

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 57.0%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Jeremiah 11 & 12

Monday: Jeremiah 13

Tuesday: Jeremiah 14 & 15

Wednesday: Jeremiah 16

Thursday: Jeremiah 17

Friday: Jeremiah 18

Saturday: Jeremiah 35

Current # of email addresses in the group: 625

Based on the number of comments and questions I received this week, it's my assumption that people enjoyed the opportunity to get a bit into the book of Daniel. It will be exciting to get back to finish this book as we near the end of the Old Testament.

We will be solely in Jeremiah this week, but please note that on the Sabbath we jump to chapter 35. I estimated this week that we are approximately 5 months from the New Testament. Assuming there will be some breaks around the spring Holy Days, that should be sometime this summer.

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:

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3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 88

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

Day 589 – SUNDAY: February 2nd

Jeremiah 11 & 12

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Jeremiah 11 is a clear break from preceding chapters in the book. The section hearkens to God's covenant with His people—which included blessings for obedience to God's law and curses for disobedience. During Josiah's reign, the nation had renewed its covenant relationship with God after the Book of the

Law was found. But the recommitment of the people was merely outward as their return to evil ways following Josiah's death made clear. "To a forgetful people the prophet says that the ancient stipulations still hold force, including the curses on the unfaithful. A date in the reign of Jehoiakim is appropriate for this discourse. Apparently Jeremiah was residing in, or frequenting, his native Anathoth, for he is made aware of a plot against him [there] ([Jeremiah 11:18-21](#))" (*The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, 1976, note on 11:1-12:17).

Because of Judah's violation of the covenant, God pronounces the curse on disobedience called for in the covenant (verse 3). Verse 5 ends with Jeremiah responding, "So be it"—or, in Hebrew, *Amen*, which was the response the people were to give to the proclamation of the curses according to [Deuteronomy 27:15-26](#), showing concurrence with God's justice.

All the towns of Judah as well as the city of Jerusalem were to hear God's case against Judah ([Jeremiah 11:6](#)). In verses 9-10, God describes the return of the people to their evil and idolatrous ways following Josiah's death as an intentional plot—a planned rebellion to throw off the yoke Josiah had put on them. Just as the house of Israel had broken God's covenant, so had Judah (verse 10).

Thus, God decreed that certain calamity was coming (verse 11). The many gods of the people wouldn't save them (verse 12). God interjects with scorn over the fact that Judah had as many gods as they had towns (verse 13)—perhaps meaning that each town had its own god. Sadly, this statement is a repeat of the one made in [Jeremiah 2:28](#), showing that the people had not changed at all since the time prior to Josiah's reformation. Furthermore, God adds the fact that they had as many shrines to Baal as they had streets! So He repeats his earlier directive that Jeremiah not pray for them ([Jeremiah 11:14](#); see 7:16).

In verse 15 of chapter 11, "My beloved" refers to "Judah, who remains the object of Yahweh's love although she must leave His house for her hypocrisy" (*New Bible Commentary*, note on verses 15-16). The mention of "holy flesh" in verse 15 is unclear in the New King James Version. Most other translations render this as meaning sacred offerings. For example, the New International Version has, "Can consecrated meat avert your punishment?" "The reference is to sacrifices offered at the temple. It is hypocritical as well as futile to hurry to church after sinning and then return eagerly to your sins" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verse 15).

God looked on His beloved Bride—His people Israel, of whom Judah was now the remnant—as a beautiful and fruitful green olive tree (as King David was inspired to describe himself in [Psalm 52:8](#)). Olive oil represented richness and blessing ([Psalm 23:5](#); 104:15). But here the tree is pictured with broken and burning branches. These branches, representing individual sinning Israelites, were to be broken off. Paul later uses this imagery in [Romans 11](#).

[Jeremiah 11:18-12:6](#), appears to be an interjection, as [Jeremiah 12:7](#) seems to pick up from [Jeremiah 11:17](#).

Jeremiah 11 concludes with a plot against the prophet's life. Those behind it wanted to destroy "the tree with its fruit" (verse 19)—that is, the prophet with his prophecies. But God gave Jeremiah supernatural awareness of it. Indeed, God had warned when Jeremiah was first called that such threats would come—and He had encouraged him with the promise of divine protection and help ([Jeremiah 1:17-19](#)). Yet that was long ago, and it is possible that Jeremiah had not faced such threats so far—as he surely had state protection during the reign of godly Josiah. Now Josiah was dead though, and the nation was conspiring against God and His prophets. Moreover, the circumstances no doubt made this situation particularly difficult for Jeremiah:

"Throughout his four decades of service to God the prophet would know the wrath of kings and courtiers, prophets and priests, and the entire population of Judah. He would be accused of betraying his country. He would be imprisoned and almost killed. But perhaps nothing would hurt as much as this first crisis, when God revealed that the people of his hometown, Anathoth, were plotting to murder him! The conspiracy was even more dreadful because Anathoth was a city settled by priestly families. Anyone who has taken a stand for his or her moral convictions, or witnessed outspokenly about faith in Christ, will understand the pain of ridicule or rejection. But few have any notion of the hurt Jeremiah experienced when those he had known from childhood wanted to take his life" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on Jeremiah 11:18-20).

This parallels the reception Jesus Christ later experienced in *His* hometown of Nazareth (see [Luke 4:16-29](#)). Indeed, there are other parallels with Christ here as well. "His own familiar friends had plotted against the prophet. The language [about being a lamb led to the slaughter] is exactly the same as that applied to Messiah (Isaiah 53:7). Each prophet and patriarch exemplified in his own person some one feature or more in the manifold attributes and sufferings of the Messiah to come; just as the saints have done since His coming ([Galatians 2:20](#); Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24)" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on [Jeremiah 11:19](#)).

