

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 53.2%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Isaiah 63 & 64

Monday: Isaiah 65

Tuesday: Isaiah 66

Wednesday: 2 Kings 20:20-21, 2 Kings 21:1-18, 2 Chronicles 32:32-33 & 2 Chronicles 33:1-20

Thursday: 2 Kings 21:19-26, 2 Kings 22:1-2, 2 Chronicles 33:21-25 & 2 Chronicles 34:1-7

Friday: Jeremiah 1

Saturday: Jeremiah 2

Current # of email addresses in the group: 624

I hope everyone had a good week, and that for those who needed the break, that it was helpful. This week we will finish the book of Isaiah, which by my count is our 20th completed book. We will also begin the book of Jeremiah this week. Happy studying!

The audio archive information is available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH

You may actually prefer accessing it directly from this Playlist tab:

<https://www.youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792/playlists>

3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 83

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 554 – SUNDAY: December 29th

Isaiah 63 & 64

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “God is pictured as returning from battle with Edom, Bozrah being the chief city of Edom. This ties in with many prophecies of Edom's destruction at Christ's return. Indeed, Obadiah states that there will be no Edomites left alive during Christ's reign ([Obadiah 18](#)). Yet, in context here, Edom seems to be used as a general representation of Israel's enemies since God mentions treading down the "peoples" (verses 3, 6). As was explained in the comments on Obadiah and [Isaiah 34](#), there may be a connection between Edom and the future Babylon, the preeminent national foe of the end time—that

is, a significant portion of Edomites may end up being part of this system.

Christ's garments are stained with blood because of the vengeance He has taken on the enemies of His people, something He has had to take care of by Himself since no one was found to help Him (verses 1-6). The winepress imagery—squeezing out the "blood" of grapes—as a figure of judgment can also be found in [Joel 3:13](#), [Lamentations 1:15](#), [Revelation 14:17-20](#) and 19:15.

A God of Great Mercy

Then, in a moving description, Isaiah tells of the loving-kindness (Hebrew *hesed*, "covenant faithfulness" or "steadfast love") God has for His people, in spite of their depraved behavior ([Isaiah 63:7](#)). God is quoted as saying: "Surely they are My people, children who will not lie" (verse 8; see [Exodus 24:7](#)). He is pictured as trusting their honesty in remaining faithful to Him as they had promised, and He helped them in all their trials. Their rebellion grieved Him tremendously, yet God still remembers the old days fondly. And Isaiah reminds God of this in His appeal for mercy and help.

God putting "His Holy Spirit within them" in [Isaiah 63:11](#) can also be translated as God putting "his Holy Spirit within *him*" (KJV and J.P. Green's Literal Translation)—that is, within *Moses*, who is mentioned earlier in the same verse. Indeed, this must be the case since God's Spirit was not given to the Israelites as a whole.

Israel's prayer for mercy and deliverance is continued in chapter 64. Verse 4 is quoted by Paul in describing the ignorance of those who crucified Jesus, not understanding the wisdom of God, and explaining that we, however, can understand through His Spirit ([1 Corinthians 2:6-11](#)).

In [Isaiah 64:6](#), the people confess that their own righteousness—that is, their attempts to obey Him without His spiritual help and their living by what they themselves consider righteousness as opposed to true righteousness—are as worthless and repulsive as "filthy rags." Says the *JFB Commentary*, "lit[erally] a 'menstruous rag'" (note on verse 6). Or *The Nelson Study Bible*: "Garments stained during menstruation...making a woman unclean ([Lev. 15:19-24](#); Ezek. 36:17)" (note on verse 6). Paul describes Israel's dilemma in this regard in [Romans 10:1-3](#)—and explains in the following verses that the answer they need is *Christ* for righteousness. That is, they need the justification that comes through His sacrifice and the ongoing obedience that comes from His living in people—as He transforms them as a potter does clay ([Isaiah 64:8](#)).

