

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 57.5%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Jeremiah 49:1 – 33

Monday: Jeremiah 22:24-30, Jeremiah 23, 2 Kings 24:8-9 & 2 Chronicles 36:9

Tuesday: Jeremiah 29

Wednesday: Jeremiah 30, Jeremiah 31 & Jeremiah 49:34-39

Thursday: Jeremiah 50 & 51:59-61

Friday: Jeremiah 51:1-58, 61-64

Saturday: 2 Kings 24:10-20, 2 Chronicles 36:10-16, Jeremiah 24 & Jeremiah 52:1-3

Current # of email addresses in the group: 627

This is a bit of a larger week then we've had recently. This week's order is a bit all over the place. You'll have to watch for partial chapter combinations and jumping around a number of books.

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

[https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA\\_tacLBfv1XR3jH](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 89**

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

#### **Day 596 – SUNDAY: February 9<sup>th</sup>**

Jeremiah 49:1 – 33

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Continuing on from the prophecy against Moab in our previous reading, we move to Jeremiah's prophecy against Moab's brother nation, Ammon, which immediately follows in verses 1-6 of chapter 49.

The Ammonites lived just north of the ancient Moabites on the east side of the Jordan River. Today their descendants live primarily in the same area, the nation of Jordan and surroundings. Their ancient capital,

"Rabbah of the Ammonites" (verse 2), is now the site of Jordan's modern capital, Amman.

When Gad and the other Israelite tribes east of the Jordan were deported by the Assyrians, the Ammonites took over Gadite territory. God speaks in verse 1 of Milcom inheriting Gad. Milcom (Hebrew *Malcam*, "their king," KJV) was the god of the Ammonites—another form of the name Molech (meaning "King")—"essentially identical with the Moabitish Chemosh" ("Molech," *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, 1986). Thus, the comments regarding Chemosh in the highlights from our previous reading would also apply here. Indeed, Milcom is to suffer the exact same fate as Chemosh (compare [Jeremiah 48:7](#); [Jeremiah 49:3](#)). To be sure, they are one and the same.

We see then that the Ammonites encroached on Israelite territory and set up their worship throughout it. Yet they were not Israel's rightful heirs, as God points out in verse 1. "Judah was by the right of kindred the heir, not Ammon; but Ammon joined with Nebuchadnezzar against Judah and Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:2) and exulted over its fall (Psalms 83:4-7-8; Zephaniah 2:8-9)" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on [Jeremiah 49:1](#)).

So Ammon, like Moab in the previous chapter, will suffer destruction as punishment. While ancient invasion under Nebuchadnezzar may have been intended in part by the prophecy, it is clear that the primary fulfillment, as with the prophecy of the previous chapter, will occur during the Day of the Lord. Notice verse 2: "the days are coming...desolate...then Israel shall take possession of his inheritance" (not only the land originally given to Israel, but the land inhabited by the Ammonites). This certainly did not occur in the days of Nebuchadnezzar for Judah was then taken into captivity—and Israel, the northern 10 tribes, remained scattered. This prophecy will not be fulfilled until all the tribes of Israel are led back to the Promised Land

(request or download our free booklet [The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy](#) to learn more).

Heshbon in verse 3 "was at one time possessed by the Ammonites, but later lost to the Moabites" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 3). Today, as part of the Kingdom of Jordan, the area of Heshbon is under the dominion of Amman, the Jordanian capital. "Ai is not the Israelite city of the same name" (note on verse 3). "Since the word Ai means 'ruin' in Hebrew, the reference may be to Rabbah" (*The HarperCollins Study Bible*, 1993, note on verse 3).

Rather than the Ammonites boasting of "valleys," verse 4 may be translated: "Why do you boast in your strength? Your strength is ebbing" (NRSV; see explanation in *The New Bible Commentary*, note on verse 4). And their vaunted "treasures" may simply be their "resources for resisting the foe" (*JFB*, note on verse 4). Certainly their trust is misplaced. God calls Ammon a "backsliding daughter" (verse 4), as the nation had departed from the faith of its forefather Lot, who worshiped the true God.

Despite the terrible destruction the Ammonites will suffer, God will not make a complete end of them. Rather, as with the Moabites, He will ultimately "bring back the captives of the people of Ammon" (verse 6; compare [Jeremiah 48:47](#)).

Other prophecies concerning Ammon may be found in [Amos 1:13-15](#), [Zephaniah 2:8-11](#), [Ezekiel 21:28-32](#), [Ezekiel 25:1-7](#) and verse 10.

## **Prophecy Against Edom**

Verses 7-22 of [Jeremiah 49](#) are directed "against Edom," the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau who dwelt in the mountainous area south of Moab and Judah (see [Genesis 25:30](#); 36:8). Sections of this passage are clearly adapted from the prophecy of Obadiah—which

you may wish to reread at this point. Edom, the perennial enemy of Israel, will at last suffer judgment.

Commentaries generally explain that this prophecy of Edom in [Jeremiah 49](#) (along with the prophecies against Moab, Ammon and Damascus) was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar's armies invaded Judah and its neighbors around 586 B.C. Yet while Edom and other tribal nations were invaded and subjugated then, the main fulfillment of the prophecy will be "in that day" (verse 22)—language that consistently refers to the future Day of the Lord. Like Obadiah, this chapter concerns ultimate national punishment on Edom. God calls it "the calamity of Esau...*the time* that I will punish him" ([Jeremiah 49:8](#)). And that time is clearly revealed elsewhere, God declaring: "For My sword...shall come down on Edom, and on the people of My curse, for judgment.... For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah [the capital of Edom], and a great slaughter in the land of Edom.... For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion" ([Isaiah 34:5-8](#); compare [Isaiah 63:1](#), [Isaiah 63:4](#)). Thus, the time frame is the year that ends with the return of Jesus Christ.

God is going to repay the people of Edom for the evil way they have historically treated Israel (see [Obadiah 10](#)). Today, as mentioned in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Obadiah, Edomites continue to dwell in various parts of the Middle East, including Jordan and Turkey. It is likely that many of today's Palestinians are Edomites in whole or in part. Furthermore, there is apparently a growing Edomite presence in many nations of Europe due to Muslim immigration from the Middle East and North Africa while Turkey is actively seeking membership in the European Union, which ultimately may help to explain some similarities between prophecies against end-time Edom and end-time Babylon.

Teman ([Jeremiah 49:7](#)) was a principal descendant of Esau (see [Genesis 36:9-11](#)) and is believed to be "the name of a town in Edom, sometimes

used as the name of the northern half of the nation of Edom; here it probably stands for the whole nation" (*Word in Life Bible*, 1998, note on [Jeremiah 49:7](#)). The "wisdom" (or cunning, as the Hebrew could also be translated) for which Teman (or Edom) is known will quickly evaporate (verse 7; compare [Obadiah 8](#)).

The inhabitants of Dedan will be put to flight ([Jeremiah 49:8](#))—Dedan being "the name of a town in northwest Arabia, also used of the northwest region of Arabia along the Red Sea" (note on verse 8).

Verse 9 is adapted from [Obadiah 5](#). Those gathering grapes or even thieves would take their fill. But God would go way beyond this. Edom would be utterly laid bare, completely plundered of everything and everyone ([Jeremiah 49:10](#); [Obadiah 6](#)).

There is some confusion as to whether anyone will even be left alive of Edom. Many Bible versions have God telling Esau in verse 11 that He will preserve the children and widows. Yet [Obadiah 18](#) says, "The house of Edom shall be stubble...and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau." If [Jeremiah 49:11](#) means that children and widows will survive, then [Obadiah 18](#) would only be referring to the men being killed. But the verse doesn't appear to read that way. Furthermore, while God promises to return the captives of Moab and Ammon ([Jeremiah 48:47](#); [Jeremiah 49:6](#)), no such provision is made for Edom. And other versions, it should be considered, translate [Jeremiah 49:11](#) differently. In the Revised English Bible, God is shown *asking*, "Am I to keep alive your fatherless children? Are your widows to depend on me?" The implicit answer in this rendering is no. And, for another possibility, notice the end of verse 10 and verse 11 in the Jerusalem Bible: "His race is destroyed: it is no more! Of his neighbors, not one will say, 'Leave your orphans, I will keep them alive, your widows can rely on me.'"

Verse 12 concerns the cup of divine wrath, imagery that is also used in [Jeremiah 25:15-29](#). Going to this other passage, we can see more clearly what God means in [Jeremiah 49:12](#). He is declaring that if His own people Israel and Judah, and His holy city Jerusalem in particular, had to drink from the cup of wrath—that is, suffer divine judgment—then Edom, who was even guiltier, would *certainly* have to (compare [Jeremiah 25:28-29](#)).

Verses 14-16 of [Jeremiah 49](#) are adapted from [Obadiah 1-4](#). Note [Jeremiah 49:16](#): "O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill," with a "nest as high as the eagle." The "clefts of the rock" may refer to Petra, mentioned in the highlights of the previous reading, and perhaps other rock fortresses. High above Petra and on other mountains of Edom were high places for worship, lookouts and refuge. "Some of the mountain peaks of Edom reach over six thousand feet; Jerusalem [by comparison] is about 2,300 feet above sea level" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on [Obadiah 3](#)). Yet the Edomites would be brought down—not just physically, but figuratively from their exalted prideful arrogance ([Obadiah 4](#); [Jeremiah 49:16](#)).

Indeed, Edom will be devastated—"all its cities shall be perpetual wastes.... as in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring cities" (verses 13, 18). The same is prophesied elsewhere of Moab and Ammon ([Zephaniah 2:9](#)). Interestingly, the territory of Ammon, Moab and Edom—modern Jordan—is believed to be where these ancient cities were located.

The translation of [Jeremiah 49:19](#) is uncertain, as there is widespread disagreement among commentaries and Bible versions as to exactly what is meant. The prophecy against Babylon in the next chapter contains almost the exact same statement ([Jeremiah 50:44](#)), again perhaps demonstrating some kind of tie between end-time Edom and end-time Babylon. In both prophecies, it is not clear who is doing what and who is speaking. Look again at the New King James rendering in

chapter 49. Contrast that with the Moffatt Translation, which has God saying, "Like shepherds when the lion leaves the jungle of Jordan for the pasture, I will chase them [the Edomites in this case] away suddenly, and seize their rarest rams. Who can match me? Who dare challenge me? What shepherd can face me?" On the other hand, the Ferrar Fenton Translation presents this as a boast of, in this instance, Edom: "See he [Edom] was like a lion coming up from the swelling of Jordan to the permanent meadows: 'I will be sly with them,' he says, 'I will assail from behind them—what hero can defend them? For who is equal to me, and who expects me? And what shepherd can stand before me?'"

Whatever the case, God is going to bring ruin on Edom: "The young of the flock will be dragged off, and their pasture will be aghast at their fate" (verse 20, REB). A great earthquake will accompany Edom's fall (verse 21), parallel with other prophecies of Christ's return (compare [Isaiah 24:17-21](#); [Zechariah 14:4-5](#); [Revelation 16:18-20](#)). The "He" who comes up "like the eagle" to "spread His wings over Bozrah" ([Jeremiah 49:22](#)) is the returning Jesus Christ coming to strike—just as in [Jeremiah 48:40](#), as explained in the comments on our previous reading.

Of course, as was noted in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Obadiah, even if Edom is totally wiped out at Christ's second coming, as appears likely, the Edomites will be raised to physical life and opportunity for salvation in the second resurrection, 1,000 years later (see [Revelation 20:5, 11-12](#); [Matthew 11:20-24](#); [Matthew 12:41-42](#)). All of God's actions, we must keep in mind, work toward the ultimate good of all mankind. Even His punishment of the Edomites will work toward *their* eventual repentance, whenever that may be.

Besides Obadiah, other prophecies concerning Edom may be found in [Amos 1:11-12](#), [Isaiah 21:11-12](#), [Isaiah 34:1-17](#), [Isaiah 63:1-6](#), [Ezekiel 25:12-14](#) and [Ezekiel 35:1-15](#).