Jeremiah lays the case before God as the righteous Judge and Vindicator. And God pronounces a punishment of death by sword and famine, both of which would come with the later Babylonian invasion and siege. God says that "no remnant" would be left to "the men of Anathoth" (verse 23)—that is, to the men involved in the conspiracy. That there were some in the town who weren't involved is evident from the fact that Ezra later reported that some men of Anathoth returned to the town following the Babylonian captivity (see [Ezra 2:1](#), [Ezra 2:23](#)).

In [Jeremiah 12](#), we see the prophet terribly disturbed at the whole affair. He asks questions that had been asked before. "Why does the way of the wicked prosper?" (verse 1; see [Job 12:6](#); [Psalm 73:12](#)). He remarks on how such treacherous people spoke of God often—indeed, Anathoth was a town of priests!—but their hearts were far from Him ([Matthew 15:8](#); [Isaiah 29:13](#)). This is a problem so many have today. They give lip service to following Christ, but they don't obey Him ([Matthew 7:21-23](#)). In contrast, Jeremiah served God from the heart as God well knew ([Jeremiah 12:3](#)). How strange then that the wicked seemed to have it so good and he seemed to have it so hard.

Jeremiah seems to wonder why God is talking about doing something but not yet doing it. He pleads for God to act. As he had been like a lamb led to the slaughter, he asks that they experience the same (verse 3). In verse 4, Jeremiah appears to be remarking on droughts that were already occurring as warnings of greater punishment to come (see [Jeremiah 14:1-6](#)). These hurt the plants and animals but were not reforming the wicked! They still said, "He [Jeremiah] will not see our final end" ([Jeremiah 12:4](#)). In other words, they were basically saying that he would die before them—that he would be killed and they would go on living, in no worry over this dreadful "final end" he spoke of.

In verse 5, instead of giving an answer of comfort, God says things are going to get much worse. He first uses the metaphor of a race. If Jeremiah is worn out in his contest with the "footmen" (the men of Anathoth), how can he make it against "horses" (the much greater and more powerful antagonists he still has to face)? If he can't take it in peacetime (as he yet suffered no actual harm), how would he make it through the "floodplain [or thicket] of the Jordan"? That is, as this expression connoted "the wild, luxuriant and beast-infested growths of the hot marshy land beside the Jordan" (*New Bible Commentary*, note on verse 5), how would he endure real physical suffering later? Even

now, it was already worse than Jeremiah knew. Some of his own family members were part of the conspiracy against him (verse 6).

The fact is, God had already told Jeremiah He would handle it—and would protect him. So He now expects the prophet to grit his teeth and develop strength. That is a call to character. Indeed, what he was now going through was to prepare him for tougher times ahead. It is very much like the Christian experience today. God does not remove all our trials. We constantly witness the seeming prosperity of those who don't follow His ways while things don't always go so well for us. Moreover, our families and others close to us sometimes turn against us as Jesus warned ([Matthew 10:36](#)). But in spite of it all we must remain strong and devoted to following God—just as Jeremiah was required to. And in doing so, there will be great reward (see [Mark 10:29-30](#)).

In [Jeremiah 12:7](#), God appears to simply pick right back up where He left off in [Jeremiah 11:17](#)—as if to say, "All right then, let's get back to it." But in his words there is a message for Jeremiah and his situation. God basically states that He has had to forsake *His* house and those *He* loves because others have ruined them. God, we see, does not ask His people to endure things that He Himself has not endured. This was made most evident in the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh to suffer and die for the sins of the world.

Message for Neighboring Lands

After speaking of the destruction that would come on His people for their sins, He then turns to the surrounding lands—"evil neighbors" who worshiped other gods and taught God's people to do the same (verses 14-17). They would now invade. These neighbors "included the powerful nations of Babylon and Assyria, as well as opportunistic kingdoms like Edom, Moab, and Ammon. These latter kingdoms seized land, crops, and hostages when Judah was weakened by invasion" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 14). Ultimately, God would bring

punishment on them all. But He also "gave them an amazing promise: He would show compassion on them by allowing them to learn about him, the God of Israel, even as they had taught the Israelites about their gods (12.16). Rather than just wiping them from the face of the earth, the Lord would give them an opportunity to turn from their worthless idols and serve him. This was truly amazing kindness. This gesture shows God's heart of compassion for all the people of the world. It demonstrates the truth that Peter would later express, that the Lord is 'patient, because he wants everyone to turn from sin and no one to be lost' (2 P[eter] 3.9 [Contemporary English Version])" ("An Amazing Promise," *Word in Life Bible*, 1998, sidebar on [Jeremiah 12:14-17](#))." [END]

Day 590 – MONDAY: February 3rd

Jeremiah 13

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: Most of what chapter 13 describes—starting in verse 6 and continuing to the end of the chapter—appears to fall during the three-month reign of the 18-year-old Jeconiah, who was apparently heavily guided in his rule by his mother Nehushta (compare verse 18; [Jeremiah 22:24-27](#); [Jeremiah 29:2](#); [2 Kings 24:8, 12](#)). The events of the first five verses of [Jeremiah 13](#), however, likely happened during the reign of Jeconiah's father Jehoiakim, as we will see—perhaps soon after the events of chapters 11 and 12.

God starts out telling Jeremiah to obtain a linen "girdle" (13:1, KJV). There is a difference of opinion as to exactly what this piece of clothing was. Many say the Hebrew here should be translated belt. Some say sash. Others contend that a waistcloth, or loincloth, is meant. Still others argue for a skirt or kilt, or even shorts. It is not clear whether the girdle was decorative outerwear or an undergarment. What is clear is that it was worn around the waist (verses 2, 4, 11). This was to symbolize Israel and Judah, which God had bound to Himself by

covenant—and which relied on clinging to God's very being to be "held up," so to speak (compare verse 11).