Isaiah is able to see, through the visions God has given him, the eventual destruction of Jerusalem, including the temple: "Our holy and beautiful temple, where our fathers praised You, is burned up with fire" ([Isaiah 64:11](#)). It was something very distressing to him, and added to his emotional turmoil." [END]

Day 555 – MONDAY: December 30th

Isaiah 65

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Verse 1 begins God's answer to Isaiah's entreaty that concludes with 64:12. The Israelites seek God but don't find Him because of their rebellion against Him. Instead, God is found by others. The first two verses of chapter 65 contain some phrases quoted by Paul in his discourse regarding the future restoration of Israel ([Romans 10:20, 21](#)). Verse 1, where God mentions "a nation that was not called by My name" is referring, according to the apostle Paul, to gentile converts grafted into Israel spiritually (through becoming part of the Church) that God uses to provoke the natural Israelites to jealousy ([Romans 10:19](#); see [Romans 11](#)).

The verses that follow in [Isaiah 65](#) then refer to the rebellious people of Israel, who would not respond to God's appeal and outstretched hands. Some of the rebellious actions of the people are described—practices of those who have forsaken God's true religion. While some of the actions mentioned may have applied literally in Isaiah's day, it is likely that the sins here have some application for our time. In verse 3, sacrificing in gardens could simply refer to worshiping in pagan sanctuaries, i.e. false Christian worship places. Incense is symbolic of prayers in Scripture and could here signify prayer in false worship. In verse 4, sitting among the graves and tombs could refer to vigils and candle burning still carried out in segments of modern Christendom for the dead. Or it could refer to séances and other occultism. The eating of unclean food such as pork (verse 4; 66:17) is replete throughout the nations of modern Israel today. And the "holier than thou" attitude of [Isaiah 65:5](#) is all too common. In verse 11, the people honor *Gad* and *Meni*—the pagan deities Fortune (or Luck) and Destiny (or Fate). Consider how many rely on luck and fate even today. God pronounces His determination to punish His rebellious people.

But He will not destroy them all, throwing the good grapes out with the bad (verse 8), for His "elect" and His "servants" of Israel will inherit and dwell in the land (verse 9). Sharon (verse 10), in the west, is the coastal plain between the modern cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa. The Valley of Achor (see [Joshua 7:24-26](#)), in the east is near the plain of Jericho. Thus, the whole land is meant. Throughout this section, a contrast is made between the rebellious people and God's "servants."

The new heavens and new earth (verse 17) are mentioned by John in [Revelation 21:1](#) as coming at the time the New Jerusalem descends to earth. Yet here in [Isaiah 65](#), the time described is one in which human beings still live on the earth in the flesh (verses 21-25; see also chapter 66:22-24).

How, then, are we to understand this? It would seem that the millennial reign of Christ will experience a *measure* of a renewed creation—in anticipation of the *ultimate* new heavens and new earth that will follow man's final judgment. Indeed, the millennial picture of peace in nature and among people ([Isaiah 65:25](#)) is repeated from [Isaiah 11:6-9](#). And all of this will continue over into the last judgment period immediately following the 1,000 years of peace (see [Revelation 20:11-15](#)). Indeed, some see verse 20 as an indication that this time of judgment will last 100 years." [END]

Day 556 – TUESDAY: December 31st

Isaiah 66

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "In [Acts 7:49-50](#), Stephen quotes from the first two verses of [Isaiah 66](#). They are the last words he says before exasperation takes over and he says things that directly result in his being stoned. Jesus also referred to heaven and earth as God's throne and footstool ([Matthew 5:34-35](#)).

The contrast between those who obey God and those who don't continues. In verse 2, God says He is looking for those that are "poor and of a contrite spirit" (lowly and repentant in mind) and who tremble at His Word (properly fear to disobey God's instructions in Scripture). Service, gifts and prayers to God from those of a wrong heart and attitude are actually loathsome to God (verse 3). Those who "tremble at His word" will rejoice to see Christ appear, while those who don't will be ashamed (verse 5). Indeed, the rebellious in heart will see their worst fears become reality (verse 4).

Verses 7-9 use an analogy of Zion in childbirth. The time of birth pangs is seen elsewhere to symbolize the period of trial and tribulation on Israel leading up to Christ's second coming. With that in mind, notice that the "male child" is born before the time of pain and that the rest of

Zion's "children" are born from "the earth" as a nation "at once" *after* she experiences the birth pangs. The "birth" here, then, appears to refer to the spiritual glorification of God's people, resurrected from the grave to immortality. The spirit birth of the "male child"—Christ's resurrection from the earth—occurred long before Israel's tribulation. But the rest of His brethren, the Church, will not be spiritually born (i.e., changed into Spirit beings like Him) until the time of the resurrection of the just at Christ's return.

