

Study of JEREMIAH

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LESSONS ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 1 —3

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Jeremiah could have claimed his lineal office to the priesthood. But God called him to be a prophet. The priesthood was almost totally corrupt, wicked, violent, and ignorant of God's word. Heathen religion of Assyria and other pagans around Palestine had been incorporated into the worship of the temple of God. Idolatry was rampant. Stealing, lying, sexual perversion, infanticide (sacrifice of children), and homicide was the rule, not the exception. GOD NEEDED A PROPHET! Jeremiah was a man with a sensitive and loving nature. He saw the terrible conditions of his nation and his countrymen and was heartbroken. But he also would have preferred to stay out in the little country town of Anathoth. How he became so filled with the word of God when it was "lost" upon the rest of the nation says a great deal for his parents and for the man Jeremiah himself. He was a man of faith, courage and conviction. Jeremiah was like iron on the outside, but like a marshmallow on the inside. Just the kind of man God wanted as a prophet for such a time as that!

James Smith says: "The call of Jeremiah is disappointing to those who love the spectacular and melodramatic. The account of how Jeremiah became a prophet of God is marked by stark simplicity. He was not privileged to see the grandeur of the heavenly throne room and hear the majestic praises of celestial beings as was Isaiah." Jeremiah is told that God formed him and knew (intimately, his character, his abilities, and his deficiencies).

At the time of his call God planted in the heart of this young man the conviction that a combination of things happened even before his birth that were to be determining factors in his becoming a prophet. Jeremiah knew what lay ahead of any true and faithful spokesman for God! So, he protested that he was unqualified and unprepared for the awesome task of preaching God's word to that rebellious nation. Few people like to be preached to by a youngster. Jeremiah was probably between 17 and 25 years of age. It is only normal to seek advice from those wise with years of experience. Even Proverbs advocates that! But when one speaks the word of God, he deserves to be heeded no matter how young he may be for it is not the human spokesman who has the authority but the Divine Word! Jeremiah also, like Moses, seemed to think he was unable to speak with the eloquence necessary to be a prophet for God. He was afraid he would fail.

God gave Jeremiah the divine decree concerning the fall of Judah, destruction of Jerusalem, and exile of the Jews. He told Jeremiah to predict the rise of Babylon; then its fall---the rise of the Medes and their fall; the destruction of many neighboring kingdoms to Judah. He also told Jeremiah exactly how long (70 years) the Judeans would be in captivity and how they would return and be rebuilt. He also predicted that the ultimate program of God was to be in a Messiah and his kingdom to come "in the latter days". AND EVERYTHING GOD TOLD JEREMIAH TO ANNOUNCE, CAME TO PASS EXACTLY HAS HE WAS TOLD! If Jeremiah pronounced judgment on a nation---IT WAS GONE! If he predicted the survival of a nation or people---THEY

SURVIVED! This was true even of individuals whom Jeremiah doomed or excused of guilt. As the world evaluates such things, Jeremiah was a failure. But had there been no Jeremiah in Judea (and no Ezekiel in Babylon) during these devastating, nation-shattering times to warn of the tragedies and to interpret them when they came, the Jews would probably have lost all faith in God and simply disappeared from history like so many of the "kingdoms" around them. Human political leaders are inclined to think they "make" history. **ONLY GOD MAKES HISTORY!** Human beings certainly have a free will to exercise and thus they choose the actions they take. But God will always make the consequences of their actions fit into his divine scheme or plan; he will see to it that every deed of men will serve his ultimate purposes---WHETHER THEY BE HEATHEN OR BELIEVER! So, when God says he will give a prophet power to "pluck up or plant" he means that what the prophet predicts is so certain to come to pass, the prophet is recording history before it happens! **AND WHEN A PROPHET OF GOD SPEAKS, EVERY HUMAN BEING HAD BEST LISTEN!**

Jeremiah makes a play upon words here. The people thought they were following habbaal, (the Baal, "pagan husband, lord, master"), but Jeremiah says they were following hahebel, (wind, vapor, nothing, vanity). Idols are "worthless". They are non-entities; they do not exist (see Isa. chs. 41 & 44; 1 Cor. ch. 8). They cannot condemn or save. Not even the ones that "cry tears of blood" (Roman Catholic Madonna). Idols can be destroyed by those who worship them, so what are they worth? What about the integrity, intelligence, value of those who worship idols? **THEY, TOO, BECOME WORTHLESS!** (Hosea 9:10). A person is no better than the god he worships! What about money? Can it become an idol? Can it do anything? It can't insure against death, against sickness, against unhappiness, against falsehood, against guilt. It can only be exchanged for things! And life does not consist in the things we possess. **SOME OF THE MOST WORTHLESS PEOPLE IN OUR CULTURE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE THE MOST MONEY!** While some of the most worthwhile are those who have hardly any money at all!

Judah contemptuously disregarded the Lord's truth. It is the TRUTH of God that sets men free. Judah was going to Egypt and Assyria to imbibe in their false religion and depraved morals. The Lord told Judah that by keeping his commandments they would please him who was the source of their physical freedom the source of their spiritual freedom. When they adamantly refused to walk in his ways, they lost all their freedoms. It is not knowledge, per se, that keeps people from being enslaved.....IT IS KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT IS TRUE, JUST, RIGHT, GOOD, HONEST, LOVING, AND ETERNAL that protects against enslavement. And that is as true in the physical, political realm as it is in the spiritual, psychological realm. Any nation that exchanges God's truth for a lie is headed inevitably for both political and spiritual enslavement. The forces of evil roam about like a roaring lion, seeking whom they may enslave! God has given all people the power to choose---whether to yield to wickedness or to righteousness (Rom. 6:12-23). **YIELD TO ONE OR THE OTHER, EVERY PERSON MUST!** The question to be answered is, which one gives freedom? We know what the Bible says---but history also, by this time, has demonstrated that only in righteousness do human beings have REAL freedom!

Judah said, "It is no use, I love the strange gods and I will continue to go after them." The lure of false worship was too attractive to be resisted! Judah is like a female wild

ass in heat. A long time resident of Palestine describes the wild ass: "She sniffs the path in front of her trying to pick up the scent of a male (from his urine). When she finds it, she rubs her nose in the dust and then straightens her neck and, with head high, closes her nostrils and 'sniffs the wind.' What she really is doing is snuffing the dust which is soaked with the urine of the male ass. With her neck stretched to the utmost she slowly draws in a long, deep breath, then lets out an earthshaking bray and doubles her pace, racing down the road in search of the male." Whoever said sin is not attractive? There would be no merit in resisting it if it were ugly, repulsive, unappealing, and immediately painful. Sin is fascinating---appears to be good for you, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable to make one sophisticated (wise). Sin receives the applause of the worldly minded majority. Peer pressure is probably the thing most conducive to indulging in sin...the "everybody's doing it" syndrome. But is it "hopeless"? Can't the magnetism of sin be neutralized? Where does one get the instruction and power to resist sin? FIRST, THE WORD OF GOD (Rom. 10:17), THEN FAITH AND COMMITMENT TO COVENANT RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST! Just like in a marriage!

The nation had been free from foreign domination for some 700 years since they left Egypt under Moses (see 2:31). They thought they must surely be pleasing God. God had brought judgment down upon Israel (those rebels to the north), but not upon Judah and besides they had the temple, the altar, and the city of Jerusalem. So, in spite of the glaring evidence against them of idolatry and wickedness, they threw their claim of "innocence" back into the face of Jeremiah and God. Jesus dealt sternly with this issue in Luke 13. "Do you think those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were worse sinners than you---I tell you, No, you shall all likewise perish" if you do not repent! God often delays punishing sin in order to give the sinners ample time to repent. He is not willing that any should perish. But all along life's journey, God gives every person repeated warnings, through his printed word, or through his creation (Rom. 1:18-32; Acts 17:24-31, etc.) that sin will be punished!

First, the context is dealing with God's relationship to Judah as a nation. Second, the law referred to here is in Deut. 24:1-4 which only prohibits a man who divorces his wife from reclaiming the same woman he divorced as his wife again. Third, God did, by grace, upon repentance of Judah, take them back again--which indicates to me that when repentance is made, grace should be extended, where divorce has occurred. That, after all, is the ultimate purpose of the law of God---to reproduce repentance so that grace and love may be extended. Thus when repentance occurs, to refuse grace and love would be contempt for God and a mockery of the law.

The Lord wanted Judah back, individually, as each individual repented, 3:11-14, because he is a loving and caring Husband. He has poured himself into this relationship with Israel and Judah like a husband pours himself into a marriage. The heart of God hurts deeply (cf. Hosea's experience) when his love is spurned and mocked. Those who repented (a "remnant") would be that "wife" that would eventually grow in her love for God the Husband until she became the spotless Zion, the church. By this glorious fulfillment of God's marriage to his people he would eventually bring them "Zion," the bride of Christ---the New Covenant church (see chapters 31,32,33 of the book of Jeremiah, ch. 14 of Hosea, chapters 2 & 3 of Joel & all of Isaiah, chapters 50 through 66).

Jeremiah 3:14-18 is one of the highly significant Old Testament predictions (numerous in Jeremiah as we shall see later) of the inevitable fulfillment of the Old Covenant in the New. James Smith in his commentary on Jeremiah, pub. College Press, says: "The Ark will disappear,' says the prophet. So it did. When the Jews returned from Babylon to rebuild their Temple they had no Ark to place in the Holy of Holies. The absence of the Ark was an evident token to those who were spiritually wise that the Old Covenant was ready to vanish away and make way for the New (my emphasis)." In about 600 years after Jeremiah's ministry a new city would replace earthly Jerusalem (v. 17). The throne of God would no longer be the Ark of the Covenant but rather the holy city, the "new" Jerusalem. The New Covenant Jerusalem is none other than the New Testament Church. The Apostle Paul calls it the "Jerusalem which is Above" i.e., the preeminent, spiritual Jerusalem the church of Christ, of which all who have entered into the "new" covenant are citizens (Gal. 4:24-31). Jesus Christ sits on the throne of God and rules over His church and in the midst of his church (Eph.1:20-23). Ezekiel speaks of that same city when he says 'the name of the city from that day shall be 'the Lord is there' (Ezek. 48:35)." **YOU SEE, THE JEWS SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THE LAW OF MOSES WAS TO BE SUPERSEDED! THERE WAS NO EXCUSE FOR THEM NOT KNOWING!** This is why Jesus Christ and the apostles were so blunt, candid, forceful (some think acerbic and harsh) with the Jews of their time (see Jesus' words with the Jewish religious leaders, and Paul's words about the Judaizers in his epistles). The book of Hebrews is forceful to say the least---one might say adamant---that the Old Covenant was totally superseded by the New. We will see more of Jeremiah's predictions that the Covenant of Moses was destined to become passé (Jer. 31:31ff). Many of the O.T. prophets predicted it.

INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL FOR THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH:

Historical:

In 732 B.C. Tiglath-pileser invaded Israel (the northern kingdom of the Jews) and brought it under subjection. At that time, Ahaz, king of Judah, (see 2 Kings ch. 16; Isa. ch. 7) became a willing vassal of Assyria. He had an Assyrian altar placed in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and emptied the national treasury and stripped the gold from the Temple to pay tribute to the Assyrians.

Hezekiah 726-697 B.C. followed his father, Ahaz, to the throne and instituted a great religious reform, destroying many idols, reinstating the Passover, etc. (2 Chron. 29-31).

In 722 B.C. Shalmaneser took thousands of the best men and women of the northern kingdom (Israel) into exile (approx. 30,000 of them) and the kingdom of Israel comes to an end, leaving only Judah as a structured Jewish nation. Hezekiah, in a moment of weakness, paid Shalmaneser tribute (2 Chron 29-32). Then in 713 B.C. Shalmaneser invaded Judah and captured 49 cities but 185,000 of his soldiers were slain by God in one night and Shalmaneser left Judah and returned to his capital, Nineveh. This great deliverance by God was long remembered and became the foundation for a false theology against which Jeremiah would have to constantly battle---most of the Jews were convinced by their false prophets that Jerusalem was inviolable. (see Jer. 7:1-4)

The independence of Judah from Assyria wrought by God's deliverance was short lived, however, for in 687 Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, declared himself a loyal vassal of the Assyrian king, Esarhaddon, who had done what none of his predecessors had---conquered Egypt. Manasseh was, without doubt, the most ungodly king Judah ever had! He erected altars to Assyrian deities in the Temple; he rebuilt all the idolatrous "groves" his father had torn down; pagan cults along with religious prostitution was tolerated within the very courts of the Temple of God (2 Kings 21:7; 23:4-7); divination and magic was practiced; human sacrifice was practiced

(2 Kings 21:6).

645 B.C. Jeremiah probably born this year. He was about 3 years younger than Josiah.

In 642 B.C. Amon succeeded Manasseh on the throne of Judah but reigned only 2 years and was assassinated.

In 640 B.C. Josiah, the 8 year old boy, became king of Judah (2 Kings 23:25).

627 B.C. Jeremiah called to the "ministry" when he was about 18 years old.

In 627 Assurbanipal, in of Assyria, died and his two sons fought each other in a civil war. About this time the Medes and the Babylonians formed a coalition and in 612 B.C. conquered Nineveh. The Assyrian government fled to Carchemish where it was finally destroyed in 610 B.C.

While the Assyrian empire was crumbling and being defeated, Josiah, now a teenager (16-18 years old) was securing Judah's independence from foreign vassalage. Josiah was one of the best kings to rule Judah. At 16 in 632 B.C. (2 Chron 34:3) he began to seek after the God of David; by 628 B.C. when he was 20 years old he began a reformation of Israelite religion even greater than that of Hezekiah. In the 18th year of Josiah's reign, while Levites were renovating the interior of the Temple, a book of the Law of Moses was found! (2 Kings 22).

By 613 B.C. JEREMIAH was on the scene as a young prophet with his scathing condemnations of idolatry and wickedness, and his tear-filled eyes pleading for repentance. With the death of Josiah about 608 B.C. the independence of the kingdom of Judah came to an end. All the kings after him were forced to become the vassals of the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem for 2 years and in 606 B.C. took the first of 3 increments of Judeans into Babylonian exile. Again in 597 & 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar would ravage the Holy City prisoners of war---finally tearing down the walls of the city and burning the Temple.

Jeremiah grew up in the village of Anathoth, 3 mi. northeast of Jerusalem---along with 13 other towns it was set aside for the priests (Josh. 21:13-19; I Chron. 6:57-60). He grew up in a time of catastrophic political conditions. He saw the rise and fall of great heathen empires. He saw thousands of his countrymen marched off as prisoners to a foreign land. He saw the powerful wrath of Nebuchadnezzar unleashed on the Holy City and its Temple. He saw week, vacillating, wickedly-indulgent Jewish kings war with one another and assassinate one another for the throne of Judah.

Religiously, idolatry permeated the nation (Jer. 2:10f; 8:2; 10:2f; 44:15-19). Pagan rituals were mixed with Judaism as they were observed in the Temple (7:30). Even the sacrifice of children was practiced as a part of their idolatry (7:31; 19:4-6) ---along with all the licentious sexual perversions of Baalism.

Morally, Judah was a cesspool! Jeremiah describes their moral depravity in 7:9---stealing, murder, adultery, perjury, sodomy, prostitution, deceit, lying (2:20; 3:6-13; 5:7-9; 9:2-6). People had no shame about sin at all

(2:27) and the nation's leaders were unconcerned (10:21).

The population was in continual social turmoil. Josiah's reforms, though godly and certainly needed, caused many to lose face and fortune and made them hostile (2 Kings 23:8-9; 23:24). Jehoiakim's vassalage to Egypt caused great economic stress (2 Chron. 36:3; 2 Kings 23:35; Jer. 22:13)

The deportation to Babylon of the king, the queen-mother, high officials, the leading citizens, craftsmen and skilled laborers, plus enormous treasures from the Temple, etc., caused tremendous social instability and confusion.

The final social upheaval came during the Chaldean siege of Jerusalem and its final capitulation. Children were orphaned, women widowed, elderly starved to death, young men slain mercilessly, and the houses and buildings and wall of the city torn down. Faced with starvation and death mother abandoned their children (Lam. 2:11) or, even worse, ate them (Lam. 2:20; 4:10; Jer. 19:9); women were raped and humiliated (Lam. 5:11). The poor were exploited by the powerful land-owners of their own country (5:26-28; 6:7). Jeremiah's agonizing cries for social justice were disregarded (7:6; 22:3).

Jeremiah's ministry was multidimensional. He was a preacher, a writer, a teacher, an intercessor, a statesman, and a counselor

James Smith, in his Bible College Textbook commentary, Jeremiah and Lamentations, produced the following chart of Jeremiah's life and ministry.

The chronology of Jeremiah's ministry is five-fold:

1. The pre-reformation (Josiah's reformation) period---627-621 B.C.
2. The post-reformation period---621-605 B.C.
3. The middle period---605-597 B.C.
4. The pre-destruction period---597-587 B.C.
5. The post-destruction period---587 B.C.,-- to his death probably in Egypt somewhere

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSONS ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 4 -- 6

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Yes! God placed the Jews in the land of Canaan (Deut. 4:6; Ezek. 5:5; 1 Kings 10:1,24) specifically to provide a witness for the heathen civilizations around them. Palestine was strategically located. The caravans came from the far off reaches of the East (Persia, India, China) and unloaded their wares (including slaves) at the seaports of Palestine headed for the civilizations of the Mediterranean. Had the Jews believed, loved, and obeyed God's commandments they would have spread the Word of Jehovah's wrath upon sin, his grace in atoning for it, and promised salvation in the coming universal Messiah. Limited amounts of God's word did filter through the idolatry of the Jews into the pagan world, but what would tremendous impact the Word would have had with an obedient Chosen People we can only guess! God did spread his witness into the world of paganism--BY THE EXILE OF THE JEWS FROM THEIR LAND AND DISBURSEMENT ALL OVER THE PAGAN WORLD! Paul explains this issue in Romans 9-10-11. Some Jews did finally come to the realization of their destiny as a Messianic witness for the whole world and gave up their idolatry and became the believing people through whom God could bring into the world his perfect Son and Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah would dare to accuse the Lord of deceiving him and the rest of the nation because Jeremiah is a flawed human being like the rest of us! Part of our flawed nature has to do with the fact that we just do not believe whole-heartedly (as Jesus did). Another part is that since our faith is small we reject the divine revelation that often gives a perspective many centuries ahead of time! We just do not believe that man is such a sinner that he needs such severe chastening as the Bible promises! Shocking as it may be, Jeremiah accuses the Lord of deceit. The severest of trials and tribulations can never be accepted by an Absolute God as an excuse for unbelief. That is why Jesus had to be sent to live a perfect human life for us and then atone for our sins. This is not the only time Jeremiah made verbal complaint to God(see 20:7). God had promised through prophets that preceded Jeremiah (especially, Isaiah) a golden age to come (3:14-18) but all around him was death, destruction, contempt for God and exile into heathen lands far away. Have you or I never said in times of extreme anxiety, "God, this isn't the way you said it would be---why have You let it be so?" Jeremiah cannot be excused---but most of us can certainly understand his dilemma and his reactions.

Jeremiah describes the fall of Judah like "the end of the world" because for the Jews IT WAS THE END OF THEIR CLOISTERED, CHOSEN- OF- GOD, WORLD! Their "world" was going to be utterly different than the one to which they were accustomed. Add to their exile into heathen cultures all the excruciating suffering they would endure in the siege (even to eating the flesh of their own children) and the death and destruction, THEIR WORLD WAS COMING TO AN END! This is an often used literary vehicle of the Bible writers (Isa. 13-14, etc.) when predicting the fall of great

governments and civilizations. Jesus used this kind of apocalyptic language to predict the destruction of Jerusalem in Matt. 24 (which would take place in 66-70 A.D.) It is the same kind of apocalyptic language used by the apostle John to describe the fall of the Roman empire in the book of Revelation. Modern writers still use the same kind of vehicle (e.g. the movie, "Apocalypse Now!" about the Viet Nam War). The song we sing, "Battle Hymn of the Republic", is apocalyptic in style because the great calamity of our American Civil War was THE END OF A WORLD for both the South and the North (death---almost 700,000 military casualties; destruction---whole cities reduced to rubble; suffering of the civilian dispossessed, etc.). MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON OUR PRESENT CIVILIZATION, SO THAT OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN DO NOT HAVE TO SUFFER "THE END OF THEIR WORLD"!

Look at the Lord's characterization of Judah for Jeremiah:

- a. Not a one of them sought justice or truth 5:1 (rhetorical question to Jeremiah)
- b. They swore falsely (perjury, deceit) 5:2
- c. They had no anguish at the Lord's chastening for their sins, 5:3
- d. They refused to take correction, 5:3
- e. They refused to repent, 5:3
- f. Poor and rich, unknown and great, all were ignorant of the law of God. 5:4 and had "broken the yoke".
- g. Their transgressions were many and apostasies great, 5:6
- h. They swore (took oaths) by idols, 5:7
- i. They committed adultery and "trooped" to the houses of harlots. 5:8
- j. They were "lusty stallions" each "neighing for his neighbor's wife" 5:9

Would your faith survive in a culture like this? This is a culture where it is not only unpopular, but dangerous to be a believer! It is a culture where you can't trust your neighbor, not even your own family members. It is like the culture of Nazi Germany, like some of the Asian and Islamic dictatorships today. Yes, there are Christians living in just such ungodly societies as this today. Let us remember them in prayer each day! Then let us pray for our own society!

These apostates had no fear of God at all. They said, "He will do nothing; no evil will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine" (5:12). God seems almost non-plussed--almost at a loss for words-- that Judah does not fear him (5:22-24). All of creation obeys God except God's highest and most loved creatures (people) and "chosen" people at that! IS FEAR A PROPER RESPONSE TOWARD A LOVING

GOD? Read the passages listed in your lesson sheet (Psa. 2:11; Prov. 19:23; 2 Cor. 5:11; Phil. 2:12---then read the book of Revelation through again!). Some like to say, "Well, awe yes, fear no", but what is "awe"---veneration, respect, reverence. And what is "awful" but full of awe and synonyms for "awful" are "fearful, solemnity, ominousness, alarmed, dreadful". After all, "no one can look upon God and live" UNLESS THEY ARE CLEANSED BY THE ATONING BLOOD OF CHRIST! But even those Christians of the first century were warned again and again by the apostles they should "fear" lest they fall into apostasy (cf. the book of Hebrews).

Yes! There are people who love to hear what is false--believe it or not. In fact, all of us probably at one time or another have wished we did not have to face reality---huh? The Bible is stark reality! God always "tells it like it is!" God's word allows no one to live in a world of fantasy---there is no "make believe" in the Bible. Isaiah wrote that people in his day said to the prophets, "Prophecy not to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more of the Holy One of Israel." (Isa. 30:10-11). Paul told Timothy that even after truth had come to the world Incarnated in the Person of Jesus Christ people would have "itching ears and accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and turn away from listening to the truth, and wander into myths." (2 Tim. 4:3-5). He wrote to the Thessalonians that many would "follow strong delusions because they refused to love the truth...but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Realities people do not wish to know but about which the Bible is absolutely realistic:

- a. Man is dependent upon an Almighty God for his physical and spiritual existence and sustenance.
- b. Man is a sinner who has offended an Absolutely Righteous Judge---Jehovah God.
- c. There is only One God, Father of all mankind, Creator of all that exists, who himself is uncaused.
- d. Man should fear, obey, love, praise, supplicate, and seek Almighty God.
- e. There are realms of reality, truth, knowledge, wisdom which man can never know unless God chooses to reveal it to him.
- f. Jesus Christ is God's ONLY divinely incarnated revelation of himself to mankind. Jesus Christ was on earth as God in the flesh.
- g. The Bible is God's propositional (verbalized in human language) revelation of his will for mankind and it is the FINAL revelation of God to man in his earthly existence concerning man's salvation.
- h. Salvation is from God and it is by grace!
- i. No human being can ever enter heaven in this mortal body. In fact, all human beings will ultimately be

divested of this mortal body and fitted with another one for their eternal existence---

whether heaven or hell.

j. There are two eternal destinies. All human beings are headed for one or the other.

If the word of God could be scorned when Jeremiah, Jesus, and Paul preached it---it can be scorned today! And, indeed, it many places it is. Synonyms for "scorn" are "ridicule, scoff, mock, jeer, deride, disrespect." It is done every day and night on television, in the movies, in magazines, by entertainers, politicians, educators, alleged scientists, lawyers, and people in all walks and levels of society. **THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD IN MOST OF THE PUBLIC AREAS OF OUR WORLD!** And it is not just general truth and goodness that is publicly mocked, it is specifically the Bible, the church, and Christians. Bill Mahr, self-proclaimed comedian-satirist, said on his TV show in January, 2011, that America's "founding fathers" considered the "Bible full of bull-shit" and he agreed with them! Mr. Mahr is an ignoramus about America's "founding father's" reverence for the Bible and a stupid fool regarding the real history of America's founding! Perhaps some Christians, and some segments of Christianity, deserve to be ridiculed and satirized because of their hypocrisy---**BUT NOT GOD'S HOLY WORD OR GOD'S HOLY SON, OR GOD'S PRECIOUS BRIDE!** And look what happens to a society when mockery of God's word becomes almost totally the rule. **JUDGMENT!** Let us thank God that in America there are still large areas where God's word is respected and revered---where thousands still sincerely attempt to obey it regardless of the filth of TV and cinema.

EVERYONE, young & old, rich & poor, high-brow and low-brow, EVERYONE was greedy, but not just for "gain"----**FOR UNJUST GAIN!** They were envious, jealous, mercenary, gluttonous, avaricious rapacious and covetous. They must have it (whatever it was) at all cost of truth, kindness, integrity, love, and respect for the property of others. No law of man or God could stop them. They would lie, cheat, rob, and even murder to get anything they wanted. **NOTHING WAS TOO SHAMEFUL FOR THEM TO ENGAGE IN TO GET WHAT THEY BELIEVED THEY MUST HAVE!** They had no shame! Nothing made them blush. They regretted no action they took. They had no limits to the wickedness to which they would go. There was no remorse in their hearts! The looting that takes place in our big cities during riots; the shoplifting in stores; the pilfering of government properties; the vandalizing of neighborhood properties. **IS THERE NO SHAME IN AMERICA?** It is one thing to commit a sin of greed, and feel shame and have remorse about it and repent---it is another to steal and have no shame! And where has the failure been in this matter?----in America's homes!

Correct! God has never said, "Ask for the new paths"---**BECAUSE THERE ARE NO NEW PATHS WITH GOD!** Even Jesus said that what he was, what he taught, and what he did was singularly the **FULFILLMENT** of the Law and the Prophets! The book of Hebrews strongly insists that the New was taught in the Old. Of course, the **NEW** Testament is "new" in the sense that it is the climax, the completion, the fulfillment, and conclusion, as it were, to God's redemptive work in this earthly frame of reference (time & history). But it is not true that the N.T. is something entirely different, distinct-from, or opposite to the O.T.(see Matt. 5:17-20; 24:35; Lk. 16:17; Rom. 7:12; 13:8-10; 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11, etal.). Why do so many religious people today assume God's

completed revelation, the Bible, needs something "new"? Why do so many search for a NEW "awakening, anointing, feeling, word-from-God, sign, time." If "All is Scripture inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" WHY DO 20TH CENTURY MEN OF GOD NEED ANYTHING BEYOND THE SCRIPTURES? If, "through his divine power he has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...through his precious and very great promises, so that we may escape from the corruption that is the world...and become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:3-4) WHAT MORE DO WE NEED? We don't need new forms of worship or new methods of evangelism--the books of the N.T. are the "old paths" we need to seek and practice. Of course we should use new technology, but we dare not let the "medium become the message!" The method of person-to-person evangelism, in the workplace, the marketplace, the home, was the METHOD practiced and approved by the apostles. It doesn't need revising or updating---just needs to be DONE! The worship of the church encongregate does not need revising from the N.T. form (the Lord's Supper; preaching & teaching; praying with the spirit that is, with the spiritual part of man as opposed to the fleshly, carnal part of man. Paul in 1 Cor. 14:13-16 is not talking about the Holy Spirit's miraculous gifts. He's talking about singing with the mind—that is, reason, logic, order and in the same manner giving to the needs of others. That order needs no change--it just needs to be done!

