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Alter the truth of the word by mishandling it and you alter the outcome of the impact it can have on our lives.

There are many who write volumes regarding the Christian life and they do not believe what the Bible says. They have academic titles and claim to be experts and they are respected by others. They think themselves to be wise, but it is the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God. As Paul said in Roman, "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools." (Rom 1:21)  
10 Therefore I will give their wives to other men and their fields to new owners. From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit.  
11 They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. "Peace, peace," they say, when there is no peace.

10-11 When those who are in the ministry are there simply because it is a "job," then they may tend to interpret the word based on the best benefit to themselves in their job. The seriousness of sin is not addressed because it may offend someone and they will stop attending (and giving). The net result of such practice is that the stewardship for God's plan of salvation will be given to others.

The gaping wounds that are crippling us are treated with band-aids. In the 1980's we tried to declare detente with the Communist forces. We'll all just live together and everything will be OK. In the church it also seems that we have declared detente with the devil. We pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." But are we doing anything to occupy the land so that God's will can be done "on earth as it is in Heaven?". When the Children of Israel went into the Promised Land they did not have possession of the land until they took control of it. They booted out the heathen and the pagan influence and to the extent they did NOT eliminate such influence, to that extent they left a snare for themselves and the coming generations. We cannot afford to declare peace until the enemies of God have been brought into submission to His will. Folks, that applies to our world, our nation, our state, our city, our community, our church, our family and to ourselves as individuals. The order in which it must be implemented is to start with ourselves.

12 Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when they are punished, says the LORD.

12 Almost as a refrain, the lack of shame is sounded out again as an indication of how far we have fallen from a right relationship with God in our culture. The problem of misplaced priority affects the clergy and the lay persons. Everyone becomes so desensitized to evil that nothing causes us to blush anymore. And we are told "it's OK." We are just being freed of our inhibitions. That is hogwash! It is sad when we put more confidence in psychologists than we do in the word of God the God of the Word. As a society we have adopted an "anything goes" attitude and we have opened the gates and torn down the walls to our fortified cities of whom we are culturally and we have let in every kind of evil beast to roam around the world in which we live. We even let it into our family rooms via the television set. When we let such things happen and do not see any immediate consequences, then we think, it must be OK. When you plant a seed, you do not see the consequences immediately – the fruit of what we do comes along later.

13 ¶ "I will take away their harvest, declares the LORD. There will be no grapes on the vine. There will be no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither. What I have given them will be taken from them."



13 When we fail to acknowledge that all things to which we have access belongs to God, then He will eventually take it away. If the harvest fails, do we look to the Lord of the Harvest Who is the Source of every good and perfect gift or do we look at the weather report? When there is not fruitfulness, then we excuse ourselves by saying that “Results don’t matter, just as long as we are faithful, that’s all that matters. Jesus taught us that we are expected to be fruitful and if we are not then we should be examining our faith and our faithfulness. However, when we recognize Him as Lord of all and allow Him to live His life through us, then we share in His abundance for all time and eternity.

14 "Why are we sitting here? Gather together! Let us flee to the fortified cities and perish there! For the LORD our God has doomed us to perish and given us poisoned water to drink, because we have sinned against him.

14 The people of Judah who lived in the countryside saw how defenseless they were against the enemy. Their solution to the problem was to flee to the fortified cities for protection. This proved to only prolong the time but was not a source of salvation. We also look for man-made solutions to problems rather than seeking God’s way and all we are doing is prolonging the judgement against us. They knew that judgement was sure even if they fled to the city. I’m not sure we understand that humanistic solutions will **not** save us.

15 We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time of healing but there was only terror.

16 The snorting of the enemy's horses is heard from Dan; at the neighing of their stallions the whole land trembles. They have come to devour the land and everything in it, the city and all who live there."

15-16 When false prophets tell us that all is well, then we have expectations that will never come to pass. It is only when we “realize our condition and repent” that judgement is stayed.

Unfortunately, those who initially believe the lie of the false prophet and “infernal optimists” will hang onto that belief until disasters comes upon them. Then it will be too late to believe the truth.

17 "See, I will send venomous snakes among you, vipers that cannot be charmed, and they will bite you," declares the LORD.

17 The coming enemy will not be appeased; that is, he cannot be charmed. The old snake becomes deaf and cannot hear the music of the charmers. The old sins that become ingrained in our culture cannot be extricated since they have become “part of who we are.” We have become a society in which human life is not highly valued at its beginning or its ending. We have turned loose a snake that is already showing signs of being out of control. We have entertained pornography and now the truth of that snake is showing itself in child abuse, perversion and other sex crimes. There are many snakes that are loose among us in our culture. We thought we could control them but they wind up controlling us.

18 O my Comforter in sorrow, my heart is faint within me.

18 When we stray far from God, then those thing that were meant for our comfort will, instead, bring sorry.

19 Listen to the cry of my people from a land far away: "Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King no longer there?" "Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their worthless foreign idols?"

19 The people would some day lament and question why God did not protect them from the onslaught of the enemy. God’s answer is another question for them to answer for themselves: “Why did they provoke God with their misplaced priorities?” One of these days, people may be asking, “Why did God abandon the USA? Did not our forefather found our nation on principles that are right and holy? Surely, God will protect us!” The answer is going to be another question that asks “Why did you replace the reading and teaching of my word in your schools with teachings about alternate life styles? Why did you refused to let people pray at your public events? Why did you ignore My word on being truthful? Why did you neglect to teach your children about Me and My ways?”

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

20 Time flies by and we keep putting off doing that which we know to be the right things to

do. We will repent tomorrow, we'll turn over a new leaf next week, we will walk closer to God next year, we will spend more time on the things of the kingdom of God when we retire. If we can put off doing what is right for one minute, then we can put it off for an hour, a day, a week, a year and a lifetime.

21 Since my people are crushed, I am crushed; I mourn, and horror grips me. 22 Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?

21-22 Those who proclaim the truth empathize with those who will not listen and instead rush to their own judgement. The tragedy is compounded by the fact that solutions for the situation are available. Healing ointment or balm of the Holy Spirit is available and the Great Physician (the Lord Jesus) Who can apply it for healing the wounds of the world is eager to help.

8:1-3 The horrors of what happens when a people no longer have the protection of God is pictured by Jeremiah. Lives of people who seek their own way are devastated by the very things they pursued when they had a choice. The undisciplined life leads to a life that is so miserable that people wish to die rather than live. Jesus warned us that the devil came to steal, kill and destroy but He came that we might have life and have it abundantly.

4-5 None of us is able to live a perfect, error-free life. However, we should not continue on in error once we see the right way. If we actually look for ways to be more sinful, then we have no hope.

6-7 Not only do people not "walk the walk" they don't even "talk the talk." Many have heard the truth but their interests lies in other things and they do not really know the message. The confession of many Christians is not one of victory and faith in the omnipotent God of the Universe, but of fear and defeat. We have failed to be about the transformation to the character of the new nature. The truth of the assertion of many who profess to be Christians is contradicted by their continued walk in the ways of the old nature. The only time they have behavior that is like the new nature is when they deliberately set their mind to do so. This proves that they are still operating under their own strength and living under law (operating according to their knowledge of good and evil) and not grace. If they have truly been converted then they would do the work of Jesus "naturally" and would not even realize they were doing it.

8-9 Those in our churches today have Bibles but they do not know what the word of God says. They have read and listened to watered down commentaries for so long, that the power of the word of God lies dormant and impotent in them.

10-11 When those who are in the ministry are there simply because it is a "job," then they may tend to interpret the word based on the best benefit to themselves in their job. The seriousness of sin is not addressed because it may offend someone and they will stop attending (and giving). The net result of such practice is that the stewardship for God's plan of salvation will be given to others.

12 Almost as a refrain, the lack of shame is sounded out again as an indication of how far we have fallen from a right relationship with God in our culture.

13 When we fail to acknowledge that all things to which we have access belong to God, then He will eventually take them away so that we will know Him Who is the Source of every good and perfect gift. However, when we recognize Him as Lord of all and allow Him to live His life through us, then we share in His abundance for all time and eternity.

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20 Time flies by and we keep putting off doing that which we know to be the right things to do. We will repent tomorrow, we'll turn over a new leaf next week, we will walk closer to God next year, we will spend more time on the things of the kingdom of God when we retire. If we can put off doing what is right for one minute, then we can put it off for an hour, a day, a week, a year and a lifetime. Hearing and doing the word (will of God) cannot be separated even to hearing it now and doing it later.

21-22 Those who proclaim the truth empathize with those who will not listen and instead rush to their own judgement. The tragedy is compounded by the fact that solutions for the situation are available. Healing ointment or balm of the Holy Spirit is available and the Great Physician (the Lord Jesus) Who can apply it for healing the wounds of the world is eager to help.

9:1-2 Jeremiah was "the weeping prophet." The condition of his countrymen broke his heart. What a tragic waste of such great potential! Such is the time in which we live and sometimes we also want to get away from it all.

3-9 God had catalogued their sins. The sources of their sins were their refusal to acknowledge the Lord and His claim as their Lord. Just as in Jeremiah's time our society today is characterized by distrust. We have come to expect people to lie rather than tell the truth. We find people working harder to do the wrong thing that it would take to do what is right. We fail to realize that God is a God of justice and He will not let our condition go unchallenged.

10 In Jeremiah's vision of what is to come upon the people, he saw a desolated land.

11 God confirmed that He would bring it about and it would be a waste land.

12 Many times we wonder why things are so bad and are getting worse in our nation. Many speculate, however, the only adequate answer is found in what the Lord says about it.

13-14 The cause is in our rebellion against God. If we will not follow His instructions regarding living life in His creation, then we will make a mess of things.

15-16 The result is that, instead of feasting on the sweetness of the word of God and drinking Living Water, we will find "polluted food and water" that will turn to bitterness and poison our outlook on life. The consequences are that people are dissatisfied and literally wander around in pursuit of "something" which they can neither define nor find so that families are scattered all over the world. It seems that we are trying to escape the word of God and the convicting power it has on lives.

17-22 If we don't turn back to God, then the time will come when it is too late and all that is left is mourning for our condition as we see the chastisement of God running its course in our lives. Sometimes this chastisement is not just a brief moment but can continue beyond our own generation. This is especially true when God punishes a nation.

23-24 What can be done now? Trust in the Lord with all total being and do not trust in our wisdom, our strength, riches or anything other than the mercy and love of God.

25-26 One day, all the earth will be judged and all who are not born of the spirit of God and have not put to death the old carnal nature will have to answer for their sins. Many who are religious will be disappointed in those days since they will think that all is well when they have not met even the basic requirement of entry into the Kingdom of God.

10:1-5 As we objectively read the words God spoke through Jeremiah, we are struck with the logic of His arguments. Why would any nation that was founded on the principles of God EVER adopt ANY other way. Yet we see our own people turning to Eastern mysticism and yoga. Many are delving into the occult and following their horoscopes rather than looking to God and His word.

6-10 We should affirm the truth of Who God is and man's relationship to his Creator at every opportunity.

11-16 We must not forget that philosophies come and go but the truth of the word of God endures forever. If we are going to put our trust in anything, it must be in what God has said.

17-18 If we fail to follow God, then we will lose our inheritance.

19-22 In the lament of Jeremiah for the nation, we see the tragedy of a nation getting to the point of being past being healed. This can happen when those who are in positions of responsibility (the shepherds) do not attempt to follow God. (A failure in leadership.)

23-25 God's judgement starts first with His people. Some think they will escape judgement because they are

church members. This is the same thinking of the people of Judah during the time of Jeremiah. They were sure God was going to judge the heathen nation but thought they were exempt.

11:1-5 The things that God expects us to do are not mysterious. He has openly proclaimed His expectations and the consequence of obedience or disobedience. Most of God's promises are conditional in that we have to meet certain criteria before participating in the blessings He has ordained.

6-8 God continues to remind us via His prophets of the covenant (truth) and the consequences.

9-10 God told Jeremiah that a conspiracy was being carried out by the people of Judah. Many have warned us that the changes happening in our society are the result of a conspiracy by Secular Humanists to discredit and displace any spiritual influence in our world. Some of the more well-known church leaders have scoffed at this idea of a conspiracy. These would probably have scoffed at Jeremiah, also.

11-13 People think they can do whatever they want to do and escape God's notice or judgement. They apparently are successful for a time. However, eventually God will bring judgement on them that is inescapable. The response of most to such calamity is to turn to the things in which they really trust. They will go to psychologists, to physicians, to the bankers, to lawyers, to anyone except God! The people of Judah did the same things, they relied on the gods and altars of the pagan who lived among them. We (the church) live among pagan and we must avoid adopting their ways. Our mission is to convert them to God's ways.

14-15 God will not allow us to go on in sin without bringing judgment. If we refuse to listen to Him, then He will come to a point of refusing to listen to us. Judah had gotten to the point that what she did for worship was sin. When the "light" that is in us is "darkness," then how great is the darkness.

16-17 We need to always remember that it is by the grace of God that we have anything. The blessings we enjoy come from God and if we repay His kindness and mercy with unfaithfulness, then He will also bring judgment on us.