God will reward His servants and destroy His enemies. All nations will at last learn to honor God. Israelites will be returned to God from around the world by nations that have not known Him before (verses 18-21). Verse 22 is perhaps a reference to the ultimate new heavens and new earth, which God "*will make*" *after* the Millennium and Last Judgment period—its permanence being used to parallel the permanence of God's redeemed people. In verse 23, "all flesh" of the Millennium and last judgment period will come to honor God according to *His* timekeeping scheme—the new moons (which define the beginning of months on His calendar) and Sabbaths.

The end of those who continue to transgress against God will see their flesh consumed by worms (maggots) and burned up by fire (verse 24; see also [Mark 9:47-48](#)). We will consider the specific wording here further when we come to the New Testament. Says *The Nelson Study Bible*: "Although the Book of Isaiah depicts God's coming salvation, it closes with a strong statement of the judgment of the wicked." Indeed, it is a rather sobering conclusion." [END]

Day 557 – WEDNESDAY: January 1st

2 Kings 20:20-21, 2 Kings 21:1-18, 2 Chronicles 32:32-33 & 2 Chronicles 33:1-20

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Hezekiah, one of the greatest Jewish kings ever, died—at the end of the extra 15 years God had promised him. He was buried next to David and Solomon.

But though Hezekiah had been one of Judah’s greatest kings, his son Manasseh was one of the worst. He was to reign longer than any other king of either Israel or Judah. “Manasseh...came to the throne as sole regent [upon the death of Hezekiah] in 686 and remained in power until 642. That he ruled for fifty-five years implies that he shared regal responsibility with Hezekiah from about 696 to 686. Why his father promoted Manasseh to this place of authority at the tender age of twelve must remain a matter of speculation. It is possible, of course, that Hezekiah’s near-fatal illness (ca. 702) prompted him, as soon as his son reached a suitable age, to take measures insuring the dynastic succession” (Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 433).

Manasseh’s evil deeds (though he repented of them at the end of his life), are well documented in these passages from Kings and Chronicles. He totally rejected his Creator, even to the point of practicing child sacrifice and setting up an idol right in the house of God. “Manasseh’s shedding of ‘innocent blood’ refers not only to human sacrifice, but probably to the martyrdom of God’s holy prophets. Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book[X], 37 {iii.1}) affirms that Manasseh not only slew all the righteous men of Judah but especially the prophets he slew daily until Jerusalem ‘was overflowing with blood.’ Uniform Jewish and Christian tradition holds that Manasseh had Isaiah sawn asunder (cf. [Heb 11:37](#))” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, footnote on [2 Kings 21:16](#)). If true, this further illustrates Manasseh’s moral depravity, as Isaiah had been such a trusted friend and spiritual advisor to his father.

Of particular note is the reference to Asherah ([2 Kings 21:7](#)), known in Babylon as Astarte or Ishtar (which has come down to us as “Easter” in English). We will see more about this pagan fertility goddess and her association with modern Christianity in [Jeremiah 7](#) and 10.

Besides worshipping pagan gods, Manasseh became entrenched in demonic witchcraft and all its associated practices—which is, sadly, all too prevalent today. God was not going to let Manasseh get away with all this evil; he would be deported to Babylon. “Some scholars argue that the deportation site of ‘Babylon’ is an error for Nineveh, but that is not necessary. Esarhaddon had rebuilt Babylon after his father Sennacherib had destroyed it and made it once again a part of the Assyrian Empire around 648 B.C. The Assyrian texts show that Manasseh was a vassal of Ashurbanipal as early as 667 B.C. Accordingly, he must have violated his agreements with Ashurbanipal to merit being deported to Babylon by the Assyrians in 648 B.C.” (Walter Kaiser Jr., *A History of Israel*, 1998, p. 382).

Secular proof of Manasseh’s vassal status comes from archaeology. “‘Manasseh King of the Jews’ appears in a list of twenty-two Assyrian tributaries of Imperial Assyria on both the Prism of Esarhaddon and the Prism of Ashurbanipal” (E.M. Blaiklock and R.K. Harrison, *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, 1983, “Manasseh”).

His deportation in hooks and fetters would have been a humiliating experience. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (“Hook”) mentions that the use of hooks was a common practice in handling captives. It was usually inserted in the victim’s nose or jaw, but the Assyrians held captives by a ring in the lip attached to a cord.