The word "assay" means "to prove, test, try, analyze." That was Jeremiah's job for God. That is every preacher's job for God. A true preacher, through the work of and by the authority of the divine word which he preaches, "proves, tests tries, and analyzes" those who hear him. Actually, it is not the human who "assays" it is the Word of God which "is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow; and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do" Heb. 4:12. But, since God is not going to miraculously plant his propositional revelation in anyone's heart apart from the Scripture, it is men and women, boys and girls, who are going to have to print it, preach it, teach it, and sing it if it ever gets into the hearts of men to do it's work (if you don't believe that, read Rom. 10:14-17). The mind of Christ was revealed to the apostles in words (human language) (see 1 Cor. 2:6-13) and they became "ambassadors" for Christ (2 Cor. 5:16-21)---but the apostles imparted the mind of Christ in words to their world through their written Scriptures. So, we today have the same power to "assay" the hearts of all who hear us---if we are using the Scriptures! We have been commissioned to "teach" what Jesus commanded the apostles (Matt. 28:18-20). It was not the working of miracles that pierced the hearts of people in the book of Acts, it was the message they preached. Miracles simply proved the authenticity of their spoken word. Now that we have the completed, authenticated, written word of God, we no longer need any miracles to accredit it as from God. THINK OF IT! CHRISTIANS HAVE IN THEIR HANDS AND MINDS THE LIVING (NOT DEAD) WORD OF GOD. GIVEN TO HUMAN BEINGS IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY MAY BELIEVE IT, AND IT CAN "DISCERN THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTIONS OF THEIR HEARTS"!---something that no human being can do for them (no psychologists, psychiatrists, "shrinks", psychics, or fortunetellers)--NOT EVEN THEMSELVES (see Jer. 17:9-10). And if there is anything a human needs to know, it's the thoughts and intentions of his own heart, as God knows them! That's

where repentance and obedience to God originate--in a heart pierced by the stark reality of the authority and truth of God's Word.

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 7 -- 10

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The people of Judah, like many before them and after them--to this very day--were making their Temple a sort of magic amulet. They were thinking in terms of "doing religion" rather than committed faith in the personhood of Jehovah God. "Religion" is what you do. "Faith" is what you have in order to properly do "religion." Faith in God has to have "religious" rituals or ceremonies and acts or deeds by which the faithful may express their faith. Faith in God also expresses itself in corporate worship and so needs places for the faithful to come together to worship as a body or kingdom or family. BUT PLACES AND THINGS MUST ALWAYS BE SECONDARY TO A FAITH THAT BELIEVER THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD THE FATHER IN THE PRECISE MANNER GOD HAS CHOSEN TO REVEAL THEM (IN HIS WRITTEN WORD).

There is no magic, no power, no miracles, no salvation in Temples, rituals, icons, relics of the saints, "movements", methods, or genealogical descent. There are billions of "religious" people in our world. Even humanists and evolutionists are "religious" about their philosophies. They have their "doctrines," "bibles," "priest-hoods," and "militant evangelizing." People turn their families, their jobs, politics, and recreations into "religion". It has been the devil's most effective seduction to "steal souls"---get people to feel "religious" about everything under the sun but to ignore the evidence that there is a Person with eternal power and deity whom all creation is to believe in and worship. One has only to read the context 7:1-15 to see how far away from true faith the people of Judah had fallen. They completely ignored the commandments of God and were playing "hocus-pocus" with the Temple. The epistle to the Hebrews in the N.T. deals with Jews of the first century A.D. who thought there was some magical efficacy in old rituals and places.

It is not only possible today to involve children in worshiping idols, IT IS BEING DONE EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES. If they are not being "disciplined" to worship the theory of evolution (or as some call it "science"), then they are being "disciplined" to worship "nature", "humanity", "themselves", "the government", "money", "popularity", "movie stars, sports heroes" or a hundred other "things" or "places". All of these have their "doctrines", "priests", "bibles" and "holy shrines". Their major "shrine" is television. Every false god man can devise is "huckstered" on the TV screen. If the "idol" is not a "thing" being preached, it is a "false idea". THERE JUST ISN'T MUCH UNADULTERATED TRUTH ON THE T.V. SCREEN--not on the news, not in entertainment, not in documentaries, and not even in many "religious" programs. The most popular "idol" being preached today is "whatever makes me FEEL GOOD!" Believe me---we are going to reap the whirlwind some day because our children have been allowed to sit 7 hours per day before the "shrine" we call TV and be disciplined to worship its false gods--IN FACT, WE'RE ALREADY REAPING!

Did you see in the Joplin Globe, just last week, a physician whose license had been revoked for malpractice in abortions he had performed but he was continuing to do

abortions, and a young woman died from an abortion in his clinic. How many millions of potential people, conceived in the image of God, have now been aborted in America since the Supreme Court's atrocious ruling? 99% of these were human beings whose abortion was not necessary to save the mother's life, or because of rape or incest. These suffered excruciating pains as bad or worse than those infants thrown into the fire in worship of Baal and Molech by the people of Judah to whom Jeremiah predicted their land would be called, "The Valley of Slaughter". America's babies have been sacrificed on the idolatrous altar of SELF (whatever I want, whatever makes ME feel good). The Nazis practiced "euthanasia" on children and adults they believed to be "unfit" and "a drain on society." Ancient Rome practiced abortion and infanticide; so did most other ancient civilizations. YOU MAY SEE FROM HISTORY HOW THEY REAPED THE WHIRLWIND! There are others in America (some talk-show hosts, some university teachers, some physicians, some politicians, some women's organizations, some churches, and yes, even some parents) who are just as culpable as the Supreme Court justices. May God have mercy upon America!

Yes, idolatry is dumb! It is sheer idiocy! It is irrational, unreasonable, and STUPID (see Jer. 10:14,21--the Hebrew word is ba'ar which means "stupid like a dumb brute"--the KJV translates it "brutish"). The prophets (esp. Isa. chapters 41-44; Jer. ch. 10) and the apostles (esp. Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 8:1-6) declared idolatry stupid. Paul wrote in Romans 1:18-32 that the evidence for the existence of a personal, spiritual God, who ought to be worshiped, is incontrovertible. Creation (existence) speaks so loudly against worshiping any other god that every person who does so is "without excuse." Then there is the human conscience (Romans ch. 2) which testifies that man is not the offspring of a piece of wood, rock or metal. Idolatry is, therefore, not only dumb and stupid, it is WICKED because it is a choice of the free will against intelligence and morality. But idolatry includes the worship of "IMMORTAL MAN," HIMSELF (Rom. 1:23). And that seems to be America's favorite idol---SELF! Humanism is the religion, MAN is the god, evolution is the doctrine, and evolution has had its "evangelists" ever since the day of Charles Darwin—actually all the way back to ancient Greece and Rome. Second Peter 2:12,22 reveals that when human beings, created in the image of God, deny their divine, spiritual origin, and begin to worship their animal, fleshly nature, they become "irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed..." Isaiah said the idolaters of his day were "dumber than donkeys and oxen" (Isa. 1:3).

Indeed, the "false pen of the scribe" has healed America's wound lightly. The "scribes" of the ancient world were the "literati, the intelligentsia, the avant garde, the culturalists" of their day. They were the educators, the lawyers, and courtiers attending to and advising emperors and kings. They had tremendous influence on the information to which their societies were exposed. What they wrote or proclaimed affected politics, economics, culture, and most importantly, morals. Societies will become righteous and just, or depraved and violent, according to the "scribe's" indoctrination. That is because, you see, what goes into the mind of a person and is believed determines what that person becomes in character and action! Jesus said so in Matthew 15:1-20. Falsehood presented "authoritatively", but seductively, will be believed by those too lazy to apply logic to God's revelation of himself (both in nature and in the written word) and know the ultimate truth. The outright, deliberate lies that are being told to our society through "false pens of our scribes" are having

tremendous effect for wickedness. Depravity is so common place today few people are any longer "shocked" by it.

Jeremiah could find no "physician" to heal and no "balm" to apply to the sickness of his society. Judah was terminal. The disease had been allowed to ravage the whole body (Isa. 1:5-6)---from the head to the foot. The disease was idolatry. The symptoms were beginning to appear full blown. The "patient" (Judah) had refused to go to the Great Physician for healing. The "patient" denied it was ill. The "patient" knew better than the Doctor how to survive. So what is the balm--the cure--for a spiritually sick and dying society? IT IS FAITH IN THE GREAT PHYSICIAN (GOD) SO STRONG THAT IT WILL READ THE DOCTOR'S INSTRUCTIONS AND TAKE THE PRESCRIBED MEDICINE NO MATTER HOW BITTER IT MAY TASTE! So, are there words in that book, the Bible, that are "medically" up-to-date for spiritually ill societies today? Could it be that the way to get America back on its feet is for the church to get busy with evangelism and proclamation of the Word----OR IS THE CHURCH PART OF THE ILLNESS? It's possible---remember the 7 churches of Asia Minor!

There is no police force, no army, no government big enough, powerful enough, to force a society to be righteous. Righteousness comes to a society, large or small, through a knowledge of and belief of the TRUTH. It is in the mind---not in the physical body---that righteousness must first take root and dwell so that bodies and other "things" may be used righteously. Bodies and things are amoral (not evil) and neutral. It is the use to which bodies and things are put by the mind that makes them good or bad. And when the majority of "minds" in a community or nation are poisoned with lies and falsehoods, YOU CANNOT TRUST YOUR NEIGHBOR OR YOUR BROTHER! Go live downtown in one of our major metropolises today and see how far you can trust your neighbor---and the police patrol the streets constantly. We could hire 2000 more policemen in Joplin and still not have enough to "make" every citizen do the right thing with his neighbor. Deliberate ignorance of the Word of God is what makes a society as depraved as Jeremiah's. Knowledge and belief of God's word is what makes a society righteous and just.

Jeremiah says (9:12-16)---"This is the bottom line, this will sum it all up--you want to know why our land is desolated and it is unsafe to travel anywhere in it? Because our people have forsaken the law of God---have not obeyed his voice---but have stubbornly followed their own hearts and gone after the Baals as their forefathers taught them to do." Is it any wonder why Jeremiah was the one who said (17:9-10), "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked---who can know it!" They were warned in Numbers 15:39 "...not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes..." But they did, even some of their prophets followed their own hearts (Ezek. 13:3). It is one thing for the masses to follow their own hearts, but when their preachers and civil leaders "follow their own hearts" then NO ONE will ever know God's will to find the way in which they should "walk". That is why God had his commandments for Israel written down in a book especially for the king (Deut. 17:14-20). BUT FOR DECADES BEFORE JEREMIAH THE WRITTEN FORM OF GOD'S LAW HAD BEEN LOST---NO ONE PAID IT HEED---THUS THE LAND OF JUDAH WAS A CESSPOOL OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY (called by the true prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel and others "Sodom and Gomorrah"). A lot like Times Square, NY, or Market

Street in San Francisco, or Pershing Ave., Los Angeles, or State Street, Chicago. And all this depravity is chosen. It can't be blamed on our "fathers". They chose their own depravity. God holds every generation responsible for its choices.

The major difference between the True God who is Holy Spirit and idols is that idols are made by man and man is made by Someone higher than he is! Creation, as Jeremiah and other prophets and apostles point out, clearly evidences an Uncaused First Cause, an Undesigned Designer, greater than His effects (the universe). That is reasonable and rational. To deny it is a moral choice to believe the irrational and unreasonable! And the verbal, propositional revelation of God has been among men (from Adam to the last apostle of the N.T.). It has been there long enough and universally enough so that people of all generations could have found it and believed it and obeyed it. That the writings of the Israelites (Moses, etal.) were from an INVISIBLE, BUT REAL AND ALL POWERFUL GOD, was thoroughly authenticated by the miracles done by God through them so that the non-Israelite world (Pharaoh, Rahab, the Queen of Sheba, Nebuchadnezzar, Darius) would know it was the TRUTH. The worship of the invisible Jehovah is NOT idolatry. He is the true and only God. That has been proven!

If "the way of man is not in himself...that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 20:24, Jer. 17:9-10) then philosophers and psychoanalysts are irrelevant unless they take their philosophies and psycho-analyses from the Bible! Actually, without God those who try to "direct" man in the way he should walk are WORSE than irrelevant---they are causing one of God's "little ones" to stumble and it would be better for them to tie a mill stone around their neck and jump into the Mariana's Trench (the deepest part of all the oceans--13 miles deep). Think how many people that would put out of a job! Think about how many philosophy and psychology books ought to be burned! Remember what B.A. Austin used to say about his counseling method? He would ask and try to determine what the actual problem was, he would refer them to the Biblical principle dealing with the problem, and ask them if they were going to make an effort to believe and obey God's solution. If not, he could counsel them no more! Of course, lots of difficulties in people's lives are physical, but this is talking about the mental, spiritual, and moral problems. EVERYONE IS A PHILOSOPHER AND EVERYONE IS A PSYCHOANALYST....so everyone had better be getting their direction from the One in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge reside (Col. 2:3)

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 11 - 13

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

It is very unusual for the Bible to record God telling anyone NOT to pray intercessory prayers. There are times in the O.T. where God says he will not HEAR the prayers of people when they are rebellious and hypocritical (Isa. 1:15; 59:2-3; Micah 3:4; Psa. 18:41; Prov. 1:20-33; Deut. 31:17). There is one other time when God specifically told someone NOT to pray (Joshua 7:10-11). Jeremiah was told in 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1; and 16:5 NOT TO INTERCEDE FOR THE "CHOSEN" PEOPLE! THEY WERE NOW "CHOSEN" FOR JUDGMENT! James Smith writes: "The Hebrew (language) here (v. 14) uses a participle which implies that God will continue to refrain from hearing no matter how hard or long the people might cry unto Him." There comes a time when a sinner (or, sinners) has become so "hard" (remember the Parable of the Soils) that nothing can penetrate his calloused conscience--not persuasion, not chastening, NOTHING! Apparently in God's economy of things intercession is useless. Remember, there was at least one man, Herod, who sent word for Jesus to come see him and Jesus REFUSED TO GO! Jesus prayed for numerous people, but so far as we know not for Herod, not for Pilate, not for the Pharisees! He did have some scathing and severe rebukes and warnings for these people---but NO PRAYER! Remember also, there were times when Jesus refused to do miracles when asked. GOD IS NOT A "GENIE IN A LAMP" TO GIVE EVERY "ALADDIN" EVERYTHING HE/SHE WANTS. God will hear only those prayers of a sinner who is sincerely penitent. And there are those who have vowed war against God openly, impenitently, and without remorse. It is not good stewardship of time (see Eph. 5:15-16; Col. 4:5) to devote all of one's time and energies interceding for them. Reuben A. Torrey, venerable preacher who converted over 70,000 people, and was founder of BIOLA University (formerly, "Bible Institute of Los Angeles") on his death bed, told his son-in-law that if he had life to live over he would spend less time praying and more time studying the word of God! The Psalmist, inviting people to behold the mighty works of God in nature and history suggests people should "be still and know that I am God" (Psa. 46-11). Less talking to God on our part and more listening through reading his word would go a long way in evangelizing the world!

Six times in 8 verses (11:1-8) Jeremiah calls upon Judah to "hear" (Hebrew, shema, means "HEAR TO OBEY") the "covenant" (Law) of God. But they trooped to the multitude of false gods and altars (11:12-13) they loved. So God told Jeremiah, "What business (or right as RSV puts it) has my beloved in my house when she has done vile deeds?" In other words, "WHAT DO THEY THINK THEY'RE DOING TRAMPING INTO MY HOUSE WHEN THEY ARE FULL OF CONTEMPT FOR ME?" Who can be a congenial host toward those who despise the host and "make no bones" about their contempt? And this almost total contempt for God had been going on for 300 years (ever since the "divided kingdom"--from 900 - 600 B.C.). So God shut the door in their face! He just tore their "house" down! Other O.T. prophets predicted that in the coming Messianic Age (Jesus and the Church) God's house would be cleansed of

apostates and aliens (Joel 3:17; Isa. 11:9; 56:7; Ezek. 20:40; Obadiah 17; Zechariah 14:16-21; Malachi 3:1-4, and Ezek. 44:1-31 is a special, figurative, prophecy of the New Temple (the Church) when the "Prince" will have come). God's household IS, in a sense, EXCLUSIVE!. Of course, God wants every human being to be saved and become a member of his household-- but ONLY if he/she is born again! Only the regenerated, the redeemed, the saved, can "enter" his Church. To all others, the door is closed until they are born again!

Numerous true prophets were threatened with loss of life by enemies of God's word: a. Amos (7:10); b. Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-4); c. Zechariah (not the one who wrote the book)(2 Chron.24:20-22); Daniel (Dan. 6:1ff); and Jeremiah (more than once!). God revealed to Jeremiah the plot against his life from citizens of his home village. Jeremiah had no idea his own "friends" (small village) would want to kill him. He seems a little shocked at the revelation. He says he was "gentle" (from the Hebrew word meaning "like a dumb ox or beast") as a lamb which is being led unknowingly to the slaughter. SO THIS IS WHAT THINGS HAVE COME TO?! A PREACHER WHO ONLY WANTS GOD'S BEST FOR HIS COUNTRYMEN CAN'T EVEN TRUST HIS OWN VILLAGE FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS! Christian brethren, we are in a war! This world is not a nice place for those who cherish God and his word and who are verbal about it! Peter wrote, "Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you." 1 Pet. 4:12 Human beings are not "basically good"--unless they have been converted to Christ. All human beings outside of Christ have declared themselves "enemies of God" Rom. 5:10 James 4:4, etc. They have the "mark of the beast" (humanism) upon them and they join the "beast" (humanistic leadership) "to make war on the saints" (Rev. 13:1ff). Sometimes that war is more subtle than violent---BUT IT IS WAR, NEVERTHELESS, and the "beast" who has partaken of the nature of the old dragon (the devil) continues to "pursue the woman" (the church) and to "make war upon her and her offspring." (Rev. 12:13ff). God has revealed all this to us! We should not be surprised at it! BUT HOW SHALL WE HANDLE IT? Shall we take up arms? NO! We must have faith and endure (Rev. 13:9-10; 14:12). This is precisely what Jeremiah did! He knew God was a righteous and just judge; that God knew the heart (Heb. leb, will, intellect) and the mind (Heb. kilyah, lit. the kidneys, meaning the innermost recesses of the human mind). So Jeremiah "committed his cause" to God. He said, "You take care of them God, for you are much better at that business than I!" Jeremiah had something much more imperative to do----preaching the Word! AND GOD TOOK CARE OF THEM! Probably, with haste!

Indeed, haven't we all, believers and unbelievers, at one or more times in our lives, asked, "WHY?" especially about the unpleasant things in life. At least, we count them as unpleasant. And the Bible realistically says, "for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11. ONE ENTIRE SEGMENT OF THE BIBLE, CALLED "WISDOM LITERATURE" (WE CALL IT "POETRY"---Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon) IS DEVOTED TO THIS QUESTION. So we ask the question again "Why do the wicked prosper and the treacherous thrive?" And why does an omnipotent, good God allow evil to exist at all? And who started it all? Why doesn't God just stop it right now? Does this problem of evil erode your faith? What if you didn't have an authentic record of the victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death? Many Jews today have given up faith in God because of the Nazi

holocaust! I quote Pulpit Helps, Feb. 1996, a Christian periodical, "Eighty-five percent of Israelis are not religious according to N. Eliad, a member of the Israeli Knesset (parliament). Eliad, a seventh-generation Israeli, numbers himself among those whose views of life and the Holy Land are primarily cultural. What about tracing present-day Israel back to the promises of God to Abraham? 'It is well for people who feel that way,' he said, 'but for me it is not religion, but only culture.'" Those who are troubled by the apparent disregard of God evil and injustice in this world forget Abraham, Moses, the Prophets, and so many the writer of Hebrews (ch. 11) could not list them all. And let us not forget the Christian martyrs of the Roman empire 100-400 A.D. The answer is FAITH. God knows the answer and perhaps we have not saturated our minds thoroughly enough with his verbal revelation, the Bible, to find it! We certainly have enough evidence of God's goodness and sovereignty and redemptive promises in the Bible that we can trust him to solve this problem---if not here, over there!

Maybe this is God's answer! "You ain't seen nothing yet!" It was his answer to Jeremiah. It was God's answer to any number of Biblical saints tested in the furnace of affliction. Even those of Jeremiah's own relatives would deal treacherously with him. It is through challenges, choices, difficulties, struggles that free moral agents grow intellectually and morally. Those made in the image of the Great Creator develop their capacities for righteousness, compassion, understanding, truth, justice and glory through the "school of discipline." One of the most evident characteristics of Jesus is his self-control. God is SELF-CONTROL magnified. He is totally just, fair, impartial, true. And we become like him as we learn from his way of teaching us. This is what impetuous Peter had to develop in his character---and even the imperturbable Paul went through the school of affliction (you can read about it in 2 Cor. 1:8-10). Athletes have a saying, "No pain, no gain!" Perhaps that originated in the Garden of Eden. So here we are reading about this "man of the ages"--- Jeremiah---a man who helped save a remnant of the Chosen People so that the Savior of the world could be born, and where are the biographies of all his contemporaries? These have been long forgotten. And what did they contribute to the world's salvation compared to Jeremiah? And what if Jeremiah had not been put through the school of affliction? Would we greet him in heaven?

Roy Acuff and his Smokey Mountain Boys made "The Great Speckled Bird" famous. You didn't know that song from the Grand Ole Opry was scriptural did you? In context God is saying that "Out of the Valley of Achor (Trouble) I will produce a Door of Hope." see Hosea 2:15 . Out of Judah's chastening (becoming a "bird of prey" to the Gentile empires) God would save, sharpen, and polish a nucleus, a cadre, of righteous that would faithfully keep God's commandments even in the face of centuries of oppression. The affliction upon the Great Speckled Bird of Prey would "plant the flag of truth" (C.S. Lewis in The Problem of Pain) in their "rebel souls" so that they would endure to the coming of the Messiah. And God dealt with his Church in the same way (see Revelation 12). He "nurtured the 'woman' in the wilderness" of Roman persecution. What a strange way to "nurture"---to allow them to become a Speckled Bird of Prey---to allow them to hurt! But isn't that the way a good parent nurtures a beloved child? TOUGH LOVE, THEY CALL IT! And you can read about those so nurtured in Daniel, Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, the Gospels, Acts and Epistles.

"YOU ARE GOOD FOR NOTHING!" That is "psychologically incorrect" today. It destroys a person's self-esteem, we are told. We are not allowed to say that about anybody, no matter how depraved, ungodly, unproductive, careless, irresponsible a person may be. And yet the Bible says it numerous times about unbelievers, (Ezek. 15:1-8; Isa, 5:5-6; Luke 13:6-9; 2 Tim. 2:20-26; Heb. 6:7-8). But should elders and preachers say that as they minister God's word to a lost world? Just how sensitive to people's sensitivity must preachers and elders be if they are to "snatch them from the fire" (Jude 23). Would the lost and/or recalcitrant church members have been offended at the preaching of the prophets? of Jesus? of the apostles? Paul called some of his Christian brethren, "enemies because he told them the truth," "babies," "ignorant," "weak," "ill," "dead." Jesus told the Pharisees of his day they were "two-fold more sons of hell than their followers. Jesus had some pretty "insensitive" words to say to the 7 Churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2-3). He said of the church at Laodicea it was not only good for nothing, it made him want to puke! If we only knew what Hell is really like---if we only knew what LOST is---would we mince words? Let's get serious about this matter of walking with God. Certainly, we don't want to turn people away from salvation by a mean-spirited, accusatory attitude. But we cannot let FEELINGS send people to Hell! I refer you to Jesus's testy words to the woman from Syro-Phoenician. She came to Jesus with an heart-wrenching appeal but he told her "It is not right to take the bread from the children (Jews) and give it to dogs" (meaning Gentiles) Matt. 15:21ff. And wasn't Jesus a little abrupt with some of his own disciples? WE MUST LEARN HOW TO "SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE".

No! The Ethiopian cannot change his skin; the leopard cannot change his spots. It is not often that God uses the word "impossible" but when he does you can rest assured he means it. People who have all the advantages of God's "chosen-ness" and blatantly, deliberately, willfully, contemptuously refuse what they KNOW IS GOD'S WILL CANNOT POSSIBLY BE RIGHT WITH GOD. "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, INDEED IT CANNOT; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. 8:7-8. And for those who deliberately return to the Law (any Law) to be justified after Christ's perfect atonement has been accomplished, "...it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance" (Heb. 6:4ff). "And without faith it is impossible to please him (God)." Heb. 11:6. If the "soil" is hard, rocky, or weedy, it is impossible for the "seed" to produce fruit. It was Jeremiah who said, "Break up your fallow (unplowed, unused) ground, and sow not among thorns" (Jer. 4:3). LET US MAKE OURSELVES TEACHABLE....MALLEABLE. LET US NOT WEAR OUR FEELINGS ON OUR SLEEVES AND TURN AWAY FROM THE TRUTH WHEN WE HEAR IT. LET US TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE GOODNESS TO KEEP OUR HEARTS FROM BECOMING CALLOUSED.

Yes, the Bible clearly states there is a state of apostasy (lit. falling away) from the Creator where there is "no return." There is a sin "for which there is no forgiveness" (Matt. 12:22-37; Mark 3:20-30; Lk. 11:14-26; 1 John 5:16-17; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 2 Pet. 2:10-22; Jude 10; Heb. 6:4-8). This describes a sinner who had taken such a deliberate position of hatred toward God that he calls evil good, and good evil. He "blasphemes" (speaks evil of) the HOLY Spirit. Nothing is "holy" or "sacred" to this person. He does not seek God's mercy because he does not believe he needs it. He is not in awe of God because he does not believe there is a God. He mocks the redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ, he mocks and prostitutes all that is good by abusing and perverting it. God will allow human beings to become THIS

PERVERTED AND DEPRAVED if they wish (Rom. 1:18-32). Those who "refuse to have God in their knowledge" and "exchange the truth of God for a lie" and "worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator" and who desire to indulge in lust, impurity, dishonoring of their bodies, Paul says in Romans, this is what God will do: (a) allow them to become futile, senseless, darkened in mind, fools; (b) give them up to dishonor their bodies among themselves, to dishonorable passions, exchanging natural relations for unnatural; (c) receive in their own persons the due penalty of their errors; (d) give them up to a base mind, improper conduct and to be filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, gossip, slander, hate, insolence, haughtiness, boastfulness, inventing of evil, disobedience to parents, foolishness, faithlessness, heartlessness, and ruthlessness. **THUS THEY BECOME LIKE IRRATIONAL ANIMALS, CREATURES OF INSTINCT, BORN TO BE CAUGHT AND KILLED (2 Pet. 2:12).** Are there people who are like this today? YES! And many of them are of the jet-set "rich and famous" as well as the skid-row-set, poor and nameless. Sins of ignorance God will cover by his grace for those who love him and trust in his Word. But sins "with a high hand"—impenitent, shameless, contemptuous, defiant sins cannot be forgiven by an Absolutely just and righteous God.

So, thus far, how would you like to have been Jeremiah? He lived in the midst of a people about like the description in #9 (who were trying to fool God by their hypocritical worship in his Temple). Are you up to it? Have you taken a "faith-check" lately? What if God planted you smack-dab in the middle of New York or San Francisco, or Chicago, or Tokyo, London, etc. etc. What if you did not live in the "Bible Belt, U.S.A.

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSONS ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 14 -- 17

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

God had already told Jeremiah, twice, "do not pray for this people" (7:16;11:14)! God reiterates--DO NOT PRAY FOR THE WELFARE OF THIS PEOPLE! Jeremiah tries to mitigate the people's guilt by telling the Lord (as if the Lord did not already know) that the false prophets are to blame for the people's rejection of God's warning that the Babylonians are going to consume their nationality and land. Jeremiah plead, "The people won't believe you God. And it is the fault of the false prophets---just let me pray for my people!". God says, "I already know about these false prophets---I did not send them, what they are saying are lies and deceit" (and God means, the evidence these are false prophets is clear enough that the people could have seen it had they really wanted to look). The people could see all around them, by now, evidence that these false prophets were speaking "the deceit of their own minds." See from 14:1-6 (actually from 1:1 to this point) that Judah was already reaping a harvest of divine judgment because of her sins. But the false prophets were saying, "No, we're not going to have any war or famine---everything is going to be alright---we're the chosen people, we have the temple of God in our midst. We are fasting and sacrificing and giving offerings, how can you think God is displeased with that?"

