

JEREMIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Jeremiah chapter 11 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we will see this evening, God is going to remind the children of Israel and specifically the Southern Kingdom of Judah of the covenant that their fathers had made with God, the covenant that they had made with God.

God wanted to remind them of the blessings for obedience and the cursing for their disobedience, that there were consequences for their actions. And they are going to refuse to keep the covenant with God; they are going to go after other gods!

And once again, before we point the finger at them, we need to look in the mirror because we do the very thing today. Think about the marriage covenant where a Christian couple comes before God and say that they will be united together until death separates them. And what happens is that it is not physical death that separates but the death of the marriage and the covenant is broken.

And there is controversy how many Christian marriages end in divorce but really, should there even be that kind of statistic for Christians? We are going to see this evening that God has told us what He desires of us in His Word and thus, He tells us, “**... ‘Obey My voice.’**”

Jeremiah 11:7. May we heed His Words to us!

Also, the timeframe as we get into Jeremiah chapter 11 is probably at the end of Josiah's reign or the beginning of the reign of Jehoahaz or maybe even into the reign of Eliakim or Jehoiakim as Pharaoh changed his name. Remember that Josiah was killed in battle against Pharaoh Necho, a battle that he was not to be involved in and his son Jehoahaz comes to the throne at the age of 23. And he reigns for only 3 months and is placed in prison by Pharaoh Necho and spends the remaining days of his life down in Egypt.

Replacing him was Eliakim, another son of Josiah whose name was changed to Jehoiakim and he reigned for 11 years until Nebuchadnezzar took him away captive to Babylon. So we are not positive who was on the throne but it was after they had heard the covenant read to them, the Word of God read to them during the time of Josiah and now they are departing from it, they are turning away from God.

With that as our background let's begin reading in Jeremiah chapter 11 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

JEREMIAH 11

VERSES 1-5

1. The covenant that is spoken of here is the Mosaic covenant and the basis of that covenant was that the Israelites would inherit the land if they were obedient to God and His commandments.

And as you can see, Jeremiah's message from the Lord here is strongly associated with the Book of Deuteronomy. The term rendered "**words**" is the Hebrew name of the Book of Deuteronomy; HADDE-BHARIM, or "the words." Also, it refers to the terms of the "**covenant**." God warned them that they were going to be blessed for obedience and, on the other end of the spectrum; they would be cursed for turning from the Lord, their disobedience!

2. As God tells Jeremiah what to say to the people we see Jeremiah jump up and shout "**Amen, LORD**" or "**So be it, LORD.**" That was the heart of Jeremiah, he loved the Lord and his desire was to be obedient to the Lord and he wanted the same for his people.

If you remember, when Moses spoke to the people about this covenant that God wanted to establish with them they responded by saying, "**. . . 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do.' . . .**" Exodus 19:8. Now it is one thing to say something like that and it is quite another thing to do it as we are going to see.

VERSES 6-8

1. This is why some feel these events took place during the reign of Josiah because the Word of God was being read, but keep in mind that Jeremiah is proclaiming these words and not the leaders of Jerusalem.

2. God is reminding His people through the prophet Jeremiah about the covenant that was made with Him. God sent them the prophets who were exhorting His people to walk in His ways, to keep this covenant but they refused as we have read. Really all God was asking them to do is to keep what they had promised Him. But they refused and they turned from Him as verse 8 tells us.

3. I do find it interesting that when the judgment of God comes people are shocked by it. They thought everything was okay and now God is doing this to them. The reality is, the people were not interested in God; they had turned from God and developed a religion that they liked instead of the relationship that God wanted. But God did warn them just as He warns us and this nation we live in.

So this should not have been a surprise announcement by God to His people. Let me show you what I mean. Listen to what God said to them just prior to them entering the land. God promised them blessings if they obeyed Him but if they turned from Him they would be cursed.

Now you can go through Deuteronomy chapter 28 on your own, but I just want to share with you a couple of verses that shows us that God is faithful to His promise. Beginning in verse 64 of Deuteronomy chapter 28 we read of what will happen if they rebel against God.