Manasseh had wielded a lot of power in Judah and, though his father had been a righteous king, the people of Judah were easily led astray. Even after Manasseh repented and tried to restore right religion in Judah, the people remained essentially evil and were ultimately to suffer the same fate as Manasseh. “Manasseh’s personal though belated repentance reminds us that it is never too late for the individual to return to the Lord. Yet the O[ld] T[estament] makes it clear that Manasseh’s years mark the point of no return for Judah. [2 Kings 23:26](#) says, ‘The Lord did not turn from the heat of His fierce anger,

which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke Him to anger' ([NIV] cf. [Jer. 15:4](#))" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on [2 Chronicles 33:1-20](#)).” [END]

Day 558 – THURSDAY: January 2nd

2 Kings 21:19-26, 2 Kings 22:1-2, 2 Chronicles 33:21-25 & 2 Chronicles 34:1-7

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Manasseh was succeeded for a short period by his son Amon. While his father had attempted to put things right in Judah, Amon followed in Manasseh’s earlier evil ways—and he did *not* repent. He evidently became unbearable to his servants, who conspired in assassinating him. But it seems obvious from the scriptural account that this was not a popular move. We know from reading Kings and Chronicles and the prophecies of the time that the people remained hostile to God and wanted the pagan ways to continue. Possibly they thought they could continue their pagan practices by appointing a boy as king. But they were soon to learn that the young Josiah was not like his father and grandfather.

Of course, God was involved in Josiah’s ascendancy—to preserve the line of David and to fulfill a specific prophecy. Josiah became king around 640 B.C. at the age of 8. He obviously didn’t get off to a good start in life. His father Amon was only around 16 when his son was born, and he was set in evildoing. It is likely that Josiah was raised by his mother Jedidah—and possibly his grandmother Adaiah.

Josiah’s Initial Reforms

By the age of 16, Josiah began to seek God. And four years later, when he was 20 (around 628 B.C.), in an enthusiastic surge of youthful vigor he showed that he wasn’t about to be controlled by a pagan populace and took dramatic steps to purge the nation of its evil religion.

It's interesting to note that his purge wasn't just in Judah, but extended into the northern territory of Israel ([2 Chronicles 34:6](#)). Naphtali was in Galilee and was part of the Assyrian province of Israel (see [2 Chronicles 34:9](#)). But how was this possible? Author Stephen Collins explains: "In approximately 624 B.C., the Scythians [near the Black Sea] launched a massive invasion to the south, and occupied Asia Minor, Syria, Media, Palestine and much of Assyria. They conquered as far south as Egypt, but spared that nation when the Egyptians offered them tribute money. In the words of Werner Keller [author of *The Bible as History*], the Scythians 'inundated the Assyrian Empire.'... [They] held Western Asia and the Mideast under their dominion for only a short time, twenty-eight years according to [5th-century-B.C. Greek historian] Herodotus, and just ten years according to [the assessment of] Werner Keller" (*The "Lost" Tribes of Israel—Found!*, 1992, pp. 186-187). Indeed, the Scythians proved instrumental in bringing down the Assyrian Empire in the years soon to follow.

The Scythians were, in the main, the northern tribes of Israel, who had been taken captive by the Assyrians a century earlier (see our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* for more explanation). Collins suggests: "The motive for the Scythian invasion was likely two-fold. The primary motive was the desire for revenge against the Assyrians who had forced them off their land and destroyed the old kingdom of Israel.... Indeed, the desire to liberate those Israelites who were still captives of the Assyrians may have served as a further strong motive for the Scythian invasion. A second reason for Scythia's invasion was apparently the reoccupation of the old Israelite homeland of Palestine. The fact that some Scythians charged straight south through Asia Minor and Syria into Palestine gives weight to this conclusion.... While the Scythians waged a total war against the Assyrians in Mesopotamia, Herodotus records that on their march through Palestine and Syria: '...the majority of the Scythians marched by, doing no harm to anyone.'