So Jeremiah "beseeches" the Lord (14:19-23), almost putting the onus on God that he (God) should not be so hateful, so unconcerned about his divine reputation, that he should not break his covenant, and where can we go but to the Lord? Never mind that the people have broken their covenant---that they are the ones who hate God--that they have ruined God's reputation among the heathen, and that they have already decided NOT to go to Jehovah but to every idol under the sun! The Lord's answer is: Though Moses and Samuel (the "Law and the Prophets" all put together) stood before him to intercede, they could not turn his heart toward these apostate people. Ezekiel was told by God, "even if these three, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it (the land of exile), they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness" (Ezek. 14:14). He commands Jeremiah, "Send them out of my sight, and let them go!" "Turn loose, Jeremiah, leave it with me!" God has willed that they shall go to pestilence, the sword, famine and captivity--AND THAT IS WHERE THEY SHALL GO, WHETHER JEREMIAH LIKES IT OR NOT!

If ever there was an example that prayer does not change the will of God, this would be it! Prayer, when it is in conformity to God's will may change God's actions, but his will is immutable! If not we might as well worship other gods or ourselves. If God's immutability, his absoluteness, his covenant commitment, can be changed by man's flawed understanding, flawed wishes, and flawed prayers, we don't have much of a God! THE IMPERATIVE FOR JEREMIAH (AND FOR ALL HUMAN BEINGS) WAS TO PRAY "THY WILL BE DONE." WITHOUT TRYING TO PRAY AGAINST THE WILL OF GOD! Our problem is that we think we know better what the will of God ought to be instead of looking in the right place to find what the will of God actually is! God

doesn't reveal his will to us in our prayers---or in our meditations---or in our whimsies---or even in our reason. We use our reason to conclude, on the basis of evidence, that the Bible is the will of God, but it is faith that accepts what is delineated therein is the will of God. (see Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:19; Ezek. 24:24; Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17). He wants us to pray because that means we are totally dependent upon him and want to let him know how much we love him for being able to depend on him. BUT HE WANTS US TO FIND WHAT HIS WILL FOR US AND THE WHOLE WORLD IS. HE HAS "HIDDEN" IT IN HIS ONCE FOR ALL, DIVINELY INSPIRED, INERRANT, INFALLIBLE, REVEALED-IN-HUMAN LANGUAGE WORD---THE BIBLE. Peter said that in his precious and very great promises God has granted to us ALL things that PERTAIN TO LIFE AND GODLINESS. Paul wrote that the Scriptures are inspired of God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. How much more is there pertaining to life and godliness than ALL? How much more is there of good works than EVERY?

It is Biblical that believers should pray for one another. Paul constantly asked his brethren all over the ancient world to pray for him and his co-workers. But Paul never asked anyone to pray to change God's will as revealed to the "prophets and apostles." It is when people pray to God contrary to what is his will (revealed in the Bible) that God advises them not to pray. When Paul knew what God's will was, he was ready to do it even at the risk of life and limb, whether he agreed with it or not. So did Jesus (Jn. 12:27; Matt. 26:36ff). But to be emphatic to Jeremiah that it was God's will that the Judeans should go into captivity, God mentions the two men of Israelite history who represented the Law and the Prophets---Moses and Samuel---as incapable of changing his will about Judah. (see also Ezek. 14:14). The people of Judah could change God's actions toward them only if they repented, did God's will revealed in the Law and through the prophets. If they should do that, God would do whatever he willed and promised to do upon repentance. But the change has to come in man---not in God! That is why "praying to saints" that somehow their righteousness would accrue to our merit is ridiculous. Each human being is responsible to God for his own attitudes and actions. If we want God to intercede let us pray to the One who is our Intercessor---Jesus Christ whose meritorious righteous life and vicarious atonement is the only efficacious intercession upon which we may call. HE IS OUR HIGH PRIEST FOREVER BY THE POWER OF AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE! (Heb. 7:16)--IF THE WILL OF GOD COULD BE CHANGED, IT WOULD BE BY JESUS CHRIST. He did come to earth not to change God's will or destroy it, but to fulfill it---WHICH HE DID, ONCE FOR ALL. There may be a part of God's will that he has kept secret (see Deut. 29:29), that is for him to keep---but the things that are revealed are for us to keep. God hears to answer penitent prayers. He hears all prayers, but answers all according to his will (1 Jn. 5:14). The words, "things" and "belong" are not in the Hebrew text---they are supplied by the English translators. The Hebrew word cathar in Deut. 29:29 means "keep concealed." Apparently God does not intend, at this time, to reveal anything other than what he has finalized in the Bible. That is the thrust of the book of Hebrews in its repetitive phrase, "once for all time." Through Jesus Christ, God "has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" ("are allowing themselves to be sanctified", the Greek verb in Heb. 10:14 is present, passive) WHAT MORE OF THE WILL OF GOD DO WE NEED TO KNOW? CAN'T WE JUST TAKE ONE DAY AT A TIME, TAKE WHAT COMES ALONG, IN THE CERTAIN AND SURE KNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE BEEN PERFECTED AND SANCTIFIED ONCE FOR

ALL!? DOES THIS NEED TO BE PREACHED AND TAUGHT? INDEED!

Jeremiah blamed the false prophets for Judah's wickedness---now God is blaming Manasseh! Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was one of the more godly kings to rule Judah. Josiah, the godly reformer of Judah was Manasseh's grandson. But Manasseh was the most wicked king ever to sit on the throne of Judah. No, God is not blaming Manasseh for the fact that the people chose wickedness, he is blaming Manasseh for being the tool or instrument of the devil to make wickedness available! Jesus said, "Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes!" Matt. 18:7 (you can read Manasseh's biography in 2 Kings 21 and 2 Chron. 33). Manasseh even humbled himself and repented in his old age, in deeds as well as words, 2 Chron. 33:10-20. But he could not undo the consequences of having "tempted" people into gross wickedness when he was a young and blasphemous king on the throne of Judah. Judas cannot be blamed that the Jewish rulers and Pilate chose to crucify Jesus, but he can be for leading them to Jesus. I cannot be blamed for someone choosing to sin, but I can be for putting that sin before them in a tempting way. Now does that apply to the way we dress, drive, and dine? Indeed! Haven't you heard young ladies who expose nearly every inch of their bodies in swimsuits or other ??clothing?? that they are not responsible for someone else's wicked thoughts? Sure you have! But just what are they "not" responsible for? Perhaps a very skimpily dressed young woman is not a temptation! Tell that to Madison Avenue!

"Woe is me!" Alas and alack! "I ain't got nobody, and nobody ain't got me!" "Nobody loves me, everybody hates me, guess I'll go out and eat worms!" What does one do about depression---write poetry or songs. A lot of George Gershwin's songs are "Why was I born, why am I livin'" kind of morose and melancholy lyrics. Of course, most modern secular music in the past 50 years has been going from bad to worse about depression, despair, despondency, destruction. And most of it comes out of a self-indulgent, libertine, "devil-may-care", "turn on (to drugs), and tune out" culture, produced by the humanistic existentialism taught in secular higher (and now in lower) education all over the world. IT'S THE VIEWPOINT THAT'S CRUCIAL! Of course, some mental depression is caused by chemical imbalances, and we must support medical science trying to find solutions to this. But, most mental depression is caused by people distancing themselves from God and his precious and very great promises! In the same breath that Jesus was promising his chosen apostles that they would be hated by the world and persecuted, he promised them that his joy would be in them resulting in their joy being full (John 15:1-27). Jesus promised the apostles this joy through the agency of his commandments, his word. That is the precise thrust of all Jesus says in John 14, 15, 16, 17. And did you notice, Jeremiah found that "eating" (assimilating, subsisting on) the "words" of God made them "become a joy and a delight of his heart." Jeremiah was able to deal with his depression by taking the word of God into his "heart." "Heart" means MIND in the scriptures. Now that sounds too simplistic for millions of people today who have been convinced they need to go to a psychologist or psychiatrist for "psychoanalysis" (or worse yet, some think they can find a cure for depression by going to a psychic). In my opinion, secularly speaking, psychics and psychiatrists are about on the same level of help---which is zilch (unless the problem is medical). Trying to cure a sinner with humanistic philosophy (which is the entire base of secular psychoanalysis) is not only ridiculously inadequate, it usually exacerbates the problem! The problem is GUILT! The problem is the

enthronement of SELF! And no one can take care of those except Jesus Christ. If you read the text (Jer. 15:10-21) you will see that his problem was enthroning SELF! The text we shall deal with in question #9 of this lesson confirms the uselessness of secular psychology.

The Lord's answer to Jeremiah's depression was, repent. "Return to me," the Lord said to Jeremiah, "talk about what is precious and not what is worthless." If you want to know what that involves, turn to the Psalms, especially Psa. 119. If anyone ever had cause to be depressed, it would be David, hunted by Saul until he had to live like an animal, betrayed by his closest friends, when all the time he knew he should be the king of Israel, living in the palace, and Saul should be the fugitive. It just didn't seem fair. And David had his moments! He even records that of himself in his Psalms. But the beautiful 119th Psalm is the solution! About 11 times, count 'em, David repeats, "I have hoped in your word and You, Lord!" Is it too presumptuous to ask Christians and non-Christians who talk about depression, to "repent" and start talking about the word of the Lord?

God forbade Jeremiah to marry because God wanted to spare Jeremiah the heart-rending experience of having to watch a wife and children suffer and possibly die in the siege, killing, and captivity that was coming upon Judah. "There is a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing" (Eccl. 3:5). Ezekiel was told by God that he could not mourn his wife's death (Ezek. 24:15-18) as a symbol of the utter distress that was coming upon Judah. Earthly ties must not have such a hold on us that they would turn us away from God, no matter how close and precious they may be! That is the thrust of Paul's apostolic instruction in 1 Cor. 7:25ff. A disciple of Jesus does not have the dubious luxury of putting family ahead of him! We must love him MORE than family. Jeremiah had about all he could handle. So God simply ordered what was best for him. For the church during the great Jewish persecution of Christians in the 1st century, and the Roman persecution in the next 3 centuries, millions of Christians would suffer the loss of loved ones in violent murder by the enemies of God! Paul advised young people of his day to forego marriage, if they could contain themselves sexually, IF NOT, THEY SHOULD GET MARRIED! For most human beings, marriage is the way to go! After all it was instituted and sanctified by God himself. But for some, it could become a "stumbling block" in their relationship to God. Better then to forego it!

BEWARE OF FOLLOWING YOUR OWN FEELINGS! We've been through this umpteen times in our Bible School lessons, but if God has seen fit to repeat it in his word, we certainly should repeat it! The scripture passages are all there (Num. 15:39; Deut. 7:17; not even kings were to trust their own judgments, Deut. 17:18-20; Jer. 9:21,23; 10:23; Prov. 3:5; 12:15; 16:1-2; 20:24; 21:2; Jer. 17:9-10; Lk. 12:17ff; 12:45; 16:15; Matt. 16:23; Rom. 8:7-8 and a multitude of others). **GOD ALONE KNOWS THE MIND-HEART OF MAN AS IT REALLY IS AND SHOULD BE KNOWN.** Now God promises in his word that if you want your heart to be really known---down into its deepest recesses, its secrets, its denials, **THEN LET THE WRITTEN, "LIVING AND ACTIVE" WORD OF GOD EXPOSE IT!** (see Heb. 4:11-13) To do so is to safeguard it from "falling by the same sort of disobedience" by which the Israelites fell in the wilderness! They did NOT "enter God's rest" because they followed the leading of their hearts without submitting their hearts to the leading of God's word. **COULD IT**

BE THAT MILLIONS ARE NOT FINDING "REST" (RELEASE, FORGIVENESS, "SELF-ESTEEM", SATISFACTION, PURPOSE) BECAUSE OF THE SAME FALSE GUIDE---THEIR EGO!? It is God's plain unequivocal word, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it? I the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." (Jer. 17:9-10) Is it any wonder that Jesus likened his words unto "bread and meat" in John 6:35-63 and really meant that his words were THE BREAD OF LIFE! I wonder, do we really believe God about this business of following our own "intuition"? Maybe the problem is that we do not believe God speaks to every issue and facet of our lives so we are on our own in lots of things!

Jeremiah was a human being---no question about that. He was no heroic "Luke Skywalker". He was no Superman with Krypton at his beck and call; no Bruce Wayne, fearless fighter of injustice and evil who turned into an invincible Batman at every challenge. He walked, stumbled, crawled, complained, doubted, suffered, and cried. He let his emotions get the best of him on occasion. But he also clung to God's Word as though he were a man drowning in a sea of injustice and wickedness. He repented and turned his cause over to the Lord; he praised and worshiped God with sincerity; and most of all, he "stuck to his guns." He fulfilled his mission (though he did not even want to start on it) and was faithful to the end! He suffered the frustrations that most every proclaimer of the unadulterated word of God---seeing what appears to be total failure in his service to the Lord. He, like most of us, feel responsible for the results of ministry. But God holds us responsible only for ministering----sowing the seed----not the results, not the crop. We may water and we may cultivate, but God gives the increase. We will sow where others reap, while we may reap where others have sown. BUT IT IS ALWAYS GOD'S WORD THAT MAKES THE SEED GROW "AUTOMATICALLY" ("of itself" Mk. 4:28). The word of God is absolutely faithful. It does not return unto him void. If the study of the prophets teach us nothing else, it will surely teach us that!

TEACHERS NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 18 - 20

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

No! Predestination or "divine election" is not to be found in this illustration. First, this is simply an illustration, an analogy---it is poetry, not prose! And as with all analogies, it has it's "break-down" point. Clay is inanimate matter; human beings are created in the image of God with freedom to choose, the power to think and will and resist. There is one main point in this analogy: God's immutable will is that human beings who repent and surrender to him will receive his pardon; those who do not will receive his destruction. And you can "put that in the bank!" GOD HAS MADE US FREE TO CHOOSE AND HE WILL NOT VIOLATE THAT POWER. BUT HE WANTS OUR HEARTS AND WILLS TO BE MALLEABLE SO THAT HE CAN WORK US THROUGH HIS HANDS OF DISCIPLINE INTO HOLY VESSELS---RECEPTACLES FOR HIS HOLY SPIRIT. Second, this passage must be interpreted in the light of all other biblical passages in which God has declared human beings morally responsible. Calvinistic predestination cannot be tenable or the Bible would be contradictory, and God would be holding us morally responsible for decisions and actions for which we could never make a moral decision. Of course, the English Bible translates the Greek word *proorizo* as "predestinated" or "destined". *Proorizo* is to be distinguished from *proginosko* which means, "to foreknow." The Greek word *proorizo* is translated "predestinate" in only 4 places in the N.T. (Rom. 8:29,30; Eph. 1:5,11)--some versions translate it, "foreordained". It does not mean that God "predetermines" that we will become Christians (or be saved) contrary to our choice in the matter! It means that God "foreordained" the redemptive program he would institute whereby we may choose to be saved if we wish to do so. In other words, God determined before the beginning of creation HOW & WHEN he would work out man's atonement. He "foreordained" that it would be done in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. His vote in the "election" process is Jesus Christ---YOUR VOTE DETERMINES YOUR ETERNAL DESTINY!

The statement by the men of Judah, "That is vain" (or, in some version, "It is hopeless", NIV translates, "It is no use.") is not a statement of despondency and despair---it is a contemptuous snarl of defiance. They are saying, "It is useless, Jeremiah, for you to continue to preach to us---we have chosen how we shall think and live, and we will continue to do so regardless of what you say the consequences will be." WHAT ARROGANCE! But then, all human beings are capable of such arrogance toward God or their fellow man---especially toward any AUTHORITY! That has been the devil's doctrine ever since the Garden of Eden---"Man, you don't have to kow-tow to any authority--not even God's. If you will partake of the forbidden, you will be as wise and powerful as God--so go ahead--mmmmmm, isn't that delicious!" "Authority" is a four-letter word, you know, in English, "OBEY" (in Hebrew it is anglicized, *shama*, and in Greek it is anglicized, *hupakouo*---and both of these are often translated, "Hear!"). Both the Hebrew word and Greek word is also translated "Obey!" And every single human being (except one, Jesus Christ) has, at one time or

another in life, hated that word. Most human beings learn before they die, fortunately, that everyone has to "obey" or surrender to some "authority" in this life. It is inescapable. And the apostle Paul teaches us that in the spiritual realm we either obey God unto righteousness, or the devil unto sin ("lawlessness"). Isn't it interesting that the very essence of sin, as the apostle John defines it, is "lawlessness." HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH AN ARROGANT REPLY LIKE THAT? HOW DID JESUS TELL HIS APOSTLES TO DEAL WITH SUCH? (See Matt. 10:14-15; Mk. 6:11; Lk. 9:5; Acts 13:44-51; 18:5-6). Even God "gives up" on people when they become "futile-thinking, senseless, fools" (Rom. 1:21-32). Even God lets people "believe what is false" when they "refuse to love the truth...and take pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2:9-12). AND ISN'T THAT A TERRIBLE ATTITUDE TO HAVE---DO YOU HAVE FRIENDS WITH THAT ATTITUDE?

Yes! It is true! Judah had outdone the heathen, the goyim, in forgetting who her God was. Judah, in Jeremiah's day, is worshiping so many heathen gods (see their worship of Tammuz, the Assyrian "Adonis", animals, reptiles, the sun, etc., in Ezek. 8:1-18). They were calling Jehovah, "Baal" and calling Baal, "Jehovah". They didn't know the difference! Isaiah said they were more dumb than an ox or a wild ass (Isa. 1:3). Heathen do not confuse their "national gods" with those of other nations. They know the difference. They may worship other gods, but they don't confuse them with others. HOW DUMB CAN YOU GET?! There are just lots of people today who have confused notions about Jehovah-God and about Jesus Christ. The worst are those who confuse Jesus Christ as being "just another human being." He was human, but he was also God Incarnate. (John 1:14, 18; 14: 5:18; 14:8-11; Col. 1:19; 2:9, et.al.). Islam "redefined" God into "Allah." Buddhism redefined God into "Nirvana". New Age has redefined God into "ME" and "YOU" and EVERY OTHER HUMAN BEING as well as DIRT, ROCKS, TREES, GRASS, FISH, SPOTTED OWLS, ETC. ETC. Jehovah God is not in every little blade of grass that grows, or every drop of rain that falls. True, God made all that, and by his infinite providence, directs it, but God only dwells, through the revelation of his Holy Spirit, in penitent, loving, obedient believers. Let us not confuse our God with the "Baals" or with something our God has made in the material world. It is getting nowadays to the point that we are being indoctrinated with the idea that man is an unwelcome intruder on "Nature." According to some "Nature" worshipers, everything man does---cutting down trees, killing animals to eat, erecting buildings to live in and work in, paving roads for commerce and protection, building power lines to have electricity (with which to see, cook, heal, protect against thievery), flying in airplanes, ad nauseam, makes man a blight on earth---we ought to get rid of man so "Mother Nature" is all that is left on earth. Well, Henry David Thoreau can have his Walden's Pond with all its bugs, snakes, humidity, and its malaria bearing mosquitoes---as for me give me a biblically-Christian stewardship of "nature" and let me use it, yes, even consume it, to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Jeremiah's "friends and neighbors" plotted to "smite him with the tongue." Why? Because Jeremiah was preaching the truth about their false "priests, wise men, and prophets." (see Jer. 9:4). One man has said: "Gossip is always a personal confession of either malice or imbecility---shun it." Another said: "I would rather play with the forked lightning, or take in my hands living wires with their fiery current, than speak a reckless word against any servant of Christ, or idly repeat the slanderous darts which thousands of Christians are hurling on others, to the hurt of their own souls and bodies." Many of God's servants have suffered the poisonous arrows of slander

(Moses, David, Amos, Hezekiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, the apostle Paul, and, of course, Jesus) (see Lev. 19:15-18; Psa. 101:5; Prov. 10:18; Il:13; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20, 22; 26:24; 1 Tim. 3:11; James 4:11-12). Bearing false witness is a serious thing with God! It was punishable by death in the O.T. and by eternal torments in the N.T. (Rev. 22:15). I have had preacher friends tell me of the deep hurt they, and their families, have suffered through things said about them which were false. I have been the recipient of some of it myself and know how deeply it hurts. May God have mercy upon me if I have slandered another human being. The Law was explicit about "searching and asking diligently" about the verity of "tales" borne around (Deut. 13:12ff). Wouldn't we expect an even higher level of discretion from Christians? **HOW MANY SOULS HAVE BEEN LOST BECAUSE CHRISTIANS GOSSIP OR SLANDER?** How large a threat is it to the kingdom, anyway?

The threat of God against Judah for "burning its children in the fire" is indubitable. God says he would give Judah over to the "sword, to their enemies, to the vultures" and "make their city and nation a horror to be hissed at". God was going to "break Judah to pieces" like the broken vessel of the potter. Now, the question that should haunt us: Is abortion on demand the same as "the blood of innocents...burning one's sons in the fire"? After all, aborting on demand a pre-natal fetus is not the same as killing a baby who has been born---or is it? If not, then America is o.k.--or is it? We haven't even dealt with the question of "aborting the souls of the innocents" through the teaching of evolution and other godless myths by our secularized educational system and media. Or perhaps we should ask: Is it hermeneutically sound to compare Judah with America---isn't the comparison to be made between Judah and God's kingdom today---the Church?" But then there is another question, Did God condemn Judah and excuse the Gentile nations who shed the blood of innocents? And still another question, Is it only the secular society that is pro-abortion on demand---are there segments of "Christendom" who advocate this as a "woman's right" to abort a baby? **ANYONE WHO KNOWS WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS, AND ACCEPTS THE BIBLE AS GOD'S FINAL AUTHORITY FOR THIS LIFE, KNOWS THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS!** And there's the "rub"! That word **ACCEPTS!** What most of the world "accepts" as the final authority for this world is, themselves! Yes, the Christian is in the right to demand, by all non-violent and law-honoring means possible, that the civil government legislate against "abortion on demand". God expects civil government, above everything else, to sanctify and protect innocent (not criminal) human life! That is civil government's fundamental mandate from God! It is the government's business to execute the death-penalty for murder---to make war on aggressive invaders and those who would violently deprive us of our unalienable rights to life, liberty, and personal property. The government has a God-ordained moral obligation to adhere to Romans 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 1:13-17; 1 Tim. 1:8-9; 2:1-4, etc. The greatest apostle of them all stood for the death penalty, even for himself, if he was guilty of a capital crime see Acts 25:11. Any Bible School teacher who does not believe this should read my book, *What The Bible Says About Civil Government*, pub. by College Press. There is nothing in either the Bible or the U.S. Constitution that prohibits the proper government officials from executing the death penalty for murder. **BOTH THE BIBLE AND THE CONSTITUTION ARE FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.** There should, therefore, be no "conscientious objectors" to it in the Christian community! The Christian's conscience is under the sovereignty of God's word. **IF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT SANCTIFY AND PROTECT HUMAN LIFE, WHAT IS IT'S REASON FOR EXISTENCE?**

Bible believers, of all the people in the world, should be realists about human nature! The Bible certainly is realistic about it! Do not ever think for a moment that a "priest" or a "clergyman" is incapable of violence or lawlessness! Even the great ones (e.g., Saul of Tarsus) have their weaknesses. Remember the Spanish Inquisitions (or do they even study about that in history anymore?), and the Crusades. And then there are the violent "leaders of government"! and physicians, and school teachers, and fathers and mothers, and now CHILDREN! Any human being is capable of atrocious behavior without the controlling power of the Gospel in their hearts. That very explicit text in 2 Cor. 5:14-16 is so significant, every Christian ought to memorize it: "For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced (Gr. *krinantas*—"convinced as in a court of law from evidence") that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view..." Paul did not mean a "feeling" when he used the Greek word *krinantas*. **WHEN WE LOSE OR LET LAPSE OUR MENTAL CONVICTION OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN HIS VICARIOUS ATONEMENT, CONFIRMED BY HIS RESURRECTION, WE ARE LEFT TO THE ANIMAL INSTINCTS OF THE FLESH!** And when that is allowed, we ultimately become like that society described in Romans 1:18-32---"foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless." Fleshly instincts, unchecked by the power of the Gospel, are the causes of war (James 4:1-10), the ultimate violence. The people of Judah in Jeremiah's day lived not by the Law of God in their hearts, but by the instincts of their flesh. They became like animals, eventually, eating the flesh of their own children (Jer. 19:9).

The Hebrew word for "deceive" is *pathah* and means, "seduce, allure, entice, deceive;" it is the same word used to describe "seducing a maiden" (Ex. 22:16) or a wife "enticing" a secret out of her husband (Judges 14:15). Jeremiah thought he had "been had" by God! He remembered how God had promised (back in Jeremiah the 1st chapter) "I will make you, Jeremiah, like a fortified city, an iron pillar, bronze wall" and you will do the "plucking up, tearing down, and building up....they will not prevail against you, Jeremiah." "So what is going on here," says Jeremiah. "Every time I open my mouth I am mocked, threatened, beaten (20:1ff), slandered, plotted against--by friends and family (with friends like that who needs enemies!)" **YES, GOD LAYS IT OUT IN THE OPEN FOR ANYONE WHO WOULD BECOME A PROPHET OR A PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL (OR, FOR THAT MATTER, A CHRISTIAN).** Jesus was utterly frank and almost brutally honest toward those who were to become spokesmen for the Gospel. They are to expect the same kind of treatment Jesus received! Jesus always warned would-be followers, **COUNT THE COST!** If you are not ready to "pay the price---don't sign on." We would probably sympathize with Jeremiah had he quit the ministry and go sell "Jerusalem real estate." The way the people vehemently insisted there would be no invasion, destruction and exile, he could have made a killing in a hurry. "Ministerial burn-out" is an on-going problem with the church today. Do preachers ever get "down in the dumps" as Jeremiah did? Yep! Do they ever insist they were naive, "didn't know it would be that bad," decide they were not "cut out to be a preacher," even blame God for not revealing to them that it would be difficult? Yep! **AND ARE THERE PREACHERS WHO COMPLAIN, BUT "HANG IN THERE" IN SPITE OF TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS? YEP! AND THAT IS WHY PREACHERS NEED THE CHURCH TO "FELLOWSHIP" WITH THEM AS MUCH OR MORE THAN THE OTHER MEMBERS NEED ONE ANOTHER!** Preachers need to be able to choose their own circle of intimate associations within,

or without, a congregation. And they need encouragement from all the members of the church.

Jeremiah had his "highs" as well as his "lows". The life of a believer is as vulnerable to mental and emotional ups and downs as anyone else's. To pretend that it is not is unrealistic and not biblical, because that is not the honest believer's experience, and the Bible clearly says that is the way life will be for believers. Even the apostle Paul had his "downers" (read 2 Corinthians again and Romans 7). So, there were moments when Jeremiah could say, "I've committed my cause to you Lord, and your word is like a fire in my bones, and I am on fire for the Lord to proclaim his word." Those are the times when the ministry of the Word is a joy and a blessing. There are times in the ministry when it is clear, as it was to Jeremiah, "The Lord is with me as a dread warrior" and great victories over sin, over impenitence, and over self take place. JESUS PROMISED VICTORIES, YOU KNOW! There are also the rich-young-ruler times, the Nazareth synagogue times, the Pilate times---discouragements---when you want to quit. But there are the Zacchaeus times, the "woman at the well" times, the Sergius Paulus times and the Luke and Timothy times---these are the times that keep fanning the fire-in-the-bones! Of course, the bottom line, is the absolutely faithful and abiding word of God.