We are told, **“Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known - wood and stone. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were morning!’ because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see. And the LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the way of which I said to you, ‘You shall never see it again.’ And there you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.”** Deuteronomy 28:64-68.

That is exactly what happened to the Southern Kingdom of Judah as they disobeyed God. Prior to the final assault by Babylon many Jews fled to Egypt, the place they had started from. In fact, shortly after the captivity began Jeremiah goes down to Egypt and ministers to the Jews who fled there. How sad to see all that God had for them and because of their actions they found themselves once again in bondage.

4. Like then, people today have heard of what God has said but they really don't believe it because their actions speak contrary. And because of that people will have their ears tickled rather than hearing the truths of God because then they don't have to act upon them, they are comfortable living in their rebellion against God. Make no mistake about it, God has judged sin and He will continue to do so!

VERSES 9-14

1. Look at what the people were doing; they had made a conspiracy against God. What kind of conspiracy is Jeremiah speaking of? They had turned from God and sought after the gods their fathers worshiped as they too refused to hear the Words of the Lord! And thus, the judgment of God was going to come upon both the Northern Kingdom of Israel, who was already in captivity, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah for their idolatry, their turning from the Lord and judgment was at the door!

And think about it, they were doing these things and God was fully aware of their actions because you can't hide anything from God. Paul said in Hebrews 4:13, "**And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**" But they thought they could get away with it, they did not see a problem in what they were doing and God says that they are wrong, that they are going to go into captivity for their actions.

When we turn from God we are in sin and sin brings us into bondage. I realize that people who are living in sin don't see themselves in bondage but they are. Jesus said in John 8:34-36, "**. . . 'Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.'**" True freedom is only found in Jesus, we are set free from sin in Him and we shall be free indeed!

2. As Jeremiah speaks of their forefathers in verse 10 and their rebellion against God I believe the reference here is their wandering in the wilderness for those 40 years and the time of the Judges, which was a very black period in the nation's history. And God is saying they have not learned the lessons but are following in their evil footsteps. Any nation and any people that refuse to learn from the past will repeat it!

3. It couldn't be that bad, could it? You bet it was bad and we see that in verses 11-13. It had gotten so bad they had as many gods as they had cities, and they had altars set up on every street to worship these gods. Now this was probably after the reign of Josiah, where his son Jehoahaz, who reigned for 3 months only, and then Jehoiakim, who reigned for 11 years, for they were very wicked and not at all like their father Josiah. It is a sad picture of a nation that was involved in full blown idolatry from its leaders to the common people.

4. Now verse 14 is interesting because as a nation, as a people are involved in this kind of activity what would you do? I think for most of us we would be praying but notice what the Lord says here, “**. . . do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or pray for them, for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble.**”

That seems very harsh, very unloving, doesn't it? God telling Jeremiah not to pray for them, and when they do cry out, God won't hear their cries any longer. That doesn't sound like a God of love? If that is all we were to read, that might be the conclusion we come to. But we must understand the patience and long-suffering of God. The reality we must not miss is there comes a point where God's grace does come to an end and if the people have rejected it, it will be too late. Don't harden your heart towards God, today is the day of salvation!

And the reality here is that they did not turn to God when the judgment came but instead of crying out to God they turned to these gods for help. We are told back in verse 12, **“Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they offer incense, but they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble.”** Instead of turning to God they turned to these false gods for help and God is telling them that if that is what they want they will not be able to help you and I will not listen to your cries, you are going into captivity!

5. Even today people try to negate the judgment of God but it is coming, not because I said so but because God did! Peter warns us in II Peter 3:3-7 of scoffers as he writes, **“knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”**

In other words people in the last days will mock the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and keep in mind that He is coming again as the Lion from the tribe of Judah to pour out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world. Thus, they are saying that there is no judgment of God and they, like Judah are worshiping all kinds of gods.

