

FALSE SECURITY: THE TEMPLE SERMON AND MISCELLANEOUS ORACLES

Jeremiah 7—13; 26

FALSE SECURITY Jeremiah 7:1—10:25

A Call for Moral Integrity (7:1—8:3; 26:1-24)

It is impossible to reconstruct the activities of Jeremiah during the period of 620-609 BC. Since no clearly identifiable incidents or oracles for these years are found in the book, it is assumed here that the prophet became disillusioned with the superficial nature of Judah's response to Josiah's reform and withdrew from a public ministry. The years of silence, however, do not infer a rejection of his call as God's spokesman. Once the tragic death of Josiah at Megiddo (609 BC) stunned the nation, God touched anew His sensitive servant and Jeremiah reappeared, vainly attempting to stay the doom that hovered over his beloved nation.

Following the brief reign of Jehoahaz (3 mos., 609 BC), Pharaoh Necho placed Jehoiakim on the throne. Those were difficult days for Jeremiah and Judah. Jehoiakim was an immoral and incompetent ruler who bitterly opposed Jeremiah.¹ The covenant reforms of his father were dreams of the past. The people were convinced that divine displeasure with the reforms had played a decisive role in Josiah's death. Judah's sin was deeply entrenched: morality was relegated to the past. However, on the surface, the religious life seemed healthy: temple worship was well attended.² External ritual was most elaborate. Jerusalem was considered to be the city of God; the sacred ark was thought to be the throne of the Most High. Because of God's promise, Jerusalem and the Temple were considered inviolable: He would protect them from all foes. Had He not delivered the city from the hand of Sennacherib (701 BC) in the days of Hezekiah? (Cf. Isa. 37; 2 Kings 8—19; 2 Chron. 32.)

Shortly after Jehoiakim had taken the throne (cf. Jer. 26:1), God commanded Jeremiah to "stand in the gate" of the Temple (Jer. 7:2; 26:2) and proclaim the Word of the Lord to all of Judah.

The Temple Sermon (7:1-15; 26:1-6)

Jeremiah's attack was not on worship itself. The problem the people faced was one of security. The international scene was chaotic: Assyria had disappeared as a political power (cf. 612 BC); Babylon was on the ascendant.

It is impossible to reconstruct the activities of Jeremiah during the period of _____ .
(620-609 BC)

The years of silence do not imply a _____ of Jeremiah's call.

(rejection)

The tragic death of King _____ at _____ touched anew God's sensitive spokesman.

(Josiah, Megiddo)

_____ reigned three months; Pharaoh _____ placed _____ on the throne.

(Jehoahaz, Necho, Jehoiakim)

Jehoiakim was _____ and _____ .

(immoral, incompetent)

The people blamed Josiah's untimely death on the _____ he sponsored. They were convinced that divine _____ led to the national defeat.

(reforms, displeasure)

The famous Temple Sermon is found in _____ and _____ .

(Jeremiah 7:1-15, 26:1-6)

Jeremiah did not condemn _____ itself.

(worship)

The problem was that of true _____ .

(security)

cy, and Egypt had made Judah a puppet state (cf. the removal of Jehoahaz and placing of Jehoiakim on the throne). Internally, Josiah's death had removed the leader committed to covenant renewal. Now the people had assembled at the Temple probably for the great fall harvest festival.³ This was their place of security; however, Jeremiah saw clearly that this was a fundamental part of the national tragedy—they worshipped a place (the Temple, 7:4) rather than the Person (God). The good and important aspect of worship was not accompanied by right actions (7:3). Honeycutt rightly interprets three vital aspects of true worship: it contains a theology, a pattern or form of expressing devotion to God, and "a system of ethics" to guide conduct.⁴ Israel had abandoned the ethical responsibility of the covenant relationship (7:3,5,6). The Ten Commandments had been violated (cf. First, Second, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth).

They trusted in "deceptive words" (7:4), i.e., "words of a delusion," or "falsehoods." The triple repetition indicates the magical significance attached to the Temple. A deceived people produced deceptive words; false security produced degenerate conduct.⁵ Consequently, the people stood before God in empty worship (7:10). The Temple had become a "cave," or "den of robbers" (7:11; cf. Matt. 21:13): it was a hiding place for evil doers. Therefore, the people were warned of the coming judgement as in the days of Eli (1 Sam. 1—4) when God had destroyed Shiloh⁶ (cf. the sins of Eli's sons, 1 Sam. 2:12-17), and the ark had been captured by the Philistines. Jeremiah announced the same fate for Jerusalem (7:14): God's promises are morally conditioned. True religion goes beyond slogans, creeds, reverence for a book, and elaborate edifices. National security is directly related to obedience to God's moral laws. Election must be accompanied by moral responsibility. Although ritual can play an important role in worship, place and form must never replace the Person of God and ethic in true religion.