## Prophecies Against Damascus and Arabia

[Jeremiah 49:23-33](#) is directed "against Damascus," the metropolitan capital of Syria representing the nation as a whole. Syria, north of the land of Israel, was usually a hostile neighbor to ancient Israel and Judah, and today *remains* a hostile neighbor to the modern Jewish state of Israel.

The Assyrians had destroyed the Aramaean kingdom of Damascus around the same time the northern kingdom of Israel fell—and the Syrians were taken captive to the north. But the resettled city survived—and it is the city, along with the territory under its control, that Jeremiah addresses.

Hamath and Arpad "were major towns located west and north of the capital of Damascus" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 23-25). They are still under the rule of Damascus, which remains the capital of Syria.

"Trouble on the sea," which "cannot be quiet," may refer to an invasion of Syria's Mediterranean coast from the sea. This did not happen in Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, which came from the east. It may even be a direct end-time reference: "And there will be...on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectations of those things which are coming on the earth" ([Luke 21:25-26](#)). Yet some read [Jeremiah 49:23](#) as simply meaning that those on the seacoast—or "*at the sea*" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 23)—are, like those in other listed parts of Syria, experiencing unrest over the prospect of imminent invasion. In any case, the once-mighty Syria will be paralyzed with fear and anguish (verse 24).

Damascus, formerly "the city of praise" (verse 25), will be destroyed "in that day" (verse 26)—referring, we may reasonably conclude, to the Day of the Lord. This is even more clearly seen in verse 27. It is adapted



from [Amos 1:4](#), which appears to be part of an end-time prophecy (see the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on [Amos 1 and 2](#)). "Ben-Hadad," it should be recalled, was a title used by a number of Syrian rulers.

Besides [Amos 1:3-5](#), other prophecies of Syria are found in [Isaiah 17:1-3](#) and [Zechariah 9:1-4](#).

The message of [Jeremiah 49:28-33](#) is "against Kedar [son of Ishmael, father of the Arabs] and against the kingdoms of Hazor...[who are] men of the East" (verse 28). These are people who dwell in tents, shepherd flocks and ride camels. Hazor here is not the more famous city of this name in northern Israel. Meaning "Enclosure," this name was given to a number of towns (e.g., see [Joshua 15:21-25](#)). The *JFB Commentary* explains that the Hazor of [Jeremiah 49](#) was "not the city in Palestine, but a district in Arabia Petraea. 'Kingdoms' refer to the several combinations of clans, each under its own sheikh" (note on verse 28). The same commentary note says "the Kedarenes led a wandering predatory life in Arabia Petraea, as the Bedouin Arabs." As was mentioned in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on [Isaiah 21:13-17](#), the entry on "Kedar" in *Smith's Bible Dictionary* states, "The tribe seems to have been one of the most conspicuous of all the Ishmaelite tribes, and hence the rabbis call the Arabians universally by this name."

In verses 28 and 30 of [Jeremiah 49](#), specific mention is made of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as the instrument of punishment. This is a major reason many Bible scholars and commentators think that attacks by Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled all the prophecies from [Jeremiah 47:1-49:33](#)—prophecies against the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Syrians and Arabians. However, as has been explained, most of the prophecies in this section have not yet been ultimately fulfilled. In that context, it may even be that while the prophecy against the Arabians definitely applied to Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, as that is clearly stated, it may also be dual. That is, Nebuchadnezzar's invasion

may be presented here as a forerunner of latter-day events to be ultimately fulfilled, as with the other prophecies, in the direct intervention of Jesus Christ during the Day of the Lord.

Interestingly, the concept of a modern day "Nebuchadnezzar" is still very much alive in the minds of Muslims. Saddam Hussein portrayed himself as such a leader. Before him, the Shah of Iran attempted to reestablish the ancient Persian Empire through modern military might. While neither man fulfilled his personal vision, this kind of thinking should remind us that while ancient biblical prophecies may seem anachronistic and in no way pertinent to our time, they contain much that is still quite relevant in the present-day Middle East.

The Arabian sheiks are described as wealthy and secure ([Jeremiah 49:31](#))—yet without gates or bars (probably referring to the fact that the waterless desert provides a barrier of protection). Yet God will bring "fear on every side" (see verse 29)—a common theme in Jeremiah's prophecies (see [Jeremiah 6:25](#); [Jeremiah 20:3](#) margin, [Jeremiah 20:10](#); [Jeremiah 5](#); [Jeremiah 49:5](#))—and then actual "*calamity* from all its sides" ([Jeremiah 49:32](#)).

What do all the ethnic groups addressed in [Jeremiah 47:1-49:33](#) have in common? Historically they have usually been aggressively anti-Israel, often fighting the Israelites to destroy them and steal the land God gave His people—and the same is true today. Furthermore, in their fervor for the Islamic faith, they oppose the religion of the Bible and its adherents—often violently. God will eventually take action against the enemies of Israel (i.e., of the physical descendants of Israel and of spiritual Israel, the Church), and against all those who oppose His Word." [END]

Day 597 – MONDAY: February 10<sup>th</sup>

Jeremiah 22:24-30, Jeremiah 23, 2 Kings 24:8-9 & 2 Chronicles 36:9

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "When Josiah's son Jehoiakim died in 598 B.C. after an evil reign of 11 years ([2 Kings 23:36-37](#); [2 Chronicles 36:5](#)), Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin—also known as Jeconiah ([1 Chronicles 3:16-17](#); [Jeremiah 28:4](#); 29:2; [Matthew 1:11-12](#)) or simply Coniah ([Jeremiah 22:24](#), [Jeremiah 22:28](#))—was crowned king of Judah.

But here we encounter what appears to be a contradiction. The Chronicles version of the story says that Jeconiah was eight years old when he began to reign, whereas the 2 Kings version says eighteen. Which was it? The archaeological and biblical evidence proves that he had to be much older than eight at the time he took over the rule of Judah and reigned for three months (from December 598 through March 597 B.C.). For he had at least five children while a captive in Babylon only five years later, as mentioned on a Babylonian ration receipt (see *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, notes on [2 Chronicles 36:7](#), [2 Chronicles 36:9](#)). And "the scriptural descriptions of Jehoiachin seem to represent him as a mature young man ([Jeremiah 22:24-30](#); [Ezekiel 19:6](#))" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on [2 Kings 24:8](#)).

The answer is probably fairly simple. Jeconiah was no doubt 18 when he succeeded his father in 598 B.C. Ten years earlier, at the age of 8 in 608 B.C., his father must have installed him as coregent—probably just in name rather than critical function, so as to perpetuate the dynasty in the event the whirlwind of events removed Jehoiakim from the throne (as Jehoiakim's brother Jehoahaz had been removed the previous year, 609 B.C.). A coregency of Jehoiakim and Jeconiah could explain why Jeremiah addresses the "kings" of Judah in [Jeremiah 17:19-20](#). But as Jeconiah likely assumed no actual power until his father died, he is credited with a reign of only the three months rather than 10 years.

As king, Jeconiah follows in the footsteps of his father—continuing in evil rather than turning to God (even though Nebuchadnezzar is in the process of mobilizing his forces against Jerusalem during Jeconiah's entire three-month reign, as we will later see). Since Jeconiah's mother

Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem, is mentioned prominently, including the fact that she would and later did suffer deportation with her son ([2 Kings 24:8](#), [2 Kings 24:12](#); [Jeremiah 22:26-27](#); [Jeremiah 29:2](#); [Jeremiah 13:18](#)), it seems likely that she wields considerable influence over the young ruler. As earlier noted, Nehushta's father is probably the same Elnathan mentioned elsewhere as the son of Achbor, the official in the administration of Jehoiakim who apprehended Urijah the prophet but later tried to talk Jehoiakim out of burning the scroll of Jeremiah (see [Jeremiah 26:21-23](#), [Jeremiah 36:12](#), [Jeremiah 36:25](#)).

In [Jeremiah 22](#), God's message regarding Jeconiah quickly moves from third person (verse 24a) to second person—addressing the king directly (verses 24b-26). God tells Jeconiah that even if he were the signet ring on God's right hand, "the most important private possession bearing the owner's mark and authority" (*New Bible Commentary*, note on verses 24-30), God would still pluck him off and hand him over to others. Continued rebellion against God by Judah's rulers would be tolerated no longer. Jeconiah and his mother would soon be carried captive to Babylon (verses 25-26). Switching back to third person in verse 27, we are told that "they"—Jeconiah and his mother—will not return to the land of Judah.

In verse 28, Jeconiah is described as a "broken idol." The Jews idolized their Davidic ruler, likely expecting him to save them from the Babylonians. Yet Jeconiah himself would be taken captive to Babylon. In verse 30, God declares him "childless"—which is qualified by what follows, as Jeconiah actually had seven sons ([1 Chronicles 3:17-18](#); compare [Matthew 1:12](#)). Indeed, in the same verse God says Jeconiah would have "descendants" ([Jeremiah 22:30](#)). But they, like him, would not "prosper" as a king. They were, in effect, banned from the throne of David. Thus, it was only in regard to the throne that Jeconiah was to be regarded as childless.

It should be mentioned that though Jesus Christ, the ultimate heir of David's throne, "was lineally descended from Jeconiah [see [Matthew 1](#)], it was only through Joseph, who, though His legal, was not His real father. Matthew gives the legal pedigree through Solomon down to Joseph; Luke the real pedigree, from Mary, the real parent, through Nathan, brother of Solomon, upwards ([Luke 3:31](#))" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on [Jeremiah 22:29-30](#)). We will look more closely at these genealogies later in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary.

### **"Woe to the Shepherds"**

While [Jeremiah 23](#) may constitute a separate prophecy, it is also possible that it follows right on from chapter 22. Chapter 22 decried the three failed Davidic rulers who followed Josiah, ending with Jeconiah. Chapter 23 begins with a message of "woe to the shepherds," the *leaders*, of God's "sheep," His people (verse 1), and then speaks of the future King of the line of David who finally *will* save Judah and set things right (verses 5-8).

In verses 1-2 the leaders, both civil and religious, bear a huge responsibility for driving God's people away from Him, which is why the people are driven from the land and scattered into distant parts. The leaders have failed to "attend to" or take care of the people—so God will take care of *them* (that is, in an altogether different sense). The prophet Ezekiel would later convey a very similar message from God concerning the wayward shepherds of His people (see [Ezekiel 34](#)).

Verses 3-8 of [Jeremiah 23](#) are parallel with [Jeremiah 3:14-18](#). Eventually, God would gather a "remnant" of His flock, bringing them "back to their folds," and appoint new, caring shepherds for them (verses 3-4). This would be fulfilled in part when a small remnant of the Jewish people later returned from Babylonian captivity—the shepherds being Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel and others. There would be a later

fulfillment through the Church of God as the "remnant according to the election of grace" ([Romans 11:5](#))—the shepherds being Jesus Christ and His true ministers (the word "pastor" actually means shepherd). And, of course, the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy is when Jesus Christ takes over the world at His return, when all people—including a regathered Israel—will be governed and taught by Him, His glorified saints and spiritually converted human leaders.

In [Jeremiah 23:5](#), the "Branch" from David's genealogical tree is the Messiah, Jesus Christ (see also [Jeremiah 33:14-16](#); [Isaiah 4:2](#); [Isaiah 11:1-5](#); [Zechariah 3:8](#); [Zechariah 6:12](#)). The mention of both Judah and Israel in [Jeremiah 23:6-7](#) makes it clear that this is an end-time prophecy—referring exclusively to the return of Christ in power and glory to rule all nations. Verses 7-8 explain that the great "Second Exodus" of the house of Israel (compare [Jeremiah 3:18](#); [Isaiah 11:11-16](#)) will surpass even the ancient Exodus from Egypt (compare [Jeremiah 16:14-15](#)). This is certainly not referring to the small Jewish return from Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C. Instead, it is clearly speaking of a great and awesome return that is yet future.

The rest of [Jeremiah 23](#) contains a scathing denunciation of the religious shepherds of God's people: "For both prophet and priest are profane" (verse 11). The same is true today. The word "prophet," it should be pointed out, can simply mean preacher, especially in the New Testament. In other words, "prophet" refers to those who *foretell* the future and those who *forthtell* God's truth—that is, who preach and teach it according to His direction. Yet not all who claim to represent God actually do—in fact, most don't.