Think about it. The human heart is a factory for idols. And idols multiply, they have short shelf lives and before long you have to find another god to worship and there are plenty out there but they will not help you in time of need, they can't bring salvation to your life, only Jesus can!

Now what about our nation, should we pray for it? I believe we should because God has not said that we should not. Who knows what will happen with our nation but let's continue to pray. Some may feel we have passed that point of no return, I don't know but I can pray.

In Matthew 12:31 Jesus said, **“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.”** This unpardonable sin is the rejection of what the Holy Spirit is doing, bringing Christ to you. If you reject that, then you will not be forgiven your sins. And there comes a point where you can reject the work of the Holy Spirit so much that you pass the point of no return, you are lost for eternity.

The religious leaders of Jesus day came to that point in John 8:39, where we read, **“Therefore they could not believe. . .”** For the Southern Kingdom of Judah, no prayer was going to stop the judgment of God because they refused to turn back to God!

VERSES 15-17

1. What is the Lord saying here? He is saying basically this, “Do you think you can enter My house to come and worship Me when your life is in rebellion against Me, your life is filled with wickedness? Then you come to Me and bring Me a sacrifice thinking everything is okay? It is not okay!” Of course God did not accept that kind of behavior, and yet, look at His love for His people. In all the evil they were committing before Him, He still calls them, **“My beloved.”** God was ready to forgive them but that did not mean the judgment was going to stop. They were going into captivity for all their wickedness.

And we see this love of God for His people here in verse 16. The Lord likens His people to an olive tree. You see, the olive tree was important because the olives were not only eaten but they made oil. It was something that was precious to them and that is how God looked upon His people, the Jews. But, because they turned from Him He was going to break the nation of their idolatry. The nation was going to be burned by their enemy and that is what the Babylonians did!

God was patient, He was longsuffering but now they had crossed the point of no return. Instead of worshiping the true and living God they were worshiping Baal! Baal was a male fertility god that brought forth crops, the rain, sunshine, or so they thought.

And what God is doing here is He is bringing judgment against them and the god they worshiped in the form of droughts and famine. Again, in Deuteronomy chapter 28 we see God warn them of this. He said, **“Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. . . . And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.”** Deuteronomy 28:17-18, 23-24.

VERSES 18-19

1. What God showed Jeremiah was a plot by his own people from his home town of Anathoth to kill him! Understand who is coming against Jeremiah, the religious leaders, for Anathoth was one of the priestly cities in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. They were to be the moral and spiritual leaders of the nation but instead they were plotting to kill the prophet of God because they no longer wanted to hear the Words of God.

2. Does that sound familiar? It should because today we see the church coming after Bible believing Christians because we believe that Jesus is God, that He alone can save us from our sins, that He was crucified and rose the third day, that the Bible is the Word of God.

Let me show you what I mean. There has been a departure from the faith in recent years and it is growing. We have Seeker Friendly Churches, Emergent Churches, and Purpose Driven Churches and let me show you what they feel must happen for all churches to conform to this way of believing. We are told,

According to Rick Warren, these people are resisters and are standing in the way of Purpose Driven progress. In a June 14th article written by Rick Warren on his website (What Do You Do When Your Church Hits a Plateau?), Warren told pastors and church leaders not to be discouraged about slow change in their churches. He told them it would take time . . . and in many cases it would take these resisters either leaving the church or simply dying. Warren stated:

If your church has been plateaued for six months, it might take six months to get it going again. If it's been plateaued a year, it might take a year. If it's been plateaued for 20 years, you've got to set in for the duration! I'm saying some people are going to have to die or leave.

Moses had to wander around the desert for 40 years while God killed off a million people before he let them go into the Promised Land. That may be brutally blunt, but it's true. There may be people in your church who love God sincerely, but who will never, ever change.

