

Jeremiah 2-3

Bible Study

Review

Introduction to the book

- Babylon becomes the principle power of the world during Jeremiah's ministry
 - His message was to the residents of Jerusalem who were about to be conquered by the Babylonians
 - A message of judgment for idolatry and the need to repent
- Jeremiah's message was primarily to Judah but much broader to the nations of Israel

Chapter 1—Jeremiah's calling and commission

- Jeremiah was set apart by God before his birth for a special purpose—to be a prophet to the 'nations'

Two fold commission:

1. To destroy and throw down"—pronounce judgment on Judah
2. To build and to plant"—to plant people in another land that will establish a kingdom from David's line

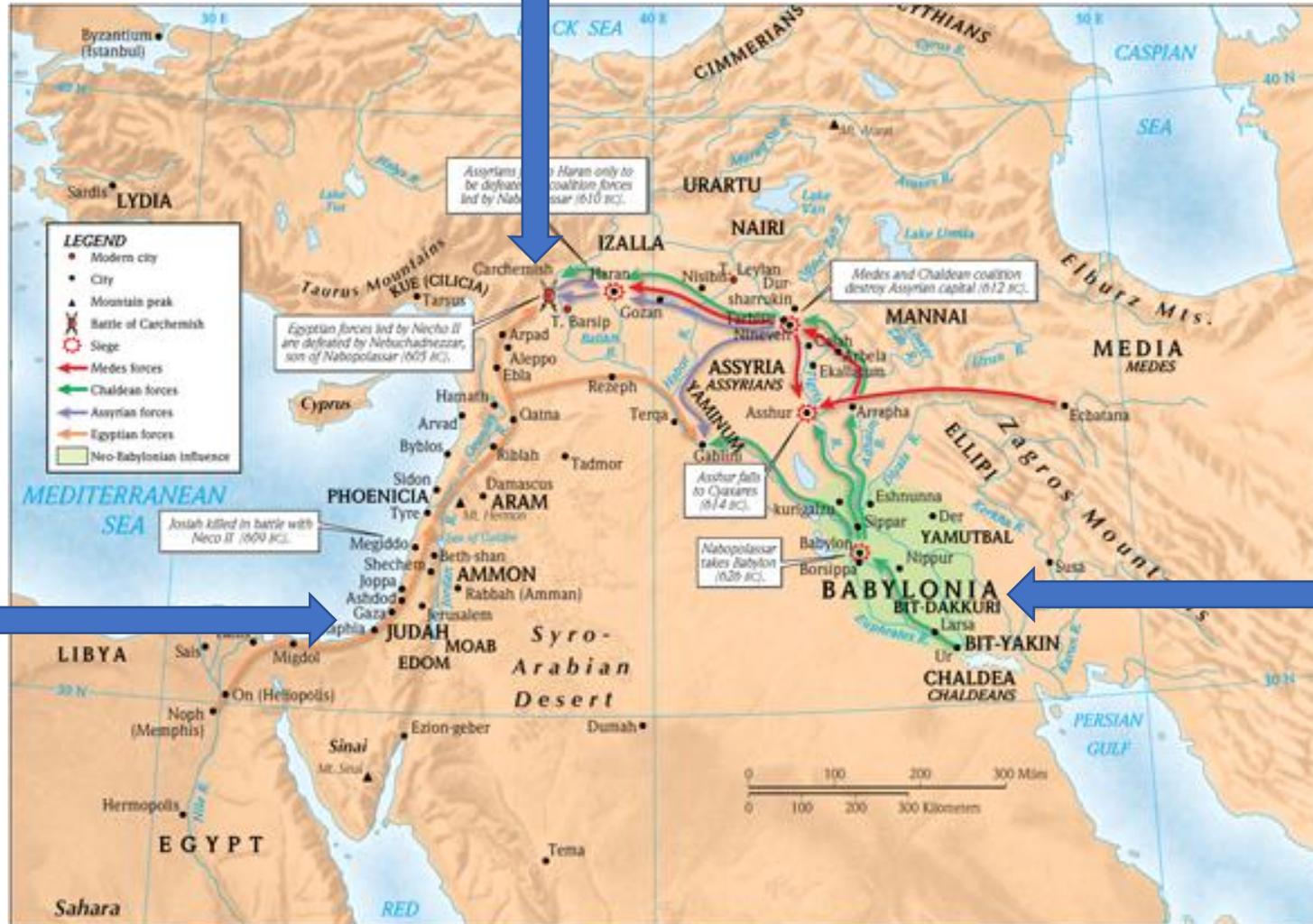
Two visions that confirm his call (and important themes of the book)