The arrest (26:7-24)

The people reacted angrily to Jeremiah's sermon. Instead of repenting, they arrested him and accused him of blasphemy. The religious leaders requested a death sentence for the prophet whose only sin was that of telling the people the truth about themselves (vv. 9-11; on blasphemy, cf. Lev. 24:10-16). Jeremiah responded that the words spoken were not his but Yahweh's (vv. 12-15).⁷ The civil leaders spared the prophet in spite of the opposition of the priests and the prophets. They argued from a similar incident that happened a century before when Micah had prophesied that Jerusalem would become ruins (Mic. 3:12). On that occasion God's messenger was not sentenced to death (vv. 16-19). However, with regard to Jeremiah, Baruch added an additional note explaining the seriousness of the incident. He included the story of the murder of the prophet, Uriah, who had preached a similar message to that of Jeremiah (vv. 20-23). Evidently, Jehoiakim's vassal

The people worshipped a _____ rather than a _____.

(place, Person—God)

Worship was not accompanied by _____.

(right actions)

Israel had abandoned the _____ responsibility of the _____ relationship.

(ethical, covenant)

The people trusted in "deceptive words," or _____ and placed their confidence in the _____.

(falsehoods, Temple)

A _____ people produced _____ words.

(deceived, deceptive)

The Temple had become a _____.

(Compare your answer with the text)

National _____ is directly related to _____ to God's moral laws.

(security, obedience)

_____ and _____ must never replace the _____ of _____ and _____ in true religion.

(Place, form, Person, God, ethic)

The religious leaders request a _____ for Jeremiah.

(death sentence)

What was the charge levelled against Jeremiah?

(blasphemy)

Jeremiah's life was spared by the _____.

(civil leaders)

_____, a prophet of Israel around 735 BC, also prophesied the destruction of _____.

(Micah, Jerusalem)

treaty with Pharaoh Necho included an extradition clause. Following the death notice, the text (v. 24) returns to the defense of Jeremiah (cf. v. 19). Shaphan was the scribe who participated in the Josianic reform (2 Kings 22:3ff.). Evidently, Jeremiah had good relations with at least one noble family, and Ahikam came to his rescue before the civil authorities (cf. Jer. 36:10,25; 39:14; 40:5 ff. for continued friendly relationships with this family).

Intercession prohibited (Jer. 7:16-20)

God commanded Jeremiah not to pray for the people for He would not hear him (v. 16; cf. Jer. 11:14; 14:11). Although intercession was one of the prophetic functions (cf. Amos 7:2,5; Ex. 32:30-32), prayer was forbidden here because the people were so sinful. To illustrate, an example was given of the worship of "the queen of heaven" (v. 18). This was probably the worship of Ishtar,⁸ a fertility goddess from Mesopotamia (cf. Jer. 44:17-25). The "cakes" were probably baked in the form of the nude goddess, or her symbol, a star. Because of the people's sins, divine anger and wrath would be poured out on the land (v. 20).

The inadequacy of sacrifice (7:21-28)

God requires faithfulness, not sacrifice. Sacrifices can only be acceptable when there is a right relationship between God and man (cf. Jer. 6:20; Ps. 51:15-19). The prophet began sarcastically (v. 21): the people were committed to the external worship pattern (cult), but not to divine covenant obedience. "Burnt offerings" were completely consumed. "Sacrifices" were frequently eaten by the worshippers. What good would these offerings do when offered by unclean hands? Evil obscured the Divine Presence. Did God command sacrifices in the beginning (v. 22; cf. Amos 5:21-24; Hos. 6:6; 8:13; Isa. 1:10-12)? To the contrary, religion then was a simple fellowship and devotion to God.⁹ Alien rites had been superimposed on God's plan. God's call for obedience (v. 23) had been rejected since the Exodus (vv. 24,25). In fact, the people trusted in their sacrifices more than in the prophetic word (v. 27). Because of their disobedience, "truth" (i.e., faithfulness) "has perished and has been cut off from their mouth" (v. 28).

Sinful rites (7:29—8:3)

The prophet makes a call for national mourning (v. 29). "Cut off your hair" was a sign of lamentation (cf. Jer. 16:6; Mic. 1:16; Job 1:20): lamentable things had happened. The house of the Lord had been defiled (v. 30; cf. 2 Kings 21:5). Also, there was the sin of "Topheth,"¹⁰ or "the valley of the son of Hinnom" (v. 31). This was located just south of Jerusalem and later became the rubbish dump for the city where fires burned continuously. The name came to be used synonymously for Hell (Gehenna, cf. Mark 9:47,48). Prior to the fall of Jerusalem (587 BC) the valley was the scene of pagan rites, including human sacrifices (cf.

MATCH the following:

sacrifices were completely consumed
burnt offerings were frequently eaten by worshipper

(Compare your answers with the text)

God's call for _____ came before

(obedience, sacrifices)

The people trusted more in _____ than in the _____

(sacrifices, prophetic word)

To "cut off" one's hair was a sign of _____

(lamentation or mourning)

Topheth, or the valley of _____ was used as a New Testament synonym for _____

(Gehenna).

(Hinnom, Hell)

The valley of Hinnom was the scene of pagan rites including _____

(human sacrifices)

2 Kings 23:10). Bright asks if the people had misunderstood Exodus 13:2, the command to dedicate the first-born to the Lord.¹¹ God did not condone human sacrifice, and it was explicitly outlawed by Josiah (cf. 2 Kings 23:10). Jeremiah prophesied that the valley would become one of “dead bodies” (vv. 32,33). Judgement would come because of the people’s sin. The dead would not have proper burial (v. 33), and the bones of the leaders would be defiled. In death, the people would be exposed to the heavenly bodies they had worshipped; ironically, these, in turn, would be important in the day of judgement (v. 2). Tragically, their sanctuary would become a cemetery: all would be punished, including the dead!

