

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 1:1--3:25

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Clarence Macartney, the famous preacher, was once delayed in the town of Dijon, France, so he visited the famous cathedral there. He was impressed by the ornate stone pulpit. Just beneath the pulpit was the figure of a recording angel, holding a tablet in one hand and a pen in the other, with face upward turned toward the pulpit, waiting to hear and record what the preacher says. "Always," writes Macartney, "the angel stands below our pulpits. He is not waiting to put down things which the congregation might like to record---in pleasure or displeasure---but whether or not the words of the preacher are true to the gospel with which he has been entrusted."

Although Jeremiah had serious reservations about being a preacher (prophet) he preached as one whom the "recording angel" was watching. Henry Halley says in his *Bible Handbook*, "Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office (626 B.C.), Jerusalem was partly destroyed (606); further devastated (597); finally burned and desolated (586). Jeremiah lived through these terrible forty years, "the close of the monarchy," "the death agony of the nation"; "a pathetic, lonely figure, God's last measure to the Holy City which had become hopelessly and fanatically attached to idols; carelessly crying that if they would repent God would save them from Babylon."

Jeremiah preached a message that was almost unanimously despised and rejected by his countrymen---his best friends and even his own family wanted him silenced. Some of what he preached even Jeremiah did not want to say (cf. Jer. 20:7-18), but the word of the Lord was a "fire in his bone" and he could not keep it in. When Jeremiah (who was born into a priestly lineage) was a youngster there was no written copy of the word of God available---it had been "lost". But in the days of Josiah, when Jeremiah was about 25 years old, the Book of the Law was "found" and Jeremiah writes, "Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart." (Jer. 15:16). Jeremiah preached about sin, about righteousness, about hypocrisy, about idolatry, about politics, about degenerate religion, nearly every subject relevant to man in his relationship to God and man.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why call Jeremiah away from his lineal inheritance to the priesthood and make him a prophet? (1:1-4)
2. Why did Jeremiah protest that his youthfulness should excuse him from being God's prophet? (1:6-9)
3. How did God set Jeremiah "over kingdoms to pluck up...and build"? (1:10-19) Did he?
4. What is "worthlessness" and how does going after it make one "worthless"? (2:1-8) Any worthless today?
5. How could Judah become enslaved simply by "forsaking" Jehovah? (2:9-19) Minus God aren't we free?
6. Why would the people of God say their addiction to wickedness was a "hopeless" situation? (2:20-28)
7. Why would Judah complain against God---and say it was innocent of Jeremiah's accusations? (2:29-37)
8. Does Jer. 3:1-2 prohibit divorced people from remarrying? (3:1-5) Be sure to note the context!
9. How could the Lord want Judah back after she had become so wicked? (3:6-10) Is this grace or what?
10. The ark of the covenant was **not** to come to mind...be remembered...missed...made again by Judah? (3:14-18). When would this occur? Re-read Hebrews, chapters 9 and 10 for your answer!

"Great sermons begin in great hearts, and hearts are made by tilling them with the needs of a brokenhearted, suffering world. Jesus' trained ears could hear a beggar's cry, see a widow's mite, above the shouts of the throng."

Anonymous

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 4:1--6:30

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The word of the Lord had become an object of scorn (6:10) to the whole nation of Judah. Jeremiah desperately plead with them to "...ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls." Jeremiah was entreating his people to return to the unadulterated word of God, revealed in the Law and Prophets. But they were incorrigible—"they refused to take correction" (5:3), and were not in the least ashamed of their wicked ways (6:15). They were "utterly faithless" (5:11), "foolish, stupid...skilled in doing evil...not knowing how to do good" (4:22). Jeremiah's imploring was answered, "We will not walk in it!"

.Such an imperative gave impetus to what we call The Restoration Movement at the beginning of the 19th century through the O'Kellys, Stones, Campbells and others. It was a clarion call to the disobedient, confused people of God to "ask for the **ancient paths**" (the New Testament) and to walk in them. Listen to a few of the pleas of **The Declaration and Address** by Thomas Campbell:

1. "The Scriptures of the New Testament are the supreme and ultimate source of authority for Christian faith and practice."
2. "The New Testament contains a perfect and complete model of the Christian institution, as to faith, life, worship, ordinances, and government."
3. "The Scriptures are essentially and intentionally intelligible, as far as matters of salvation are concerned."
4. "The church needs reforming by being restored to the New Testament model, and a complete restoration is both desirable and possible."

It is obvious, even to some non-Christians, that our present secular society is much like that of Jeremiah's nation and urgently needs to return to ancient paths. But what about all those in our world professing to be followers of Christ? Are they asking for the ancient paths...giving heed to the trumpet of God's word from modern prophets? Closer to home, what about the Independent Christian Church? Have we strayed from the ancient paths?

QUESTIONS:

1. Were Gentile nations to know God through an obedient Israel? (4:1-8) (cf. Deut. 4:6; Ezek. 5:5; 1 Kings 10:1, 24).
2. Why would Jeremiah dare say to the Lord "thou has utterly deceived this people"? (4:10; cf. Jer. 20:7).
3. Why would Jeremiah describe God's judgment on Judah like the end of the world? (4:15-31).
4. You think our society is totally depraved--what about Jeremiah's ? (5:1-9) Would your faith have survived?
5. Should we think of God as someone to fear? (5:22-29) (cf. Psa. 2:11; Prov. 19:23; 2 Cor. 5:11; Phil. 2:12)
6. Do people really love to hear false prophets? (5:30-31; cf. Isa. 30:9-11; 2 Tim. 4:3-5; 2 Thess. 2:9-12).
7. Is it possible for the word of the Lord to become an object of scorn for God's people today? (6:10)
8. What would greed have to do with shamelessness? (6:13-15) Do you know anyone like this?
9. Who said ask for the new paths? Not God! (6:16-19) Does God's revelation for man's redemption need updating and revision to make it relevant? (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3-11).
10. How would Jeremiah be an assayer of God's people? (6:27-30). Should Christians be spiritual assayers?

