

**JEREMIAH**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Jeremiah chapter 7 as we continue our study through the Word of God. At this time Josiah was the King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and revival broke out. Not because there were some charismatic priests but because the Word of God was found in the Temple among all the junk and idols that they had stored there. And it was not just that the Word of God was found, it was read and it needed to be applied to their lives.

Tragically this revival in Josiah's day was superficial but that was a choice that the people made. They could have let the Word of God convict their hearts and draw them to God or they could just play church or Temple and look religious and that is what they ended up doing, putting on a façade of religiosity!

As we are going to see, Jeremiah is going to bring to them the Word of God, share with them what God desires of them and as I have said, true revival is seen as the Word of God is spoken, it is taught! Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

In January 1519 something shocking happened at the Great Minster in Zurich. Everyone in the city was talking about it. One man said he was so excited he felt as if someone had grabbed him by his hair and lifted him out of his pew.

What was the cause of all this commotion? Simply this: Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), the new pastor of the church, was preaching the Word of God. At the first service in January he opened his Bible to Matthew 1 and began to preach from the Scriptures. At the next service he picked up where he left off in the Gospel of Matthew and kept preaching. He did the same thing at the third service and thereafter, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book, right through the New Testament.

Then Zwingli started preaching through the Old Testament. Amazing! Unheard of! Soon men, women, and children came from all over Zurich to hear the minister explain the Bible in words they could understand.

Zwingli's systematic Bible exposition was the beginning of the Reformation in Switzerland. To this day there is an inscription over the portal of that church that reads, "The Reformation of Huldrych Zwingli began here on January 1, 1519." Reformation begins with preaching God's Word!

- Philip Graham Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, p.119

That is what we don't see happening in America today. Listen to this article called, "Whatever Happened to Expository Preaching?" and you will see what I mean. We are told,

In September of 1982 - more than a decade before the rise of the Internet - journalist Allen Neuharth launched a newspaper that would revolutionize the world of print media. What made *USA Today* so unique is that its approach and design were based on the most thorough market research ever performed on behalf of a newspaper. By surveying readers about their likes and dislikes, Neuharth was able to present the news in a way that catered to the desires of his potential audience.

In his research, Neuharth discovered that people liked lots of color, lots of pictures, and lots of graphics. They wanted short, easy-to-read articles that didn't continue on a later page. They wanted less international news and more human interest stories. In short, they wanted something that reminded them more of television than a newspaper. So that's what he gave them. And even though critics began referring to *USA Today* as "the junk food of journalism," the end product was an amazing success, at least in terms of circulation.

Unfortunately, many churches today have taken a similar approach to designing their worship services. The trends reveal that people want less doctrine and more drama, less preaching and more props, less declaration and more dialogue. They want short, easy-to-listen-to sermons that don't get too deep and that don't focus too much on God and not enough on me. In short, they want something that reminds them of the Sunday morning edition of *USA Today*. And that's exactly what they're given.

In the process, essential elements of biblical worship are often compromised, if not abandoned altogether. One of the most common casualties is the faithful proclamation of the Word of God. For this reason, churches that are committed to the expositional preaching of Scripture are becoming increasingly difficult to find.

As David Jackman writes:

For every pulpit won, another seems to be lost, not necessarily to heresy, but to the Bible being relegated from the [driver's] seat to the passenger seat, where it makes a useful companion, a map to be consulted from time to time, but does not really determine the direction of the car.

One study of 200 evangelical sermons found that neither the content nor the organization of the message arose from a biblical passage in more than half of those sermons. In his book, *Why Johnny Can't Preach*, T. David Gordon estimates that of all the sermons he has heard in the past 25 years, less than 10 percent were demonstrably based on a biblical text. Instead, the content of most sermons was simply asserted, presumably on the authority of the preacher himself. In too many churches the Bible has indeed been relegated to the passenger's seat.

In contrast, the goal of expository preaching is to get back to the Book - to uphold the authority of Scripture by proclaiming the message of God Himself. The expository preacher has been divinely commissioned to stand before the people and declare with authority: "Thus sayeth the Lord!" He is, in a very real sense, the mouthpiece of Yahweh who has been called to speak forth the utterances of God (1 Pet 4:10). To those who believe that the relevance of expository preaching has long since passed, this may seem naïve. But for those who take seriously the biblical mandate to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2), it's the only option worth considering.

