

A Study of the Book of Jeremiah

Timothy Tow

In Times Like These

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To
Rev Dr Arthur E Steele
founder of
Clearwater Christian College
and friend
of
Far Eastern Bible College
this book
is
affectionately dedicated

In Times Like These

RUTH CAYE JONES, 1902.

RUTH CAYE JONES, 1902.



1. In times like these you need a Sav-ior, In times like these you need an
2. In times like these you need the Bi-ble, In times like these O be not
3. In times like these I have a Sav-ior, In times like these I have an



an-chor; Be ver-y sure, be ver-y sure Your an-chor holds
i-dle; Be ver-y sure, be ver-y sure Your an-chor holds
an-chor; I'm ver-y sure, I'm ver-y sure My an-chor holds



REFRAIN



and grips the Sol-id Rock! This Rock is Je-sus, Yes, He's the



One; This Rock is Je-sus, The on-ly One! 1,2. Be ver-y sure,
3. I'm ver-y sure,



be ver-y sure Your an-chor holds and grips the Sol-id Rock!
I'm ver-y sure My an-chor holds and grips the Sol-id Rock!



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PREFACE

The sixteen Prophetic Books of the Old Testament are four-fifths the length of the New Testament. Whereas the New Testament is familiar ground to many, the Prophets seem to be a closed territory. This is due to a lack of knowledge of their historical background, and of a proper perspective of what the Prophets see. By bringing both the historical background and the Prophets' vision into focus through this commentary, the Reader can now enjoy a clearer picture of God's salvation plan in the Prophetic Word what seemed before a jigsaw puzzle.

This paragraph is taken from my introduction to the study of the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah under the title *The Gospel Prophets*. What is said of Isaiah and Micah is true also of Jeremiah.

The study of Jeremiah was undertaken through lectures delivered to the evening classes of Far Eastern Bible College. After the conclusion of the classes the printed notes given to them serially were further polished and improved. Hence this book titled *In Times Like These* is presented to the Christian public to awake us to similar perilous times in which we live and of immeasurably worse times to come before our Saviour's return.

Timothy Tow



Map of the Ancient Near East during the times of Jeremiah

INTRODUCTION

Josiah was the last good king to rule the Southern Kingdom of Judah. His birth was predicted 300 years before (I Kings 13:2). He was predestined to the difficult task of reforming the religious life of the nation when it would sink to an all time low. Instead of serving Jehovah the Lord their God, Judah had turned the Temple into a Synagogue of Satan.

The beginning acts of Josiah's Reformation are recorded in II Chronicles 34:1-7.

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about. And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven

images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem. (II Chronicles 34:1-7)

As goes the Church, so goes the nation. Despite Josiah's acts of uprooting the deep idolatry into which the people of God had sunken, the moral life of the nation was far from being purged of its filth and degradation. To help the good king God raised up Jeremiah in the 13th year of his reign (Jeremiah 1:1,2).

If there is a heart-rending job given to a servant of God, it is the commission of fighting the hydra-headed monster of evil and corruption during the last days of Jerusalem, now become a mother of harlots — the reigns of good king Josiah's wicked sons, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. "For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee" (Jeremiah 1:18-19). Inasmuch as Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet against all the pollutions and abominations of Judah, here is captured a dark and mirky picture of those times by a poem excerpted from the pen of William Cowper:

*The prophet wept for Israel, wished his eyes
Were fountains fed with infinite supplies;
For Israel dealt in robbery and wrong;
There were the scorner's and the slanderer's tongue;
Oaths, used as playthings or convenient tools,
As interest biased knaves, or fashion fools;
Adultery, neighing at his neighbour's door;
Oppression, labouring hard to grind the poor;
The partial balance and deceitful weight;
The treacherous smile, a mask of secret hate;
Hypocrisy, formality in prayer,
And the dull service of the lip were there.*

*He saw his people slaves to every lust,
Lewd, avaricious, arrogant unjust;
He heard the wheels of an avenging God
Groan heavily on the distant road;
Saw Babylon set wide her two-leaved brass
To let the military deluge pass;

Jerusalem a prey, her glory soiled,
Her princes captive, and her treasures spoiled;
Wept till all Israel heard his bitter cry,
Stamped with his foot, and smote upon his thigh;
But wept, and stamped, and smote his thigh in vain,
Pleasure is death when told of future pain,

And sounds prophetic are too rough to suit
Ears long accustomed to the pleasing lute;
They scorned his inspiration and his theme,
Pronounced him frantic, and his fears a dream;
With self indulgence winged the fleeting hours,
Till the foe found them, and down fell the towers.*

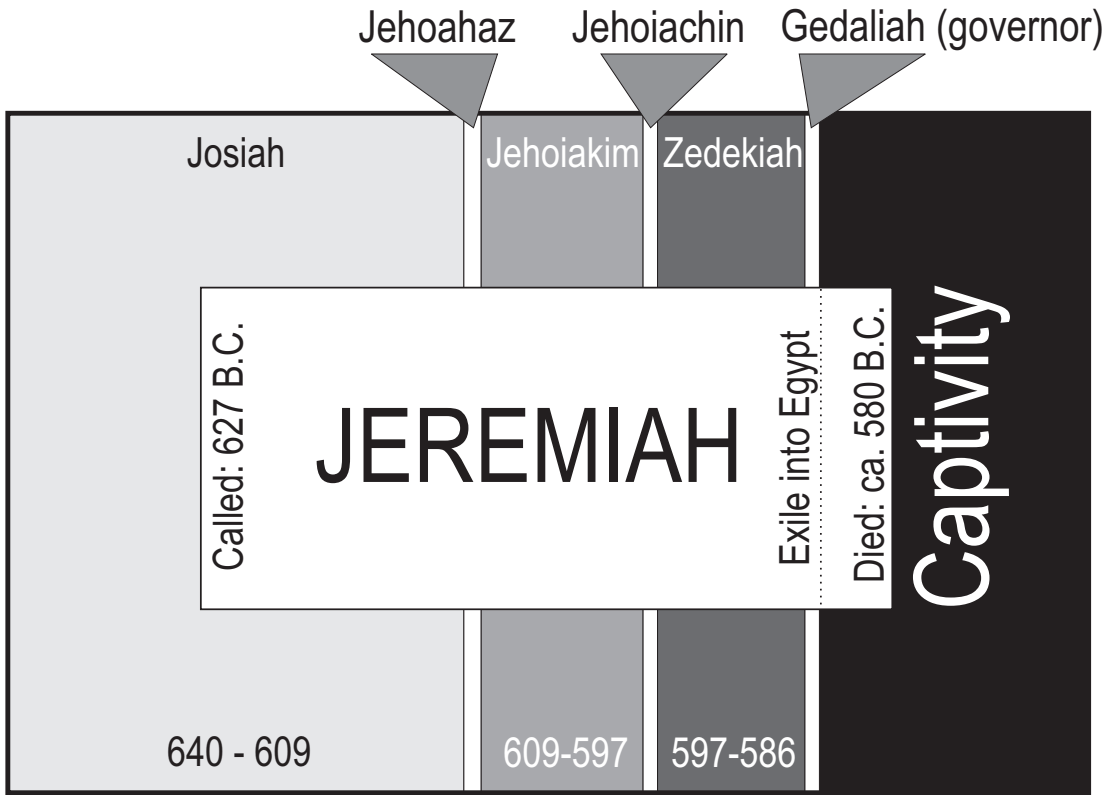
A people beyond redemption, Jeremiah became also their prophet of doom. The punishment of a rebellious people was sealed by their own wilful acts. (O, if only they would repent! There's always mercy with the Lord.) Judah must be conquered by the Babylonians and her people taken into captivity. This was Jeremiah's message all along until the Day of Judgment came, after a 20-year siege, from 606 BC to 586 BC when the City and Temple were burnt to the ground.

Yet, as they were a covenanted people, God sent Ezekiel and Daniel to go along with the Jewish captives to Babylon, while Jeremiah was retained to live with the Remnants in the land. Jeremiah served for 40 years with his people, even with the frightened Remnants who tried to escape Nebuchadnezzar's sword by fleeing into Egypt. Abducted by his own people, Jeremiah still served as their mediator with Jehovah their God to the very end. Jeremiah stands at the very forefront of the

Prophetic order so that Christ was thought to be Jeremiah returned from the dead (Matthew 16:14).

The greatness of Jeremiah is reflected in the Jewish tradition as told by Dean Stanley of Westminster in his *Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church*.

Whether, according to the Christian tradition, he was stoned to death by his fellow-exiles in Egypt, or whether, according to the Jewish tradition, he made his escape to Babylon, the Hebrew Scriptures and Josephus are equally silent. But his legendary and traditional fame shows how large a space he occupied henceforward in the thoughts of his countrymen. More than any other of their heroes, he becomes, as has been truly said, the Patron Saint of Judea. He is the guardian of their sacred relics; carrying off with him the sacred fire from the altar; ascending the mountain of Sinai where Moses climbed up and saw the heritage of God and there in a hollow cave he lays the tabernacle, the ark, the altar of incense, and closes the door until the time that God shall gather His people again together, and receive them into mercy. He appears in a vision to Judas Maccabeus, with grey hairs, exceeding glorious, of a wonderful and excellent majesty, with a sword of gold in his right hand — a gift from God to the patriot warrior, wherewith he shall wound the adversaries. That peculiar intercessory mediation which even those who most feared and detested him believed that he possessed in life, he was thought to exercise with yet more potent efficacy after his death:— a lover of the brethren, who prayeth much for the people and for the Holy City, Jeremiah the Prophet of God. As time rolled on, he became the chief representative of the whole Prophetic order. By some he was placed at the head of all the Prophets in the Jewish canon. His spirit was believed to live on in Zechariah and in all the Prophetical writings which could not be traced back to the real author. At the time of the Christian era, his return was daily expected. He was emphatically thought to be the Prophet — the Prophet like unto Moses, who should close the whole dispensation.



Chronological Chart of the times of Jeremiah

CHAPTER I

THE CALL OF GOD'S SERVANT

Every servant of the Lord must receive God's call whether prophet or apostle, evangelist or pastor. (Conversely, how shall they preach except they be sent? Romans 10:15.) The circumstances and means of such a call may vary, but the certainty thereof is equally compelling in each case.

Moses was called audibly and visually in his desert encounter with Jehovah in the Burning Bush (Exodus 3). Isaiah was called by a vision also of the LORD attended by Seraphims crying antiphonally, “. . . Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). Samuel was called in the stillness of the night by a Voice that spoke three times before he knew it was the Lord. In the case of Jeremiah the Lord had spoken to him numerous times from the days of Josiah's reign to the reigns of Josiah's sons, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. How did the Lord call Jeremiah in the first instance, it is not told, but with two visions following the account of his call, we are persuaded these were given not only to show him the swiftness of coming judgment, but also to confirm the prophet's call (Genesis 41:32).

Does God call His servants today by vision and voice? While we who have felt His call with equal certainty need no vision or voice as claimed by charismatics, the testimony of Sadhu Sundar Singh and of John Sung, how the Crucified Christ had appeared

and spoken to them cannot be refuted. Their testimonies are fortified by the mighty works that followed them. Nevertheless, these are extremely rare instances.

When God called Jeremiah he was a young man. God revealed to His servant that He had him in mind even before his conception, and had appointed him prophet to the nations before his birth. This is the mystery of predestination. It is reiterated by St Paul as involving the election of every child of God, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, . . ." (Ephesians 1:4). Such high mystery is seen by the heathens darkly as fate. Fate is static, and ruled by blind chance. Fatalism is doomed. Predestination is dynamic involving Divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Predestination fortifies perseverance. As for Paul he could say with Jeremiah that God had called him, who ". . . separated me from my mother's womb . . ." (Galatians 1:15). By way of humble testimony the writer must witness to God's grace in calling him also from his mother's womb. I have tried to run away from God in pursuit of worldly power and fame, but Mother's vow bound me securely to Him (Proverbs 31:2). Mother's death and seven-month old daughter's death within five weeks of each other thwarted me like falling in a hurdle race. And His grace has kept me in the pastoral ministry the last forty-five years. After forty-five years I can say with Caleb, "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in" (Joshua 14:11). If the Lord has called you to be a pastor, missionary, teacher, or evangelist, may you remain faithful in that call to the very end. ". . . No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Now the meaning of the two confirming visions:

(A) The rod of an almond tree. Why almond? From our pilgrimages to the Holy Land, we have been shown by the tour

guide that the almond tree is the first of trees to blossom, even before advent of spring. There is also a play of the words *almond* and *hasten* in the Hebrew language. Almond in Hebrew which is *shaked* rhymes with *shoked* which means hasten. Thus when God showed Jeremiah the blossoming almond rod He meant to say, “I will hasten my word to perform it.” Could this not also be a confirmation of his call like God causing Aaron’s rod to bud as a testimony against the rebels? (Numbers 17:10).