The hymn with the chorus, "Hold the fort, for I am coming..." written by P. P. Bliss, was suggested to him by an incident in the American Civil War. At Altoma Pass the fort being held by Gen. Corse was besieged by the enemy under Gen. Hood, who summoned it to surrender. Many were the casualties, but in spite of the hopeless situation the defenders remained **faithful**. Then a white signal flag across the valley, some twenty miles away, waved the message, "Hold the fort, for I am coming." General Sherman was marching to the relief of the beleaguered and **faithful** defenders.

---A Naismith

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 7:1--10:25

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“What ever happened to obedience and discipline?” That is what God is saying through Jeremiah in these chapters. Being hyper-active in religious ceremony is not necessarily **obedience**, from God's perspective.

And proclaiming there is peace and tranquility when truth and virtue are being viciously assaulted is not **worship** as God defines it! Jeremiah's “congregation” (the nation of Judah) felt secure in it's religious institution (“the temple of the Lord”, 7:1-4) and hyped-up, hypocritical worship there (7:8-15). Just “going through the motions” at church service is not **discipline** as God describes it. God's **chosen** people, whom he blessed time and again with miraculous deliverance and abundance, refused to accept God's discipline and correction for their entire 800-year existence from the Exodus to Jeremiah! (7:21-28). They had utterly obliterated truth from their thinking and acting.

During the American Civil War General Robert E. Lee sent word one day to General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson that the next time he rode in the direction of headquarters the Commander-in-Chief would be glad to see him on a matter of no great importance. General Jackson received the message and immediately prepared to leave the next morning. Rising very early, he rode the 8 miles to Lee's headquarters against a storm of wind and snow, and arrived just as Lee was finishing breakfast. Much surprised, General Lee inquired why Jackson had come through such a storm. Jackson replied, “But you said that you wished to see me. General Lee's slightest wish is a supreme command to me.” God's **chosen** people today, **the Church**, must constantly examine itself in these fundamental issues of faith----**obedience, worship and discipline!** When these do not conform to God's word there is no such thing as faith! God's slightest wish must be in the mind of the church His supreme command. Whatever discipline, struggle, trial, or labor the church is called upon to endure to obey God, she must hasten to do. If she does not, she may be consigned at judgment to the lake of fire and brimstone reserved for those with the mark of the beast. It could happen! Read again Christ's admonitions to the 7 churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2:1--3:22).

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jeremiah say, “Do not trust in the words—‘This is the temple of the Lord’”? (7:1-15)
2. Is it possible today to involve children in worshiping idols? (7:16-20) (read 1 Jn. 5:21; Matt. 18:5-14).
3. Most of America and its leadership is not listening to its “prophets” about infanticide (abortion)(7:29-34) could she be destined to become another “valley of Slaughter”? (cf. Jer. 19:1-9; 2 Kings 17:17; Psa. 106:37).
4. Is there anything in idolatry that would cause people to be dumber than animals? (8:1-7). (cf. Hosea 9:10; Isa. 1:3; Prov. 6:6-11; 2 Pet. 2:12, 22)---and what about our idols, Evolution? “Me?” Government?
5. Has the “false pen of the scribe” (the literati, the media, and the movie-maker) healed the wound of our society lightly with their shameless perversions? (8:8-13)
6. “Is there no balm in America?” (8:22). Isn't the church the cure? Or is it a part of the illness?
7. Is it a lack of knowledge of God (9:3) or the lack of governmental regulation that makes it impossible to trust one's neighbor (9:4-9)?
8. If their fathers taught them to go after Baal why is God holding them responsible for doing so? (9:12-16) Why not blame it on their ancestors---see Ezekiel 18:1-32!
9. What are the differences between idols and Jehovah God? (10:1-16) Why isn't worshipping an invisible Jehovah just another form of idolatry? How do you know?
10. If “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps” (9:21, 23) what are philosophers (and everyone is one) and psychoanalysts (and everyone is one) to do

In the North Pacific lies the little island of **Iwo Jima**. Its dry surface of volcanic ash has been likened to a landscape on the moon. For this tin but vital piece of land we paid the terrible price of some **21,000 casualties** in our war with Japan. For the men who took it, it was never a question of a feeling of adequacy or inadequacy, courage or lack of it. They took it **in obedience to a command.**

—*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, p. 909

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 11:1--13:27

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

A staff of American, Russian, Chinese, British and French generals and admirals met in the basement of United Nations headquarters to learn if they have been given any orders from the Secretary General--orders they've been awaiting for 50 years, according to an Associated Press wire story. Orders never came so after about 5 or 10 minutes around a long table, they broke up and went their way. When AP reported the story they had met 739 times and all they had done was meet. The reporter asked why this went on. The answer came, "We're part of the U.N. Charter." All the troops who have ever fought under the U.N. flag in Korea, Cyprus, the Middle East, etc. have been organized on an emergency basis, NEVER ONCE through the U.N. Security Council's military staff committee which had been meeting to approve the minutes of their last meeting. GOOD FOR NOTHING!

God told Jeremiah that the nation of Judah was "good for nothing" (13:10). God wanted to "wear" the chosen people like a beautiful "waistcloth" ("girdle") but they were "spoiled" (Heb. *shachath*, decayed, rotten). They were disgraceful and "good for nothing"! Does it shock you that God would call any of his creation, "good for nothing"? Ezekiel said Judah was like the wood of a grape vine, "good for nothing" but to be burned! (Ezek. 15:1-8). Indeed, even the Good Shepherd judged some people as "good for nothing"!

Jesus told a parable about a "good for nothing" fig tree that (the unbelieving Jews) "cumbered the ground" (Lk. 13:6-9); he said of believers-- "salt of the earth"--- if they have lost their savor they are "good for nothing" (Lk. 14:34-35); he indicated that the servant who kept his "pound" laid away in a napkin, was "good for nothing" (Lk. 19:20ff); Paul warned Jewish-Christians that to seek salvation back in Judaism would make them "worthless, cursed and destined to be burned." (Heb. 6:1-8); and Jesus told the Christian Church at Laodicea that because they were "lukewarm" they were good for nothing but to be "spewed out of his mouth" (Rev. 3:16).

QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think about God refusing to hear the cries of Jeremiah's people? (11:11) Did Jesus ever refuse to hear a request made to him?
2. Why would the Lord ever deny anyone access to his house? (11:15) (cf. Heb. 13:10; Rev. 15:8; Ezek. 44:4-9)
3. How did Jeremiah handle the threats from people in his own home-town? (11:18-23) God's solution?
4. Have you noticed how very much like anyone else this great prophet of God is (12:1-4) asking God "why and how long do the wicked get away with it"?
5. God answers Jeremiah, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!" (12:5-6) Jeremiah is doing God's will--why should he have to suffer so?
6. Did you catch the prediction that Judah's becoming "The Great Speckled Bird" would give the Gentiles an opportunity to turn to Jehovah? (12:9 & 12:14-17). Did any of them? (cf. Esther 8:17; 9:27; Ezra 2:59-62).
7. Could all those "who stubbornly follow their own heart" rather than the word of God today be "good for nothing" as were those of Judah? (13:10) Big-time psychobabble today---"Follow your own heart!"
8. Is God saying it is IMPOSSIBLE for these wicked Judeans to change? (13:23)
9. Are we to understand that some human beings reach a "point of no return" toward God? And know when?
10. Thus far, how would you like to have been Jeremiah? Are you up to it? Taken a "faith-check" lately?

In Chicago, David Johnson was on a scaffold 8 stories high, when he heard a snap and saw his partner fall and felt himself sliding into space. "My whole life flashed before me," he said. "It was very clear. I could remember when I was a kid....Johnson seized wildly at a hanging cable and found himself perched atop an air-conditioner. He slipped through the window unharmed. As for going up again, Johnson said, "That's it for me. I'll never go up again. I've got to find a new trade. It's hard to explain how terrified I was."

—*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, p. 687

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 14:1--17:23

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

William E. Gladstone, faithful Christian and legendary English Prime Minister during Queen Victoria's regency, used to tell friends about a neighbor's little girl who really believed in prayer. Her brother had made a trap that caught little sparrows and she prayed and prayed that it might fail. Suddenly, for three days in succession her face was radiant when she prayed and her absolute faith that the trap would fail was so noticeable her mother asked "Julia, how can you be so positive?" Julia smiled, "Because, dear Mum, I went out three days ago and kicked the trap to pieces!" There's a time to pray and a time NOT to pray. Reuben A. Torrey, president of Moody Bible Institute after Dwight L. Moody died; founder of BIOLA University in Los Angeles, CA.; world traveling evangelist who baptized tens of thousands; author of "The Ten Fundamentals of The Faith" and called "Mr. Fundamentalist", said on his death-bed, "If I had my life to live over again, I would spend less time praying and more time reading the Bible!"

God was emphatic with Jeremiah! "Do not pray for this people!" (see Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1; 16:5). God said it clearly **5 times**. Here is a classic example of the dictum, "Obey God rather than follow your own heart!"

Jeremiah was tender hearted and compassionate. His eyes became rivers of tears lamenting the impending judgment upon his beloved nation (read Lamentations). His heart said, "But God---I don't want my people to have to suffer what you are telling me---I don't even want to give them this message---please, God, hear my lament---let me intercede for them." **BUT GOD CALLED JEREMIAH TO PREACH! Then was not the time to pray!**

The most effective intercession Jeremiah could make would be to CONVERT his countrymen back to the Law of God. Time was of the essence! The situation was imperative! God's word must get out! There's a remnant to be saved! Prayer will not convert others---but persuasive preaching may!

QUESTIONS:

1. Jeremiah tried to "slip one (prayer) in on God" (14:7-9)--what is God's answer (14:11); Jeremiah tried to present mitigating circumstances (false prophets 14:13) for the people's sins--God's answer (14:14-18)?
2. Jeremiah tried to "slip another (prayer) in on God" 14:19-23--what is God's answer (15:1-2)
3. Does prayer change God's will? Then why pray?
4. Can the "saints" (St. Moses, St. Samuel) intercede for us? Who is our Intercessor? Why? (Read Heb. 7)
5. Why blame Manasseh? (15:4) Do our wicked deeds live on after us? But Manasseh repented (2 Chron.33:10-17) "Saved, but with regrets!" Aren't we all! David, Samuel, Eli, Aaron, Jacob, Samson, et al.
6. Although Jeremiah had made God's word his very life (15:16) he had become depressed (15:10-17). Do you ever get depressed that God is not going your way? Would you admit it to God?
7. Jeremiah **accuses** God of being unfaithful, unreliable, deceitful (15:18)---what is God's answer?
8. Why was Jeremiah forbidden to marry? (16:1-9) (cf. I Cor. 7:25ff; Matt. 19:10-12)
9. **Beware of "following your own heart" Why?** (17:9-10). Beware of believing that "psychics" or "psycho-analysts", or even **you**, can know your heart! How can the human heart be revealed? (Heb. 4:12)
10. Has Jeremiah had a "change of heart"? (17:14-18) Can you identify with Jeremiah's "ups and downs"? Now do you see the way the heart of man is deceitful---but the word of God is absolutely faithful?

A mother repeatedly told her little boy to sit down. The boy continued to stand, disobeying his mother. Finally, the mother went to him, and plopped him down in a chair. Fuming, the boy said, "I may be sitting down on the OUTSIDE, but I am standing on the INSIDE."

—*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, p. 1361

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 18:1--20:18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

It is said that on the eve of Napoleon Bonaparte's departure on his Russian campaign, he detailed his strategy to a noble lady with such arrogance and confidence, that she tried to caution him, saying, "Sir, man proposes: but God disposes." "Madam, I propose and dispose too," the little emperor haughtily replied. A few months later he was in full retreat from Russia losing about 400,000 men of a 600,000 man army---they were either slain in battle, starved to death, or frozen to death. Two years later he was forced to abdicate his rule and was exiled to the island of Elba. He escaped from Elba, raised an army, marched on Paris, regained his crown and ruled for a total of 100 days until the famous battle at Waterloo where he was defeated by the Englishman, Wellington. The great Napoleon was taken as a prisoner of war, exiled to the barren island of Helena off the west coast of Africa and died there within 5 years. So it has been with numerous politicians and other leaders who have become inebriated with power. Each in his or her own turn have found that it may be man who proposes, BUT IT IS GOD WHO DISPOSES!

So Jeremiah was taught by God that Judah was clay in the hands of the Divine Potter (see also Isa. 45:9; 64:8; Rom. 9:21; Matt. 20:15). God has every right (that of Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer) to do as he pleases with anything or anyone. It was God's will that if Judah submitted to the working of the Divine hand, he would produce from her a beautiful and useful vessel (2 Tim. 2:20-22). If she refused to allow the Potter to have his way with her then she would be discarded and the Potter will start all over again with a new "lump" of clay.