- <http://www.christianity.com/blogs/expository-thoughts/what-ever-happened-to-expository-preaching.html>

As we will see here in Jeremiah chapter 7, Jeremiah is going to give this powerful sermon there at the Temple, as people were gathering to worship God and it is a tough sermon but one that needed to be heard and not only heard but applied to their lives. This message continues from Jeremiah chapter 7 through Jeremiah chapter 10 and it was a simple message but it was not a popular message and we see that today. People don't want to hear the Word of God because of the conviction it brings to their lives and thus, they want to have their ears tickled and they will find people who will tickle their ears, pastors who will give them what they want instead of what they need.

Jeremiah did not do that, he gave them the Word of God and that is what I must do, give to you the whole counsel of God and let the Holy Spirit work on your heart, work on my heart as He is conforming us into the image of Jesus! With that as our background, let's begin reading in Jeremiah chapter 7 starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

**JEREMIAH 7****VERSES 1-2**

1. As some read this they think it is the same sermon that Jeremiah gave in Jeremiah chapter 26, but it is not. As you will see, there are some differences. Here in Jeremiah chapter 7 we see that he gave this sermon at “**the gate**” while in Jeremiah chapter 26 it was given “**in the court.**” Also, Josiah is the King here in Jeremiah chapter 7 and in Jeremiah chapter 26 we see that the son of Josiah, Jehoiakim was King. The content may be similar but the timeframe is different because God’s Word is unchanging!

2. Get the picture of what is going on here. The Temple has been repaired. The Word of God was found. There was excitement about going to the Temple and worship God; it was the popular thing to do! That is the problem many times. Just because lots of people are doing it does not mean it is right or it is accepted by God.

Going to the Temple became a social event; it was fashionable to say, “***The LORD lives!***” Because of all this hypocrisy God wants Jeremiah to go to the Temple and speak to the people. And it is not because God hates them, He loves them and is warning them that they need to have their hearts changed; they need to come back to God and not just to the Temple!

VERSES 3-4

1. There truly is nothing new under the sun, man does not learn the lessons from the past and he repeats them. Back then they were comfortable going to Temple, they felt good about doing this. And here is the big problem. They put their trust, their faith in this building instead of the Lord who dwelt there.

Because of that false hope they went to Temple and then they lived like the Devil. They felt that by going to the Temple it gave them the freedom to sin without any consequences. How wrong they were. God warned them when the Temple was built that if they turned from Him He would turn from them, that judgment would come upon them and they would be taken into captivity. But they did not listen to those words and they developed their own false theology!

We still do that today. People go to church, they may even serve in the church but they don't know Jesus and thus, their salvation is not based in truth, they are not saved. And you see the fruit in their lives, they are living like the Devil and yet, they go to church, "It's all good" they say!

And there are those who see grace as a freedom to sin. "It's all covered under the blood!" and they feel they can sin all they want and there are no consequences to their actions. How wrong they are!

Paul put it like this in Romans 6:15-18, **"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."**

The question here is “What if I sin just a little, if I just dabble in sin? Since I am not under the Law, I am under grace then just a little sin must be okay!” Paul shows us the problem with that kind of thinking, and some Christians feel this way, a kind of justification for their sin, “I am not perfect, just forgiven!” Paul tells us that we are not to think that way; we are to live holy lives. That is the goal!

Think about it like this. “I’m only going to try cocaine just this once!” “It is only one drink, it can’t hurt me!” “I only cheated on my wife once, and we were having problems back then anyway!” “It is only one magazine and God made the body beautiful, so what is wrong with me looking at these women who aren’t wearing any clothes?”

Obviously this list can go on and you can put in it any sin you are trying to justify. In saying that let me now say this, once you open the door to sin it is hard to close! God said to Cain before he murdered his brother Abel, “**. . . ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.’**” Genesis 4:6-7.

In other words, God told Cain that sin is at his door and it wants to come in to control your life, it wants you to become a slave to sin, don’t open the door, don’t let it in or it will rule over your life! “I can’t believe that, maybe just a little peek!” and as that door opens up, it flies open and before Cain knew it, sin controlled his life, he was a slave to it and he murdered his brother Abel! God says what He means and He means what He says! Don’t be a slave to sin but be a slave to God, be obedient to Him. Don’t let the liberty you have in Christ put you into bondage!