18-23 If we would proclaim God's word to a nation that is deliberately trying to cast off Godly influence, then opposition will come. In Jeremiah's situation, some plotted to kill him. In our day, the effort is to "kill" the Christian influence by mockery and disdain. This should not stop us from doing what is right and we should not attempt to attack those who attack us, because God will fight those battles for us.

12:1-4 Though we KNOW God is righteous we have problems understanding how (in His righteousness) He will allow (a) *evil people*, (b) *those who ignore Him*, and (c) *those who are quick to talk about God but slow to obey* to be successful. Our approach to such people would be instantaneous judgment. However, we should be glad that God is slow to anger because we also slip and have problems. If God were to judge quickly and strictly, then no one would be left alive. The answer to Jeremiah's question of why God allows evil to prosper is found in the "Full Cup Principle." (See comments on Jeremiah 16:10-13 in this document.)

5-6 We get weary with the unfaithfulness of the hypocrites and others of our community or nation. The Lord warns us that this is nothing compared to dealing with those who have completely foreign principles and backgrounds or those who are controlled by satanic forces.

7-13 The word of God leaves no doubt that judgment will come on those who follow other philosophies (other gods) and give themselves over to evil. This same principle applies to the heathen as well as to those with whom God has made a covenant. For the Jews, the judgment was pictured as affecting the land. The blessings of God on this people from the start was focused on the land. They came into a land flowing with milk and honey but would see it turned into a wasteland and a place of barrenness. God has blessed our nation in many ways (physically and spiritually) and as we abandon Him, then He will replace the blessing with curses in these same areas.

14-17 God brings judgment on all nations; however, these judgments are intended to cause them to repent and turn to God. If they do, then God restores what was lost and even the heathen will be accepted by God and counted as His people. Failure to repent and continuing in wickedness will result in judgments that are destructive rather than redemptive.

13:1-2 The unwashed linen belt or girdle is symbolic of those whom God has purchased to be bound close to Him and to uphold Him and His principles. It is purchased "as is" or unwashed to tell us that God takes us as we are. This is the same way He took Israel and brought them into close association with Himself.

3-5 The girdle (Israel) did not stay close to the Lord but secretly (they thought) got involved with pagan practices (represented by the river Perath or Euphrates in KJV).

6-7 The association with the foreign river ruined the girdle and made it useless. In the same way, if we pollute ourselves with false philosophies and misplaced values, then we become ineffective in the work of the Kingdom of God. By associating ourselves with evil we ruin our witness. It is only when we are closely bound to

God that we are fulfilling the purposes for which He redeemed us.

8-9 The glory of a child is his father and the glory of the people of God is the Lord. If we are “far removed” from Him, then the very things in which we could legitimately point to as being worthwhile are missing and all we have left are the “filthy rags” of our own righteousness.

10-11 The problem starts with neglecting the word of God. We either do not hear or if we hear it, do not heed it. In our pride we think we know more than God knows and by refusing to follow Him, we end up following “other gods.”

12-14 Our nation started out honoring God and others knew that our nation was great because we followed after the righteousness of God. We did not always carry out the practice to perfection; however, we stated that we wanted to do what was right. Now we have come to the point of proclaiming we want to do what is evil. We defend the right of women to kill their unborn babies, we protect the right of the sexually perverted to advocate and openly practice their abominations, we promote the sensual, and we give more rights to the criminal than to the victims. We have become as a drunkard whose mind is incapable of proper reasoning and we are literally destroying one another. This tragedy is happening in the highest positions of government, in organized religion, and in our homes. It appears that the judgment is being repeated on us as it was demonstrated against Judah and Jerusalem.

15-16 The Psalmist said in 36:9 “In your light, we shall see light.” Our problem is that, in our prideful arrogance, we want to provide our own light. If we will not turn to the Word of God (the Light of the World), then we will end up in darkness.

17 We may weep publicly for our nation as it goes astray. However, after many warnings we learn that such weeping does not affect those who are going astray, but we still need to weep for them. Our weeping can then be in secret because of the anguish of the loss of the liberty the people once had as they operated within the boundary of God’s commands.

18-21 Through the prophets, God did not keep His coming judgment a secret. The people knew what Jeremiah said; however, they chose to believe the false prophets instead.

If we make allies of the ungodly we may find them ruling over us. Therefore, we need to choose our associations carefully.

22 Many times we do not pay any attention to what is happening until we are directly affected and then we cry out “Why me, Lord?” The answer does not change. We are impacted by our sins.

23-27 The futility of trying to improve ourselves in our own strength to be acceptable to God is seen in a leopard getting rid of his spots. He would have to become something other than a leopard. Similarly, we cannot become “good” since we have a basically sinful nature. We need a new heart (nature).

14:1-2 We tolerate a spiritual drought without a complaint; however, a physical drought brings immediate anguish. Yet the spiritual drought has much more lasting and far-reaching consequences than lack of water. We need to come to the point of being as sensitive to our spiritual needs as we are to physical needs.

3-6 We can easily see the impact of physical drought on all levels of society and even wild animals, however, it takes revelation from God for us to be immediately aware of the impact of a spiritual drought.

7-9 Our prayers are sometimes as the prayer of Jeremiah. “Lord, I know we deserve Your chastisement, but stop chastising us.” We send all sort of signals that God is not welcome in our lives and then we marvel that He is not near in times of need. Our nation’s leaders try to make it very clear that they do not want God present in our society. One day we will be in great distress and will wonder why God has gone away!

10-12 God reaches a limit in His patience with a nation or even an individual. If we will not respond to His chastisements (redemptive judgments) then destruction will eventually come upon us.

13-16 It is difficult enough to get people to listen to and obey God’s word under the best of circumstances. It is nearly impossible for this to happen if someone else is proclaiming a false message that is full of optimism and human potential. If people believe the lie “that all is well” when it is not, then they will perish.

17-18 Jeremiah pictured either himself or God crying over the nation and the coming disaster. Jesus lamented over Jerusalem before their time ran out and it was destroyed because they rejected God and His period of parole. The problems for Judah had already begun and one would wonder how the false prophets could continue to say that all was well. We see a similar situation today. The secular humanists keep insisting that their “programs” to make man better will work while all the evidence around them is that their social experiments are ruining people’s lives and causing a breakdown in the very fabric of our society.

19-22 Jeremiah saw what was happening and protested to God regarding what he saw. He could not accept that God would come to a point of rejecting His people or would despise those He had saved in the past. He may have been echoing the questions of the people of Judah in their amazement that judgment had finally come upon them.

Perhaps he remembered the intercessory prayer of Moses who appealed to God to spare the Israelites for the sake of His name or the call of Samuel for the people to abandon their idol sacrifices as he made intercession for the people. He confessed their sins and reminded God of His covenant. But the people had already broken the covenant. Their only hope was indeed in God alone since the false gods they worshiped and nature itself has no power to save (spiritually) or to provide rain for the salvation of the land.

15:1 Sometimes we pray and if our prayers are unanswered we assume that it is lack of faith or perhaps some sin in our lives that has hindered our prayers. We need to realize that God has His own agenda and some things are not going to be changed regardless of the fervor or our prayers, the strength of our faith, or the purity of our lives.

2-3 When we are removed from the presence of the Lord (if we are not in Christ), then we have no protection and there is nothing to restrain the sure outcome of the law of sin and death.

4-6 God holds those in leadership to a higher level of accountability. Manasseh had a godly father and yet his sin of idolatry was grievous. The people joined him in his sin and they had never looked back with a possibility to change but continued until the time of Jeremiah.

The fact that the Jews were (are) despised by many nations is no coincidence. This is part of the on-going judgement for rejecting God. We should tremble in fear for our nation that has been so well blessed of God as we turn our collective backs on Him and His ways. Even in our lifetime, we are seen more and more nations come to despise our country. Others rejoice in our calamity.

7-9 In God's judgment everything hidden will be uncovered and every sin that is not confessed and repented of will add to the penalty of the people. People will die and others will lose heart and wish they were dead. Those who escape one calamity will survive only to run into another calamity.

10 When we take a stand for God's ways, then we will find resistance and contention with those who oppose and rebel against God.

11 Young's Literal Translation says "Jehovah said, Did I not direct thee for good? Did not I intercede for thee in a time of evil, And in a time of adversity, with the enemy?" When we come to the point of discouragement because of opposition, then God reminds us of the help He has given us in the past and the fact that He is in control and will work to bring good from that which seems to be evil.

12-14 The coming judgment against Judah was repeated. The uselessness of resistance to what God has ordained is sobering and the extent to which He will chastise His own people should cause us all to reverence the Lord, keep His commandments and not presume upon His mercy.

15-18 When we are down emotionally we tend to recite all the sacrifices we have made for Jesus. We know that He already knows but, in reminding Him, we are actually taking a mental inventory to see if we have overlooked doing some "good thing" in our life.

After we take the inventory and find nothing amiss (by our own judgment) we then wonder why we continue to suffer. If it not our fault, then is God different than we thought?

19-21 When we question God, He simply reminds us of the truth of how He operates. God calls, we respond, He restores so we can serve him. If we speak what God has told us (worthy words) then He recognizes us as His spokesman. If we are attacked for proclaiming God's word, then we must remember that He has promised to strengthen us and to save us from the hands of the wicked.

16:1-4 Children are usually a source of great joy and blessings to parents. However, there are times when having children would add to our grief. In times of calamity and suffering, the pain the children suffer would multiple the grief the parents already had.

5-7 We are to comfort those who mourn; however, any comfort we can give has its source in the Spirit of God. In times of judgment, God withholds His comfort, blessings and even His love and mercy. Such times are truly pitiful; however, even pity is not available and hope is removed.

8-9 In times of judgment, just as there is no comfort or mercy for those who mourn, there will be no joy or gladness for those who celebrate. All emotions are dominated by fear of the impending disaster as the judgment starts.

10-13 The disinheritance of the one thing that was most important to them (the land) was a result of an accumulation of unrepentant evil from the time the people came into the Promised Land. Each succeeding generation become worse than the one before them. There were times of reformation but it did not last. The long-term trend was to ever-increasing decadence. What parents allow in moderation, their children practice in excess. Each succeeding generation raises the level of acceptable sensuality. Eventually, God will break His silence and then bring judgment on any nation that allows the cup of iniquity to fill up.

14-15 We tend to identify and label people by some significant act or characteristic. Until the time of Jeremiah, the most significant thing God had done in the lives of the Israelites was to bring them out of Egypt. After the Babylonian captivity, the deliverance and return to their homeland would become the significant act to succeeding generations. In the New Testament, God is referred to as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. For us, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the most significant act by which we identify God.

For the Jews, this part of Jeremiah message should have held out a glimmer of hope that they (or their children) would eventually be restored to their homeland.

16-18 The promise of restoration was not intended to lull them into a sense of security regarding the judgment that was to come upon the nation. In our time, we see the wickedness of the entire world and we hear (or read) God's word regarding a time of tribulation and redemptive judgments that are to come upon the earth. In the background of all of this is the promise of our coming back in the millennial reign of Christ. We must guard against focusing too much on the glory of this 1000-year period and not be prepared for the time of trouble that will come.

The analogy of fishermen and hunters was a message that they could not hide from the coming judgment any more than they could hide their sins from the eyes of God.

19-21 The Jews would learn to not go after idols anymore and eventually all men -- even the Gentiles -- would come to a realization that statues and totems made by the hands of men have no power to save. We have become sophisticated enough to not bow down to a statue; however, we are not wise enough to realize that false philosophies have no power to save.

17:1-2 Repeated sins become a way of life. They cause "ruts" in our psyche and we easily slip back into these paths. By introducing pagan ways to our children we imprint them with error and the eradication of such error is extremely difficult.

3-4 Walking in the ruts of a sinful lifestyle has natural consequences of zero progress and eventual loss. In addition, we incur the judgment of God that increases our loss as a means to get our attention so we might repent and return to Him. In the case of the Jews, it meant severe losses and enslavement. Many find themselves enslaved to habits and relationships as a result of rejecting God's ways.

5-8 God provides us with choices of either curses or blessings. He has clearly defined the cause and effect relationships and still calls us today to choose between the two alternatives of blessings or curses..

9-11 The basic problem of mankind is his sinful nature. He endorses practices and philosophies that are contrary to what God intends for us. Some birds lay their eggs in the nests of other species. When these foreign eggs are hatched the hatchlings destroy the eggs of the unsuspecting "foster" parents. In the same way, sinful practices hatch into "things" that crowd out and destroy the right (Godly) things in our lives.

The pleasures of sin of our younger days, takes its toll in suffering later on in our lives. We see this with such things as smoking (heart disease, lung disease) and drinking alcohol. It is even more devastating when one considers such things as adultery, pornography, abortion, and homosexuality.

12-13 Jehovah is the high and glorious eternal authority, our holy place, and foundation of all our hope. All other sources fail and if we turn from God and put our trust in the things of the world system (the kosmos), then our only hope is in things that are temporal (things of the earth).