1. Almond tree (sign of beginning)= God is ready to bring about the judgment upon Judah
2. Boiling pot (judgment) facing away from the north= the judgment will come out of the north

The reason for the coming judgment

The people's wickedness...they have forsaken God...burned incense to other gods...worshipped idols

Babylon cannot cross the desert to attack Judah, they follow the river system and attack from the north



Judah

Babylon

Chapter 2

Jeremiah's 1st message to Jerusalem

Probably during Josiah's reign

Israel's apostasy

1 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

2 "Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: "I remember you, The kindness of your youth, The love of your betrothal, When you went after Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown.

3 **Israel** was holiness to the Lord, The firstfruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; Disaster will come upon them," says the Lord.' "

v. 1-2 Jeremiah is commissioned again to speak to all in Jerusalem to remind them of their former relationship with God during the times of Israel's wilderness wanderings, using a marriage metaphor

v. 3 **Israel**: special attention brought... "Firstfruits" An agricultural metaphor to describe God's love He had for Israel—(whole nation)

- 'holiness to the Lord'= set apart...as the first fruit offering was set apart
- The first fruits (of the harvest) were set aside for God, no one was to eat of them

v. 3 [Last part] "All that devour him will offend; Disaster will come upon them..."
(Paraphrase) "all that devour [within] him will be held guilty; disaster will come upon them"

- Referring to members of the nation who perverted the holiness/relationship with God
 - Disaster came upon them (Context is not foreigners here)

God's word to the house of Israel

4 Hear the word of the Lord, O **house of Jacob** and all the families of **the house of Israel**.

5 Thus says the Lord: “What injustice have your fathers found in Me, That they have gone far from Me, Have followed idols, And have become idolaters?”

v. 4 “house of Jacob” ... “house of Israel”—northern ten tribes kept that name when Israel and Judah were separated (II Kings 17: 18-23)

v. 4 God's message through Jeremiah is addressed to “**all** the families of the house of Israel”—to “hear the word”
The northern tribes were taken into captivity (722 BC) and scattered around the Black and Caspian Sea area

- They did not receive this message from Jeremiah
- This is a dual prophecy directed more for the modern descendants of Israel in the last days

v. 5 [1st part] (NIV) “What fault did your father's find in Me?” ...that they went away from Me?

Ancient Israel...as well as its modern descendants ‘have gone far from Me’...into idolatry

6 Neither did they say, 'Where is the Lord, Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, Who led us through the wilderness, Through a land of deserts and pits, Through a land of drought and the shadow of death, Through a land that no one crossed And where no one dwelt?'

7 I brought you into a bountiful country, To eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered, you defiled My land And made My heritage an abomination.

8 The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' And those who handle the law did not know Me; The rulers also transgressed against Me; The prophets prophesied by Baal, And walked after things that do not profit.

v. 6 Just as ancient Israel had forgotten who it was who had delivered them from slavery, and all He did for them...modern descendants of Israel also have forgotten Him

v. 7 "brought you in to a bountiful country—ancient and descendants of Israel

- They had forgotten who was the source of their blessings
- Modern descendants of Israel as well have forgotten Him

v. 8 The priests and those who handle the law did and do not know God, the rulers as well

- They have turned from the true God...to teach and worship false gods (Baal)
- **Baal** is mentioned here the first time in the book...was a constant 'thorn in Israel's side' (Num. 33:55)

Charges of apostasy and idolatry against the people v. 9-13

9 “Therefore I will yet bring charges against you,” says the Lord, “And against your children’s children I will bring charges.