There is one true God, who reveals divine truth, and calls a relatively few to be His followers, prophets and ministers. But the world has always been filled with many counterfeit and alternative religions and religious leaders. If a false religion teaches some good values and good works, it is still damaging in an overall sense because any false religion



ultimately deprives its followers of a genuinely committed and close relationship with God and the *one* path that leads to eternal life. Compounding the evil is the utter blasphemy and disgrace of leaders who claim to represent God while setting examples of corrupt and immoral behavior, implying that such conduct is *God's* nature or that it is acceptable to Him. God is outraged when people claim to be His spokesmen when they are anything but—living and preaching totally contrary to His will (compare [Matthew 15:1-9](#)).

Beginning with [Jeremiah 23:9](#), Jeremiah's conscientious character and compassionate personality are shown. He reels in shock and misery as if drunk at the harmful message of the false prophets and because of the judgment God has proclaimed for his countrymen. Terrible droughts continue (compare verse 10; Jeremiah 12:4; [Jeremiah 14:1-6](#)) because the land, Jeremiah says, "is full of adulterers" (verse 10). And no wonder, for the spiritual leaders themselves "commit adultery" (verse 14). "This term could apply to those who practiced immoral sexual behavior, those who committed spiritual adultery by pursuing other gods, and those who were involved in cultic prostitution" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 9-10).

The deplorable situation God addresses here through Jeremiah certainly existed in the prophet's day—and the message was clearly applicable to that time. But there are indications that the message was also, even primarily, for the end time. While "the year of their punishment" (verse 12) may have referred in part to the year of ancient Jerusalem's fall, 586 B.C., the primary fulfillment, we may ascertain from verse 20, was to come in "the latter days." Surprisingly, the end-time *year* of punishment usually refers to the final Day of the Lord, *after* the time of "Jacob's trouble" (30:7), when God punishes the *enemies* of Israel. Perhaps God views the false prophets in [Jeremiah 23](#), who represent spiritual Babylon, as Israel's enemies. Verse 12 may mean that they will suffer through the darkness of the Great Tribulation



to meet with final disaster in the Day of the Lord. In verse 20, God says that we would understand all of this *perfectly* in the latter days (other translations say "clearly"). But *do* we—even though it appears we are in the latter days? Verse 20 seems more likely to mean that after these things are actually *fulfilled* in the latter days, *then* we will understand perfectly.

Part of [Jeremiah 23:15](#) is a reiteration of [Jeremiah 9:15](#), where God decreed punishment for following false religion (see verses 13-14). And the false prophets are the *source* of this abomination.

The false prophets basically told the people what they wanted to hear, which was, "You shall have peace" (verse 17). The people did not appreciate Jeremiah telling them otherwise—and people still don't want to hear what God actually says. Ironically, this runs counter to the main reason for prophecy. Verse 22 highlights an important truth: the primary purpose of a prophet of God was not to merely foretell the future, but to *turn the hearers "from their evil way and from the evil of their doings."* Instead, these prophets shamefully "cause [God's] people to err by their lies and by their recklessness" (verse 32)—shrugging off any damage they may be doing. Rather than delivering God's messages, they "steal [God's] words every one from his neighbor" (verse 30). That is, they plagiarize each other and often take God's actual words (those in Scripture being the prime example) and twist them to suit their own messages.

From verse 33 to the end of the chapter, God is warning them not to mock Jeremiah, sarcastically asking him, "What is the sad news from God today?" Jeremiah's experiences are sobering because they give us insight into the hostile resistance God's Church can anticipate as its end-time warning message becomes stronger and more and more people become aware of it." [END]

Day 598 – TUESDAY: February 11<sup>th</sup>

## Jeremiah 29

### Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Jeremiah 29 appears to fall in the same time frame as chapters 27-28—the fourth year of King Zedekiah (see [Jeremiah 28:1](#)). Though chapter 27 contained rumblings and plotting of rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, it is evident that Zedekiah has not yet actually revolted—for we see him sending a delegation to the emperor in Babylon ([Jeremiah 29:3](#)). Later in his fourth year, Zedekiah himself travels with others to Babylon (see [Jeremiah 51:59](#)). The reason for these journeys is not given, "but it is altogether possible that they had to do with the annual presentation of tribute" (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 463). Regarding the second journey, *The HarperCollins Study Bible* alternatively suggests, "It may be that Zedekiah made such a trip in order to explain his participation in the conspiracy mentioned in ch[apter] 27" (note on [Jeremiah 51:59-64](#)). The same could be true of this earlier delegation.

Jeremiah sent messages from God with key individuals in both delegations—the first message being a letter to the Jews in captivity. He entrusts the letter to Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah. They are clearly important dignitaries. Elasah was evidently the brother of Ahikam, who defended Jeremiah ([Jeremiah 26:24](#)), and brother of the Gemariah who allowed the use of his room at the temple for the proclamation of Jeremiah's prophecies ([Jeremiah 36:10](#))—all three being sons of Shaphan, who reported the finding of the Book of the Law by the high priest Hilkiah to King Josiah ([2 Kings 22:3-13](#)). The Gemariah of [Jeremiah 29](#) may have been the son of Hilkiah the high priest. "If so, Jeremiah was supported by two very powerful families in Judah who had been involved in Josiah's reform" (verse 3).

In the letter, God tells the exiles through Jeremiah that they will be there for a long time and that they should make the most of it by

settling down, building houses, growing food, expanding their families and being good citizens of Babylon, even *praying* for it: "For in its peace you will have peace" (verse 7). This parallels the responsibility of God's Church today, which dwells in the "Babylon" of this world. Besides telling us to obey the governing authorities ([Romans 13:1-7](#)), the apostle Paul writes: "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" ([1 Timothy 2:1-2](#)).

Indication of Judah's integration into Babylonian society is confirmed by archeology. Over the course of excavations in 1889, 1900 and 1948 at Nippur, southeast of Babylon, 700 inscribed tablets known as the Murashu Archives were uncovered. "These tablets record contracts, certificates and receipts for payments, in documents belonging to a Jewish family living in Babylon in the fifth century B.C. The names of the individuals mentioned there are both Hebrew and non-Hebrew names, perhaps indicating that the family was integrating into Babylonian society" (Walter Kaiser Jr., *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?*, 2001, p. 163 ).

In general, "the Jews experienced economic well-being, and some found opportunities to rise high in the government, just as Daniel did. There is evidence that they were able to form their own council of elders and to have the advantage of prophets and priests in their midst as well, for Jeremiah addressed all three groups when he wrote to the captives (Jeremiah 29:1)" (Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 1998, p. 414). Yet Jeremiah warns the people against listening to the prophets among them ([Jeremiah 29:8-9](#)). For these prophets were preaching the same message the false prophets in Judah were propagating—that the captivity would be over shortly, with the people soon resettled in the Jewish homeland.

Yet Jeremiah reaffirms the time as 70 years, as in chapter 25 (see [Jeremiah 29:10](#)). He also reaffirms the wonderful fact that God's people actually *would* go free and return to Judah—but that they had to wait a while. Verses 11-14 "are undoubtedly among the most comforting in Scripture. The exiles in Babylon are to settle down and wait, for God knows the plans He has for them, plans to give them a hope and a future. In the O[ld] T[estament] 'hope,' either *miqweh/tiqwah* or *yahal* invites us to look ahead in confident expectation. Each assumes a time of waiting. But the latter especially reminds us that our future is guaranteed by our personal relationship with God. Because He is our God, He has plans for us [too]. And those plans are good—both beautiful and beneficial. Like the exiles, we may have to wait for God's plans for us to bear fruit. But we can wait confidently, because our hope is in Him" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on [Jeremiah 29:11-14](#)).

The point of verses 15-20 can be a little confusing. In essence, God seems to be saying: "Because you think these false prophets are telling you the truth—that you'll be going back to Judah soon—let me tell you what's going to happen to the land of Judah and the people who remain there...." "He informs them that their hopes of returning soon are fruitless, for Zedekiah, the present occupant of Judah's throne, will shortly be unseated and the last vestiges of the kingdom will be cruelly eroded away" (Merrill, p. 463). The imagery of cyclical punishment and rotten figs is again used (verses 17-18; compare [Jeremiah 24](#)). So the exiles just needed to wait it out—keeping their hopes and trust on God's true message.

In [Jeremiah 29:21-23](#), two prophets were singled out for speaking lies in God's name. As punishment, Nebuchadnezzar would have them "roasted in the fire," a form of execution that was certainly used in Babylon (see [Daniel 3](#)).

Next Jeremiah sends instruction to proclaim a message to another false leader in the exile, Shemaiah ([Jeremiah 29:24](#)), who went on a letter-writing campaign to the people and priests of Jerusalem to have Jeremiah reprimanded or locked up for his prophecies. One important recipient was Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah (compare [Jeremiah 21:1-2](#); [Jeremiah 34:3-4](#); [2 Kings 25:18](#)), who read aloud the letter he received to Jeremiah. The prophet then received God's judgment against Shemaiah. His treachery would be paid back in his having no descendants and being prevented from seeing the blessings God had promised to the exiles." [END]

#### Day 599 – WEDNESDAY: February 12<sup>th</sup>

Jeremiah 30, Jeremiah 31 & Jeremiah 49:34-39

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "It is not known specifically when chapters 30 and 31 of Jeremiah were written. Since they follow the previous reading, chapter 29, which contains the letter sent to the captives in Babylon, we are reading these chapters now. Indeed, there is a thematic continuity here. In the letter, Jeremiah delivered God's message that the people would later be brought back from captivity. The message of this section, communicated to Jeremiah in a dream ([Jeremiah 31:26](#)) is *also* one of return from captivity—yet clearly in the end time. "In the latter days," God says, "you will consider it" ([Jeremiah 30:24](#)). This ties in with "Behold, the days are coming..." in verse 3. We will see more about this phrase in our next reading.

In no way can the return of this section refer to merely the Jewish return from the ancient Babylonian captivity. Notice that this is a return of Judah *and* Israel to the Promised Land (verses 3, 10). This has never happened. However, some who recognize that this section is a prophecy of events in modern times have argued that it refers to the Jewish return to establish the state of Israel in the 1900s. Yet it is only a low percentage of Jews in the world who have returned to live in the

land of Israel. Moreover, only a very small percentage of Jews are ethnically descended from Israelites of the northern tribes. Most are descended from the southern tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi. Moreover, most of the people in the world today who are descended from the northern tribes of Israel are not Jews at all—rather, they are largely people of northwest European heritage (as northwest Europe is the area to which the "lost tribes" eventually migrated following their ancient captivity). The United States and Britain are the preeminent nations descended from ancient Israel (download or request our free booklet [\*The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy\*](#) to learn more).

Also noteworthy is the great joy described in Jeremiah's account of the return from captivity. When some of the Jews under Zerubbabel returned from Babylonian captivity, they apparently were not feeling relieved and liberated, since they had not suffered an oppressive slavery prior to this. They had mixed feelings when they arrived at Jerusalem, saw the ruins and realized they would not be able to restore the temple to its former glory ([Ezra 3:11-13](#); [Haggai 2:1-3](#)). Shortly before Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, he "wept and mourned for many days" at the pitiful state of Jerusalem ([Nehemiah 1:3-4](#)). So the description in [Jeremiah 30-31](#) of miraculous interventions, huge masses of people and great excitement, joy and thanksgiving just does not fit the return of Jews from Persian-ruled Babylon.

We should also observe that the release from captivity described here follows a period of greatest suffering for both Israel and Judah ([Jeremiah 30:4-7](#)). The greatest suffering the people of the northern kingdom had experienced so far was the Assyrian conquest of their nation and their subsequent deportations. Yet God could not here be referring to those events, as He gave Jeremiah this prophecy of Israel's suffering more than a century later. So to what was He referring?

Notice verse 8: "Alas! For that day is great, *so that none is like it*; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it"—that is,

after suffering through it, not that Israel would never have to go through it at all. This is parallel with other passages of Scripture. The end of [Daniel 11](#) describes events "at the time of the end" (verse 40). Of the same period, the Jewish prophet Daniel was told, "At that time...there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered" ([Daniel 12:1](#)). The next verses show that this refers to the time of the resurrection at Christ's return. We see this here in [Jeremiah 30](#) as well. God says He will "raise up" King David after this terrible time (verse 9), so there should really be no question that we are dealing with future events.