If the Lord seems to delay His judgment, let us hear Peter’s word, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (II Peter 3:9). God’s judgment is always tempered with mercy. He gives us a second chance on earth but not beyond.

(B) A seething pot and the face thereof is toward the north. A seething pot spells trouble. As it faces the north it means, “Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land” (Jeremiah 1:14). As Israel is separated from Babylon her enemy on the east by a forbidding desert, those invading Jerusalem cannot but come by the north, following the course of the River Euphrates through civilised country known as the Fertile Crescent (see map). That is why the seething pot faces north where the Euphrates flows.

War is a means of judgment from God. The reason why Judah is soon to be invaded is her rampant apostasy. They “. . . have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands” (Jeremiah 1:16). Jeremiah’s mission is a particularly difficult one. Not one like “delivering a positive gospel message.” His job is to denounce kings and governors — to root up and pull down (strongholds) before he could build and plant. He must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). He is called to be a reformer in every sense of the word, and a revivalist to rekindle the flickering faith of an

erring nation. He is model to stalwarts of church history like Luther and Calvin, Zwingli and Knox. In our century, an inspiration to J Gresham Machen and Carl McIntire in the great fundamental-modernist controversy. As God will inspire him to speak, he must be courageous, polemical, unflinching, like Athanasius who said, “The world is against me. I am against the world.”

In these days of ecumenical conspiracy when Evangelicals and Roman Catholics have officially closed ranks and repudiated the 16th Century Reformation, every faithful church must take a stand in a Twentieth, yea, Twenty-first Century Reformation. To drift along with the Ecumenical tide betrays the Jeremianic Spirit. Riding “two feet in two boats,” to use a Chinese idiom, what will become of those who profess leadership in the ICCA (International Council of Christian Churches) while sitting in Council with Ecumenicals and Charismatics?

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3,4).



CHAPTER II

FIRST REVIVAL MESSAGE TO APOSTATE JUDAH

Today there is a cry for mass evangelism, to reach out to those outside the Church. The greater need is revivalism, to awaken the slumbering within her fold. Those who profess their faith in God but who “. . . draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:” (Isaiah 29:13) are condemned. And who are they teaching the precept of men? “The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit” (Jeremiah 2:8). This was Bishop J C Ryles’ lament. The Anglican clergy in his day could little explain the Christian Faith beyond saying Christ’s Name.

The Jews were accused of committing two evils: “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). They have fallen back into the old heathen ways of Egypt and adopted the culture of the Assyrians inasmuch as they vacillated to placate the two contending powers in Josiah’s earlier reign. They come not to worship at the appointed place Jerusalem in face of war, but set up

their own upon every high hill and under every green tree which was forbidden by Moses (Deuteronomy 16:21).

In forsaking the Lord to serve other gods which is rank idolatry, Israel and Judah have “played the harlot” (Jeremiah 2:20). Unfaithfulness to the living and true God who saved them out of Egypt is **spiritual adultery**. Their straying from God to Baal is so strong that it is likened to a **wild ass** on heat — “there is no hope for me; for I have loved strangers and after them will I go” (Jeremiah 2:25). Kings, princes, priests and prophets have led in this national apostacy. The rulers have oppressed the poor and innocent for gain. And yet they pretended to be innocent themselves. The result is troubles all around and judgment impending. This first message is presented like a prosecution conducted in a court room.

Now the question is asked, is Christendom any better than Judah in the last days of her apostacy before judgment came through the Babylonian invasion? Protestants are now joined back to the Church of Rome with all her idolatry and superstition. This is no better than the Jews going the way of Baalim. Are ministers of the gospel preaching the faithful Word or the godless philosophy of modernism and liberalism? Is the Church the stronghold of a professional clergy who serves their own belly or is it the House of prayer for God’s people who readily find succour in time of need? Is the Church a lighthouse shining a bright light of truth to bring men groping in darkness to the Saviour or a cage of hateful birds? Every church of whatever denomination must search her own heart and examine her own body before the eyes of the Omniscient Triune God. Amen.

CHAPTER III

WHAT IS GREATER THAN A HUSBAND'S AND FATHER'S LOVE?

God's judgment on Israel (and Judah) is not the punitive action of a judge, but the chastisement out of a husband's love and a father's love!

According to Moses a husband can put away his wife if he finds "some uncleanness in her."

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

Israel as Jehovah's wife (Isaiah 54:5) has fallen into deeper sin than described by Moses' law on marriage above — she has degenerated to a prostitute serving many men. "Yet return to me

again, saith the Lord.” Humanly speaking no husband can readmit such a wife. But God is willing to accept His wayward people who have committed both spiritual and carnal adultery, if she repents. What greater love can you find than God’s love?

A second demonstration of God’s love is the figure of a father. Israel, even Judah, is a wayward son. Like the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, when he returned home, did his father turn him away? Even so, God loves His chosen people. So He pleads, “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, “My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?” The Lord pleads further, “Will He reserve His anger for ever? will He keep it to the end? Behold thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.” God is more than willing to forgive a prodigal son if he should repent of his sins.

Using another analogy, Israel the Northern Kingdom and Judah the Southern Kingdom are called sisters. Now, the Northern Kingdom was taken into captivity in 722 BC by the Assyrians. Why? Because of her turning from Jehovah to Baal. For her apostasy she was taken into exile.

Did Judah her sister learn from Israel’s downfall? Judah was worse. Did they not possess Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem their capital? Yet, they also went after Baalim and many other gods. That was the reason also for their coming chastisement by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. “And the Lord said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah . . . Only acknowledge thine iniquity that thou has transgressed against the Lord thy God . . . and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Turn O backsliding children, saith the Lord: for I am married to you . . .” (Jeremiah 3:8-14). Again we ask, “What is greater than God’s love? Returning to the figure of a husband Isaiah said in equally endearing terms:

*For thy Maker is thine husband;
The LORD of hosts is his name;
And thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel;*

*The God of the whole earth shall he be called.
 For the LORD hath called thee as a woman
 forsaken and grieved in spirit,
 And a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.
 For a small moment have I forsaken thee;
 But with great mercies will I gather thee. (Isaiah 54:5-7)*

What greater love than this? So will the Lord receive every lost sinner, every sinning saint, when we return to Him.

O Come BACK to the Lord ...

Oh come unto the Lord. Oh, come back to the Lord;

No mat-ter how hee - y And how great your sins may be;
 Our Lord is wait-ing for Your re-turn both night and day;
 That No mat-ter how hard hit And how beat-en you may be,

There are no sins that Christ our Savior Cannot bear or not ac - cept,
 He is an-xiously wait-ing for you With His doors kept o-pen wide,
 The Lord's hands will comfort you greatly They will touch and will heal you;

The great depth of the Lord's lov-ing heart, It is far deeper than the skies.
 As if He is wait-ing in the night For His lost child to come back home,
 Oh Come un - to our Lord who loves so Please come back home, pl. come back home.

CHAPTER IV TO VI

DEATH IS NEAR, JUDGMENT IS SURE, EXCEPT JUDAH REPENTS

In these three chapters Jeremiah predicts the coming invasion of enemy forces descending from the north. These are the Babylonians and troops of other races under their king Nebuchadnezzar. The consequences of war are given in the grimmest terms. To see a more vivid picture of the atrocities of war, read Lamentations. Those of us who went through the ravages of WWII and the Japanese Invasion feel vividly the scenes described by Jeremiah the war-time prophet of Judah.

War is one of God's ways of judging a corrupt nation, polluted by sin of every kind like a dying patient vile with sores from head to foot (Isaiah 1:6). Only repentance can bring about salvation and deliverance from judgment. When Nineveh repented from Jonah's preaching, destruction was averted. Let this message be received by the nations of our day. Let the Church pray for the nation, for "as goes the Church, so goes the nation."

What are some of the sins Judah need to repent from? "The sins of the spirit are ten times worse than the sins of the flesh," says Dr Chia Yu Ming my teacher in China. Let us examine them, the root of their apostasy in these three chapters as follows:

1. **A Hardened Heart.** "For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and

sow not among thorns” (Jeremiah 4:3). This tells of the condition of Judah’s hardened heart, which is described in the parable of the sower. There is the trodden footpath, the rocky soil and the thorny ground. All this is fallow ground which must be ploughed. The stones must be taken away, the thorny shrubs and weeds thoroughly cast out and burned that it may be declared good ground that will bring forth fruit 30, 60 and 100 fold (Matthew 13:3-8). Until our hearts are broken and softened by God’s plough of chastisement, we will not repent!

2. **An Uncircumcised Heart** (Jeremiah 4:4). As the foreskin of the flesh must be cut off to become ceremonially God’s people, the greater need is the corresponding circumcision of our heart. Paul says, “For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. . . For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:25-29).
3. **A Covetous Heart.** “For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely” (Jeremiah 6:13). The same situation prevailed in Micah’s day, a hundred years before Jeremiah. Micah puts it more vividly, “The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us” (Micah 3:11).
4. **No Good Head.** What a nation needs is not military might nor economic power. The cry we hear in the annals of

Israel's history is always for a man to stand in the gap (Jeremiah 5:1, Ezekiel 22:30, Isaiah 59:16). After Josiah the reformist king, there was no more such a good and righteous leader to stand in the gap. All his sons (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah) and grandson (Jehoiachin) who ruled after him were bad. Hence came judgment.

5. **Wandering Feet.** "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16). "Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish" (Jeremiah 6:21). **Judgment is the end result of rebellion and apostacy**, and wilful sinning brings judicial hardening of the heart.

May we not call this the Divine Paradox?

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. (Isaiah 6:9-10)



CHAPTER VII

FROM SHILOH TO JERUSALEM

Jerusalem represents Judah's centre of government but more so Judah's centre of worship. Jerusalem is God's chosen site for the building of the Temple by Solomon. Here dwelt the presence of Jehovah their God. Here were the appointed sacrifices to the Almighty made, nowhere else. Here dwelt the pastor and the high priest who ministered to the needs of the chosen people.

With God's Temple standing in the midst of the nation's life, the Jews reasoned this would be divine protection from their enemies. While they banked their hopes in God's House like a mere piece of talisman no different from the heathens, their hearts were far from the Lord God who bought them, who redeemed them from Egypt. In this dark situation God sent Jeremiah to denounce them in their confusions. "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these." Except they repent, they were sure to be taken by the enemy (the Babylonians).

Here is a catalogue of their sins: Injustice in court trials, oppression of aliens, orphans and widows; shedding of innocent blood, worship of foreign gods, stealing, murder, adultery (all sexual crimes), Baal worship, sacrilege and simony. All these abominations are piled up before God's sacred eyes. As long as

there is no repentance from these evils, God must destroy the Temple the Jews worshipped in as He destroyed Shiloh.