**A Doomed Nation
(8:4—10:25)**

Irrational sin (8:4-7)

Sin is irrational. “Do men fall and not get up again? Does one turn away and not repent?” (i.e., “turn back,” v. 4).¹² Yet Jerusalem has continually sinned and not repented (vv. 5,6). The pathetic situation is graphically expressed:

Even the stork . . .
Knows her seasons;
And the turtledove . . . and the thrush
Observe the time of their migration;
But My people do not know
The ordinance of the Lord (v. 7).

The knowledge referred to is one of experience. Literally, “my people do not know how Yahweh rules” (Heb., *mishpat*). Wild birds experience (know) instinctively the divine order or rule; however, Judah does not recognize the divine order that governs her.

False wisdom (8:8-12)

Not only is sin irrational (vv. 4-7), the sin of rejecting God’s Word is illogical.¹³ Jeremiah condemns the false interpretation of the law (v. 8). The “lying pen” (lit., *sheger*, i.e., “false,” “a delusion”; cf. Jer. 3:23) “has made it into a lie;” however, the real force of the section is a play on the “law of the Lord”: (v. 8) and “the word of the Lord” (v. 9). What kind of wisdom is it that rejects the Word of the Lord? The result will be the loss of that which is precious (“wives” and “fields,” v. 10). The sin of greed has obsessed the people, even to the prophets and priests (cf. Jer. 6:12-15). All practise deceit and deal in superficial cures for a mortal wound (vv. 11-12).

False timing: a belated recognition of sin (8:13-17)

Jesus observed that a barren tree would be cut down (cf. Luke 3:8,9; 13:6-9); previously, Jeremiah had prophesied that Judah’s fruitlessness would result in destruction (v. 13). At the final hour, the “fortified cities” would

What would be the ironical judgement on the people?

(Compare your answer with the text)

Sin is _____ and _____

(irrational, illogical)

False _____ comes from false

_____ of the _____

(wisdom, interpretation Law)

The Law of the Lord (8:8) is related to the _____ of the Lord (8:9).

(Word)

The result of false _____ will be the _____ of that which is precious.

(wisdom, loss)

not provide safety. The ultimate result of apostasy would be destruction—self destruction (vv. 14, 15; cf. Jer. 4:4). Only when death was at hand would the people belatedly admit, “we have sinned against the Lord” (v. 14c). Once again the projected invasion would come from the North: “From Dan is heard the snorting of horses . . .” (v. 16). Also, God was sending poisonous snakes among the people, and no snake charmer’s art would turn aside their bite (v. 17). The poisoned water (v. 14) and poisonous serpents (v. 17) echo the Exodus experience (cf. Jer. 15:23ff. and Num. 21:6ff. respectively). The difference between the two is that now there was no cure.

The prophet’s grief (8:18—9:6)

Jeremiah’s sympathy and love for his people is poignantly reflected as he expresses his deep grief over the coming destruction. He also realizes that the righteous would also suffer with the unrighteous in that day (v. 18). Then a cry comes as though the Exile were already accomplished, “the cry . . . from a distant land” (v. 19). However, the inner grief of the Lord comes back in His lament: “Why have they provoked me with their graven images . . . ?” Consequently, time had run out: “Harvest is past, summer is ended . . .” (v. 20). The season for the grain harvest and that for the fruit harvest (end of summer) had past. The proverb was one of wasted opportunity! Furthermore, His people’s wounds were His (v. 21). And then come two questions: “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” (v. 22). The questions are rhetorical: yes, there was balm in Gilead! The best medicinal herbs were found there, and yes, the best physicians were also located there. “Why then has not the health . . . of my people been restored?” The answer is obvious: they refused to take the medicine prescribed for the illness. The cure remained unused while the patient died! Judah had rejected God’s remedy!

The prophet had identified himself so deeply with his people until their hurt became his hurt. He mourned for the “slain of the daughter of my people!” (v. 1). Tragically, this verse has been misinterpreted representing Jeremiah as “the weeping prophet.” He was a “suffering prophet”; however, he never wasted time in weeping when there was a task at hand.¹⁴

The honest confessions of a heartsick prophet continued: he felt a strong impulse to flee and look for a “wayfarer’s lodging” in the desert (v. 2). He wanted to leave the adulterous, treacherous society with its deceit, lies and unrestrained evil (vv. 2,3). But he resisted the escape mechanism and stayed with his people until the bitter end. He was unwilling to occupy the seat of a spectator in life’s struggles. He would play his part. He knew there was no escape from the sovereignty of God, so he accepted his responsibility.