[Matthew 24:21-22](#) says of the time preceding Christ's second coming, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [preserved alive]; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened." Clearly, there is not more than one worst time ever. These verses are all describing the same period. [Jeremiah 30:12-15](#), regarding Israel's incurable affliction and wound, abandonment by allies and severe chastisement from God is obviously parallel to [Hosea 5:12-15](#), which was previously explained in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary to be a prophecy of this same period of the Great Tribulation.

This will be a time of terrible calamity for the American people, other nations of British heredity, certain peoples of northwest Europe and the Jews—to soon be followed by the entire world suffering the greatest catastrophes imaginable. All the dreadful events of human history will pale before the awful and horrific events that are coming. But each scriptural announcement of this worst time that is yet to happen is accompanied by a message of hope: "but he shall be saved out of it"; "your people shall be delivered"; "those days will be shortened."



In fact, as we have elsewhere noted, God offers a promise of protection even *during* this terrible time to those who will repent and seek Him. In [Luke 21:36](#), Jesus said: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." And He tells true Christians who remain faithful in this age: "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" ([Revelation 3:10](#)). This should not be viewed as a guarantee against death or even martyrdom, as death itself can be a "place of safety" until the resurrection (see [Isaiah 57:1-2](#)). Nevertheless, it does appear that God will give His faithful servants protection from the kind of suffering the rest of the world will experience—and in general will hide His faithful people from what is coming (see [Revelation 12:13-16](#); [Zephaniah 2:3](#)).

On the other hand, as for Christians who have spiritually drifted from God, it appears that they will have to experience the terrible times ahead in severe measure to be shaken into taking a stand for Him and His truth (see [Revelation 12:17](#); [Revelation 3:14-21](#)).

## **A Dream That Ends Sweet**

After the awful calamities at the end of this age, Jesus Christ will return and a new age will commence. (Notice again the mention of King David being resurrected. This is repeated in [Ezekiel 37:24-25](#)). Some think "David" in both places is a reference to Christ, David's descendant, since it is Christ who inherits the throne of David to reign as King over Israel (see [Isaiah 9:6-7](#); [Luke 1:32-33](#)). Yet notice that [Jeremiah 30:9](#) says the Israelites will serve "the LORD their God, *and* David their king." The "LORD" in this context is Jesus Christ. Consider that even when David ruled over Israel 3,000 years ago, the ultimate King of Israel was Jesus Christ, as David and then Solomon "sat on the throne of the LORD" (compare [1 Chronicles 29:23](#); [2 Chronicles 9:6-8](#)). Even so, Christ

promises that in His coming Kingdom, His servants will share His throne with Him ([Revelation 3:21](#)). Yet they will have specialized administrative duties, being given particular rule, under Him, over different responsibilities, such as different numbers of cities (compare [Luke 19:11-19](#)). The 12 apostles, resurrected in glory, will each rule over one of the 12 tribes of Israel ([Matthew 19:28](#)). And a resurrected David will serve as king, under Christ, over all of *them*.

Humbled and repentant, the Israelites will be restored to a position of honor and glory in the world ([Jeremiah 30:18-20](#)). Foreigners will no longer be their masters (verse 8). In fact, the nations that enslaved them will be destroyed (verse 11)—that is, the political entities, not all the people in them, since we also see that these enemy nations will themselves be put into captivity for a time (verse 16). At long last, Israel will have peace and no longer need to fear (verse 10).

The beginning of [Jeremiah 31](#) contains what *The Expositors Bible Commentary* describes as "one of the most beautiful poems in [Jeremiah's] book" (1998, note on verses 3-4). It is a continuation of the magnificent prophecy about Israel and Judah's future in the previous chapter. God's love won't be just a nice platitude—He will demonstrate it with action. He will bring Israel's people home, the land will be fertile, producing plenty of food, and there will be peace and abundance.

God says in verse 8, "Behold, I will bring them from the north country [primarily Europe], and gather them from the ends of the earth"—wherever they have been scattered. A proclamation is issued to the nations and to the remnant of Israel "in the isles afar off" (verse 10) that God is the one who has humbled, freed and now amazingly blessed Israel. The scattered Israelites will come "streaming to the goodness of the LORD" (verse 12). And eventually, the rest of mankind will follow their example.

We then see a sad picture of Rachel weeping inconsolably for the loss of her children, which is heard at Ramah in the territory of Benjamin, five miles north of Jerusalem. Rachel, wife of Jacob, was the mother of Joseph and thus of the northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh that descended from him. She was also the mother of the southern tribe of Benjamin, so she is representative of both kingdoms. Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin and was buried not too far to the north of Bethlehem, which itself is five miles to the south of Jerusalem ([Genesis 35:19](#); [Genesis 48:7](#)). The location of her tomb was later referred to as Zelzah, which in Samuel's day was within the territory of Benjamin (see [1 Samuel 10:2-3](#)). The traditional spot is about a mile north of Bethlehem, and thus around nine miles from Ramah. The image of Rachel weeping from the grave is not to be understood literally. Like the image of Abel's blood crying out to God from the ground (see [Genesis 4:10](#)), it is figurative—especially considering that this is a prophetic dream.

Rachel's northern children had in one sense been lost in the Assyrian conquest and deportation more than a century earlier. Many of her southern children had been lost to the Assyrians not long afterward. And many more were lost in the stages of Babylonian conquest, the final stage of which was coming soon. Ramah was "the very place where exiles were gathered before deportation to Babylon (cf. [Jeremiah] 40:1).... Jeremiah himself was in a camp for exiles in Ramah (cf. 40:1)" (*Expositor's*, note on 31:15). So the prophecy apparently had some application to Jeremiah's day. However, in context, it should be clear that the primary meaning here relates to what we have already seen in this prophetic dream—the terrible time of Jacob's trouble, when Rachel loses more children than ever before. In verses 16-17, the weeping is to stop because the children will be brought back. In fact, *Ephraim* is specifically mentioned as returning in the next few verses, making the end-time context plain—since Ephraim will not return in the repentant way described until after the Great Tribulation.

It may seem strange, then, that the New Testament book of Matthew applies the verse about Rachel weeping for her children to King Herod's massacre of the innocent children in the region of Bethlehem in his attempt to kill the infant Messiah ([Matthew 2:16-18](#)). *Expositor's* comments: "How can this prophecy be fulfilled in Matthew's reference? First, it must be stressed that Matthew's method of quoting an O[ld] T[estament] reference does not automatically imply a direct fulfillment.... For proof see the immediate context in [Matthew 2:15](#), where [Hosea 11:1](#) in its original context unmistakably speaks of the nation Israel but by analogy and higher fulfillment (called by some 'compenetration') refers to Christ. Similarly, that which related to Israel in original revelation (v. 15) is by analogy ('typological fulfillment'...) used in speaking of Herod's atrocities. In both cases God will overrule the nation's sorrow for her ultimate joy" (note on [Jeremiah 31:16-17](#); see also *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 15). Indeed, though children were lost to Rachel in Herod's massacre, they will ultimately be restored in a future resurrection (see [Ezekiel 37:1-14](#)).

It should be pointed out that though we have spent time exploring the meaning of Rachel's weeping, that's not really the main focus of the dream. The main focus of the dream, and why it is so positive at this point, is that the time for weeping has ceased. The mention of the weeping itself was in fact very brief. It is God's declaration concerning the wonderful time that follows that filled most of Jeremiah's present vision.

In [Jeremiah 31:21](#), Israel is directed back to God. In verse 22, God intends to bring Israel's gadding about to an end. "For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth—a woman shall encompass a man." This is one of the most disputed sentences in the book of Jeremiah. Many interpretations have been suggested. A tradition going back to early Catholic theologians is that it refers to Jesus in Mary's womb. But

most modern interpreters reject this view. Indeed, just to say that a male child is inside a mother's womb does not seem that unique.

Interestingly, rabbis have used verse 22 to explain the custom of a bride walking in circles around the bridegroom seven times at a traditional Jewish wedding. This is also related to the encirclement of Jericho seven times, whereby the city wall was brought down. The idea with bride and groom seems to be one of collapsing any wall or barrier between them—and in Jeremiah would imply collapsing the wall that has been built up between the woman Israel and her Husband the Lord. However, if the interpretation does relate to God and Israel, perhaps it is much simpler. In the beginning of the verse, God asked Israel how long she would grieve about. And now the new thing He has brought about is that she encircles her Husband *with her arms*—embracing and clinging to Him rather than continuing to wander. The New Living Translation renders the verse: "For the LORD will cause something new and different to happen—Israel will embrace her God." This seems most reasonable. Nevertheless, we cannot be certain as to what is meant. We do know that Israel returns to God—and that is sufficient.

Verses 23-25 show Judah, Jeremiah's beloved homeland, ultimately restored with great blessings. The prophet had been afforded a marvelous picture. After all the warnings and the people's continuing rebellion, beyond the sin and punishment of Israel and Judah, he sees through God's vivid testimony that they would ultimately turn back to God and be gloriously restored to such blessings as he could only imagine. It was such a change for Jeremiah from the sadness of so many previous visions, and the frightening images at the beginning of this one, that he woke up in the middle of it feeling on top of the world—or, as he put it, "my sleep was sweet to me" (verse 26). Greatly comforted, he was able to rest easy—for he saw with clarity what the future would ultimately bring.

At the end of the previous reading, Jeremiah awoke from a prophetic dream that had become peaceful and even blissful regarding the future of Israel and Judah. Comforted, he fell soundly back asleep. And it appears that he went right back into the dream.

This final part of the prophecy is divided into three sections, each beginning with the same words we read in [Jeremiah 30:3](#), "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD..." ([Jeremiah 31:27, 31, 38](#)). "This expression introduces a new era in the history of God's dealing with His people" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 38-40). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* says it is "an eschatological formula that places the prophecy in messianic times in the Day of the Lord, the consummation period of the nation's history" (note on verse 31).

The first section continues the millennial picture of the prophetic dream. Though the population of Israel and Judah will be greatly diminished due to the calamities they will suffer in the end time, God will begin to multiply them once again when He returns them to the Promised Land. He will also multiply the animals of the nation—bringing back the livestock and general wildlife (verse 27). As God has overseen the destruction of the nation, He will now oversee its building and planting—here using the same words as those describing Jeremiah's commission (see [Jeremiah 1:10](#)).

In God's just society, children will not be made to pay for their parents' sins, as happens in various ways in the present age ([Jeremiah 31:29-30](#)). The New Living Translation paraphrases the thought this way: "The people will no longer quote this proverb: 'The parents eat sour grapes, but their children's mouths pucker at the taste.' All people will die for their own sins—those who eat the sour grapes will be the ones whose mouths will pucker." (The discontinued proverb is also mentioned in [Ezekiel 18:2](#); see [Ezekiel 18:1-20](#) there for a fuller exposition).

We then come to the second section here ([Jeremiah 31:31-37](#)). God says He will make a "new covenant" with Israel and Judah (verse 31). "This mountain-peak O[ld] T[estament] passage stands in a real sense as the climax of Jeremiah's teaching" (*Expositor's*, note on verse 31). Indeed, in [Jeremiah 17:9](#) God proclaimed that the human heart "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Here, we see how this is going to change.

In describing this *New Covenant* in contrast to the one He made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt, God is, by implication, declaring the previous one *old*. Thus the term "Old Covenant" for the Sinai Covenant. The Old Covenant was, as we see here, essentially a "marriage" covenant—by which God was a Husband to Israel (verse 32). In this covenant, Israel, the wife, had agreed to submit to God and obey His laws. But she did not. The people never had the right heart and mind to obey ([Deuteronomy 5:29](#); [Romans 8:7](#)). This fault of the people, the book of Hebrews explains, was the problem with the Old Covenant—and the reason the New Covenant was necessitated ([Hebrews 8:7-8](#)). The book of Hebrews actually quotes this important passage from Jeremiah twice (verses 8-13; [Hebrews 10:16-17](#)).