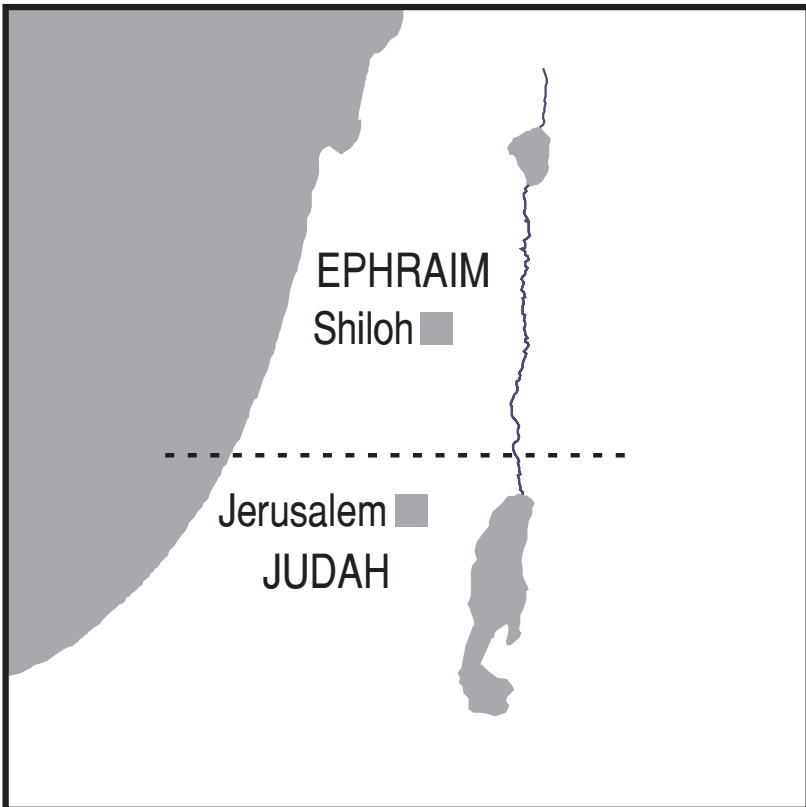
What is Shiloh? When the children of Israel entered the Promised Land God told them to worship only at one place where He would pitch the Tabernacle. The place He chose was Shiloh in the territory taken by the Tribe of Ephraim. Ephraim was the second son of Joseph who was chosen over and above Manasseh, Joseph's first son. Joshua was Israel's leader and Joshua was of the Tribe of Ephraim. The Tabernacle at Shiloh therefore became the centre of Israel's worship and government. It rested in Shiloh for three hundred years.

Now in the days of the last high priest Eli, Israel's religion had sunken to its lowest depths. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas who as assistant priests to their father made use of the Tabernacle for their nefarious ends. They committed sex with the women who came to worship, and took away sacrificial meat before consecration to God, because they would eat it "fresh" without passing through the fire. As the spiritual life of the nation became so polluted, the centre of worship, the Tabernacle at Shiloh, had to be destroyed. Thus, Eli's sons were killed in battle, the Ark of the Covenant was taken by the Philistines, and Eli fell to his death upon receipt of the news of Israel's defeat. Shiloh is fallen, is fallen. So will Jerusalem in the face of the sins blatantly committed by her people be destroyed. The last straw that broke the camel's back of God's endurance is described as follows:

Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon

this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched. (Jeremiah 7:17-20)

And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. (Jeremiah 7:31-33)



CHAPTER VIII TO X

MORE CONDEMNATORY MESSAGES

These three chapters are a continuation of Chapter VII where Jerusalem is denounced to suffer the same fate as Shiloh. In spite of God's call to priest and people through His prophets, Jeremiah being the foremost, "rising up early and speaking" they would not hear or answer. "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle" (Jeremiah 8:5-6). But they do not have the horse sense to turn around in the face of death, in the destruction by enemy forces "coming from the north."

"Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord" (verse 7). Taken up by the craze for money and illegal gain neither priest nor people could be plucked from their ruin. The people wanted peace in order to get gain, they cared not for safety. In Seoul, Korea there was a five or six storey departmental store that was cracking up because of faulty foundations. Big cracks were observed in the walls and beams. The business bosses should have called the people to get out. Being drawn by their covetous desire to make more money, they delayed, and procrastinated until all of

a sudden the whole structure sank into the earth like a man stepping into a quagmire. Over 600 souls perished. This disaster was the same as what happened to the New World Hotel in Singapore 1986. So will it happen to this generation in spite of prophetic warnings of judgment with the Second Coming of Christ.

And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. (Luke 17:26-30)

Jeremiah's warning that the bones of the kings of Judah and of the princes, the priests and the prophets would be totally desecrated by being strewn on the exposed earth like dung is recorded in II Kings 23:4-20,

And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel. And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the

children of the people. And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city. Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren. And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire. And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men. Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent,

and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel. And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria. And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Bethel. And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

IX

Under God's judgment in time of war the livelihood of the people would be like drinking wormwood and gall water (Chapter 9:15). There will be no love lost even between members of the same family. They will lie to one another and betray one another.

Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait. (Jeremiah 9:4-8)

What Jeremiah has observed here between neighbour and neighbour Micah sees in darker hues between even members of the same family.

The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. (Micah: 7:2-6)

During the days of Mao's Cultural Revolution in the sixties what Micah cautioned, "Keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom" (Micah 7:5), starkly came to pass. Can you imagine that husbands and wives betrayed one another for the cause of Communism? Conversely for the Gospel's sake, our Lord has warned,

"For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (Matt 10:35,36)

There will arise also those that will make wartime money, the successful ones, whether through just or foul means. These will be the admiration of the common herd, but Jeremiah reminded them:

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth

me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. (verses 23-24)

X

Like Isaiah sarcastically describing how idols are made, (Chapter 44), Jeremiah has his own way of snubbing God's people now gone to the dogs:

Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities. Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men. But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out

the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. (Jeremiah 10:2-15)

After all that is said, it seems so ironical to be told in a word by the apostle Paul to the Colossians, “and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5). If we pay too much attention to the dollar sign, we are worshipping an idol too!



CHAPTER XI TO XII

THE CURSE OF THE BROKEN COVENANT

A covenant is a sacred promise made between two parties. There is, for example, the marriage covenant. God's dealing with Israel is by covenant.

Now this message to Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem points them back to the Exodus. They were slaves to the Egyptians but God would give them Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey on condition they obeyed the Lord (Exodus 13:5, Genesis 15:16). He gave them His Law to keep, but they did not. "After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances" (Leviticus 18:3).

The present generation who are the remnant Jews and people of Jerusalem was worse than their forefathers. They have departed from the law of God so much that every city of Judah has set up its own god, and every street of Jerusalem has an altar to Baal, like coffee shops in every street corner in old Singapore! This is spiritual adultery. "What hath my beloved to do in mine house (that is, the Temple), seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest" (Jeremiah 11:15).

Judah is a green olive tree planted by the Lord that produces good fruit. But God has to burn her down like a multitude coming to destroy her, because the incense she offers to Baal has provoked Him. In proclaiming this message, Jeremiah finds a conspiracy rising from his own fraternity — the priests who make their abode in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. They would that Jeremiah be exterminated out of the earth. These are what Paul has called false brethren.

In answer to Jeremiah's complaint against the priests of Anathoth the Lord replied that their young men would be slain by the sword, their sons and daughters die by famine.

The people of Judah worshipped the Lord with their mouth but their heart was far away from Him (Jeremiah 12:2). This echoes to what Isaiah had said earlier of Jerusalem and her inhabitants, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isaiah 29:13-14).

The pastors, many of them, have destroyed God's vineyard and none of them cared.

The evil neighbours that "touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit" will be properly dealt with by the Lord. "The sword of the Lord shall devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land: no flesh shall have peace" (verse 12).

And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every

man to his land. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 12:15-17)

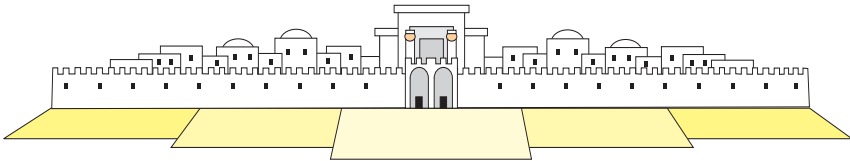
This passage looks forward to Israel's restoration in the Millennium.

O Jerusalem

*O Jerusalem Thou City bright and fair
My heart is yearning to be there
My Lord now has come
No more shall I linger
O Bring me to Jerusalem*

*O Jesus my Lord Thou Holy Son of God
Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation
Messiah is come
King o'er Jerusalem
Behold He sits enthroned in Zion*

*Hail Thou Prince of Peace
Come reign over us
Gov'nors and kings fall on their knees
From Jerusalem Truth and Grace shall conquer
Till suns shall rise a thousand years*



CHAPTER XIII

THE MESSAGE OF THE LINEN GIRDLE AND WINE BOTTLE

God speaks to men through His servants the prophets. When they do not pay attention He uses object lessons, like teaching young children with visual aids. Today we have discovered the effectiveness of visual aids, such as the screen to show slides and videos, etc. But God is always ahead of man. In the thirties when Dr John Sung visited Singapore with a mighty Pentecost, on numerous occasions he used visual aids. The most famous of all was a mini-Chinese coffin from which he pulled out slips of paper with all the sins we commit from A to Z.

In this chapter Jehovah said to Jeremiah, “Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water” (a brand new piece bought from Jerusalem’s clothier). So Jeremiah put it on.

Perhaps, the next morning, the Lord came and spoke to him again, “Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock.” So Jeremiah went and hid it in a hole of the rock, as the Lord had commanded. Now, the distance from Jerusalem to the Euphrates River that flows forming the northern border of Syria, from our observation, is at least 400 miles. Far or near, if God says it, He will provide for all our needs. We have experienced His

marvellous provisions in sending us even to Canada, to the uttermost part of the earth.

After many days, perhaps months, the Lord said to Jeremiah again, “Arise, go to Euphrates and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there.” This time when he went, he recovered that new girdle from the hole he had buried it, and see, it was spoilt. It could not be used anymore. From this object lesson Jeremiah was given a message of condemnation to all Judah from the king to the priests and prophets and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem” (Jeremiah 13:9).

By corollary, Jeremiah was instructed to expose the Jews from the lesson of the girdle to the lesson of the wine bottle (made of the whole skin of an animal). Jeremiah said, “The Lord God of Israel says, ‘Every bottle shall be filled with wine.’ (To which the people would reply, Of course every bottle shall be filled with wine.) Now, I will fill all the people of this land, from King to commoner with drunkenness. They will be totally confounded for their pride and their pollutions of the land both with carnal and spiritual adultery.”

In despair of their incorrigible waywardness, Jeremiah concluded, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”



CHAPTER XIV TO XV

THE MESSAGE OF THE DROUGHT

The Lord was sending this Drought in fulfilment of Moses' prophecy, which reminds of the three-and-a-half years of famine in the days of Ahab (I King 18:1; Jas 5:17):

The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed. (Deuteronomy 28:21-24)

Because there was no rain the nation was brought down to the dust. The ground was chapt (Jeremiah 14:4), there was no ploughing. The young of animals when born were forsaken by their mothers. Even the wild asses drooped because there was no grass.

There is a Chinese saying, "Natural disasters plus human tribulations" (天灾人祸). Both come from God. God uses famine and war as a means of judging a wicked nation, particularly Israel and Judah, nations under God, yet opposing

God. Therefore the Lord declared, “Though Moses and Samuel (*two greatest prophets*) stood before Me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight and let them go forth” (Jeremiah 15:1).

Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. (Jeremiah 14:2-4)

How terrible are the sins of the fathers. The sins of Manasseh, grandfather of Josiah, in apostatising from the heritage of good King Hezekiah, are still fresh crimson in the eyes of God. It was in Manasseh’s reign that children were commonly sacrificed in the Kidron Valley, the Valley of the son of Hinnom which gave its name for hell in the Greek Gehenna, that is, Valley of Hinnom.

In spite of impending judgment the false prophets prophesied a rosy picture of peace and plenty, being deceived themselves and deceiving others (v14). The punishment they received from God would be swift and severe. “For we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth” (II Cor 13:8).

In the course of rebuking the backsliding nation Jeremiah self-pitied his role as a prophet. He regretted that his mother had borne him a man of contention to the whole earth (so was St Paul, so was Athanasius). “I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?” (Jeremiah 15:17-18). Thus complained the over-worked prophet. Jeremiah was infallible and inerrant when he declared all the counsel of God to

the backsliding. But in the weakness of his wretched condition, he cannot be without the reproach of a spoilt child. So was John the Baptist when he was imprisoned by Herod. Why was not Jesus come to his rescue? So he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” Jesus, after giving testimony of His works of grace on the sick and the poor answered, “And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Matthew 11:6). Can we who are called to be the Lord’s servants remain steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord (I Corinthians 15:58)? Paul, who questions us, remained faithful to the very end.

As for Jeremiah, the Lord was ever indulgent like a loving father.

Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible. (Jeremiah 15:19-21)

CHAPTER XVI TO XVII

JEREMIAH, DON'T MARRY!

Marriage is a mystery of mysteries. With some it comes like a whirlwind that knocks you off your feet — love at first sight. With others, it seems like a sailboat sitting still for weeks in the harbour: there is no wind, not even a breeze. It takes a long time to fruition. Or it never occurs.