And Paul speaks of us being slaves to sin in the past tense because now we are a new creation in Christ, the old things have passed away and all is now new in Him! God's warning to the people back then is a warning to us, God does not want us to play church, He wants a relationship with us. He wants all of our lives not just part of our lives. He will transform our lives inwardly and it will affect our outward actions. Or, you can try and fool others with the façade of playing church but in the end you will lose because God is not fooled!

2. What were they doing that was so bad? Let's read on and see because the Lord is going to tell them!

#### VERSES 5-10

1. Here we see God catalog the sins of His people. They broke the commandments that God had given to them back in Exodus 20:1-17. They had other gods before them according to Jeremiah 7:9. They burned incense to Baal Jeremiah 7:9 says and thus, they made idols breaking another commandment. They profaned the house of God according to Jeremiah 7:10 and that was the place that God dwelt, it bore His name and they broke the third commandment, they took the name of the Lord in vain! The fourth commandment and the last one on the first tablet was that they did not honor the Sabbath because they gave the Lord false worship, it was not from their hearts and you can see that in these verses as you look at their actions. So they broke or violated all the commandments that dealt with their relationship with God but there is more.



They also broke the commandments that deal with their relationship with their fellow man. The fifth commandment that they broke deals with honoring their father and mother and in Jeremiah 7:6 we see them neglecting their social responsibilities to the fatherless, the widow, they were not honoring their father and mother by their actions.

Then there are the commandments not to murder, commit adultery, steal, give false testimony; commandments sixth through nine and those are broken in Jeremiah 7:6! And I guess you can throw in covetousness because they did these things to obtain what they did not have, they coveted them! They were breaking all of God's commandments and they didn't even see it!

2. So is this an unreasonable request from God? Of course not! In fact these are just the basics, to turn back to God and treat others as you would have them treat you. It speaks of the two tables or tablets of the Law. You see, God wanted to bless them and all He was asking from them was the basics but unless they returned to Him they would never be able to treat their fellow man the way that He wanted them too and that is also true of us. Our relationship with our fellow man is based on our walk with the Lord. If our walk with the Lord is off so too will be our relationship with our fellow man. What ends up happening is we try to fix our relationship with our fellow man apart from God and that will not work!

VERSE 11

1. First of all let's deal with Jeremiah's day. They were seeking to be justified without being sanctified! In other words, they lived like the Devil and thought that because they went to Temple all was good with God and it was not! Maybe they were not practicing wicked things in the Temple at that time but their wicked actions were with them when they went to the Temple and thus, it was a place for thieves to hide out!
  
2. Fast-forward to the time of Jesus because Jesus quoted this in the New Testament when He drove out the money changers who were making a profit off of God, ripping off the people, right there in the Temple, the place where they were to gather to worship God. In fact, He did this twice. Once at the beginning of His ministry and then at the end of His earthly ministry!
  
3. Now bring this up to our day. There are very wicked people that go to church and think that by going to church everything is okay. There are those churches that allow wickedness into the church and accept it as a normal way of life. The church has become a safe haven for thieves who are trying to rob their way into heaven and that will not happen!

I am not saying we don't welcome sinners into the church, of course we do! But as you come to Christ your life is changed. Paul put it like this in I Corinthians 6:9-11, "**Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**"

We once were like that but the blood of Jesus has washed our sins away, we were once like that but the Master set us apart for His use, He has sanctified us. We once were like that but we have been justified, declared innocent before God through Jesus Christ. You see, we came out of that lifestyle and now we are a new creation in Christ. Not that we are perfect or we don't sin, but that is not the practice of our life any longer!

4. Now some may reject what the Lord was saying through Jeremiah, they may not believe it. Thus, the Lord is going to give them an object lesson that they could see for themselves that what He has promised will come to pass, even His judgment against His people for their rebellion!

VERSES 12-15

1. Shiloh was to be an object lesson for the nation. When they first entered the land they set up the Tabernacle in Shiloh. We are told in Joshua 18:1, “**Now the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of meeting there. And the land was subdued before them.**”

And later as the nation was divided, the Northern Kingdom of Israel ran into idolatry and God judged them for it. And Shiloh became no longer a place of worship but a barren wasteland that remains in that condition today.

But the people refused to look and listen to what God was saying. In Psalm 78:58-61 we read, “**For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their carved images. When God heard this, He was furious, and greatly abhorred Israel, So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent He had placed among men, And delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy’s hand.**”

Shiloh represents the judgment of God, the absence of God among His people because of their sin and their refusal to turn back to Him!