Jeremiah’s grief was heightened by the tragic social conditions. Evil was so prevalent that one could not trust his neighbour (v. 4a). In fact, “every brother deals craftily”

Apostasy is _____ .
(self destructive)

An invasion would come from the _____ .
(North)

God would also send poisonous _____ and
poisoned _____ because of unrepented

(snakes, water, sin)

Jeremiah mistakenly has been called the _____
_____ ; it is better to see him as
the _____ prophet.
(weeping prophet, suffering)

Jeremiah felt a strong impulse to _____ ;
however he resisted the _____
_____ and stayed with his people until
the _____ .
(flee, escape mechanism, bitter end)

(v. 4b). Literally, each one is a “supplanter,” i.e., is “like a Jacob” (*ya’gob*). Slander and lies were daily occurrences (vv. 4,5). The root of the social problem was summed up in their refusal to know the Lord (v. 6).

The consequences of sin (9:7-11)

Once again the prophet’s voice turns to the familiar theme of judgement. Because of the people’s hypocrisy (v. 8), the Lord cannot remain inactive, for it would compromise His integrity (v. 9). Consequently, the land and cities will be laid waste: total desolation will be the consequences of their sin (vv. 10,11; cf. the frequent description of the coming desolation: Jer. 2:15; 4:25; 34:22).

The reason for judgement and a call to mourning (9:12-22)

“Why is the land ruined, laid waste . . . ?” (v. 12). God answers: “Because they have forsaken My law . . . and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it . . .” (v. 13). The Covenant has been violated. The people had given themselves to idolatrous Baal worship (v. 14; cf. Jer. 5:18,19). The results of their apostasy would be bitterness (“wormwood”) and death (“poisoned water,” v. 15; cf. Jer. 8:14; 23:15; Ezek. 23:31-34). Baal worship was man’s invention, not God’s revealed truth. Since death and the Exile were near (v. 16), send “for the mourning women,” i.e., the professional mourners employed to lament and stimulate grief in others (vv. 17,18). Bitter cries will be heard from Zion because of her fate (v. 19). Now the women will really have something to wail over and will not be employed to stimulate grief (v. 20): “death has come up through our windows . . .” (v. 21).¹⁵ The imagery continues: as the Reaper enters the houses and relentlessly stalks the streets, he will leave a trail of death like sheaves after the harvester, and there will be no one left to gather the bodies and bury them (v. 22).¹⁶ Bright suggests that perhaps the poem was written in 598/7 BC just prior to the Babylonian siege and deportation.¹⁷

The true ground for boasting (9:23,24)

Not only was Jeremiah an excellent poet and narrator, he was also versed in the wisdom tradition (school) of his people. Perhaps the date for these verses is prior to Nebuchadnezzar’s second invasion (ca. 602/1 BC; cf. chronological chart), when the counselors (wise men) were elated over their “freedom” from Babylonian domination. God’s oracle came with penetrating power: man is not to “boast” (lit., “glory”) of his “wisdom,” “might,” or “riches” (v. 23). These may be good if properly used; however, the things that are most important are “lovingkindness” (*hesed*), “justice” (*mishpat*), and “righteousness” (*tsedhaqah*) (v. 24; cf. Jer. 2:2 and 4:1,2 for commentary). Once again Jeremiah returns to the covenant terms (cf. influence of Hos. 4:1,6; 5:4; 6:4,6). As in so many epochs, the “wise men” of Jeremiah’s day put their priorities on material

The word Jacob means _____

(*supplanter*)

God says the reason for the ruined land is (9:13)

(*Compare your answer with the text*)

Man is not to _____ of his _____ ,
 _____ , or _____ (9:23).

(*boast, wisdom, might, riches*)

The most important elements are _____
 _____ , _____ and _____ .

(*lovingkindness, justice, righteousness*)

The “wise men” of Jeremiah’s day put their priorities
 on _____ .

(*material values*)

values. They boasted of their accomplishments: wisdom, power and wealth. In so doing, they lost sight of the only true ground for boasting: the God-given qualities of His grace (lovingkindness), justice (right decision), and righteousness (conformity to His established norm).

The fate of the circumcised—yet uncircumcised (9: 25,26)

Those who do not have a right relationship with God are “uncircumcised of heart,” i.e. spiritually. Judah’s neighbours, although circumcised,¹⁸ would likewise suffer the fate of those who did not obey Him. The cutting of “the hair on their temples” (v. 26) was a religious rite practised by some Arabian tribes (cf. Jer. 25:23; 49:32; Lev. 19:27). The emphasis here, as in the Temple Sermon, is placed on inner obedience rather than external rites or ceremony.

A contrast: a satire on idolatry (10:1-16)

The text of this passage is difficult. The Septuagint omits verses 6, 8 and 10, and verse 9 follows verse 5. Apparently the words are addressed to a people living among pagans and need to be cautioned about heathen idolatry.¹⁹ It is possible that the oracle is from a late period in Jeremiah’s life after the first exile in 598 BC. Regardless of the date, the passage strongly resembles Isaiah 40:19-22; 44:9-20; 46:5-7 and Psalms 115:3-8; 135:15-18.