For Warren to couple his statement about dying or leaving with a statement about God killing off a million people is ignorant at best, subliminal at least. Coupled with his mention of 40 years in the desert and Warren's teaching that God always did good things in numbers of 40, Warren's intention in this statement seems obvious. In addition, the concept of *get with the program, change or die* is very common in New Age circles, that those who don't get on board (or ride the wave as Leonard Sweet puts it), will have to die. Listen to the words of renown New Ager Barbara Marx Hubbard:

Christ-consciousness and Christ-abilities are the natural inheritance of every human being on Earth. When the word of this hope has reached the nations, the end of this phase of evolution shall come. All will know their choice. All will be required to choose. . . . All who choose not to evolve will die off. (See The Plan)

Furthermore, Leonard Sweet, in his book, *Soul Tsunami*, says that:

A sea change of transitions and transformations is birthing a whole new world and a whole new set of ways of making our way in the world. . . . It is time for a Postmodern Reformation . . . Reinvent yourself for the 21st century or die. Some would rather die than change (pp. 17, 75).

Rick Warren (whose endorsement sits on both the front and back covers of Sweet's book) says that *Soul Tsunami* "shows us why these are the greatest days for evangelism since the first century." In an audio set done by Rick Warren and Leonard Sweet called *Tides of Change*, the two men elaborate on this and make it clear that those who don't ride this new wave will not make it.

One of the tools Rick Warren uses to help churches become Purpose Driven is a book called *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change*. The book is sold on Rick Warren's website and is written by Dan Southerland. According to pastors.com (Rick Warren's website to pastors), Southerland is the director of "Church Transitions Inc., an organization that trains pastors and church leaders to effectively manage major transitions. Southerland . . . is the leading expert on implementing the Purpose Driven paradigm in existing churches."

Chapter six of *Transitioning* is called "Dealing with Opposition" and is just one of many ways Rick Warren tries to convey the fact that those who oppose him are less than desirable.

Southerland states:

We have experienced two major sources of criticism during our transitions. The first is Christians from more traditional backgrounds. . . . Not all of our traditional backgrounded Christians have been critical - just the ornery ones. Our second source of criticism is traditional church pastors. Again, not all traditional church pastors - just the meaner ones (p. 116).

Southerland tells readers that "some folks are going to get very angry." He goes so far as to liken opposers of Purpose Driven to "leader[s] from hell." He says:

If you have read Nehemiah recently, you will remember that Sanballat is Nehemiah's greatest critic and number one enemy. Let me put it plainer than that. Sanballat is a leader from hell. We all have some Sanballats in our churches. This is the guy who opposes whatever you propose. . . . You cannot call this guy a leader from hell to his face - but you could call him Sanballat (p. 115).

- <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/resistersdieorleave.htm>

So I guess they are getting in place pastors, leaders who will succumb to these lies and they will mold their congregations to this new way away from God not to God. And for those who reject they need to either leave the church or die! Great church growth plan and tragically it is working. Take a good look for yourself at how many churches in town are Purpose Driven, Seeker Friendly, Emergent and I think you will be shocked!

When you stand up for the truth it will cost you something just like we see here with Jeremiah. But it will be worth it to stand up for the truth, to stand up for Jesus!

VERSES 20-23

1. I don't know about you but I can understand what Jeremiah is feeling and what he is asking God to do to these people, some his own family, wipe them out before they wipe him out! Now we are not to pray like that, we need to pray for our enemies but we do struggle with this from time to time depending on what we are going through and where we are looking, outward instead of upward!

2. And in verse 21 notice what these religious leaders were fighting against. They did not want to hear the Words of God any longer. What a sad day that must have been and like I have said, we are living in a day when religious leaders, pastors no longer want to teach the Word of God and the people are loving it!

And like in Jeremiah's day, God will take care of it, judgment will come. The thing we need to remember and be thankful for is that God is gracious, He is merciful, He is longsuffering and patient but there comes a point where judgment will come and I think we are getting very close!

3. As we move into chapter 12 Jeremiah enters a theological crisis, one that Asaph went through in Psalm 73 and I'm sure we all have had times in our life where we question these things as we will see.