The waistband would also have been valuable. All of this was fitting symbolism for Israel and Judah. "Linen was a costly material ([Isaiah 3:23-24](#)), often imported from Egypt ([Proverbs 7:16](#)). The Israelites generally reserved its use for making exquisite furnishings, such as those in the sacred tent [the tabernacle] ([Exodus 26:1, 31, 13](#)), and fine garments, such as those worn by the priests ([Exodus 28:39](#)) or a favored person ([Esther 8:15](#); [Ezra 16:10-13](#))" ("A Waste of Fine Material," *The Word in Life Bible*, sidebar on [Jeremiah 13:1-11](#)). Israel, rescued from Egypt and supported by God, was to be a special treasure and chosen priesthood. The waistband was not supposed to get wet (verse 1), as this would cause it to begin deteriorating.

God then instructs Jeremiah to take the waistband to the River Euphrates (Hebrew *Perath*) far to the north and hide it in a hole. "This would have meant a round-trip journey of some seven hundred miles—a trip that would have taken two to three months" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 3-5). And Jeremiah ends up going twice. Not believing that the prophet would have left his responsibilities in Judah for so long, some commentators argue that *Perath* should in this instance be rendered Ephrathah (another name for Bethlehem) or Parah (a town of Benjamin, [Joshua 18:23](#)), both of which were quite near Jerusalem. Yet the Euphrates seems far more likely.

First of all, *Perath* normally denotes the Euphrates in Scripture. The objection that Jeremiah would not have left his duties for so long is improper reasoning since his duty would always be to go where God told him. Consider also that Jeremiah preached for many, many years in Judah—so an absence of a few months is not at all unreasonable. God could even have supernaturally sped up Jeremiah's journey if time was a factor.

Most important, however, is the *symbolism* of the Euphrates. The land promised to Israel actually extended all the way to the Euphrates ([Exodus 23:31](#); [Deuteronomy 11:24](#))—and reached as far in the days of David and Solomon ([2 Samuel 8:3](#), [2 Samuel 8: 6](#); [1 Kings 4:21](#), [1 Kings 4:24](#)). *Beyond* the Euphrates was the territory of the Mesopotamian powers—previously Assyria and now Babylon. The Euphrates itself was the crossing point. The "hiding" of the waistband there would seem to imply God's people seeking refuge and help from the powers of Mesopotamia. This was true of their national alliances. It was also true religiously, since the false gods the people worshiped originated in Babylon. The people of Israel were ultimately taken beyond the Euphrates themselves—in captivity. And the same would soon befall the people of Judah.

(Interestingly, the Euphrates continues to play a part in Bible prophecy right to the end of the age of mankind—see [Revelation 16:12-14](#).)

The expression "after many days" in [Jeremiah 13:6](#) could actually mean that Jeremiah didn't return to the Euphrates until years later. If a few months of travel were required for the journey, the events of the first part of the chapter must have happened prior to Jeconiah's three-month reign—thus sometime during his father's reign.

Spending years in a hole by a river—far away from its owner—there was no way the waistband would not get wet and dirty and thus suffer damage. Indeed, Jeremiah finds it rotted and worthless. This parallels what happened to Israel and Judah: "Rather than clinging to the Lord, the people chose to worship idols ([Jeremiah 13:10](#)). They became as useless to God as Jeremiah's rotten linen belt was to him. The processes in [the physical realm of] creation often parallel the realities of the spiritual realm. Spiritual decay may not be as obvious as the damage of moisture to buried cloth, but the results are even worse.... Jeremiah's ruined belt still paints a vivid picture of our ruined condition

[when we fail to cling to God and His ways]" ("INDepth: Jeremiah's Symbolic Acts, *Nelson Study Bible*, sidebar on [Jeremiah 13](#)).

God then tells Jeremiah to say to the people, "Every wine jug is to be filled with wine"—to which the people basically respond, "Of course they are" (compare verse 12). Commentators believe the statement Jeremiah made was a proverb of the time. Some think it meant "good times ahead"—and that the complacent Jews were saying they already knew this (indeed, the false prophets had told them so). Yet it may also be that the statement was a proverb denoting a truism—that wine jugs were made to hold wine. Either way, the common understanding of this proverb was not what God meant by it. He meant that the people, as the wine jugs, were going to be filled with His wrath until they reeled as if drunk: "As wine intoxicates, so God's wrath and judgments shall reduce them to that state of helpless distraction that they shall rush on to their own ruin ([Jeremiah 25:15](#); [Jeremiah 49:12](#); Isaiah 51:17, 21, 22; [Isaiah 63:6](#))" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on [Jeremiah 13:12](#)).

In verse 17, we again see Jeremiah's tremendous heart of feeling. As bold as his pronouncements have been, he knows he will deeply lament with weeping when his countrymen are carried away captive.

We then see a message for the king and queen mother (verse 18)—again, most likely Jeconiah and Nehushta. They would be exiled to Babylon very soon. The mention of the "cities of the South" in Judah (verse 19) is evidently to point out that even these—though located the farthest away from northern invasion (see verse 20)—will be shut up in a siege that no one will break. And *all* Judah—the whole land—will be taken captive.

The nation will be stripped of her people and violated (verses 20-22, 26). God depicts the sins of Jerusalem as a prostitute that has no shame—sentenced for adultery and immorality, having forgotten Him

to whom they were bound by covenant and trusting in false idols (verses 25, 27).

God speaks a now-famous proverb in verse 23—concerning Ethiopian skin color and leopard spots—that implies people cannot change their character and live rightly. "Habit is second nature...it is morally impossible that the Jews can alter their inveterate habits of sin" (*JFB*, note on verse 23). Yet notice God's remarkable statement at the end of the chapter: "Woe to you, O Jerusalem! Will you still not be made clean?" (verse 27). The fact is, while the Jews were incapable of transforming themselves into people of right character, they actually could "*be made clean*"—through the miraculous power of God. Yet they had to respond to Him and cling to Him for this to happen. But alas, they did not.