The people are cautioned about learning (copying) worship customs of “the nations” (vv. 2,3). Sarcastically, idols are presented as lifeless creations of men (vv. 3,4).²⁰ They have to be secured with nails so they “will not totter.” Also they “cannot speak” (v. 5): there is no revelation from an idol. Furthermore, in contrast with God, who is active in history, “They must be carried, Because they cannot walk” (v. 5). In contrast, there is none like Yahweh (vv. 6-16): His reality and sovereignty are seen in creation and history. He is “the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King” (v. 10). He is the Creator of the world (v. 12) and sustains that which He formed (v. 13). The God of Jacob is not a lifeless creation of a workman: He is the living “Lord of hosts” (v. 16).²¹

The coming judgement (10:17-22)

The rejection of God (true wisdom) results in ruin. Prepare to flee the city—the siege is presented as a present reality (vv. 17,18). The people respond: “Woe is me . . .” (v. 19). Because of the foolish shepherds, the flock is scattered (v. 21); they have lost homes and children (v. 20). Once again the desolation is projected as coming from the North (v. 22).

Jeremiah’s Prayer: the source of true knowledge (10:23-25)

Once again the influence and style of the wisdom school appears. From the prophet’s own experience, he knows that true knowledge comes from God alone, not

Who are the “uncircumcised of heart”?

(Compare your answer with the text)

Idols are _____ creations of _____.
(lifeless, men)

There is no _____ from an idol. Idols
 must be _____.
(revelation, carried)

Yahweh’s reality is seen in _____ and
 _____.
(creation, history)

Because of the foolish _____ (leaders),
 the flock (people) will be _____.
(shepherds, scattered)

from man himself (v. 23; cf. Prov. 20:24). Apart from God, mankind (*'Adam*) cannot find freedom or the fulfillment of his potential, nor can the individual man (*'ish*) direct his own steps. The prayer continues: "Correct me" (the Septuagint reads "correct us"), "O Lord, but with justice;" (i.e., "in just measure," RSV), "Not with Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing" (v. 24). He knows that complete justice would mean total destruction; therefore, he prays for the correction of his weakness (and the people's) according to divine mercy, not wrath (v. 24; cf. Pss. 6:1; 38:1). The prayer closes with a request for retribution on the nations that have "devoured Jacob," i.e., Israel (v. 25; cf. Jer. 11:20; 12:3; 15:15; 17:18).

MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS

Jeremiah 11:1—12:17

A Call to Covenant Fidelity (11:1-17)

The initial phrase of 11:1 indicates a new division in the topically arranged book. The prose style is similar to that found in the Temple Sermon (Jer. 7:1-15). Immediately, the major concern is presented: a call to covenant faithfulness (vv. 2-4; cf. Deut. 4:23).²² The Covenant was addressed to the community (forefathers): "Cursed is the man" who does not heed the words of this Covenant (cf. Deut. 27:15-26). The reference evidently is to the Sinaitic Covenant as interpreted in the Deuteronomic call to "covenant faithfulness."²³ Jeremiah responded favourably (v. 5c: he said, "Amen") to the initial stages of the Josianic reforms. He understood that obedience to the Covenant was a prerequisite to renewal (v. 5; cf. Deut. 6:3; 7:8; 11:9); also, the Covenant was conditional. Consequently, God's past punishments had come as indicated in the covenant agreement (vv. 6-8). Now a more serious breach had occurred: "a conspiracy" (i.e., revolt) "has been found . . . They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors . . ." (forefathers, vv. 9,10). This "broken covenant" probably referred to Jehoiakim's reversal of Josiah's policy. Once again the message of "disaster" was proclaimed (v. 11), accompanied by ridicule heaped on the impotency of idolatry (v. 12). Central in the Law was a monotheism, although incipient in form, that excluded the worship of other gods (Ex. 20:3): Judah had violated the cardinal command, "For your gods are as many as your cities . . ." (v. 13; cf. Jer. 2:28b). Then, once again, God commanded the prophet not to pray for his people (v. 14; cf. Jer. 7:16): for prayer to be heard, covenant obedience was required (vv. 15-17).

A Plot Against Jeremiah's Life and His Complaint (11:18—12:17)

This is the first of the passages known as the "con-

Apart from God, _____ cannot find _____
(*man, freedom*)

Jeremiah prays for _____ with _____ according to divine _____, not _____
(*correction, justice, mercy, wrath*)

Josiah's reform was a call to covenant _____

(*faithfulness*)

Is the following statement true or false? The Sinaitic Covenant was unconditional. _____

(*false*)

The reference to 11:9-10 probably refers to _____

_____ reversal of _____ (his father's) policy.

(*Jehoiakim's, Josiah's*)

God's Lament (12:7-13)

In the foregoing passage Jeremiah had complained of the conspiracy against his life and of the prosperity of the wicked. He had requested God's vengeance on his opponents and was utterly discouraged at the failure of the people to respond to his God-given message. He needed consolation and encouragement. In that context, God tenderly revealed that He, too, suffered in abandoning His "inheritance . . . into the hand of her enemies" (v. 7). Nevertheless, because of the people's defiance ("like a lion"), He had left them to the consequences of their action; "many" had made the "pleasant field a desolate wilderness" (vv. 8-13). Jeremiah understood God to be the Lord of history who was working toward His goal. Israel, His chosen instrument, had rebelled and had suffered invasion (598 BC?); however, in that process, God had also suffered!