10 For pass beyond the coasts of Cyprus and see, Send to Kedar and consider diligently, And see if there has been such a thing.

11 Has a nation changed its gods, Which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory For what does not profit.

v. 9 “bring charges”—a legal term, God prosecutes the people (Israel) because of their rebellion

- The covenant terms which they agreed to had been broken constantly

v. 10 Cyprus to the west, and Kedar to the east—one could go to their lands and see that they don’t forsake, nor change their gods

v. 11 Israel and Judah had been quick to change to worship of other gods, forsaking the true God for ones who do not profit

12 Be astonished, O heavens, at this, And be horribly afraid; Be very desolate,” says the Lord.

13 “For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.

v. 12 The heavens are called as witnesses against the people

The heavens which had been a witness of the covenant terms with Israel (Deut. 32:1) will be horrified at their behavior

v. 13 Two evils committed by the people:

- 1) They have forsaken God—the fountain of living waters
- 2) Substituted false gods (Broken cisterns)—a cistern holds stale water...and here they are ‘broken’

Go God's way or the way of the nations?

14 "Is Israel a servant? Is he a homeborn slave? Why is he plundered?"

15 The young lions roared at him, and growled; They made his land waste; His cities are burned, without inhabitant.

16 Also the people of Noph and Tahpanhes Have broken the crown of your head.

17 Have you not brought this on yourself, In that you have forsaken the Lord your God When He led you in the way?

v. 14 Israel which had been freed from slavery, had made itself a slave to other nations and plundered by the Assyrians

"slave"—can refer to being a vassal to another nation

v. 15 "young lions"—Assyrians who laid Israel waste and burned its cities (722 BC)

v. 16 Noph and Tahpanes—cities in Egypt
Israel fell to the Assyrians after making a bad deal with Egypt

v. 17 The point:

Israel brought these catastrophes on themselves for not trusting God and putting their trust in other nations

v. 18-19 Judah's present situation

18 And now why take the road to Egypt, To drink the waters of Sihor? Or why take the road to Assyria, To drink the waters of the River?

19 Your own wickedness will correct you, And your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing That you have forsaken the Lord your God, And the fear of Me is not in you," Says the Lord God of hosts.

v. 18 Judah is warned not to trust in Egypt or Assyria (they should trust in God)
Sihor—reference to the Nile
'the River'—the Euphrates (in Assyria)

v. 19 The coming judgment upon Judah is a result of their forsaking the Lord

“backslidings” (also ‘backsliding’)—forsaking God and not trusting Him
(Heb. *me shuba/showbab*)—apostasy/idolatry/heathenism (7 times in Jeremiah chapter 3)...(13 times in the book)

v. 20-28 Judgment for Israel and Judah's evil ways

20 "For of old I have broken your yoke and burst your bonds; And you said, 'I will not transgress,'
When on every high hill and under every green tree You lay down, playing the harlot.

21 *Yet* I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me Into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?

22 For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, Yet your iniquity is marked before Me," says the Lord God.

v. 20 [1st part] God broke their bonds of Israel's slavery, but they were not faithful to God, playing the harlot with other gods

v. 20 "every high hill and under every green tree"—the locations of the pagan shrines dedicated to the worship of Baal and the Asherah; 'playing the harlot'—spiritual harlotry

v. 21 Israel (the vine Isaiah 5: 1-5) had been planted in the promised land to flourish and be fruitful, but turned into a degenerate plant...Spiritually degenerate

v. 22 Israel tries to wash itself clean, to appear righteous, yet the iniquity of false religion is a stain so great it doesn't come clean

23 “How can you say, ‘I am not polluted, I have not gone after the Baals’? See your way in the valley; Know what you have done: You are a swift dromedary breaking loose in her ways,

24 A wild donkey used to the wilderness, That sniffs at the wind in her desire; In her time of mating, who can turn her away? All those who seek her will not weary themselves; In her month they will find her.