The same situation remains true for everyone. While the normal human mind is hostile against God and cannot be subject to His law ([Romans 8:7](#)), through the transforming power of God we can be changed. Indeed, we *must* be changed. That is the message of the whole Bible." [END]

Day 591 – TUESDAY: February 4th

Jeremiah 14 & 15

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Drought, first apparently mentioned in [Jeremiah 12:4](#), continues to afflict the land ([Jeremiah 14:1-6](#); see also [Jeremiah 23:10](#)). Things get so bad that the people resort to calling on God, Jeremiah here recording the people's plea for relief in which they confessed their sins and asked God to save them for His own name's sake ([Jeremiah 14:7-9](#)). This was according to the prayer Solomon had long before prayed at the temple's dedication: "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess your name,

and turn from their sin because you afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance" ([1 Kings 8:35-36](#)).

But there was a major problem here. The people confessed but they did not "turn from their sin" as Solomon had stated. They asked God to act for the sake of His name (His reputation) after they had, by their wicked conduct, profaned God's name among the nations—and would not desist from doing so. Therefore, their repentance is meaningless and God will not accept it. He knows that such pleas always come in times of need. In the past He answered the calls over and over again. This time He has drawn the line and will follow through with the threatened punishment ([Jeremiah 14:10](#)). Again, God tells Jeremiah not to pray for the people (verse 11; compare [Jeremiah 7:16](#); [Jeremiah 11:14](#)).

In verse 12 of chapter 14, God says that He will not accept any of their hypocritical displays of piety but will send worse punishment than just the droughts. The people will be consumed by the sword (of warfare), by famine and by pestilence (disease epidemics). Centuries before, King David was given a choice between these three punishments for sin (see [2 Samuel 24:13](#)). But the people of Judah would now suffer all three ([Jeremiah 14:12](#); compare [Jeremiah 16:4](#); [Jeremiah 24:10](#); [Jeremiah 27:8](#), [Jeremiah 27:13](#); [Jeremiah 29:17-18](#); [Ezekiel 14:21](#)). Indeed, these terrible occurrences have often formed a cycle in human history. In war, people are pillaged, their crops and livestock ruined, their water taken or polluted. This leads to famine. Widespread malnourishment then weakens people to the point of greater susceptibility to infection with disease.

Jeremiah's love for the people is obvious. While he is not allowed to pray for the people's deliverance from punishment, he proposes mitigating circumstances that may alleviate the people's guilt to some

degree. "He says it's the prophets' fault. The prophets have misled the ordinary folks. There are two things to note here. First, we are each responsible for our own choices. We can't pass that on to anyone else, even preachers! Second, the prophets *were* guilty of misleading Judah and would suffer more greatly than others [compare [James 1:1-3](#)]. [But] don't suppose that 'he said it was all right' or 'I was obeying orders' relieves us of responsibility" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on [Jeremiah 14:13-16](#), emphasis added).

In verses 17-18, God gives Jeremiah a lament to utter when the prophesied punishment actually comes. "Jeremiah's tears, portraying his own and the Lord's anguish over a destroyed people, are part of his message to them and have the force of an 'acted oracle.' They show the backlash of the message of doom on him who preaches it, and none should preach destruction who cannot weep for those under its threat" (*New Bible Commentary*, note on verse 17). Surely we will feel the same when we see our nations suffer in the years ahead. Indeed, many tears were shed by God's people over the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York. Thus we can certainly empathize with Jeremiah.

At the end of verse 18, it is not clear in this case if the "land they do not know" is a foreign land or their homeland so devastated as to be unrecognizable. Eventually, as other prophecies make clear, they will be removed to a foreign land.

In verses 19-22, the people make another empty plea for mercy. "The people of Judah based their hope for relief on an appeal to God to act for the sake of (1) His name, (2) His temple (e.g., His 'glorious throne'), and (3) His covenant. Why was the plea empty? Because Israel's blatant idolatry had already dragged God's name through the mud. His temple was defiled by those who supposed they could [brazenly] sin and still worship. And His covenant had been broken by those who now wanted to claim it. There comes a time when only judgment can preserve God's honor" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verse 21).

So God responds in [Jeremiah 15:1-9](#) with His determination to proceed. Moses and Samuel were among the great leaders of God who interceded for Israel with favorable results ([Exodus 32:11](#); [1 Samuel 7:9](#)). But even *their* intercession would avail nothing for the people now. Verse 2 of [Jeremiah 15](#) is rather ominous, telling the prophet to respond to inquiries about where to go (i.e., what to do now) with the pronouncement of judgment. "The imagery of dogs, birds and beasts devouring human flesh vividly illustrates not only death but desecration" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 3-4). These animals may also portray gentile nations here.

"The basis for this desecration is the defilement of Jerusalem that took place during the reign of Manasseh, when idolatry reigned in the temple courts and children were sacrificed to Molech" (note on verses 3-4). Manasseh was the most evil king Judah ever had ([2 Kings 21:9-18](#)). It seems he did turn to God later, but had caused much damage to the relationship between Judah and God. "He was now dead, but the effects of his sins still remained. How much evil one bad man can cause! The evil fruits remain even after he himself has received repentance and forgiveness. The people had followed his wicked example ever since; and it is implied that it was only through the long-suffering of God that the penal consequences had been suspended up to the present time (cf. [I Kings 14:16](#); [II Kings 21:11](#); 23:26; 24:3, 4)" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 4).

Jeremiah has faithfully pronounced the message God has told him to. But no one, of course, is happy to hear it. His comment regarding not having lent for interest is "proverbial for, 'I have given no cause for strife against me'" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 10). Yet his preaching has generated nothing *but* strife it seems. Everyone hates him, whereupon Jeremiah is understandably dejected. He wishes he hadn't been born. "Note that his call was from the womb and that God decreed from birth that he would be a prophet (see 1.5;

20:14-18)" (*The HarperCollins Study Bible*, 1993, note on [Jeremiah 15:10](#)).