Exile and Restoration of Israel's Neighbours (12:14-17)

"Many shepherds have ruined my vineyard . . ." (v. 10). Israel's aggressive neighbours (Syria, Moab, Ammon) had probably served as a coalition commissioned by Nebuchadnezzar to check the rebellion of Jehoiakim until the Babylonian king could arrive on the scene.²⁸ Now these neighbours were condemned to exile for their evil against Israel (v. 15; cf. Jer. 25:8,9; 27:4-11); however, God would ultimately have compassion and restore them if they would "learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name . . ." (v. 16; note: the people of God are those who swear by His name, or Person, the ones committed to Him personally. The people of God are constituted by a "faith" response—not an ethnic or racial decree). If they would not come to Him, they would be permanently uprooted (v. 17). In spite of Israel's narrow particularism, God's universalism was understood by the prophet (cf. Jer. 1:5,10; 48:47; 49:6).²⁹

FIVE WARNINGS Jeremiah 13:1-27

The formula in verse 1 indicated a new division in the material. Five pessimistic passages continue the general theme of apostasy and punishment and are probably related to the latter part of Jehoiakim's reign.

The Linen Waistband (13:1-11)

The figure of a waistcloth buried in the moist earth of the Euphrates (vv. 5-7) was used to illustrate the destructive effect of Jehoiakim's pro-Babylonian foreign policy (cf.

Why were Israel's neighbors condemned (12:15)?

(Compare your answer with the text)

How could they be restored (12:16)?

(Compare your answer with the text)

The people of God are constituted by a _____ response, not an _____ or _____ decree.

(faith, ethnic, racial)

The linen waistband illustrated _____

(Compare your answer with the text)

Jer. 2:14-19) and the resulting religious syncretism (cf. 2 Kings 24:1-7). Expositors are divided as to the interpretation of verse 4: did the prophet twice make the approximately 1200-mile round trip to the Euphrates? Or, is this a prophetic parable? The text is somewhat ambiguous: the Euphrates (Heb., *perath*) may be the famous river in Mesopotamia; however, there was a town *Parah* about three miles from Anathoth. Some expositors feel that he went there and that the obvious play on words would have achieved the same symbolic meaning. Symbolic acts were considered to be charged with unique power and were used by the prophets to intensify the verbal declaration of the divine Word. It not only depicted what was about to happen, it also was thought to hasten the occurrence. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel relied frequently on such procedures (cf. Jer. 13; 16; 19; 28; Ezek. 4—5). Since the narrative is presented simply, it seems preferable to accept the account at face value. In his deep commitment to do God's will, Jeremiah made the long trips: he was willing to do whatever the Lord asked of him in order to impress the divine message on his people.³⁰

The symbolic act has been interpreted variously; however, the linen garment seems to stand for Israel, the priest nation (cf. Ex. 19:5,6; Lev. 16:4), who, in her pride, had gone after other gods. This pride would be destroyed by the Babylonian Exile (vv. 9,10). The intimate use of the waistband wrapped around the body evidently symbolized the close relationship which Israel should have enjoyed with the Lord; "but they did not listen" (v. 11).

The Wine Jugs (13:12-14)

Jeremiah used a proverb, "Every jug is to be filled with wine" (v. 12), and then used the figure of drunkenness to describe divine judgement (vv. 13,14; cf. Jer. 25:15,16; Ezek. 23:31-35). Just as drunkenness dulls the perception and alertness, so Israel's sin had made her insensitive and incapable of defence in the hour of crisis (v. 14). There would be no mercy when judgement falls!

A Warning Against Pride (13:15-17)

The only alternative to destruction was a rejection of personal pride (cf. arrogance and self-trust) and a turning to God, giving Him the glory (vv. 15,16a). Forgiveness was still possible. The path the nation had taken was dark and dangerous (v. 16). Then, anguish of the prophet's spirit burst through as he lamented the probable rejection of his counsel; if God's offer were rejected by Israel's pride, the Exile was imminent (v. 17).

A Warning to the Royal Family (13:18,19)

The king and queen mother were probably Jehoiakim

What was the value of symbolic acts? _____

(Compare your answer with the text)

The only alternative to _____ was a rejection of personal _____ and a _____ to God.

(destruction, pride, turning)

and Nehushta (cf. 2 Kings 24:6-17). The occasion was the captivity of 597 BC. After a three month reign, Jehoiakim surrendered Jerusalem to the Babylonians and was taken into exile. Jeremiah prophesied that help would not come from Egypt (v. 19). The Exile was a reality and they should accept the "lowly seat" with dignity (v. 18).

A Warning to Jerusalem (13:20-27)

The last warning in the series is addressed to Jerusalem (v. 27) and probably was delivered around 600 BC, some years after the battle of Carchemish (605 BC). The city is personified as a woman who is about to be dishonoured by those she formerly called friends (v. 21).³¹ The reason for the invasion from the North (v. 20) is plainly given: because of the "magnitude" of their "iniquity" (v. 22), because of forgetting God (v. 25), and because of their "adulteries" (v. 27). She will be exposed in the nude (vv. 22,26). The term "adultery" also means "idolatry." The pagan shamelessness of Judah will be exposed: prostitution and idolatry are abominations to the Lord.