2. The next verse is truly a sad and tragic one.

VERSE 16

1. How terrifying to realize that a nation can get so wicked that God finally gives up on them, no longer will He hear their prayers or the prayers that are made for them, and nothing will stop the coming judgment. They had passed the point of no return and there was no turning back from that. I wonder how far down the road our nation is, if we can still turn back? I pray that we can!

2. Now why was God not going to hear their prayers or relent from His judgment? He is going to tell us as we read on.

VERSES 17-19

1. God is showing them and us what they were involved in that brought this judgment upon them and the whole family was involved in this idolatry! Who are they worshipping? The Lord tells us that they are worshipping the “**queen of heaven.**” He is rebuking them for this practice that originated in Babylon, this mother-child cult.

And keep in mind this idea of the queen of heaven goes by different names, depending on what culture you came from. In Assyria she was called Ishtar. The Canaanites had Astarte or Ashtoreth. The Romans called her Venus. And these were nothing more than fertility goddesses that were worshiped through all kinds of sexual promiscuity, and we will see what came out of that and what the people did about it in a few minutes.

Now in the Catholic Church Mary has been called the queen of heaven and she is spoken of as co-redeemer or the person you need pray to in order to get to God. Mary, like all of us was a sinner that was in need of a Savior. Yes, she was used mightily by God, but she was still flesh and blood, a sinner. In fact, we read in Luke 1:46-48, “**And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.’**”

Now the Catholic Church will argue that they don't worship Mary but listen to what Pope John Paul II said during his 1996 visit to Guatemala. He said,

All those who have at some time prayed to the Most Holy Virgin , even though they may have strayed from the Catholic church, conserve in their hearts an ember of faith which can be revived. The Virgin awaits them with maternal arms open wide.

- Christianity Today, April 8, 1996, p. 94

So they may say that they don't worship Mary but when you have statues, when you say the rosary, when you bow before her at church, that is worship and God condemns it! And to give her the title of queen of heaven should be obvious that it is wrong. The Bible tells us we are to worship God alone, no one else!

2. Our sin does not hurt God, yes He is grieved over our sin because He knows what it will do in our lives, how it will hurt us and that is the key. Sin brings consequences upon the person that is involved in it and many times it touches the lives of those around the person also. Look at the person addicted to drugs and the family and friends that are hurt by it. Look at how sexual promiscuity outside of marriage hurts many lives. And we can go on but you get the idea, sin is destructive and that is why Satan is called the one who destroys lives, he uses sin to tempt us down that path!

VERSES 20-24

1. They didn't listen to the Lord, they refused to obey what the Lord had said, and God kept trying to give them lessons to draw them back but they refused to turn. Some of you may remember the baseball great Yogi Berra. He had some great quotes that made no sense! He once said that it was like "déjà vu all over again!" Think about that one for a minute, you will get it!

God's judgment was coming because they refused to listen, they refused to obey and thus, they might as well stop their empty sacrifices and eat the meat themselves because God is not accepting those sacrifices any longer!

And the end result of this rebellion, "**Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward.**" Jeremiah 7:24. They were moving backward, they were not moving in the direction toward God but away from Him!

2. Listen to how this faith walk applies to us. We are told,

Faith is not a one-time, sensational event in one's life, neither is it a state of moral and spiritual perfection to which a handful of super-saints attain. Faith is a dynamic, lifelong journey that each believer is on. At any given moment, we are either moving toward God or turning away from Him.

The people of Jeremiah's day stood under God's judgment because they turned away from Him - they "went backward and not forward" (Jer. 7:24). Rather than cultivate a growing relationship with the Lord based on sustained, faithful obedience, they went their own way and followed the "dictates of their evil hearts" (7:23-24).

May that not be true of you! The only way to make progress in your journey of faith is to keep moving toward God as best you know how. You may fail and fall at times, but the main thing is to keep turning back toward God, not away from Him. Paul described this dynamic in his own spiritual experience: “Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13–14).

- Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne:  
Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary, Jeremiah 7:23

### VERSES 25-27

1. People have all kinds of excuses why they did something that was wrong and usually they like to blame someone else, it was not their fault. The Lord is telling His people that there was no excuse for their behavior. You see, God warned them over and over again by His prophets speaking forth day and night to them, but they refused to listen and obey.