The Hebrew of verse 11 is difficult. The New Revised Standard Version renders it, "The LORD said: Surely I have intervened in your life for good, surely I have imposed enemies on you in a time of trouble and in a time of distress." But, God asks in verse 12, can anyone break iron and bronze? This appears to symbolize Jeremiah, whom God referred to as an "iron pillar" and "bronze walls" in his call (1:18; compare 15:20). That is, God would protect him.

In verses 13-14 it is not clear whether God is speaking to Jeremiah or to Judah again. The latter seems more likely but some have suggested that Jeremiah is to experience some measure of punishment as a representative of the people—perhaps, in some sense, as a type of Christ. We do know that Jeremiah was later carried away against his will to Egypt. In any case, Jeremiah asks that God, in fairness, would protect him and take vengeance on the real wrongdoers, those who are persecuting him. The prophet declares his faithfulness to God. He "ate" God's words—accepting and internalizing them and finding joy in them (verse 16). He was not part of the assembly of mockers because 1) he would not mock God's message and 2) what he preached prevented him from being part of the assembly at all—he was isolated from everyone.

In verse 18, we see Jeremiah in great anguish over his predicament. But then he goes too far. Having declared his own faithfulness, he actually accuses God of faithlessness. God is the fountain of living waters ([Jeremiah 2:13](#)), but now Jeremiah wonders if He is not like a dried up stream as far as the prophet's welfare is concerned.

In [Jeremiah 15:19](#), God responds with a gentle rebuke. It is a rebuke because God calls on Jeremiah to "return"—the Old Testament word for *repent*. He tells him to "take the precious from the vile"—an "image

from metals: 'If thou wilt separate what is precious in thee (the divine graces imparted) from what is vile (thy natural corruptions, impatience, and hasty words), thou shalt be as My mouth': my mouthpiece (Exodus 4:16)" (*JFB Commentary*, note on [Jeremiah 15:19](#)). God warns him, "Let them return to you [that is, let the people change to walking in your right, faithful ways], but you must not return to them [you must not change to walking in their wrong, faithless ways]." If Jeremiah turns from his negative, wrong thoughts, then he will be able to continue in God's service and God will continue to protect him, just as was promised at Jeremiah's initial call (verse 20). It is in this way that God's rebuke is gentle, for it is accompanied by a wonderful positive reassurance of His enduring faithfulness even despite the weakness of His servant. This is something for which we should all be ever so grateful." [END]

Day 592 – WEDNESDAY: February 5th

Jeremiah 16

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Jeremiah is commanded by God not to marry and have children while in Judah. He is also forbidden from taking part in social activities such as mourning and feasting. Both were to serve as a witness against Judah. "The prophet is ordered to behave in an eccentric manner [as prophets often were]...; celibacy was extremely uncommon, refusal to participate in funerary rites ill-mannered and disrespectful. Both actions had one meaning: There is no future here" (*New Bible Commentary*, note on verses 1-21). "The prohibition against marriage is to underscore the coming death and destruction that will face parents and children. Even burial will be denied the dead. The theme of lament is repeated in God's refusal to allow Jeremiah to intercede on the people's behalf ([Jeremiah 7:16](#); [Jeremiah 14:11-12](#); [Jeremiah 15:1](#)). He is also forbidden to rejoice with them, for joy will be taken from the land during the impending destruction and exile" (*HarperCollins Study Bible*, note on [Jeremiah](#)

[16:1-13](#)). [Jeremiah 16:9](#) is a repetition of Jeremiah 7:34—and will be repeated again in [Jeremiah 25:10](#).

Moreover, the restrictions imposed on Jeremiah actually served his well-being. He would not have been able to have a normal family life anyway with his commission and the animosity it brought.

Furthermore, the near future was going to be calamitous—"so severe that the single state would be then (contrary to the ordinary course of things) preferable to the married (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:8; 1

Corinthians 26:29; Matt.hew 24:19; [Luke 23:29](#))" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 2). In times of great trial, worry over loved ones increases the pain of the circumstances. This being so, we can perhaps see how the prohibition against fraternizing in normal social contexts was also a great blessing to Jeremiah. It kept him from developing close friendships with those who were soon to suffer.

Moreover, we should consider that many of the social customs of the people, such as those in [Jeremiah 16:6](#), were derived from paganism. Jeremiah would, of course, have to separate himself from such practices.

Verses 10-13 illustrate the falsity of the people's confession of sin in chapter 14. For they here do not even know what sins they are guilty of—even though they have committed terrible idolatry worse than their ancestors! So punishment is certainly coming—they will be taken away to another land where they will learn through painful experience what it really means to be subject to paganism and cut off from the true God ([Jeremiah 16:13](#)).

Verses 14-15 (repeated in [Jeremiah 23:7-8](#)) offer a glimmer of hope about the future. God will bring Israel back in a second Exodus (compare [Isaiah 11:11](#)). This is speaking not of the Jewish return from Babylonian captivity in ancient times, but of the return of all Israel from captivity at the end of this age. This should be clear from the fact that

the Jewish return from Babylonian exile never overshadowed the Mosaic Exodus from Egypt—as God said this return would.

In the next verse, [Jeremiah 16:16](#), God seems to return to the theme of immediate punishment, as hunting and fishing are elsewhere used as metaphors for captivity by enemies (compare [Ezekiel 12:13](#); [Amos 4:2](#); [Habakkuk 1:15](#); [Micah 7:2](#)). Yet perhaps God is actually using similar imagery to describe the bringing back of His people mentioned in the previous verse. *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary* states: "It is remarkable, the same image is used in a good sense of the Jews' restoration, implying that just as their enemies were employed by God to take them in hand for destruction, so the same [i.e., hunters and fishers] shall be employed for their restoration. (Ezekiel 47:9-10). So spiritually... [God's ministers are "fishers of men"], employed by God to be heralds of salvation, 'catching men' for life ([Matthew 4:19](#); [Luke 5:10](#); [Acts 2:41](#); [Acts 4:4](#) ... 2 Corinthians 12:16)" (note on [Jeremiah 16:16](#)).