Yes, Jeremiah lost it again! Don't we all? Have you ever lived a day in your life where everything and everybody was pleasant, upbeat, encouraging, victorious, satisfying, fulfilling? If you have, you should write a book--it would be a best-seller. What is your estimate of the number of Christian books written to tell you "How To" have such a whole lifetime? Check it out! Some of them are helpful---but for the most part, life just doesn't seem to want to conform to all the "I'm o.k., you're o.k." books. THIS WILL CERTAINLY BE TRUE OF YOUR LIFE IF YOU ARE AN UNASHAMED, VERBALIZING, RIGHTEOUSNESS-PRACTICING CHRISTIAN OUT IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE! If you don't believe it, try it! Jesus promised his disciples persecution, self-denial, enemies, and WORK. Read the book of Acts, the epistles, the Revelation. After all, this world is not our home! We're looking for a better one! The New Testament says over and over that the believer's journey here is only temporary---a place perfecting him for heaven. So we anticipate another life, where there will be no evil circumstances, and no evil people and won't that be glory for me and for you and for Jeremiah. And we will all be there by the grace of God, not because we lived every day with a smile on our face and a song on our lips. We will get there because we believed and loved the Savior who attained it for us.

Do not give in or give up! God used Jeremiah in a mighty way, with Jeremiah, having his ups and downs all the way from the day the young man was called to be a prophet until the old man was taken as a hostage down into the heathen land of Egypt (never to return to his beloved land of Israel). God has used more "unlikely" people than we can imagine! People with all kinds of physical handicaps; people with all kinds of phobias; people with money and without money; people with large families and those without any family; people in isolated jungles and deserts and people in cities jam-packed with millions of differing cultures and languages; people with all different kinds of personalities, preferences, backgrounds, likes and dislikes. THERE JUST ISN'T ANY SUCH THING AS A STEREOTYPICAL CHRISTIAN SERVANT OF GOD! If God can use Jewish fishermen and tax-collectors; rabbinical persecutors; complaining

prophets; butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers-----HE CAN USE YOU!
JEREMIAH WAS USED MIGHTILY BECAUSE, WHEN ALL WAS SAID AND DONE,
HE TRUSTED GOD IN THE THINGS THAT KEPT HIM UPSET AND WEARY FOR
MOST OF HIS LIFE. AND THAT IS PRECISELY WHY GOD CAN USE YOU AND
ME! Jeremiah had the great honor from God to predict a “new” king (Messiah), a new
covenant (in the Messiah), and a new “kingdom” (of the Messiah).

TEACHERS NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 21 -- 25

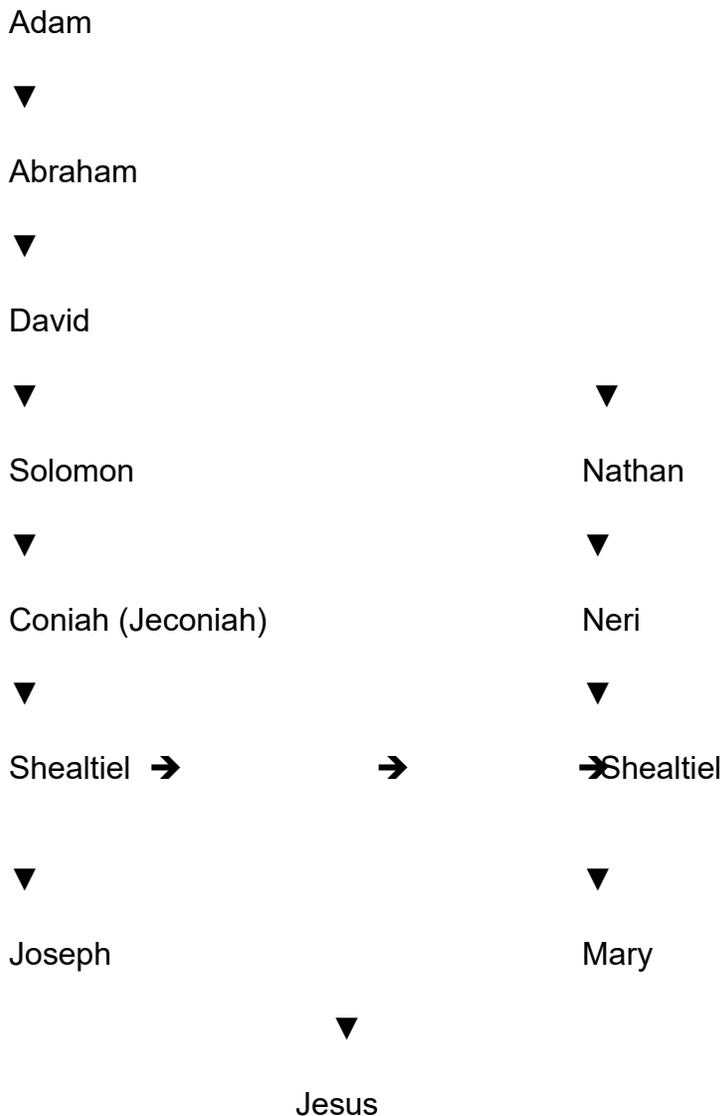
by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

It is not only "Constitutional" for preachers and prophets to preach about political and military issues---IT IS BIBLICALLY MANDATED (Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:14-17) THAT THEY SHOULD! BOTH JESUS AND THE APOSTLES SPOKE ABOUT POLITICAL ISSUES. If it was good enough for Jesus, Paul and Peter, it's good enough for me (it's the "old time religion"---as old as the New Testament!). In fact, Christian preachers (and all Christians) are obligated by their confession of Christ to take a stand for Biblical, Christian ethics and principles in civil government and civil "servants." The Bible charges that Christians are to take a stand against immoral and unbiblical ethics and principles in government and its "servants." Abraham did! Moses and the Law did! The O.T. prophets did! John the Baptist did! Jesus did! The apostles did! Scripture references to confirm this would be too numerous to mention here. I recommend you get my book, *What The Bible Says About Civil Government*, published by College Press, if you have any doubts about this, and read it. Look up any subject concerning civil government you wish, and you will find the Bible has plenty to say about it---Taxes, War, Crime and Punishment, Civil Disobedience, Laws, Civil Servants---it's all in there! This is so because God ordained civil government. Civil government did not "evolve" from the mind of man. Civil government is one of the institutions ordained by God to bring about man's redemption. There are three redemptive institutions ordained by God---family, church, and civil government; the most important of those 3 is, of course, the church. The church is to impact both of the other institutions with the revelation (word) of God. Not by force, but by persuasion (preaching-teaching) and by infiltration (personal involvement). Probably the most significant statements in the New Testament about civil government are: Matt. 22:23-33; Luke 3:10-14; Acts 25:11-12; Acts 26:1-32; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 Tim. 2:1-4.

It always needs repeating, "Faith without works is dead." Professed faith in God and Christ is to produce godliness and Christ-likeness in what a person does, with what God has given him by which to do! Everyone does! Nobody is a non-doer! "No man is an island..." wrote John Donne. Even Robinson Crusoe had his man "Friday". It is significant that the Lord says through Jeremiah, "Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the Lord." (Jer. 22:15-16). Millions are running to and fro to every new fad in religion, hoping to have some "new experience" and come to "know the Lord", when all along, to know the Lord is simply to do justice and righteousness! The apostle James said it succinctly, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and keep oneself unstained from the world." (Jas. 1:27). Many people have been duped into believing that "Pure religion" is to be found in liturgical ritual. Many others have been conned into believing that "Pure religion" is to be found in sweating, shouting, sensational "hallelujah-highs"---and both views are

wrong! That is why it always needs repeating!

God declared Coniah (or better known as Jeconiah) "childless" in that the descendant of Coniah (Jesus Christ of Nazareth) would not come to the throne of Judah by legal descent from Coniah. Harold Fowler explains it by pointing out that while Coniah evidently had sons (1 Chron. 3:17; Matt. 1:12), Coniah was to be taken to Babylon and slain --Jer. 22:26-- so Coniah's brother Neri (see Luke 3:27) married Coniah's wife and Coniah's son Shealtiel became, by levirate law (Deut. 25:5), a "descendant" of Neri, still able to claim legal ascendancy to the throne of Judah, because Neri descended from David through Nathan (Coniah descended from David through Solomon). It is charted thus:



It does appear that Matthew says Joseph was of the tribe of Judah; and Luke is saying that Mary was of the tribe of Judah (see Rom. 1:3---"Jesus Christ....descended from David according to the flesh..."). God made no mistake.

The Hebrew word *tzamach* is translated "Branch" but might be more accurately translated "sprout" or "sprig" or "shoot" (see Isa. 53:2). Jeremiah's use of the word here definitely refers to the promised Messiah (or "Anointed One"). Isaiah 4:2 refers to the Messiah as the "Branch" of the Lord that will be beautiful and God will use the Branch (or "Planting") of the Lord to "cleanse: Israel. Isaiah 11:1-10 refers to the Messiah as the "shoot from the stump of Jesse" who will bring an entirely purified and transformed "kingdom" which shall be inhabited by people from all nations. Jeremiah 23:5-6 and 33:14-16 are clearly personifying this "Branch." And Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12 are even clearer that The Branch is going to be The Messiah. The Messiah is called by a number of other figurative titles, but the idea of the "sprout" or "planting" of the Lord is very appropriate for God did indeed "Plant" the Messiah in the "seed of Abraham" and the "seed of David." I think that God was telling the Israelites through this prophetic symbol ("Sprout") that the Messiah would be none other than the Perfect Son of God incarnated in human flesh. This, of course, is not the only prophetic symbol of the incarnation of God in the Messiah (Micah 5:2; Isa. 7:14, etc.), but it is part of the cumulative mass of O.T. revelation from which the Israelites should have known that God was going to become man. Jesus expected the Jews of his day to know this from the O.T., but they didn't (Lk. 24:25-27; 25:44:-49). When he claimed it, the Jews indicted him for blasphemy, and had Pilate crucify him---for something their O.T. taught over and over. Jeremiah's prediction was that "the days are coming" when God would raise up this Righteous Branch. But the Israelites did not even have to guess when that would be, for Daniel 9:24-27 specifically pinpoints the time of his coming to be 490 years after the restoring of to the Jews their national identity (see my commentary on Daniel, 3rd edition, pub. by College Press for details).

Every true prophet of God in the O.T. speaks very severe words of condemnation against false prophecy and false prophets. And well they should, for God will not tolerate it (remember how God told Elijah to deal with the false prophets of Baal, 1 Kings 18:20-40!---God made such drastic measures a part of the Law of Moses, Deut. 13:1-5). Many passages in the O.T. speak with the same severity against false prophecy and false teaching. But what about the N.T.? Peter denominates false teachers as those like "creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed!" (2 Pet.2:12). The Lord Jesus declares "war" on those in the church at Pergamum (Rev. 2:12-17) if they do not deal with the false teachers in their midst! The apostle Paul advised the Ephesian church that those living according to false teaching should be "exposed" (Eph. 5:11)---and Paul practiced his preaching. He wrote some severe words to the Corinthian church about false teaching. He struck one false prophet blind (Acts 13:8-12). Paul had severe words to say about the Judaizers who were false teachers in Philippians—he called them "dogs" (Phil. 3:2) and Galatians (Gal. 3:1; 6:12-13). I did a study on what the N.T. says about false teachers and teaching years ago and found 78 passages in the N.T. condemning it in no uncertain terms. But while we are obligated to speak severely against them and their teachings, our obligation also is to make every effort to save the false teacher (see Jude 22-23, et.al.). We cannot save them by giving them the impression that we, or God, condone false teaching---THE TRUTH MUST NOT BE COMPROMISED! NOT EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF HURTING "FEELINGS". WE MUST REMEMBER THAT EVEN WHEN WE "SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE" WE WILL OFTEN BE CASTIGATED AS "INTOLERANT", "BIGOTED", "IGNORANT" AND "HEARTLESS"....BUT WE WILL BE IN GOOD COMPANY, FOR THAT IS WHAT MANY SAID OF JESUS AND THE APOSTLES! Paul asked the Galatians, "Have I become your enemy for telling you

the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).

God's word gives definite criteria by which we may distinguish between true and false prophets and false teachers: (a) by whom they claim authority to teach (Jer. 23:13); (b) by their personal lives (Jer. 23:14); (c) by whether they speak their own minds to people who stubbornly follow their own hearts---or speak the word of the Lord (Jer. 23:16-17)--THERE IS THAT WARNING AGAIN---DO NOT FOLLOW YOUR OWN MIND AND HEART....FIND OUT WHAT THE LORD SAYS! (d) by whether they have "stood in the council of the Lord and listened to the Lord's word, or not (Jer. 23:18); (e) by whether they turn people from their evil ways or not (Jer. 23:21-22); (f) by being so aware of the true word of God you can tell the difference between "false dreams" and true teaching [between straw and wheat] (Jer. 23:28); (g) by whether they "steal" [Hebrew word ganab is used in a figurative way here to mean "those who appropriate from one another words supposedly from Me"] or deceive by words that sound like they are from God--there is a lot of that going on in modernistic theology today (Jer. 23:30). In the case of the special prophets and apostles who were appointed by God to deliver his verbal, propositional, written revelation to mankind, you could distinguish them from false ones by whether their predictions came to pass or not---that was the way they were authenticated---AND THAT IS THE WAY WE AUTHENTICATE THE WRITTEN SCRIPTURES AS THE WORD OF GOD TODAY---FULFILLED PROPHECY! But all the other factors mentioned above are given in the N.T. as criteria by which to judge true and false teachers today (e.g. Matt. 7:15-23; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; Jude 1-16) THE MAIN THING IS THAT WE MUST BE SO TRAINED IN WHAT THE TRUE WORD OF GOD SAYS ABOUT EVERY SUBJECT OF LIFE, WE CAN DISTINGUISH IMMEDIATELY WHETHER A TEACHER IS TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD, OR FOLLOWING HIS OWN MIND AND HEART OR NOT!

Figs were a staple commodity of Israel. Their main use was for sweetening. But they also contain lots of fiber. They were often dried and pressed into cakes for food (1 Sam. 25:18); and they were sometimes used medicinally as poultices (2 Kgs. 20:7; Isa. 38:21). The Hebrew word is te'anim; the Greek word is sukun. Having a good fig tree was a sign of peace and prosperity in Israel (1 Kgs. 4:25; Micah 4:4; Zech. 3:10; Haggai 2:19; Habakkuk 2:17). Israelites finding themselves traveling between "sit-down" meals often could slake their hunger by just one or two figs plucked from a tree along the roadside (Matt. 21:18-19; Mk. 11:12-14). Small figs which appear along with the first leaves of spring after ripening are called "first-ripe figs" and are considered a delicacy (Hosea 9:10; Micah 7:1). Figs allowed to remain on the tree and get over-ripe are not tasty, eventually spoil and are unfit for anything. James Smith, in his commentary, Jeremiah and Lamentations, pub. College Press, suggests that the "good figs represent those who had been taken captive in 597 B.C.....God is smiling on those who have been carried away to Babylon...While those who remained behind were still belligerent and rebellious---the exiles were beginning to show signs of repentance." This is the best explanation of the symbolism. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are examples of the "very good figs." Daniel prays his great prayer in Daniel 9:1ff beseeching the Lord that those down in Babylon with him are acknowledging their sin and are repenting. Daniel also predicts that many of the exiles will "know their God and stand firm and take action" in the face of idolatry, persecution, and apostasy (Dan. 11:29-35). However, Ezekiel dealt with rebellious and hardheaded Jews already down in Babylon. God was telling Jeremiah, by this vision of "figs", that he saw in that group of exiles who heeded Jeremiah's message to

surrender to Nebuchadnezzar and go into exile as ordained by the Lord, a nucleus of the New Israel---a Messianic remnant! Coniah, Zedekiah, Hananiah, and those who resisted the Babylonian exile, are the "very bad" (rotten) figs. This remnant of "very good figs" was salvaged from a crop of "very bad figs" BY THE TEACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD! It was Isaiah (his predecessors and successors among the true prophets of God) who said, "Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples... to the teaching and to the testimony..." (Isa. 8:16,20). It was Jeremiah who "For 23 years"...(had) spoken persistently the word of the Lord (Jer. 25:1-3). It was Daniel who dared to do and teach the word of God down in Babylon to those few (about 50,000 out of a 1,000,000) who by their exile were now prepared to HEAR the word of the Lord. It would take another 600 years for the "sprout" that God Planted to grow into a "great tree". God starts with small things, and works deliberately, slowly, but steadily toward his goal of redemption. WE MUST "WAIT UPON THE LORD" BY CONVICTION AND FAITH, AND NOT BE FOUND RUNNING AHEAD OF HIM! That was the failure of those who resisted the exile----they would not take correction---they would not "wait upon the Lord" for his promises---they set out to make God's promises come to pass on their time schedule! AND IT IS ALL DONE BY TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD--no force; no trickery, no monetary rewards, no "hype" (at least there shouldn't be).

The Lord mixed up his "cup of the wine of wrath" (Jer. 25:15); Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon would be the "cup of wrath" from the Lord, first upon Judah---then afterward upon Egypt, Uz, Philistia, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon, Dedan, Tema, Buz, Arabia, Zimri, Elam, Media, and all other kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth (at that time, known to that part of the world). FINALLY, "SHESHACH" (a code name for BABYLON) ITSELF WILL DRINK GOD'S "CUP OF WRATH" (Jer. 25:26). Now, is that fair?! If judgment is to begin at the house of God, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God...and if the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear? (1 Pet. 4:17-18)! God used the King of Assyria to punish Judah in Isaiah's day, but declared he would also punish the King of Assyria (Isa. 10:5ff). God used the kingdom of Medo-Persia to destroy Babylon, but then used the Greek empire of Alexander the Great to judge the Medes and Persians; he used the Romans to destroy the remnants of the Greek civilization (Daniel chs. 2 and 7). When God sent Amos to predict the destruction of the ten northern tribes (Israel), he also sent him to predict the destruction of their heathen neighbors (Amos chs. 1 and 2). OF COURSE IT IS FAIR! IT IS THE WORK OF THE ABSOLUTELY FAIR, JUST, RIGHTEOUS, HOLY GOD! "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). It's not fair from a humanistic point of view. Look out America---while divine justice may have been being meted out through the A-Bomb at Hiroshima for Japan's savage rape of China and all Southeast Asia, God may have a judgment in store for America at the hands of another "tool" of his!. How long will God tolerate America's infanticide, homicide, adultery, thievery, militant unbelief, and self-worship (idolatry)?

Jeremiah wrote, "For behold, I (God) begin to work evil at the city which is called by my name" Jer. 25:29)--what then shall be the lot of Babylon! Prov. 11:31 says, "If the righteous is requited on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!" Isa. 10:15 "Shall the axe vaunt itself over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it?" Ezekiel was told God's 9:6 judgment was to "...begin at my sanctuary." And when Christ chose to reveal to John the apostle the terrible

judgments that were going to fall upon the "beast" (the Roman empire), he began that Revelation with warnings of judgment upon the seven churches of Asia Minor if they did not repent! If Christ will "make war" upon an impenitent church, what will he do to an impenitent world? He is coming in flaming fire, with his angels, to render the vengeance of God upon those who know not God and obey not the Gospel (2 Thess. 1:8). And God will have a perfect, complete, ultimate vengeance in store for his enemies! They will be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone, where the smoke of their torment will go up for ever and ever, and they will have no rest, day or night! Rev. 14:9-11). Biblical history gives us a small sampling of the inconceivable power of God to punish (Sodom & Gomorrah, Jerusalem, Babylon, Rome).

Apocalyptic language is "crisis language." It is used to get people's attention about impending "world shaking" crises. Apocalyptic language was used by people in our own nation prior to and during WWII to try to shake some of the "isolationists" out of their lethargy about the fact that our "world of the 20s and 30s was about to come to an end." Few paid attention to them until Pearl Harbor! And didn't that old world of our younger years--of untouchable America, of the security of two oceans protecting us, COME TO AN END! Apocalyptic language is used all the time and it speaks in terms of "world-ending" figures of speech. BUT IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THE END OF ALL TIME! In my opinion, the O.T. prophets say NOTHING about the end of all time---except as the "end of civilizations" become a sort of earthly example of what God can and will do (in an ultimate sense) at the end of time---WHENEVER THAT WILL BE (and no one will ever know that ahead of time. Matt. 24:36, 44, 50; 25:12). What Jeremiah predicts certainly came to be the END OF THE WORLD FOR BABYLON! (see Isaiah chs. 13 & 14; Daniel chs. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 26 -- 29

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Shiloh is about 20 miles north of Jerusalem. It was where Joshua set up the Tabernacle (Josh. 18:1); and from year to year the Israelites went to Shiloh to sacrifice at the great feast days and other times (1 Sam. 1:3). The Israelites took the Ark of the Covenant from the Tabernacle at Shiloh to their encampment against the Philistines at Aphek (1 Sam. 4:1-4). But that so stirred up the Philistines they defeated Israel and captured the Ark and took it off with them. This is probably the point in time when Shiloh was ravaged and obliterated. The Philistines kept the Ark only 7 months---God laid great plagues upon them. They "got rid of that thing!" and gave it back to Israel. The Ark was never taken back to Shiloh. The Ark was taken to Beth-shemesh, then to Kiriath-jearim, (both places west of Jerusalem about 10 miles), where it remained 20 years. After the Ark was gone the Tabernacle was never at Shiloh again. The Ark was taken to Jerusalem by David, and Solomon laid it up in the Temple. Shiloh was never mentioned again in the historical books of Israel. Jeremiah refers to the destruction of Shiloh in Jer. 26:6 and had already predicted the destruction of the Ark of the Covenant in Jer. 3:15-18. Shiloh's destruction is referred to by the Psalmist (Psa. 78:56-60) saying it had been forsaken by the Lord because of their idolatry. And Psa. 78:56ff may be a description of the destruction of Shiloh. Jeremiah stands in the very court of the Temple built by Solomon nearly 400 years earlier, so massive, so ornate, so impressive that the Queen of Sheba traveled to see it. The Israelites were convinced it would last forever---AND JEREMIAH SAYS, "IF YOU DON'T REPENT, GOD WILL MAKE THIS TEMPLE AND THIS CITY LIKE SHILOH!" Jeremiah's message is that no place is so beautiful, so sacred to man, so indestructible, that God cannot tear it down to chasten impenitent man! And that goes for all cathedrals, church buildings, university campuses, and Washington D.C. memorials and government buildings! Look what's left of the ancient, indestructible, ruins of Greece and Rome!

Needless to say, Jeremiah's doom-boom upon the Temple and Jerusalem was not well received! In fact, the false prophets and corrupt priests declared Jeremiah to be guilty of a capital crime for saying such things! It's treason! It's sedition! Kill him! (of course, these corrupt "religious leaders" had a vested interest in the Temple--and how! The priests urged people to sin so they would bring more sacrifices to the altar. They made their charges to the royal house of princes. Jeremiah certainly did not protest innocence against the charge! He straightforwardly declared he was guilty---guilty of doing what the Lord had told him to do and to say! Jeremiah testifies that his message was from God! Jeremiah then leaves himself to the discretion of the royal princes---admonishing them that if they execute him they will have committed murder for he is innocent of any crime. If they execute him they will bring the judgment of God upon themselves. Some 630 years later another great spokesman for God, the apostle Paul, will be on trial for his life and will defend himself almost exactly as Jeremiah did (see Acts 25:11). The princes were impressed and convinced by the

unshakable conviction of Jeremiah. They declared him not guilty of the charges.

Yes! God does leave lessons of truth and justice, and judgment, in history. These princes remembered the precedent set by Hezekiah when Micah the prophet was predicting the same destruction of Jerusalem as Jeremiah had predicted. Hezekiah did not indict Micah for treason! Hezekiah paid attention to the prophets of his day (both Isaiah and Micah) and repented and the Lord delivered Jerusalem from destruction by the Assyrian, Rabshakeh (see Isa. chs. 36-39). The princes voted to acquit Jeremiah of these charges. But there was another true prophet of God in the same time as Jeremiah, Uriah, who did not fare as well as Jeremiah. Uriah predicted the same destruction upon Jerusalem as Jeremiah and Jehoiakim tried to find him to kill him. Uriah fled to Egypt, but Jehoiakim sent some of his secret agents to Egypt---they found Uriah and brought him back to Judah. The king executed him and contemptuously threw his dead body into the common burial place. **BUT THOSE WHO DO NOT LEARN FROM HISTORY ARE DOOMED TO REPEAT IT!**, said the philosopher, George Santayana. And so it goes! The majority of mankind **NEVER LEARNS FROM HISTORY---ESPECIALLY BIBLICAL HISTORY!** The Bible **IS** history, you know! The majority of the human race does not even learn from its own secular historians, and poets and philosophers (Acts 17:26-31). There's enough to learn from creation that honest thinking people can conclude there is an "eternal, powerful, divine, and wrathful-against-sin" God (Rom. 1:18ff). And do people learn it? Nope! **THEY REFUSE TO LEARN IT!** (Rom. 1:23, 25, 28; 2 Pet. 3:5; 2 Thess. 2:10-12). Sydney Harris said: "People are fond of saying that 'the past is dead,' but it is actually the future that is dead---and we make it come alive only by applying what we have learned from the living past to the present." History is actually the only source of knowledge we really have. If it isn't in history (like the unscientific theory of evolution) then it isn't knowledge---it's speculation and in almost any speculation about "what might have been" or "what maybe shall be" one speculation is as good as another. It may be that theorizing will lead to experimentation which may lead to learning something we did not know before. **BUT WE KNOW ONLY THAT WHICH HAS BECOME A FACT...AND JUST AS SOON AS A FACT BECOMES A FACT, IT IS HISTORY!** On the other hand a theory that has never been demonstrated as a fact, remains only a theory. There is, for the Christian, a second source of knowledge, and that is divine revelation. That is something that God tells us which may never be demonstrated in this world as an historical fact. Our reason for accepting divine revelation as knowledge is that those who claimed to be speaking and writing divine revelation authenticated their claim by manifesting divine powers in history! **GOD EXPECTS US TO LEARN FROM HIS "TRACKS" AS HE HAS "WALKED THROUGH HISTORY" IN DEEDS AND WORDS, RECORDED BY PROPHETS AND APOSTLES, AND IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON, JESUS, WHO DID HIS MIRACLES IN HISTORY!**

Yes, God has given over his creation as a stewardship by which mankind may serve him (Gen. chs. 1-3). However, many people choose not to serve God, but rather to try to "take over" God's creation for themselves. It has been that way since Adam and Eve sinned. God confounded human language into many different dialects (Gen. 11) to restrict man's attempts to do that. He had begun the human race all over again, earlier, through Noah and separated it into many cultures and races so that man might seek after him (Acts 17:26-32). Still, today, unbelieving people are stubbornly determined to do as they please with God's world. Even unbelieving cultures and

civilizations discover they must structure themselves into some governing form. God has given an outline in the Bible of the kind of human government that best serves sinful man to help him find redemption. But heathen rulers insist on rejecting those principles and thus they erect perverted governmental forms. Still, God allows such heathen governments to exist, and God uses them to serve his ultimate goal of redemption for the world. Exactly as Jeremiah reported God's revelation, "Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant..." 27:6. Daniel predicted that God would give orders to Persia "Arise, devour much flesh..." (Dan. 7:5), and God would "give dominion" to Greece (Dan. 7:6), and God would say through Isaiah that the king of Assyria would become God's "rod of anger and staff of fury to punish a rebellious Israelite nation" (Isa. 10:5); and Isaiah would predict the king of Persia (even predicting his name---Cyrus) 200 years before he was born would be God's "anointed" (Messiah in Hebrew) to "build God's city and set God's exiles free" (Isa. 45:1-13); and Isaiah would say that God was "stirring up the Medes against Babylon" (Isa. 13:17). Do you get the picture? Many more references could be cited! One more significant one: As Isaiah is closing his prediction of the destruction of Babylon, in his book, chapters 13 & 14, he makes a point to say in 14:20-27, God will never allow an evil ruler or evil empire take complete control of His world! Read it for yourself! Of course, that is what the prophecies of Daniel chapters 2 and 7 through 12 are all about! Evil empires come and go, and God uses them, even in their evil machinations, to work out his scheme of redemption. GOD IS ON THE THRONE, YOU SEE! AND THAT IS THE PRIMARY MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION (See Rev. ch. 4 & 5).