And the Lord tells Jeremiah that as He speaks forth these words no one will hear, no one will respond to what he is saying. Why did God do that? Because God gives them ample opportunity to hear His truths so they can respond. Thus, no one will have an excuse when they stand before God in their own righteousness, which are like filthy rags before a holy and righteous God!



VERSES 28-31

1. Jeremiah is going to call for them to mourn over the judgment that is coming. They refused to listen and obey the truth of God and even though they were a very religious people, they were very wicked; their hearts were far from God. Even their homes were filled with all kinds of idols!

Now this kind of behavior, these gods they were worshiping that involved all kinds of immoral sexual activity produced many unwanted children. Thus, what do you do with them? Well you might as well kill two birds with one stone you might say, so they would go to the Valley of Hinnom, which is on the south side of Jerusalem, and offer these children to the god Molech, to burn them alive in the bronze hands of this god. And they not only got rid of a problem they had, all these unwanted children, but they also believed they would be blessed for their actions, Molech brought them good luck, or so they thought. How horrible is that!

Now as outraged as we may be at that, we do the same today as millions of children have been offered to the god of pleasure, the god Molech through abortion. The so-called sexual freedom we have today has produced many unwanted children and thus, they are offered up to this god and our God is aware of their silent screams and He will hold this nation accountable!

VERSES 32-34

1. When the Babylonians come in the land will be overcome with dead bodies, God's judgment is quickly coming and there is no escape. But again, they refuse to heed the warning and turn to God. The words of Jeremiah fell on deaf ears, not that they couldn't hear, they just refused to hear!

2. Make no mistake about it; it is a truly sad day when God removes Himself from a people or a nation. When He does there is no more joy, no more gladness, but only desolation. And I know, not a pretty picture but it is not meant to be. God is warning His people and He is warning us as a nation to return to Him or judgment will come, not might!

## JEREMIAH 8

### VERSES 1-3

1. I think you can understand why Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. Look at the judgment that is coming upon his people. Keep in mind that Jeremiah is speaking of the Babylonians coming and desecrating the graves of the dead in Judah. They not only were desecrating the dead but they removed anything of value from the graves. And this judgment will be so bad that the valley of Hinnom will be filled with the dead who have been slaughtered by the Babylonians. (See Jeremiah 7:32-33)

And the Lord wants them to think about these gods that they were worshiping, how much help they were to them and the answer is, “They were of ***NO HELP*** at all!” And thus, all those who have been killed in this slaughter, all the bones of the dead that have been removed from the grave will be left out in the open, left out under the host of heaven, which God’s people were worshiping. Not a pretty picture that Jeremiah is painting as the people were going to Temple.

And for those who were living, those who survived the Babylonian attack, they are going to wish that they were dead! You see, the Babylonians were a brutal people! And all of this was the result of their hard hearts, that they refused to turn back to the Lord and these are the consequences of their actions!

VERSES 4-6

1. How often as we are in sin that we think we are so smart, that we are getting away with something, that God doesn't care about what we are doing. How foolish that is! Here we see the Lord is exposing Judah's stubbornness in returning to Him, the foolishness of their actions.

You see, if someone falls down they are going to get up. If someone is going in the wrong direction you don't keep going that way but you will turn and move in the right direction. That is just obvious, that just make sense, anything else would be plain foolishness on their part. And yet, Judah refused and because of that they are in a perpetual backsliding condition. They had fallen and refused to get up. They were moving away from God and refused to turn back to Him.

Not only that, but the Lord likens them to a horse that is going into battle. The horse is totally unaware of the danger they are heading into and yet they race on in. Thus, they are foolish as they rush into this course of destruction!

2. How does that apply to us? Think of it like this. The Christian life, in a sense, is like climbing up the front part of the slide, not using the ladder or stairs. And as you go up you can make it to the top if you keep moving, if you keep your momentum going. But what happens if you stop moving forward? Well, as soon as you stop, you will begin to slide backwards, and it is hard to get the momentum going so you can go forward again. The key for us is to keep walking, keep drawing close to God so you won't slide backwards, away from Him.

VERSE 7

1. God points to nature saying that the birds know when to migrate, they know when to leave the cold and head towards Hawaii or where it is warmer, and then return. But God's people are oblivious to what season it is. Judgment day is right around the corner!

Look at how foolish they were. They refused to repent of their sins and they did not even know how to get back to God! That is very bad and yet, it is not that they didn't know how to get back to God, they just refused to come the Lord's way, they instead did it their own way.