What, then, is the New Covenant? It is basically a new marriage contract God lays out with Israel and Judah. Does it negate God's laws, as many today claim? By no means. First of all, remember that God's commandments were in effect long before the Sinai Covenant was entered into (compare [Genesis 26:5](#)). Thus, Old Covenant or no, God's law was still binding. Certainly, obedience to God's law was part of the obligation of the Old Covenant. But man has that obligation even without the specific terms of the Old Covenant. When the Old Covenant ended, the law remained. It remains still under the New Covenant, as we will see.

Bear in mind that just because God has drawn up a "new" covenant, this does not mean that it is such a radical break with the past that



there is no similarity between the Old and New Covenants whatsoever. Consider contracts today. The parties to a contract may decide to void it and draw up a replacement contract. There may be many aspects of the former contract that are made part of the new. Moreover, the law of the land upon which the contracts are based remains unchanged. So it is with God's contracts. The end of the Old Covenant does not mean the end of the law upon which the covenant is based. And neither does the introduction of the New Covenant.

Moreover, under the terms of the New Covenant, the laws of God (i.e., those that were His laws at the time of Jeremiah's prophecy, when the *Old Covenant* was in force!) are to be written *in the hearts and minds of God's people*—engraving them into their very character and making it possible for them to truly obey. God says that all will *know Him* under this new arrangement ([Jeremiah 31:34](#)). And how do people really know God—developing an intimate, loving relationship with Him? The New Testament answers: "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" ([1 John 2:3-4](#)). That should be pretty clear—God's law is still required under the New Covenant. Of course, God desires and expects more than mere grudging compliance. That's not at all what God's laws and covenant are all about. He wants our hearts to be in the covenant and the covenant to be in our hearts. This is the spirit and intent of God's commandments.

Notice what else God says in [Jeremiah 31:34](#): "For I will forgive their iniquity [lawlessness], and their sin [lawbreaking] I will remember no more" (compare [Jeremiah 50:20](#)). If lawbreaking were constantly before God's face, how would He ever forget it? Is God saying that He will eliminate lawbreaking by doing away with His laws? Clearly not, as He will write His laws in the hearts and minds of His people. So what God must be talking about is putting an end to lawbreaking—an end to

sin—*through enabling people to obey*. Yet as other biblical passages explain, this is a growth process. People do not become perfect overnight. With help from God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit He gives them, they *grow* in obedience—God's laws being written into their character gradually. But eventually, as Scripture shows, people are to be transformed into perfect spirit beings who will never sin again. This is how sin will ultimately one day be remembered no more—it will no longer exist.

Yet there must still be a provision for dealing with sin in the meantime—both sins committed before this process has begun and sins that occur during the growth period. And indeed there is—the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. On the eve before His death, during the last Passover meal at which He ate with His disciples, Jesus introduced the symbols of broken bread to represent the sacrifice of His broken body and wine to symbolize His shed blood—His death. Notice: "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood *of the new covenant*, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" ([Matthew 26:27-28](#)). Christ was explaining that the shedding of His blood as a sacrifice for sin was required to make the New Covenant possible. Without it, there was no way to atone for the sins of all who would participate in the covenant. Also, it was Christ's death that brought the Old Covenant marriage to an end—thus enabling a new marriage contract to be entered into.

Notice further that Jesus was here *initiating* the New Covenant with His disciples. This can be confusing since Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant made with Israel and Judah is definitely millennial in setting. Furthermore, the "marriage of the Lamb" does not occur until Christ's return ([Revelation 19:7-9](#))—and this is clearly referring to Christ's marriage to the Church. It helps when we understand that the Church of God is *spiritual* Israel—a pioneer in the relationship God announced through Jeremiah. However, this does not explain why the Church

seems to be under the New Covenant marriage today even though the marriage does not take place until Christ's return.

To understand, we must know something about the nature of Jewish marriage in biblical times. Couples initially became engaged or betrothed with a customary shared cup of wine. This betrothal was not like engagements today, which can easily be broken off. A Jewish betrothal (Hebrew *eyrusin*) was a binding contract. It required a divorce to break it. The couple during this *kiddushin* or "sanctification" period was considered essentially married—and already considered husband and wife—except that they did not live together or have conjugal relations (compare [Matthew 1:18-20](#), where Joseph and Mary are "betrothed" yet already called husband and wife). The betrothal period was one of preparation. Later, at the time of the actual marriage ceremony (*nissuin*), another cup of wine was shared to confirm the covenant and a wedding feast commenced. (In modern Jewish practice, the *eyrusin* and *nissuin* are combined into the same wedding ceremony—the contractual engagement period having been removed, according to some scholars, during the dangerous times of the Middle Ages due to fear that bride or groom would not survive until the wedding.)

With all of this as background, we can better understand the New Covenant relationship. Jesus initiated the New Covenant—proposed marriage we might say—to a group He saw as the remnant of Israel and Judah who were as yet married to Him under the Old Covenant arrangement. As we've seen, the Old Covenant arrangement was not good enough. Even Christ's disciples, the most faithful people of His day, were still carnal and condemned because of their sins. They needed to be freed from the Old Covenant marriage and then changed into new spiritual people to enter into the new relationship with Christ. This was accomplished through Christ's death and resurrection and their receiving the Holy Spirit (see [Romans 7:1-4](#); [1 Corinthians](#)

[7:39](#); [Galatians 2:20](#); [2 Corinthians 5:16-17](#); [Romans 8:5-10](#)), thus making them the Church of God, the true "Israel of God" ([Galatians 6:16](#))—that is, the faithful remnant of Israel according to God's grace (compare [Romans 11:1-5](#)).

Having agreed to the New Covenant, the Church is now betrothed and sanctified to Christ ([2 Corinthians 11:2](#))—under the terms of the New Covenant but still awaiting the coming *fullness* of the New Covenant marriage. The Church has grown to include more people ever since. Yet to be part of it still requires partaking of the cup of the New Covenant each year, reaffirming agreement to the terms of the marriage contract—a repentant commitment to obey and the acceptance of Christ's shed blood to atone for any *failure* to obey. Those who accept these terms and follow through on them become part of the true Israel, *spiritual* Israel. Gentiles, and even all those who make up the physical nations of Israel and Judah, must actually become spiritual Israelites, through repentance and spiritual conversion, to participate in the New Covenant. And a small number of physical Israelites and gentiles have become part of spiritual Israel, the Church, since the Church began.

At Christ's return, those who are betrothed to him prior to that time will then go through an actual wedding ceremony and feast wherein the New Covenant will be ratified. Glorified with spirit bodies, they will be perfect and will never sin again, having God's laws ingrained perfectly into their character—continuing in unbroken oneness with Christ thereafter. This is the culmination and fullness of the New Covenant marriage—yet God intends to thereafter extend the marriage relationship to all human beings, that is, to all who will ultimately agree to be changed in the same way.

When Christ returns and joins into the fullness of marriage with the Church, He will then also extend His engagement proposal to all those of physical Israel and Judah who are then left in the world—and later to

all Israel and Judah of all ages in the resurrection of [Ezekiel 37](#). Yet, as mentioned, all of these, too, must become *spiritual* Israelites. Christ will also extend His proposal to all mankind—yet the covenant is still with Israel ([Jeremiah 31:31](#); [Ezekiel 37:11, 19](#)) since all must become spiritual Israelites to participate in it. Eventually, all who ultimately choose to serve God and continue in His covenant will be changed into spirit to enter into the fullness of the New Covenant. And, in the end, sin will at last be no more.

Yet even before that, when Israel and Judah as a whole repent and embrace the way of God at Christ's return—and become spiritual Israelites betrothed under the New Covenant—peace and harmony will begin to reign among them as God transforms them on the inside to develop His character. And as all of mankind is brought into this relationship, peace will extend to encompass the earth—all under the rule of Christ and His perfected saints, the glorified spiritual Israel.

What we see, then, is that the offering of the New Covenant to Israel and Judah at large, as described in [Jeremiah 31](#), will happen in an ultimate sense after Christ's return. It is parallel to other passages foretelling the general outpouring of God's Spirit in the latter days. However, He has already initiated the New Covenant with a forerunner of Israel, His Church, to whom He has given the "firstfruits of the Spirit" ([Romans 8:23](#)) to begin the process of transformation now (to learn more, download or request our free booklet [Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion](#)).

Finally, we come to the third section of [Jeremiah 31](#) (verses 38-40). With the New Covenant will come a rebuilt Jerusalem. "The rebuilding of the city will encompass the four corners of the capital (cf. Zechariah 14:10). The Tower of Hananel was the northeast corner of the city (cf. [Nehemiah 3:1](#); [Nehemiah 12:39](#); Zechariah 14:10). The Corner Gate probably refers to the one at the northwest corner of the city wall (cf. [2 Kings 14:13](#); [2 Chronicles 26:9](#)). The locations of Gareb

and Goah are unknown (v. 39); conjecture places Gareb on the western side of Jerusalem and Goah towards the Valley of Hinnom on the south. There are no clues to the sites. The valley of the corpses and ashes (v. 40) is generally understood to be the Valley of Hinnom (cf. 7:31). It has been suggested that the fields are quarries. The Kidron flows east of Jerusalem (cf. [2 Samuel 15:23](#)). The Horse Gate is apparently at the southeast corner of the temple courts (...cf. [Nehemiah 3:28](#) with [2 Kings 11:16](#); [2 Chronicles 23:15](#)). Thus even the polluted areas would be sanctified to the Lord" (*Expositor's*, note on [Jeremiah 31:38-40](#)).

### **Prophecy Against Elam**

The prophecy against Elam ([Jeremiah 49:34-39](#)) apparently came to Jeremiah at a later time than the several prophecies immediately preceding it in chapters 46-49. Yet they are all grouped together in his book, along with chapters 50-51, as these are prophecies against other nations. This one was given to Jeremiah "in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah." This would date the prophecy to some time in the first half of Zedekiah's reign, from 597-593 B.C.

Elam was a son of Shem ([Genesis 10:22](#)). As has been mentioned previously in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary, the ancient territory of the descendants of Elam eventually came to be called Persia (known today as Iran). Western Persia was called Elymais by the Greeks. During the day of Assyrian rule, some of the Elamites were evidently pressed into Assyrian military service and may have participated in assaults on Israel and Judah. This may be partly what is meant in [Isaiah 22:6](#), which states that "Elam bore the quiver with chariots of men and horsemen" (though, as was explained in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on this verse, it may well be an end-time prophecy). Yet the Elamites, along with the nearby Medes, actually *opposed* Assyrian rule in the main. They allied with the Chaldean Babylonians in *overthrowing* the Assyrians. Following that, they also "helped Nebuchadnezzar against



Judea" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on [Jeremiah 49:34](#))—at least in the initial incursions.

For the Elamites' actions and pride in their strength, God pronounces punishment on them. He would break their "bow"—the implement of their power (again compare [Isaiah 22:6](#)). "God often orders it so that that which we most trust to [at] first [later] fails us, and that which was the chief of our might proves the least of our help" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*, note on verses 34-39). The "four winds from the four quarters of heaven" (verse 36) represent a mustering of power by God (compare [Ezekiel 37:9](#); [Daniel 8:8](#))—evidently military forces under His direction in this case.

Interestingly, "the last exploit of Nebuchadnezzar which is recorded in the Babylonian Chronicle is a campaign against the Elamites...594-593 [B.C.]" (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 1987, p. 452). Once Babylon was secure as the imperial successor to Assyria, the Elamites and Medes were no longer needed as allies. So they were conquered and became subjects of the Chaldeans. Some see this as the prophesied destruction on Elam. In this context, the Lord setting His throne in Elam ([Jeremiah 49:38](#)) is said to be Nebuchadnezzar's conquest, as this is by God's doing (compare [Jeremiah 27:4-8](#); [Jeremiah 43:10](#)), and the Elamite return from captivity ([Jeremiah 49:39](#)) is considered to be the later conquest of Babylon by the Persians and Medes under Cyrus in 539 B.C. Still others identify the destruction of Elam as the Persian Empire falling to the Greek forces of Alexander the Great in 331 B.C.—this later episode seeming to fit better since *it* was the great destruction of the Elamites in ancient times and the prophecy states that recuperation from the foretold loss does not occur until "the latter days" (verse 39).