JEREMIAH 12

VERSES 1-2

1. Jeremiah understands God's righteousness but he wants to talk with God about His judgments. Jeremiah is saying, "Lord, You are righteous, You are good and You allow me to talk with You. But I do have this complaint, why do the wicked prosper? Why are You allowing them to continue on, just wipe them out?"

This was the struggle that Jeremiah was going through, the prosperity of the wicked. They seemed to have no problems in life while Jeremiah, a prophet of God, did. It is truly a blessing being a child of God, but it is not always easy. We must not lose our focus.

You see, we have forsaken this life for Jesus to spend an eternity with Him. But you have to keep reminding yourself of that. Asaph, in Psalm 73 said, "**But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**" Psalm 73:2-3.

Asaph was looking at how the wicked prospered and how he suffered so much in this life even though he loved God and they didn't! He did not see this as fair and he even generalized about the wicked and the good life that they had. It was so bad that he almost backslid away from God! They never had problems and even when they died it was with ease! Obviously not true but that is the way Asaph felt, that is how he saw things.

How did Asaph get a correct perspective of things? I love this. Psalm 73:17 tells us that it was not, **“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.”** As Asaph spent time with God he got a proper perspective of things because now his view of the situation was from above and not from below!

For us, that can also happen! What can we do to correct this eye or I should say, ***“I”*** problem? We need to spend time in His Word, in prayer, in church to hear the Word of God. We need to keep our eyes on Him and as we do we will not be moved, our feet will not slip, because we understand the end of the wicked, their eternal punishment, that they don’t get away with anything! We have a view of the situation that is from above and not from below!

VERSES 3-4

1. Just in case God forgot, Jeremiah is reminding God that his faith was real and the things that are happening to him should stop and they should come upon the wicked, those who are coming against Jeremiah and really the Lord!

This again reminds me of what Asaph was struggling with as he said in Psalm 73:13, **“Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence.”** As we compare ourselves to the wicked we do look good but we are not to compare ourselves with the wicked, that is not the standard. The standard is God and thus, it is only by His grace and mercy that we remain. Again, the perspective for Asaph and for Jeremiah was clouded because of the ***“I”*** problem they had.

2. We may at times respond like Jeremiah, but that is the flesh. Remember when James and John were rejected in Samaria and they asked Jesus if they should call fire down from heaven and destroy these people, wipe them out, burn them up. Did Jesus say to His men, “Right on, burn them up!”?

Not at all, not even close. In fact we read in Luke 9:55-56, **“But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.’ And they went to another village.”** You see, if you feel that is the way to deal with your enemies, to gather together your weapons and fight against these enemies of God, Jesus is saying that you are not being guided by the Spirit of God. We are to come with the love of God, even to our enemies. That is the Spirit of God! Yes we can pray for their plans to be destroyed but we are to also pray that their hearts would be changed, that they would come to the saving faith that is only found in Jesus!

3. Now the wicked are bold, they are arrogant, they are proud, it is the nature of man apart from Christ and even in Christ we battle against the flesh daily! But here in verse 4 we see that the wicked are saying that Jeremiah won’t see their destruction because it isn’t coming, no matter what Jeremiah might say. And they are saying these things in the midst of a famine and drought! God was warning them, trying to get their attention and they did not see this as anything but, kind of what we would say today, “Mother nature!” How wrong they were and how wrong people are today. God is warning of His coming judgment and people refuse to see, they refuse to hear but it won’t stop the judgment from coming. The only way out is Jesus!

4. Now keep in mind that Jeremiah is angry, his eyes are focused on the wicked, his thoughts are upon all they are doing and all they are getting away with and not the Lord. And now God is going to respond back and I think you may be surprised by what God says to him. Let's read on and see.

VERSE 5

1. God answers Jeremiah by asking him a question. That is interesting because God does that when we begin to question Him, when we put Him on trial. Now I also think God is trying to toughen Jeremiah up but the idea of putting God on trial because He did something wrong is not right and what God does with Jeremiah He also did with Job.