While God has made woman to be a helpmate for man, and in the normal course of life, a man will find a life partner, yet there is the mystery of predestination whereby it is for some not to marry. Jesus says, “For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it” (Matthew 19:12). Now, we observe that Jeremiah belongs to the last category. Another of Biblical history, truly, is St Paul. Or, as some think, he was a widower, he never married again for the Gospel’s sake. William Chalmers Burns, “Grandfather of Singapore Bible-Presbyterians” also remained single his whole life in order that he might evangelise China.

Why was Jeremiah told not to marry? Because he was living in the last days of the Jewish kings, and Jerusalem being so

polluted with the crimson stains of every shade of Judah's crimes, must soon face total destruction.

For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. (Jeremiah 16:3-4)

Now inasmuch as Isaiah "and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion" (Isaiah 8:18), God's command to Jeremiah to singleness was a greater sign to Judah before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. If Jeremiah had a girl friend and he had to break with her, the sign would be even greater.

That those who marry in the face of war approaching are doubly burdened is reflected in Jesus' words to the married or who intended to marry on His way to Calvary.

And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (Luke 23:27-31)

As for Paul this is his advice:

But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. (1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

Another case concerning the prophet's wife is Ezekiel. As Jeremiah was prophet to the Jews remaining in Judah in the days of Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem, Ezekiel was prophet to those taken in exile to Babylon, a pastor to those in captivity, as Daniel was posted to the Babylonian court.

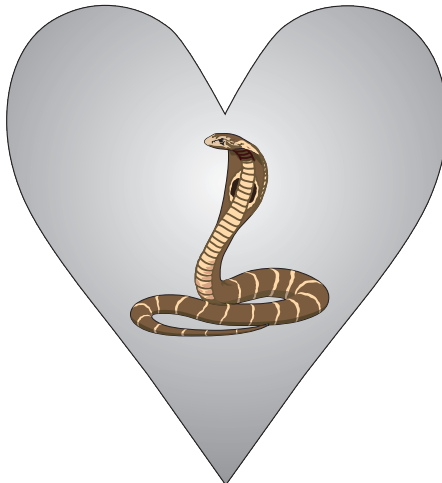
Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded. And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so? Then I answered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword. And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD. Also, thou son of man, shall it not be in the day

when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters, That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears? In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 24:15-27)

For a powerful object lesson, we see the sudden death of Ezekiel's wife used as a sign to apostate Israel. Therefore as Ezekiel is commanded not to mourn for his wife, the Jews were told to hold their peace when calamity fell on them because of their sins. Will God go to such lengths with His servant in order to bring the erring congregation to their senses?

In the vortex of war and confusion, a man's true character under such testing will be revealed. Jeremiah observes, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" This is all clearly attested by his composition of Lamentations.

The sin of breaking the Sabbath among others is a national sin that had doomed Judah to destruction.



CHAPTER XVIII TO XIX

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay:
Mould me and make me After Thy will,
While I am waiting, Yielded and still.*

Why did the Lord tell Jeremiah to go to the pottery before He would give him His Word?

Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. (18:3-4)

In this case, seeing is believing! There is nothing in the sphere of teaching to equal the practical. The going through the whole process that is described in theory. When we were on Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, one place we were taken to visit [before the *Intifada* (Uprising)] was the Pottery at Hebron. How wonderful was the potter's wheel and the potter's hands that shaped the vessel he was making. How smooth and malleable was the clay. Vessels of any shape desired by the potter came off the revolving wheel like magic! But the essence of pottery making is the determination of the potter. Paul spoke from experience, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Romans 9:21).

Now the message to the enlightened prophet,

O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. (Jeremiah 18:6-11)

Instead of quickly repenting of their sins, so the Lord would not spoil them as the potter in the first instance, the Jews replied, "There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart" (verse 12). The result was they would be scattered as with an east wind before the enemy (verse 17).

When Jeremiah's enemies plotted his downfall, even death, with their sophistic rhetoric, Jeremiah hurled back an imprecatory prayer calling God to requite them for their evil. Is this not unChristian? Inasmuch as there are also many imprecatory psalms of this nation (Psalm 137 for example) we must conclude this is calling for public justice and not private revenge. There is no dispensational licence for the Old Testament prophets.



Part II

On this occasion the Lord told Jeremiah to get an earthen bottle from the potter's house and gather the elders of the people and the priests to the Valley of Hinnom and proclaim these words:

And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind: Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them. (Jeremiah 19:3-9)

With these words of malediction the prophet is commanded to smash the earthen bottle he had brought along in the face of the elders of the nation. As if this was not enough, Jeremiah ascended the court of the Lord's House at the Lord's command, and there he reiterated his word spoken below in the valley,

Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD'S house; and said to all the people, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words. (Jeremiah 19:14-15)

What evil response will come to this curse from the Lord?

The Ten Commandments

Adapted by T.T.

GERMANY L.M.

1. Th - ou no gods shalt ha - ve but ME, Be - fore no i - dol bow the knee.
 2. Nor dare the Sab - bath da - y pro - fane. Give to thy pa - rents ho - nour due.
 3. Abstain from words and de - eds un - clean, Steal not for thou of God art seen.

Take not the na - me of God in va - in, Nor dare the Sab - bath da - y pro - fane
 Take heed that th - ou no mur - der do, Ab - stain from wor - ds and de - eds un - clean.
 Tell not a wil - fil lie, nor love it, What is thy neigh - bour's do not co - vet, A - men.

CHAPTER XX

CAN DARKNESS FIGHT AGAINST LIGHT?

When news of Jeremiah's denunciation of the Judah leadership came to the ears of Pashur, the son of Immer the priest, chief governor of the Lord's House, then Pashur struck Jeremiah and put him in the lock-up in the high gate by the House of the Lord.

When he was released the next day, Jeremiah told Pashur what the Lord said of his name, "The Lord has not called your name Pashur but Magor-missabib." (Pashur = *Prosperity*, but Magor-missab = *Terror from every side*.)

For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there,

thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.
(Jeremiah 20:4-6)

What an awful message, what a curse is pronounced on those who oppose the truth. The darkness of Pashur is dispelled by the Light of the true prophet, inasmuch as his name is turned into Terror from every side. Beware today's charismatic leaders who speak a false word from their heart against the unchanging Word of God as revealed in the Bible. In Isaiah's words, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

There is a great expense of energy to declare God's Word against the wilfully ignorant who speak out of the deceit of their heart, deceiving and being deceived. Would Jeremiah in the flesh choose to denounce Pashur? Was he not under their constant ridicule? As he felt like calling it a day, "His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." A true prophet, meeting a false prophet, like light confronting darkness, must end in contest and quick victory for light. "But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten" (Jeremiah 20:11).

Jeremiah, being a man of like passions as we, concludes this chapter with a complaint about his life ministry. The life of a contending prophet against the whole House of Israel seems too hard to bear. His wish to have been aborted at birth reflects the suicide syndrome that is so common in the lives of the defeated. This is not the first time Jeremiah complains of his destiny. May God help us to serve Him rather like Job, who totally submitted himself to the will of God.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BEST OUT OF A BAD SITUATION

Zedekiah, the youngest son of King Josiah, was the last Judean King and he reigned 11 years. Before him Jehoiachin his nephew reigned only three months when he was taken into captivity to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. The nation was in great turmoil. Zekediah hoped Nebuchadnezzar would be satisfied with his booty and would not come back for more. So he sent messengers to Jeremiah to inquire from the Lord what the future would be.

But this was a case of doing too little too late. All the messages against the wickedness of the nation addressed to the last kings of Judah were brushed aside. If there was any repentance it was only skin-deep. Therefore final judgment of Judah had come.

Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city. And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence. And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and

CHAPTER XXII

EXPLOITATION OF THE POOR — AND EXECUTION OF THE PRINCES

Another sin of the rich condemned by Jeremiah is their exploitation of the poor. This referred to “him who buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong” — “that useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth not him for his work” (verse 13). It is a despicable crime to use carpenters and masons to build one’s house and not paying their worth, not to say not paying at all. The scarlet sin of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah was the constant eating up of the small fish by the big. But in judging the cause of the needy the judges would close one eye when bribed by the rich. This is what Jesus says of His Pharisaical opponents, “Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows’ houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation” (Luke 20:46-47).

This message in point of chronology is given before that of the previous chapter, because the three kings mentioned here all reigned before Zedekiah. It is a pronouncement of malediction, of curse, and not blessing.

1. Shallum or Jehoahaz is Josiah’s second son. He, not Jehoiakim the first son, ascended the throne by popular

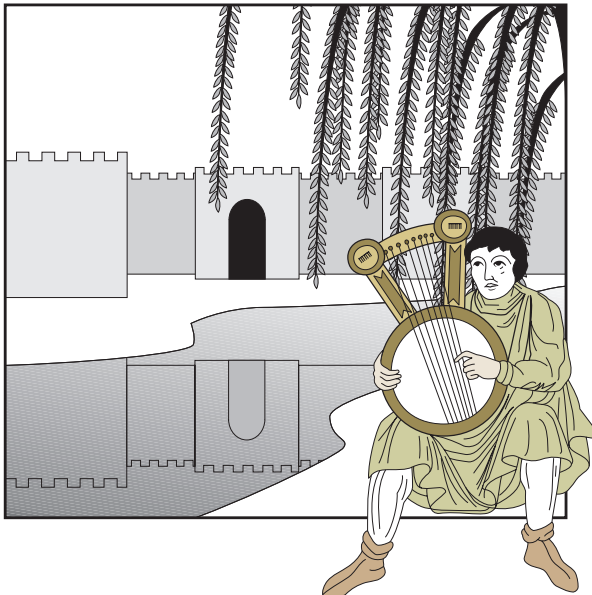
acclamation. He did reign but three months, but was taken by the Egyptian king to Riblah and to Egypt from which he never returned. Judah at this time was caught in between two contending super powers, Egypt and Babylon.

2. After Jehoahaz or Shallum reigned his elder brother Jehoiakim. This was prophesied of him: “Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem” (Jeremiah 22:15-19).
3. With the demise of Jehoiakim, the Egyptian power was broken. Henceforth, Babylon reigned supreme. “So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt” (2 Kings 24:6-7).

The last judgment on kings fell on Coniah or Jeconiah whose proper name was Jehoiachin. He also reigned three months like his uncle Jehoahaz. He was exiled to Babylon. He was pronounced childless not that he would have no descendants for he had seven sons (I Chronicles 3:17-18). He is mentioned in the Messianic line (Matthew 1:11). He is childless by Divine judgment in that he had no physical descendant to sit on David’s

throne. In him the sceptre departed. With his uncle Zedekiah succeeding him for a short season, the throne of David came to an end. This is one meaning of his being “childless.”

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones. (Psalm 137)



CHAPTER XXIII

CLASSIC CHAPTER ON FALSE PASTORS AND FALSE PROPHETS

Who are false pastors but they who prey on the sheep and scatter the flock, but never visit them! Ezekiel says of these faithless shepherds who feed themselves and not the flock as follows:

Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord

GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. (Ezekiel 34:3-10)

Jeremiah then looks to the distant future when God will gather the scattered sheep and will set up shepherds over them and the sheep will not lack anything. These are undershepherds to be headed by a righteous Branch from David, the Lord our Righteousness. “A King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice **in the earth.**” This is Jeremiah’s vision of Christ’s millennial rule which amillennialists have escaped notice.

After the denunciation against false pastors, Jeremiah reveals their true character.

1. They commit adultery and walk in their lies (verse 14) (that is, pretending to be innocent).
2. They help evil doers that they stray further into evil (verse 14).
3. They profane, with priests, the House of God.
4. They prophesy by Baal.
5. They make the people vain by speaking of a false peace.
6. They speak a word of “no evil will come upon you” as the people so wish. They use psychology to be accepted.
7. They speak but the Lord has not commissioned them.
8. They pretend to have dreamed but they lie to say this.
9. They are deceived by their own wayward heart.
10. They even forget the name of Jehovah and substitute Baal.

11. They steal from one another the word of the Lord, a second hand message and a pirated copyright.
12. They use their own tongues to say the Lord hath said.
13. They dream false dreams to lead the people believe a lie.
14. They are a frivolous crowd.
15. They pretend to speak from a burden of the Lord, when they have no burden at all.
16. They pervert the words of the Lord with what they think is the burden of the Lord.
17. For their perverted ways God will forsake them and the city He had given to their fathers.
18. God will bring a perpetual reproach and shame upon them and this stigma will remain forever.