Yet while verses 35-37 may refer to ancient destruction, perhaps they actually refer to end-time calamity—or it could be that they are *dual* in meaning, applying to past history *and* events yet to be. In any case,



verses 38-39 are probably exclusively for the end time—which would seem to give some latter-day context to the previous verses as well. The Lord setting His throne in Elam (verse 38) most likely refers to the establishment of the Kingdom of God over all nations following Christ's return—and this will be accompanied by great destruction, as the nations of the world will attempt to fight Him.

Recall from the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on [Isaiah 21](#) that the Elamites today are apparently to be found in Eastern Europe as well as their ancient homeland of Iran (with a few in western India). When the kings "of the whole world" gather to fight the returning Christ ([Revelation 16:14](#)), it is evident that a representation of Elamite forces will be present and thus destroyed. Soon afterward, forces of Persia are part of a great military host that will be destroyed for attempting to invade a reestablished Israel under Christ's rule (see [Ezekiel 38-39](#), especially [Ezekiel 38:5](#)). Either or both of these events would well fit Jeremiah's prophecy.

Apparently, those Elamites who are scattered and taken into captivity will eventually be brought back to reconstitute a nation during the reign of Christ. This demonstrates God's great mercy. In fact, even those who die without a full realization of what they are doing—which will be the case with the vast majority of those fighting Christ at His return—will be brought back to life after the first 1,000 years of Christ's reign (see [Revelation 20:5](#)) and then given their first real opportunity to serve or reject God. (See our booklet [You Can Understand Bible Prophecy](#) for an explanation of this little understood truth of the second resurrection.)” [END]

Day 600 – THURSDAY: February 13<sup>th</sup>

Jeremiah 50 & 51:59-61

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “J [eremiah 50-51](#) is a long prophecy against Babylon. At the end of the prophecy is an account of the context in which it was first delivered ([Jeremiah 51:59-64](#)). Though obviously written down after the prophecy itself, this reading starts with part of this account (verses 59-61) to give us that context up front.

The time frame is the fourth year of Zedekiah, 593 B.C. The Jewish king, we are informed, traveled to Babylon at this time. As was suggested in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on [Jeremiah 29](#), Zedekiah may have made this trip to allay Nebuchadnezzar's concerns over his involvement in the international plotting addressed in chapter 27. Whatever the reason for the journey, we are told that Zedekiah is accompanied by Seraiah the son of Neriah ([Jeremiah 51:59](#)), apparently the brother of Jeremiah's scribe Baruch. Seraiah was serving as the "quartermaster" or, as the Contemporary English Version translates the term, "the officer in charge of arranging for places to stay overnight" ("quiet prince" in the King James Version is evidently a mistranslation).

Prior to the departure of the entourage, Jeremiah writes on a scroll what God has revealed to him about the future downfall of Babylon—the words recorded in [Jeremiah 50:1-51:58](#). The prophet sends the scroll with Seraiah to read aloud when he gets to Babylon. No doubt, God intends that a representative number of Babylonians hear this message, as there are numerous statements in it addressed directly to Babylon. However, His main purpose in directing Jeremiah to send the message to Babylon is probably to console the Jewish captives there.

### **"Move From the Midst of Babylon"**

The Neo-Babylonian Empire of the Chaldeans would be destroyed. Repeated reference is made to an assembly of nations invading Babylon from the north ([Jeremiah 50:3](#), [Jeremiah 50:9](#), [Jeremiah 50:41](#); [Jeremiah 51:48](#)). In the next chapter we will see that one of the principal nations involved in this invasion is that of the Medes

([Jeremiah 51:11](#), [Jeremiah 51:28](#)), who were located to the northeast of Babylon in ancient times. This must surely refer in part to what happened 54 years later, in 539 B.C., when Cyrus of Persia, in alliance with the Medes, defeated the Chaldeans and took over their empire.

However, while these two chapters of Jeremiah portray a violent overthrow of the city of Babylon, "the Nabonidus Chronicle, a text describing the fall of Babylon, reports that 'Cyrus entered Babylon without a battle'" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on [Jeremiah 51:29-32](#)). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* states: "It has troubled some scholars that chapters 50-51 predict the violent destruction of Babylon, whereas its defeat by Cyrus in 539 B.C. took place without a battle and with no damage to the city. But as with other predictive prophecies, if a fulfillment does not occur in one period, it is to be sought for in another and future one" (introductory notes on chap. 50).

Indeed, these two chapters also show that Babylon would be left desolate and perpetually uninhabited ([Jeremiah 50:39-40](#); [Jeremiah 51:43](#)). And yet the Persians made it their winter capital. Some, therefore, look to events that followed. "Cyrus took away its supremacy. Darius Hystaspes [a later successor of Cyrus] deprived it, when it rebelled, of its fortifications" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on 50:39). His successor, Xerxes, sacked Babylon in 497 B.C. This best fits the picture of [Jeremiah 50-51](#) in an ancient context. Still, Alexander later resurrected the city as an Asian capital. His successor in the region, Seleucus, made it his capital for a while but soon relocated. "Seleucus Nicanor removed its citizens and wealth to Seleucia, which he founded in the neighborhood; and the Parthians [later] removed all that was left to Ctesiphon. Nothing but its walls was left under the Roman emperor [H]adrian" (*JFB Commentary*, note on 50:39).

Yet even this does not *fully* fit the *utter* destruction and sense of desolation that is prophesied. We should compare Jeremiah's prophecy

with what we saw earlier in [Isaiah 13](#). The mention of wild animals living at the site is found in both [Jeremiah 50:39](#) and [Isaiah 13:21-22](#). Now note the verse that follows in Jeremiah: "'As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbors,' says the LORD, 'So no one shall reside there, nor son of man dwell in it' (verse 40). Compare that with [Isaiah 13:19-20](#): "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation..." And notice particularly the end of the verse: "...nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there." This just has not come to pass on the site of ancient Babylon. Bedouins have ranged over the area for centuries. People involved in archeological excavation have lived at the site in more recent times. Moreover, in the past several years, Saddam Hussein of Iraq began a monumental restoration project at ancient Babylon, even though Jeremiah prophesied that none of the city's stones would be used for rebuilding ([Jeremiah 51:26](#)). And certainly people have been living at the site to carry this out.

How do we explain this? As was pointed out in the [Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Isaiah 13](#), the prophecy there was primarily referring to the fall of *end-time* Babylon—the coming European-centered economic, politico-military and religious world power bloc called the "Beast" and "Babylon" in the book of Revelation. So it is with these chapters of Jeremiah as well. Notice the phrase "daughter of Babylon" ([Jeremiah 50:42](#)), wording that indicates an end-time counterpart to the original (compare [Isaiah 47:1](#), [Isaiah 47:5](#)). The expression "Behold, the days are coming," points to events that are yet future ([Jeremiah 51:47](#); [Jeremiah 51:52](#)). We can especially see the latter-day context here in the references to the return and restoration of both Judah *and* Israel ([Jeremiah 50:4-5](#), [Jeremiah 50:19-20](#); [Jeremiah 51:5](#))—which has never happened.

Thus, while much of [Jeremiah 50-51](#) is applicable to ancient times—as is clear from the references to Nebuchadnezzar ([Jeremiah 50:17](#); [Jeremiah 51:34](#)) and the fact that Jeremiah sent Seraiah to read the prophecy to people of that time—these chapters also point to events that are yet future. "Babylon was employed as the rod in God's hand for the chastising of all the other nations, and now at length that rod shall be thrown into the fire. The destruction of Babylon by Cyrus was foretold, long before it came to its height, by Isaiah, and now again, when it has come to its height, by Jeremiah.... And as [with] Isaiah's prophecies...Jeremiah's prophecies of the same events seem designed to point at the apocalyptic triumphs...over the New-Testament Babylon, many passages in the Revelation being borrowed hence" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*, introductory notes on [Jeremiah 50](#)).

With this in mind, let us notice some of the particulars in the first part of the prophecy, chapter 50. (We will go through the rest of the prophecy in the next reading.)

Verse 2 mentions the Babylonian deity names Bel (which, like Baal, means "Lord") and Merodach (the Hebraic form of Marduk, chief god of Babylon). These names referred to the same deity—often styled Bel-Marduk. It and the other false gods of Babylon are referred to using a word translated "images" (NKJV) or "idols" (NIV), but which actually denotes "dung pellets" or "animal droppings" (*Expositor's*, note and footnote on verse 2; *Nelson*, note on verses 2-3). Idols are utterly revolting to the true God and should be to everyone else as well. God actually refers to the worship of idols as "insane" (verse 38)—completely irrational.

Interestingly, the humiliation and shame foretold for Babylon's gods in verse 2 (compare [Jeremiah 51:44, 47, 52](#)) did not come with Cyrus' takeover—except in the sense that they were powerless to prevent it. For Cyrus allowed their temples and priests to continue unmolested.

But the idols *were* "broken in pieces," as it says, by Xerxes, whose attack was directed at the Babylonian religious establishment. In a modern context, Bel-Marduk or Baal has come down to us as the false "Lord" of the Babylonian counterfeit Christianity (see [Revelation 17](#)). This religious system still worships powerless idols. But these idols will be utterly destroyed at the coming of the *true* Lord to rule all nations.

God issues warnings to His people to leave Babylon so as not to be corrupted by it and suffer its destruction (verse 8; [Jeremiah 51:6, 45](#); compare [Isaiah 48:20](#)). This was not meant in a literal sense for the time Jeremiah's prophecy was given. We can be sure of that because he had already written to the captives instructing them to settle down where they were ([Jeremiah 29:4-7](#)). Furthermore, they could not leave until they were later freed. Certainly the message would still have applied in a figurative, spiritual sense—that is, though they dwelt in Babylon, they were to come out of its *ways*. On the other hand, the instruction to leave would have applied literally once the Jews were eventually freed. That is, they needed to leave Babylon before it was afterward sacked. Most significantly, the same warning is issued regarding *end-time* Babylon in [Revelation 18:4](#): "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."

As mentioned, God would bring great forces against the Babylonians. They are pictured as archers ([Jeremiah 50:9](#), [Jeremiah 50:14](#), [Jeremiah 50:29](#), [Jeremiah 50:42](#); [Jeremiah 51:3](#))—though sword, lance and ax are also mentioned. The shooting of arrows may relate to Persian forces elsewhere described with bow and quiver ([Jeremiah 49:35](#); [Isaiah 22:6](#)). This probably meant literal bows and arrows in the ancient application of this prophecy. But what about an end-time fulfillment? Perhaps the image is simply one of dealing destruction from afar. The "arrows" or "missiles" used in *today's* warfare are mechanical ones. Note this statement: "Their arrows shall be like those of an expert warrior; none



shall return in vain" ([Jeremiah 50:9](#)). This almost sounds like modern smart missiles.

Verse 17 says that Israel has been partially devoured and scattered by the king of Assyria and is being finished off, so to speak, by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. This definitely applied to Jeremiah's day. "Therefore," God says in the next verse, "...I will punish the king of Babylon and his land." This seems to still be referring to Nebuchadnezzar. And indeed, God did punish him by causing him to go crazy for seven years (see [Daniel 4](#)). However, God then restored him to sanity and glory—and Nebuchadnezzar never saw the fall of Babylon. So perhaps a successor ruler is meant. Belshazzar was killed at the time of the Medo-Persian takeover for his arrogant defiance ([Daniel 5](#)).