14-15 God alone is capable of true healing (physical) and salvation (spiritual). Consequently, our confidence (praise) must be in Him alone. Though we trust in God for every need and we put our confidence in His word, we do not always see these needs met nor prophecies fulfilled on our schedule. Those who do not trust God may taunt and criticize; however, every word of God **will** come to pass and every need of his children **will** be met.

16 Young's Literal Translation renders verse 16 as "And I hastened not from feeding after Thee, And the desperate day I have not desired, Thou--Thou hast known, The produce of my lips, before Thy face it hath been." We read God's word and it is spiritual nourishment to us. We may read of impending judgment and though we know it is coming, it is not an event we are eager to see happen. In Jeremiah's case the word of God was not something he had read but something he had spoken and written under God's inspiration.

17-18 When we see the judgment of God unfolding and realize the enormous power He has, then we might be terrified unless we remember His love for us and know that He is our shelter in the storm. However, those who stand in opposition to God can find no comfort or shelter in the day of judgment.

19-20 When God gives us a word to share with others, we must be about the business of doing what He says. To reach many people, God sent Jeremiah to the entrances to the city. God's word applies to all. Those of high positions are not exempt from obeying God's commands.

21-27 The observance of the Sabbath Day of rest is a practical demonstration of our trust in and willingness to obey God. From a strictly "moral" viewpoint, the observance of a day of rest every seven days has no obvious

basis. However, this is what God has said He wanted. Therefore, the question is “will we be obedient or not?” We may bring sacrifices and offerings but unless we are obedient, then all these acts do not matter. If we continue commerce as usual (thus saying that commerce is more important than God), then God will destroy the commerce.

18:1-6 God can speak His message to us through many means. One consistent message is that God is Sovereign. He creates us for a purpose and the features He gives us are there for a reason. When we are unhappy with the “unchangeables” it is likely the result of our not understanding God’s purpose for our lives and realizing He wants only the best for us.

7-10 However, God is influenced by our response to Him. God will alter His plans for our lives if we make changes. These can be either positive or negative.

11-17 Before God brings His judgment on a nation, He repeatedly warns them of what is being planned. Typically, people will not heed the warning but will continue in the same way, perhaps even getting worse rather than better.

The situation with Judah was unprecedented. They had the best and turned away from that best to something inferior. We see the same thing in our nation. Because of our Christian heritage and the fact that in our laws we attempted to recognize and honor God, we prospered more than any nation in history. In our ease and apathy, we have turned away from the very Source of success to our own schemes and devices. If we do not repent and return to God, then we will suffer the same fate as Judah.

18-20 Because Jeremiah proclaimed a message contrary to the establishment’s priest and prophets he was considered a nuisance that should be eliminated. People have not changed, we are still trying to silence the messenger if the message is not optimistic so as to cause us to “feel good” about ourselves.

21-23 Jeremiah was to the point of affirming God in His plan to overthrow the nation. He had become disillusioned with them. In our pity for people we find that applying “tough love” is very difficult. Sometimes, God allows those who must be disciplined to hurt us enough so that we will stop “enabling” them to continue in their road to destruction.

19:1-6 Those who walk with the Lord are called upon to confront the leaders regarding the conduct of the nation. When Jesus taught he used parables to dramatize His messages and the Old Testament prophets used drama to indelibly impress their message in the mind of others. The elders and the priests would long remember the sound and sight of the clay jar being shattered. God, in His mercy, repeats his warnings of judgment before it arrives. The Lord had Jeremiah take the leaders to “scene of the crime.” In the Valley of Ben Hinnom the people had sacrificed to Molech and Baal and had burned their children in the place called Topheth (fire stove).

Jeremiah told them that the Valley would have its name changed to the Valley of Slaughter. In the New Testament times it was known as Gehenna which is translated “hell” in the King James Version. After the exile it was the place where the refuse of the city was dumped -- an awful place. This is what happens to a place of beauty that is misused for sin. Sin can turn a heaven into a hell.

7-9 At the place where the people sacrificed to false gods, the God of heaven would bring destruction upon them at the hand of their enemies. Things would be so bad before the fall of the city that people would turn to cannibalism.

10-13 The destruction of Jerusalem would be as that of a clay jar being broken. It would be so great that it could not be repaired. There they sacrificed animals and their children to false gods and there they would die -- so many would die that there would not be room enough to bury them all. They burned their children in the fire of Topheth and burned incense on their roof tops. Therefore, Jerusalem would become like Topheth (a fire stove).

14-15 After the leaders were given the message of God’s impending judgment, then the people needed to be told also. We cannot depend on the leaders to share this type information with those they lead. People need to know that every word of God will come to pass.

20:1-2 The prophets of God will suffer persecution and intimidation because the enemies of God realize that the truth must be silenced or discredited if they are to have any “success.” We see a concerted effort in our society to eliminate any reference to God from public life. Truth also threatens the lies of the devil.

3-6 Apparently, Pashhur was “law abiding” in that he was not willing to kill Jeremiah in order to silence him. In our day we see those who want to silence the truth working within the system to pass new laws or have the courts modify existing laws in an effort for them to “be legal” in their wickedness.

Intimidation, threats and bodily harm will not stop God’s messengers nor His message. Jeremiah warned the priest that before very long he would have an inappropriate name. His name (Pashhur) signified “release” or “liberty.” However, when the judgement of God came upon him and his family, he would have been more



appropriately named Magormissabib or “fear all around.” The prescribed judgment was already set in place for the priest, his family and his friends.

7-9 (Note: The word translated *deceived* is better rendered as *persuaded* or *convinced* in this context.) God had called Jeremiah and had used strong arguments to convince him to be obedient to the calling. Jeremiah delivered the messages God gave to him and the result was ridicule and insults. The same thing is happening today. Those who proclaim the word of God are the object of mocking and ridicule by many. However, we must be as Jeremiah was in that he was not able to refrain from speaking the burning message God put on his heart.

10-13 The false prophets as represented by Pashur who was renamed by Jeremiah as "Magormissabib" (meaning “terror on every side”) encouraged those who knew Jeremiah to report anything they knew about him that might be negative. We see that sort of behavior being used today in the religious and political arenas. One group tries to discredit another by “digging up some dirt” on the opposition. We need to be as Jeremiah who was confident that God would protect him through all such attacks and will take vengeance on those who persecuted those whom God has called.

14-18 (Note: this passage may not be in chronological order relative to the previous verses that signaled such confidence in God.) Jeremiah was sure that God had called him and yet he was extremely discouraged at times. It is likely that no one encouraged him in what he was doing. We may experience such times of being down; however, we must not remain there or our ministry will be stifled. In the Psalms, David asked “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” The answer was “Hope thou in God.”

21:1-2 [Note: Verses 1-10 belong to a later time than the message given in verses 11-14.] After proclaiming the message of God during the times of four different kings (Josiah, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah) with the only result being persecution and ridicule, finally during the latter years of Zedekiah, Jeremiah is recognized as a prophet. The Babylonians were literally at the gate. The false prophets were proven to be false and the truth of what Jeremiah proclaimed had come to pass. Now the leaders who refused to repent and be obedient to God hoped for a miracle. Is this not what we do today? We disregard what God has said and when we get into the problems He promised, then we hope for a miracle to deliver us. God will send miracles when we are obedient to Him and problems come in spite of our obedience.

3-7 No miraculous delivery is available when the problems we have are the result of chastisement from the hand of God. The troubles will run their course.

8-10 If we can recognize such problems as God’s judgment and submit ourselves to that judgment rather than fight against it, then we have chosen the way of life rather than the way of death. This does not stop the judgment and the loss; however, we escape with our life.

11-14 If this passage were in proper chronological order relative to the message to Zedekiah, then it would be as if God were saying “I told you so.” The remedy to prevent the judgment that arrived in the time Zedekiah was prescribed to them and this same remedy is required in every time and in every nation. The priority in a society must be for justice to prevail for everyone. We have turned our system into a competitive “game” of winning and losing. Our judicial system is not about justice nor truth but about which lawyer can “win.”

We place our confidence in the strength of our nation’s military, the advanced nature of our technology, the skill of our medical people, the shrewdness of our financial experts, and our own basic intelligence. We take refuge in all these capabilities and think we are safe. However, unless we repent and turn from our wicked ways, this nation shall also perish. We cannot quench the fire that God sets.

22:1-5 As God’s prophets (those to whom the word of the Lord has come), we must speak to those in high places or authority and advise them of the way of the Lord. Obedience to God’s commands leads to prosperity and disobedience leads to ruin. (See comments in verses 15-16 regarding how success is defined.)

6-9 The palace of the king was a place of beauty and very majestic (like Gilead and Lebanon), yet it would be destroyed if they continued to ignore God and push Him out of the life of the nation.

10-12 The kings of Judah would either be killed or taken into captivity. Josiah (the last of the good kings of Judah) had been killed and many mourned his death. Jeremiah may have been saying that perhaps it was better that Josiah died rather than being carried away captive by the Babylonians. Therefore, the people could stop lamenting the death of Josiah and start to mourn for those who would be taken to Babylon.

13-14 The spirit of materialism drives people to obtain more and more things that are of less and less usefulness (true value). It briefly satisfies our carnally motivated pride and then begs for more things. It impresses us but does not impress God.

15-16 Having a larger house, the latest style in clothing, a brand new car, belonging to the right clubs, and having the right hobbies does not make us a better person or truly successful in life. Those who are successful (and

are judged by God as such) are those who do justly, love mercy (help the poor and needy) and humbly walk with God.

17-19 No one mourns the loss of a tyrant or a person who always was looking out for himself. In this sense, the historical perspective agrees with God's judgment on such people.

20-23 Externally, we must carefully choose those with whom we make alliances. Judah, who was supposed to be God's people, had allied herself with the pagan nations and was trusting in these relationship for security. The relationship was wrong in itself and the fact that it was an object of trust made it doubly wrong.

Internally, we must be carefully choose those to whom we listen as adviser. If we allow godless men to be our shepherds, then their advice will harm rather than help.

24-28 Regardless of our potential, if we are not obedient to God, then we will be cast away and lose all we have and all we could have had. The consequences affects us and our descendants to all generations.

29-30 Nations or individuals who abandon God should serve as warnings to others of the consequences of such action. Sadly, few learn from the mistakes of others or even from their own mistakes.

23:1-2 The influence of the church on our nation has greatly declined in the past several decades. This decline can be correlated with the rise of liberal theologies in our seminaries where pastors are being trained. Instead of the church being viewed as place where people are gathered in, it has become a place from which people leave. The judgment of God came upon the unfaithful priest and prophets of Jeremiah's day and the religious leaders of the Jews in the time Christ. It will happen again in our time to those who have scattered and driven people away from Jesus because of their watered-down message and unbelief proclaimed from the pulpits of our churches.

3-4 When the leaders of a nation and/or the church fail to provide proper leadership, people will be dispersed. If that nation is still part of the plan and purposes of God, then He will sovereignly intervene to preserve some of them to carry out his will. When those exiled Jews who chose to return came back from Babylon, God raised up leaders such as Ezra, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah.

5-6 This prophecy likely refers to the thousand-year reign of Christ. However, it could refer to the First Advent of Christ in which the salvation of Judah and Israel was offered to the people. This time of salvation would have been the outcome of the "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9 if the Jews had fulfilled God's requirements to put an end to sin and transgression, etc.

7-8 We tend to identify and label people by some significant act or characteristic. Until the time of Jeremiah, the most significant thing God had done in the lives of the Israelites was to bring them out of Egypt. After the Babylonian captivity, the deliverance and return to their homeland would become the significant act to succeeding generations. In the New Testament, God is referred to as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. For us, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the most significant act by which we identify God.

9-15 When the spiritual leadership of a nation refuses to follow God's way, the hope for the people of that nation is greatly diminished. The judgment of God on these unrighteous leaders will be severe. Part of that judgment is that they lose whatever discernment they had and then they indiscriminately embrace all manner of false philosophies (eat bitter food and drink poisoned water). We see this among many of the modern liberal theologians who are endorsing Eastern religions and New Age philosophies.

16-18 Churches have many proclaiming a "feel-good philosophy" from the pulpits. Our self-esteem is high and our performance (bearing fruit) is low. The reality of the wrath of God is downplayed and only the forgiveness of God is mentioned. Many preach their messages from the pages of the Reader's Digest rather than the Bible.

19-20 For those who will observe what is happening now and compare with the actions of God in the past, they understand what is coming regardless of the soothing words spoken by the false prophets.

21-22 It used to be that we put much emphasis on men being called into the ministry. Now many see it only as a vocation -- something they have chosen to do. Since they provided their own "call" they continue in their own ways and provide their own council.

23 Many Christians will do things when they are away from home (on vacation, business trips, etc.) they would not dare do at home. Such duplicitous behavior is a result of fearing men more than fearing God. There is no place you can go to escape the eye of the Lord.

25-28 Those who stand in the pulpits or Sunday School classes of our churches and proclaim the imaginations of the mind of man are prophesying lies in God's name. To do so is the same as idol worship since it makes the people forget God. If people want to discuss what they dreamed up with each other, that is OK; but don't bring false philosophies into the church so as to attempt to give credibility to these philosophies. These have nothing to do with the word of God.