25 Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst. But you said, ‘There is no hope. No! For I have loved aliens, and after them I will go.’

v. 23 They (Judah/Jerusalem) claim innocence, not involved with the **Baals** (plural—the multitude of dedicated shrines)

- “your way in the valley”—place to worship Baal
- Referencing the Valley of ben-Hinnon, SW of Jerusalem where pagan rituals were held

v. 23 [Last part] “swift dromedary breaking loose”—like a camel running wild in heat

v. 25 (NIV) Do not run until your feet are bare and your throat is dry. But you said, ‘Its no use! I love foreign gods and I must go after them’

Foolishness of worshipping false gods

26 “As the thief is ashamed when he is found out, So is the house of Israel ashamed; They and their kings and their princes, and their priests and their prophets,
27 Saying to a tree, ‘You are my father,’ And to a stone, ‘You gave birth to me.’ For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble They will say, ‘Arise and save us.’
28 But where are your gods that you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, If they can save you in the time of your trouble; For according to the number of your cities Are your gods, O Judah.

v. 26 The people’s behavior leads to their shame/disgrace
“shame”—as being led away as a captive at the hands of an enemy (Assyria)
▪ Especially their **leaders** have led them astray through idolatry

v. 27 Instead of leading the people to God, they turned them to idols...idolatry is pointed out again and again
▪ “You are my father”—instead of giving that title/worship to God, they give it to wood and stone idols

v. 28 False gods they made cannot save the people in time of trouble...they had made as many of them as the number of cities found in Judah—each town had their own manifestation of the god Baal (Jer. 11:13)

v. 29 -37 Irrationality of the people

29 “Why will you plead with Me? You all have transgressed against Me,” says the Lord.

30 “In vain I have chastened your children; They received no correction. Your sword has devoured your prophets Like a destroying lion.

31 “O generation, see the word of the Lord! Have I been a wilderness to Israel, Or a land of darkness? Why do My people say, ‘We are lords; We will come no more to You’?

32 Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.

v. 29 “Why will you plead [contend] with Me?”

- The people attempt to plead their case (against the charges made by God in verse 9)
 - He tells them, they have rebelled against Him

v. 30 God’s punishment of the people in their history had been of no avail, the correction did not work
Even God’s prophets bringing His word had been slain for their efforts

v. 31 God led them through the wilderness and out of darkness and yet they say they are in control of their lives and will not come to God

v. 32 They had forgotten God by their disobedience

33 “Why do you beautify your way to seek love? Therefore you have also taught The wicked women your ways.

34 Also on your skirts is found The blood of the lives of the poor innocents. I have not found it by secret search, But plainly on all these things.

35 Yet you say, ‘Because I am innocent, Surely His anger shall turn from me.’ Behold, I will plead My case against you, Because you say, ‘I have not sinned.’

v. 33 [1st part] (NIV) “How skilled you are at pursuing love”

- The love they seek is illicit...idolatry

So illicit (their idolatry)...they could teach loose women their trade

v. 34 [1st part] Their new love of idolatry and social sins have left the blood of the innocent poor upon them

[2nd part] “I have not found it by secret search”—blood shed on innocent poor is seen plainly

v. 35 Despite their moral decay, they continue to plead their innocence

Returns to the futility of foreign alliances

36 Why do you gad about so much to change your way? Also you shall be ashamed of Egypt as you were ashamed of Assyria.

37 Indeed you will go forth from him With your hands on your head; For the Lord has rejected your trusted allies, And you will not prosper by them.

v. 36 “gad about”= shifting positions

They would not change their ways and would trust in foreign alliances instead of God

[Last part] Turning to Egypt will bring as much shame as had trusting in Assyria

v. 37 “hands on your head”—a figure of grief/shame

- Trusting in other nations will only bring futility, shame and grief...they will not prosper

Chapter 3

Chapter theme: The call for repentance

Moves to end time prophecy

v. 1-5 judgment against the people

1 “They say, ‘If a man divorces his wife, And she goes from him And becomes another man’s, May he return to her again?’ Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; Yet return to Me,” says the Lord.