Verse 23 does not limit the freedom of the will (cf. Jer. 17:9,10; there is hope in the Lord; also 2 Cor. 5:17) or the possibility of repentance. Physical characteristics are unchangeable; however, "you also can do good who are accustomed to do evil" (cf. Jer. 31:29,30). Man is born with a free will, but the force of habit may make it a "slave" (cf. John 8:34). Judah had become set in her habit of sin (cf. Hos. 5:4-6); nevertheless, the prophet still hopes that she will exercise her freedom and repent before it is too late: "Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will you remain unclean?" (v. 27c). Once again the tragic condition was that she did not want to change (cf. Jer. 3:22,23).

The warning to Jehoiakim was occasioned by the impending _____ of _____ BC.

(captivity, 597)

_____ was personified as a _____.

(Jerusalem, woman)

The term "adultery" also means _____.

(idolatry)

Two abominations to the Lord are _____ and _____.

(prostitution, idolatry)

People are born with a _____, but habit can make it a _____.

(free will, slave)

Endnotes

¹Many of the oracles found in chapters 7—20 were delivered during Jehoiakim's reign (609—597 BC).

²One lasting result of Josiah's reforms was the centralization of worship in the Temple.

³Another suggestion for the setting has been Jehoiakim's inauguration.

⁴Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr., *Jeremiah: Witness under Pressure* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1981), p. 25.

⁵Other Old Testament writers also deal with the essential nature of religion: cf. Pss. 15; 24; 51; Amos 5:21-23; Micah 6:6-8.

⁶Shiloh was located about eighteen miles north of Jerusalem. It was an important sanctuary during the early days of Israel. The Old Testament does not record the destruction of the city; however, excavations of the site, modern Seilun, indicate that Shiloh was destroyed about 1050 BC (cf. the Philistine capture of the ark) and was not rebuilt until about 300 BC. The ruins were probably visible in Jeremiah's day.

⁷One of the signs of a true prophet is that he delivers Yahweh's Word.

⁸The cult became popular in Judah under Manasseh and took the place of the older Canaanite Astarte worship. Since Ishtar, or Venus, was considered to be an astral divinity of love and fertility, her cult took place on open terraces (cf. Jer. 19:13; 32:29). The evident popularity of this cult indicates the brevity of Josiah's reform movement.

⁹Sacrifices did not exist and were divinely regulated (cf. Lev. 1—7); however, moral dispositions had greater importance. In the day of the new covenant, Jeremiah considered that a sacrificial system would still exist (33:18).

¹⁰Probably the original meaning was "fireplace," (cf. Isa. 30:33). The vowels were later changed to correspond to the Hebrew *bosheth*, or "shame."

¹¹John Bright, *Jeremiah*, Vol. 21 of *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1965), p. 57. Cf. F. Cawley and A. R. Millard, "Jeremiah," in *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, ed. by D. Guthrie *et al.* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 634.

¹²Jeremiah makes a play on the word *shuv* ("turn" or "repent"). The form appears six times in these verses.

¹³Honeycutt, *Jeremiah: Witness under Pressure*, p. 30.

¹⁴Cawley and Millard, "Jeremiah," p. 68.

¹⁵In a Ugaritic (Canaanite) myth, Baal refused to have windows put in this newly constructed palace for fear that his enemy, Mot, god of the nether world (death), would enter through them and take away his daughters, Dew and Rain. Cf. Guy P. Couturier, "Jeremiah," in the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 311; and James Leo Green, "Jeremiah," in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, ed. by Clifton J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), p. 71, footnote 61.

¹⁶Jeremiah's powerful poem could well be the work of a modern apocalyptic sage envisioning the awesome destructiveness of nuclear weaponry. The timelessness of his message is breathtaking!

¹⁷Bright, *Jeremiah*, p. 73.

¹⁸On circumcision cf. Jeremiah 4:4; 6:10; also, Romans 2:25-29.

¹⁹James Philip Hyatt, "Jeremiah," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 5, ed. by Nolan B. Harmon *et al.* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 897.

²⁰Honeycutt, *Jeremiah: Witness under Pressure*, p. 35.

²¹Idolatry is not a thing of the past: it is an ever-present reality appearing in many forms—not just wood and metal images. It is that which is worshipped apart from God. The tragedy is that people make their gods in their image and fashion them with care. They become more and more like that which they have created: empty, "scarecrow gods" in the garden with nothing living or dynamic to offer a troubled world, nothing but their own lifelessness; decorated, but dead.

²²The Old Testament records covenants offered to Noah (Gen. 9:8,9), Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:18; 17:1,2), and Israel (Ex. 19—24). The latter, a suzerainty type treaty, was the most important. It was based on the grace of God and required obedience on the part of the recipient. The sovereign God *called* (elected) and *promised* to supply that which was necessary to perform the designated function; then He offered a *covenant* which must be accepted by the chosen one(s); the *law*, or direction, followed which guided or regulated the relationship between God and His people (the contracting parties). The pattern followed with periodic covenant renewal ceremonies. The Sinaitic covenant was both conditional (Ex. 19:5) and personal. Therefore, each generation was called to publicly accept and commit itself to the stipulations (law) of the covenant: cf. Exodus 19—24; Joshua 24; 2 Kings 22—23; and Nehemiah 8—10. Josiah's renewal was an effort to conform to the pattern established and broken by the people. Only through covenant obedience was protection guaranteed by the suzerain.