Man is no different today. They feel that God will accept them because they are a good person, better than some. Others come by the broad way which speaks of any way except what God has said. Make no mistake about it, there is only one way to God and that is through Jesus Christ as Jesus said, "**. . . 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'**"

There are many roads to God but there is only one way to get there like I have said. Jesus warned us in Matthew 7:13-14, "**Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.**"

Notice what Jesus says here. "Come any way you want. Just feel good about the door you are going through, the road you are on. Don't worry, be happy!" No, that is not what He said here. It is not a have it your own way salvation. That may be how you order your hamburger but we are talking about something more important than food, we are talking about eternal life!

And Jesus is not making a suggestion He is commanding us to “**Enter by the narrow gate.**” The King James Version puts it like this, “**Enter ye in at the strait gate.**” These words are offensive to many in the twenty-first century and they feel that anyone who thinks like that is narrow-minded.

I have to agree, it is very narrow-minded, but it is true! C. E. Jefferson wrote regarding how others see us. He tells us the following,

We often hear [narrow] used in a sinister and condemning sense, we sometimes use it so ourselves. We say, “Oh, yes, he is narrow,” meaning that one side of his nature has been blighted, blasted. His mind is not full-orbed. His heart is not full grown. He is a dwarfed and stunted man, cramped by a defective education or squeezed out of shape by a narrowing environment.

- C. E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 107

Please hear me out on this. Being narrow-minded is not bad, it is not wrong; it is not evil if it is based in the truth. You see, we tend to believe what we hear instead of thinking these things through. Aren't you glad that when you get on a plane to travel that the pilot is very narrow-minded? Of course you are. He has a check list that he goes through. He has a flight plane that he observes. He has procedures that he follows.

Now let's play this out just a little. What if your pilot believed that all courses would get you to the destination that you wanted to go? He was open, he was free, he was not going to let any narrow-minded teacher tell him that he had to follow a certain course to get to a certain destination. In fact, forget the check list. Forget all those procedures, they are just too narrow-minded. You know what, they would never let a person like that fly a plane because he needs to be narrow-minded in what he does!

And think about all roads leading to God, do all roads take you to the destination you want to go? Absolutely not and yet, when it comes to eternity, we believe they can! Now let me clarify something here. All roads do lead to God but if you are on the wrong road you will not stay there. You see, all will appear before God and apart from Christ, you will not enter into eternity with Him but will be cast into Hell for eternity where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Now who or what is this gate that I have to enter through? The gate or the door is Jesus. Remember what Jesus said in John 10:9, "**I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.**" You see, we can enter in through Jesus and what happens when we enter through Him? Jesus said that "**he will be saved.**" In other words, salvation is only found in Him, we must enter through *THE* door, Jesus Christ!

#### VERSES 8-12

1. They knew the Word of God but they did not believe the Word of God, they did not apply it to their lives and they changed the Word of God to fit what they wanted to believe. Thus, they are not wise because they have turned from the Lord! You see, if you don't apply the truths of God, you are a fool.

Amazingly we see that even back then people were editing the Word of God to be in agreement with what they believed, they interpreted God's Word in a way to justify their sins. And we see that today as the big issue among Christian musicians. Some believe that homosexuality is not a sin.

Also, back in the summer of 1996 in the Philadelphia newspapers was a story about a group of ministers who announced their support of the mayor's initiative to provide health benefits to the partners of gay and lesbian employees. They said, "Not all of Christianity condemns it as sinful." Some churches "have not changed with the times." "As people of faith we find no difference in the basic morality of committed, loving relationships and different-sex couples." Thus, they have altered the Word of God to fit what they want to believe and that will never work! They are saying "Peace, peace" when there is no peace!

And it is not just that issue. We have so-called Christians who deny the deity of Jesus Christ, His blood atonement, His resurrection, His virgin birth and-so-on. They deny all that Jesus said He was and yet they want to still call themselves a Christ-follower and they are not!

2. And because of their turning from God, turning from His Word judgment is coming and it is not going to be good. We are told that the men will be killed and their wives given to others. And as God looks at this society, He sees a people that have degenerated morally and spiritually.

They openly displayed their sin for all to see, they were not ashamed of what they were doing. How can that happen? God has placed in all of us a consciousness; we know what is right and what is wrong. When we do something wrong the alarm goes off inside of us warning us.