2 “Lift up your eyes to the desolate heights and see: Where have you not lain with men? By the road you have sat for them Like an Arabian in the wilderness; And you have polluted the land With your harlotries and your wickedness.

v. 1 Marriage analogy—not allowed to return to 1st wife after divorcing 2nd wife (Deut. 24: 1-4)
➤ Jeremiah is emphasizing how serious Israel’s idolatry offense is to God

v.1 [last part] God observed the idolatry of both Israel and Judah as: ‘played the harlot with many lovers’—with many gods (spiritual wanderings)
▪ Yet he calls for them to repent and come back to Him

v. 2 “desolate heights” (KJV) “high places”—favorite places of idolatrous worship

[Mid. Part] (NIV) “Is there any place where you have not been ravished? [by idols]
By the roadside you sat waiting for your lovers, sat like a nomad in the desert...”

3 Therefore the showers have been withheld, And there has been no latter rain. You have had a harlot's forehead; You refuse to be ashamed.

4 Will you not from this time cry to Me, 'My Father, You are the guide of my youth?'

5 Will He remain angry forever? Will He keep it to the end?' Behold, you have spoken and done evil things, As you were able."

v. 3 As judgment God withheld rain—God makes a point:
Baal was being worshipped as a 'god of fertility' who 'sends the rain'
▪ But God is in control of the rain

v. 4 (NIV) "Have you not just called to Me: 'My Father' my friend from my youth"

Syncretism –they call out to God as 'Father' but it is only lip service...They are attached to their idols

v. 5 Hoping God will hold back His anger, they continue to do evil...they have not learned a thing

End of Jeremiah's 1st message

Jeremiah's 2nd message—given at a different time

(Bible Knowledge Com.) “The prophecy is dated generally ‘during the reign of king Josiah’. Perhaps it can be placed sometime between the beginning of Jeremiah’s ministry in 627 BC and the discovery of the law in 621 BC”

6 The Lord said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: “Have you seen what **backsliding Israel** has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot.

7 And I said, after she had done all these things, ‘Return to Me.’ But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

v. 6 “backsliding Israel”—northern tribes of Israel who were conquered and taken into captivity by the Assyrians

- They had indulged in the gross practices of the pagan religion

“backsliding” or ‘backslidings’—7 times in this chapter...13 times in Jeremiah
backsliding (Heb. *me shuba*)= apostasy, turning away... “where it has become a way of life” (Theological Wordbook OT)