²³Cf. the Introduction, Lesson 1, "Deuteronomy and the Reforms of Josiah."

²⁴Cf. John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1948), p. 201. Other passages included in the "confessions" are: 15:10-21; 17:9-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18.

²⁵Cf. Jeremiah 20:7-18 for additional comments regarding the confessions.

²⁶Anathoth was the home of the descendants of Abiathar, David's friend (cf. 1 Sam. 22:20-23); however, Abiathar had been deposed by Solomon in favour of Zadok, who supported his candidacy for the throne (cf. 1 Kings 2:26-35).

²⁷Isaiah 40—55 deals with the problem of suffering as does the book of Job. Isaiah 53 points the way to the solution found in Jesus and the cross.

²⁸Cf. 2 Kings 24:1-4; also Couturier, "Jeremiah," p. 314.

²⁹Because of the universalism expressed here, some expositors have considered this to be a post-exilic addition to the oracles of Jeremiah. There seem to be insufficient grounds for the observation. Jeremiah is a champion of God's universal love for His total creation.

³⁰Cf. Green, "Jeremiah," pp. 84-86. Couturier, "Jeremiah," p. 314, refers to the discourse as a parable, or simply a "literary device."

³¹Since the reign of Hezekiah (715-687 BC), Judah had intermittently been friendly with the Babylonians (cf. 2 Kings 20:12-19). After the battle of Carchemish, Jehoiakim paid tribute to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:1). When he revolted (ca. 599 BC), the Babylonian army invaded and captured Jerusalem (598 BC).

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (*Levels 1, 2, and 3*). Read the study guide and answer the following questions:

1. Evaluate the popular religious scene following Josiah's death with regard to the following: temple worship; external ritual; Jerusalem; the ark; Jerusalem and the Temple.

2. Name Honeycutt's three vital aspects of true worship.

3. What was the fate announced for Jerusalem (Temple Sermon)?

4. What was the reaction to Jeremiah's sermon?

5. Why was the prophet forbidden to pray for the people?

6. What was the probable worship of the "queen of heaven"?

7. When are sacrifices acceptable?

8. How does Jeremiah describe Judah's sin in 8:4-7?

9. Describe the prophet's reaction to the message from God (Jer. 8:18ff.)

10. What is the imagery of Jeremiah 9:20-22?

11. What is the true ground for boasting?

12. For Jeremiah, what would ultimately transcend the loss of the cherished physical institutions?

13. What was the apparent reason for the opposition of Jeremiah's relatives?

14. How did popular theology interpret "divine justice"?

15. What does the lament (Jer. 12:7-13) reveal about the nature of God?

5. Interpret the warning of the wine jugs (Jer. 13:12-14).

Supplementary activity (*Levels 2 and 3*). Read the material indicated for each question and answer the following:

1. Evaluate the reign of Jehoiakim. (See 2 Kings; 2 Chronicles; read John Bright, *A History of Israel*, pp. 325-327.)
2. Define the meaning of election in the Old Testament. (Read R. E. Clements, *Old Testament Theology*, pp. 87-96; read an article on "Election" in a Bible encyclopedia or dictionary.)
3. Define the meaning of covenant in the Old Testament. Name four principal Old Testament covenants. List the stipulations for each. Which are conditional? (Read R. E. Clements, *Old Testament Theology*, pp. 96-103; see "Covenant" in a Bible encyclopedia or dictionary.)
4. Discuss the meaning of repentance (*shub*) in the Old Testament. (Refer to a Bible encyclopedia or dictionary.)
5. Define the popular dogma of the inviolability of Jerusalem.

Advanced activity (*Level 3*). Read material indicated for each question and answer the following:

1. Discuss the significance of the ark in Israel's history. (See a Bible encyclopedia or dictionary; read John Bright, *A History of Israel*, pp. 155,168,200; also see *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, footnote, p. 99; in the text see the footnote on Jer. 3:16.)
2. Discuss the implications of the central sanctuary for worship in Israel. How does it differ from the tabernacle concept?
3. Compare the complaint of Jeremiah 12:1-4 with that of Habakkuk 1 and Job (see also Ps. 73). What answer does God make in Jesus?

Optional Supplementary Reading

H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel*, pages 74-98.

Seminar Discussion

Read *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Volume 6, pages 14-18. Discuss the following concerning literary components of the book of Jeremiah:

1. Identify Mowinckel's three types of materials found in Jeremiah.
2. What is the weakness of the position?
3. With precautions, what is the value of type analysis?
4. Identify the prophet of disaster. What are its basic elements?
5. Analyze the lawsuit pattern. What essential elements are included? What is the probable source? How does it relate to the covenant form or formula? Identify the protasis-apodosis of the covenant. How does Jeremiah employ the conditional form?
6. When did the prose sermon form originate?
7. How did Jeremiah use the lament?
8. What other literary forms appear in the book?