"The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth,  
that God governs in the affairs of man;  
and if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground  
without his notice, is it probable that an empire  
can rise without his aid?—Benjamin Franklin

QUESTIONS:

1. Does this allegory infer that God made a mistake with Judah as the clay was "spoiled" by the potter's hand? (18:4). Does it teach a doctrine of predestination---that there is nothing we can do to resist God? (18:6)
2. Are the people replying to Jeremiah that it useless to submit to God as clay to a potter? (18:12). Have you ever heard arrogance like that from friends and neighbors? How do you deal with it?
3. Is it true---had Israel (Judah) outdone the heathen (Heb. *goyim*, Gentiles) in forgetting who her God was? (18:13-17). Could God make a similar comparison between Christendom and Islam?
4. More prophets and preachers have been slain by a tongue of unwarranted criticism and gossip or by carping church members than by sword or pistol (18:18). Have you examined yourself about this? How does one deal with this issue, anyway?
5. God repeats; he will break to pieces a nation that fills itself with the blood of innocents (19:1-15). Is the Christian in the right to demand the civil government legislate against a woman's right to have an abortion?
6. What is a priest doing torturing and beating a prophet? (20:1-6). Priests were charged with executing certain prophets (Deut. 13:1-5; 13:12-15). What was Jeremiah's reply to the priest?
7. Why would a prophet of God accuse God of "deceiving" (seducing) him? (20:7-8) Did God not "lay it all out in the open" when he called Jeremiah to preach? Preachers never get upset with God---do they?
8. Looks like Jeremiah has it under control (20:9-13)---what's his source of empowerment and encouragement?
9. Oooops---Jeremiah lost it again! (20:14-18). A prophet of God actually cursing---wishing he were dead? (Jonah, Peter, and maybe others!). Does God want us, or use us if we are despondent and bitter?
10. What about that? Does being a Christian guarantee no emotional, spiritual struggles like Jeremiah's? If we have struggles, does it mean God will have nothing more to do with us? Jeremiah took his problem to the Lord---he had no wife, no friend---not even a psychologist!

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 21:1--25:38

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

History is the consequence of ideas! Deeds are born from thoughts! Choices made are based on values! What is taught transforms for good or for evil. There is probably more emphasis on teaching and learning in the Bible than any other single subject! We become what we learn! (Hosea 9:10). What we think, we are! (Prov. 23:7; Phil. 4:8-9).

Grigory Yefimevich Rasputin (1872-1916), was a religious mystic and court figure whose pervasive influence over Czar Nicholas II and the Czar's wife Alexandra, was a scandal in pre-communist Russia. Born in Siberia, an uneducated peasant, he left his family to become a wandering "holy-man". He soon acquired a wide reputation for both his "faith healing" and his debauched behavior. He was presented to the Russian royal court and made a deep impression on Alexandra because he was thought to be able to relieve the suffering of her hemophiliac son, Alexis Nikolayevich, heir to the throne. Rasputin became the most influential person in the Czarina's entourage. After 1911 many high government offices were filled by the Czar's appointees, most of whom were incompetent. When Czar Nicholas went to the front to take command of Russian forces in World War I, Rasputin became the decisive influence in the Russian government. His famous orgies scandalized the people of Russia, and rumors circulated that he was conspiring with Germany. Called "The Mad Monk" he aroused so much hatred from both the common people and the aristocrats a group assassinated him in 1916. But Rasputin was in a large part responsible for the rising tide of discontent that led to the Bolshevik (Communist) revolution in 1917-1918. Isn't it ironic that numerous men whose legacy to mankind has been evil, began their education in "preparation for the ministry", to name two, Charles Darwin and Joseph Stalin. Friedrich Nietzsche, "God is dead" philosopher whom Hitler worshiped had a father and grandfather who were preachers.

In this lesson Jeremiah has some very solemn and severe words about teaching and teachers. What he has to say about both true and false teaching is singularly significant for the Bible believer. It unequivocally confirms the proposition that false teaching (especially in theology) is responsible for the moral malaise in society today!

QUESTIONS:

1. Is it "Constitutional" for a prophet of God to preach about political and military issues? (21:1-14). Even those issues contrary to "administration policies"? (21:13) Jeremiah was accused of sedition for this!
2. Why the repetition about practical faith---good works, etc. in 22:3 and 22:13-17
3. How could Coniah (a.k.a. Jehoiachin, Jeconiah, Jeconiah, and Joiakin) be "childless" and have children? (22:24-30). (see 2 Kings 24:15; Matt. 1:12---but look at Luke 3:27-18). Did God make a mistake?
4. After the false "shepherds" (religious and political leaders) had devastated God's flock, God promises to raise up a "righteous Branch" (Heb. *tsemach*, "shoot or sprout").(23:5-8). Who? When? How do you know?
5. Jeremiah did not relish condemning false prophets! It saddened him. (23:9-12) He publicly and urgently tried to correct them. Should we do the same today? Publicly? How? (Gal. 6:1-5; James 5:19-20, etc.)
6. How does one distinguish between true and false prophets? (23:13,14,16,17,18,22,26,27,33)
7. Another name for the "good figs" (24:1-10) is "remnant". How was this "remnant" salvaged from such a depraved basket of "very bad figs"? (re-read Isaiah, 8:16, 20). Is teaching the "word" important or what!?
8. Is it fair of God to use Babylon to punish Judah and then to punish Babylon for doing so? (25:1-26).
9. If God is so thorough and severe in the punishment of his "own"(25:29)--"what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (Prov. 11:31; Ia. 10:12-15; Ezek. 9:6; I Pet. 4:17; 2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 14:9ff).
10. Notice the apocalyptic imagery (25:30-38)---is this predicting the end of the world? Yes & No! (compare it with Isaiah, chs. 13 & 14, or Daniel's history of Babylon, Persia, Greece & Rome and you'll know).

11.