29 The word of God is powerful. If the message from the pulpit (or Sunday School class) doesn't have any fire and lack the power to break our stubborn wills, then it is likely not the word of God.

30-32 False prophets plagiarized the false philosophies of other false prophets. The ideas of liberal Christian writers often are heard in the sermonettes coming from our churches pulpits. God's prophets should have only one Source and that is the Lord. The other messages have no spiritual nourishment.

33-36 The contemporaries of Jeremiah would taunt him with questions of "What is the burden or oracle of the Lord?" This was an attempt to ridicule the messages he spoke from God. God did not appreciate the lack of respect for His word. He promised punishment on any who inquired of Jeremiah using such words. If they really wanted to know then they needed to ask using different words.

24:1-3 There were several waves of attacks on Jerusalem and capture of people who were taken to Babylon. The group mentioned here were those of capability and skill who were put to work in Babylon to strengthen that kingdom. How many of our young are being captured by the enemy and their capability and skill is used to strengthen the kingdom of this world rather the kingdom of our God?

4-7 The chastisement of Judah was to separate the good from the bad and to strengthen the good so they would be able to fulfill the call God had upon the nation of Israel to be His people and to bring His message of salvation to all the world. (History shows they did not accomplish this but repeated the errors of the past.)

25:1-3 When God calls a person to a task, it may take a lifetime to carry out the mission. Jeremiah had already spent 23 years proclaiming God's message and the leaders nor the people were listening. The mind set of most Christians is that if we don't see immediate results (in several months), then we become discouraged and quit.

4-7 Jeremiah was not the only messenger from God who proclaimed the same warning to Judah. Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and others had messages that also were ignored. God's message was not difficult to understand and the obedience of it was not difficult to do. The consequences of the two alternate courses of action were clearly defined. They had no excuse.

8-11 The judgment of God against iniquity was not limited to Judah. Their neighbors also practiced iniquity and they would be punished along with Judah. Jeremiah did not leave any doubt regarding who was in control of the situation. God had raised up Nebuchadnezzar and God had decided on the length of time for the exile.

12-14 Babylon had great success in its conquest of the surrounding nations. The people of Babylon did not realize God had empowered them as an instrument to bring punishment upon Judah. In their pride, they did what they wanted to do and showed no compassion on those they conquered. We, as ambassadors for Christ, must realize God has empowered us for a purpose. We must operate as He would, always showing forth His character.

15-16 The means by which God brings His judgments upon nations can be wars among themselves. The same attitudes that caused them to do evil will work to cause them to destroy each other.

17-26 In a vision, Jeremiah symbolically visited each nation to have them drink the wine of God's wrath. The judgment would come to pass on the nations of that part of the world.

27-29 The wine of the wrath of God would be so stunning that the people would be stupefied and sickened similarly to a person getting drunk. Proverbs 31:6 says "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts." We see a rise in drug and alcohol usage throughout the world (but especially in our country). This may be preparation to dull the senses of the masses for the judgment that is about to come upon the earth.

30-33 These words of Jeremiah parallel the description given by John in the Revelation regarding the judgment of God during the end time. The world seems to be paralleling the actions of the nations in the time of Jeremiah. However, we now are able to carry it out to greater excess. We should view these events of 2600 years ago and look to learn from their example. *Pr 21:11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.*

34-38 If the world but knew what was coming upon it, there would be less celebration and more mourning. The party is over and the time of grief has already begun. The consequences of our abandoning God is evident everywhere. One of the means that God has used to chastise and punish people and nations is to simply give them over to their own lusts and let the destructive consequences run their course.

26:1-6 God sent Jeremiah to the place where His people were suppose to worship Him. These who came to worship should have been receptive to God's message. Many times we find just the opposite to be true. Those most closely involved in religion are the most difficult to reach. Jesus also went to the temple and declared God's message and pronounced a similar message of doom on the temple and the city.

7-9 The religious leaders and the people reacted to Jeremiah in the same way the people did to Jesus. They deemed that He must die. We have been warned that if we live godly lives in Christ that we too will suffer persecution.

10-11 The civil authorities and the religious leader came together on matters of significance. Such a system does not always ensure that God's ways will be followed. The religious leaders were the accusers of the prophet of God. This similar to the trial of Jesus.

12-15 Jeremiah's defense was simple: "I am doing what the Lord sent me to do." This should be our reason for anything with which we are involved. If we are doing God's will, then we have great boldness and confidence in what we do and say. Jeremiah did not try to soften the message when his life was threatened.

16-19 The "checks and balances" of the civil and religious arms of the government worked in this case. Speaking in the name of the Lord was not a crime unless what was prophesied failed to come to pass. Jeremiah's defenders relied on precedence of past kings and prophets such as Hezekiah and Micah. However, since the leaders repented and the Lord relented there was no way to prove where Micah was right or not. How can you prove what might have happened.

20-24 Jeremiah's accusers also relied on precedence of a more recent event in which a prophet was killed by the king for prophesying the same thing Jeremiah did. The argument was carried that day by a person of great influence (Ahikam) who had served king Josiah. Those who have gained great respect of the people because of their positions in life have great responsibility to use that influence in the right way.

27:1-7 [The KJV says Jehoiakim rather than Zedekiah which was 11 years prior to Zedekiah's reign. One possible explanation (aside from a manuscript error) is that the word came to him 11 years before he sent envoys to the neighboring kings.] Zedekiah was the last king of Judah and the power of Nebuchadnezzar was already well established. However, the kings of the region were rebelling by refusing to send tribute to Babylon. Some had already been carried away into captivity by the time Zedekiah ascended to the throne.

8-11 Jeremiah was in a difficult situation. National pride was demanding independence and "no taxation." Many religious leaders were encouraging the government to rebel. The dominion of Babylon was a judgment of God against the nations of that region and submission to that judgment would be the best evidence the people had learn the lessons the chastisements were supposed to teach.

12-15 Because of our tendency to drift away from God and God's commitment to "finish in us what He has begun," we may find ourselves in difficulties and in oppressive situations. We need discernment or a clear word from God to know what our response should be. Unless we are in close communication with God through prayer and Bible study and fellowship with other believers, then we may not have a clue as to what is happening to us. When trouble comes we must seek council with those who are true prophets of God and not those who give the council of man.

16-18 In earlier conquests, the Babylonians carried away many articles from the temple of God in addition to the skilled craftsmen of the nation. When things are going wrong in our lives, then we should not expect a turn-around unless we make some change in the direction we are going. Instead, we should expect more of the same. The "feel good about yourself" counselors would have us think that we are "just going through a cycle and things will get better."

19-22 Once the judgment of God starts, then it is "like letting out water" (Prov 17:14); it must run its course. Restoration would not occur until the people had been removed from the land for seventy years. Most Christians do not live their lives with a consciousness that God is in control and that He causes all things to work together in such a way as to transform us into the image of His Son. When calamities come upon us, it is for the purpose of causing change. Planned changes seldom work and it is in the times of difficulties or crises that real progress is made. Our focus when troubles come is to get away from the trouble rather than attempting to understand what is doing in our lives to make us more like Jesus.

28:1-4 We need to be on guard lest we be deceived. Not everyone who claims to speak for God has been given a message from God. Hananiah had an official office of prophet; however, such official recognition means nothing unless the message is from the Lord. He was guilty of telling the people what they wanted to hear. There was no basis for his conclusions.

5-6 Jeremiah's response was gracious. There are many false prophecies around who are causing the church to be unprepared for the coming persecution. We can only say, as Jeremiah did, "I hope you are right."

7-9 There is little value in arguing about what cannot be proven until it happens. The preponderance of past prophecies supported what Jeremiah said; however, the matter is not settled until prophecies are fulfilled.

10-11 Prophets dramatized the messages they wanted to communicate to the people. Jeremiah put on a yoke when he spoke his message to the people. Hananiah also employed the dramatic when he broke the yoke Jeremiah was wearing. Notice that Jeremiah did not engage in a debate with the false prophet. Such arguing does not change strongly held opinions.

12-14 Hananiah likely thought he had "won the argument" with Jeremiah when he had broken the yoke Jeremiah

was wearing. However, when we argue with God's word it is not the prophet with whom we are arguing but with God Himself. In the short term, we may think that we have prevailed in our rationalization of things we do that are contrary to God's will; but God always has the last word. Since the false prophets had rejected the initial wooden yoke, God promised an even harsher punishment with an iron yoke. We can save ourselves much grief if we will submit our wills to God's will early in the correction process.

15-17 We are very uncomfortable with the idea that God will bring judgments on people. To suggest that a person had died (will die) because he or she was misleading people would be unacceptable to the typical church attender. We have had so much teaching about the kind and benevolent Father God and the meek and mild Jesus that we have neglect to realize that He is Judge of all the earth.

29:1-4 Though the judgment of God had come upon the people of Judah and many had been carried away as captives to Babylon, God had not abandoned them. They were still significant participants in His plan of salvation. God used Jeremiah to send a messages to the captives. I would think that all the Jews in Babylon would have been eager to hear or read the message Jeremiah sent. Many times God's prophets are ignored as long as people have any other semblance of hope. However, when we are at the end of our resources, then we listen to what God wanted to tell us initially.

5-7 Sometimes we find ourselves in situations not of our own choosing. In may be because our job takes us to a new place or we have limitations imposed on us by infirmity or age. Our response to these "less than ideal" circumstances can be that we become bitter and withdraw into our own shell of pity or we can make the best of what ever situation we are in. God advised the captives to make the most of what they had.

8-11 The captives were so anxious for this terrible nightmare to be over. They talked about it all the time. Some of the false prophets were giving false hope that they would return to Jerusalem in a couple of years. Since returning home was the constant topic of conversation, they probably did dream about it happening. It would happen but seventy years would pass before it occurred. If we know that God wants what is good for us and that He has a plan to make it happen, then we can enter into His rest and leave behind our anxiety.

12-14 After the time of judgment had run its course, the promise of restoration would take effect and the relationship with God would be normalized. This normalized relationship requires us to prioritize our lives so that God is first and foremost in all we think, say and do. If we call upon, come to, pray, and seek with all our hearts (number one priority), then we will find Him. The First Commandment is to have no other gods before the Lord.

15-19 People are usually eager to hear messages that agree with what they already believe. Consequently, the people of Judah ignored the words of God's true prophets and listened instead to the false prophets. They continued to do so even while in captivity.

20-23 The false prophets in Babylon were evidence of the fact that character counts. They were not people of good integrity and they adjusted their message to justify themselves and their lifestyle and to express their hopes and visions rather than what God wanted and was going to do.

24-29 Those in entrenched and established positions usually try to protect what they have and do so at the expense of truth. The false prophets tried to stop anyone else from prophesying by passing laws. Jeremiah's letter to the captives triggered a reprimand for one of the priest left in Jerusalem since he (Zephaniah) had not tried to stop Jeremiah.

30-32 Jeremiah was not intimidated by the threats. He could already see that the prophecies God had given through him were coming to pass and he was confident God was in control.

30:1-3 God had called Israel for a purpose and He would not let them go until that purpose had been fulfilled. For us, we have this promise: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6).

4-10 The punishments that God sends on His people to chastise them can be terrible at the time. We must maintain our trust and faith in Him knowing that He desires what is best for us. His chastisement is to restore us to Himself.

11 There is a difference in the way God treats His chosen people and the way He treats the those in the world system.

12-15 When people suffer the consequences of sin from which there are no earthly remedies, then those with whom they indulges in sin will abandon them. Our response to the consequences of sinning is typically to bemoan the misery and question why "this terrible thing" is happening to us.

16 If God's judgment and chastisement comes upon us from the hand of the ungodly, then they must answer for their excesses.

17-22 While the world can offer no hope for the afflictions God imposes, He can heal and restore. When that happens, then our mourning turns into joy. The promises to the Jews would find fulfillment in the rebuilding of

Jerusalem and the leadership of Zurubbabal. God gave them another chance and yet they still continued to reject God's best for them.

23-24 Eventually, the Jews came under the wrath of the Lord since they continued to rebel and rejected Him when He came in the person of Jesus.

31:1-2 This promise could apply to spiritual Israel -- all who have the faith of Abraham. The passage traces the history of ancient physical Israel to which all of God's people (in their personal spiritual journey) can relate as they escaped from Egypt, wandered in the wilderness and entered into God's rest in the Promised Land.

3-6 God's everlasting love was never more clearly revealed than in His sending His Son to die in our place. He is the foundation upon which God's people will be rebuilt. The Gospel message is a message of joy (good news) and will lead to vineyards (churches - the Body of Christ - I am the vine) planted beyond Jerusalem (Samaria and Ephraim). The day in which people come up to Zion to the Lord is likely the millennial reign of Christ.

7-9 Jacob is another name for Israel. Many believe this is in reference to the restoration of physical Israel but some would apply this to all God's people, those to whom He is their Father. In the millennial kingdom, Israel (spiritual Israel) will be the chief nation.

10-14 This message is to "the nations" or the Gentiles. Hence it may be a reference to salvation for all who are enslaved to sin. The grain (wheat) can be related to the "Bread of Life." The wine to the "Atoning Blood of Christ." The oil to the "Holy Spirit" by which we are anointed. The young of the flocks and herds could be those added to the church via the new birth.