The test by which to prove whether a person is a true prophet (one who is declaring he is predicting something from God before it is to come to pass) is to wait to see if his/her prophecy comes to pass! That is how God says to determine a true prophet (see Deut. 18:21-22). We are not talking here about generalities, or speculations, or guesses. We're talking about making detailed, timed, specific predictions. Jeremiah challenged the so-called prophets of his day who were contradicting his message to prove they were from God by seeking to get from God a message that the Babylonians would not carry away the vessels of the temple, (Jer. 28:1-9). Jeremiah said they would, the false prophets said they wouldn't. Who was right? Jeremiah! They didn't have to wait very long to find out that Jeremiah was correct. Isaiah continually challenged the false prophets who spoke for the idols of his day to "Let them....tell us what is to happen...Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know you are gods;" (Isa. 41:21-24; see also Isa. 44:7; 45:20-21; 48:3-8). Many modern-day prophets have, in our own life-time, made fools of themselves predicting things as spokespersons of divine revelations from God (from Tulsa to Timbuktu). Their predictions did not, have not, and will not, come to pass because when the completed Word of God had been revealed and compiled together as our Old Testament and New Testament, the need for divinely inspired prophecy ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-13). Zechariah predicted that when the Messiah had come and completed the setting up of his kingdom, prophecy would cease (Zech. 13:1-6). All of Zechariah chapters 9 through 14 are Messianic prophecies in highly symbolic (apocalyptic) language.

Hananiah claimed his message came from the Lord (Jer. 28:1-4). Jeremiah told Hananiah that he wished his false prediction of only 2 years of exile were correct; but Jeremiah said, "We shall see!" Later, Jeremiah came back to Hananiah with a prophecy of his own. He told Hananiah he was a false prophet, that he was telling the

people a lie, and that God did not send him to tell the people anything. So, Jeremiah said, "This very year, Hananiah, you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the Lord." And in that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died! And that's a fact! Is God serious about false prophecy?! Jesus said they were "ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matt. 7:15). Hananiah got his prophecy out of his own mind---SEE WHAT FOLLOWING YOUR OWN HEART AND MIND DOES? You must read Ezekiel, chapter 13, about false prophets! "Out of their own minds" is where false prophets get their message, says Ezekiel (13:2, 17).

Life on this earth is tenuous! No one has the absolute certainty that they will be here tomorrow. James says our fleshly life on this earth is "a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes" (Jas. 4:14). No one knows what tomorrow will bring! Job said, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and withers; he flees like a shadow, and continues not." Job. 14:1-2. Psa. 90:5-6, "Thou dost sweep men away; they are like a dream, like grass which is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers." So teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom. The Psalmist went on to say, "...our years come to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are three-score and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away." Hananiah died, just as Jeremiah said he would. But remember, not too long afterward, Jeremiah also died! We are all "terminal"! Only let us so believe God and live according to his word that our passing from this life will not be under condemnation as was Hananiah's! Let us be faithful until he calls us to the life that is "very far better" (Phil. 1:23) where we shall be "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:7). "Home"---isn't that a wonderful word!

Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylon with God's instructions for them there. Why? Because the "natural mind," or as Paul calls it in Rom. 8:5-8 "the mind that is set on the flesh," would want to do everything within its power to retaliate towards its enemy! But God's mind for his people is just the opposite. God says anyone wishing to be a citizen of his kingdom will, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust..." (Matt. 5:43-48). The natural reaction of an unconverted mind is to "get even---at least!" Actually, the desire to see that things are "even" is put in us by God. If we didn't have that urge, we would never "enforce justice" as Hebrews 11:33 venerates. Our sense of justice is all that keeps this wicked world from getting more wicked. However, God wants justice left up to him and the proper authorities to whom he has delegated its enforcement (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17, et al..). Justice is never to be executed on an individual basis, for when that becomes the case, we are in a state of anarchy where emotions and opinions rule instead of reason and evidence. So, God did not want these exiles to be spitefully and emotionally taking their sense of justice out on their captors on an individual basis. That is the principle! And of course, there is the practical aspect of it, too, in that the Judeans would be powerless (see the book of Esther) to "fight city hall." What could these unarmed, physically drained, captives do against the armed might of the Babylonian army? God is going to take care of "getting even" with the Babylonians through the secondary means of the Medo-Persian conquest of Babylon. Seventy years is a long time in man's earthly life. Some who went down to Babylon would not live to see the "getting

even." But, then, that is God's way of operating. Besides, God has plans for these Judeans for which 70 years of captivity will prove to be one of the best things that ever happened to a "remnant." Daniel, you remember, had a little difficulty even with the fact that God had restored some of his Jewish brethren to their land, but they were still having trials and tribulations and that precipitated Daniel's exemplary prayer (Dan. 9). The Lord told Daniel that he was eventually going to fulfill his promise to set up that "kingdom which would never be destroyed nor its sovereignty left to another people" (Dan. 2:44), but only after 490 (7 X 70s) more years of "trouble" for the Jews (Dan. 9:24-27). And a remnant of the Jews did do what Jeremiah ordered them to do in his letter (Ezekiel, Daniel, the three "fiery furnace brothers"; Mordecai, Esther, Nehemiah, and thousands of others).

The predictions of, and the historical fulfillments of, the 490 years of trouble (Dan. 9:24-27 amplified in Dan. 10-11-12 esp. in the times of the Seleucids [Syrians] from ca. 300 B.C. until ca. 60 B.C. and the take over of Palestine by Pompey for the Roman empire) certainly indicate that God's "plans for the welfare, future, hope" of the Jews WAS NOT TO BE A SECULAR, PHYSICAL, FLESHLY "FUTURE." That viewpoint is exactly what Daniel needed to repent of in his prayer! The Jews were, more or less, harassed, dominated and persecuted from the moment they returned to their land (read Nehemiah, Ezra) and when the Romans conquered their land the oppression did not lessen! No! God was not intending to set up a secular kingdom as the fulfillment of this prophecy in Jeremiah 29:10-14. THIS PROPHECY FOUND ITS FULFILLMENT IN THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ON PENTECOST, ACTS 2! THAT WAS THEIR "FUTURE WELFARE AND HOPE!"

There was at least one Jew (undoubtedly numerous others) down in the exile who despised Jeremiah, was contemptuous of his letter to "behave yourselves," and made false claim to some priestly authority back in Jerusalem. His name was Shemaiah. And Jeremiah knew all about him! The Lord instructed Jeremiah to fire a cable right back to Babylon, to the effect that Shemaiah and his descendants would be punished; Shemaiah would be deprived of descendants to carry on his name, and, Shemaiah would not live to see the restoration of the Jews to Palestine in 536 B.C. Shemaiah called Jeremiah a "mad man." Because Jeremiah's message from the Lord did not agree with Shemaiah's viewpoint! Well, Shemaiah was not the first unbeliever [within the "congregation" let alone without] to do such a thing, and he certainly was not the last! Practically every one of God's servants from Moses to Paul faced the same castigation. Jesus was accused of being "beside himself" (out of his mind) by his own family; his disciples thought he was "off his rocker" (Jn. 4:31-33)--that he did not care if they perished in a storm; the Jews accused Jesus of being a blasphemer, in league with Satan, being a Samaritan, possessing a demon, being illegitimately born, preaching treason, deceiving the populace, a law-breaker, a false prophet (Lk. 7:39), and many other slanderous things. The Greeks accused Paul of "babbling"; the Jews accused him of law-breaking, and of "being mad" (Acts 26:24), among many other slanderous things. What does Jesus instruct his disciples to do when slandered? "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matt. 5:11). The Greek word *agallias* means, "jump for joy" and is a word from the Greek Olympic games depicting the person who has just won his race! It's a sign

you're a "winner" when you are reviled, falsely, on Jesus' account! JEREMIAH WAS A WINNER!

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 30 -- 33

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION: James Smith in Jeremiah and Lamentations, writes: "Chapters 30-33, the so-called Book of Consolation, is the only consistently hopeful section of the Book of Jeremiah. It is likely that these chapters date to the tenth year of Zedekiah (588 B.C.). At least that is the date assigned to chapters 32-33. These were dark days for Judah and for Jeremiah. The Chaldean army was at the gates of Jerusalem. The city was experiencing the famine, pestilence and misery connected with siege operations. Jeremiah himself had been imprisoned in "the court of the guard" as a suspected traitor...These dark and dire days gave birth to one of the most beautiful passages in the entire Bible. Here is the positive aspect of the prophet's ministry. He is now beginning "to build and to plant" (1:10). ...here the focus is upon hope and salvation. Here the prophet treats the great themes of the destruction of Babylon; the return of God's people; the reunification of Israel and Judah; the coming of Messiah and establishment of His kingdom...someone has described these chapters as 'a little green oasis' in the midst of a 'dry and barren desert.'"

Jeremiah was told to "Write in a book all the words (God) had spoken to him..." because God wanted the Jews to have these prophecies in permanent form (especially the ones that are in chapters 30-33 about their return and the coming Messiah). They were going into an alien culture, nothing would look, feel, smell, or be the same as in Palestine. They would be like "fish out of water" as one of the prophets portrays their exile, so they needed the promises of God in written form to be able to ponder over as often as possible. Nothing will ever replace the WRITTEN WORD! Technological advances come and go, but the written word (especially the written Word of God) will always be the repository of human knowledge. Isaiah was told to write his message in a "book" (Isa. 30:8) and so was Habakkuk (Hab. 2:2)--- and evidently, so were all the other prophets whose books are in the O.T. And, of course Moses wrote the Torah (Law/Teaching) which constitute the Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the O.T.). Others wrote the historical books and the "wisdom" literature. And did the people down in the exile read Jeremiah's book? We know for sure that one person did, Daniel (Dan. 9:2), and I am certain that many others read it or had it read to them. THANK GOD FOR HIS WRITTEN WORD! IT SHOULD BE THE THING WE TREASURE MOST IN THIS LIFE! WE CAN DO WITHOUT EVERYTHING ELSE IN THIS LIFE EXCEPT THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD! We have super-abundant evidence that we have in our hands, in our own language, the WORD OF GOD as it fell from the very lips of those who spoke it, and as it came through the very fingers of those who wrote it. Can you visualize in your mind's eye what this city, this nation, this world would be without the WRITTEN WORD OF GOD?

"David their king..." (Jer. 30:8-9) is none other than Jesus Christ, the Messiah! What

we have here is a classic example of prophetic "lingo" called by one scholar, Shortened Perspective. "Shortened Perspective" is the verbal visualization of two historical events as if they were to follow one another in rapid sequence while, in fact, they are separated from one another in time by a gap of centuries between them!" It is used by practically every literary prophet in the O.T. from Isaiah to Malachi. Jesus used this vehicle of eschatological literature in Matthew 24:1-35 (and a 1900 year gap so far between) 24:36--25:46. The "vehicle" is this: A prophet may be speaking of events that are currently transpiring or will transpire in the very near future----- (then he skips over 600 years)-----where he predicts the Messiah and the messianic age. This is what Jeremiah does here. He is talking about the Jews surviving the siege and exile and being delivered by God back to Palestine in 536 B.C. (Jer. 30:1-7)---- and suddenly, he begins to speak about the coming Messiah (Jer. 30:8-9)-----and then he returns to talking about his own day (Jer. 30:10ff). Prophets do it all the time! Another classic example is Joel 2:27 and Joel 2:28---Joel 2:1-27 is Joel's prophecy of the locust plague and the restoration of crops afterward. But Joel 2:28 to the end of his book is all about the Messiah and his kingdom (see Acts 2:14ff). Joel skips 800 years from one verse to the next verse--BANG....JUST LIKE THAT! Actually, lots of us do it every day in ordinary speech if we would just realize it! In Matthew 24:1-35 Jesus is predicting the destruction of Jerusalem in 66-70 A.D. by the Romans; but in Matthew 24:36 clear to the end of Matthew 25, Jesus is speaking about the end of time and his second coming, about which no "signs" will be given---no one will know that day or hour. So how much did Jesus "shorten the perspective? Some 2000 years at least! Every prophet in the Book does it! Jeremiah has already done it (Jer. 23:5-6); he will do it again in his famous prediction of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34).

Notice the phrases in the rest of Jeremiah ch. 30---"restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob"....."Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving"....."Their prince shall be one of themselves"....And you shall be my people and I will be your God"....."In the latter days you will understand this." THAT IS ALL TO REACH ITS ULTIMATE GOAL IN THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH IN THE "LATTER DAYS." To an O.T. prophet, "the latter days" were the end of the Jewish age and the beginning of the Messianic age (Christ's FIRST coming, not his Second Coming) "David their king" in prophetic literature is Messiah, the son of David (see Isa. 55:3-5 with Acts 13:22-23 and 13:34-35; see Ezek. 34:23-24 and 37:24-25 with John 10:1-17; see Hosea 3:5 with Luke 1:69). Daniel clearly identifies the prince as the Messiah in Dan. 9:25-26 where he uses the words interchangeably. There can be no mistaking that the "Prince" is the Messiah. Isaiah's Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) is the Messiah. The Greek word archegon in Acts 5:31 and Rev. 1:5 is often translated Prince and clearly refers to Jesus Christ. "The latter days" in O.T. prophecy is always the Messianic age! The O.T. says nothing about the second coming of Christ---why should it? God had all he could do to convince the Jews and the rest of the world about the FIRST coming of Christ! Jesus had little time to speak of his second coming because he had to spend all his time convincing the Jews that HE was the first coming of the Messiah. Almost always even in the N.T. when the word "days" is plural in "latter or last days" (Acts 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:20; and in the two places where "time" is singular 1 Jn. 2:18 and Jude 18, the Greek syntax clearly shows they are speaking of "now"---the Christian age) it is referring to the FIRST COMING OF THE CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION. But when the word "day" is singular in "last day" (John 6:39,40,44,54; 11:24; 12:48; 1 Pet. 1:5) it refers to the Second Coming of

Christ. Take careful note of Paul's definition of the "end of the ages (plural)" in 1 Cor. 10:11 as the time which "has come" upon even Paul and those of his time! Jewish scribes divided their eschatology into two main eras: Olam hazzeah which was the order existing in the O.T. dispensation; and Olam habba which is "the world to come" by which they meant what we call the Messianic age, the FIRST coming of Christ. Of course for the traditional Jew, then, as today, Olam habba was the glorious age of the Messiah which was all to take place upon this earth, with the Jews ruling the world. They knew nothing then and know nothing now of a "Second Coming" of the Messiah!

"At that time" (31:1) unquestioningly connects to it's nearest antecedent phrase, "In the latter days (Messianic age) you will understand this." (30:24). In the Messianic age they will understand the connection between the exile, the restoration, and all the subsequent preparations for the coming of the Messiah that would take 600 more years! At least, God hoped they would! Not many of them did---a few did, like Simeon (Lk. 2:22-35) and Anna the prophetess (Lk. 2:36-38) and perhaps Joseph of Arimathea (Lk. 23:50-51) and maybe Mary, the sister of Martha (Matt. 26:10) and a few others. Jesus's disciples, who had great difficulty comprehending the prophetic concept of a divine Messiah as long as Jesus was here in the flesh, eventually "understood" after the Day of Pentecost. "At that time" is also going to "connect" the "Rachel weeping for her children..." passage and the "...I will make a new covenant..." passage of this chapter to this whole section (chapters 30-33). This section is a prophecy of that "green oasis in a dry desert" far off in the future from Jeremiah's day---in fact, 600 years afterward---at the FIRST COMING OF THE MESSIAH. It will "connect" also to Jer. 32:36-41 and the "everlasting covenant", and will "connect" to 33:6-8; 33:14-18-----ALL MESSIANIC! But the future Messianic age is tied into the exile and the restoration after the exile---all that has to come first. What Jeremiah does, like every other prophet, is to skip over centuries of history of the Jews (from 600 B.C. until 34 A.D.) without so much as a tiny bit of the history in between alluded to---that is left for Daniel to "fill in" which he does magnificently in his book, chapters 7 through 12.

The reference to "Rachel weeping for her children..." is God's use of Rachel's sad experience with her husband and children to predict that the Messiah's birth will be surrounded by sorrow. Rachel, you remember, could not have children at first so she had children by proxy through her handmaid and her husband (Gen. 30:1). It was a tragedy in that culture not to be able to bear children. When she finally bore a child by her husband, it was Joseph, who was destined for a sorrowful life as a youngster (Rachel would not see that, of course, for she died before Joseph's enslavement in Egypt). And she died giving birth to the only other child she bore (Gen. 35:16-21) and she named him Ben-oni which means, "Son of my sorrow" Jacob renamed him Benjamin which means "Son of the south" for Ben-jamin was born down south in the land of Canaan, south of Bethlehem--probably to remind Jacob of his sorrow at the death of his wife. So the whole experience is saturated with sorrow! Rachel symbolizes all the mothers of the entire nation who had lost and will lose sons through death and exile and the future "troubles" of the Jews (see Jer. 10:18-20). It may be that Jeremiah is trying to tell his contemporaries that the experience of the Jewish people from his time until the coming of the Messiah (and even including the Messiah himself) is going to require many sorrows! AFTER ALL, THIS IS WHAT DANIEL TELLS THEM (Dan. 9:24-27) i.e. THAT GOD IS GOING TO RESTORE THEM FROM THEIR EXILE AND IS GOING TO SEND THE MESSIAH, BUT ONLY AFTER 490

YEARS OF "TROUBLE!" Even the Messiah himself was called, "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53). Rachel's sorrow definitely is a symbolic prophecy of the sorrow surrounding the birth of the Messiah and the slaying of all the Bethlehem babies 2 years of age and under by Herod (Matt. 2:18). Jeremiah (and the other prophets) wanted the Jews to understand that the glorious predictions of freedom from exile, restoration, and a coming Messianic age when they would be victorious, secure, prosperous, famous, did not mean God's ultimate blessings for them would not come without sorrow, and lots of it, along the way----and the "glory" was to be spiritual and not physical! AND DO NOT FORGET, THAT IS WHAT WE ARE CALLED TO AS CHRISTIAN "PILGRIMS" IN THIS WILDERNESS CALLED "THE WORLD." But do not leave this prophecy without reading Jer. 31:16-17---God says "your work shall be rewarded....there is hope for your future." So while we are told that if we follow Jesus we will suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12) we do not "grieve as those who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13).

As we said, this entire section (30-33) has as its goal the Messianic kingdom (the church). It is all wrapped around the NEW COVENANT. The NEW COVENANT will result from God's whole plan of redemption, which will include the history of the Chosen People (the Jews), but it is the NEW COVENANT that is God's goal----not the Jewish dispensation. While God was using the Jews to prepare for the birth of Christ he put them in a special geographical location (Deut. 4:5-6; Ezek. 5:5-6) for his purposes. But once God decided redemption had been completed for Jew and Gentile alike, God had no more reason to call them "Chosen" or to keep them in a special geographical location---ESPECIALLY WHEN THE JEWS REJECTED GOD'S ANOINTED! The Old Covenant was going to be replaced by a New Covenant---not like the Old. It was the Old Covenant that gave the land to the Jews---in the New---in Christ, neither land or no-land, Jew or Greek, free or slave, male or female, counts for anything. NOW JUST THINK HOW MUCH SUFFERING, DEATH, SORROW, AND MONEY HAS GONE INTO (AND BILLIONS OF IT YOUR TAX MONEY) KEEPING THE NATION OF MODERN ISRAEL IN THE LAND OF PALESTINE. We have no argument with anyone who occupies a geographical location by the process of arbitration, diplomacy, even military take-over---BUT JUST DON'T CLAIM THE BIBLE GIVES A MANDATE FOR PUSHING SOME OTHER PEOPLE OUT AND TAKING IT OVER!

Jeremiah bought a field during the siege and exile of many of his countrymen to Babylon at the command of the Lord. Jeremiah followed the ancient legal criteria: (a) write it in a book; (b) make a duplicate copy; (c) have it witnessed; (d) weigh out the purchase price; (e) file the two copies of the contract away in a safe place. Jeremiah was demonstrating in the most graphic way possible that God would keep his promises----the Jews would be brought back to "their land." They can "put it in the bank!" It was made even more electrifying by the fact that Jeremiah bought a plot of ground which was at that moment in possession of the Babylonians by right of war-time occupation. It was land that belonged to Nebuchadnezzar! How could Jeremiah or his family ever expect to get possession of his "acreage?" BECAUSE GOD PROMISED! AND WHEN GOD PROMISES, YOU CAN PUT IT IN THE BANK! The "everlasting covenant" of Jer. 32:36-44 is none other than the NEW COVENANT of Jer. 31:31-34. The Hebrew word *olam* is the word used for "everlasting, forever, etc."

"Restore their fortunes" is a Messianic phrase. Look back to 31:23---it is figurative for the NEW COVENANT of 31:31-34 and in this NEW COVENANT God "will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more." (Jer. 31:34). This phrase is translated "restore their fortunes" is found in these words in the Revised Standard Version but it is a phrase repeated and repeated in the O.T. prophets concerning the Messianic age (see Jer. 29:14; 30:3,18; 31:23; see Joel 3:1; Zeph. 2:7; 3:20; Ezek. 39:25; and other places I cannot list here without my RSV Concordance). "Restore their fortunes"---although not literally stated---is the very idea of Isa. 61:1-11 which is Messianic as interpreted by none other than the Messiah himself (Lk. 4:18-19). Thus the "fortunes" God was going to restore ("turn back" is what the Hebrew word literally means) was not to be fulfilled in gold and silver or lands and houses, but in A NEW COVENANT which would pardon all their sins through the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ! IS THAT A "FORTUNE" OR WHAT? It's worth all the gold and silver and diamonds and rubies and palaces and lands of this entire world, all piled up in one pile! For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul????? BUT, THEN, YOU'VE GOT TO DECIDE THAT SPIRITUALITY IS YOUR TREASURE IF THAT'S WHERE YOU WANT YOUR HEART TO BE (Matt. 5:21). AND MOST OF THE JEWS DIDN'T!

The "Righteous Branch springing forth from David" is Jesus Christ (Isa. 4:2; 6:13; 9:1-7; 11:1-10; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; Zech 3:8 Acts 13:23; Rom. 15:12). This "Branch" will rule by his justice and righteousness---that is his essence, his character (Isa. 9:7; 11:1-5). AND THAT WAS QUITE UNLIKE MOST OF THEIR HUMAN KINGS...FOR EVEN THE BEST OF THE HUMAN ONES FAILED (DAVID, SOLOMON, HEZEKIAH, JOSIAH, JEHOSHAPHAT). And how did Jesus build his kingdom? He built it upon his character---justice and righteousness! He did not conquer lands and peoples by the sword; he did not buy his kingdom with money; he did not build it with deceit. AND HE STILL RULES, IF HE RULES AT ALL, IN YOUR HEART AND MINE BY WHO HE IS! Zechariah has a significant prediction of the "King who comes, humble and lowly riding on an ass" as one who will "sue for peace"---i.e. he will reason, persuade, convince and convert as his method of building a kingdom; and he will do it with TRUTH FROM GOD! He will also live absolutely in the same righteousness and justice which he preaches. Quite unlike ALL human government leaders and rulers!!

Jeremiah saying that God is going to perpetuate the Levitical priesthood forever must be interpreted in one of two ways, else it DOES CONTRADICT THE BOOK OF HEBREWS (AND THE ENTIRE N.T.) AND THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES NOT CONTRADICT HIMSELF! (a) either the word olam ("forever") does NOT ALWAYS MEAN "ETERNALLY" OR EVEN "FOREVER" IN THIS LIFE, or; (b) the word olam is being used as a prophetic symbol to predict the "priesthood" to which all Christians are called and given when they come into Christ (see 1 Pet. 2:9; Isa. 61:6; Rev. 1:6; 20:6, et al.). BOTH ARE CORRECT! The word olam does not always mean "eternally" for this life. The Israelites were promised in the law that God would give their enemies to them as "servants forever" but that can't be eternally And it is true, every Christian is his own priest---Christians have only ONE GREAT HIGH PRIEST, JESUS, Heb. 7, but Christians are priests offering up "sacrifices praise, and good works" Heb. 13:15-16. HAVE YOU DONE YOUR PRIESTLY DUTIES TODAY?

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 34 -- 36

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. He reigned 11 years, from 597-586 (see 2 Kings chs. 24-25 & 2 Chron. ch. 36). The siege and exile of Jerusalem and the Jews was in 4 increments, 606, 597, 586, & 581 B.C. Daniel went to Babylon with the first increment in 606 B.C. Ezekiel the prophet was probably taken to Babylon in the 597 exile. In 586 the Babylonians came for the 3rd time, burned Jerusalem, broke down its walls, put out the eyes of King Zedekiah, and carried him in chains to Babylon with 832 captives, leaving only a remnant of the poorest and weakest class of people in the land. Zedekiah died in prison (Jer. 52:11) in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was 20 years in destroying Jerusalem. He probably could have done it quicker, but really only wanted Jerusalem to surrender and pay him tribute. God told the Jews to surrender and save their city, but they would not do it! They doggedly resisted and even made an alliance with their old enemy, Egypt, which forced Nebuchadnezzar in 581 B.C. to wipe Jerusalem off the map until the place was "like a plowed field" (Jer. 26:18; Micah 3:12). This was the end of David's earthly kingdom. It had lasted 400 years. About 600 years later, the universal, spiritual kingdom of David would be established in Jerusalem, on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2; Christians of every race and nation and language are citizens of that kingdom! Zedekiah had sworn an oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar when he had been "taken" to visit Nebuchadnezzar about the 4th year of his reign (Ezekiel 17:11-14), but Zedekiah reneged on his oath and rebelled by trying to get Egypt to assist him in fighting against the Babylonians (Ezek. 17:15-21; 2 Chron. 36:11-14). The passage in Ezekiel indicates God was as angry with Zedekiah about "breaking his oath" with the king of Babylon as anything else he ever did. Swearing oaths of allegiance or swearing to tell the truth, is serious business with God! And this was God's king of the "chosen people" swearing in a heathen palace to a heathen king! God does not allow his people the "luxury?" of lying---not even to heathen! Our word must be our bond---we must mean yes when we say "yes" and mean no when we say "no." Why did God choose to spare Zedekiah from immediate death? We are not told. But we can try to put ourselves in Zedekiah's sandals. And which would be worse, to die immediately, or watch your sons slaughtered (Jer. 52:10-11) and then have your eyes gouged out or burned out, and taken to Babylon and put in prison for the rest of your life? So Zedekiah got a semi-royal funeral! so how is Zedekiah going to appreciate anything from that?

When Jerusalem came under siege in January 588 B.C., king Zedekiah took the initiative in doing for the first time in a number of years, what the Law of Moses ordered to be done concerning Israelites who were so poor they had to indenture (sell) themselves into servitude (slavery) to their rich Israelite countrymen. Zedekiah ordered the slave-holders to emancipate their indentured slaves. James Smith, op.cit., writes, "Then, in the Temple in Jerusalem, the king and princes ratified the agreement by participating in ancient and solemn ceremonies. A calf was slaughtered and divided down the middle. One half was laid against the other with a passage

between and the covenanters walked between the pieces. The significance of this act was probably that of an implied curse: 'May the party who breaks this covenant be cut in two even as the calf is divided.' Perhaps an oath was actually repeated as the parties passed between the halves of the dead animal. By such a ceremony God's covenant with Abraham had been ratified many centuries earlier (Gen. 15:9ff)." Zedekiah and his princes may have thought to trick God into believing they were going to do his will by "one of the most disgusting acts of hypocrisy ever recorded in the Bible." (Smith, op.cit.). Smith offers another possibility---a pragmatic one! With the siege comes sudden economic crises. Slaves could no longer work the farm lands or tend flocks outside the city. Food and every other staple of life began to vanish. The rich were beginning to get hungry---less mouths to feed would be expedient! Besides, freeing these "servants" would make them available to fight Babylonians. A free man has more incentive to fight than a slave. In the summer of 588 B.C. the siege was temporarily lifted. Most of Jerusalem's inhabitants were foolish enough to believe God was having "second thoughts" and going to deliver them from Babylon--the danger is over---the enemy will not return. So, let's revoke the order liberating the bond-slaves and put them to work on the farms and with the flocks again. The rich people of Jerusalem had experienced a "death bed conversion" but now they think they are not facing death, so foey on the confession, repentance, and conversion---- we take it all back---we didn't mean it in the first place. To practice such perjury, such hypocrisy, such deliberate lying, is to profane the name of the Lord. It is as evil as any sin in the book. It is as bad as ingratitude. It means you can't be trusted---you don't know what TRUTH is---you can't be depended upon! Jeremiah minces no words---he uses satire and sarcasm. "Behold, I proclaim to you liberty to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine...I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth---I will slaughter you like the calf you walked between when you made your lying oath, and like the dead carcasses of slaughtered animals, your dead bodies will be left to the vultures and other scavengers."