"I think of myself as a historian more than a statesman. As a historian you have to be conscious of the fact that every civilization that has ever existed has ultimately failed. History is a tale of efforts that failed, of aspirations that weren't realized, of wishes that were fulfilled and then turned out to be different from what are expected. So, as a historian, one has to live with a sense of the inevitability of tragedy. As a statesman, one has to act on the assumption that problems can be solved." ---Henry Kissinger

Mr. Kissinger, as a historian you need to know about the "Kingdom of Jesus Christ!"

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 26:1--29:32

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

On the morning of Abraham Lincoln's death, a crowd of 50,000 people gathered before the Exchange Building in New York City. Feelings were running high---there was danger of the rage finding expression in violence. Then a well-built man in Army officer's uniform stepped to the front of the balcony and in a voice that rang like a trumpet call, cried: "Fellow citizens! Clouds and darkness are round about Him. His pavilion is dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies, justice and judgment are the establishment of His throne. Mercy and truth go before his face. Fellow citizens! God reigns! And the Government at Washington still lives!" Instantly the tumult was stilled, as the people grasped the import of those words. The speaker was General James A. Garfield, before the Civil War a Christian Church preacher, college teacher/president, and U.S. Congressman; himself to become a martyred U.S. President just 16 years later.

There are astounding statements made by Jeremiah in today's lesson. In chapter 26 Jeremiah faces almost certain death but God is in control of the situation and rescues him through Ahikam (son of Shaphan who was "secretary of State" under Josiah). In chapter 27 Judah's king Zedekiah was conspiring to resist the invasion of Judah. Jeremiah told him that God had ordered him to surrender to the Babylonians when they came because the God who gives control of the world to whomever he wishes and "has given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar." In chapter 28 Jeremiah pronounced God's death sentence on the false prophet Hananiah---and sure enough, "in that same year...Hananiah died." In chapter 29 the Lord told the Judeans to go down to Babylon, live normal lives, seek the welfare of their captors, and he would deliver them in 70 years because he had plans for their welfare and their future! In exactly 70 years God returned some of the Jews to their land!

FELLOW CITIZENS! GOD REIGNS! God is in control! Everyone of Jeremiah's prophecies came to pass exactly as he predicted! Today God reigns over Russia, China, Iraq, America, North Korea, and the church of Jesus Christ. It may not seem so on the T.V. screen, but that's all fallible and circumscribed by the limits of human ignorance. Look to the Bible for the "long haul"! Observe that divine prophecy never fails to come to pass! Yes, even godless governments, through war, suffering and captivity are made to serve God's purposes!

QUESTIONS:

1. What image of judgment would Shiloh plant in Judah's consciousness? (26:6; cf. 1 Sam. 4:10-22 "Ichabod")
2. How does Jeremiah defend his life from those who would execute him for sedition? (26:12-15)
3. Does God leave lessons in history? (26:16-19) Has he left any in recent (last 500 years) history? What?
4. Does God really "give" the world into the hands of heathen governments? (27:1-11) Recently? Why?
5. Is there a test by which to prove a true prophet of God? (27:12-22) Any "prophets" pass the test today?
6. Where did Hananiah get his information that in 2 years "the yoke of Babylon" would be broken? (28:1-4)
7. How would you like to get a prediction that in less than a year you would die? (28:16) What about James 4:14; Psa. 39:5; Job 14:1-2; Psa. 90:5-6; I Pet. 1:24-25--do those give you pause for reflection?
8. Why would God have to command the Jews to "seek the welfare of the city" of their captors? (29:1-9) Did any of them do so?
9. What was the "welfare, future, hope" God had "planned" for Judah? (29:10-14) They were under heathen domination for 500 years after their return! When were God's plans for them fulfilled?
10. One influential rebellious Jew down in Babylon writes that "mad-men", Jeremiah in particular, should be executed. Have you noticed that stalwart men of God today who proclaim God's judgment against wickedness are often verbally castigated as "mad-men"? It's the media---brethren!

If God Forgot

**If God forgot the world, forgot for just one day  
Forgot to send the sunshine, and change the night to day;  
Forgot to make the flowers grow, forgot the birds and bees;  
Forgot to send the sweetness of the south wind in the trees;  
Forgot to give us friendships, forgot to send us rain;  
Forgot to give the children play, forgot to soften pain.  
What would happen to this world and us?  
Would we still be gay?  
If God should forget, Forget for just one day?  
---George M. Anderson**

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 30:1--33:26

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (69-140 A.D.), Roman biographer and historian wrote a biography of the 12 caesars from Julius Caesar to Domitian covering the period from 70 B.C. to 96 A.D., altogether about 166 years. If you think politicians are scandalous in their conduct now, you should read *The Twelve Caesars*, by Suetonius! They were sadistically cruel, sexually profligate, hedonistically indulgent, and heartlessly indifferent to the suffering of their subjects--both rich and poor. With only a few exceptions they all bled the national treasury dry of funds and created economic and social havoc in both Italy and their world-wide empire.

Occasionally a "good" (administratively, at least) emperor would come along. One good administrator was Titus Flavius Vespasian (9-79 A.D.). He ruled 10 years (69-79 A.D.) during which time he restored order to the government and the public finances. He was in the midst of squelching the Jewish revolt of 66 A.D. when he was elevated to Emperor. His son, Titus, eventually destroyed Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews over the Roman empire. And the world was at peace for 9 years. Suetonius writes about the reign of Vespasian, "An ancient superstition was current in the East, that out of Judea would come the rulers of the world. This prediction, as it later proved, referred to two Roman Emperors, Vespasian and his son, Titus; but the rebellious Jews, who read it as referring to themselves, murdered their Procurator, routed the Governor-general of Syria when he came down to restore order, and captured an Eagle (a Roman battle standard)."