15-17 It seems that sacrifice is a prerequisite to success. Before the Israelites could enter the Promised Land the old generation had to die. To be restored to proper relationship with God the people of Judah had to go into captivity and most died there. Because we live in fallen world, the coming of the Christ Child resulted in the death of many children at the hand Herod. To secure our salvation, the very Son of God had to die. Before we can participate in His salvation we must die to self. We can not concentrate on the loss of the sacrifice but should focus on the gain of the new day and new life.

18-20 Confession of sin and repentance is an absolute necessity for being restored to our proper relationship with God. Many times we do not realize our need to repent until the consequences of sin (chastisement and discipline) gets our attention.

21-26 When we wander away from God, we need to know the path back to Him. This truth is symbolized in the setting up of markers along the road we travel. We have available to us the word of God which clearly defines the way.

The restoration of the Jews to their homeland was to culminate in the coming of the Messiah. He would be born of a virgin (a woman will surround a man).

27-28 God had set Jeremiah as a prophet over the nations to root out, to pull down, to throw down, to build and to plant (Jer 1:10). This prophecy addresses the last two stages of building and planting. Such messages reassure us that God is aware of what is happening to us and has not abandoned us.

29-30 Though God would deal with the Jews as a nation, He was also transitioning them to the concept of individual responsibility that would prepare them for the Gospel message in which God saves us one by one. Each person must be born again of the Spirit of God to be able to enter the Kingdom of God. Membership in a family or being a citizen of a Christian nation does not justify us before God.

31-32 At the end of "those days" (v. 29), Jesus met with His disciples in a upper room and declared, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you." In Hebrew 8:7-8 we are told that God found fault with the Old Covenant and with the people. Therefore, the New Covenant must address the problem of changing people.

33-34 God's laws become inner principles enabling His people to delight in doing His will, God and His people will have intimate fellowship, sinful ignorance of God will be removed forever, and forgiveness of sins will be an everlasting reality. Jesus is the Mediator of this better covenant and the Holy Spirit is the Agent through Whom it is worked out in our lives. As we allow Jesus to be Lord of our lives, we find the promise Jesus made to "come abide with us" is a present reality.

35-36 Throughout all the historical chastisements of the Hebrews, they have maintained their distinctiveness as Israelites. However, this promise could also apply to spiritual Israel.

37 The terrible calamity of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was preceded by many Jews accepting God's New Covenant. We tend to forget that the early church was made up of descendant of physical Israel.

38-40 This passage cannot refer to the city rebuilt after the exile, but must refer to the church of Christ. The extent of the city gives us some insight. *Hananel* means "God has graciously given." The church is a result of and is dependent on the grace of God. It extends to the Corner Gate, the Corner being the chief or main part. Jesus is the only way (gate) into this city (church) and He is the Corner. The line stretches to include those of Gareb (the abiding place of lepers) and Goath (faithfulness). God includes those who are counted as refuse by the world (the valley where

dead bodies and ashes are thrown) and those whose lives have been less than pure (Kidron - turbid).

A similar description of the city boundaries and promise to never be destroyed is given in Zech 14:10-11; however, v 9 (of this same passage) declares it shall be at a time when the Lord is king over all the earth. Therefore, the accomplishment will see its fulfillment during the millennial reign of Christ.

32:1-5 At this time, the army of Babylon had surrounded the city for almost a year. Yet, in spite of the evidence that Jeremiah's prophecies were true, the king had imprisoned him. This imprisonment was in the royal palace and was likely an attempt to stop Jeremiah's message from reaching the common people. None are so blind as those who will not see. Zedekiah refused to see that the words of the prophet were surely coming true. However, he would not stop his rebellion against the word of God and continued on in doing what he wanted to do. How similar this is to what is happening in our world today.

6-10 God's message through Jeremiah had two components: the first was the judgment and the second was the restoration of Israel. The transfer of ownership of land was a means God used to send an additional message of hope to the people that the restoration would happen. God's message will not be silenced. If His prophet is not allowed to "speak," then God will speak through circumstances and events in the normal course of life.

11-15 The legal transactions and the record keeping required many people to know what was happening. In this way, many knew that Jeremiah was buying a parcel of land in a time when the enemy was literally at the city gate. This was a powerful testimony that a time of restoration was coming. We should consider the impact of what we do relative to the alignment of the message it sends with the message we speak to others. Consider, for example, a particular Christian who was active in protesting against abortion of unborn babies. When his wife had a miscarriage early in her pregnancy he insisted on a funeral, casket, and burial in a cemetery rather than just disposing of the "fetus" as the hospital personnel wanted to do.

16-19 The writings of Jeremiah do not mention that God told him expressly to buy the parcel of land. However, the implication was there and Jeremiah was, first of all, obedient. After he obeyed, then he prayed about what had been done. His prayer started with praise to God and recognition of His power and knowledge.

20-23 In his prayer, Jeremiah helped his own faith by reminding himself of God's faithfulness and love in the past to His people and to all mankind. Jeremiah also acknowledged the sinfulness of the people and the reason for God's judgment. When we have questions about what God is doing in our lives, we can find help in the word of God by reviewing what God has done in the past. Also, we can be assured that God's judgment will come upon all who ignore His commandments and laws.

24 The judgments God sends upon us cannot have the impact God desires unless we acknowledge that He is the Source of the judgment. If we attribute problems to "mother nature" or to "luck," then we are not likely to turn to God in repentance for the sin that brought on the judgment.

25 Jeremiah did not understand why God wanted him to buy the parcel of land. Yet, Jeremiah was obedient to what God wanted him to do. Often God tells us to do something for which we don't understand the reason. Our relationship with God should be such that we recognize His voice and that we obey first and then ask for an explanation.

26-27 Jeremiah had already asserted nothing was too difficult for the Lord. He then had questions regarding the purpose of buying a parcel of land when the Babylonians were about to conquer the city. The Lord's question was possibly a mild rebuke to Jeremiah. We do as Jeremiah when we say we trust God completely and then do not step out in faith based on His word to us.

28-29 God is able to restore though the coming judgment would be a devastating destruction on the city. We must not limit God by thinking that situations are hopeless. As the Psalmist wrote: "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

30-33 The general indictment against Israel and Judah: Rebellion against God starts early in life and can permeate an entire culture. We grieve God when we take the talents and resources He gives us and use them in activities contrary to His character. We further provoke God when we will not listen nor respond to His warnings and chastisements.

34-35 The specific deeds of the people of Judah were characteristic of their culture and the time in which they lived. We are not likely to physically bow down to statues but we can easily slip into trusting things we can see and touch rather than trusting the Invisible God. We can get caught up in activities that take us away from doing God's will regarding bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and, consequently, sacrifice their future to things we allow to come between us and God.

36-37 For many years the people and their leaders denied the truth of the prophecy of judgment that was to come upon Jerusalem. They were relying on false hope. Now that the destruction was underway and many things of the prophecy had already happened, they were coming around to acceptance of the reality of judgment. This led to despair

in that they had no hope because they could see no remedy for the situation. When we reach the end of our resources, then God reminds us that He has limitless resources and He is able to restore what was lost.

38-42 The general promise of restoration is presented in most translations as a future event (“they will .., I will..”). *Young’s Literal Translation* renders these promises as an accomplished fact (“they have.., I have..”). Because God is eternal, He calls things that are yet to be as already accomplished. We need that kind of faith in our daily walk. We should be so confident in the promises of God that we rely on them as accomplished facts.

God points us to His faithfulness in the past as a means by which we can build our trust regarding that which is yet to come.

43-44 The purchase of the parcel of land by Jeremiah was a foreshadowing of the time when people would buy fields, build houses and plant crops.

33:1-3 God rarely speaks only once. He confirms His word with additional messages to us. He invites us to come to Him to learn the mysteries of life.

4-5 The message God spoke through Jeremiah has not changed even for us today. If we continue in wickedness, then God will hide his face from us.

6-9 God’s judgment on His people is redemptive. He loves us and want to accomplish good in and through us.

10-13 We look around us and see that wickedness abounds and evil is growing in influence everywhere. People have abandoned God and morality. Homosexuality, abortion, pornography, drug abuse, and senseless murders make us think that we are headed into a desolate wasteland. Yet God would point to a day when Christ will reign and we will reign with Him.

14-16 We find the fulfillment of this promise in Christ and His church. We are identified with the Lord and have been made to be the “righteousness of God” in Him.

17-18 This passage has to apply to Christ and the church as the true spiritual Israel. We are kings and priests unto God and our High Priest continually presents Himself in the presence of God the Father ever making intercession for us.

19-22 God’s promises are sure. This passage is a certain confirmation that the promises are to spiritual Israel (the church) and not to physical Israel since there is no one on that throne. The descendants of David and those who minister before God are the same.

We see confirmation of countless descendants in John’s vision of events in heaven. [Re 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; ]

23-26 The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the faithful who have come to Jesus (God the Son) for cleansing of their sin and are surrendered to the will of God being led by His Spirit Who dwells in us. God will not reject us -- He Who has begun a good work in you will complete it unto the day of salvation.

Abraham is the father of the faithful (represents the work of God the Father). Isaac is the son of promise and we see him as type of Christ (God the Son). The ministry of the Holy Spirit in us is like the transformation of Jacob as he wrestled with God and finally became dependent upon God rather than relying on his own strength.

34:1-3 It was likely Jeremiah was put into prison for this message to the king. Neither Jeremiah nor Zedekiah knew the extent or conditions of this prophecy. Zedekiah did not choose to submit himself to the meaning of the message from God and attempted to escape. We cannot know if the situation would have been better for the inhabitants of Judah or for Zedekiah if he had surrendered to the Babylonians. Zedekiah did indeed see Nebuchadnezzar but it was the last thing he saw.

[Jer 52:11 Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.]

4-5 The intent of the apparent mercy to be shown to Zedekiah was to encourage him to surrender. But since he rebelled against the word of God, that which was intended for mercy became misery instead.

Though he died peacefully, he was blind and in prison. The people did mourn his passing with the honor reserved for kings.

6-7 Jeremiah was faithful in delivering God’s message even when it appeared inappropriate in light of the circumstances of the time. He did not attempt to reason whether to speak the message from God or not or to look for a better time, but spoke as God commanded him. We need such holy boldness in our day.

8-11 For years the Israelites ignored God’s laws and now that the enemy is knocking down the walls, they decide to be obedient. This decision could be classified as a “foxhole conversion.” The problem with such decisions is that the results are short-lived. People forget their vows when the crisis appears to be over.



12-16 God is gracious to inform us of what He requires. His laws and commandments are not hidden from us. When we fail to follow His word, then judgment comes. If such judgments are to be effective, then we must know the reason for the judgments. Proclamation of this type is the job of God's prophets. The people of Judah and Jerusalem had made a mockery of the situation by going through a solemn oath ceremony and then later violating that oath.

17-19 The judgment for those who reneged on their decision to free the slaves was severe. In their solemn oath ceremony they agreed and dramatized their commitment by passing between parts of a calf that had been cut up. They in effect said that what happened to that calf should happen to them if they did not carry out what they had committed to do.

20-22 We do not want to believe that God administers judgment. When seemingly "bad" things happen, we want to blame it on the devil. Such things might be the judgment of God.

The Babylonian army had withdrawn from Jerusalem for a while (to fight the Egyptians) and the people of Jerusalem thought the crisis was over. This was likely why they reneged on their promise to free the slaves.

35:1-4 The time of this event was early in the conquest of the land by the Babylonians. God used this encounter with the Recabites to dramatize His message of the unfaithfulness of Judah.

5-10 The Recabites were faithful to the commands of their forefathers and would not be tempted to do anything contrary to those commands.

11 They had moved into the city for protection from the invading armies but had not abandoned their commitment to be nomads.

12-16 If one group of people can obey and be faithful, then another group can do the same. God used the example of the Recabites to show the people of Judah that it is possible to be faithful. The Recabites were faithful to an ancestor -- a mere human being. The Jews refused to be obedient to God.

17 God, through Moses told the people of Israel what would happen to them if they were disobedient. He repeated His warnings through other prophets. Now it was time for the fulfillment of His promise.

18-19 God blesses obedience.

36:1-3 This prophecy came to Jeremiah 18 years before the destruction of Jerusalem. God was willing to change the impending wrath that was to come upon these people if they would but repent.

4-8 The reason Jeremiah could not go to the temple is not known. It could have been the king's order or perhaps some ceremonial reason. Because he could not go and speak the words of the prophecy he resorted to having someone write the words which would be subsequently read to the people. This was a very proper time in which to deliver the prophecy. The people were fasting and humbling themselves before the Lord; though some think this was a fast proclaimed by Jehoiakim, to avert the vengeance threatened by the Chaldean army.

9-15 Jeremiah had begun recording the message in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign and it was read in the ninth month of the fifth year. In a day when we expect instant everything, we can learn from the patience of the prophet.

When the people heard the words of the prophecy, they realized the significance of what God was telling them. The elders were called and they listened.