Rechabites are one of the most interesting groups mentioned in the Bible---probably Kenites (1 Chron. 2:55) who had joined the Israelites at the time of the Exodus from Egypt (Judges 1:16). Hobab the Kenite was the brother-in-law of Moses, clearly the brother of Zipporah, and from the land of Midian. Midian's land was around the Gulf of Aqaba and the Sinai Peninsula. The Kenites were descended from Abraham by his wife Keturah (Gen. 25:1-6). Jonadab (or Jehonadab), son of Rechab, made "Rechabites" famous. Jonadab worshiped Jehovah and joined Jehu in purging the northern kingdom of Israel by slaying all of Ahab's house and followers (2 Kings 10:15,23). Jonadab was evidently filled with revulsion at the excesses he saw in the houses of Ahab and those who followed them. Baal was the Canaanite god of fertility and harvest, and the worship of Baal was one big orgy of drunkenness and sexual depravity. After Jonadab finished helping Jehu clean up all the wickedness of Baalism, he refused to allow members of his clan to build a house, sow seed, plant or own vineyards, or drink wine (Jer. 35:6-7). So, when these descendants of Jonadab, the nomadic-tent-living, Rechabites, had come into the city of Jerusalem for safety from the Babylonian army marching through Palestine, Jeremiah uses them to shame the other Jews about breaking oaths and practicing idolatry. LOYALTY TO ONE'S WORD AND TO GOD is what Jeremiah was trying to make these rebels and perjurers see! There is no indication that the austerity of life-style imposed on the Rechabites by Jonadab and strictly obeyed for 250 years until Jeremiah's day, was a command of God. It certainly was not in the Law of Moses that the Israelites should live such a

severe life-style. There certainly was nothing wrong with the way they lived. So, even when forced into the wicked city of Jerusalem amidst all its ungodliness, even when told by a true prophet of God, in the Temple, to break their word, they were LOYAL TO THEIR PRINCIPLES AND CONVICTIONS. Smith, op.cit. says, "Surely this is one of the most noted examples of the influence of a father in all the annals of history! They wish it to be clearly understood that their presence in Jerusalem does not indicate unfaithfulness to principle....Such convictions and courage were as rare in the 6th century before Christ as they are today. May God grant that the lives of his people today will be a perpetual protest against the debauchery and drunkenness of this world."

For 250 years the Rechabite clan had obeyed the command of a dead ancestor, even though his appeal to principle and conviction was a human judgment, not a revelation of God. But prophets had been sent "persistently" to these Jerusalem rebels---scores of prophets, in every generation, who proved they spoke the Word of God, but the Jews would not obey. Jeremiah wants them to learn the lesson of obedience from the Rechabites. The contrast is vivid. A small, nomadic, austere clan of "weirdos" faithfully obedient to the principles of an ancestor who lived 250 years earlier----and a city full of sophisticates and scoffers, disobedient to the Law of Moses which had been in their possession for 800 years. Not only that, they scoffed at, ignored, persecuted, and killed the prophets which God had sent to them PERSISTENTLY, from Samuel to Jeremiah. AND DON'T WE SEE A CONTRAST LIKE THAT IN AMERICA TODAY?! A FEW "RIGHT-WING, CONSERVATIVE, EXTREMIST, FUNDAMENTALIST, CHRISTIANS, WITH WEIRD LIFE-STYLE, TRYING TO OBEY THE PRINCIPLES OF THEIR FOUNDING FATHERS (BOTH POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS), contrasted with a majority, while they have had the Bible and the (free) Church as a heritage for 360 years, scoffing at, ignoring, persecuting, and, yes, even killing (if not physically, then slanderously) those who would proclaim TRUTH! Can the Ethiopian change the color of his skin, or the leopard his spots? NO! THE ONLY THING HUMAN BEINGS CAN'T CHANGE IS THEIR WICKED MIND-SET! THEY MUST LET GOD DO THAT THROUGH HIS CONVINCING, CONVICTING, AND REDEEMING WORD!

God's promise is that Jonadab, the son of Rechab, will never lack a man to stand before God. (Jer. 35:19). Evidently God knows there will always be his obedient servants among the descendants of Jonadab. There is no recorded data as to how that has been fulfilled in the ages since 586 B.C. I would suppose there have always been Christians (few though they may be) among the Arabic nations. We know that numerous Lebanese and some Jordanians, and some modern Israelis have become Christians. When Jesus gave John the apostle the letters to the seven churches (Revelation) one of John's visions was that of innumerable hosts of redeemed people from "every nation...tribe...people...and language." They were standing before the throne of God having come out of the "great tribulation" of the Roman persecutions (100-500 A.D.) and had washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. Surely, today, it would be the same if only we could see as John did! Smith, op.cit. suggests "Throughout history there have been and will be spiritual descendants of the Rechabites who remain true to their convictions and separate themselves from the sinfulness of the world." By this Smith means people of the same spiritual mentality---not the same genetic lineage. That may be what God is promising here by the lips of Jeremiah. It would certainly fit the figurative and symbolic language of Isaiah, Daniel,

Ezekiel, and the prophecy of Amos 9:11-12 as fulfilled in Acts 15:12-18.

Jeremiah had been preaching, in the face of great opposition, for 23 years. It is time now for God to have him commit his preaching to the printed vellum (a writing material made from animal skin---usually calf, sheep or goat skin in the form of a roll). It is important that the prophecies of Jeremiah be preserved in their divinely revealed form, especially for the exiles. It would not do for the people who did give heed to his preaching to have to depend on oral perpetuation of what Jeremiah said. There would be too much occasion for errors and deliberate falsification of what he said. God wants a printed document of Jeremiah's predictions so that the exiles, and anyone else who might be interested, to be able to CONFIRM THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PREDICTIONS JEREMIAH MADE! THERE IS NO BETTER PROOF THAT THE BIBLE IS DIVINELY REVEALED AND INERRANT THAN FULFILLED PROPHECY! I believe Daniel used the book of Jeremiah for more than just looking up to see how many years the Jews were supposed to be in captivity (Dan. 9:2). Jeremiah's scroll was widely read (cf. Ezra 1:1; 2 Chron. 35:25ff; Matt. 2:17; 16:14). The very fact that the populace said of Jesus that he was "Jeremiah" (Matt. 16:14) indicates a centuries-long awareness of Jeremiah! Nothing is as permanent as writing! Case in point, consider all the very ancient written works we have extant today---some on clay tablets, some on the side of mountains (the Ante-Diluvian or Pre-Flood tablets; the Lachish Letters; the Behistun Rock, the Weld Dynastic Prism; Hammurabi's Code; The Rosetta Stone; the Black Obelisk; the Sinaiticus mss., the Vaticanus mss., the Papyri) some on animal skins, some on papyrus; and those are just a very few written works that are associated with the Bible! Writing will never be replaced! PEOPLE MUST HAVE WORDS THEY CAN SEE WITH THEIR EYES. THEY NEED UNIVERSALLY UNDERSTANDABLE SYMBOLS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE BY WHICH IDEAS, EMOTIONS, EVENTS, AND THINGS MAY BE COMMUNICATED, PERSON TO PERSON. WORDS CAN BE READ, PONDERED, INTERPRETED, APPRECIATED, VISUALIZED, MEMORIZED, LEARNED, KEPT, AND PRESERVED.

It wasn't that Jeremiah couldn't write (Jer. 32:10; 51:60) that he got Baruch to be his scribe and write his words on a scroll. Writing Jeremiah's words on a scroll would take a long time (at least a year). Jeremiah had lots of other things to attend to---preaching, mainly. Smith, op.cit. "The word of God was never intended to be written and then deposited in the public archives. God's word is meant to be read, studied, heeded, and obeyed...If the word of God is to have an impact upon individuals it must be transferred from the written page to the hearts and minds of individuals." So Jeremiah ordered Baruch to take the scroll and go to the Temple and read it in the hearing of the multitude of people who would be there for a special "fast." Jeremiah was persona non-grata at the Temple--he was not welcome there, to say the least. It took extra-ordinary courage by Baruch to do what Jeremiah commanded. Baruch may have been the only person Jeremiah could trust to understand the extremely critical juncture of history that faced the Jews as the prophet did. Baruch may have been as "fired in his bones" as Jeremiah about the prophecies of doom upon his people. Whatever the impetus that moved Baruch to face the hostility that had gotten Jeremiah almost slain a number of times, it was a brave act of faith for which Baruch was rewarded by the Lord (see Jer. ch. 45). Baruch went to the "upper court" which was the court of the priests, elevated by a few steps above the court of the people. It would give him a dias with a commanding view of all the worshipers there and provide

the best position from which to read the words of Jeremiah. GOD'S CHURCH TODAY COULD PROFIT BY MORE READING OF THE SCRIPTURE IN THE SERVICES WHERE THE WHOLE CONGREGATION IS GATHERED IN ONE PLACE! I BELIEVE WE HAVE ASSUMED (WRONGLY) THAT CHRISTIANS GET ALL THE READING OF THE SCRIPTURE THEY NEED AWAY FROM THE CHURCH! Halley says in his Handbook: "The Scripture lesson (reading) as commonly conducted, is given a very minor place, while the whole service is built around the Sermon. What a mistake! The Sermon is the big thing! The Scripture Lesson (reading) very insignificant! Usually just a few verses read as a sort of lifeless form, in the opening part of the service....It would be much better, if, instead of being a brief isolated ritual, in the opening part of the service, the Scripture Lesson (reading) would be combined with the Sermon, forming the Basis, Framework, Structure and Heart of the Sermon; with God's Word thus in the foreground, and the preacher himself, more or less in the background. A Responsive Reading is no adequate substitute for a Scripture Lesson (reading)..." YOU SHOULD READ HOMER HALLEY'S EXHORTATION ON "BIBLE READING" IN HALLEY'S BIBLE HANDBOOK! IT'S A DOOZEY---A BELL-RINGER---A KNEE SLAPPER. YOU MAY HAVE READ LONG AGO, BUT READ IT AGAIN!

Baruch's impromptu reading of the Scripture (the word of the Lord to Jeremiah) to the congregation of Judah gathered for a solemn religious function (a fast) CREATED QUITE A HUB-BUB, TO SAY THE LEAST! One person who heard Jeremiah's words read (why hadn't they heard them when Jeremiah spoke them????) was Michaiah, son of Gemariah---Gemariah was the brother of Ahikam---Ahikam was the man who had a conscience about his countrymen trying to kill Jeremiah (Jer. 26:24) and saved him from those who sought his death. These were all prominent men. Baruch knew them. Michaiah went and told the royal princes what was going on out in the Temple courts. The princes were impressed! This Baruch is a prominent scribe. It must be significant. They requested that Baruch read it to them. They heard drastic, dire, ominous things about Jerusalem's fate and that of the king! They took the book, hid it, and told Baruch he and his prophet-master had better hide while they tell the king what Jeremiah has written. WHAT PUZZLES ME IS WHY HADN'T THESE PRINCES HEARD JEREMIAH'S WORDS BEFORE? WELL, THEY HAD....THEY JUST HAD NOT BEEN GIVING THEIR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION TO THEM! IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER....GOT OTHER MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO! MORE PEOPLE WILL GO TO HELL BECAUSE OF INDIFFERENCE TOWARD THE WORD OF GOD THAN THOSE WHO MILITANTLY OPPOSE IT! Having heard from the princes, the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll. It was winter, and the king had his portable stove (brazier) filled with coals close by, so he took the scroll in one hand, his knife in another, and began cutting it to pieces and putting it on the coals to burn. THERE! THAT WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT PROPHET'S WORDS! I'VE GOTTEN RID OF THEM---SEE HOW EASY IT WAS! AND THAT PROPHET SAID IT WAS THE WORD OF THE LORD! THE KING WAS NOT AFRAID OF WHAT HAD BEEN READ....NONE OF THE OTHERS PRESENT WERE, EITHER! The king ordered Baruch and Jeremiah to be found---but they were safely hidden. A WHOLE YEAR'S WORK, UP IN SMOKE! WRITING IS HARD WORK TODAY....AND FOR A WRITER, TO DESTROY HIS WORK IS LIKE DESTROYING ONE OF HIS CHILDREN! But the Lord told Jeremiah to "write it again." Baruch did so, and added more of Jeremiah's preaching to it. THE WORD OF THE LORD IS INDESTRUCTIBLE (Ha! caught College Press with a misspelled word in James Smith's commentary---he, or they, spelled it "INDESTRUCTABLE" pg. 595). Have you ever considered that theologians

and religious people have been more numerous and more militant in trying to destroy the Word of God than heathen!! YES! THE "HIGHER CRITICS" IN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES HAVE DONE MORE TO OBLITERATE THE TRUE WORD OF GOD THAN ALL THE BIBLE-BURNING HEATHEN COMBINED! They do it by trying to "demythologize" it, or by "mythologizing" it--which is rather paradoxical, to say the least. On the one hand they claim it is full of myths and fables (or mistakes, untruths, or deliberate hoaxes); on the other hand they claim that if we excise all the miracles, all the claims to inspiration, and understand that all the prophecies were written after the events happened, ("demythologize it") then we will have "the word of God." Of course it will be simply the words of fallible, erroneous, superstitious, naive, credulous human beings. They say it is a nice enough book, "demythologized" to help one over the rough spots in life, and interesting to discuss and speculate about, but no more significant than the works of the great philosophers and poets of history.

BUT GOD'S HAND HAS HOVERED OVER HIS WRITTEN WORD! HE HAS INTERVENED BOTH MIRACULOUSLY AND PROVIDENTIALY, DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES, TO PRESERVE IT ON EARTH, IN HUMAN LANGUAGE, FOR THE REDEMPTION OF MANKIND.

AND THOUSANDS, YEA, MILLIONS OF MARTYRS HAVE BEEN SLANDERED, RIDICULED, TORTURED, AND EXCRUCIATINGLY MURDERED FOR THEIR PART IN PERPETUATING THE PURE WORD OF GOD TO A LOST AND DYING WORLD! The history of the survival of God's word is much too long and glorious for me to discuss it here---I could go on for pages and pages. I HOPE YOU WILL TAKE A MOMENT THIS LORD'S DAY TO GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR HIS HAND IN IT AND FOR THE MILLIONS WHO GAVE THEIR ALL--- The Waldenses, John Wycliff, John Huss, Savonarola, the Anabaptists, Martin Luther, the Huguenots----and don't forget our Restoration Movement forefathers---Barton W. Stone, Thomas & Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, "Raccoon" John Smith, Moses Lard, et al.

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 37 -- 39

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Zedekiah was a weakling. He was a vacillating, self-seeking, politician who could be manipulated and was being manipulated by a group of radical, hot-headed, princes who were ready to disobey any one, even the Lord, who told them they must surrender to Nebuchadnezzar. The Lord wanted to be as merciful and patient with Zedekiah as divinely possible (JUST AS THE LORD IS MERCIFUL AND PATIENT WITH EVERY ONE OF US). Perhaps Jeremiah could yet say something or do something to sway this king of Judah to heed the program of the Lord and save the city and hundreds of thousands of Jews from death, destruction and exile. It may seem like a waste of time by human time schedules---but God has a different schedule than we do. Besides, Zedekiah is the man where "the buck stops." If the nation is to heed God and surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, and thus be saved "the sword, pestilence and famine" then Zedekiah is the ONE person who can bring it off. It was worth a try, up to the last minute! When Nebuchadnezzar lifted his siege of Jerusalem temporarily, Zedekiah had apparently been persuaded by the "hotheads" that help was on the way from Egypt and Jeremiah's dreadful predictions of a Babylonian holocaust was ridiculous. So, Jeremiah has to go to Zedekiah with the latest message from God. "If you should defeat the whole army of Chaldeans...and there remained of them only wounded men...they would rise up and burn this city with fire." PLEASE, GET THE MESSAGE, ZEDEKIAH! JUDAH AND JERUSALEM ARE DOOMED! MUST GOD BRING KILLING, FAMINE & DISEASE TO GET YOU TO SURRENDER?

When Nebuchadnezzar retreated (temporarily) from Jerusalem, Jeremiah went out of the city of Jerusalem to the town of his birth, Anathoth, "to receive his portion" which probably means he went there to take care of the business of purchasing a field as the Lord had told him to do. He probably got some distance outside the city when he was seized by Irijah, chief officer of the guard, and brought before the princes accused of treason or defecting to the Babylonians. The princes were enraged (the Hebrew word is qatsaph, means an "explosion of rage"). They beat him and imprisoned him.... (there are two Hebrew words used here to describe the place they incarcerated Jeremiah---bor, meaning "dungeon" or "subterranean cavity", and chanuyot, meaning "cell" or "single space"). Jeremiah was evidently considered dangerous and put in "maximum security." Why would these princes feel the need to beat him if they could lock him up? POWER CORRUPTS, AND ABSOLUTE POWER CORRUPTS ABSOLUTELY! They had taken numerous tongue-lashings from this small-town clod-buster, Jeremiah, and they weren't going to take any more. Furthermore, they would show him who was in charge around Jerusalem---and it certainly was not some treason-minded religious kook! Isn't that usually what precipitates such uncalled for violence on the part of civil authorities---WE WILL SHOW YOU WHO IS IN CHARGE HERE! Often, civil authorities forget THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE SERVANTS OF GOD AND THE PEOPLE, NOT THE PEOPLE'S

SLAVE-MASTERS! The reasonable thing to do if they really wanted to get rid of Jeremiah would be to let him defect to the Babylonians (as they accused him of trying to do). THEY KNEW HE WASN'T REALLY INTENDING TO DO THAT! They knew very well Jeremiah would stay on in Jerusalem and keep on prophesying until either the Babylonians destroyed them or withdrew completely. This is often how the world treats believers---we may as well expect it. REMEMBER, THE JEWS BEAT PETER AND JOHN Acts 5:40; HOW MANY TIMES WAS PAUL BEATEN? 2 Cor. 11:24-25

Jeremiah had preached 23 years, now king Zedekiah has the gall to ask, "Is there any word from the Lord?" You notice, Zedekiah "questioned him secretly." If Zedekiah had really been sincere in wanting to know the Lord's word for the sake of righteousness and truth, he would not have been so secretive about it! If you are a sincere believer in the Lord, sooner or later a public profession has to be made with the mouth (Rom. 10:9-10). And how did Jeremiah deal with this effrontery from the highest public official of the land? HE SAID, "THERE ISYOU SHALL BE DELIVERED INTO THE HAND OF THE KING OF BABYLON!" Jeremiah had his "down days" but this was not one of them. THIS IS A MOUNTAIN PEAK "UPPER"! This may be his finest hour! He not only (a) delivers the word of the Lord, concisely, precisely, and fearlessly (b) he verbally challenges the injustices done to him by the king's underlings! Every Christian worthy of the name must verbalize opposition to injustice! Remember, every prophecy and every dogma taught concerning the reign of the Messiah is that it will be in justice and righteousness. If a Christian is not sensitive enough to the difference between justice and injustice, and not courageous enough to speak for justice and against injustice, he is not reaching the level of spirituality his Master wants for him! We have not only the doctrine and the commands in the Bible, we have the practical precedents set by the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus himself. So when you see justice being done, praise it---verbally; when you see injustice being done, condemn it---verbally; (c) Jeremiah closed his "close encounter" with the king by challenging him to call in the false prophets who had predicted that the king of Babylon would not come against Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah was inferring they should have to explain the fact that just the opposite of their predictions had occurred and that Jeremiah had been correct all along! EVIDENCE! THE VERITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS BASED ON EVIDENCE, AND FULFILLED PROPHECY IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EVIDENCE! We may tell our friends and neighbors (and antagonists) that "there is a word from the Lord" BUT WE NEED TO BE ABLE TO CHALLENGE THEM WITH THE EVIDENCE THAT THE WORD IS INDEED DIVINELY INSPIRED, INERRANT, AND INFALLIBLE.

The princes accused Jeremiah of deliberately, openly, verbally doing harm to the city and the people. They said he not only seeks the harm of the city and people, he is doing harm with his constant harangue by "weakening the hands of the soldiers and the people of the city." They considered Jeremiah a "fifth column" who was giving aid to the enemy by destroying the morale of the army and the citizens. "Fifth column" was a familiar figure of speech in America during WWII applied to anyone suspected of being sympathetic to or related to the Axis powers---or anyone else who might say or do anything to weaken morale. Actually, Jeremiah was guilty of weakening their morale, but he was not doing it to harm them. He was trying to get them to quit resisting, quit fighting Nebuchadnezzar, and surrender, because the Lord told him this would work out to their physical safety. Jeremiah was trying to get them to submit to the discipline of the Lord, to go into exile in Babylon, and build houses, rear families

and seek the welfare of their captors. Otherwise, they would die by sword, pestilence and famine! DISCIPLINE OR DEATH! If someone gave you those alternatives and he could prove what he said would inexorably come to pass---WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

King Zedekiah "caved in" to the princes. He said, "...he is in your hands; for the king can do nothing against you." OH, HE COULDN'T, COULD HE? He could have at least spoken up that Jeremiah was telling the truth, that Jeremiah was only trying to keep them from being slaughtered, that he was innocent of treason. He probably could have done more---after all, he is the king. He's supposed to be the leader, the decisive, unhesitating, strong and courageous leader who leads by principles of what is right and just and fair and good for the people! BUT ZEDEKIAH IS A PRAGMATIST! Whatever works to bring about the least amount of personal loss and suffering must be right. For the pragmatist, truth is never ultimate, never static---for the pragmatist truth is always changing with the circumstance. For the pragmatist the ultimate truth is "save your own neck in every situation." AND HAVEN'T WE HAD OUR SHARE OF PRAGMATISTS IN PUBLIC OFFICE IN AMERICA? It doesn't make any difference which political party or persuasion---PRINCIPLES AND GOD-ORDAINED VALUES, CAN GO TO BLAZES! For the pragmatist, truth is what he says it is at any given moment in his life. King Zedekiah would have been right at home in Washington, D. C. or Jefferson City, MO. Now think about this from a Biblical perspective---ISN'T PRAGMATISM BIBLICAL? Isn't it correct that we should try every idea that comes to our mind, or every experience that presents itself to us, and see IF IT WORKS, and if it gives us more pleasure than pain, more prosperity than poverty, more freedom than restriction. Then ISN'T IT TRUE, AND RIGHT AND GOOD and shouldn't we then adopt it as our life-style? God surely doesn't want us to suffer pain and restriction! JUST WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THAT? As to suffering, read Rom. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; 2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 12:1-17; 1 Pet. 2:19-21; 4:1-2; 4:12-19.

Ebed-melech (name means literally, "servant of the king") was a eunuch. He had been castrated by someone at sometime in his life, and sold into servitude. He was a black-skinned man from Ethiopia. Yes, the Jews had black men as slaves. So did black kings have black men as slaves. In fact, black men hunted down their fellow black men and sold them to white English slave brokers who shipped them to America. The African black man has his hands as bloody with the slave trade as the white man! Slavery is not a one-race affliction. White Europeans have enslaved fellow Europeans (Hitler and Stalin did it on a much larger scale than White Americans did); Anglos have enslaved Asians; Asians have enslaved Anglos. In the days of the Roman empire slavery was your lot if the Romans ever defeated your nation. John even mentions the marketing of slaves in Revelation 18:13; and Onesimus was a runaway slave from Philemon. Slavery can never be cured by human governments---it can only be obliterated by the Gospel WORKING IN THE HEART OF BOTH THE ENSLAVER AND THE SLAVE! Here is a slave, Ebed-melech, who had principles. He knew what was right. He stood up against his master, the king, and laid his life on the line for Jeremiah. Think about it! It was Jeremiah's Jewish people who had made him a slave! Why should he care if a Jewish prophet loses his neck? Why should Daniel, taken into exile by the Babylonians, care about the Chaldean wise men, about Nebuchadnezzar, about Belshazzar, about Darius? YOU SEE, PRINCIPLE IS OFTEN PURCHASED AT THE RISK OF THE MOST

PRECIOUS THING YOU HAVE----YOUR LIFE! In a person of godly character, principle wins over pragmatism. Had Ebed-melech been a pragmatist, he would have said, "Hey, I'll keep my mouth shut---it works for me!" Ebed-melech not only "bearded the lion in his den", he put his verbalized principles into action, took some men, some of the king's old clothes, and pulled Jeremiah out of the muck and mire of the cistern where the princes had, in a fit of rage, thrown him. How, in the midst of all the wicked, uncaring, idolatrous, self-serving people, and how, in light of his station in life, did this castrated Ethiopian slave have such daring and courage to speak and act on principles? Where did he pick up on principle over pragmatism? From Jeremiah's preaching! Usually, principles that steadfast and emphatic are locked into the heart from the home!

Can Zedekiah be trusted to keep his word? Jeremiah is about to find out! The king sends for Jeremiah and meets him at the 3rd gate (sounds like a clandestine meeting). Remember Zedekiah went back on his word about the freeing of the indentured servants (ch. 34); Zedekiah is the blatant pragmatist who will do whatever is necessary to save his own neck. SO SHALL JEREMIAH TRUST HIM? Well, it would take some desperate circumstances to trust such a man. AND ZEDEKIAH WAS IN DESPERATE CIRCUMSTANCES! His own household was deserting him and going out to the Babylonians. Actually, Zedekiah is playing the pragmatist again. This time, he is afraid of the Jews and the Babylonians, so he wants to know from Jeremiah all that Jeremiah knows about the Babylonian siege so as to save his own neck. Zedekiah is planning to sneak out of the city in the dark of the night and leave those who don't know about it behind to the Babylonian swords. Zedekiah is not only a vacillating, unprincipled pragmatist, he is a cringing, coward. SO JEREMIAH ANSWERS THE KING. But what does Jeremiah tell him?---ONLY WHAT HE HAS BEEN TELLING HIM ALL ALONG! Zedekiah did not put Jeremiah to death on the spot---but why? Zedekiah was too busy planning his own escape---and besides, being the pragmatist he was, he might have use for Jeremiah in his escape plans. It was Zedekiah who said, "Don't tell anybody what we've talked about here!" Zedekiah knew the time had come when he must either surrender or run for it! If he had not been in such desperate circumstances, he probably would have thrown Jeremiah back into the dungeon or cistern, or killed him. We have a slight ethical problem here: Did Jeremiah lie? The king told him what to say to the nosey princes and that is what Jeremiah told them. Jeremiah had made a plea not to be sent back to the house of Jonathan the secretary (see 37:29), BUT IT WAS NOT A PART OF THE LAST CONVERSATION. And besides, the princes demanded specifically, that Jeremiah "tell (them) what you said to the king and what the king said to you; hide nothing from us." So what did Jeremiah tell them?--just what the king told him to tell them! So, is this a compromise of the truth? Is this a breach of ethical uprightness? No! As we've discovered before, there is a hierarchy of ethics by which human beings have to live in this sin-cursed world where some evil people have no regard for the sanctity of life, liberty or property. If Jeremiah had told what the king said he would have endangered not only his own life, but that of the king. If the king is assassinated and Jeremiah is slain it would be murder---and possibly anarchy would have followed if the king was dead. No telling how many other murders would have been committed. So, Jeremiah not only withheld the facts of his conversation with the king, he also told them something that was not exactly the unadulterated truth as to what he and the king had talked about in this latest conversation. This kind of doing the "lesser of two evils" (as some people call it) is practiced all the time---police undercover men, police "stings",

espionage in war-time, propaganda or deliberate "misinformation" to the enemy to confuse him---it's even practiced in sports (hiding signals from one another, feints and tricks to confuse the opposition and the players make big bucks by deceiving their opposition). It was done by Bible characters; Joshua was even instructed by the Lord to "ambush" secretly the people of Ai (Josh. 8:3-17); Rahab lied to the men of Canaan about the Israelite spies (Josh. 2:1-7); David and his men ate the shewbread from the Tabernacle which was in direct opposition to the command of God and Jesus even used David's actions to show that human life takes precedence over other ethical or religious obligations; Paul let his friends lower him down the wall, at night, secretly, at Damascus---why didn't he wait till morning and go, truthfully, out the city gate? IF WE LIVED IN A PERFECT WORLD, IN A TOTALLY CHRISTIAN WORLD, WE WOULD NOT NEED TO CONFUSE AND DECEIVE WICKED PEOPLE TO PROTECT OUR LIVES, OUR FAMILIES, OUR HOMES! BUT WE DON'T

Zedekiah tried to escape. But the Babylonians caught him. They slaughtered his sons and all the royal princes trying to escape with him while he was forced to watch. Then they put out Zedekiah's eyes---probably with a hot poker, or maybe simply by gouging them out, and put him in "fettters" (probably irons around hands and feet) and took him to Babylon. (see 2 Kings 25:6-7; Jer. 52:10-11; 2 Chron. 36:17-21). What a tragic way for Zedekiah to learn that Jeremiah was telling the truth of God and that you cannot escape from God's truth! BUT HE BROUGHT IT UPON HIMSELF! It was all so simple---he just did not believe the Word of God! He believed he was smart enough to know, that what the prophet of God was saying was impossible! Besides, his political cohorts, the majority of the populace, and all the religious leaders of the day (except Jeremiah) were saying the same thing----IMPOSSIBLE! Now in a story-book world (or a perfect world) all the wicked and unbelieving would suffer the fate of Zedekiah, or worse. But in our world, it doesn't happen that way. Sometimes the righteous have their children slain and their eyes put out (persecution and martyrdom). How do we handle that? WE DO THE BEST WE CAN TO RESTRAIN EVIL, AND TRUST IN GOD TO ADMINISTER HIS ABSOLUTE JUSTICE AND MERCY AS HE SEES FIT, IN THE NEXT LIFE! IT'S CALLED FAITH!