But what Jeremiah the prophet of God experiences in delivering God's Word is this. He says,

Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness. . . . The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? (Jeremiah 23:9-19)

Jeremiah the prophet God had raised specially for the stormy times of Jerusalem's last days was one. The false prophets consisting of everyone called prophet numbered hundreds, like those 400 in the time of Ahab, were the majority. This is a mirror for the Church of this age. Those who stick to the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible, the Word of God, are a few Fundamentalists. Those who claim to prophesy like the prophets

of old but do not speak out of the Bible or walk according to the Bible are many, thousands and hundreds of thousands — charismatics and ecumenicals. But one with God is majority, even as Jeremiah who testified, “But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten” (Jeremiah 20:11).

Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not. They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them? They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep. But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing. The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory. (Psalm 64)

CHAPTER XXIV

THE VISION OF TWO BASKETS OF FIGS

There were three deportations of the Jews to Babylon. The first was in 606 BC, the second in 598 BC and the third in 586 BC. It is in the second deportation BC 598 that King Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, was taken to Babylon with all the carpenters and smiths and men of valour 10,000 souls (II Kings 24:14).

Now, it was after this second deportation involving Jehoiachin that the Lord showed Jeremiah this vision of two baskets of figs set before the Temple.

One basket contains very good figs, like the first ripe ones, the cream of the crop. These the Lord said represented those who went into captivity with Jehoiachin, for their good. Those who were willing to go into captivity according to God's will would be specially watched over by the Lord. When we obey God and walk in the light of His Word we are blessed by His cooperative will. These will know the Lord.

The other basket contains "naughty" figs. Figs that count for naught, for nothing. They are like figs shrivelling upon the tree, at the end of a harvest. This basket of bad figs represents Zedekiah's group. Zedekiah swore to Nebuchadnezzar's allegiance but he broke his vow. He was most severely punished. His eyes were put out and his sons executed before his face. "And I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence among them till they be

consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and their fathers.”

During the Japanese War many who tried to escape from Japanese rule were killed and imprisoned. They did not look to God for protection. Those who trusted God and remained were unharmed.

Jesus’ Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. (Luke 13:6-9)



fig fruit



fig tree

CHAPTER XXV

SYNOPSIS OF 23 YEARS' MESSAGES ON BABYLONIAN CONQUEST

The warning of Babylonian conquest of the ancient world finally burst on Jerusalem in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign when Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne the same year.

Hitherto Assyria and Egypt were the super powers. As nations rose and fell this was the time of the rising of Babylon. Babylon will come swift and sure and send all the powers and kingdoms of the ancient world to reel and fall like a drunken man. Beginning from Egypt the new Empire of Babylon will sweep over Judah, Uz, Philistines, Ashkelon, Azzah, Ekron, Ashdod, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyrus, Zidon and Islands beyond the sea, Dedan, Tema, Buz, Arabia and all the desert countries, Zimri, Elam and the Medes will be swept away by the king of Sheshach (Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon). Like a whirlwind all resistance from these nations enumerated will be swept away.

How true a picture this was in the light of our experience during WWII. When Japan entered the war, she came like a furious flood sweeping all barriers of resistance to the dust. How she took East and Southeast Asia with contempt. The only difference between Japan and Babylon was that Japan could hold to her conquests for less than four years and was subdued by the return fire of the Allies, whereas the Babylonian conquest held on

for 70 years. In both instances it was by the higher hand of God, “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest men” (Daniel 4:17). War is a means of God’s judgment on nations turned away from Him particularly those who were His chosen, Israel and Judah. But God’s dealing is not like the blind turning of the wheel of fate with no escape. God’s dealing with men is always dynamic. When we humble ourselves and repent of our sins, He will forgive and graciously withhold the threatened judgment.

And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. (Jeremiah 25:4-9)

So a “global” war was the result and all the kings and governors of the lands mentioned (shepherds) would have a howling time. Jehoiakim, new king of Judah after his father Josiah’s death, would not escape. Everyone was doomed and the blame was on their unrepentant heart.

CHAPTER XXVI

STERLING GOLD WITHSTANDS THE FIRE

What is pertinent about this chapter is that two persons preached the same message against wickedness in high places. One they dared not touch, the other they hounded him to the death. Why?

The first person is Jeremiah. When he preached that impending disaster was falling upon the Temple and City of Jerusalem, that the Temple would be destroyed like the Tabernacle at Shiloh and the city would be desolate without an inhabitant, all the priests, prophets and people ganged up to seek his death. A true prophet is not afraid of death. Jeremiah maintained he was sent by the Lord to warn his accusers of God's judgment on their heads. He warned them not to shed innocent blood.

God came to His servant's help by moving the princes with all the people to restrain the accusers from violence, and to consider Jeremiah's declaration that God had sent him. To cite a precedent, they recalled the case of Micah the Morashite how he also threatened judgment on Judah in the reign of good king Hezekiah, unless she repented. After denouncing the crimes of judges, priests and prophets in taking bribes and distorting justice Micah declared, "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house

as the high places of the forest” (Micah 3:12). “Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? Did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls” (Jeremiah 26:19). Jeremiah’s life was spared. Ahikam the son of Shaphan (his son later became Governor of Jerusalem under Babylonian occupation) stood by Jeremiah.

The second person is Urijah. Although he prophesied in the name of the Lord and according to the words of Jeremiah, when pressure came upon him, he fled to Egypt. King Jehoiakim had him extradited from Egypt and executed him. There is a time to flee and a time to stay. Fleeing played into this persecutor’s hand. “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:25).

Why did Jeremiah live and Urijah die? Perhaps Urijah was never called to this onerous task. He served the Lord out of carnal zeal. He received no direct word from God but spoke from Jeremiah’s words. He was right but he had no commission. This is a good lesson for every servant of God in these evil days.



CHAPTER XXVII

A YOKED PROPHET

A yoke is made for a beast of burden. In olden Singapore we used to ride bullock carts. These carts had yokes laid on the neck or necks of bullocks, single yokes or double yokes. A yoke means a burden to be carried.

Jeremiah was told of the Lord to make yokes and present them to the kingdoms surrounding Judah, viz., Edom, Moab and Ammon in Transjordan and to Tyre, Zidon on the Lebanon coast by the hands of their ambassadors to Jerusalem. The command to make and send these yokes was given in the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, but was not implemented until Zedekiah's reign, a decade after.

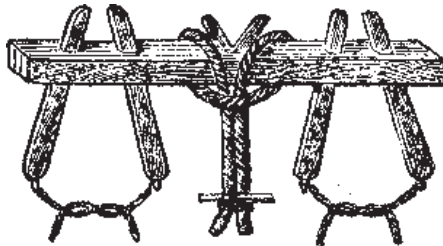
As Jeremiah finally discharged these yokes to the ambassadors of the aforesaid countries, himself wearing one on his neck, he said to them of God's power:

I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of

him. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein. (Jeremiah 27:5-11)

The message above was given to Zedekiah also. As to Zedekiah the false prophets had announced the vessels carried to Babylon recently with Jeconiah, that is, King Jehoiachin, would be brought back. To the contrary Jeremiah declared they would not be brought back but rather the vessels that still remained in Jerusalem would be carried away — this the second time. God's appointed time of judgment on Judah and her surrounding kingdoms had come and there was no running away from it.

From this lesson of yokes let us sense when the time of God's judgment on nations is nigh to heed his Word and follow His decreive will.



a yoke

CHAPTER XXVIII

HOW TO TELL WHETHER A PROPHET IS TRUE OR FALSE

In the early years of Zedekiah's reign when Jeremiah was in the house of the Lord, there came Hananiah the son of Prophet Azur into their midst.

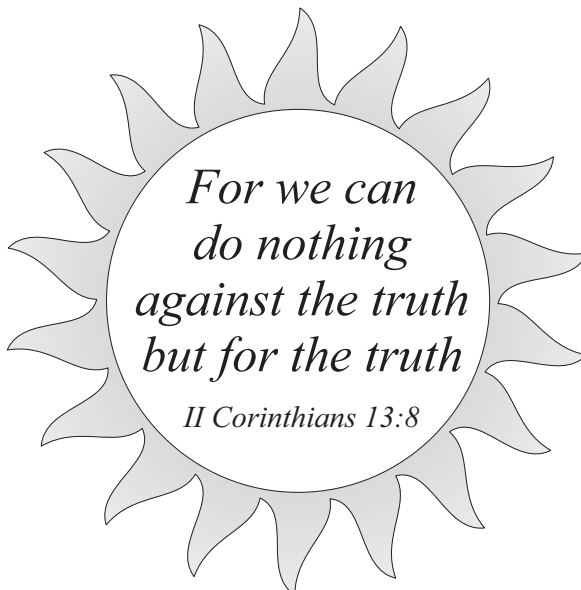
He declared in the name of the Lord, "Within two full years God will bring back to Jerusalem all the temple vessels taken away by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon." Jeremiah said, Amen. But here is the test, "The prophet who prophesies peace, when his word comes to pass, then that prophet is a true prophet." This is right logic, and is conversely stated by Moses, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:22).

Now, Jeremiah was carrying a wooden yoke as the Lord had commanded. Hananiah came to him, snatched the yoke from off his shoulders, and broke it, and again he averred, "Thus saith the Lord; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years." Jeremiah quietly left.

But truth is truth. The Word of the Lord came again to Jeremiah,

Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also. Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month. (Jeremiah 28:13-17)

There is a Chinese saying, “The success or failure of a man cannot be determined until the coffin lid is laid.” So does the Apostle to the Hebrews say of leaders, “Whose faith follow, (but) consider the end of their conversation (conduct)”. Hananiah’s abrupt end is a warning to every leader good or bad.



CHAPTER XXIX

LETTER THAT REVEALS BOTH THE COOPERATIVE AND PUNITIVE WILL OF GOD

When we obey God's directive will, He blesses with His cooperative will. When we disobey God's directive will He curses with His punitive will.

This is seen in Jeremiah's letter written by God's direction to the Jews taken in exile to Babylon with Jeconiah (King Jehoiachin).

Blessing of God's Cooperative Will

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither

hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD. For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive. (Jeremiah 29:4-14)

Cursing of God's Punitive Will

Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon; Know that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD. Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon: Thus saith

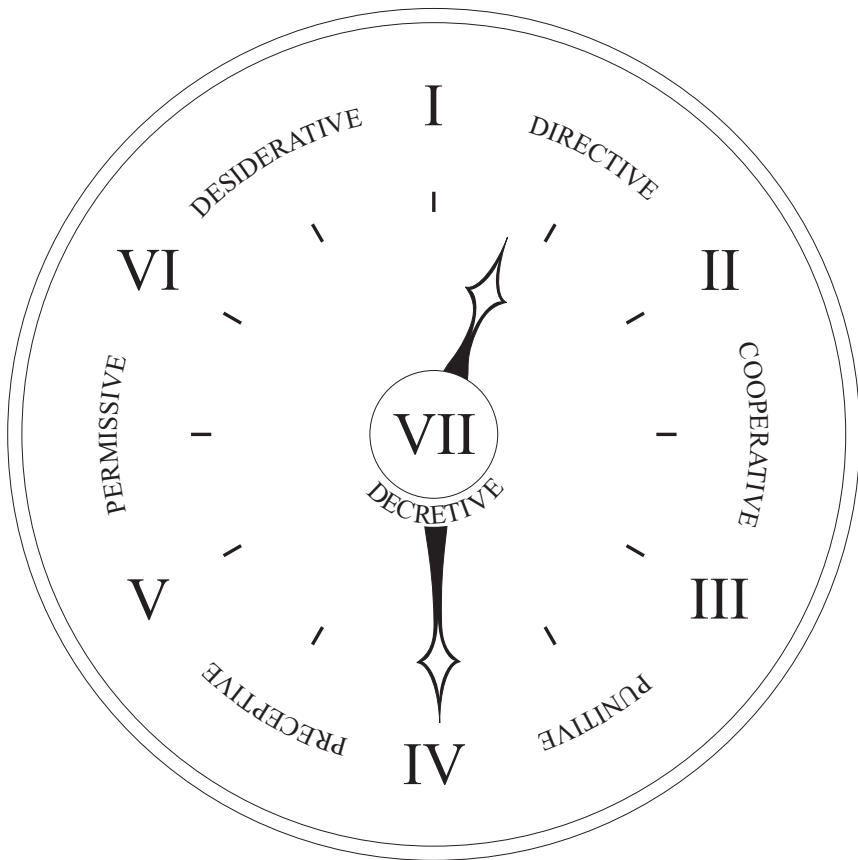
the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes; And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 29:15-23)

Punishment of Another False Prophet

Thus shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying, The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks. Now therefore why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you? For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long: build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie: Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish

Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD. (Jeremiah 29:24-32)

What are the other aspects of God's Will after the Cooperative and Punitive?