The "ancient superstition...in the East" was, of course, the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah to come from the Jewish nation for the whole world. Isn't it interesting that the Romans laid claim to this "ancient superstition!" People of this world are constantly singing the tune---"Some day, my Prince will come....." and looking for an extraordinary, superhuman, beneficent ruler who will set up a tranquil social order and endow everyone with their every material/physical dream. Many Americans have looked for their "Prince" in every president from George Washington to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But our "Camelot" dreams have never been fulfilled. The only "Prince" capable of producing "Paradise Restored" is the One predicted in Jeremiah 30-33.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Jeremiah ordered by God to write in a book all that God had spoken to him? (30:2)
2. Who is "David their king"? (30:8-9) Then how do you interpret the rest of this context?
3. Who is the "prince" who shall be "one of them"? (30:21) And when are the "latter days"? (30:24)
4. How does "At that time" of 31:1 connect what follows to what has been said before?
5. Why the prediction of "Rachel weeping for her children" (31:15-17) fit into these contexts?
6. Now interpret 31:23 through 31:40 as one context and what becomes of the idea that the physical land of Israel belongs to the Jews forever?
7. Why did Jeremiah buy a field? (32:1-35) When was the "everlasting covenant" given? (32:36-44)
8. How does God's promise to "restore their fortunes" connect to forgiveness of all their sin? (33:1-9)
9. Who is the "righteous Branch" from David and what is he to do? (33:12-16)
10. But why would God promise to perpetuate the Levitical priesthood forever? (33:18, 22) Doesn't this contradict the book of Hebrews?

SAMARITANS, YOUR PRINCE HAS COME!

The Samaritan woman who talked with Jesus at the well was waiting for the Messiah to come. As late as A.D. 1925-1926, six-hundred descendants of the ancient Samaritans were living in Palestine and were still waiting for Messiah to come. Every year they gathered for Passover at their temple on Mount Gerizim in Palestine, still convinced they had the *true* faith. They prayed for the coming of the Messiah, not realizing that He had come two millennia before!

—PTB

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 34:1--36:32

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

King Henry of Bavaria became weary of court life and determined he would enter a monastery. When he presented himself to Prior Richard, the faithful monk gave him the strict rules of the order. The king listened eagerly and enthusiastically expressed pleasure at the prospect of such complete consecration. The Prior insisted that obedience, implicit and expressed, was the first requisite of sainthood. The monarch promised to follow the Prior's will in every detail. "Then go back to your throne and do your duty in the station God assigned you." was the Prior's word to him. The king took up his scepter again, and from then until he died, his people said of him, "King Henry has learned to govern by learning to obey."

God puts his stamp of approval on steady faithfulness more than occasional moments of spectacular deeds interspersed here and there in life. The Rechabites (Jer. 35:1-19) were a clan of the nomadic Kenites (1 Chron. 2:55) who had joined the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt (Moses' father-in-law was a Kenite, Judges 1:16). Jonadab (or Jehonadab) had apparently been outraged at the filthy debauchery he witnessed among the Israelites as they clamored for the perversions of Baal-worship (drunkenness, sexual depravity, and infanticide). He covenanted with his family two centuries earlier to remain nomadic sheep-herders and abstain from wine (Baalism was based on agricultural deities and city dwelling). For 200 years they remained faithful to their ancestral covenant (although it had nothing to do with a commandment from God).

The Rechabites had come into the depraved city of Jerusalem to escape the attacks of the Babylonians and other violent gangs roaming the countryside. There they were surrounded by temptations of the wicked populace. Jeremiah was not trying to seduce them by setting wine before them--he knew they would refuse and wanted to use them as a vivid object lesson in faithfulness to the licentious Israelites. Such convictions and courage were as rare in the 6th century before Christ as they are today! And Jehovah blessed their faithfulness, promising that throughout all the centuries there would always be obedient servants of the Lord among the descendants of Jonadab.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would God choose to spare the life of Zedekiah from Babylonian execution? (34:1-7)
2. And why do you suppose Zedekiah and the people covenanted to set free their bondservants? (34:8-10)
3. Would the temporary lifting of the siege of Jerusalem in 588 prompt Zedekiah's disgusting hypocrisy? (34:11-22)
4. Was the Rechabite abstinence a commandment of God? (35:1-11). Do we have to receive a specific command from God regarding every principle or practice of value and goodness?
5. What was the contrast between the Rechabites and the Israelites of Jerusalem? (35:12-17)
6. How was God to reward the Rechabites for their faithfulness to their principles? (35:18-19) Is that enough?
7. Why did God insist that Jeremiah write his message to Jerusalem in a "scroll"? (36:1-8)
8. Do you admire the courage of Baruch? (36:9-26) Do we need that courage in today's world?
9. How many others through history have attempted, like Jehoiakim, to destroy the Word of God? (36:27-31)
10. And, by whose efforts (man and God) has it survived? (36:32). Are you thankful for its survival?

"The English language is a strange language. You would think that full of faith and faithful would be the same thing. They are not. They are related, but they are not the same thing. To be full of faith is to have faith. To be faithful is to keep the faith. It is being true to the trust placed in us by others and by God. Everybody appreciates the person who is faithful, who will never betray a trust and never fail to keep a commitment. When we have not been faithful, it is because some doubt, however momentary or tentative, has crept in."

---1000 Windows, Robert Shannon, p. 83

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 37:1--39:18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Roman emperor Valens (328-378 A.D.) born in what is today Croatia was emperor of the eastern division of the Roman Empire. He sent messengers to Eusebius Pamphili (260-340 A.D.), bishop of Caesarea and venerable Church historian and Christian apologist to try to lure the godly churchman into some heresy by fair words and glowing promises. Eusebius replied: "Alas, sirs, these speeches are fit to catch children; but we, who are taught and nourished by the Sacred Scriptures, are ready to suffer a thousand deaths, rather than permit one tittle of the Scriptures to be altered." The emperor then threatened to take by force all his goods, to torture him, banish him and even kill him. Once again the courageous Christian, who had already suffered imprisonment and torture during the terrifying reign of Emperor Diocletian (284-305), gave answer: "He needs not fear confiscation, who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his country; nor torments when his body can be destroyed at one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow."

If you think those fictitious characters in the movies or on the "soaps" have more troubles than any ordinary person ought to have, take a look at Jeremiah's "Days of Our Lives" in chapters 37--39. He is seized, accused of treason, imprisoned and beaten (37:11-15). After having preached for 23 years (25:3) he is brought before King Zedekiah whose question (37:17) "Is there any word from the Lord?" undoubtedly strained Jeremiah's patience to the breaking point. Zedekiah appears to befriend Jeremiah (37:21); but when some of the princes clamor for Jeremiah's death, Zedekiah cowers in fear and allows these scandalous officials to throw Jeremiah into a cistern where he sinks into the mire (38:4-6). Rescued by a black man from Ethiopia, Jeremiah had to face the spineless king Zedekiah again and tell him of God's awful judgments to come. Next Jeremiah had to witness and live through the siege and destruction of his beloved Jerusalem, and the brutal slaughter and exile of most of his countrymen.