And how about the results of Ebed-melech's rescue of Jeremiah from the cistern? Isn't that a storybook ending? The Lord delivered him from death and gave him his life as a "prize of war." BECAUSE HE HAD PUT HIS TRUST IN THE LORD! But all believers do not get delivered from death, pestilence, and famine or tornadoes, hurricanes, drunken drivers, murderers, robbers, and even religious persecutors. So how do we handle that? AGAIN, WE DO THE BEST WE CAN TO REWARD RIGHTEOUSNESS HERE IN THIS FLAWED WORLD, AND TRUST GOD TO REWARD IT ABSOLUTELY, AS HE AS PROMISED, IN THE NEXT LIFE! IT'S CALLED FAITH! To some people that sounds simplistic, credulous, idiotic, and impractical. But it's God's way for us, nevertheless. The bottom line is this: We can't possibly remedy the evils and injustices of this life by any human schemes, or any human efforts. If we could, it would have been done, long ago, by civilizations richer, more powerful, more educated, than we are. We either trust God and live in hope of a perfect existence beyond this life, or we disbelieve and expect that this life with all its disappointments, evils, injustices, and flaws is all we shall ever have----except maybe extinction (as Bertrand Russell, Madalyn Murray and others have preached).

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 40 -- 45

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

If you had been Jeremiah, would you have left your homeland and gone willingly into exile. The Babylonians promised to "look after him well." They gave him freedom to go, or stay, and if he stayed, they apparently gave Gedaliah, son of Ahikam (who had already treated Jeremiah well), instructions to care for Jeremiah. Also, if Jeremiah chose to stay in Judah, he had freedom to go where he wished, supposedly without interference from anyone else. Consider: (a) the Babylonians treated Daniel very well once he proved himself an exile not intending to start a revolution; (b) Jeremiah would be a lot safer in Babylon than left behind with those who had not surrendered and were out to get him; (c) and what was left for Jeremiah in Judah and Jerusalem--- every thing was, or would be, torn down; (d) and how much more can God require of a man now getting along in years, who had expended his heart and soul preaching, had suffered imprisonment, slander, beating, near death, and had won (apparently) only one convert. Isn't it time for Jeremiah to retire? Couldn't he be excused if he chose to accept the offer to go to Babylon where there were those who had listened to him? (e) he could have been a "missionary" to Babylon and joined the team of Daniel & Ezekiel. I believe Jeremiah expected to preach to these recalcitrant until he died--- hoping some of them would repent. If he were to leave them, who would "be there fore them?" No one! Those who had repented and gone to Babylon had Daniel and Ezekiel and others like them--but who would these rebellious, poor, vulnerable, weak "orphans" have? Remember what God told Isaiah when Isaiah said, "How long, O Lord, am I supposed to preach to a people who will see but not see, hear but not hear?" And the Lord answered, "Until there are no more villages with people in them to whom to preach" (see Isa. 6:8-13). I have heard people say, "Well, the people in the U.S. have had the Gospel preached and preached to them, and they won't listen, so we need to concentrate most of our resources on foreign nations." I sympathize with that viewpoint, to a certain extent. But here we have an example (as well as in Ezekiel ch. 2 & 3) of prophets staying with their own people who had been hearing the word of God from Moses (ca. 1400 B.C.) to Jeremiah (ca. 600 B.C.)---800 years, and now they are down to a few "left-overs" and still Jeremiah stays! The same principle applies to preachers in A.D. 2011 in localities within the USA---some preachers have the idea that if I don't make a big splash here, double the attendance, and build a new building within 5 years, I'll move on to "greener pastures." We can't seem to get the point of the Scriptures that the Lord does not reward on the basis of how many "pounds" or "talents" we bring him, but how faithfully we've worked at it!

It was the practice of ancient potentates and empires when conquering a nation or territory, to devastate it, plunder its riches (thus to insure its subservience), and depose its current rulers. Then, the conquerors would leave behind in the territory a segment (usually poor, older, less educated) people of the land and appoint new rulers---sometimes from among the defeated, sometimes from the conquering army. The Assyrians did this when they conquered the 10 northern tribes (Israel) 122 years

earlier than Jeremiah (722 B.C.). This was the policy of all the ancient empires, Assyria, Babylon, Persia (see Nehemiah & Ezra), Greece (see Daniel, ch. 11-12), and Rome (the Herods, et.al.). It has been the modus operandi of some recent "wannabe" emperors (Hitler, Stalin, Hirohito). They thought was not only strategic but diplomatic! In ancient times, Palestine was a "buffer zone" between the Mesopotamian empires and Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar figured that if he had to march against Egypt one day, he would need people in Palestine growing crops, building lodging facilities, etc., he would use as he marched his army in that direction. In ancient times, armies "fed off the land." That's not quite as ancient as you might think---this is what both armies in our tragic Civil War had to do most of the time because of the very inadequate "supply systems" they had. And if Nebuchadnezzar left Jews behind in Palestine, the worst thing he could do was appoint a Babylonian native to rule over them. So Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah, a Jew, to be "governor" of Babylon's newly acquired province of Judea. And Gedaliah seems to have done an excellent job considering the "mess" he had to reorganize---people scattered everywhere hiding out in the hills, hungry, homeless, cities and villages in ruin and devastation. Americans have forgotten what war is like on their home soil! If our schools don't do a better job teaching about our American War for Independence and the Civil War Americans are going to continue to forget to their great regret. Most High School students don't even know the centuries in which both those struggles took place, let alone the ideas and principles involved or the heroes and heroines who participated.

Ishmael, means, "God has heard, or God hears." I don't know why this Jewish man's mother and father named him Ishmael since ancient Ishamel was the father of the Arab tribes that were antagonistic toward the descendants of Isaac (Ishmael's "step-brother-of-sorts" or half-brother). Perhaps the Ishmael of Jeremiah's day was a "miracle-baby" whose parents were infertile for many years and suddenly he came, they believed, after many prayers to God for a baby boy. Whatever the case, this Ishmael was a died-in-the-wool, patriotic, even fanatical Judean! He would have none of this surrendering to the Babylonians, and he undoubtedly despised any one who collaborated with them (like Gedaliah and Jeremiah) in anything. And Gedaliah's orders were, as God had commanded Jeremiah, that the Judeans left behind should "not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans...and the king of Babylon. You know what that meant---taxes, tribute, vassalage, humiliation, taking orders from "headquarters" in Babylon, etc. Ishmael was of the royal family, descended from David; Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam, one of those who served the king of Judea. There probably was a little jealousy involved here, too. Gedaliah was evidently a man of some principle, or terribly naive, for he would not believe that Ishmael had been plotting to kill him. He was probably both! It seems incredible that in light of all the upheaval, anarchy, assassinations, etc. that had been going on, Gedaliah would not be more cautious or suspicious. But, then, he was having a successful administration---why would anyone be angry enough to kill him? Ishmael committed the sin of eating bread with a man and then killing him at the table! That was a terribly insolent thing to do in that culture--or any other culture for that matter! It was deceit, cowardice, and fanaticism of the worst kind! Plus it was anarchistic and nihilistic! It was assassination of a civil ruler. It would have ripple effects throughout the entire nation (what was left of it there). Within 3 months of his administration (reign) Gedaliah was murdered! Zealously patriotic Jews like Ishmael and his followers have suffered incredible misery, suffering, devastation and death down through the centuries because of their

desire to live free of foreign oppression! As Americans we can sympathize with that burning desire to live free! But when God gives an order through one of his spokesmen, plainly authenticated by evidence such as fulfilled prophecy, he means for it to be obeyed! Ishmael was just a tad violent, ruthless and blood-thirsty! He was a deceitful wretch---he could cry crocodile tears to lure people into a massacre. He eventually had to flee for his life to the Ammonites (41:15). Ammonites were descendants of Lot, they worshiped Moloch which involved burning babies in fire, their territory is what is today modern Jordan. Among the Ammonites he would be among his own kind, character-wise!

Those left after Ishmael fled to Ammon, came to Jeremiah and asked him to pray that God would send a message telling them "which way they should go." They promised if God would show them the way through the prophet Jeremiah, they would go that way---they even swore a curse upon themselves if they didn't! They even promised to do God's will even it seemed "evil" to them! They really spread it on thick! (42:5-6). WHAT A LAUGH! PROMISES, PROMISES, PROMISES! THEY ALREADY HAD GOD'S WILL FOR THEM! THEY ALREADY KNEW THE "WAY" GOD WANTED THEM TO GO! They didn't need any further revelation! And isn't that par for the course in many instances today. We still have professing Christians praying that the Lord will "show us the way." I hope this attitude is due to spiritual immaturity, naivete, or innocent ignorance---because it certainly isn't scriptural! HE HAS REVEALED TO US ALL THAT PERTAINS TO LIFE AND GODLINESS THROUGH A KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST (2 PET. 1:3-4)---AND WE GET OUR KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST THROUGH THE BIBLE---NO WHERE ELSE! "Lord show us the way" is usually born of an anxiety which is born of an ignorance of the Bible---OR, IT IS AN ATTEMPT TO PUT A FACADE OF DIVINE SANCTION ON A "WAY" WE INTEND TO GO ALL ALONG, EVEN IF GOD SHOULD REVEAL A DIFFERENT "WAY" TO US! That is precisely what Johanan and these Jews were about! When people came to Jesus with that attitude he always referred them to "the Scriptures." When Paul and Silas went to Berea and preached to the Jews about the Messiah, the Bereans "examined the scriptures daily to see if these things were so." (Acts 17:10-11). What we should be praying is, "THANK YOU LORD FOR HAVING SHOWN US THE WAY THROUGH YOUR INCARNATE SON, JESUS, AND THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES WHICH TESTIFY ABOUT HIM AND HIS "WAY"! JESUS SAID, "I AM THE WAY...THE TRUTH...AND THE LIFE..." NOW IF WE KNOW JESUS, WE KNOW THE WAY! AND THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO KNOW JESUS...BY KNOWING AND DOING HIS WORD! AND HIS WORD DOES NOT COME TO US OUTSIDE THE NEW TESTAMENT!

Jeremiah told the people who asked to know the Lord's "Way" that whatever the Lord told him he would tell them---he would hold nothing back. He told them this because they were accustomed to hearing from the false prophets only what they wanted to hear. Micah was a prophet near the time of Jeremiah---read what Micah says about the false prophets in Judah (Micah 2:6; 2:11; 3:5-8; 3:11)---and then there is Isaiah who prophesied about 100 years before Jeremiah who characterized the people as demanding to hear "illusions and smooth things" (Isa. 30:9-11). And, there is Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, with the exiles in Babylon who had to deal with false prophets among the people down there (see Ezekiel, ch. 13). They asked for the Lord's "way" and Jeremiah promises that is what they shall get---ALL OF IT, THE FULL LOAD, EVERY THING THE LORD SAYS, WHETHER THEY LIKE IT OR NOT!

Now you know that Jeremiah was not intending to do this out of malice or spite! He didn't want to be God's prophet in the first place (Jer. ch. 1). Later he pronounces a curse on the day he was born because he had to preach a message of doom upon his beloved land and people. Any preacher, worthy of the calling, will have a heart like Jeremiah's---BUT HE WILL ALSO HAVE A WILL LIKE JEREMIAH'S.....A WILL TO PREACH GOD'S WORD, "LOCK, STOCK, AND BARREL"...HOLDING NOTHING BACK! It may not be the popular approach, it may not be the expedient approach, it might get him fired by a congregation (not by God), he might even get "run out of town"---BUT IF HE DOES, HE WILL BE IN GOOD COMPANY. They ran Jesus out of Nazareth for preaching the whole word of God; Paul told the Ephesians, "...I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable (Acts 20:20), and "...I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.." (Acts 20:27) and he was run out of Ephesus (and a lot of other places). Paul asked the Galatians, "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). That we hear the unadulterated, pure, total, Word of God, is so important Jesus said even if a hypocrite-Pharisee should declare unto us the Law of Moses, we are "to practice and observe whatever they tell (us); but not what they do..." So don't get angry with the preacher IF he's preaching what the Bible says---it's God's word, not his! And since preachers are human, they're going to have flaws, just like the rest of us, BUT IF HE'S PREACHING GOD'S WORD (AND IF YOU'RE NOT SURE, YOU'D BETTER CHECK IT OUT) DON'T LET YOUR FEELINGS KEEP YOU FROM PRACTICING AND OBSERVING GOD'S WORD!

God did not want the Jews to go to Egypt for safety from the Babylonians because he had told them he would keep them safe if they would only obey his word through Jeremiah! the days of king. In the days of king Hezekiah, little less than 100 years before Jeremiah was called to prophesy, God delivered (722 B.C.) Jerusalem from an Assyrian force just as powerful and violent as the Babylonians. It was in their history---couldn't they learn anything from history? IT WAS IN THEIR HISTORY FROM THE DAYS OF THEIR FOUNDING FATHER, ABRAHAM, TO THE VERY DAY JEREMIAH BEGAN TO PREACH TO THEM! God wanted them to trust HIM for deliverance. Furthermore, if they go to Egypt they will put themselves in the midst of temptation to continue their idolatry, which is exactly what happened (Jer. ch. 44). Furthermore, Egypt is incapable of keeping them from the clutches of Babylon, for Nebuchadnezzar ravaged Egypt also! (Jer. ch. 46:1ff) NO HIDING PLACE HERE!! The Jews were, in fact, trying to run from God! They were trying to find safety from God in Egypt!! BUT GOD IS EVERYWHERE! HE'S IN THE DEEPEST OCEAN, ON THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN, HE'S 6 BILLION LIGHT YEARS OUT IN SPACE! HE'S IN YOUR HOUSE, IN YOUR DINING ROOM, YOUR BEDROOM, YOUR KITCHEN. HE'S WHERE YOU WORK, AND WHERE YOU PLAY! HE'S IN YOUR CAR AS YOU DRIVE AROUND TOWN, HE'S IN JAPAN, ALASKA, RUSSIA, AND EVEN IN CHINA! GO TO HEAVEN AND GOD IS THERE; GO DOWN TO SHEOL (DEATH) AND GOD IS THERE (Psa. 139:8; Amos 9:2-4; Job 26:6; Prov. 15:11) HE'S EVEN INSIDE YOU! HAVE YOU EVER READ THE POEM, THE HOUND OF HEAVEN, by Francis Thompson? YOU OUGHT TO.

They said Jeremiah was lying to them when he told them in no uncertain terms NOT TO GO TO EGYPT. Practically every prophet who wrote admonished the Jews against seeking help from Egypt! God planned to reduce the once glorious, rich, world-dominating empire of Egypt to a fifth-class nation economically, militarily,

educationally, and culturally. Read Isa. chapters 18, 19, 20, 30, 31; Jer. chapter 46; Ezek. chapters 30,31,32). Ezekiel says Egypt would be (a) the most lowly of kingdoms; (b) never again exalt itself above the nations; (c) never again be the reliance of the house of Israel; (d) have an end put to its wealth; (e) no longer have an Egyptian prince rule over her. Isaiah called Egypt, "Rahab (meaning, "big mouth") who sits still ("does nothing")." But Jeremiah was NOT lying---he was predicting the truth! THEY SAID HE WAS LYING BECAUSE IT WAS THE MESSAGE THEY DID NOT WANT TO HEAR! And that is precisely why unbelieving theologians and philosophers today say the Bible is full of errors, myths, and "redactions" (by which they mean some "editor" deliberately altered the original Biblical texts). THEY DON'T WANT TO HEAR THE MESSAGE OF A BIBLE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE, FOR WHAT IT SAYS, AS BEING FROM ALMIGHTY GOD AS IT CLAIMS! These so-called "higher critics" pretend their view of the Bible is scholarly, scientific, and rational. They accuse those of us who are convinced by the evidence that it is from God, authentic, inerrant, and credible, of being anti-scholarship, anti-reason, anti-science. They think Bible-believing Christians are credulous, gullible, incompetent, incoherent fools. BUT THEN, THAT IS WHAT THE ELITE POLITICIANS AND SCRIBES THOUGHT OF JEREMIAH. WHO WAS RIGHT, IN THE END?

Jeremiah went to Egypt as a hostage. Those Jews who fled to Egypt were doing so to escape the wrath of the Babylonians for having assassinated Gedaliah, the man whom Nebuchadnezzar had appointed "Governor" of Judea. They believed that by taking Jeremiah and Baruch with them as hostages they could get "safe passage" to Egypt through the Babylonian army lines. There may have been a lot of spite involved in kidnapping the two men who had been "burrs under their saddle---thorns in their flesh" for a quarter of a century! Neither Jeremiah nor Baruch would have gone to Egypt willingly, for they both had offers from the emperor of Babylon for safety and certain rewards whether they stayed in Judah or went to Babylon. Jeremiah had already turned down the offer to go to Babylon and a life of comparative ease, to stay in Judah. But these renegade Jews did not escape Babylon even in Egypt. Jeremiah predicted Nebuchadnezzar would overrun Egypt and ravage the land (ch. 46) which he did, as history confirms. These Jews should have known better. Assyria had done the same thing to Egypt a hundred years earlier, just as Isaiah had predicted. AS WE MENTIONED BEFORE, THEY WERE TRYING TO RUN AWAY FROM GOD, BUT IT CAN'T BE DONE!

The "queen of heaven" was Ashtoreth (sometimes called Ashtart), a Phoenician goddess; in Assyria she was known as Ishtar; in Greece she was known as Aphrodite; in Rome she was known as Venus; in Ephesus she was known as Diana or Artemis. Solomon introduced the worship of Ashtoreth into Judah (1 Kings 11; 2 Kings 23:13) and for that God promised to take the kingdom from Solomon, giving 10 tribes to Jeroboam. These Jews rationalized their worship of this vile goddess (a) by saying they were doing nothing new at all--their forefathers had worshiped her including kings and princes; (b) they said "pragmatically" as long as we were worshiping Ashtoreth things went well for us--but just as soon as Josiah brought in his iconoclastic reformation everything went downhill for our nation, but they had a "revisionist" view of their own history for it was their idolatry that brought depravity, degradation, moral decay, and the punishment of God, not Josiah's reform; (c) now the women chime in, "whatever acts of worship we performed to Ashtoreth were with the consent of our husbands, so Jeremiah, you butt out!" But what was the worship of

Ashtoreth? For the women, it required they become temple prostitutes to be used and abused by any male worshiper desiring them; for the men it involved license to have sexual intercourse with any "priestess" they desired; it involved homosexuality especially with young boys and young girls; it involved infanticide. Archaeological excavations at Megiddo unearthed the ruins of a temple to Ashtoreth with a cemetery where many earthen jars were found containing the remains of infants who had been sacrificed in this temple. Prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth were murderers of infants. This was the worship they said produced such a wonderful society—prosperous, secure, and enjoyable. They must have been looking at their society through rose-colored glasses because it really was not that at all. THE 4TH CHAPTER OF HOSEA DESCRIBES THE SOCIAL CHAOS IN THE 10 NORTHERN TRIBES FROM WORSHIPING ASHTORETH AND BAAL! Hosea writes (Hosea 9:10) "...they came to Baal-peor, and consecrated themselves to Baal, and became detestable like the thing they loved."

Jeremiah "laid it on the line" to this gang of renegade sex-maniacs and child killers (these are Jews, I remind you, the "Chosen of God"). One of the most significant things he said was, "...you did not obey the voice of the Lord or walk in his law and in his statutes and in his testimonies, that this evil has befallen you, as at this day." (44:23). THEIR PRIMARY REBELLION WAS THAT OF REJECTING THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD FOR THEIR OWN FEELINGS, RATIONALIZATIONS, AND OPINIONS!! Like Jeremiah had said much earlier, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt..." DO NOT FOLLOW YOUR OWN HEART!!! THAT IS IDOLATRY AT ITS WORST---WORSHIPING ONESELF! Did you notice in 44:25 God uses satire and sarcasm, telling this bunch of hot-headed rebels, "Then confirm your vows and perform your vows!" (They had vowed they would worship the queen of heaven regardless of Jeremiah's predicted doom). God's pronouncement is that he no longer considers himself to be their covenant God and therefore they have lost the right of calling upon his name. God will somehow withdraw his name from the lips of his people. Probably meaning that they will become so deeply committed to idolatry, so far gone into apostasy, they, and their descendants will never call upon Jehovah God again. Have you considered the idea that these renegades were probably ABSORBED into the Egyptian race through intermarriage and thus into the Egyptian culture and religion, etc. YES, THERE ARE EGYPTIANS LIVING IN EGYPT TODAY WHO ARE UNDOUBTEDLY PART JEWISH! The predictions that Nebuchadnezzar would ravage the land of Egypt came to pass--- just as God said they would---AND AS GOD SAID, "YOU SHALL KNOW WHOSE WORD SHALL STAND, MINE OR THEIRS!"

IS IDOLATRY A PROBLEM IN AMERICA TODAY? LET THE CLASS CHIME IN HERE!

THESE ARE FOR STARTERS IF NO ONE WILL SPEAK UP!

(a) We worship self---our feelings, our desires, our rationalizations, our opinions OVER THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD.

(b) We worship wealth---acquisition of "things".

(c) We worship popularity---let our peers dictate our values and decision

(d) We worship health---virility, beauty (who's to say what's beautiful? how about God
1 Pet. 3:1-6)

(e) We worship athletes, movie stars, secular musicians, and rich, young politicians

(f) We worship TOLERANCE OF ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING...THAT'S
PROBABLY OUR MOST PREVALENT "GOD "---TOLERANCE

(g) We worship "human rights." AND LOOKED AT FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE,
NO HUMAN HAS ANY RIGHTS—ONLY GRACE! NEED WE CONTINUE

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 46 -- 49

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Carchemish is just west of Haran. Carchemish is on the Euphrates River, almost at its headwaters. It was the chief city of the Hittites and very rich, thus a "commercial plum" to be plucked by empires vying for control of the "Fertile Crescent." Today, Carchemish would be near the border of Iraq and Turkey in the locale where the modern "Kurds" live (it was on our T.V. screens not too long ago when Saddam Hussein was killing the Kurds). Yes! This battle actually took place in 605 B.C. It was the battle that would decide the fate of the ancient world at that time and the destiny of empires. Pharaoh Neco was the son of Psammethicus, and was the 2nd king of the 26th Dynasty. He ruled Egypt from 610-594 B.C. only 16 years. He started to build a canal to unite the Red Sea with the Mediterranean Sea but never finished it (Darius the Mede finished the canal). The Assyrian empire fell to the Babylonians circa. 610 B.C. Because of the fall of Assyria, Neco decided it would be an opportune time to regain control of the territories of Palestine and Syria. As Neco marched his army northward from Egypt through Palestine, Josiah, the king of Judah, engaged Neco in combat near Mt. Carmel at Meggido to try to stop him (2 Kings 23:29-30). Josiah was slain. Neco refused to acknowledge Jehoahaz (the son of Josiah) to be the king of Judah, imprisoned him, and put Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim (later called Jehoiakim), on the throne. Neco exacted heavy tribute from Judah (2 Kings 23:33). Babylon, under the leadership of Nabopolassar, and his son, Nebuchadnezzar, became the imperial power of the Mesopotamian region and was bent on extending its control to Syria and Palestine and Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar led a Babylonian army against Pharaoh Neco in 605 B.C. and defeated him at Carchemish. The Babylonians took over Neco's Syrian territory (2 Kings 24:7) including Palestine. Egypt was never again a power in that area---just as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel predicted. JEREMIAH'S PREDICTION OF WHAT WOULD TAKE PLACE AT CARCHEMISH WAS PRECISELY FULFILLED. THE OFFICIAL BABYLONIAN ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE REVEALS HOW ACCURATELY JEREMIAH HAD FORESEEN WHAT WOULD TRANSPIRE THERE.

Satire and sarcasm is a powerful tool, used correctly, to get sinful man's attention. God uses it in the mouths of his prophets in the O.T., in the mouths of his incarnate Son, Jesus, and the apostles in the N.T. Jeremiah says, satirically (46:15), "Why has Apis fled?". Apis (the bull) was one of Egypt's chief "gods", associated with Ptah or Osiris the chief "god", creator of all other "gods" of Egypt. Egyptians believed that Osiris, the sun-god, lived in Apis, the bull. They kept Apis the bull in the temple at Memphis and celebrated its birthday every year. When the bull died, they embalmed and buried it with great ceremony. It was representative of life and power. BUT IT COULD NOT KEEP EGYPT FROM THE JUDGMENT PRONOUNCED UPON HER BY JEHOVAH, THE ONLY REAL GOD. Thousands, probably millions, of sacrifices and prayers had been offered to numerous bulls, but all in vain! Another satirical jibe (46:17), "Call the name of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, 'Noisy one who lets the hour go

by." The NIV translates this verse, "Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is only a loud noise; he has missed his opportunity." This sarcasm is much like that of Isaiah 30:7 where Pharaoh is called, "Rahab who sits still" and in Hebrew "Rahab" means, "Loud mouth who does nothing." The glory and power of Egypt that Joseph and Moses knew was gone! Egypt was only a "paper tiger or bull" in Jeremiah's day. Idolatry and all its wicked fruits (including incest and infanticide) had brought Jehovah's judgment down upon her. God has an "appointed time for nations and rulers" (Dan. 2:20-22; Acts 17:26). God revealed some of those "times" in the Bible (O.T. prophets and Matt. 24 & Revelation in the N.T.). But he does not reveal them all (Acts 1:7). I am convinced that God has use for any nation that will seek his will for its appointed place in his great program of redemption for mankind. I believe he used Germany and Switzerland for the Reformation—England and France for Protestantism—and America for the Restoration. But when any nation turns its back on God so completely that it becomes depraved and despicable, so that it cannot possibly be of any use to God for redemption, then "its opportunity" is passed! And sooner or later it is judged and disappears (except for a few ruins which scholarly archaeologists dig up and put in museums).