CHAPTER XXX and XXXI

THE REBIRTH OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH AND THE MILLENNIUM

Because of turning away from Jehovah their God, Israel the Northern Kingdom was taken captive by Assyria in 722 BC. The Ten Tribes were scattered and never returned.

Because of turning away from Jehovah their God, Judah was taken captive by Babylon from 606 to 586 BC. As for Judah, Jeremiah prophesied this captivity would last 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10). So there was a first return in 536 BC to coincide with the first batch of captives in 606 BC with other batches following.

The prophecy of Jeremiah in these two chapters look far beyond the return from Babylon. It describes a final return with the rebirth of Israel as a united nation (no more the Northern Kingdom of Israel of Ten Tribes and the Southern Kingdom of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin). In the reborn Israel as one nation David will be king, and who is this greater David but Jesus the son of David according to the flesh. Therefore it will be an earthly reign which will be a thousand years, mentioned six times in Revelation 20:2-7. It will be Christ reigning over a reborn earth out of total destruction in the last days.

Here are the relevant passages looking forward to Israel's total peace and prosperity above the 2,000 years of diaspora.

Israel began to be regathered worldwide when she became a nation on May 14, 1948.

For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished. (Jer 30:3-11)

Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforetime,

and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Jeremiah 30:18-22)

At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.

Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. (Jer 31:1-12)

Come O Come Our Lord Jesus

T. Tow

Come O come our Lord Je- sus O come we pray

The first system of music consists of a treble and bass staff in G major and 4/4 time. The treble staff contains the vocal melody with lyrics underneath. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

Let all eyes be- hold Him come in clouds of heav'n

The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The treble staff shows the vocal line with lyrics, and the bass staff shows the accompaniment.

He shall rule a thou- sand years and Sa- tan shall be bound in hell

The third system continues the melody and accompaniment. The treble staff shows the vocal line with lyrics, and the bass staff shows the accompaniment.

For our Lord comes from heav'n to His glo- rious reign

The fourth system concludes the piece. The treble staff shows the vocal line with lyrics, and the bass staff shows the accompaniment. The system ends with a double bar line.

CHAPTER XXXII

BUYING A COUSIN'S PROPERTY WHEN JERUSALEM IS FALLING!

When Singapore was under Japanese bombing in the first days of the Pacific War, would anyone be interested in buying property? Only the farsighted who had confidence Singapore would be restored would consider such a thing. Such a transaction would be deemed foolish in days of fleeing and panic.

Under similar circumstances, when Jerusalem was surrounded by Babylonian troops and its fall would occur any time (actually in a matter of months) there came Hanameel, the son of Shallum, Jeremiah's uncle, requesting his cousin to buy his field in Anathoth (the priests' city), "for the right of redemption is thine to buy it" (verse 7).

So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the

purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open: And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land. (Jeremiah 32:8-15)

After the transaction of the sale of Hanameel's land, Jeremiah prayed to the Lord rather plaintively, but the Lord comforted him. Though Judah was being heavily chastised for her sins of idolatry, human sacrifice and covetousness, Jehovah would one day redeem them, as Jeremiah had redeemed his cousin's land at Anathoth, because of His covenant and special love for the chosen people He would show mercy to them again.

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be

bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 32:37-44)

This prophecy is being fulfilled today as Israel is reborn as a nation and as Jerusalem has flourished with over half a million population, properties and houses are being bought more and more.

*In that glad day of peace in New Jerusalem,
The Greater David shall sit on His Throne,
From Earth's end to Earth's end, homage to Him they'll bring,
All glory to the Lamb, God's Lamb that was slain.*

*Jesus the Son of God has come to Earth from Heaven
He has come with Healing in His wings,
In peace shall He reign.
Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelu,
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah.*

(May be sung to the tune of Santa Lucia)



CHAPTER XXXIII

REAFFIRMATION OF ISRAEL'S RESTORATION UNDER GOD'S “CHASTITIVE” WILL

In Chapter XXIX we learn of the cursing upon false prophets by God's Punitive Will. Under God's Punitive Will and His curse there is no chance of salvation. By way of illustration, Jeremiah pointed to Ahab, son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah, son of Maaseiah “which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes” (Jeremiah 29:21).

But to the House of David, the covenant God has made with him will stand forever in spite of their sins.

Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind,

that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: (Jeremiah 32:32-38)

In order to reaffirm Israel's Restoration, the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time while he was shut up in the court of the prison where the transaction of the sale of land was made between Jeremiah and his cousin, that His mercy endureth for ever (Jeremiah 33:11). For Israel and Judah were not punished unto perdition but were chastised like sons. They were dealt with rather by the cane of a loving Father which is a sugar-cane!

Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me. Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them. (Jeremiah 33:20-26)

Yerushalayim, Messiah Is Come

T. Tow

Swedish folk melody
Arr. by R. J. Hughes

1. Ye - ru - sha - layim, thy sons and daughters love thee! Two thousand years they've
2. Ye - ru - sha - layim, be - hold Christ Je - sus has come To save thy sons, if
3. Ye - ru - sha - layim, be - hold Mes - si - ah shall come To save thy Land, when
4. Ye - ru - sha - layim, God is thy 'ter - nal pe - ace, Ci - ty of Zion, Da -

wandered in ex - ile. Now by God's grace, they're gathered to thee in peace,
they will turn to Him. By death and pain, He has be - come their ran - som.
thou shalt cry to Him. He comes on clouds, with awesome loud trum - pet sound
vid's throne rise a - gain! Ci - ty of Truth, resplendent in His glo - ry

Chorus

By thy embrace, their weeping turns to smile.
Ris - ing a - gain, He has forgiv'n their sin. Ye - ru - sha - layim, let
To judge the earth - peace a mil - len - ni - um.
Till sun shall rise and moon no more shall wane.

peace and freedom ring. To thee Sha - lom! To thee Sha - lom! Ye - ru - sha

layim, lift up thy voice and sing, Messiah is come, Messiah is come!

CHAPTER XXXIV

TOO LITTLE DONE AND THAT TOO LATE

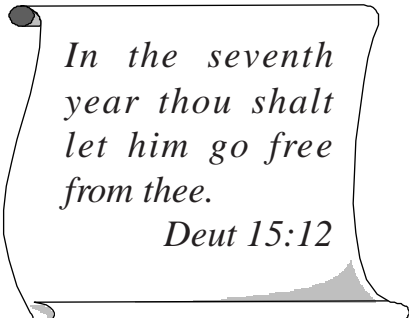
In the very last days of Judah God spoke through Jeremiah to Zedekiah the last reigning king of Judah. The fate of Jerusalem was sealed. He would be taken prisoner by the king of Babylon. Nevertheless, his life would be spared and he would be given an honourable burial.

Perhaps, in gratitude for God sparing him personally, Zedekiah made a last effort to do something good for the oppressed. According to the law of Moses this is the regulation concerning Hebrew slaves: “And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee” (Deuteronomy 15:12). Zedekiah called all the princes and the people and covenanted with them to implement Moses’ law on Hebrew slaves, to proclaim liberty owed to them. So they let them go. No sooner were they gone than their masters rounded them and brought them back. What a mockery to justice and to the king’s decree. “They let them out by the front door but smuggled them in by the back door.” Too little was done, and that too late.

In judging the Hebrew masters for their infidelity, God’s word came to them,

Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf; I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you. Behold, I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant. (Jeremiah 34:17-22)

Too little that was done too late resulted in greater punishment.



*In the seventh
year thou shalt
let him go free
from thee.*

Deut 15:12

CHAPTER XXXV

COMMENDATION ON THE RECHABITES FOR THEIR FILIAL OBEDIENCE

Among the Jews there lived a tribe known as the Rechabites. They were a nomadic people, the descendants of Jonadab, son of Rechab. Their father had commanded them not to live in the coziness of houses but under the rigours of tents. Nor were they to sow seed and plant vineyard, for they were to keep themselves apart from the mainstream of civilisation. The reason why they were dwelling in Jerusalem was war — from the Babylonians.

Jeremiah received word from the Lord to test the faith of the Rechabites. He brought them to the House of the Lord and there set before them pots of wine and asked them to drink. But the Rechabites refused and gave Jeremiah the reasons stated above:

Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now

every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. (Jeremiah 35:12-17)

On the other hand God said through Jeremiah to the Rechabites:

And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever. (Jeremiah 35:18-19)

By way of testimony, the author's grandfather had commanded his children and grandchildren not to celebrate birthdays, because he said, every birthday marks our life one year nearer to the grave. To this day we have not celebrated birthdays to the third generation. We have respected Grandfather's word.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE BIBLE STANDS

God had a message to proclaim against Israel and Judah and against all the nations, from the days of Josiah to the fourth year of Jehoiakim. He told Jeremiah to record this message in a book, which he did through the hand of Baruch his secretary. As Jeremiah was “shut up” he told Baruch to read the scroll on which he had recorded God’s Word to the people in the Lord’s House on the fasting day.

The same words in the scroll Baruch had written from the mouth of Jeremiah was taken and read before Jehoiakim the king and his princes in his winter house. Angered by the message, the king took a penknife and slashed it, threw it into the fire on the hearth. It was burnt to ashes, but were the Words of God destroyed? Not only was the king not afraid, he commanded that Jeremiah and Baruch be arrested. But God hid his servants.

After this the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah again.

Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim

king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not. (Jeremiah 36:28-31)

So Jeremiah had a second scroll written by Baruch's hand all that he had said in the first scroll, every word of it, "and there were added besides unto them many like words." Jesus says, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Luke 21:33).

Today modern scholars (so-called) are cutting away the Bible with their penknives of destructive hermeneutics. They have an awful fate to face like Jehoiakim's.

Contrary to the destructive Bible critics of his time, Dean Burgon of Oxford (1861) fearlessly defended the Scriptures as follows:

The Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it is direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne, faultless, unerring, supreme.

In our opinion this is the sublimest confession made by man on the indestructibility of God's Written Word. So we have required both directors and faculty of Far Eastern Bible College to take an oath of allegiance in Burgon's words at every graduation service. "So help me God, Amen."

The Bible Stands

HALDOR LILLENAS, 1885-1959

HALDOR LILLENAS, 1885-1959

1. The Bi - ble stands like a rock un - daunt - ed 'Mid the rag - ing
2. The Bi - ble stands like a moun - tain tow - ring Far a - bove the
3. The Bi - ble stands, and it will for - ev - er When the world has
4. The Bi - ble stands ev - 'ry test we give it For its Au - thor

storms of time; Its pag - es burn with the truth e - ter - nal, And they
works of men; Its truth by none ev - er was re - fut - ed, And de -
passed a - way; By in - spi - ra - tion it has been giv - en - All its
is di - vine; By grace a - lone I ex - pect to live it And to

CHORUS

glow with a light sub - lime.
stroy it they nev - er can. The Bi - ble stands tho the hills may
pre - cepts I will o - bey,
prove it and make it mine.

tum - ble, It will firm - ly stand when the earth shall crum - ble; I will

plant my feet on its firm foun - da - tion, For the Bi - ble stands.

CHAPTER XXXVII

“STONE WALLS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE, NOR IRON BARS A CAGE.”

These lines express the free spirit of the prophet Jeremiah, who underwent in all five phases of imprisonment.

This is his first imprisonment when falsely charged with treason. During a lull in the siege of Jerusalem when Babylonian troops left the scene upon hearing Pharaoh's army coming to the relief of Judah, Jeremiah wanted to go back to his home town in Benjamin. He was arrested by Irijah the Captain on duty at the city gate. Being accused of falling away to the Babylonians, Jeremiah was thrown into the dungeon of Jonathan the Scribe's house. Here he was incarcerated "many days."