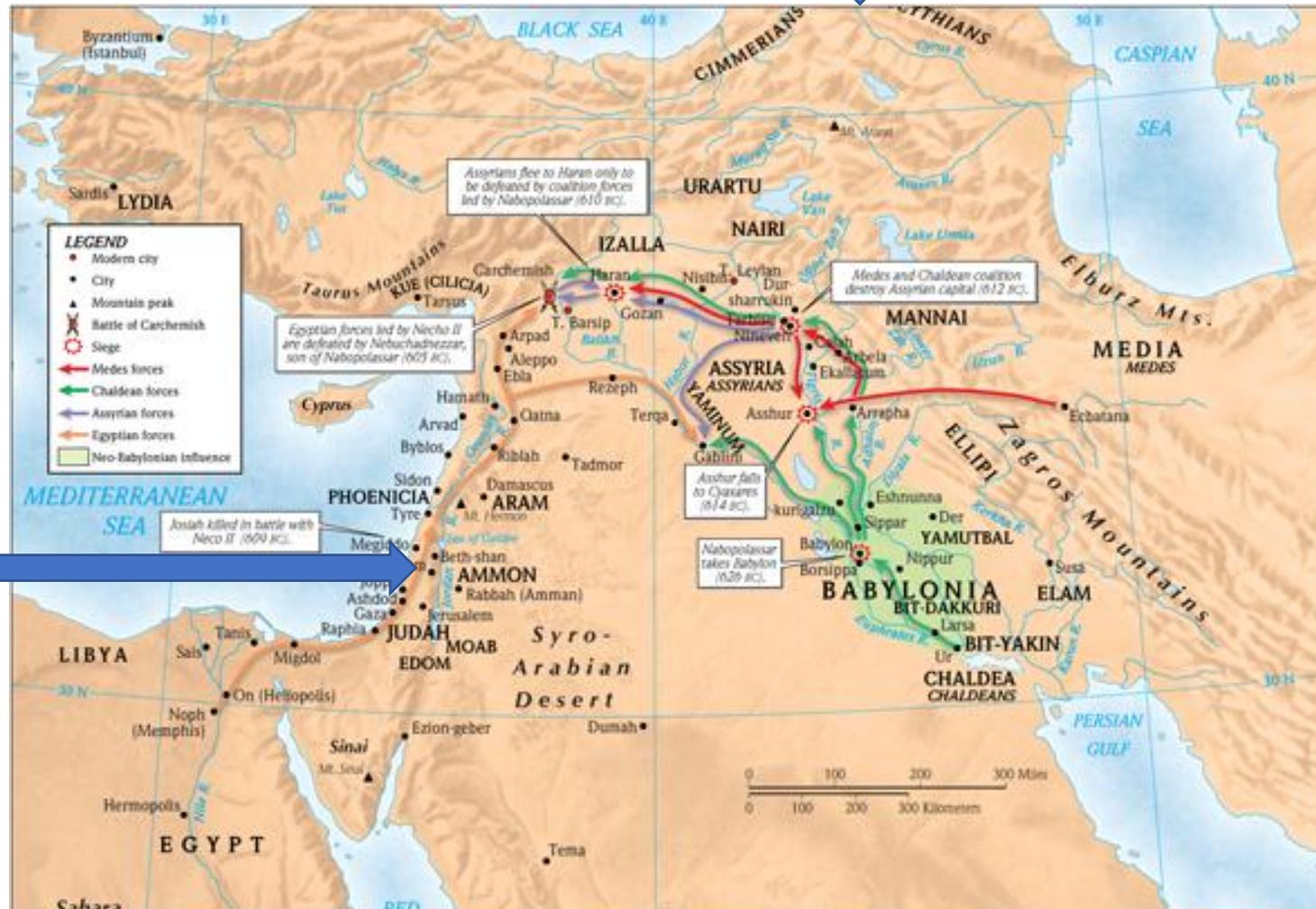
v. 7 Israel was given opportunity to repent, but would not

“treacherous sister Judah saw it”—Judah observed but learned nothing from Israel’s punishment

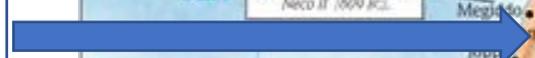
- In fact Judah will do worse

The northern tribes of Israel who went into captivity in 722 BC were located in this area around the Black and Caspian Sea when Jeremiah singled them out...they did not hear his message

- They were called by this time Cimmerians and Scythians



Original location of Israel, 10 tribe northern kingdom



8 Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.

9 So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.

10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense," says the Lord.

v. 8 God put Israel away (northern tribes in captivity) for spiritual adultery, but Judah did not fear nor learn and committed spiritual adultery as well

v. 9 "stones and trees"—the idols that are made from them
(KJV) "stocks" (Heb. *ets*)= a tree

v.10 Judah did not learn nor repent...but hypocritically made a pretense of returning to God

Israel clearly distinguished, separate from Judah

Moves to the future

11 Then the Lord said to me, “Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.

12 Go and proclaim these **words toward the north**, and say: ‘Return, backsliding Israel,’ says the Lord; ‘I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,’ says the Lord; ‘I will not remain angry forever.