16-19 To the credit of the elders, they were shocked with fear of the impending judgment of God upon the nation. The prophetic ministry of Jeremiah was known to them and they knew the likely outcome of the reaction of the king. Their advice was for both Baruch and Jeremiah to go into seclusion.

20-21 This prophecy caused a great stir in Jerusalem. A fresh word from God should be big news to any generation. The elders' reaction was such that the king could not ignore what was happening. It would be great if the leaders in our nation would confront our governors and president with what the word of God says about the times in which we live.

22-26 Jehoiakim was arrogant and proud and was typical of earthly kings. He thought he was god. He showed contempt for the word of the Living God. The people of his court were of like mind. We tend to surround ourselves with people who think as we do. This is a grave error in that all we have is one point of view and if that view is in error then we have no alternative course of action to consider.

To the credit of the elders of the city, they spoke in protest to the blasphemous actions of the king. However, this just stirred Jehoiakim to sin even more. He ordered the arrest of the messengers. We cannot change the message by attacking the messengers.

It is difficult to know when to hide and when to stand up to the enemy. We see occasions of both actions in the scripture. It is important to be open to God's leadership in such matters since His timing is always right. In this case, the Lord had hidden Jeremiah and Baruch. In a sense, this kind of protection is provided for each of us as we are obedient to and trust in Him.

27-31 If we want to get into a contest of our wills versus God's will, then we need to remember that God always

wins. We do not change the truth of the message by destroying the paper on which it is written. However, by showing contempt for God, He adds to any punishment.

I think it is rather sad that the person in charge (the king) was such a fool that he prevented the nation from repenting. If some of the elders had been in charge, then they would have listened and encourage the people to repent.

In our nation we have the privilege of choosing our leaders. We tend to ignore the character of the leader and instead choose on the basis of looks and outward charm. We need to learn that the character of the leader will impact the nation.

37:1-2 The Babylonians were rulers of the entire region. They removed and installed kings.

When a leader is corrupt and the people are still willing to follow God we find a progressive deterioration in that the people eventually also become corrupt. When Jehoiakim was king, the people were willing to listen to the words of the prophet but the king was not. Now that Zedekiah has become king, neither he nor the people would listen.

3-5 We must be careful that we do not pray “our will” be done rather than “God’s will” be done. Zedekiah wanted Jeremiah to pray that Pharaoh’s army would defeat the army of the Babylonians. That would deliver Jerusalem from the oppression of the attack and siege on the city. The Babylonian army did leave to go fight the Egyptians but they were going to come back and finish the destruction of Jerusalem.

6-10 Jeremiah was not going to pray for something that was not aligned with the will of God. When we do that, we are not effective in our pray lives. The New Testament teaches that whatsoever we ask according to His will, we will have. This is the secret to effective praying. This is also in agreement with the words of Jesus who told His disciple that they (we) could “bind on earth” whatsoever had “been bound in heaven.” The certainty of the word of God happening is pictured by Jeremiah in the burning down of the city even if it were by a defeated Babylonian army. It was going to happen.

11-12 The king of Judah had turned to the Egyptians for help during the siege of Jerusalem. They had clear instructions from God through Jeremiah that they were to surrender to the Babylonian but they looked for their own solution. Because the army of Pharaoh was approaching, the Babylonian army pulled back from Jerusalem to fight them at a more favorable place.

This pull back allowed people to come and go from Jerusalem and Jeremiah was apparently going to check out the piece of property he had bought.

13-16 Because of Jeremiah’s prophecy and the messages from God that the people should surrender to the Babylonians, many thought he was a traitor. He was viewed with suspicion and was accused of going over to the enemy. Just because the officials suspected Jeremiah had done something wrong, he was arrested, beaten and confined.

17-19 Apparently, when the Babylonian army returned the king was ready to inquire of the true prophet of God. The word of God had not changed and Jeremiah’s message remained faithful to God’s word. We must have this same dedication to the truth even in the face of persecution.

Jeremiah was bold enough to challenge the injustice done to him and to remind the king that all the false prophets who had said that Babylon would not attack had proven to be false.

20-21 Zedekiah was a weak king and did not want to confront those officials with the injustice done to Jeremiah. Therefore, he did not fully release him but did provide better quarters and food as long as the food supply lasted.

38:1-4 It is good to think positively and to be upbeat and optimistic. However, our optimism must be based on truth. We can’t just “will” what will happen. When judgment comes in response to sin, then all the positive thoughts we can muster will not change the truth of what God will bring to pass. Those who ascribe to the power of positive thinking tend to accuse and label anyone who reveals error as being “negative.”

The situation was so critical in Jerusalem that some were willing to kill the one who refused to go along with the “false hope” crowd.

5-6 Zedekiah was weak and easily swayed by others. He did nothing to stop the injustice against Jeremiah. Apparently, those who wanted to stop Jeremiah’s message were not willing to kill him with the “shedding of blood.” They choose to let him die by starvation.

7-13 Not everyone in Jerusalem was ignoble. A foreigner intervened on behalf of Jeremiah. Once again we see the lack of resolve of the king. He was able to agree with just about anyone who came along. Wishy-washy leadership is no leadership at all.

14-16 Zedekiah was afraid of the officials in his government; however, he was curious to know what the prophet had to say. Likely, most of what he had heard regarding Jeremiah’s messages from God were related by someone else. Jeremiah correctly assessed the situation that the king would not follow any counsel he would give him. When we fear men more than we fear God, then we (as Zedekiah) will be trapped into doing what we know to be wrong.

17-18 The officials had accused Jeremiah of causing discouragement among the people and the army. If they had

listened, he was offering true encouragement and a way to reduce the suffering. However, it did not seem logical to them that one could “gain by giving up.”

Jeremiah repeated the only way that the city could be saved. God provided a way to spare many lives and to prevent the destruction of the city.

19-20 Zedekiah suffered a common failing all of us have -- being fearful. He had imagined what might happen and believed his own imaginations more than he believed the word from God. Our failure to trust God completely with our lives prevents us from discovering the very best He has for us.

21-23 Zedekiah should have feared his “friends” who were encouraging him to resist the Babylonian army. The consequences of continuing to reject God’s way described by Jeremiah were worse than Zedekiah had imagined would happen if he surrendered. People will reject surrendering their life to Christ because they fear they will lose their friends or be prevented from having fun or some such imagined concern. At the same time they ignore the sure consequences of an eternity in hell by choosing their own way rather than using the salvation freely offered by a loving Heavenly Father.

24-28 The extent of the fear of Zedekiah is shown by his request to keep the content of the conversation with Jeremiah secret. If he had but offered some positive leadership and declared that he was going to follow the word from God, then the opposition would have melted away. Many times we are bullied by those around us, but when we take a stand, and our resolve is evident, then the opposition will disappear or we find it has no effect on us.

39:1-3 Nebuchadnezzar had placed Zedekiah on the throne of Judah and wanted loyalty from him. Zedekiah rebelled and refused to pay tribute to Babylon. This was an example of the rebellion of the people of Judah against God for hundreds of years. The Babylonians were persistent in their determination to punish Zedekiah. It took 18 months to capture the city and establish their dominance of it.

4-7 Zedekiah ran away to protect himself but as Jeremiah had prophesied, he was not successful. The rebellion was so odious to Nebuchadnezzar that he himself was involved in directing the battle plans and in the punishment of Zedekiah. The fate of Zedekiah was worse than he had imagined would happen to him if he had surrendered. As promised, he was not killed but he likely wished that he had been after he had to watch his sons being killed and then having his eyes put out.

8-10 All the prophecies of God came true. We may scoff at or ignore what God says, but we cannot change the truth or the surety of His word.

11-14 Word of the work of Jeremiah had reached Nebuchadnezzar through those who had listened and heeded the words of the prophet. Some had surrendered to the Babylonians early in the siege. Gedaliah was perhaps one of those who left Jerusalem before it fell.

There was more kindness shown to the prophet of God by the heathen leaders than by the leaders of his own people. It is a sad commentary when the people of God are less charitable than the people of the world.

[We will see later that the release of Jeremiah was from among the captives taken to Ramah. He was taken (in chains) along with all the other captives from Jerusalem. We must have patience to see the salvation of God.]

15-18 Because the proselyte had believed Jeremiah to be a prophet of God and had compassion of his condition when he was in the cistern he was rewarded by God.

“He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.” (Mt 10:41)

40:1 The impact of God’s judgment on a nation will affect even those who are faithful though they are delivered from the full effects of what happens.

2-6 Apparently, the word from the Lord was by the mouth of the commander of the guard. God can speak to us through unbelievers; however, we may not listen because of the medium. Jeremiah recognized that God was bringing about his release from the chains that bound him.

Jeremiah was given complete freedom to choose what he wanted to do. To make it easier on him, he was offered two possibilities. Which of the two was the will of God for Jeremiah? It apparently did not matter. Many situations are such that God’s will for our lives is not affected by the alternatives we may choose.

7-12 The Babylonians built their empire by incorporating the craftsmen and artisans of captive people into their society. The poor (and, by implication, the unskilled) were not taken captive. These who were poor were also those who had little influence on the direction the nation took before judgment came. Consequently, they (apparently) were not held as accountable as the others.

Many who believe that judgment was coming and escaped to other countries came back to live in the land along with the poor who were left by the Babylonians. Although both groups did not have to endure the exile, their lives were profoundly affected by the judgment that came upon the nation. When judgment comes, the innocent

(having no influence) and those who believe still have their lives disrupted.

41:1-3 The motivation behind the action of Ishmael may have been that he believed he should have been appointed governor of the land since he was of royal blood. He aligned himself with the enemies of Israel so that he could gain his own purposes. We must always be on guard that our ambition and pride do not lead us to make deals with the devil for our personal gain.

Those who would vote for legalized liquor and gambling so we can have better roads or schools and lower taxes are dealing with the devil for personal gain they will never realize.

4-7 The pervasiveness of heathen influence on the people is seen in the combination of acceptable and unacceptable religious practices. Shaved beards and torn clothing were acceptable, but cutting one's flesh was forbidden. We cannot shed our own blood to please God since we cannot make any claim of being a perfect sacrifice.

Ishmael pretended to be religious so he might gain the confidence of some who were seeking God. Since they were not familiar with God's word they were deceived and lost their lives in the process. We see this same type behavior today in some of the cults whose leader convince members to engage in mass suicides thus destroying lives.

8-10 The ten who escaped with their lives recognized that greed for material possessions was part of what was driving Ishmael.

11-12 Physically: When we see or hear of injustice inflicted on other people, we cannot sit idly by and not challenge those who commit the crimes. We have a responsibility to help those who are oppressed. Spiritually: We have opportunities everyday to help those who are captives of the forces of evil.

13-14 If people realize their condition and want to find a better life they will readily turn to other alternatives.

15 Despite our efforts to eliminate evil in our society, it still persists. When efforts are put forth to crack down on crime, those who commit such acts simply go into hiding for a time.

16-18 Old habits and relationships are hard to break. Johanan had been successful against Ishmael, yet they feared the Babylonians because of what Ishmael had done. Instead of seeking God's will in this matter, they immediately thought of going to Egypt. This dependence on Egypt was one of the problems the people faced before the fall of Jerusalem. Missionaries tell us that many in other cultures who make decisions to become Christians actually rely on their old "religion" by going to the witch doctor when they are faced with problems.

42:1-3 Many want to know what God would have them do. If we listen carefully, then we can hear people praying this same request for God to tell them what to do even today.

4 God wants us to know His will for our lives. If we ask, then He will tell us what we should do. In fact, He has already revealed so much to us in His word.

5-7 The words of the people to Jeremiah are similar to what the children of Israel told Moses regarding the commandments of God. We begin with the greatest and best of intentions.

7-10 When we deal with God, it is on His timetable. We often want instantaneous answers to our prayers. When we do not get an immediate answer, then we conclude that God did not answer our prayer.

God's word to them was clear and was full of hope. All that was left was for the people to simply obey what God had said.

11-17 We have a tendency to fear people rather than to fear God. Our fear of others will often cause us to disobey that which we know to be God's will for our lives. God has promised provision and protection for all who will obey Him and it is a lack of trust that causes us to look for other solutions and methods.

We cannot escape our fears by seeking security in the way of the world. In fact, by removing ourselves from God's protective cover (by being disobedient), then the very thing we fear will come upon us.

18 We are to learn from the examples of what has happened in the past. When God brings judgment (in time) upon specific sins, then we can be sure that His judgment will not be withheld for others who sin in the same way. This judgment is not always immediate but will eventually come (perhaps even in eternity).

19-22 We who know what God would have us do will be held more accountable than those who are ignorant of His word.

43:1-3 We must guard against being so in love with our own ideas that we fail to follow God's direction for our lives.

4-7 It is typical of human nature to do our own will even when we know it is contrary to the word of God.

8-13 We can attempt to run away from God's will but we cannot escape God's word. When Johanan took the prophet of God with him to Egypt he took a reminder of their disobedience. The truth of God's word doesn't change just because we may find ourselves in a different situation. Our only hope of salvation is in God and not in the world system which will pass away.

44:1-6 The historical accounts of what God has done are constant reminders of His expectations for us and His patience with our disobedience. These accounts also tell us that God's patience has a limit and that His judgment is sure.