During this confinement Zedekiah sent men to bring Jeremiah to his palace where he sought a word from his God secretly. The reply was as before, to the other kings, that surrender to the Babylonians and not resistance was God's will. All circumstances pointed to this inevitable end, as Jeremiah challenged Zedekiah to compare his word with the lies of the false prophets.

For this service rendered to the wavering king Jeremiah was "promoted" from dungeon to the court of the prison and awarded a piece of bread daily by royal decree until the bread ran out from the Baker's Street. Jeremiah being thus fed was free as a lark!

"Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SAVED FROM THE TIGER'S MOUTH, STEADFAST IN WITNESS

Standing steadfast in his witness of the Lord's Word to Judah to surrender to the Babylonians, Jeremiah underwent this last punishment by his enemies, the princes. Overriding even Zedekiah the king, they threw Jeremiah into the dungeon of the prison in dark solitary confinement. This dungeon was cold and had miry clay for a floor.

Hearing of this grave situation, Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, one of the king's eunuchs, petitioned Zedekiah on Jeremiah's behalf, "My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city." Upon this the king's conscience was stricken. He gave thirty of his bodyguards to Ebedmelech to rescue the prophet.

It was a delicate operation. They used old cast clouts and old rags as padding to ropes which they let down into the bottom of the dungeon where Jeremiah was left to die. Wrapping the rope around his body with the soft padding under his armholes he was gently hoisted to freedom. He was promoted to the court of the prison, like those migrants in olden days who travelled to

Singapore in the holds of cargo boats coming up on deck. From suffocating slimy darkness into fresh air and light.

Again Zedekiah brought Jeremiah to the House of the Lord to consult him on his “luck.” Had not the prophet given him God’s Word on the fate of Jerusalem? To ask again exposed his unbelief. Zedekiah was like one consulting a medium. The medium, using his psychology will change his tune, like all the false prophets, to satisfy their clients’ wishes.

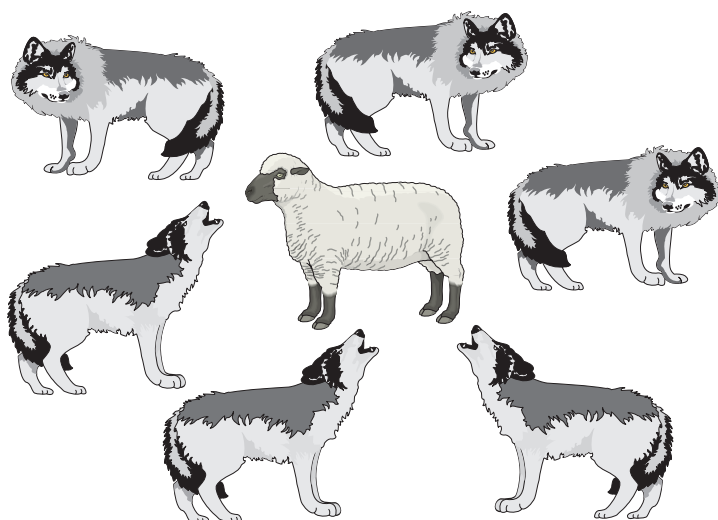
Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. (Jeremiah 23:15-20)

The message Jeremiah gave to Zedekiah remained the same, “If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon’s princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house” (verse 17). Conversely, if he disobeyed, the Babylonians would burn the city and the king and his people shall not escape in the destruction.

The king, to ensure his own safety, bound Jeremiah to secrecy by an oath. He commanded Jeremiah not to reveal the things said and confided. So Jeremiah, when confronted after this by the princes, kept secret the words the king had spoken to him. He spoke in general terms that supplication was made to the king that he would not be returned to Jonathan's house (where he was earlier imprisoned, Jeremiah 37:15), which was true. "So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived" (verse 27).

Epilogue

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. (Matthew 10:16-20)



CHAPTER XXXIX

RETRIBUTION OR REWARD?

(I) In confirmation of what Jeremiah says of the last days of Zedekiah and Jerusalem, the Chronicler records:

Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the

LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. (2 Chronicles 36:11-19)

Because of Zedekiah's unbelief and rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar had his sons slain, and his eyes put out, and being bound with chains he was carried to Babylon. He who knows God's will and fights against it suffers under his punitive will. Dr McIntire says, "A strong will is dangerous unless it is subjected to the revealed will of God."

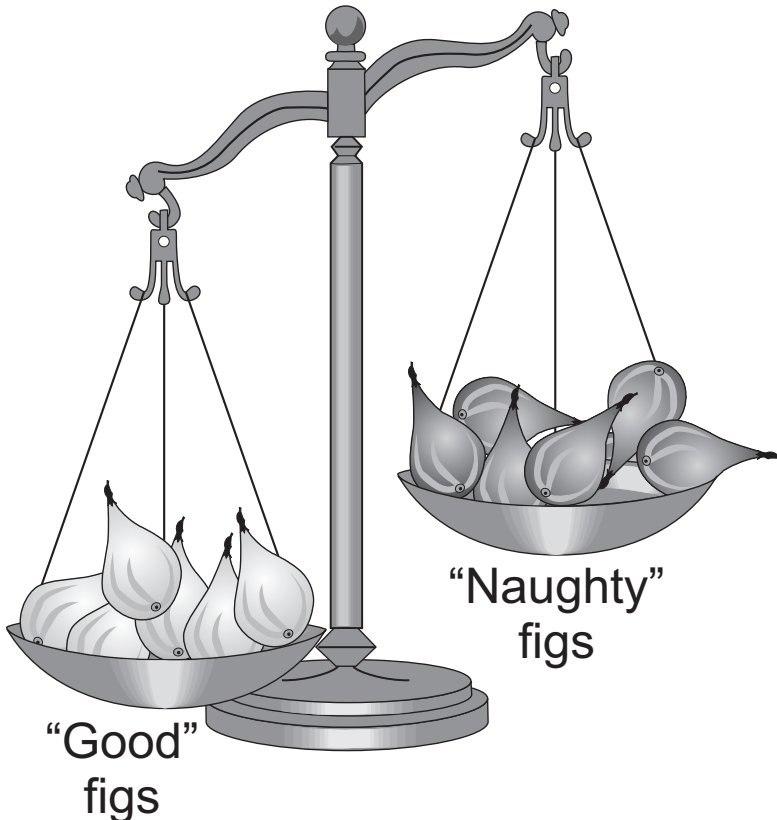
(II) Jeremiah suffered as no other prophet for preaching God's Word against evil. What he prophesied of Babylon's conquest of Judah and Jerusalem was fulfilled before his eyes and all those to whom he testified. For his faithfulness to God his life was spared in the war. He was kindly treated by Nebuchadnezzar. The Jews might have thought of him as a traitor. But since God was using Nebuchadnezzar as His servant to bring judgment on the sins of Judah, and openly declared peace to those who repented, Jeremiah was a patriot. Doing God's will can never go wrong.

(III) Because Ebedmelech was concerned for Jeremiah's life, saving him in the nick of time, God promises to keep him safe through the war. At great risk to his own life, he trusted the God of Jeremiah, and Jeremiah's God rewarded him accordingly. He saved Jeremiah's life and God would save his life. Loyalty and faithfulness are rare virtues in this age of self advancement and treachery, but God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble (I Peter 5:5).

The Continuing Story of the Basket of “Naughty” Figs

In Chapter XXIV God gave Jeremiah a vision of two baskets of figs. One was very good, first ripe figs, cream of the crop. The other had naughty (from naught or nothing) figs, “which could not be eaten, they were so bad” (Chapter 24:1-3).

The good figs were the three batches of Jews taken to Babylon 606, 598, 586 BC. Among them were Daniel and his three friends and Ezekiel, prophet and pastor to the exiles. The “naughty” figs were those that were left in Judah to whom Jeremiah ministered in vain.



CHAPTER XL

ASSASSINATION OF GOVERNOR GEDALIAH

The war being ended, Jeremiah was given the freedom he deserved. Nebuzar-adan, the Babylonian Captain, let Jeremiah go with a food parcel and a sum of money, with recommendation to report to Gedaliah at Mizpah. Gedaliah was the newly appointed Governor under the new regime. So Jeremiah lived among the remnant Jews under Gedaliah.

Among the chieftains who gathered around Gedaliah at Mizpah were Ishmael and Johanan to whom the Governor gave assurance even with an oath that all would be well if they cooperated with the new Babylonian power. (Government by proxy is wise administration which we experienced under Japanese occupation during WWII.) This stability in Judah began to draw back all that had escaped to the lands across the Jordan: Ammon, Moab and Edom. These gathered much fruit and oil from the fields now vacated by reason of war.

Johanan who was loyal to Gedaliah secretly informed the Governor that a plot to assassinate him was afoot — the assassination plotted by Ishmael at the behest of Baalis, king of Ammon. Being a simple soul, he did not take this to heart. If Gedaliah had heeded this Proverb from Solomon he would not have been assassinated: “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and

hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished” (Proverbs 22:3; 27:12). There is an English proverb: “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”



CHRISTIAN, seek not yet repose;
Hear thy guardian angel say,
'Thou art in the midst of foes;
Watch and pray.'

2 Principalities and powers,
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thy unguarded hours:
Watch and pray.

3 Gird thy heavenly armour on,
Wear it ever night and day;
Ambushed lies the evil one:
Watch and pray.

4. Watch, as if on that alone
Hung the issue of the day;
Pray, that help may be sent down:
Watch and pray.

Charlotte Elliott (1789-1871)



CHAPTER XLI

JOHANAN PUT ASSASSIN ISHMAEL TO FLIGHT

Ishmael with ten men came to Mizpah and a feast was spread by the unsuspecting Governor. As predicted by Johanan the foul plot burst upon Gedaliah and he was slain by the sword, together with the Chaldean and Jewish officers around him. The massacre continued the next day when upcountry Jews from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria, 80 of them, brought offerings to the Lord's House. Except for ten men, the whole party was massacred. With that Ishmael carried away captive all that remained in Mizpah to go over to the Ammonites.

When this wholesale slaughter was reported to Johanan, he gathered all his warriors to fight Ishmael. When all the captives taken by Ishmael saw reinforcements coming from Johanan they switched over to their liberators. Ishmael with eight men escaped to the Ammonites.

Johanan and all the captains of his army then took these that were delivered from Ishmael's hands, and all the Jews with him gathered by Bethlehem, to take refuge in Egypt — because of Ishmael's massacre of Gedaliah and the Chaldean officers with him.

CHAPTER XLII

PROLONGED ANSWER TO JEREMIAH'S PRAYER SPELT JUDGMENT

A “congregational” meeting was held, attended by all the community of remnant Jews under their leader Johanan and his captains to seek the leading of the Lord. They asked Jeremiah to ask his Lord what they should do next, whether good or evil, they would obey.

Jeremiah prayed but no answer came until ten days after. (In Ezekiel’s case it took seven days, Ezekiel 3:16.) The Word of God to Jeremiah was the same as given before Jerusalem’s fall, that if they surrendered to the Babylonians and stayed put they would be safe.

Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand. . . . If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; Then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die. . . . For ye dissembled in your hearts when ye sent me unto the Lord. Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die. . . .
(Jeremiah 42:11-16, 20-22)

To go against the directive will of God is on collision with death!

CHAPTER XLIII

LIKE A STUBBORN STUDENT ARGUING WITH HIS TEACHER

When I was studying in Seminary in the United States, I had a classmate come from Manchuria. As he had no formal learning of English, he asked me to be his tutor. When I corrected his mistakes, he would argue with me. He said the way he constructed the English sentence was correct, when it was glaringly wrong. So I asked him why he asked me to teach him?

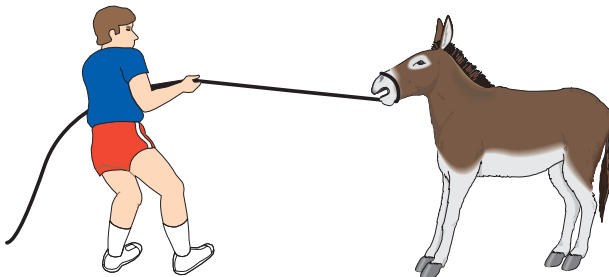
The remnant Jews who were bent on fleeing to Egypt to escape Nebuchadnezzar's punishment because Gedaliah and Chaldean officers were assassinated by Ishmael, nevertheless wanted a Word from the Lord. So they asked Jeremiah to pray on their behalf. After ten days the answer came. It was no to their desire to run to Egypt. They wanted God to do their will and not they to do God's will. They accused Baruch for influencing Jeremiah to stop them from their plan. If they were stubbornly set in their mind to do what they wanted, why bother Jeremiah? It is like my Manchurian classmate, who when corrected for his grammatical errors, argued with me!