13 Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against the Lord your God, And have scattered your charms To alien deities under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice,’ says the Lord.

v. 11 Though Israel, the northern tribes, rejected God and His laws, Judah became even worse

v. 12 Jeremiah told to prophesy to the ‘north’—northern tribes who had gone into captivity...they did not receive this message

- The message was to repent, turn back to God and He would have mercy upon them
 - Message for end time peoples of Israel

v. 13 End time Israel admonished to acknowledge their sin and that they had been worshipping the pagan deities

End time prophecy—future restoration

14 “Return, O backsliding children,” says the Lord; “for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

15 And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

16 “Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days,” says the Lord, “that they will say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord.’ It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore.

v. 14 “I will bring you to Zion”—scattered Israelites at Christ’s return

- “one from a city and two from a family”—few left alive after the tribulation

v. 15 Returning Israelites will be taught the truth and God’s way of life

v. 16 It won’t be necessary to remember the ark of the covenant, because Christ will be there, and ruling from Zion

- The ark of the covenant was a type of the throne of the Lord

At that time...in those days—future

17 “At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts.

18 “In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers.

19 “But I said: ‘How can I put you among the children And give you a pleasant land, A beautiful heritage of the hosts of nations?’ “And I said: ‘You shall call Me, “My Father,” And not turn away from Me.’

v. 17 Christ will be ruling in Jerusalem and all nations will come there to learn and worship

Isaiah 60: 1, 3

1 Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

3 The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.

v. 18 Both the house of Israel and Judah will be rejoined together out of the north from their captivity

- That never happened in ancient times...but will happen in the future (Isa. 11: 11-12)

v. 19 In that day both Israel and Judah will submit to God revere Him as Father, and not turn away from Him

Remembering Israel's past betrayal pointed out to them...for them to repent

20 Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," says the Lord.

21 A voice was heard on the desolate heights, Weeping and supplications of the children of Israel. For they have perverted their way; They have forgotten the Lord their God.

v. 20 Israel's past betrayal is portrayed as a wife who had departed her husband
"dealt treacherously"—by their apostasy

v. 21 "A voice (of repentance) was heard on the desolate heights"—acknowledge their guilt from the
desolate heights

➤ the Canaanite worship sites were located there

Israel then recognizes her guilt...weeping and crying for what they have done...they realize they had
perverted their way and had forgotten God

Israel's repentance will be genuine

22 "Return, you backsliding children, And I will heal your backslidings." "Indeed we do come to You, For You are the Lord our God.

23 Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, And from the multitude of mountains; Truly, in the Lord our God Is the salvation of Israel.

v. 22 God's admonition that Israel return/repent to Him...and He will heal them (spiritually)

Israel's answer: "Indeed we do come to You"—They come to God and acknowledge He is the true God

v. 23 It was vain to have worshipped the pagans they acknowledge

- 'hills'... 'mountains'—high places of pagan worship

24 For shame has devoured The labor of our fathers from our youth— Their flocks and their herds, Their sons and their daughters.

25 We lie down in our shame, And our reproach covers us. For we have sinned against the Lord our God, We and our fathers, From our youth even to this day, And have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.”

v. 24 They will acknowledge their shame going back through their ancestors

“shame”

(Parallel Com.) “The shameful thing is a euphemism for Baal (the evil substitute for the true worship of God)”

v. 25 “For we have sinned against the Lord our God”

- They repent of their sins for not having obeyed God

Lessons

“Have you not brought this on yourself (catastrophes/exile to Israel), In that you have forsaken the Lord your God When He led you in the way?”

- Obedience to God brings blessings, but disobedience brings penalties

The people of Jeremiah’s day “appeared” to be righteous, only giving lip service to God

- We must worship and serve God from the heart in obedience

In the future at Christ’s return, at last the world will have “shepherds according to My heart”

- Important to be growing in character and overcoming to be those future leaders