“It is significant that while marching through Palestine, the Scythians took no action to attack or harm the Jewish capital of Jerusalem. If the Scythian motive was simple conquest, why did they spare the Jewish capital? Since the entire Assyrian army could not stand before the Scythian onslaught, Jerusalem had no might to resist them. The obvious conclusion is that the Scythians *chose* to spare Jerusalem. This makes sense only if the Scythians were the descendants of the ten tribes of Israel, who knew the Jews were one of their related tribes. This indicates that while the Scythians were intent on destroying Assyria, their purpose was to ‘liberate’ Palestine. One city in Palestine (Beth-Shan) was renamed ‘Scythopolis’ in honor of the Scythians, and the local population retained that name even after the Scythians left the area....

“This Scythian occupation, which included Palestine, occurred during the reign of King Josiah (circa 639-608 B.C.). The Bible does not mention ‘Scythians’ in Palestine at that time because ‘Scythian’ was a Greek term. However, the Bible refers to them as Israelites....” (pp. 187-190). Indeed, we will later see not just the Jews but people “of Manasseh and Ephraim, and all the remnant of Israel” giving to the restoration of the temple and attending Josiah’s famous Passover ([2 Chronicles 34:9](#); [2 Chronicles 35:18](#)). What were Israelites doing in the land, considering that they had been carried away by the Assyrians a century earlier? The answer is that these were the Scythians—Israelites who had returned, some now desirous to honor God. Of course, this represented only a small percentage of the Israelites who had been taken into captivity, certainly not fulfilling the many prophecies of God gathering Israel back to the Promised Land. Indeed, they did not ultimately stay—perhaps because Israel was no longer the land of milk and honey it had once been and they preferred their far northern territories.

In any case, it was the presence of returned Israelites that enabled Josiah to carry out his reform even in the territories of the former

northern kingdom. Indeed, the Scythian presence explains other things too, as we will see.” [END]

Day 559 – FRIDAY: January 3rd

Jeremiah 1

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “The Old Testament mentions nine different people named Jeremiah. The man God used to author this book was a priest and one of Israel's greatest prophets. Because of several biographical narratives in the book of Jeremiah, more is known about Jeremiah than any other prophet.

The Hebrew name Jeremiah apparently means "Exalted of the Eternal" or "Appointed by the Eternal." It may relate to the fact that the prophet was one of only a few people whom the Bible reveals to have been sanctified by God before birth for a special purpose—the others being John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul ([Luke 1:13-14](#); [Isaiah 49:1, 5](#); [Galatians 1:15](#)). [Jeremiah 1:5](#) may mean that, like John and Jesus, Jeremiah was chosen even before his conception for his commission.

Jeremiah's father Hilkiah ([Jeremiah 1:1](#)) was apparently not the high priest Hilkiah of [2 Kings 22:8](#). The priests who lived at the priest-city of Anathoth (about 3 miles northeast of Jerusalem) were of the house of Ithamar (compare [1 Kings 2:26](#)) while the high priests, since Zadok, were of the line of Eleazar.

Jeremiah's ministry began in the 13th year of Josiah ([Jeremiah 1:2](#))—ca. 627 or 626 B.C.—when Zephaniah is also believed to have preached. The book bearing Jeremiah's name relates his words and works during the reigns of the last five kings of Judah—a span of about 40 years—and on into the first years of Judah's Babylonian captivity (verses 1-3). Josiah was a righteous ruler who was apparently close to Jeremiah—the king's great reformation coming five years after Jeremiah's preaching

began. Upon Josiah's death, Jeremiah lamented for him ([2 Chronicles 35:25](#)). But the mostly superficial benefits of Josiah's reforms were soon replaced by moral and spiritual decay. Following him were four wicked rulers—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and, finally, Zedekiah, whose reign was ended by Babylon's invasion of Judah.

"According to the traditional date, the time of [Jeremiah's] call (year 13 of Josiah's reign—[Jeremiah 1:2](#)) coincided approximately with the death of the last great Assyrian ruler, Ashurbanipal, an event which signaled the disintegration of the Assyrian empire under whose yoke Judah had served for nearly a century. Against the waning power and influence of the Assyrians, Judah asserted its independence under Josiah" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, "Jeremiah, Book of"). This was no doubt assisted by the arrival of the Scythians, which soon followed. But following their eventual withdrawal, Judah found itself in a vulnerable position between two powers contending for dominance—Egypt and the Neo-Babylonian Empire—and the latter would emerge supreme.