7-10 The wise person will learn from what has happened to others rather than having to learn from his own mistakes. Those who are foolish will not even learn from their own errors.

11-14 God's plans for the people left behind in Judah had to be changed because they would not listen to His words. They were determined to follow their own way and the result of such a decision is not being able to "escape or survive." Unless we are obedient to God's word then we cannot receive His blessings.

15-17 When people are confronted with their sins, then they are forced to choose whether to repent and return to the Lord or to continue in their own way. We have these confrontations from God as part of our maturing in Christ. To the extent that we choose God's way is the extent to which we are transformed into the image of Jesus.

18-19 The Jews who were in Egypt had already fallen into idol worship. They had attributed any success they had to worship of the Queen of Heaven. Now nothing would cause them to abandon this practice.

20-23 We must constantly remind people to do what is obviously correct. People forget the lessons of (even) the immediate past and, consequently, repeat the errors of the past. These were part of the same group of people who sinned in a similar way in Judah. We do not learn from our own mistakes. *Failure is missing the target we (or others) have set for us. When we fail, the emotional impact is such that it clouds our sight and we cannot objectively evaluate the cause and effect relationships. When others fail, we can objectively assess the underlying causes.* (From Management of the Absurd)

The Jews that went into exile stayed there 70 years. The new generation was able to learn from what the previous generation did. When they returned to Israel, they did not ever again get involved in idol worship.

24-28 The people of that day put great emphasis on fulfilling their vows and carrying out what they promised. This level of integrity has been eroded to the point that today many place no emphasis on doing what they say they will. Being true to your word is important, however, it is more important to be sure that which we promise to do is in agreement with God's will. We should never lightly make a vow.

Not only did the people make vows, but God makes vows. We have the awesome power to influence the nature of the vows God makes regarding us. Abraham believed God and was obedient to Him and God vowed to bless Abraham. These Jews who went into Egypt in disobedience to God's words provoked a vow from God that involved harm rather than a blessing.

When it comes to a contest of words and vows, we can be assured that God's word will stand and find its fulfillment.

29-30 Sometimes we wonder if God is keeping His word. If we will but look around we can see evidence that He does and He is keeping all of it.

For the Jews in Egypt, they were to watch for the fall of Pharaoh to Nebuchadnezzar to know that God's word was being fulfilled.

45:1-2 This prophecy was given to Baruch eighteen years before the fall of Jerusalem. Baruch was used of God to help Jeremiah and he needed some assurance in the troubled times in which he lived.

3 It is easy for us to become discouraged when there is trouble all around.

4-5 When trouble comes we can be assured that God is still in control. We need this assurance because the judgment of God on the wicked has an impact on the righteous that live in the same area. We may be as Baruch was and have great plans which we would like to accomplish. However, such plans will fade into a faint glimmer when the judgment of God comes upon a nation. We are not exempt from the disruption that comes upon the society in which we live and we may be glad to escape with our lives.

46:1-4 John 3:16 tells us "For God so loved the world..." We tend to forget that God knows and cares about all mankind and not just those who are called "His people." Though God dealt mainly with the nation of Israel, He had messages specifically to the surrounding nations.

Not only did God's judgments come against His people but also against the heathen nations. God used Nebuchadnezzar as an instrument of judgment in both cases. Here He calls for Egypt to do whatever they wanted in preparation to stop the judgment of God; however, it would be in vain. We must not think we can ignore God's laws and then protect ourselves (with man's remedies) against the judgments God will send.

5-9 God showed Jeremiah the outcome of the battle between Egypt (plus her allies) and Babylon. Egypt was strong and boastful and as a result, Judah thought Egypt would protect them against the Babylonians.

We tend to put our confidence in that which we can see or experience with our physical senses rather than in the Invisible God. Such misplaced trust will eventually fail us and that in which we trusted will fail and we will be

without any resources.

However, if we put our trust in the Eternal God Who made heaven and earth and in His word, we have the assurance they are established forever.

10-12 We've read the "end of the book" and God wins! Why then would we ever want to align ourselves with the losing side as we live our lives?

13-17 This prophecy is separate from the previous verses and may have come to Jeremiah while in Egypt with those who fled there after the fall of Jerusalem. This conclusion is based solely on the command for this prophecy to be proclaimed in various cities of Egypt.

The prophecy has a familiar ring to it. It is similar to that which was delivered in Jerusalem before it fell.

Egypt relied on mercenaries from neighboring nations and these would have little loyalty to stand in the face of sure destruction at the hand of the Babylonian army.

18-25 The king of Egypt may be only a loud noise; however, the Lord Who is King of the universe can be counted on to speak the truth. Therefore, the people of Egypt could proceed to get ready to go into exile since it was so sure to happen they could treat it as if it had happened.

We must be careful to not rely on our own resources. Egypt was a beautiful and rich land and that was a source of confidence for the people. They had cultivated friendships and treaties with other nations and they were counting on their help in times of trouble. They had access to forest and natural resources and they counted on these as things to sustain them against their enemies. We sing "America the Beautiful" and name all the great blessing God has bestowed on this land. We must be careful to not put our trust in these blessing but in the God Who is the Source.

25-26 Just as Judah trusted in false gods, so did Egypt. Just as Judah trusted in Pharaoh to save them from the Babylonians, so did Egypt. Such misplaced trust would not help Egypt anymore than it helped Judah.

The judgment on Judah was for redemptive purposes and apparently the judgment on Egypt was also redemptive in that the land would again be inhabited.

27-28 This message to the Jews may have been directed to those who had gone into Egypt with Johanan. However, it could also apply to those who were in exile in Babylon.

The message to them is a message we can use in that we are not to fear the turmoil that is happening around us but are to put our trust in God. He loves us and His chastisement are meant to draw us closer to Him and restore the relationship with Himself so that He is our God and we are His people.

47:1-7 The time when Pharaoh attacked Gaza is uncertain since it might have been when Egypt came to help Judah during the siege or much earlier when Pharaoh was going to or coming from Carchemish (near the time when Josiah was killed).

When God raised up Nebuchadnezzar to bring judgment on the Jews He also used him to bring judgment on the surround nations. The Philistines had a history of being the enemies of God's people and the time for judgment against them had come.

Judgment was delayed for generations on many of the nations of that part of the world. They probably thought God didn't care about the cruelty and injustice they had committed against others, but the cup of their iniquity had become full and with great efficiency, God used one nation to bring judgment on the entire region during this time period. We cannot take any comfort in thinking that just because God did not immediately punish us for our sins that we have gone unnoticed from His watchful eyes.

48:1-5 Moab (descendants of Lot) had been an enemy of Israel and Judah and now the judgment of God was coming upon them. The scope of the judgment would encompass all the land and would touch all phases of their society. Their heathen prophets (represented by Nebo), the alliances of their cities (Kiriathaim means two cities), the high places in which they worship and felt secure (Misgab), nor their strongholds of learning (Heshbon) would not be able to deliver them. Judgment would extend from the cities they had built (Luhith - made of boards) to the country side (Horonaim - two caves) and would effect even the lowly places (Madmen was a town and the name means dunghill).

6-7 Since there would be no place to hide, they would have to run. Everything in which they trusted would fail them. Even Chemosh, their national deity would be himself subdued and carried off.

8-9 We should be careful to not drift or slip into a lifestyle of disobedience and disregard for God. Eventually, His patience will come to an end. The thoroughness of the judgment against Moab should be a warning to all who would go on sinning.

10 Those whom God sent to judge these nations apparently believed they were on a mission to conquer and kill. It may have been what the Arabs today call a *jihad* or holy war.

11 When people are spared serious trouble in their lives they can become complacent and see no need to put their trust in God. Prosperity can become a snare for us.

12-13 Eventually, problems and challenges do come and if we are not properly prepared from a relationship with God, then we will have nothing on which we can rely with trouble does come.

14-17 When disaster strikes and our world is crumbling all around us, then we will find no place of boasting of how rich, smart, or secure we are.

18-25 Unless our confidence is in the Lord, then whatever we are trusting in will fail.

26-27 The judgment by which we judge others will be used against us. Moab ridiculed Israel in her trouble and she fell into the same situation of being attacked and conquered by the Babylonians.

28 If people wanted to survive the coming battle, then they would need to flee to the country side and find a place to hide. There is a hymn that has a phrase “He hideth my soul in the clefts of the Rock and covers me there with His hand.” We need to take our refuge from the turmoil and trouble of the world by separating ourselves from the world system and make our dwelling place in Christ who is the Rock.

29-30 Because of their pride the Moabites did not follow the advice to flee. The same thing happen in the lives of many people. They refuse to turn to God even at the point of death because they are still trusting in their own sufficiency even as they watch their very lives crumbling around them.

31-34 Jeremiah knew what was coming up these people and he could do nothing more than warn them and lament for them. We are faced with no more possibilities in dealing with some people. We see them headed for destruction and have warned them in vain and now all we can do is to weep with a broken heart for them.

35 The Moabites were under God’s judgment because they ignored God. Generations ago their ancestor (Lot) knew Abraham and saw the power of God against the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. They failed to acknowledge and follow God but adopted a pagan god. Our nation was founded on Christian principle and open acknowledgment of the value of God’s word. Now we have abandoned the God of our fathers and have gone the way of humanistic pride. Can we expect an outcome any different than what happen to Moab?

36-39 Jeremiah could see the outcome of God’s judgment on the people of Moab and report it as if it had already happened. We should not think that the judgment on our nation for its sins will be any less sure.

40-46 The destruction of Moab was a result of their continuing to defy God. Our society has essentially thumbed its nose in the face of God. We have forgotten that any success we have had is a result of the fact that once we relied on and trusted in God.

47 The judgment on Moab was redemptive in that God intended for these people to repent.

49:1 When the Northern Kingdom (Israel) went into exile, the Ammonites moved into Gad. We are not take for ourselves that which belongs to another just because it has no one to protect it. God holds us accountable for all our actions.

2-3 When Judah returned from exile in Babylon they took possession of the land of Gad and the territory of the Ammonites. God will restore all things to their rightful possession. The work of redemption restores people (one-by-one) to a right relationship with God. That which was lost in the Fall of man is regained by the Cross of Christ.

4-6 It is our pride that causes us to rebel against the authority of God. We think we are self-sufficient and disregard God living our lives as if He and his demands on us matter. As the writer of Proverbs observed “Pride goes before a fall.”

God causes us to fall when we go away from Him so that we will realize our dependence on Him. Many of the people of this area responded to the gospel message in the early days of the church. Yet we know that today the descendants of these have adopted Islam as their religion.

7 The descendants of Esau apparently were as unwise in their choices regarding their priorities in life as was Esau.

8-11 On several occasions, God gave warnings to the inhabitants to flee before the time of judgment came. As part of the family of God, we are constantly admonished to “come out from among them and be ye separate” from the way of the world. If we get caught up in the affairs of the world, then we will experience the losses they experience when judgment comes.

Many times Christian live secret lives in which they try to have one foot in the church and the other foot in the world. They attempt to hide what they are doing but eventually all will be exposed.

When God’s judgment comes, then those who are helpless will find their protection in God for their will be no one else in whom to trust.

12-13 When a general judgment of God comes upon a land, the good suffer along with the evil. Since that is true, then no one who practices evil should think they will escape the judgment of God. Many live their lives as if the promised judgment of God on every person is not a reality. We should not be so foolish.

14 We should never forget that God is in control and it is He Who “putteth down one, and setteth up another.” (Ps 76:7) The destruction of Edom by the surrounding nations was orchestrated by God who placed the plan in the

minds of the surrounding nations.

15-16 The Edomites thought they had defenses that could not fail. The hilly country and the narrow passages made their land easily defended. They apparently intimidated their neighbors and this prevented any attacks on them in the past. However, God is not intimidated by our wealth, intelligence, military strength or anything else.

17-18 Kings and kingdoms will all pass away but the righteous judgments of God are forever. If we are trusting in anything other than God and His word, then we will be disappointed since everything else will fail.

19 When we rely on our own strength, wealth, and wit, we will eventually find challenges from those who are stronger, richer and smarter than we. However, when we trust completely upon God, He is omnipotent, the owner of all things, and omniscient.

20-22 Those who abandon and ignore God will find they are objects of His judgment and wrath. Many of our leaders are trying to drive all godly influence from our culture so that we become totally secularized. We must stand against and overcome such efforts if this nation is to survive.

23-27 Damascus was known for the beauty of the city and yet that virtue was not enough to spare it from the coming judgment. We must be careful to not put our efforts on outward beauty and neglect inner or spiritual beauty that comes from a proper relationship with the Lord.

28-33 Kedar was a son of Ishmael. They were mainly a nomadic people who lived in tents and moved about from place to place to pasture their flocks and herds. Their confidence was in their lifestyle of having abundant herds and pasture and yet that did not protect them from the terror of the Babylonians. That which was their confidence became a spoil of war for the enemy.

34-39 The Elamites are generally thought to be the Persians (descendants of Elam the son of Shem). Their confidence was in their weaponry. All such confidence will fail and only those who trust in the Lord can have any lasting confidence.