But before any future regathering, God's people are to receive "double" for their sins (verse 18). It is not clear exactly what is meant here. It may refer to the fact that God expects more from those to whom He gives special gifts so that Israel and Judah are to receive a more severe judgment than the rest of the nations (compare [Luke 12:47-48](#); [James 3:1](#)). Some suggest that "double" is idiomatic for "fully" or "amply." Others maintain that the double punishment actually refers to two periods of punishment, the ancient captivity and the one to come later—just prior to the ultimate restoration promised in the preceding verses.

The point of verses 19-21 is also not exactly clear. These seem to refer to the time of Christ's return, when the relationship between God and man is restored and all nations on earth come to know God and worship Him (compare [Isaiah 2:1-4](#); [Isaiah 11:9](#)). The word "gentiles" in verse 19 of [Jeremiah 16](#) actually means "nations" and, in that sense,

could include Israel and Judah. So the point may be the happy ending of Israel's future return, followed by all nations. However, the point may also be that while God's people have filled His land with foreign idols and are rejected (verse 18), many foreigners would come to forsake their pagan past and embrace the true God—that is, during the Church age (from apostolic times until Christ's return). This would serve as a point of shame against God's own people (see [Romans 11:11](#)). Either way, we can still be thankful for the happy ending promised in verses 14-15 of [Jeremiah 16](#) and throughout Scripture.” [END]

Day 593 – THURSDAY: February 6th

Jeremiah 17

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Rather than the law of God, rebellious idolatry—including pagan offering and *asherah* worship—is ingrained in the heart, the inner character, of the people of Judah, being passed down from one generation to the next ([Jeremiah 17:1-2](#)). This is much like the sin of modern Israelite nations. Christmas trees and other pagan traditions are clung to so strongly as to be considered part of the very heart of the people—again, passed down through the generations.

For the people's rebellion, God will give their enemies the wealth of His "mountain [Jerusalem] in the field [of the nation of Judah]" and of all their "high places" (worship centers) in the land (verse 3). Indeed, even the people themselves will be given to their enemies—deported to a foreign land (verse 4). God's anger will burn "forever"—that is, against the sin as long as the sin persists.

God then contrasts trust in man with trust in God. In verse 5, two different Hebrew words are translated "man": "Cursed is the man [the person] who trusts in man [mankind]." The Jews should have realized this regarding their national and religious leaders. And we must understand this today. This does not mean we cannot place any trust in

other human beings. But our ultimate faith and trust must not be in other people—or ourselves. Consider that God Himself gives human beings to guide and teach us. But He cautions that our allegiance must be to Him and His Word first. "We ought to obey God rather than men" ([Acts 5:29](#)). In fact, Scripture contains many warnings about false teachers who will rise up, some even within the fellowship of the true Church ([Acts 20:29](#); [2 Peter 2:1-4](#)). And God makes it clear that people will not be excused if they choose to follow what a man says above what God says. Human beings have no authority to change any of God's directives. Those who rely ultimately on other people or themselves are inevitably cursed.

Those who place faith and trust in God, on the other hand, are blessed. They are compared to fruitful trees, as in [Psalm 1:3](#). They do not need to fear times of physical drought—as Judah was experiencing when Jeremiah prophesied—because the Almighty God is there to sustain them. He will ensure their fruitfulness on a physical level and, more importantly, on a spiritual level—granting them abundant eternal life in the end.

Failure to discern this is a problem of the heart—a person's inner thoughts and feelings. God declares that the heart is *deceitful*—the original Hebrew word here coming from the same root as the name Jacob (the designation for unconverted Israel)—and "desperately wicked" ([Jeremiah 17:9](#)). For the latter expression, some margins have "incurably sick." It is like a mental illness: "Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead" ([Ecclesiastes 9:3](#)). [Romans 8:7](#) tells us that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." Clearly, the human mind needs spiritual healing, which God ultimately will bring (see [Jeremiah 31:33](#)).

Lest any think that the heart is so deceitful that even God can't see what it's about, God assures us that He is quite aware of it and,

knowing to what degree each person is culpable, is able to deliver just recompense to everyone ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)).

The discussion then moves from those who trust in human beings to those who trust in wealth apart from right living. A "nest egg" won't ultimately save anyone (verse 11). God is our only real source of hope (verse 12).

Those who depart from the Lord, "the fountain of living waters," shall be "written in the earth" (verse 13). This apparently refers to being written in sand, which signifies no permanence at all—as opposed to being "written in heaven" ([Luke 10:20](#)) in the "book of life" ([Revelation 13:8](#); [Revelation 20:12](#), [Revelation 20:15](#)). Perhaps [Jeremiah 17:13](#) explains why Jesus, after declaring Himself the source of living waters ([John 7:37-38](#)) and being rejected as such by the religious leaders of His day (verses 45-53), "wrote on the ground" when these religious leaders came to entrap Him the next morning ([John 8:1-9](#)).

Jeremiah prays for his own spiritual healing ([Jeremiah 17:14](#)). He knows that his message will provoke further scorn, beyond what he has already suffered. In verse 15, he declares that his persecutors are essentially inviting the day of doom in their mocking. In verse 16, Jeremiah points out that he himself has not desired the coming of that day. He has taken no joy in pronouncing judgment on the people—certainly not on the nation as a whole. However, he does ask for vindication—that he would be protected (verse 17) and that his persecutors would suffer the judgment they themselves called for (verse 18), the "double destruction" here being what God had already foretold (see 16:18).