I believe the prophecy in Jeremiah 46:25-28 is a parallel to that in Isaiah 19:16-25 both of which are predicting the distant future Messianic age (when Christ came and established the church) and the Gospel was preached to people all over the world (even to Egyptians and Libyans, see Acts 2:10). Coptic Christianity flourished in Egypt until Mohammed and Islam swept through that region. The word Copt is taken from the Greek word, Agegyptios, meaning, Egyptian. Egyptians were converted to Christianity in 100-200 A.D. by the millions. Copts even developed their own language--a combination of Greek and Egyptian--and some of our best and most ancient mss. of the Bible are Coptic! The Coptic church is independent of Roman Catholicism and all other religions. In A.D. 642 when the Moslems conquered Egypt, many Copts converted to Islam. But today, there are still approximately 4, 000, 000 Ethiopians who belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church. A Coptic community exists in Jerusalem today. Unsubstantiated tradition says that both the apostles Thomas and Simon the Zealot preached Christ to the Egyptians. It is more likely that ordinary people such as the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) went back to Egypt and Ethiopia and Libya and converted their friends, and these friends, converted other friends. THAT'S THE WAY THE GOSPEL WORKS MOST EFFECTIVELY, ONE ON ONE. The Gospel kingdom is like mustard seed, it starts very small, and grows; it starts and works almost imperceptibly like leaven; it works by itself and slowly, first the sprout, then the stalk, then the full ear, like the farmer who planted and let it grow by itself. GOD SAVED A "REMNANT" OUT OF THOSE JEWS EXILED INTO BABYLON, FROM WHICH CAME THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHOSE GOSPEL OF GRACE BUILT A "HIGHWAY" (ANOTHER MESSIANIC FIGURE OF SPEECH) UNITING CHRISTIANS IN "ASSYRIA, ISRAEL, AND EGYPT". THE PICTURE (IN ISAIAH 19) IS THAT OF BRINGING FORMER ENEMIES TO RECONCILIATION THROUGH THE OFFSPRING OF THE "REMNANT" WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT PAUL TEACHES IN EPHESIANS, CHAPTER 2!

Jeremiah puts it this way, "At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his stallions, at the rushing of his chariots, at the rumbling of their wheels, the fathers look not back to their children, so feeble are their hands...." Either out of fear for self-preservation or out of resignation that they are helpless to do anything, (or both), the Jewish fathers

will be incapable of helping their screaming children during all the death and devastation that the Babylonians are going to wreak upon Judah! If you want to visualize this, watch your T.V. screen and reports from Bosnia, and multiply it a thousand times! THAT'S HOW IT WAS IN THE SIEGE AND DOWNFALL OF JERUSALEM! Moses warned the Israelites this would happen if they forsook God's law, Deuteronomy 28:53, it happened in the Jews in Samaria (circa. 850 B.C.) during a siege of Ben-Hadad, 2 Kings 6:26-31, Jeremiah 19:8-9, and Ezekiel 5:10 both predicted a famine would be so absolute during Nebuchadnezzar's siege (circa. 606-581) that Jews would eat the flesh of their own children! And it took place again, according to Josephus, (circa. A.D. 66-70) during the siege of Jerusalem by Roman armies. You remember, the Jews had worshiped Ashtoreth which involved infanticide (throwing children into the religious fires on Baal's altars)! THEY INVOLVED THEIR CHILDREN IN ALL THEIR WICKED PRACTICES....WHY SHOULD WE THINK THEY WOULD HAVE ANY CONCERN FOR THEIR CHILDREN WHEN THE BABYLONIANS WERE KILLING THEM??? IT WASN'T GOD THAT HAD NO REGARD FOR THEIR CHILDREN....IT WAS THE WICKED JEWS! God didn't tell them "not to look back to their children." GOD HAD BEEN TELLING THEM ALL ALONG, THROUGH JEREMIAH, TO LOOK OUT FOR THEIR CHILDREN---TO SURRENDER AND TAKE THEM DOWN INTO EXILE IN BABYLON, REAR THEM UP, MARRY THEM TO FELLOW JEWS (Jer. 29:1-9). They had been warned over, and over, and over, and over, and over! AND SO HAS OUR WICKED WORLD!

Jeremiah was not exactly empathetic toward Moab! God gave Jeremiah the message that Moab would be destroyed by the same forces (Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians) that was going to destroy Judah. Jeremiah had already warned these nations (Jer. 27:3) specifically, that they would perish if they did not surrender to the prophecy that Jehovah God had "given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my (God's) servant... (27:5-6). They are now told by Jeremiah their "gods" would be impotent, useless, and exposed as fakes when the Babylonians came and carried their "gods" into exile. Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites. Like most of the other religions surrounding Israel and Judah, the worship of Chemosh involved lascivious and perverted sexual acts, sacrifice of children (2 Kings 3:27). Solomon built an altar and a "high place" for Chemosh (1 Kings 11:7). We do need to remember that one of Christ's ancestors was a Moabite---Ruth---and that the Moabites provided safety for David's family when king Saul would have killed them. Evidently, there were a few God-fearing, believing, Moabites. Isaiah tells the Jews (Isa. 16:1-5) that they should provide "refuge" for Moabites fleeing from the wrath of the Assyrians (see Isa. 15:5) and that in the far distant future the "throne of David" (the Messiah) will provide opportunity for some of the Moabites to come to the True God. Ancient Moab is now Jordan; population approx. 2,000,000; the people are very poor; 50% are farmers, others are merchants, craftsmen and laborers; 75% of the people are illiterate; there are some Protestant and Roman Catholic schools and missions in Jordan today. Modern Jordan occupies a large portion of the land of Palestine west of the Jordan River (called today, "the West Bank") and they, along with the other Arab nations, have been a constant "thorn in the flesh" to modern Israel.

Because of Moab's mountainous terrain and rather isolated position (shielded by the Dead Sea on the west and by the desert on the east), she had enjoyed a relatively stable history for centuries---compared to other nations around her which had been

invaded and devastated often. Moab was like "new wine having settled on its lees." In ancient times "tilters" (or as KJV says, "wanderers") would take wine jars and "tilt" them to pour the wine off its "lees" and strain the lees out. They would do this very cautiously to keep from spilling the wine and breaking the jars. But God is going to send "tilters" who will "tilt Moab and empty his 'wine' out upon the ground, and break his jars in pieces." In other words, Nebuchadnezzar would totally destroy Moab's undisturbed condition and "break her to pieces." And God pronounces a curse upon Babylon if she does "the work of the Lord with slackness." CAN YOU BELIEVE IT! BABYLON IS "DOING THE WORK OF THE LORD" IN ALL THIS DESTRUCTION AND DEATH! LOTS OF PEOPLE CAN'T BELIEVE THAT! THEY CALL THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT A "BLOODY BULLY" AND REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT THESE ARE THE WORDS OF GOD! Read Isaiah, chapter 34, for a most graphic description of God's mandated slaughter and destruction of idolatrous unbelieving nations.

Yet, God promised to "restore the fortunes of Moab." (48:47). Now would you say from our description of Jordan in answer #5 above that Moab is having its "fortunes restored?" Is this going to happen in the alleged "millennium" when Christ allegedly sits on the throne of David in Jerusalem? (which has allegedly been going to happen every 3 or 4 years for centuries now). But most pre-millennial theories provide only for the alleged "restoration of the fortunes" of Israel. Moab (today's Jordan) has been an enemy of Israel ever since her exodus from Egypt and Moses' attempt to march the Israelites through the territory of Moab. Some would say that Moab's fortunes will be restored at the alleged millennium because the Jews are going to conquer that territory (along with ancient Edom, and Lebanon, etc.). However, there is Biblical proof that these alleged "conquests" by the alleged reborn nation of Israel, is actually a prediction of the Church taking the Gospel into those territories and converting people to Christ (compare Amos 9:11-12 with Acts 15:16-17). The restoring of the fortunes of Moab in "the latter days" is none other than the invitation of the Gospel to those "Arabians" on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11), and afterward by the apostles and other disciples of Jesus. THOSE ARABS WHO HAVE THE GOSPEL HAVE A FORTUNE! THEY HAVE THE "FIELD WITH A TREASURE IN IT" (Matt. 13:44); THEY HAVE THE "PEARL OF GREAT PRICE" (Matt. 13:45-46); THEY HAVE THAT WHICH IS BETTER THAN GAINING THE WHOLE WORLD (Mark 8:36).

Ancient Ammon is also, now, a part of modern Jordan. The capital city of Jordan is Amman which is probably the modern Ammon. It was inhabited by a nation of giants (see Deut. 2) called Zamzummim. The Ammonites descended from the incestuous sexual assault upon Lot by his daughters (Gen. 19:38). The occupation of this territory by the Israelite tribes of Reuben and Gad was a constant source of hostility between the Ammonites and the Israelites (even though the Israelites were related to the Ammonites---Lot was the nephew of Abraham, remember). The Judges, king Saul, and king David all had to fight wars in defense against the Ammonites. The 10 northern tribes under Jeroboam were weakened and the Ammonites joined with the Assyrians perpetrating outrageous cruelties upon the Jews (Amos 1:13-14). Remember it was the Ammonites who sent Ishmael, to murder Gedaliah (2 Kings 25:22-26; Jer. 40:14). We find the Ammonites opposing the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah (Neh. 4). By the time of Origen A.D. 185-254 A.D., the Ammonites had lost their national identity and were absorbed into the nomadic Arab tribes that wandered through that area. Today, along with the ancient

Moabites, Edomites, and Syrians, the Ammonites are the inveterate Arabic enemies of the establishment of the modern nation of Israel. There will never be a secular peace between these people and modern Israel! The animosities are too ingrained in their minds and hearts! There will be either war on a national scale between them, or constant unrest and terrorism. The only possibility for peace between these peoples is the Gospel of Christ. **AND THE IRONY OF IT IS, MANY OF THE ARAB PEOPLES AND THE JEWS ARE DISTANTLY RELATED TO ONE ANOTHER!** And another matter of fact is that modern Israel is composed of many "Jews" who are part Caucasian, part Arab, part Negroid, part Asian! **FURTHER, MOST OF THE JEWS IN MODERN ISRAEL DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE GOD OF THE BIBLE!**

Hazor was a Canaanite city in extreme northern Palestine (Galilee), evidently the capital city of a "kingdom" which included a number of cities in that area, all the way west to Sidon (see Josh. ch. 11 & 12; Judges ch. 4). Generally speaking, the land of Kedar was east of Hazor, toward Syria. Kedarites were descendants of Ishmael, the illegitimate son of Abraham by Hagar (Gen. 25:12-13). You remember what God said about Ishmael and his descendants---"He shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen." (Gen. 16:12). The Kedarites were truly nomadic, living in tents, moving constantly from one place to another. The lands of Hazor and Kedar are in the general area violently contested today by Israel, Lebanon, and Syria (some of that territory is the "Golan Heights"). It is indeed a sort of "no-man's-land." In fact, all the territories mentioned in Jeremiah ch. 49, are essentially useless to anyone today. It is a tragedy almost unparalleled in all of history that those territories in the "Middle-East" have been so saturated with the blood of centuries and centuries of slaughtered mothers and fathers and children. The slaughter seems never to cease!

Elam was essentially in what we now know as Persia. Its capital was Susa. Elam had comparatively little contact with Judah. Isaiah does mention that Elam joined Assyria in its assault upon Judah (Isa. 22:6). Some have suggested that the exiles down in Babylon on the Euphrates River were looking to "Elam" (Persia) for immediate rescue from Babylon and Jeremiah pronounces Nebuchadnezzar's ravage of Elam to "puncture their balloon." God raised up Cyrus, king of Persia, to conquer all that territory, including Elam, and establish the great Persian empire which would, 70 years after Judah's exile, release the Jews and send money with them to reestablish their commonwealth in Palestine. This is what is meant when Jeremiah says of God, "I will set my throne in Elam, and destroy their king and princes, says the Lord." (Jer. 49:38). But we also notice that God predicts a restoring of the fortunes of Elam **IN THE LATTER DAYS**. Once again, it is fulfilled in the outreach of the Gospel through those present on the Day Pentecost (Acts 2:9) and subsequent proclamation of the Gospel in that territory. Yes! There are a few Christians living today in that area---even in Iran. **AND, AFTER ALL, WHAT IS THE REAL "FORTUNE" OF ANY NATION?** It is not oil, not gold, not military might, not industrial strength---**IT IS CHRISTIANS!** Any nation today which counts its material resources as its real "treasure" is **POOR INDEED!** Can you imagine what these United States of America would be now if we took just the "few" Bible-believing and practicing Christians out of it? If it is like Sodom and Gomorrah in some places now, what would it be like if it was all like San Francisco, CA, now?

TEACHER'S NOTES -- LESSON ON JEREMIAH

CHAPTERS 50 -- 52

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

What we have in this chapter is something like an antiphonal chorale (a) first there are the lyrics about Babylon 50:1-3; (b) then the lyrics about Judah and Israel 50:4-7; (c) then lyrics about Babylon 50:8-16; (d) then lyrics about Israel 50:17-20; etc., etc., etc. Do you get the idea that the prophets were also poets? You're correct! Smith, Jeremiah & Lamentations, op.cit. pg. 757 outlines ch. 50 thus:

- (1) Babylon's destruction and Israel's deliverance (50:2-10)
- (2) Babylon's desolation and Israel's restoration (50:11-20)
- (3) Babylon's visitation and Israel's vindication (50:21-28)
- (4) Babylon's recompense and Israel's redemption (50:29-34).

This is Jeremiah's funeral dirge for Babylon, and it's pretty gruesome! You notice, however, the prediction of the reunion of Judah and Israel? Shortly after Babylon fell under the attack of Cyrus the Great (emperor of the Medo-Persian empire), he allowed all the exiled Jews who wished, to return to their land. Ezra's list of names of those who returned includes some of the people of Israel (the so-called "lost ten tribes of Israel"). Those of the northern kingdom, Israel, who were exiled by Assyria in 722 B.C. did not get lost! Most of them, along with most of those of Judah, decided not to return to Palestine. Those who did return (50,000) started well, but finished badly! At first they, like their forefathers in Moses day, exhibited a love for the word of God (Neh. chs. 8-9); but the majority of them soon fell into their old ways of materialism, ignoring the Law of God. God had to send them "post- exilic prophets" (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) to try to turn them back to repentance. But it was only a small minority who "sought the Lord, asking for the way to Zion, desiring an everlasting covenant which would never be forgotten." **THAT WAS THE MINORITY WHO, "IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME," BROUGHT FORTH THE MESSIAH AND BECAME THE NUCLEUS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH!** The fall of Babylon was the signal that God was indeed moving to keep his promises of the coming Savior and Lord.

God warned Lot and his family to flee from Sodom & Gomorrah; Jesus warned his disciples to flee from Jerusalem when they saw the Roman army encompassing it; John warned the believing world to flee from the clutches of the wickedness of the Roman empire; Jeremiah warns Judah to flee the clutches of the wickedness of Babylon. This is not instructing people to try to flee from one geographical locale to another---it would have been impossible for them to have fled from the Mesopotamian River country when Cyrus conquered it. But they can repent of their wickedness and idolatry and give up their Babylonian ways! Some of them did as Daniel predicted

they would (Dan. 11:32-35, etc.). The majority of Jews, sad to say, refused to return to Palestine, preferring to remain in exile. The book of Esther documents part of the history of those who stayed behind. Some of those who stayed had become accustomed to the ways of the heathen---many Jews married into Persian and other races, retaining a facade of Jewish culture and religion, but they incorporated so much of the superstition, mysticism, and idolatry into Judaism there are hardly any Jews today who really believe in the inerrancy, inspiration, and authenticity of their O.T. Scriptures. Some Jews became rich, powerful, and famous in the history of that part of the world. But their Jewishness became so intermingled with other races, most Jews today are not really as Jewish as they would have us believe. Most of the Jews down in the Babylonian exile would have been born there because it had been 70 years from the date of the exile to the return. They no longer spoke the Hebrew language, but Aramaic (when Ezra read the law in Nehemiah ch. 8, many of them had to have it translated for them). Millions of them had put down "roots" there and the Persians were very amenable hosts! Numerous Jews were in very important positions in government, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego, Mordecai, and Esther the Queen! Many of the Persians became proselytes (Esther 8:17; 9:27). So, they thought, why should we go through all those trials and tribulations and struggles to start all over again in a land that has been devastated time and time again? How do we know all this business of exile won't occur again! And it is true, that those who stayed down in Persia and became Persian-Jews did not suffer all the persecutions that would come upon the Jews who returned (oppression from the Syrians, Ptolemies, Romans). Did you know are large "Jewish" communities in both Iraq and Iran today?

Smith, op.cit. pg. 762, writes: "In the post-exilic times God will provide for the remnant of his people, the spiritual Israel of God, absolute forgiveness (50:20). This verse looks ahead to the cross of Calvary where the Son of God bore the sins of the world. The efficacy of that sacrifice was retroactive to sins committed under the old law as well as sins of the present and future. The remnant of Israel, the spiritual Israel, in both Testaments consists of those who turn to the Lord in faith, repent of their iniquities and obey the commandments of God appropriate to that dispensation of time. Thus verse 20 states the grounds of the promise of restoration in verse 19. God can restore the remnant of Israel to spiritual blessing and prosperity because they have repented; God can pardon this remnant because of what he knows will transpire at Calvary." I will say Amen to that interpretation---in fact, I've taught that very proposition for the more than 40 years I've been teaching Old Testament Prophets at Ozark Christian College and in Sunday School classes. Is it any wonder that Jesus was constantly amazed that the Jews of his day did not understand more about the spiritual nature of the Messianic prophecies of their own Scriptures? Jesus was not only amazed, he was agitated and upset about it!!! It is a decree of Scripture that the death of Christ pardoned the sins of penitent Jews in the O.T. (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:15). But there could be no absolute and total forgiveness, as Jeremiah predicts in v. 20, until the death of Christ **THUS WE HAVE HERE ANOTHER MESSIANIC PROPHECY IN JEREMIAH**. Now you know what Jesus meant in Luke 24:25-27 and 24:44-49! **THE O.T. IS ALL ABOUT JESUS AT HIS FIRST COMING! AND THE JEWS SHOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD!**

The Lord is going to smash Babylon (70 years after Jeremiah predicts it) like a man smashes a vessel which is no longer useful and no longer pleases him. **AND THIS IS**

A MESSAGE WHICH BRINGS JOY TO THE HEARTS OF GOD'S PEOPLE! In punishing the wickedness of Babylon, God vindicates the faith those who surrendered and went down into exile, and repented of their sin of idolatry. A small minority of Jews realized, after Jeremiah's predictions of Jerusalem's fall became a reality, that God's word never "passes away" (Psa. 119:89; Matt. 25:34; 1 Pet. 1:25). It brought them to repentance. As a result, God would fulfill his promise to destroy Babylon, and thus vindicated their faith that persisted through the 70 years of exile. Saints, apostles and prophets and heaven itself is told to "rejoice for God had given judgment for them over the "beastly" empire of Rome (Rev. 18:20). God pays the enemies of his beloved people back double for all the hurt they have brought upon "the apple of God's eye" (cf. Isa. 40:2; Jer. 50:28; Nahum 1:1-8; Zech. 2:6-12, etc.). YES, IT IS PROPER TO PREACH THAT GOD WILL JUDGE HIS ENEMIES, AND FOR THE CHURCH TO REJOICE IN THAT REVELATION FROM GOD! If we cannot hate lawlessness, we cannot love righteousness (Heb. 1:9). If we cannot rejoice over the defeat of wickedness, how will we be able to rejoice over the victory of righteousness? IT WOULD BE ILLOGICAL!--- TO BE TOLERANT OF BOTH WICKEDNESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IS IRRATIONAL!

The Medes were a people living in an area northwest of Persia, in the high mountains of what is now Iran, near Armenia. About the year 548 B. C. Cyrus, who was a Mede, not a Persian, was able to form a coalition of all the tribes of Persians (earlier known as Scythians) and the highlanders known as Medes into one great fighting force. Remember, God predicts Cyrus would conquer the "world" 200 years before Cyrus was born (Isaiah 44 and 45). In fact, God calls Cyrus his "Messiah" (Anointed One) in Isaiah 45. We do not know how God stirred up Cyrus and the Medes to conquer Babylon, but we know it was God who stirred him up (2 Chron. 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-4). IT COULD BE THAT CYRUS KNEW WHAT THE JEWISH PROPHETS HAD PREDICTED OF HIM (ISAIAH 44-45 AND JER. 51) AND WAS "STIRRED UP." THIS WOULD SEEM MORE LIKELY TO ME THAN SOME MIRACULOUS COMMUNICATION TO CYRUS. Remember that even when God gave Nebuchadnezzar messages by dreams, he had to have Daniel interpret the dreams for him---same thing with the handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar. Josephus relates that when Alexander the Great came down through Palestine on his way to "conquer the world," the Jewish high priest showed him the predictions of his world conquest in Daniel, and as a result Alexander was "stirred up" to forego his intention to attack and plunder the city of Jerusalem. It is true that God occasionally spoke to people in Biblical times apart from his written word, but those were exceptions to the rule that God chose the written word for most of his communication to mankind! NOW THAT THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF CHRIST IS FINISHED, ONCE FOR ALL TIME, AND THE VERBAL, PROPOSITIONAL, HISTORICAL REVELATION OF GOD IS COMPLETE, HE HAS NO NEED TO SPEAK TO MANKIND OUTSIDE THE SCRIPTURES!

God takes vengeance on Babylon for desecrating his holy temple and its vessels (remember Belshazzar's drunken feast using the vessels of God's temple? Dan. 5). Whatever God has sanctified, no man dare desecrate! ALMIGHTY GOD IS ABSOLUTELY HOLY---HE CANNOT TOLERATE LAWLESS REBELLION FOR THAT IS AN ATTACK UPON HIS ABSOLUTENESS AND ALMIGHTINESS (OMNIPOTENCE). IF GOD ALLOWS THE CREATURE TO THINK AND ACT CONTEMPTUOUSLY TOWARD THE CREATOR WITHOUT PUNISHING HIM, GOD

WOULD NOT BE GOD! THAT IS THE GLORY AND GRACE OF THE GOSPEL-- GOD PUNISHED ALL THE SINS OF MANKIND IN JESUS, BUT ONLY THOSE WHO BELIEVE, REPENT, LOVE, TRUST, AND OBEY JESUS WILL ENJOY THAT GLORY AND GRACE! THOSE THAT PERSIST IN SIN AFTER THE GOSPEL OF GRACE HAS COME....WHAT WILL BE THEIR END?

We have dealt with this in answer to question #4. Suffice it to say, we have such songs in our hymnal, like "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," but we don't sing those anymore. To get an idea about this kind of singing, read the Song of Moses, Deut. 32:1-43. AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT SONG WAS BEING SUNG IN HEAVEN BY "THOSE WHO HAD CONQUERED THE BEAST AND ITS IMAGE? YOU GUESSED IT! IT WAS "THE SONG OF MOSES, THE SERVANT OF GOD, AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB...." (Rev. 15:3) and the song was all about the revelation of God's judgments! THAT'S WHAT IS SUNG IN HEAVEN! DO YOU SUPPOSE WE'D BETTER LEARN HOW TO SING THOSE LYRICS BEFORE WE GET THERE?

Smith, op.cit. pg. 791 believes Seraiah was sent to read this last prediction of Jeremiah, not to the Babylonians, not to the majority of Jews in Babylon, but to a "certain few trustworthy witnesses who would be able to testify in later days as to what they had heard and seen." That is speculative since we do not really know precisely who the audience to this reading was. It is not an unlikely speculation since it would be rather dangerous for Seraiah to read this to the Babylonians or to the majority of the Jews. This prediction is the absolute death-knell for Babylon---she will not rise ever after. But why was Seraiah to throw the prediction in the Euphrates? To get the attention of the hearers! Jeremiah was a great educator! He used "show and tell" many times (remember the rotten waist cloth, the potter's wheel; the broken vessel, etc., etc.) Those who heard these words, and saw the scroll sink into the Euphrates River, would remember what they heard! WE MUST COMMUNICATE! WE ARE SPEAKING DIVINE ORACLES----THE ETERNAL WORD OF GOD! WE ARE DEALING IN TERMS OF THE ETERNAL DESTINY OF SOULS! WE MUST COMMUNICATE! IT IS USELESS TO "PREACH" OR "TEACH" IF WE DO NOT COMMUNICATE! We must "do our best to present ourselves to God as those approved, workmen who have no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15). We must "preach the word, urgently, in season and out of season, convincing, rebuking, and exhorting, being unfailing in patience and teaching." (2 Tim. 4:2).

The truth is, we don't know who wrote this appendage called "chapter 52 of Jeremiah's book." The best guess would be Baruch--but it is still a guess. Baruch, the courageous, faithful scribe was responsible for recording all of Jeremiah's "sayings" and putting them in book form, so why wouldn't he be the one most likely to add this "Epilogue." But why this historical epilogue? Jeremiah is not mentioned in the epilogue, plus the details of it can all be found in 2 Kings 24 & 25). This epilogue describes in detail the fall of Jerusalem, which absolutely vindicates the whole prophetic ministry of Jeremiah. A MONUMENTAL CONCLUSION WHICH ALLOWS THE FACTS OF HISTORY TO AUTHENTICATE THE TRUTH OF JEREMIAH'S PROPHECIES. And, second, the recording of the release of Jehoiachin (52:31-34) and his elevation to a semi-royal status again is a prophecy in itself that "better days are ahead" for the Jews. This, too, Jeremiah had predicted in his great Messianic

section, chs. 30-33. This is a true characteristic of literary expertise. Sum it all up! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's word will never pass away! GOD'S WORD WILL SURELY COME TO PASS! OUR CALLING IS TO "WAIT UPON THE WORD OF THE LORD!" WE MUST NOT GET ANXIOUS, WE MUST NOT RUN AHEAD OF THE LORD, WE MUST BELIEVE AND ENDURE FOR HE WILL SURELY VINDICATE OUR FAITH, JUST AS HE DID THAT OF JEREMIAH!

Jehoiachin was kept in prison 37 years from the time he went down to Babylon in 597 B.C. until 560 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded on the throne by his son Amel-Marduk (which means, "Man of Marduk"---Marduk was a chief idol-god of the Babylonians); the Jews called this king "Evil-Meordach" (which means, "stupid one of Marduk") which reminds us of Antiochus IV (Dan. ch. 11 & 12) who called himself, "Antiochus Epiphanes" meaning, "Antiochus the Illustrious One" but the Jews called him "Antiochus Epimanes" which means, "Antiochus the Mad-man." Again, we do not know with certainty why the king of Babylon released Jehoiachin and elevated him to such status. It might be that all the good things Daniel and others like him had done for the Babylonians had enough impact and influence that "Evil-Merodach" was moved to reciprocate in such a way. "Evil-Merodach" held his throne a total of 2 years (561-559 B.C.) and was assassinated. He was followed on the throne by, Neriglissar (559-556---3 year reign); next Labash-Marduk (556--one year); next, Nabonidus (555-536---19 years) and Belshazzar (Dan. 5) was the son of Nabonidus and reigned alongside his father in the last years of Babylon. Babylon fell to Cyrus and Darius, the Medes, in 536 B.C. and Belshazzar was slain on the very night Cyrus marched his troops into the city of Babylon in the dry river-bed of the Euphrates which Cyrus had diverted around the city by digging a new channel for it.

IT HAS BEEN A REWARDING EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR LESSON WRITER TO RESTUDY JEREMIAH FOR AT LEAST THE 40TH TIME (I HAVE TAUGHT IT EVERY YEAR, SOMETIMES TWICE A YEAR AT OZARK CHRISTIAN COLLEGE)! I learn something new and edifying every time study I it. WE CERTAINLY NEED TO BE REMINDED CONSTANTLY OF THE WRATH OF GOD UPON SIN! AND JEREMIAH DOES THAT RIGHT WELL!

WE NEED TO BE REMINDED NOT TO FOLLOW OUR OWN MINDS AND HEARTS, BUT TO FOLLOW THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD IN HIS WRITTEN WORD....AND JEREMIAH HAS DONE THAT REPEATEDLY!

WE NEED TO BE REMINDED THAT GOD PLANNED TO REDEEM HIS CREATURE, MAN, AND HIS CREATION, THROUGH THE ATONING DEATH OF THE "RIGHTEOUS BRANCH" AND THAT OUR APPROPRIATION OF THAT ATONEMENT IS IN COVENANT RELATIONSHIP....AND JEREMIAH HAS DONE THAT WITH A PROPHETIC FLAIR!

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

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