50:1-2 The prophecy regarding Babylon is applicable to physical Babylon of Jeremiah's time and to spiritual Babylon referenced by John in the Revelation.

The fall of nations is equated with exposing their false gods to be powerless.

3 In the case of physical Babylon, the Medo-Persian empire did the job. In the case of spiritual Babylon the destruction will come from the forces of the antichrist -- that ten-nation coalition that will attack "the harlot."

*[Rev 17:16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.]*

4-5 The reference to an "end-time" fulfillment of this prophecy is found here in that upon the fall of physical Babylon none of the dispersed "ten tribes" return to the Promised Land. Only those of Judah returned.

A case can be made that the end-time fulfillment will be for spiritual Israel or all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus.

6-7 People have "justified" persecution of the Israelites by telling themselves they deserved it because of their sin against God. Even today, some say they deserve present day persecution it because they crucified Jesus.

In the end-time many will persecute the saint of God because of their stand against the religious organization of the day since those in power will claim to have the only true religion.

8-10 In the case of physical Babylon, the Jews were being advised to take the opportunity to return to their homeland when the offer was made by Cyrus. In the case of spiritual Babylon, we are to not get caught up in a false religious system that has a form of godliness but has no power.

11-16 People tend to be as Babylon was. When the Lord uses them and gives them success, they attribute that success to their own strength and wit. They give in to pride and fail to show mercy or just plain respect to those who are under their control. Consequently, they are cut off from the Lord's help and His judgment come against them. With people, that judgment could come as loss of position, broken family relationships, loss of health, financial ruin, or any number of problems.

17-18 God raised up Assyria to bring judgment on Israel and Babylon to bring judgment on Judah. Both these nations used excessive force and gave in to pride. Because of their cruelty and failure to acknowledge God, both were brought down.

19-20 This is a promise to Israel and Judah for a time in the future when all their guilt will be erased and they will be restored to the land. God's provision for removal of our guilt is by the Blood of Jesus. All who trust in Him have the faith of Abraham and are the true seed unto whom all the promises point.

21-23 The Babylonians had encompassed much conquered territory within their borders. All the annexed territories would be taken from them as God's judgment came. We should never put our trust in the size of any "empires" we



have built in our own strength. Whatever sphere of influence we have should be under the rule of the Lordship of Jesus.

24-27a The rulers of Babylon thought they were completely safe and invincible. They boasted and bragged and congratulated themselves in parties and revelry and did not acknowledge the Lord of Glory who gave them success. When another nation was raised up to bring judgment on them, they were completely unprepared. Jesus told a parable about a farmer who had been so successful that he could think what he should do with the harvest. He decided to simply build bigger barns. Jesus remarked, “Thou fool.”

27b-28 When the army of Babylon captured Jerusalem they carried away the vessel of the Temple of God and at times misused these vessels. This dishonored God and they would have to answer for their actions.

29-30 All who defy the Lord will fail. Babylon serves as an example of those who were once blessed and empowered by God but who failed to acknowledge Him as God.

31-32 The manifestation of defiance against God is arrogance and pride. These are opposed by God while graciousness and humility are endorsed by Him.

33-38 According to Gill, this is a separate prophecy and is related the “mystical Israel of God” (the church) which will be oppressed in the end time by the forces of the devil. Babylon, in this case, is the mystical Babylon described by John in the Revelation.

39-40 The land of physical Babylon is today the nation of Iraq. People do live there. Consequently, we must conclude that the prophecy against it is yet to come to its fulfillment.

41-43 The Medes and Persians (and the people whom they had already conquered) came from the north to subdue Babylon. In the case of mystical Babylon, ten kings (thought to be from Europe) shall be raised up against Babylon, and hate her, and burn her with fire, Rev 17:12,16.

44 These same words described Nebuchadnezzar in his conquest of Edom and are now applied to Cyrus in his conquest of Babylon. God raised up Cyrus to break the power of Babylon and to ensure that the exiles could return to their homeland. If Babylon had remained in control, the release of the exiles would not have happened.

45-46 Babylon would be repaid with the same treatment as they treated others in their conquests. They were such a powerful influence in the world during their time that the fall of Babylon was a shock to all the nations influenced by them. The same response will be seen in the future regarding mystical Babylon. Those who traffic with her will lament her swift passing and be astonished at the fall of such a great “city.”

51:1-2 We must never forget that God is in ultimate control. For those who love the Lord and are in His will, this fact gives us great confidence whatever may happen. However, this same knowledge should strike fear in the hearts of those who rebel against God.

3-4 When God’s judgment comes, it is useless to try to defend against it. Those who are wise will repent before judgment start.

5 God has a purpose and a plan for mankind. He is working to bring that plan to completion. Israel and Judah were central to the revelation of God to all men. Certainly mystical Israel will be saved in the end time.

6 Since the Jews did not (could not) leave Babylon prior to the victory of the Medes and Persians, this verse may be directed to the Babylonians rather than the Jews. One possibility is the message is intended for the Jews when they were allowed to return to Israel. Another possibility is the message is meant for spiritual Israel and Babylon of the end time. This and the following verses are similar to passages in the Revelation.

7-9 Because of rebellion and sin, God brings judgment upon people and nations. Sometimes that judgment is that people are deluded and left to think they are right in our own devices and schemes. Paul used the phrase “given over to a reprobate mind.” If we believe a lie long enough, then we cannot recognize the truth when it come. We think such situations can be turned around and we work on trying to rescue such (get balm for the pain). At times, the only recourse we have is to recognize there is no healing and judgment is all that is left.

10 Those who have been faithful to God are often maligned by those in the world system. Christians, themselves will wonder if there is any reason to remain faithful when other seem to succeed and they don’t. Eventually, we will be vindicated. Following God’s way is the right way and is the only way of lasting success. When such vindication comes, then we will praise God for His great work in our lives. We need to trust Him for vindication and praise Him even in the midst of present troubles.

11-14 Just as nations are raised up for specific purposes of God and just as these nations pass away and have no more influence so it is with individuals. Our lives are of relatively short duration and we have a window in time to be useful to God. We should learn from the mistake of nations such as Babylon who were arrogant in their time of power and acted with profanity against the things of God (His Temple). All our actions and attitudes should be bathed in humility and reverential fear of God. Without this mind set we will extend ourselves beyond his umbrella of protection and will come under His judgment just a Babylon did.

15-19 If we could continually see ourselves in the perspective of the majesty of the Mighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, then we would not slip into pride and arrogance. We would realize that the works of our hands are dead works and only those things that are the result of God working in us are lasting and have eternal value.

20-23 God had called Babylon His hammer and now He calls Medo-Persia His battle axe (KJV). When God's judgment comes upon a nation or group of nations, then people in all stations in life are affected. The sins of those nations may have been the result of bad leadership; however, even the common people (and animals) suffer the consequences of bad leadership. Christians who are reluctant to "get involved in politics" should realize that we are opening up ourselves and future generations to the consequences of bad leadership and our aloofness from "government" will not protect us from the judgment that eventually comes to those who make wrong choices.

24-26 God's judgment against those who have defied Him and especially those who treat that which is holy with contempt and disrespect is a fearful thing. Those who attack the church and ridicule the things of God would do well to consider how God has reacted in the past to such behavior. We, in the Church, also must be careful to not let our worship, reading of the Scriptures, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and other things of God become so common place to us that we treat them as ordinary.

27-28 Babylon was once feared by all the nations and they were so powerful that no one could stand against them. Such power is temporary and the misuse of that power will eventually backfire when others come into power. Many kingdoms in the area were not reluctant to join forces against Babylon when the time came.

29-32 When the enemy forces are overwhelming, then the soldiers give up the fight. In the action against Iraq in the early part of the 1990s, the highly touted army of Iraq was found to be totally unprepared for the battle. They hid until they could be captured. When a people are demoralized, then such a phenomenon happens. If our trust is in anything other than the unfailing and infinite God of all creation, then we can easily become demoralized when all does not seem to go well.

33 In word pictures, God gave Jeremiah a vision of what was to become of Babylon. In the natural course of events, harvest time comes around. We are assured that "seed time and harvest" also apply to our spiritual lives as well.

34-35 Jeremiah could have drawn a cartoon depicting the land of Israel as an empty vessel and the people of the exile being held inside a snake (dragon in KJV). Eventually, the captors let the Jews go (as a cornered snake will regurgitate its undigested food). Just as the digestive process inside a snake works on what it swallows, the Jews had been scarred by their Babylonian captivity.

36-37 The KJV continues the analogy of the serpent and renders this as Babylon which will become the habitation of dragons, an astonishment, and a hissing. People who deal with devil long enough are taken over by demons and evil spirit and their lives become an object of horror.

38-40 God's judgment comes suddenly upon those who continue to rebel against Him. The message of judgment against Babylon came to the king while he and his princes were partying and desecrating the vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem. God's message was they had been weighed in the balances and found wanting. That very night Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, was killed.

41 No matter how great the splendor of the works of our hands, it can come to naught in a very short time. Whether by natural disasters or by acts of war, all those things in which we put our confidence will fail.

42 In prophetic writings the "sea" is typically a reference to a multitude of people. The Medes and the Persians brought many people against Babylon, caught them off guard, and used one of the things which they took great pride as a means to defeat the city. The river Euphrates ran through the city and watered the gardens. Cyrus's army drained the river and then used the river bed to pour his forces into Babylon.

44 The chief god of the Babylonian was Bel and he is pictured as the serpent or dragon that will have to give up that which he has swallowed (see Jer 51:34)

44-48 The call for separation from the world system is constantly repeated for the people of God. If we align ourselves too closely with the world then we may suffer from the "spill over" when judgment comes. This particular warning was repeated by John in the Revelation in reference to mystical Babylon.

49-58 Perhaps the prophecy against Babylon was given as an encouragement to the defeated and humiliated Jews who had been taken to Babylon as it was given as a warning to the leaders of Babylon.

At the time of the fall of Jerusalem, Babylon must have seemed (to the Jews) to be unstoppable. However, God reassured them through this prophecy He is greater than anything thing Babylon was at that time or might become in the future. Those who rely on their own resources (rather than on God) will find someone with more resources and greater ability. Those who live by the sword will find someone with a bigger sword. Our only hope of ultimate victory is in the God of all Creation, the Maker of Heaven and earth and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

59-64 God knows the end from the beginning. At the beginning of the exile He already knew the outcome for all involved. God chooses to reveal the future to us in His word. In this way, the fulfillment of the prophecies help to

build our faith in the word of God. Knowing His word is the place for us to start as we build up ourselves on our most holy faith.

52:1-3 Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. The entire region was controlled by the forces of Babylon and Zedekiah was installed as king by their decree. He chose to follow after his own prideful ways and (as so many other kings of Judah) ignored God's will revealed through God's prophets. God's patience ended and His judgment climaxed during the reign of Zedekiah.

4-11 Just as Zedekiah rebelled against God's authority, he also rebelled against Babylonian rule. God had raised up Babylon to bring judgment against the entire region. He had warned the people to stop their rebellion and to submit to the authority of Babylon to escape a more severe judgment. God's mercy was at work even in the midst of His wrath. Each nation in the region ignored the advice given by the prophet Jeremiah and great destruction came upon them.

Zedekiah paid a terrible price for his rebellion in that the last thing he saw was the slaughter of his family.

12-14 The resistance of Jerusalem and the long siege it took to conquer it helped to build up the rage of the Babylonians against the city. That rage expressed itself in complete destruction of the city. The Jews had put their confidence in the walls around the city and in the temple rather than in God. These objects of trust failed in the day of wrath.

15-16 Many had already been taken captive into Babylon prior to the fall of Jerusalem. Now, all but the very poorest were also taken.

17-23 The Babylonian empire became rich by plunder of the wealth of those they conquered. Because they had no regard for the temple of God they removed everything of value and took it to Babylon. God, eventually, called them to account for their disregard for things which were holy.

The temple Solomon built was magnificent. The description of the bronze objects is impressive. The value of the material used to build the temple shows the degree of devotion the people had to God at the time the temple was built. It obviously required a lot of sacrifice to build it. Today we are being built (as living stones) into the temple of God. We must put the best value into the construction and not turn back when sacrifice is required.

24-27 The craftsmen and even many of the unskilled people were taken captive and used to expand the Babylonian empire. However, those who were in positions of leadership (who might stir up the people to rebellion) were executed. The number of those in leadership was small compared to the total number of people.

In the church we bemoan the lack of spontaneous proactive behavior by most of the membership. This lack is simply confirmation of the sparseness of leadership in most population groups. The remedy is for those who do have leadership ability to rise to the opportunity and lead those who are willing to follow.

28-30 In 2 Kings Chapter 24 the number of people taken into exile is given as ten thousand. The number mentioned here (4600) may be restricted to those of the tribe of Judah. The rest were Benjamites and some of the other ten tribes living in the area.

31-34 Jehoiachin was disposed as king of Judah when Nebuchadnezzar set up Zedekiah as king. He was preceded by Jehoiakim and followed by Zedekiah. Both these were described as doing evil. Perhaps Jehoiachin did not do evil. His latter years were spent in pleasant surroundings.