Hallow the Sabbath

The remainder of chapter 17 is devoted to God's admonition about keeping the Sabbath holy. In verses 19 and 20, Jeremiah addresses the

"kings" of Judah. It may be that Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) was a coregent with his father at this time (a possibility we will later give more attention to). The people, be they kings or commoners, are told to stop violating the Sabbath—to stop bearing burdens and doing work on God's Holy Day (verses 21-22). This should be understood within the teachings of Jesus Christ. He explained that it was acceptable and within the keeping of the Sabbath to take care of emergencies, to visit the sick and to carry one's bedroll on the Sabbath ([Luke 13:15](#); [Luke 14:5](#); [Mark 3:4](#)). Indeed, He spoke against the extreme limitations the Pharisees placed on the Sabbath and on all of God's laws ([Matthew 23:4](#)).

But there are clearly things we should *not* be doing on the Sabbath, as the Fourth Commandment and [Isaiah 58:13](#) make clear. The burdens Jeremiah spoke of referred to the typical errands of the people—for instance, lugging wares home from the market. And the work the people were doing referred to their regular business or household responsibilities. This should all have ceased so as to observe God's holy time—from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Sadly, Israel and Judah both had a terrible record when it came to keeping God's Sabbath. [Ezekiel 20](#) makes it clear that the two main sins of Israel in the past were idolatry and Sabbath breaking—and that they had been severely judged for these. Now their continued violation of the Sabbath would be met with judgment again (see [Ezekiel 22:8, 14-16, 26, 31](#)).

The Sabbath was very important. Besides being enjoined in one of the Ten Commandments, God had given the Sabbath as a special sign between Him and His people ([Exodus 31:12-17](#)). It identified Him as the true God, the Creator. If the people had continued in its faithful observance, perhaps they would have continued to worship the Creator rather than elements of creation as the pagan world around them did.

In verse 25 of [Jeremiah 17](#), God states that even at this last moment He could change His mind and stay the punishment against Judah—

allowing Jerusalem to remain standing and the line of David to continue to rule from it—if they would just start hallowing the Sabbath. Of course, this would have required keeping it properly from the heart—not the hypocritical way in which the people engaged in various ritual practices. But they would not. Nor will the nations of Israel do so today. Thus, punishment was coming in Jeremiah's day—and it is likewise coming in the not-too-distant future. The warning of destruction with which the chapter ends is essentially a quote from the prophets Hosea and Amos—concerning ancient *and* future calamity (see [Hosea 8:14](#); [Amos 1:4-2:5](#)).

With such strong declarations from God about the Sabbath, it is utterly foolhardy to think and teach, as many do today, that the Sabbath can be changed to Sunday or that it no longer matters. It obviously mattered a great deal to God—and still does. It should likewise matter to us. (To learn more, send for or download our free booklet [Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest.](#))” [END]

Day 594 – FRIDAY: February 7th

Jeremiah 18

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “God here uses the example of a potter forming clay vessels. Almost a century earlier, Isaiah had written, “But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand” ([Isaiah 64:8](#)). Thus, the potter and clay was a familiar image of God's absolute authority over His creation. But “the message God intended to communicate through this illustration was not, as some have thought, one of divine sovereignty. It was a message of grace. Judah had resisted the divine potter. Yet even now God was willing to begin anew and reshape His people into that good vessel He had had in mind from the beginning” (Lawrence Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 1991, note on [Jeremiah 18:6](#)).

God desires that all Israel be saved ([Romans 11:26](#))—in fact, all mankind ([1 Timothy 2:4](#)).

In verses 7-8 of [Jeremiah 18](#), we see what Jonah well knew when he "dragged his feet" in bringing God's warning message to Nineveh (see [Jonah 3:10](#)). If people will repent at God's warning of destruction, He will call off the destruction. But the opposite is also true. If God pronounces good on a nation and it turns to evil, He will bring punishment on it instead ([Jeremiah 18:9-10](#)). So there was a warning inherent in the potter-and-clay analogy as well. But the main focus here was on mercy. God was fashioning disaster but was willing to start over with the people if they would soften their hearts and allow Him to work with them.

"But when Jeremiah preached this good news the people continued to resist the heavenly potter! It was too late to surrender their passion for idolatry and sin. What a tragedy! In the coming invasion the people who were unwilling to change would be crushed by suffering. The few survivors would become workable clay in His hands" (note on verse 6).

In verse 12, it is interesting to consider that people here see obedience to God as hopeless—perhaps viewing it as impossible. It may be that the false prophets had corrupted them by a message of "cheap grace"—teaching that since they supposedly couldn't obey God, the only thing to do was mouth confessions and rely on their sacrifices and other acts of piety. This is not so different from what is often espoused in modern mainstream Christianity. Furthermore, the people's concept of God had been corrupted by pagan teachings so that they were essentially appealing to pagan gods while believing they were trusting in the true God. He is astonished that they would forsake Him and His ways for false religion. "Snow water of Lebanon" (verse 14) refers to the waters from high Mount Hermon, which looms over the northern part of the land of Israel (*Lebanon* actually means "White Mountain"). These waters sank into the ground and emerged in the form of many

springs, providing most of the water for the Jordan River to water the Promised Land. God likewise provided their physical and spiritual needs. Why would they look elsewhere?

Since the people have forgotten God and forsaken His ways, the land will be desolate and the people taken captive and scattered (verses 15-17). God will turn His back on His people (verse 17), just as they had turned their backs on Him ([Jeremiah 2:27](#)). While this was, no doubt, difficult for God, being a loving Father (compare [Hosea 11:8](#)), the evil of the people had to stop. Today some might call this needed approach "tough love." Indeed, the need for intervention was made even more pressing by the people's mistreatment of each other and of God's servants.