In Job 38 we see God begin to question Job with some 70 questions. For some 37 chapters Job and his friends were trying to figure out the how's and why's of God and they came to the wrong conclusions. Now, here in Job 38 God is going to correct their errors. Listen to what the Lord says in the first several verses of Job chapter 38. We are told, "**Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: 'Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?'**" Job 38:1-7.

The questions that God is asking Job were unanswerable. Then why did God ask them in the first place? I think God wanted Job to understand that there is one God and it is not Job! It is as Andersen wrote, “That God speaks at all is enough for Job. All he needs to know is that everything is still all right between himself and God. . . . To that extent it does not matter much what they talk about. Any topic will do for a satisfying conversation between friends. It is each other they are enjoying.”

Also, it is as Derek Kidner wrote about God answering our questions, “God’s answer is never philosophical, as though he owed us explanations, but always pastoral, to rebuke us, reorientate us or reassure us.”

2. God speaks forth with two metaphors and like I have said, they are in the form of a question. The first one dealt with running and if Jeremiah felt it was difficult to run with the footmen then he is going to have trouble running with the horses! What does that mean?

The footmen were a picture of his hometown or the Southern Kingdom of Judah itself and the trouble he was facing and if this was too hard for him, when the Babylonians come in, the horses, he will not be able to contend with them.

The second one dealt with a time of peace and if this has been difficult for you while Jerusalem is still standing, in this time of peace, then how will you stand when the Babylonians come in and destroy this city and take the people captive? On another level the Lord could be saying that the relatively peaceful setting of Anathoth, with its minor opposition from treacherous family members, served to prepare Jeremiah to struggle against greater antagonists, the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and its leaders! Probably both do apply.

3. Now as tough as it was going to get for Jeremiah and as tough as it will get for us, how are we going to stand strong. I may be able to keep pace with the footmen but with horses, no way? So how can I accomplish this, how can you accomplish this?

In Isaiah 40:28-31 we are told, **“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”**

In other words, our strength comes from the Lord. He helps us to keep pace with the horses you might say. He helps us to stand strong in the midst of turmoil. He is our strength! May we *NEVER* forget that!

VERSE 6

1. God warns Jeremiah not to listen to his own family because they are going to try and deceive him; they are going to smooth talk him to follow after their ways instead of the ways of God. How tough that is when people come against you but when your own family does, that is even harder! Who would he go to for comfort, for strength, to talk to, to lay his burdens down upon? The same person we can go to any time of day or night, the *LORD!*

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”** Thank you Lord that you are never too busy for us, may we never be too busy for you!

VERSES 7-9

1. What is the Lord talking about here? He is talking about the judgment that is coming and it is coming upon His people or **“My heritage”** or **“My inheritance.”** God wanted to bless His people but they came out against Him like a lion, fighting against Him.

Next He speaks of His people being a **“speckled vulture”** and how the other vultures have seen her as being different and are coming against her. In other words, the other nations, the pagan nations are going to come against God’s people and they are going to be victorious. Not because their gods were stronger but because Judah had turned from the One true God and this is the judgment! The Southern Kingdom of Judah will be destroyed!

VERSES 10-12

1. God is speaking of the leaders who have led the people into idolatry and destruction. Because of their actions, destruction was coming. And we are not only speaking of political leaders here but spiritual leaders as well, pastors. Let me share this with you. We are told,

The spreading cancer of apostasy in the Church is not confined to theologians and church conferences. It can be found at the grass roots level, in local churches.

Consider, for example, The Episcopal New Church Center in Walkersville, Maryland. This church hired a public relations firm to develop a print and television advertising campaign. One of the first ads in this campaign carried a banner headline that read, “To Hell With Church!” It showed a man thinking, “If I want to feel guilty, I’ll eat some cheese fries.” Another ad in the series showed a painting of Christ nailed on the Cross. Scrawled over the painting were the words, “Of course people with pierced body parts are welcome in our church.”

The Maryland church really went wacky when it moved to producing TV ads. They hired a fellow known for the kinky cartoons he produces for *Saturday Night Live*. His first ad for the church opened with a father and son tossing a baseball to each other in the front yard.