Now you can ignore that alarm or turn it off and you can do that so much that you finally are insensitive to it, like the Southern Kingdom of had done. Paul put it this way in I Timothy 4:2, “**... having your conscience seared with a hot iron.**” You see, after a while of placing your hand on a hot iron you will kill the nerve endings and you become insensitive to the pain. That is exactly what happens when we ignore sin in our life; we will eventually become insensitive to it!

One writer put it like this in regards to the Word of God and he does sum it up very well for us. He wrote,

This Book is the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding; its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s character. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. Follow its precepts and it will lead you to Calvary, to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ; yes, to glory itself, for eternity.

- Source Unknown

May we not forget that because all that God has said will come to pass! May we live it, may we believe it and may we speak it forth!



3. Now verse 11 is speaking of the false prophets, the ones who were to be speaking for God and yet they spoke out of the imagination of their own hearts and thus, they were speaking lies. They were saying that God will not bring judgment upon them. That was not true. Their condition was terminal, they were bleeding to death, and the false prophets were coming with a Snoopy Band-Aid to heal them, and of course, it was going to do nothing for them. This was an arterial gusher and they were bleeding to death and those that were there to help them, these false prophets were obviously not doing that and the nation was going to be destroyed, they were going to go into captivity!

### VERSE 13

1. The land is going to be devastated by this judgment of God. The prophet Habakkuk also spoke during this time. And listen to the tremendous faith he had in God as he too saw this devastation coming upon the land and its people.

In Habakkuk 3:17-19 we read, **“Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls - Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; he will make my feet like deer’s feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.”** In other words, no matter what happens in his life, Habakkuk was going to trust in the Lord. Job put it this way when he said, **“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. . . .”** Job 13:15. May we do the same, look to Him and find comfort, rest, peace in Him as we trust what His Word says to us!

VERSES 14-17

1. The picture here is that of not listening to God, looking for peace when God said judgment was coming and in the end it was too late. Their sin brought the judgment of God upon them. What the false prophets were saying never came to pass!

And by the hands of the Babylonians, who began in the north, in Dan, they would then come down southward towards Jerusalem and they will be like snakes that are coming down upon them! Some feel that this might be a literal viper plague. It could be and it might be a combination of both.

VERSES 18-22

1. The people, seeing the Babylonian's coming, were wondering where the Lord was. And the Lord explains to them that they have brought this judgment upon themselves. But make no mistake about it, God was patient with them, He sent them prophet after prophet, warning them to repent. He sent droughts and other judgments to get their attention, but they refused to listen and see this was from God. They even refused to learn from the object lessons that God had given them, in fact it was their own brethren, the Northern Kingdom of Israel who was taken into captivity long before the Southern Kingdom for their idolatry. And now the time of God's grace was over, the judgment was here.

2. For Jeremiah, we see his heart of compassion for his people and what was going to come upon them for their rebellion against God. He sees that there is no treatment for them and he speaks of Gilead, located east of the Jordan River, and the balm that was located there or made there. Gilead was known for a balm that it made from the resin of the storax tree and it was used for the eyes and other parts of the body to heal. There is no balm to heal; there is no physician to treat them any longer so that his people can be healed.

The problem was they rejected the great physician, they turned from God and His healing touch and thus, God gave them what they wanted and they did not like it. Why don't we just listen to the Lord? Because we think we know better and in the end, we find out we didn't! May we learn that lesson quickly!

3. Let me close with this from David Wells and his book, "God in the Wasteland." He is speaking about the contemporary church of today and how inconsequential God is. He wrote,

It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless . . . he has become unimportant. He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable. . . . Those who assure the pollsters of their belief in God's existence may nonetheless consider him less interesting than television, his commands less authoritative than their appetites for affluence and influence, his judgment no more awe-inspiring than the evening news, and his truth less compelling than the advertisers' sweet fog of flatter and lies. That is weightlessness.

. . . The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is that God rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant, his grace is too ordinary, his judgment is too benign, his gospel is too easy, and his Christ is too common.

- David Wells, God in the Wasteland, pp. 88, 30

May we heed the warning and draw close to God and He will draw close to us! May we believe that God's Word is living and it is powerful and it will change our lives! And may we warn others of the coming judgment in the love of Christ but still warn them that in their sins they will die, they will be separated from God for eternity! But God loves them and is calling them if they would only turn and receive Him into their lives! There is a healing, and that healing is found in Jesus Christ, our Great Physician!