In [Jeremiah 18:18](#), we find the people again plotting against the prophet, whereupon he cries out to God (verses 19-23). Jeremiah has done all he could to intercede for them, and yet they are trying to bring him down (verse 20). So he now cries out for God to act in terms that seem to violate Christ's instruction that we love our enemies and pray for them ([Matthew 4:43-48](#)). But we should suspend such judgment, not really knowing all the facts. It is likely that Jeremiah understood the truth of the second resurrection—that these people would be given an opportunity for salvation at a later time—and that he was here asking that God not provide a *present* atonement so as to relent from *present* destruction (as God had said earlier in [Jeremiah 18](#) that He would upon repentance), for the sake not only of himself but of God's message. "Some have questioned the bitter prayer for vengeance. But those Jeremiah inveighs against have not only slandered him, but distorted the truth and so brought judgment upon the entire nation" (note on verses 19-23).

Moreover, God Himself may have inspired His prophet with this call for judgment. *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary* states: "In this prayer he does not indulge in personal revenge, as if it were his own

cause that was at stake; but he speaks under the dictation of the Spirit, ceasing to intercede, and speaking prophetically, knowing they were doomed to destruction as reprobates; for those not so, he doubtless ceased not to intercede. We are not to draw an example [of how to pray concerning our enemies in general] from this, which is a special case" (note on verse 21). In any case, as with other calls for vengeance in Scripture, what is expressed is that the perfect vengeance of God is awaited rather than any hint of personal acts of revenge being taken by God's servant (see [Romans 12:17-21](#)).

The Psalms of David contain several calls for God to exact vengeance. Regarding these, the *Tyndale Commentary* remarks, "We may summarize [these] as the plea that justice shall be done and the right vindicated" (note on [Psalms 1-72](#), p. 26)." [END]

Day 595 – SATURDAY: February 8th

Jeremiah 35

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG Commentary states: "The events of this chapter transpired during the reign of Jehoiakim, following the initial invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. (see verse 11). His Chaldean host was accompanied by Syrians, as the Babylonians had just taken Syria from the Egyptians (compare same verse). The invading army prompted the Rechabites to quickly relocate to Jerusalem.

The Rechabites were descended from the Kenites and hence were related to Jethro, Moses' father-in-law (see [Judges 1:16](#); [1 Chronicles 2:55](#)). Rechab was the father of Jehonadab (here called Jonadab), who supported Jehu in his purge of the Baal prophets from Israel ([2 Kings 10:15-28](#)).

Jeremiah brings the Rechabites—probably several of their representatives—into the temple for a test that others are to witness. "We know essentially nothing of the persons mentioned in vv. 3-4,

except for Maaseiah, who was probably the father of Zephaniah the priest (cf. [Jeremiah 21:1](#); [Jeremiah 29:25](#); [Jeremiah 37:3](#)). He was in charge of the money given for the temple repair (cf. [2 Kings 12:10](#)). Jaazaniah was probably the leader of the group. The name, not uncommon in Jeremiah's day, has been found on a seal (c. 600 B.C.) at Tell en-Nasbeh.... 'The sons of Hanan' (a prophet of God [or, as "man of God" could also signify, merely a faithful priest]) were probably his disciples. He appears to have been in sympathy with Jeremiah. The three leaders (cf. [Jeremiah 52:24](#); [2 Kings 25:18](#)) probably had charge of the inner and outer court of the temple and the entrance door. They ranked next to the high priest and his deputy" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 1986, note on [Jeremiah 35:3-4](#)).

Jeremiah sets wine before the Rechabites and tells them to drink (verse 5). Jonadab had apparently given strict commands to his descendants regarding the lifestyle they were to live (verses 6-10). Instead of settling down in houses or cultivating fields, they were to dwell in tents as nomads. Perhaps he was concerned over the fact that God had prophesied that once the people of Israel settled into private homes and lands that they would become forgetful of God because of their abundance (compare [Deuteronomy 8](#)). Maybe he had even seen the truth of this in the society of his day. Jonadab also commanded his descendants to avoid wine. Perhaps this was motivated by the restriction against alcohol in the Nazirite vow or dangers of abuse he may have witnessed. Interestingly, the Rechabites saw that obedience to these commands from their forefather would allow them to "live many days in the land"—which was the blessing God promised for following the Fifth Commandment in obeying one's parents (see [Exodus 20:12](#); [Deuteronomy 5:16](#)).

In any case, [Jeremiah 35](#) doesn't say that God approved of the restrictions Jonadab placed on his descendants. Indeed, the Bible nowhere condemns the use of alcohol—only its abuse and

drunkenness. And housing and agriculture are certainly not forbidden. The lesson here is not one of refraining from settling down or abstinence from alcohol, but a lesson in obedience for Judah. The Rechabites were prepared to obey a human progenitor who had died many generations before. How much more should Judah have been willing to obey God Himself—their divine parent—who was still alive and still instructing them?

We should note that when Jeremiah put the wine before the Rechabites in verse 5, he did *not* say, "The *Lord* says, 'Drink wine.'" That would have overruled their past commitment. Instead, he simply placed the wine before them and told them to drink, which they refused. Indeed, God certainly knew they would refuse and had Jeremiah perform the example for just this reason.

In verses 18-19, a blessing is pronounced on the Rechabites for their faithfulness to their father's commands. Jonadab will never lack a descendant to stand before God. This may simply mean his family line would always continue, as everyone who exists is "before God." But it could also signify that a descendant of Jonadab would always be in God's service (compare [Jeremiah 15:19](#)). "The Mishnah [Jewish oral tradition later written down] indicates that in the Second Temple period a special day was set aside for the Rechabites to bring the wood offering (*Ta'an* 4.5)" (Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan, editors, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 1993, "Rechabites," p. 643). Perhaps this is just one way the Rechabites were to serve before God if standing before Him implied such service." [END]