“Guess what, Timmy?” the father asks. “Tomorrow your mother and I are going to take you to church.” The father continues, “Not only will you be able to learn about the wages of sin and eternal damnation, but you can play fun games like ‘Bible Sword Drill’ and sing inspirational songs like ‘Kumbaya’ and ‘I’ve Got Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart.’”

Dejected by this prospect, little Timmy walks into the middle of the road and holds up his hands in surrender as a semi-truck blows its horn and bears down on him.

Not only apostate, but sick.

- http://www.lamblion.com/articles/articles_signs5.php

If judgment came to Judah because of their sin, their apostasy then can the judgment of churches in America be far away? I don’t think so!

VERSE 13

1. God now speaks of their fields, the crops that they have planted and the fruit from their labors was nothing but thorns and not wheat! Why did God judge their crops? Keep in mind that the Jews had now come to believe that their fields were producing great fruit because of Baal and not the Lord. Thus, the Lord shows His people that this is the fruit of their idolatry, their fields are not going to produce the wheat that they have planted but they will be overgrown with thorns!

2. I think that there is a spiritual application to this as well. They rejected the Words of God, the bread of life and were listening to the false prophets, whose words were empty, and thus, in the end they will have nothing, they will be fruitless. Here is another warning to us and to pastors that we need to heed. We are to read, listen, apply the Word of God in our life if we want to be fruitful in the work we do for the Lord.

That is what Paul told Timothy, **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, *that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”** II Timothy 3:16-17.

VERSES 14-17

1. In the midst of God’s judgment we see it tempered with His mercy and grace. Yes they were going into captivity for their sin, but God was going to bring them back into the land again.

2. Also, God is extending the gift of salvation to the Gentiles and yes, even in the Old Testament we see this. If they would turn to Him, if they would obey His Words He would bless them. But, if they turned from Him, if they rejected His Words they would be destroyed!

3. As I close this evening I hope you are seeing that we are very much living in the days that Jeremiah spoke of, the apostasy of people. And let me leave you with this to think about. We are told,

The nations cannot be saved on their own terms or by their own gods. They must take the trouble to come and learn how to worship the one true God.

Jeremiah's prophecies contradict contemporary notions of religious pluralism. In 1996 the *New York Times* reported on a controversy in the Reformed Church in America. A pastor in Spring Lake, Michigan, no longer believed that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. In the words of one member of his congregation, "We do not know the limits of God's grace, and not knowing that, how can we possibly say we know these people are going to heaven, and these are not?"

The pastor of the church compared universal salvation to a great cathedral lined with stained-glass Windows: "Inside stand groups of Jews, Christians and Muslims. Each group reads the story of its faith in a particular window. All the windows," he wrote, "are illuminated by the light of God."

This is a popular view in post-Christian America, the view that there are many windows to divine light. The New Testament, of course, denies this view of salvation. Jesus Christ testified that he is the only way, the only truth, and the only life (John 14:6). But universal salvation was already ruled out in the Old Testament. Even in Jeremiah 12, a prophecy about the salvation of all nations . . .

Can unbelievers be saved? Yes, but only if they become believers! The condition for entering into blessing with the people of God is swearing by God's name. The grace of God is available to all the nations of the world. Yet it is only given to those who come to the one true God and confess his name.

- Philip Graham Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, p. 231

And it is from that kind of teaching, that all roads led to God and our lack of knowing God's Word that have given us these statistics. Keep in mind that this pastor did this in 1996, as well as many others from that time forward and here we are now some 18 years down the road and a recent report shows that 37% of evangelicals rejected the claim that Jesus is the only way to heaven. Also, 52% of American Christians agreed that religions other than Christianity can lead to eternal life.

May we as Christians wake up and heed the warnings, God's judgment is coming and many are blinded to it until they are taken into captivity like Judah! Remember what the Lord said, "... 'Obey My voice.'" Jeremiah 11:7. May we heed His Words to us and ***OBEY!***