Jeremiah was appointed "a prophet to the nations" (verse 5)—to "all the kingdoms of the world" ([Jeremiah 25:26](#)). And chapters 46-51 are directed to various gentile nations. However, "nations" would seem to refer primarily to the people of Judah and Israel. His preaching was, of course, in large measure directed to the people of Judah where he lived. But Jeremiah also prophesied to *the house of Israel*—which God had punished and sent into captivity *nearly a century before he began preaching*. Obviously, then, God's message is for Israel of the end time. Jeremiah wrote of a time of *national trouble* that is yet ahead for the modern descendants of the lost 10 tribes of Israel. A number of passages in Jeremiah clearly refer to events that will occur just before and after Christ's return at the end of this age.

One of the greatest values of this book is its universal application in understanding the righteous nature of God and the rebellious nature of

man, desperately in need of transformation. According to *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, "Jeremiah preached more about repentance than any other prophet" (introductory notes on Jeremiah). For a time, Jeremiah's message was for the people of his day to repent or else be taken captive by Babylon. Yet, because the response was resentment rather than repentance, God revealed to Jeremiah that Jerusalem's fall and the people's captivity had become the inevitable punishment. Following that revelation, Jeremiah continued to exhort the people to repent, but he also preached that God's will was for them to submit to Babylon—with assurance that, if they did, they would receive mercy. However the populace, especially the authorities, viewed this message as pessimistic, heretical, unpatriotic and even treasonous. As a result, Jeremiah repeatedly suffered rejection, hostility, ridicule, persecution, and threats against his life. For a while he was actually imprisoned.

Besides this book that bears his name, Jeremiah is also credited with writing the book of Lamentations—a term that has become almost synonymous with the prophet. Indeed, much of the book of Jeremiah can be described as a lament about the people's lack of obedience to God and the tragic fate awaiting them. Based on the prophet, the English language contains the word "jeremiad," defined as "an elaborate and prolonged lamentation or a tale of woe" (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 1969). That should not be surprising. The Jeremiah of popular imagination is a stern and gloomy doomsayer. But that is an extreme and unfair characterization of the prophet. His messages, which were critical of the people's conduct and warned of punishment, were not his own inventions. Rather, he was conveying *God's* messages. Moreover, these messages included the wonderful promise of mercy and deliverance if the people would repent. And [Jeremiah 1:10](#) clearly reveals that his commission was to include positive *and* negative—constructive *and* destructive—elements. His book also contains joyous

prophecies of the coming Messiah, a new covenant and a blissful new age to come.

Part of the unfair portrayal of Jeremiah's personality is the picture of a chronically depressed person. Yet while he did suffer frequent melancholy, this was a reflection of the great stress and sacrifices of his life, not of inherent weakness. A prophet's lonely life of being the bearer of bad news was a heavy and depressing burden to bear, especially for one so deeply concerned and tenderhearted as Jeremiah. He felt anger and disgust at the apostasy and idolatry of the people, but he grieved as well, knowing the ominous fate awaiting his beloved countrymen. Added to that, he felt perplexed and humiliated when many years were passing and his prophecies were not materializing.

Jeremiah is sometimes called the "weeping prophet" (see Jeremiah 9:1, 10; [Jeremiah 13:17](#); [Jeremiah 48:32](#)), but mourning for others over their wickedness and future suffering is a spiritual *strength*, not a weakness ([Ezekiel 9:4](#); [Ezekiel 21:6](#); [Amos 6:6](#); [Matthew 5:4](#)). Other strengths of Jeremiah were his faith in God, devotion to prayer, faithfulness in fulfilling his calling, and unflinching courage in the face of hostility and danger. Jeremiah's life has parallels with the life of Christ, who was a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" ([Isaiah 53:3](#); [Matthew 16:14](#)).

Eventually, Jeremiah will see his prophecies of the immediate future come to pass. Following the righteous reign of Josiah, a period of national decline will end with Judah's fall to the Babylonians. But the prophet's work does not end with that calamity, as we will see.

Of all the prophetic books, Jeremiah is the longest. It "is longer than Isaiah or Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets combined are about a third shorter. The claim has been made that it is the longest book in the Bible" (*Expositor's*). It is also the most complex of the prophetic books. It is not arranged chronologically or topically. That may partly be

because Jeremiah was mainly a preacher rather than a writer, who later dictated events and messages after the fact. (Jeremiah dictated much of the book to his secretary Baruch.) As it is, "the organization of the oracles, prose sermons, and other material is based on content, audience, and connective links" (*Nelson Study Bible*, introductory notes on Jeremiah). The Beyond Today Bible Commentary will not cover the chapters in the biblical order, but will rather put the sections in the apparent chronological order to follow the story flow of Jeremiah's life—placing his messages in that context.