Yet this verse, [Jeremiah 50:17](#), may also have an end-time application—and it does seem to, given its juxtaposition with the verses that follow concerning Israel's future return. "Nebuchadnezzar" could denote not just the ruler with that name in Jeremiah's day, but also an *end-time* Babylonian ruler of any name (for just as a prophecy of a future Elijah in [Malachi 4](#) did not refer to Elijah himself, but simply to one in the same spirit, so it could be in this case). In fact, the name itself could have broader application. Consider that, according to some scholars, "the *-ezzar* of Nebuchadnezzar means Assyria, and appears in such words as Nabonassar, Bel-ch-azzar, Nebo-pol-assar, Tiglath-Pil-eser, Esar-haden, and so on.... Nebuchadnezzar is *Nebo-chah-adun-Assar* (Nebo, royal prince-of Assyria)" (E. Cobham Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 1898, "Nebuchadnezzar"). Nebo was a god whose name meant prophet or spokesman, thus equating him with the Greek Hermes or Roman Mercury, messenger of the gods. So Nebuchadnezzar ("Spokesman for the god of this world, royal prince of Assyria") could conceivably be a general descriptor for the end-time Assyro-Babylonian "Beast" dictator. Even if not, the original Nebuchadnezzar was certainly a *precursor* of this future ruler. Just as Nebuchadnezzar's pride brought



God's punishment on him, once again we see pride and haughtiness as a major reason the wrath of God will be unleashed on the end-time Babylon (verses 29-32).

In verse 21, Merathaim, "i.e., 'double rebellion'—signifies Babylon. Southern Babylon was known as *mat marrati* ('Land of the Bitter River'). 'Pekod' means 'visitation' or 'punishment.' An eastern Babylonian tribe was named Puqudu" (*Expositor's*, note on verse 21). The *JFB Commentary* says Pekod was "a chief province of Assyria, in which Nineveh, now overthrown, once lay.... The visitation on Babylon was a following up of that on Assyria" (note on verse 21).

Babylon is to receive "the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of His temple," which the Babylonians destroyed (verse 28). The end-time Babylonians will also defile the temple through the setting up within it of the future "abomination of desolation" (see [Matthew 24:15](#)). [Jeremiah 51](#) mentions the shame suffered by the Jews because "strangers have come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's house" (verse 51). As this provokes divine vengeance on Babylon's "carved images" (verse 52), perhaps such images will be set up in God's temple.

The drying up of waters in [Jeremiah 50:38](#) refers, at least in part, to the diversion of the River Euphrates by Cyrus as a means of access into Babylon. This was explained in the [Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Isaiah 45:1](#). As was further explained there, the Euphrates will also be dried up in the end time in preparation for the final destruction of Babylon (see [Revelation 16:12](#)).

As already stated, Babylon will be left wasted and desolate. In an end-time context, this would appear to refer to the capital of the future empire, probably Rome. Notice again the description of wild animals dwelling there ([Jeremiah 50:39](#); compare [Jeremiah 51:37](#); [Isaiah 13:21-22](#); [Jeremiah 14:23](#)). While probably literal on one level, *The Expositor's*

*Bible Commentary* reports that at least one scholar "attempts to render the assonance of tsiim 'eth 'yim (*siyyim et- iyyim*, 'desert creatures and hyenas') by 'goblins and ghouls'.... [Another scholar] considered them, not as animals, but probably demons of the desert" (footnote on [Jeremiah 50:39](#)). This is certainly interesting given the parallel—as mentioned in the [Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Isaiah 14:23](#)—with [Revelation 18:2](#), which mentions the future Babylon becoming "a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!" (the latter also apparently referring to demons). This parallels the abyss or bottomless pit where Satan and his demons are confined after they are bound at Christ's return ([Revelation 20:1-3](#)).

[Jeremiah 50:44-46](#) is adapted from the prophecy against Edom in 49:19-21, substituting Babylon for Edom (Review the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on this other passage for alternative suggestions regarding its meaning.)” [END]

Day 601 – FRIDAY: February 14<sup>th</sup>

Jeremiah 51:1-58, 61-64

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Chapter 51 begins with a reference to "Babylon...those who dwell in Leb Kamai" (verse 1). The King James Version renders Leb Kamai as "the midst of them that rise up against me." The Hebrew expression literally means "the heart of my enemy." Many argue that this is the first of two cryptograms in this chapter. The explanation is that a code is used wherein the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is expressed by the last, and so forth, so that *Leb Kamai* corresponds to *Chasdim*, the Hebrew word for Chaldeans. The other possible cryptogram in the chapter is Sheshach in verse 41, where, as mentioned in the [Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Jeremiah 25:26](#) (the other place where this expression occurs), using the same letter substitution system would produce the word Babel.

However, as in chapter 25, it is clear in both cases here in chapter 51 who is being described anyway—so it is not apparent why such a code would be needed. The word Sheshach, as explained in previous comments, has been interpreted variously by scholars, with perhaps the most likely meaning being, as noted before, "thy fine linen," which, again, would seem to tie in with the description of end-time Babylon in [Revelation 18:16](#): "that great city that was *clothed in fine linen*, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls."

Babylon is going to be punished. God is going to rescue Israel and Judah—again showing an end-time context. The Lord has not forsaken His people "though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel" ([Jeremiah 51:5](#)). God has always intended Israel to be a godly, model nation for the world. And He will not be thwarted from His purpose. Despite the failings of the Israelites, the omnipotent God will yet confront them and lead them to repentance. (This does not mean that all Israelites will ultimately respond in a right way to God—but undoubtedly the vast majority will.)

Verse 7 uses the imagery of Babylon as a cup of wine being poured out on the nations by God. This is a symbol of divine wrath taken from [Jeremiah 25:15-29](#). The nations are made drunk (to reel and stagger) through suffering conquest. Also, we can see this as God giving the nations over to Babylon's *spiritual* wine, thus making them drunk with false religion (compare [Revelation 17:2](#)). Yet now God will break the cup of Babylon. "Babylon has suddenly fallen" (verse 8; compare [Isaiah 21:9](#); [Revelation 18:2](#)).

[Jeremiah 51:9](#) states: "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed.... Let us go everyone to his own country." From the next verse we can see that it is God's people who are pictured speaking here. "The people of God that were captives among the Babylonians endeavoured, according to the instructions given them (Jeremiah 10:11), to convince

them of the folly of their idolatry, but they could not do it; still [the Babylonians] doted as much as ever upon their graven images, and therefore the Israelites resolved to quit them and go to their own country" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*, note on [Jeremiah 51:9](#)).

Verse 10 states, "The LORD has revealed our righteousness." This may just mean that, through punishing Babylon, God has shown the Israelites to be the ones *in the right* in the present circumstances. Babylon's treatment of them has been unjust. And the Israelites' abandonment of the Babylonians to suffer destruction is appropriate. However, the wording could also perhaps refer to the Israelites being reconciled to God through repentance—and God making this manifest through His deliverance of them.

Verses 11 and 28 identify the forces that would invade Babylon from the north as those of the Medes. And the Medes, as was noted in the previous highlights, did invade ancient Babylon in 539 B.C. under the Persian king Cyrus the Great. Verse 27 mentions other nations that are joined with the Medes in the invasion—Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz. In the sixth century B.C. these peoples lived in northwestern Iran and contiguous areas. "The first are the Urartu of the Assyrian inscriptions, practically Armenia, north of Lake Van. The second are the Mannaeans of the Assyrian records, who lived south of Lake Urmia. The last, the Ashguzai of the Assyrian inscriptions, were nomads living east of Lake Urmia (cf. Genesis 10:3 [where Ashkenaz is listed as a nation descended from Noah's son Japheth, see verse 2])" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on [Jeremiah 51:27-33](#)).

While the ancient invasion was no doubt intended by the prophecy, we should also look beyond that. For given the clear latter-day context of much of this chapter and the previous one, it is evident that the modern descendants of these same peoples will play a part in the fall of end-time Babylon. As was pointed out in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on a parallel prophecy concerning Babylon's

downfall, [Isaiah 21](#), while some of the Medes probably still live in their ancient homeland, many today may be found north of the Black Sea in what is now the Ukraine. Concerning the Urartians and Mannaeans, today's Armenians and neighboring peoples would seem to be indicated.

Ashkenaz is commonly identified with the Scythians—though it should be understood that various nomadic groups near the Caspian Sea were known as Scythians, including the Israelites who came out of Assyrian captivity (see our free booklet [The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy](#)). The people of Ashkenaz appear to have ranged eastward, becoming scattered throughout East Asia. One source explains that many of those who live today in "south-east Asia, Bhutan, Nepal, Tibet, southern China and a few of the population of Japan are descendants of Ashkenaz" ("The Origin of the Nations of South-East Asia," [cgca.net/coglinks/origin/oon2.1/vol2\\_1p4.html](http://cgca.net/coglinks/origin/oon2.1/vol2_1p4.html)). The book of Revelation describes a 200-million-man army from beyond the Euphrates River that will inflict great destruction on all mankind, including end-time Babylon, shortly before the return of Christ (see [Revelation 9:13-19](#)). Later, as referred to in the previous highlights, the Euphrates is "dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared" ([Revelation 16:12](#)). As mentioned, Cyrus dried up the Euphrates to enable Babylon's invasion in his day. Both events seem to be indicated by [Jeremiah 50:38](#).

Babylon is said to "dwell by many waters" and to have a "sea" with "waves" ([Jeremiah 51:13, 36, 42, 55](#)). Recall from [Isaiah 21:1](#) that Babylon was there referred to as the "Wilderness of the Sea." This was apparently a reference to the lakes and great marshes surrounding the Euphrates to the south of Babylon—the region bordering the Persian Gulf known as the Sealands. However, this could also be a reference to the later Babylon, Rome, which sat beside the Mediterranean, calling it Mare Nostrum ("Our Sea"), as the Roman Empire encompassed it. A

similar situation may exist in the end time. The image is also quite likely a figurative one. The Romano-Babylonian Beast power is described as rising from the "sea" and as one that "sits on many waters" (see [Daniel 7](#); 13; 17), these waters representing "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues" (verse 15).

[Jeremiah 51:15-19](#) contrasts the omnipotent God with powerless idols and the foolishness of worshiping them. The words here are taken from an earlier prophecy God gave Jeremiah in 10:12-16. Both sections end by describing God as the "Portion" of His people—their livelihood and reward.

Then notice the next section. God says, "You are My battle-ax and weapons of war..." (verse 20). And He goes on to show how He would use this battle-ax to do great damage (verses 20-23). But just whom is He talking to and about? Verse 24 answers, "And I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all the evil they have done in Zion in your sight." Clearly, Babylon is the one being broken and destroyed—and, surprisingly, the Jews are the ones being used to accomplish this (and probably all Israel since Jacob is the last people referenced just prior to this section—verse 19). This did not happen in ancient times. Israelite Scythian forces did help to bring down ancient Assyria and its capital of Nineveh, but there was no parallel with the fall of ancient Babylon.

However, we do have other indications that such a resurgence of Israel and Judah will happen in the *end time*. For instance, [Zechariah 14:14](#) says that at the time of Christ's return, "Judah also will fight at Jerusalem." [Isaiah 41:14-15](#) says: "Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel.... You shall thresh the mountains [kingdoms] and beat them small, and make the hills [smaller nations] like chaff." (Babylon is described in [Jeremiah 51](#) as a mountain that will be threshed—verses 25, 33). [Micah 4:13](#) says, "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion...you shall beat in pieces many peoples." This last reference is likely dual, as it



could also refer to spiritual Israel, the Church of God, glorified at Christ's return and executing God's judgment on the nations.

Yet we might wonder how physical Israel and Judah, enslaved and decimated peoples, could become resurgent prior to Christ's return. Realize that this does not mean restoration to greatness. That will not come until after Christ establishes His Kingdom on this earth. Rather, resurgence simply implies a slight regaining of strength—and probably in pockets rather than all Israel. As we saw from [Hosea 6:1-2](#), the time of Jacob's trouble will apparently last about two and a half years, to be followed by the "day of the LORD's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion" ([Isaiah 34:8](#))—the final year prior to Christ's return. According to the book of Revelation, "the great day of His wrath" ([Revelation 6:17](#)), which follows the Great Tribulation (compare verses 9-11), will encompass the great calamities of the seven trumpets (see [Revelation 8-9](#)).