Discard all pretense and superficiality, anyone who would take up the mantle of prophet and spokesman for God! As Jesus so often warned, be sure to count the cost before you "sign-on" as his disciple. The apostle who suffered so very much in soul and body (Paul) cautions us all, "Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). Be in Bible School and learn Jeremiah's formula for victory!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Lord continue to send Jeremiah to king Zedekiah (37:6ff) when the king was not listening (37:1-2)? Wasn't this a waste of time? Couldn't Jeremiah have done something more profitable?
2. If these "princes" wanted to be rid of Jeremiah, why not let him go out (37:15)--why beat and imprison him?
3. What effrontery! Jeremiah preached for 23 years; Zedekiah would not listen; now he orders the prophet into his presence and asks, "Is there any word from the Lord?" (37:17) How did Jeremiah handle it?
4. What was the indictment of the "princes" against Jeremiah the second time? (38:4) Guilty or innocent?
5. What prompted the king to "cave in" to the princes? (38:5) Should political leaders rule by principles or pragmatics?
6. Do you admire the Ethiopian slave for daring to "beard the lion" and advise the king it was wrong to throw Jeremiah in the cistern? Have you "bearded any lions" in high places about wrong lately? (38:7-13)
7. Is there any indication Zedekiah would give heed to Jeremiah's counsel (38:14-28)? Then was Jeremiah's "ministry" a failure? He didn't seem to make many converts for all his courageous preaching!
8. What a tragic way for Zedekiah to learn God's prophet was speaking the truth! (39:1-10) But all rebellious sinners do not come to such an end in this life---Why? How do you handle that?
9. And all obedient believers do not find deliverance in this life as did Jeremiah and Ebed-melech (39:11-18) Why? How do you handle that?

SO ARE THE DAYS OF AN APOSTLE!

"...with far great labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been ship-wrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak?"  
---the apostle Paul, 2 Corinthians 11:23-29

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 40:1--45:28

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The two chief Egyptian deities were Osiris and Isis (supposed to be sun and moon). Other inferior gods were the stork, ape, cat, hawk, and some 20,000 other creatures. Thebes worshiped a ram. Memphis an ox (Apis), Bubastis a cat, Momemphis a cow, the Mendesians a he-goat, the Hermopolitans a fish called "Latus," the Paprimas the hippopotamus, the Lycopolitans the wolf. The ibis (heron) was deified because it fed on serpents; the crocodile was deified out of terror, the ichneumon (weasel) because it fed on crocodiles' eggs. Modern Hindus have 330 million gods and goddesses---8 for every Hindu family. Hindu religion teaches the sanctity of animal life. And so, while they themselves usually live in abject poverty the animals among them are maintained in idleness. India's 450 million Hindus have roughly 75 million cows to worship. And because they are sacred, cows, monkeys, rats and other pests are allowed to eat and damage their crops.

Idolatry is a violation of the FIRST of the TEN COMMANDMENTS. It is an ABOMINATION to Almighty God. God's eternal prison, the "lake of fire and brimstone," is for idolaters (Rev. 14:9ff; 22:15). In spite of God's chastening through natural disasters, war, suffering and death from Babylonian invasion, and the clear, constant message of the prophets, the Jews contemptuously continued worshiping idols. And when many of them fled to Egypt to escape the invading Babylonians (forcing Jeremiah and Baruch to go with them) they refused to repent of their idolatry. Defying Jeremiah and God, they vowed to add the Egyptian goddess, "the queen of heaven" (Ashtoreth---worshiped with lewd acts of sexual immorality) to their insatiable lust for idolatry.

God's prophets predicted that Egypt (and other idolatrous civilizations) would become desolate forever because of idolatry. Deliberate ignorance of the evidence that there is One True God (Rom. 1:18-32) and exchanging that truth for the lie of idolatry brings inevitable doom to any civilization or culture. All idolatry is not restricted to bowing before statues and images. Some idolatry is mental. Some idolatry is ideological---worshiping false ideas (evolution, New Ageism, occultism, etal.) is also idolatry! GOD WILL JUDGE IT!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would Jeremiah reject the offer of a life of ease and safety in Babylon? 40:1-6
2. Why did the Babylonians leave some Jews in the land? and why appoint a Jew to rule them? 40:7-12
3. Who is this "Ishmael" and what kind of person is he who would kill so many people? 40:13--41:10
4. Why did the people seek God's counsel will, 42:1-6, if they had decided to go to Egypt, 41:17-18?
5. Why did Jeremiah say, before he prayed, "...I will keep nothing back from you?" 42:4
6. Why was God so adamantly against the Jews going to Egypt for safety from the Babylonians? 42:7-18
7. Why say Jeremiah was lying when they had earlier asked him to pray for them? 43:1-3
8. Did Jeremiah join the rebellious flight to Egypt willingly? 43:5-7 Did they escape Babylon in Egypt?
9. How did these Jews rationalize their joining in the idolatry of Egypt? 44:15-19
10. Jeremiah was a faithful preacher to the very end---these are his last verbalized words, 44:20-30, did they come to pass?
11. Is idolatry a problem in America today? How? What can be done about it?

A two-inch long discolored eyetooth is revered by 400 million Buddhists as the most sacred object on earth. The tooth is supposed to have been reclaimed from Buddha's funeral pyre in 543 B.C. and was brought to Sri-Lanka 800 years later. Today the tooth sets upon a golden lotus in the glorious Temple of the Tooth in Kandy. It is surrounded by rubies and tons of flowers. Each year 100,000 faithful Buddhists come from many countries to gaze at the sacred tooth. They bring gifts of gold, silver, and jewels to place within the temple.  
---*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, p. 595

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 46:1--49:39

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all predict the downfall of Egypt, the earliest and greatest ancient empire of all time. They predicted Egypt would be reduced to a place of minor importance for all future time. Thus Nebuchadnezzar invaded and plundered Egypt in 572 and 568 B.C. Egypt never recovered its former glory and has ever since played a very minor part in world history becoming "the basest of kingdoms" (Ezek. 29:15). The Philistines (from which the word Palestine originates) were descendants of Ham and very powerful and wicked in ancient times. Jeremiah's prophecy (along with prophecies of Amos, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah and Zechariah) predicting their desolation by Babylon was fulfilled 20 years later. All that remains of them are ruins and archaeological artifacts. Moab helped Nebuchadnezzar against Judah, but later, according to Jeremiah (and other prophets) was devastated at the hands of the Babylonians. For centuries the land has lain desolate and inhabited by nomadic Arab tribes. Its ruins testify to its ancient grandeur. Ammonites (modern Jordan) were the descendants of Lot and their god was Moloch who was worshiped by burning to death little children. Edom, Damascus (modern Syria), Kedar and all the others are great civilizations of the past who defied God and died! Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome all believed themselves to be invincible. So also did the British empire, the Nazi "Third Reich", and Lenin's Communism. They all defied God and put their trust in themselves.