Jeremiah's Calling and Commission

When God called and commissioned Jeremiah, he was modest and reluctant, citing his youth as a handicap to speaking from experience and with authority. *The Bible Reader's Companion* states, "He was called by God as a *na'ar* ([Jeremiah 1:6](#)), a youth some 16 to 18 years old" (note on verse 6). However, youthfulness is relative and his age was not important, since his safety and success was dependent on God, not on himself (verses 7-8, 17-19). Indeed, this would have provided evidence of God's direction and inspiration—as well as serving as a point of shame for the nation's elders who had been failing in their responsibilities. The king on the throne now was young too—and he would lead the nation in wonderful reforms.

Jeremiah's young age at his calling should also serve as an inspiration for any young person reading God's Word who understands the truth and is stirred with a strong conviction to act on what he or she knows. God calls and works with young people too.

In verse 10 God gives Jeremiah a mysterious commission: "See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (New Revised Standard Version). "The words *root out*, *pull down*, *destroy*, *throw down*, *build*, and *plant* are repeated at key points in the Book of

Jeremiah to reaffirm Jeremiah's call ([Jeremiah 18:7](#); [Jeremiah 24:6](#); [Jeremiah 31:28](#); [Jeremiah 42:10](#); [Jeremiah 45:4](#))" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 10). Based on Jeremiah's life hereafter, it is easy to ascertain what God meant by plucking up, pulling down, destroying and overthrowing. This great prophet repeatedly warned the Jews to repent of their disobedience—but they scorned him. So God used him to pronounce judgment on the nation: the people and the kings of David's line would be overthrown in the Babylonian conquest and uprooted—to Babylon.

But the latter part of the prophet's commission yet remained: "to build and to plant." What did this involve? From [Jeremiah 45:4](#) we can see that building and planting in this context originally entailed God's planting His people in the land and building a kingdom of them there—now to be pulled up and destroyed. So the commission would seem to involve planting people in another place in order to establish a kingdom elsewhere. We will examine this question further toward the end of the book.

God here gives the sign of an almond tree, "which blossoms when other trees are still dormant.... as a harbinger of spring, as though it 'watched over' the beginning of the season. In a similar fashion, God was 'watching over' His word, ready to bring judgment on Israel" (note on [Jeremiah 1:11-12](#)). Jeremiah also saw a boiling pot tilted southward, "indicating the direction in which the pot's contents would be spilled. The calamity suggested by this vision was an enemy attack on Judah and Jerusalem from the north. In [Jeremiah 20:4](#), Jeremiah finally identifies this enemy as Babylon. Babylon was itself east of Jerusalem, but the road went around the desert and approached from the north" (note on verses 13-14). Interestingly, the enemy to the northeast when Jeremiah started prophesying was still Assyria. But that would soon change. Indeed, the book of Jeremiah refers to Babylon 164 times, more references than in all the rest of the Bible. Jeremiah foretold that

Babylon, the destroyer of Judah, would herself be destroyed by the Medes and Persians, never to rise again. Some of the prophecies in this regard are dual, referring also to the rise and fall of the end-time political, economic and religious system called Babylon—located to the northwest of Judah (thus still north)—while some prophecies refer *exclusively* to the end time.

Preaching God's message brought Jeremiah a great deal of suffering, but God emphatically charged him, "Do not be afraid of their [intimidating] faces" ([Jeremiah 1:8, 17](#))—as He, the Almighty Deliverer, would provide impregnable defense (Jeremiah 1:18-19). We too can take encouragement from these words as we carry out the commission God has given His Church to preach His true gospel to the end of the age (see [Matthew 28:19-20](#)).” [END]

Day 560 – SATURDAY: January 4th

Jeremiah 2

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Jeremiah was to “go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem,” yet his message was about all Israel ([Jeremiah 2:1-3](#)). And then God’s message was to go to the “house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel” (verse 4). Yet remember that the northern kingdom of Israel had been taken into captivity a century earlier. Still, we do know that, around three years after Jeremiah's ministry began, a small percentage of Israelites actually returned to the land for a short period—that is, the Scythians who overran the region. Thus, it is likely that Jeremiah's message was intended in some measure for Jews and Israelites of His day. But notice again that the message was for “*all* the families of the house of Israel.” Because the Israelites were scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire at the time Jeremiah prophesied, with many near the Black and Caspian Seas, we may safely assume that his message was never delivered to them in that age.