Consider then: The people of end-time Babylon will be preoccupied by the catastrophic events of that final year, which may direct their attention away from their slaves to some degree. This could allow many Israelites scattered throughout Europe and other places to escape and pockets of resistance to form (think of the French resistance of World War II). These pockets of resistance may secure weapons with which to fight. When forces from the East—apparently including the latter-day Medes—come to wreak havoc on Europe ([Revelation 9:13-21](#)), this would likely free up even more Israelites. And the Israelite resistance forces would then be able to help in the destruction of end-time Babylon. Perhaps they will, in particular, help destroy the Babylonian capital of the last days, probably Rome. (Again, such Israelite participation would parallel the fall not of ancient Babylon, but of ancient Nineveh—which still makes sense when we realize that end-time Babylon will be fused together with end-time Assyria in the same power bloc.) Whether or not events turn out exactly this way, we



should be able to see that a somewhat resurgent Israel can well fit in the panorama of end-time events laid out in Bible prophecy. And indeed, we are told here in [Jeremiah 51](#) that it will help to bring about the final Babylon's downfall.

Babylon stands guilty of great evil. The "slain of Israel" (verse 49) may refer also to "the blood of the saints...and of the martyrs of Jesus" ([Revelation 17:6](#)). For all she has done, swift punishment is coming. "Babylon is compared to lions' cubs (v. 38). She will be given a feast, followed not by the usual drunken sleep, but by a perpetual sleep of death (vv. 39-40)" (*Expositor's*, note on verses 34-44). We see this specifically applying to Babylon's leaders and prominent people in verse 57. It should be clarified that the statement "They shall sleep a perpetual sleep and not awake" does not mean they will never be resurrected, as they surely will be. Again, the point is simply that their "sleep" is death—long and ongoing. They will not awake from it as from typical slumber.

In part, this seems to be a reference to Belshazzar's drunken feast ([Daniel 5](#)), which facilitated the downfall of the city of Babylon that very night. Of course, as with the rest of the prophecy, a greater fulfillment will come at the end of this age, during the Day of the Lord.

"The broad walls of Babylon" ([Jeremiah 51:58](#)) refers to the literal massive walls of the ancient city of Babylon, as well as to the exalted confidence in the strength and security of "Babylon the great" of the last days. She will think she "will not see sorrow" ([Revelation 18:7](#)), but "her plagues will come in one day" (verse 8).

After reading the prophecy, Seraiah is to visually enact the symbolism of Babylon's fall by throwing the scroll, with a stone tied to it, into the Euphrates ([Jeremiah 51:63](#)). Babylon will sink to never rise again (verse 64; see also verse 42).

The section ends with the statement, "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah." The Good News Bible renders this, "The words of Jeremiah end here." This is because the next chapter of the book, [Jeremiah 52](#), the last chapter, was evidently added by a later editor. However, we are not yet finished reading other parts of the book of Jeremiah." [END]

#### Day 602 – SATURDAY: February 15<sup>th</sup>

2 Kings 24:10-20, 2 Chronicles 36:10-16, Jeremiah 24 & Jeremiah 52:1-3

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Nebuchadnezzar returns to Jerusalem "at the turn of the year" ([2 Chronicles 36:10](#)), near the spring equinox, "in the eighth year of his reign" ([2 Kings 24:12](#))—that is, in March of 597 B.C. (his first year according to Jewish reckoning being September 605-September 604 B.C.). Jeconiah's time as king of Judah is up.

"After replacing his father on the throne of David, Jehoiachin [Jehoiachin] evidently maintained an anti-Babylonian posture that immediately brought Nebuchadnezzar's stern reaction. After only three months in power Jehoiachin found his city surrounded by the Babylonian hosts and he quickly capitulated. This time the royal family was deported along with other leading citizens including Ezekiel the prophet. The cream of Judah's military force and her most skillful craftsmen also had to abandon their land and homes to go into exile. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar helped himself once more to the temple treasures and carried them back to Babylon as a sign of his complete success" (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 1987, p. 452).

The Babylonians were prolific recorders of their accomplishments. Among some 300 cuneiform tablets unearthed near modern Baghdad, one Babylonian chronicle was found paralleling the biblical account of Nebuchadnezzar's sacking of Jerusalem and capture of its monarch in [2 Kings 24:10-17](#).

"Here is the Babylonian version: 'Year 7 {of Nebuchadnezzar [according to Babylonian reckoning]}. In the month of Kislev {December 598}, the king of Babylonia mobilized his troops and marched to the west [showing that he began his assault as soon as Jeconiah assumed the throne]. He encamped against the city of Judah {Jerusalem}, and on the second of Adar {March 16, 597}, he captured the city and seized {its} king. A king of his choice he appointed there; he to{ok} its heavy tribute and carried it off to Babylon.

"The corroboration of the biblical text by the records of Israel's ancient foe is unmistakable, and a bit ironic," writes *U.S. News & World Report* religion writer Jeffery Sheler. "Until a century ago, it was commonly claimed by skeptics in the biblical academy that Nebuchadnezzar had never existed—that he was yet another of the Bible's legendary figures invented for propaganda purposes. But then the German archaeologist Robert Koldewey, excavating in Iraq beginning in 1899, came upon the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's magnificent palace complex, the famed temple of Marduk, and the remains of the Ishtar gate [now in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin]—as well as numerous inscriptions, statues, and stelae from the ancient Babylonian empire. At once, Nebuchadnezzar ceased to be a fictional foil in a supposed Hebrew mythology; archaeology had affirmed him as a true historical figure. And now the royal records of this ancient enemy of the Israelites are adding testimony to the accuracy of the Bible as it relates this important chapter of Israel's history. This reversal once again shows the capacity of archaeology to turn the skeptical suppositions of biblical scholarship upside down" (*Is the Bible True?*, 1999, p. 137).

Returning to the scriptural account, it is clear that Nebuchadnezzar's invasion is a devastating blow to the nation. While the first deportation of Jews to Babylon, which included Daniel and his friends, was quite small, this one is major—involving a substantial portion of Jerusalem.

The Babylonian emperor, we are told, takes all but the poor captive ([2 Kings 24:14](#); compare [Jeremiah 27:20](#); [Jeremiah 29:2](#)). "This method of eliminating leaders and leaving the peasant population to pay taxes to the kingdom was learned from the Assyrians and was designed to reduce the likelihood of rebellion" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 2). The beginning of [2 Kings 24:20](#) sums up this episode and all that would soon transpire: "It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence" (NIV).

Nebuchadnezzar removes Jeconiah and his mother from power and places Josiah's remaining son Mattaniah—Jeconiah's uncle—on the throne, renaming him Zedekiah as a demonstration of the emperor's supremacy. As with Necho's replacement of Jehoahaz with Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar keeps the Jewish kingship within the royal family of David rather than introducing a new dynasty. This was a smart move on both occasions, as the people would not have accepted a non-Davidic ruler and it maintained the façade of Jewish self-rule, which helped to prevent uprising. More importantly, of course, God's overseeing direction in keeping His promise to David was certainly a factor.

Mattaniah's new name Zedekiah meant "Yahweh Is Righteousness." *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary* says, "This being a purely Hebrew name, it seems that [Nebuchadnezzar] allowed the puppet king to choose his own name, which was confirmed" (note on [2 Kings 24:17](#)). If that's so, it's interesting to recall that Jeremiah had prophesied that, after Jeconiah ([Jeremiah 22:24-30](#)), a "Branch of righteousness" would come from David's house to save Judah ([Jeremiah 23:5-6](#)) called "Yahweh Our Righteousness" (see verse 6). Could it be that Mattaniah, probably with the help of advisers, intentionally chose a name meaning something very close to that? In other words, might Mattaniah have co-opted Jeremiah's prophecy to

set himself up as a messianic figure to inspire popular support? It is certainly a possibility.

But the people had difficulty accepting him as the true king, much less anything beyond that. "Though 'he reigned in Jerusalem,' the fact that seals have been discovered with the inscription 'Eliakim steward of Yaukin [Jehoiachin or Jeconiah]' indicates that, at the least, his nephew Jehoiakin continued to wield influence as a recognized possessor, even if an absentee one, of royal property and, at the most, that Zedekiah may have ruled to some extent as a regent for his exiled predecessor" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on [2 Chronicles 36:11](#)).

"Though Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle and Josiah's son, was left as puppet ruler of Judah, it is clear that the Jewish people regarded Jehoiachin as the true scion of David until the day of his death. He never returned to Jerusalem, it is true, but after long years as a political prisoner in Babylon he was placed on a government pension and apparently was treated more as an honored guest of Babylon than as her prisoner ([2 Kings 25:27-30](#)). It must have seemed to the exilic Jewish community that the time would surely come when Jehoiachin would lead them back triumphantly to Jerusalem and restore the former glory of the house of David" (Merrill, p. 452). Yet this was utterly foolish, considering that God had banned Jeconiah and his descendants from inheriting David's throne ([Jeremiah 22:24-30](#)).

In any event, Zedekiah was "king *de facto* of whatever was left of Judah in 597" (Merrill, p. 452). Indeed, he was more than that, for God's decree against Jeconiah made Zedekiah the legitimate successor of David *despite* what the people thought or desired. Yet the stubborn and faithless Zedekiah does not heed God, propagating 11 more years of wicked rule. "Evil like his brothers, he paid no attention to the admonishings of Jeremiah the prophet to accept Babylonian suzerainty as the will of God [as we will see in upcoming readings]. Rather, he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, thus inviting sure and swift disaster.

The date of this rebellion cannot be determined" (Merrill, p. 452)—but it was sometime between 593 and 588 B.C., as we will see. The Jewish king's rebellion is utter defiance, not merely against the Babylonian king, but also against God and His prophet ([2 Chronicles 36:12](#))—doubly so since Zedekiah took an *oath in God's name* that he would *not* rebel against Babylon (verse 13).

This all spells disaster for the king—and for the Jewish nation. The end would come soon.

### **The Two Baskets of Figs**

God had a plan in allowing some of the Jews to go into exile while allowing others to remain in Jerusalem. To make clear to Jeremiah and others what He was doing, God gave the prophet a vision of two baskets of figs ([Jeremiah 24](#)), one filled with good, ripe figs and the other with foul, rotten ones.

Through the image of the good figs, God explained to Jeremiah that He was providing a place of refuge for those who would later be able to return to Him with a right heart. As we'll later read, the exiles were given the opportunity to prosper in Babylon ([Jeremiah 29:4-7](#)). At the time of the second deportation, Daniel had already been in Babylonian exile for eight years and was by now entrusted with enormous responsibility in the empire. No doubt he was able to wield considerable influence with regard to the Jewish exiles—including their treatment, settlement, employment, education, etc. An important lesson for us here is that God doesn't just act impulsively, but *plans* for the future—in this case placing Daniel in Babylon first and promoting him to a position of high authority ahead of the arrival of the remaining exiles.

The bad figs represented those such as Zedekiah and the other leaders of Judah who were rebellious and stubborn. Left behind in Jerusalem

(or in Egypt), they would ultimately be destroyed. Concerning those who "dwell in the land of Egypt" ([Jeremiah 24:8](#)) there is some debate. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* contends: "To understand them as those involved in the events of chapters 43 and 44 [when a sizable remnant of Judah later flees to Egypt following Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Judah in 586 B.C.] is to leap too far ahead in the narrative of the book" (note on [Jeremiah 24:8](#)). Yet the statement could certainly mean this, as it was a prophecy. However, there are other possibilities.

*Expositor's* continues: "A number of scholars suggest that those living in Egypt were Jews who were deported with Jehoahaz to Egypt by Pharaoh Neco (cf. [2 Kings 23:31-34](#)). Others suggest that they were emigrants who were opposed to the Babylonian domination of Judah or fled to Egypt at the first approach of Nebuchadnezzar. Another proposal is that they were fugitives from Judah who went to Egypt during various wars. Since details are lacking, it is impossible to rule out those probabilities. Archeological research does, however, reveal that those who remained in Egypt set up a rival temple later on" (same note). Perhaps God intended all of these groups.

[Jeremiah 24](#) concludes with a warning of the ominous cycle of sword, famine and pestilence also mentioned elsewhere (verse 10; see [Jeremiah 14:12](#); [Jeremiah 27:8, 13](#); [Jeremiah 29:17-18](#); [1 Kings 8:33-39](#); [Ezekiel 14:21](#); compare [Revelation 6:3-8](#)). Indeed, tying in directly with this chapter, [Jeremiah 29:18](#) says, "Behold, I will send on them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like rotten figs that cannot be eaten, they are so bad."" [END]