The United States of America did put its trust in Almighty God and his word, the Bible, at its founding. She has on her currency, "In God We Trust." But does she now trust in God or in herself? Are the words written into her Declaration of Independence, her other national documents, and upon her currency, just so much verbiage? If Americans defy God and give themselves to the worship of idols, their civilization will be as surely judged as all those aforementioned mentioned! The kingdom of God (the church) will survive! God will save his "elect" just as he saved a remnant of the Jews. A CHRISTIAN'S LOYALTY MUST BE PREEMINENTLY TO THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD AND THE CHURCH!

QUESTIONS:

1. Where is Carchemish? 46:1-12 Did this battle really take place? Jeremiah preached it 20 years before it happened--how did he know such details?
2. So how powerful are the gods and governors (Apis and Pharaoh) when God decides to act against them? 46:13-24 Do you think God has acted against defiant nations in our life-time? Which? How do you know?
3. Who could God save out of the Jews he committed to exile and punishment? 46:25-28
4. How can God be so cruel as to cause fathers not to look to their children 47:1-4. How did God accomplish this judgment? (Remember Jeremiah 27:5-11)
5. Why would Jeremiah be empathetic toward Moab ("Woe...Flee! Save yourselves!...Give wings to Moab") 48:1-9; 48:31-32 (check also Isaiah ch. 16)
6. But what is Jeremiah's conclusion about God's judgment upon Moab? 48:10
7. So how and when did God "restore the fortunes of Moab"? 48:47
8. Where is Ammon and why would God "restore the fortunes of the Ammonites"? 49:1-6
9. Are Kedar and Hazor (the Arabian tribes) "an everlasting waste" today? 49:33
10. Elam (capital is Susa) was in Persia---why did God pronounce judgment against it? 49:34-39 and then promise to restore its fortunes?

"All that is best in the civilization of today is the fruit of Christ's appearance among men." ---Daniel Webster

"Civilization is always in danger when those who have never learned to obey are given the right to command."  
---Bishop Fulton Sheen

"Alcohol and race consciousness are two conspicuous sources of danger to Western civilization. A mixture of atheism, materialism, socialism, and alcoholism have been the cause of the decline and decay of 19 out of 21 civilizations." ---Arnold Toynbee

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 50:1--52:34

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

An artist asked a friend to his studio to see his latest painting. He came at the time appointed, but was shown into a dark room. There he waited fifteen minutes. Finally, the artist came in, greeted him cordially, and conducted him to the studio. Before he left, the artist said laughingly, "I suppose you thought it queer to be left in that dark room so long?"---"Yes I did." "Well," said the artist, "I knew that if you came into my studio with the glare of the street in your eyes, you could not appreciate the fine coloring of the picture, so I left you there until the glare had worn out of your eyes."

God put the Jews in the "dark room" of Babylonian captivity hoping that the glare of idolatry and fleshly wickedness might be "worn out of their eyes." It worked! At least for a remnant! Some of the Jews had their spiritual vision corrected through the exile in Babylon and they renounced idolatry and worldliness. They turned back to God and his word and became the forerunners of Christ and the beginning church at Pentecost. There was, after all, a "balm in Gilead" (Jer. 8:22)---it was God's commandments and promises!

Applied to the heart, this miraculous medicine can heal the utter blindness that sin causes in each of us.

Today we are blinded by the trivial inanities of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Our spiritual perception is bedazzled by the glittering vanities of this existence so that we cannot see clearly the ultimate realities of a blessed eternity in the presence of our Father, God. Shall we continue allowing our spiritual eyes to be blinded by the unholy until God has to put us in his "dark room"? The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial (2 Pet. 2:9). But it's is the "godly" who are rescued.

Let us be about the business of godliness. Let us anoint our spiritual eyes with the healing balm of God's word. Let us faithfully study God's word---and let us start by being in Bible School each Lord's Day!

QUESTIONS:

1. What has the "everlasting covenant" to do with Jews returning after the Babylonian captivity? 50:1-7
2. Why exhort Jewish exiles to "flee from the midst of Babylon"? 50:8; 51:6,45 Why would they want to stay?
3. When would there be "no iniquity" and "no sin" in Judah? 50:17-20
4. Is declaring the judgments of God upon the enemies of his people a proper message? 51:10
5. Who are the "kings of the Medes" and how did God "stir them up" against Babylon? 51:11; 51:28
6. Why does God take vengeance for "his temple"? 51:11 and for the Jews? 51:36
7. Is it right to "sing for joy" when Babylon is destroyed? 51:48 (see Revelation 18:20)
8. What was the purpose for throwing a written prediction of Babylon's demise into the Euphrates? 51:59-65
9. Who added chapter 52 (see last sentence of 51) to Jeremiah's book, and why?
10. Why did the king of Babylon treat Zedekiah and Jehoiachin so differently? 52:8-11 & 52:31-34

"When Daniel Webster was in the prime of his manhood, he was dining with a company of literary men in Boston. During the dinner the conversation turned upon the subject of Christianity. Mr. Webster frankly stated his belief in the deity of Christ and his dependence upon the atonement of the Savior. One gentleman said to him, 'Mr. Webster, can you comprehend how Christ could be both God and man?' Mr. Webster promptly replied, 'No, sir, I cannot comprehend it. If I could comprehend him, he would be no greater than myself. I feel that I need a super-human Savior.'"  
---*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, p. 649