Since God would not deliver a message to people who could never hear it, these prophecies must then be *dual*, directed more to the descendants of Israel in the latter days, particularly since the descriptions in this chapter and much of the book certainly fit our American and British societies and much of the world today. (In the book of Jeremiah, "Israel" is named almost as much as "Judah." And "Jerusalem"—ancient capital of all 12 tribes—sometimes clearly refers more to Israel than to Judah.)

The Israelites have a short memory, soon forgetting the source of past and present blessings (verses 7, 32), and quickly turning to myriad forms of idolatry. "Those who handle the law" (verse 8) have turned from the true God and His law to *false* gods! Whereas most cultures cling to their traditions and gods, Israel, chosen by God to receive the true religion (the only way that brings true reward!), has been quick to forsake God and to do so "for what does not profit" (verse 11). These are the "two evils" here—forsaking God and substituting false gods (verse 13). "God, the fountain of living waters, offered a limitless supply of fresh, life-giving sustenance. Instead the people chose broken cisterns, which were useless for storing water and useless for sustaining life" (*The Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 13). God proclaims a dire penalty for rejecting Him, "the fountain of living waters," in [Jeremiah 17:13](#).

As He often does, God colorfully portrays the utter stupidity of making gods of wood and stone, but Israel and Judah make as many dumb deities as the number of cities in Judah (2:27-28). "See if *they* can save you in the time of your trouble!" God taunts (compare verse 28). Today, our peoples still trust in worthless and inanimate things to save us—such as our weapons of war and our money. And some still serve actual idols, seeing power in crosses, statues of Mary, good luck charms, etc. And then there is a wrong trust in other people, directly condemned elsewhere in Jeremiah (17:5).

Verses 14-16 of chapter 2 show that though God had freed Israel from slavery, the nation subjected itself to vassalage and subsequent plunder and slavery by the Assyrians after making a failed deal with the Egyptians (Noph and Tahpanhes, also known as Memphis and Daphne, were principal cities in northern Egypt). In verse 18, Sihor, meaning "Black," is a reference to the Nile River, while "the River" associated with Assyria is the Euphrates. Judah is here basically warned, "Why trust in Egypt or Assyria when they cannot save?" This should serve as a warning to us now. For modern Israelites often make the mistake of putting more trust in alliances than in Almighty God (compare verses 36-37).

Jeremiah repeatedly portrays Israel and Judah as an unfaithful wife who has both deserted her loving, generous husband and also committed adultery, "playing the harlot," with multiple lovers—false gods and national allies (verse 20). She takes steps to "wash" herself (verse 22)—efforts to *feel* and *appear* righteous. But it is her *heart* that needs washing—her *thoughts* purified (compare [Jeremiah 4:14](#)). And only through true repentance, God's forgiveness and God's power can one be truly spiritually cleansed. Israel is adulterous not just by being seduced, but by actively enticing partners like a female animal in heat (verses 23-25).

Worse, not only has Israel not received correction, but God rebukes the people: "Your sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion" (verse 30). Sadly, Israel and Judah have always rejected God's true servants—even subjecting them to martyrdom. While that is not happening right now, times are prophesied to get much worse. God also says, "On your skirts is found the blood of the lives of the poor innocents" (verse 34). Today there is little difference. The most innocent are the children. Few children now are sacrificed to fire, but many are murdered, many more *unborn* children are slaughtered, and

society is so twisted, corrupt and degenerate that nearly all children are set on a path of life that leads to death.

Because obedience to God's absolute laws brings automatic blessings, and disobedience brings automatic penalties, He tells Israel, "You've brought this on yourself" (compare verse 17) and "Your own wickedness will correct you" (verse 19). While a national warning, it is incumbent upon each of us individually to respond. If we are living contrary to God's way, that will eventually catch up with us. Indeed, that is surely producing consequences already. Let us all, then, turn to God now and remain loyal—and avoid the suffering sin brings." [END]