So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah. But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations,

whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; Even men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah. So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: thus came they even to Tahpanhes. (Jeremiah 43:4-7)

“For we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth” (II Corinthians 13:8). And truth was hard on the heels of the fleeing Jews. When the remnant Jews reached Tahpanhes at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace, God commanded Jeremiah to take great stones and hide them in the clay in the brickkiln before the Jews.

And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such [as are] for the sword to the sword. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. He shall break also the images of Bethshemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire. (Jeremiah 43:10-13)



CHAPTER XLIV

THE UNREPENTANT ARE DOUBLY PUNISHED

Though the Jews had scattered to stay at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, and Noph and at Pathros, God commanded Jeremiah to follow up with His chastisements.

And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape. (Jeremiah 44:12-14)

In spite of this gravest warning, the stubborn Jews and their wives replied:

As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. But we

will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men? (Jeremiah 44:16-19)

This constant argument with God by a stubborn people can only bring greater condemnation to their heads.

Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs. And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaohhophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life. (Jeremiah 44:27-30)

CHAPTER XLV

THANK GOD WE ARE ALIVE

The fourth year of King Jehoiakim was the year Baruch had recorded God's Word through the mouth of Jeremiah addressed to the King. It was read to Jehoiakim but the wicked king cut the scroll up with a penknife and threw it into the fire. God's Word endures for ever, so Jeremiah told Baruch to write the words given before plus many other words. The fourth year of Jehoiakim was also the year the first batch of Jews were taken to Babylon, including Daniel and his three friends.

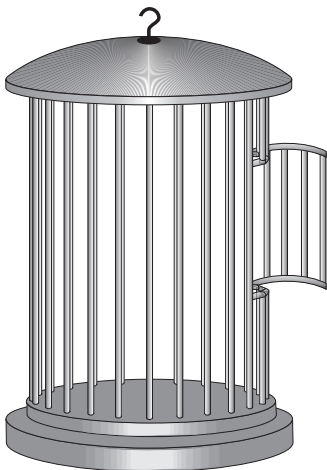
Baruch having been involved in the Lord's work was blessed. So is every one taking part in the Lord's work. What blessing did Baruch receive? Well, as a young man he was very ambitious. He aimed to become somebody in the new world of international struggles. War, turning the world upside down, also gave untold opportunities for advancement and speculation. Perhaps, for serving with Jeremiah, he lost some unexpected openings. So he cried, "Woe is me now for the Lord had added grief to my sorrow. I fainted in my sighings, and I had no rest." Despite Babylon having taken captive Judah's choicest young men, Daniel and his three friends, Baruch did not see the seriousness of the international situation. He thought to catch up with the times to climb the ladder of success.

Jeremiah saw more clearly the gravity of the times. He saw more destruction and final doom coming as the Lord had stated,

Behold that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest. (Jeremiah 45:4-5)

In these days of phony peace, puny man goes all out to amass wealth or to jostle for power, not knowing all will vanish when destruction comes. Baruch didn't realise how ruthless things ahead would become. God therefore confronted him, I give you better — your life will come under my protection all the way through. Under the terrible destructions to come in our day let us be thankful we are alive.

LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever. (Psalm 131)



But thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

CHAPTER XLVI TO XLIX

WAR ENGULFING NATIONS IN JEREMIAH'S TIMES

In full perspective, what happened in Jeremiah's times affected not only Judah for her sins, but also all the nations that would be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar. We saw this earlier in Chapter 25 like the overrunning of East and Southeast Asia in WWII when Singapore was taken by the Japanese. Groaning together with us were Malaysia, Indonesia, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines insofar as Southeast Asia was concerned. The list of nations conquered by Babylonian power were Egypt, Philistia, Tyre, Zion, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus (Syria), Kedar, Hazor, Elam. A message from the prophet was addressed to all the nations as follows:

Chapter XLVI Prophecy Against Egypt

Egypt was one of the two ancient super powers. The other was Babylonia. Pharaoh-necho moved his forces to Carchemish on the River Euphrates to challenge the new super power coming from the north, i.e. by way of the Euphrates. Egypt had the support of Ethiopians and Libyans, but the clash with Nebuchadnezzar turned out to be “a noise, he hath passed the time appointed” (verse 16) “because the Lord did drive them” (verse

15). Nebuchadnezzar the new super power was “God’s servant” to fulfill his role like Assyria, as God’s rod of anger (Isaiah 10:15) to punish Egypt, even to cut down “their gods” (verse 25). Though Israel had also sinned and Judah was also punished, yet Jacob was not totally destroyed. God would save her one day and bring her people back to their homeland. In this context, Egypt comes under God’s punitive will, while Jacob is chastised with promise of her rehabilitation.

Chapter XLVII

Prophecy Against Philistia

This warning message by Jeremiah to Gaza the coastal strip of Philistine country nearest to Egypt, which today is prominent with Yasser Arafat, head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (Palestine is derived from Philistine) extends to Tyre and Sidon on the northern Lebanese coast. Ashkelon is a coastal city near Gaza and Caphtor is Crete.

This long coastal strip extending to the south bordering Egypt and to the north bordering the Euphrates River was the corridor of the contending powers. It was the route taken by Assyria in her invasion of the south. In Jeremiah’s earlier times, Egypt would ride high through all the cities and countries mentioned above making them tributary to Pharaoh.

Now, a new power had arisen in Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. His troops would come by the Euphrates Valley to the northern most point Carchemish. From there they would come southwards as the Pharaohs would ride northwards. All these coastal cities would be swept away like a flood by this new super power, that would even engulf Egypt. They would be caught in the middle. A modern analogy would be the small Eastern European countries which were conquered by Germany in WWII. Soon as the Nazi domination weakened, the Greater East European power—

Russia—fought back, and the smaller East European countries were now submerged by the Russian flood.

Chapter XLVIII

Prophecy Against Moab

Moab is the son of Lot's eldest daughter with her father. Moab is settled on the southeast side of the Dead Sea. The hills of Moab are visible from Bethlehem on the western side of the Dead Sea.

When Israel needed a throughway via Moab to the Promised Land, Moab refused and sought to hinder Israel by bringing a curse on them through Balaam. What Balaam could not do because God forbade him, the Moabite women did by seducing the young men of Israel into both carnal and spiritual fornication, that is, the worship of their idols.

Isaiah and Ezekiel, Amos and Zephaniah have messages also against Moab. The many places mentioned in this chapter are geographical locations in Moab that should not bother us. The main thing is that because of Moab's self-sufficiency and not turning to the Lord, a materialistic people, they also worship their own god Chemosh. So they would be punished when war swept through their land. The self-sufficiency of Moab is like "the settlement on his lees" that is, the sediment produced by fermentation in the process of brewing wine. Their self-sufficiency, like this sediment contaminates the wine, until it is emptied. Moab needs to be emptied, by going into captivity, so that she would be overturned from her waywardness. So she must go into captivity!

But there is a glimmer of hope for Moab because the Lord will bring her back from captivity "in the latter days" (Daniel 11:41).

Chapter XLIX

Prophecy Against Ammon

Ammon is the son of Lot's second daughter with her father (Genesis 19:38), Ammon inhabits the land east of Jordan between the Rivers Arnon and Jabbok. Other Hebrew prophets that spoke against Ammon are Ezekiel (Ezekiel 21:20) and Amos (Amos 1:13-14).

“Hath Israel no sons?” This refers probably to the Assyrian invasion in 722 BC. After the Israelites were carried off by the Assyrians the Ammonites took over Gad in Transjordan. Milcom is the god of the Ammonites. Rabbah is capital of Ammon.

Because Ammon trusted in her isolation and materialism, they would be judged. This is part of the theology of war. Nevertheless Ammon would be restored (see Daniel 11:41).

Prophecy Against Edom

The Edomites are descendants of Esau. Jacob's twin brother, Edom means **red**. The Edomites inherited the territory south of the Dead Sea, beyond Jordan, from the brook Zered to the Gulf of Aqaba. This is a rugged mountainous country known as the land of Seir (Genesis 32:3) through which the ancient caravan route ran, known also as the King's Highway (Numbers 20:14-18).

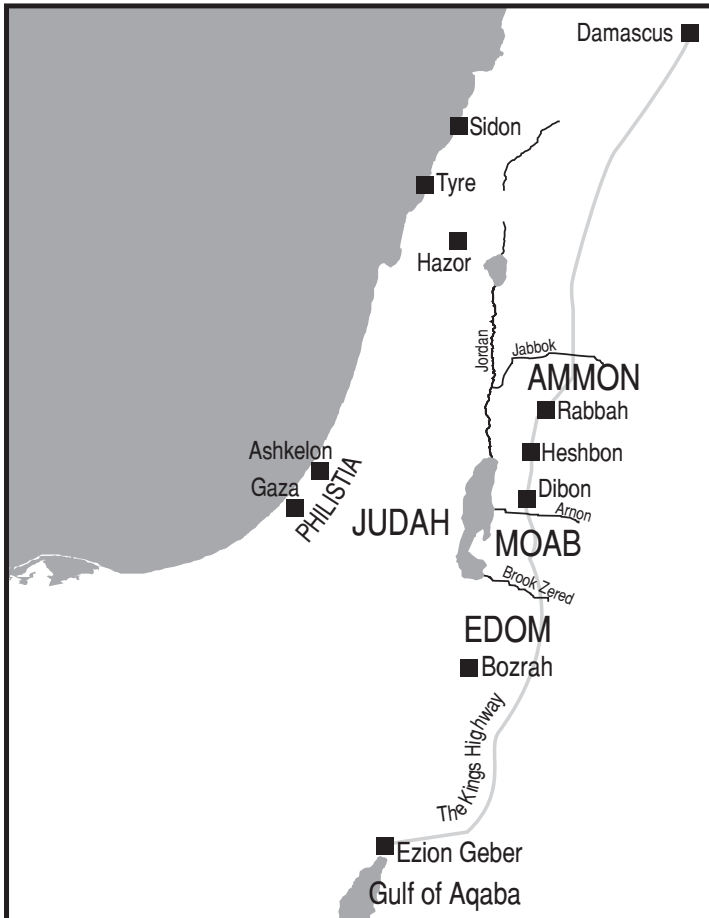
As Jacob and Esau struggled in the womb of their mother Rebekah, so the descendants of Jacob, the Israelites and the descendants of Esau, the Edomites have throughout history been at loggerheads.

The Edomites took delight in the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. Edom in New Testament times was called Idumea. Other prophets that have spoken against Edom are Ezekiel (Ezekiel 25:12-14), Joel (3:19), Amos (9:12) and Obadiah (1:16).

This message against Edom is like that pronounced by Obadiah.

“A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle” (Proverbs 18:19).

“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).



Map of the Foreign Nations of Jeremiah 47 - 49

CHAPTER L AND LI

MESSAGE AGAINST BABYLON

These two long chapters of 46 and 64 verses respectively are a message of doom written in a book by Jeremiah and given to the hand of Seraiah, “a quiet prince” who accompanied Zedekiah to Babylon when he went there in the fourth year of his reign. Seraiah was commanded to read this long-drawn message upon arrival in Babylon:

And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 51:61-64)

The theme of the message is simple. Inasmuch as Babylon has been a ruthless, conquering nation that has swallowed all the nations around her and beyond, particularly the chosen people of God, the day will come when God will judge her for her sins. Jeremiah 25 and 29 had predicted that Babylon would flourish for 70 years. Now is the time come for her destruction.

Sheshach, which is another name for Babylon, is taken. The broad walls of Babylon, rising 300 feet high are “utterly broken” (Chapter 51:58). Bel and Merodach, the gods of Babylon which are supposed guardian “angels” of the Empire-City are “broken in pieces themselves” (Chapter 50:2) when the crunch comes. Like as it is said in China, “The clay idols when crossing the river cannot hold themselves together.” God will raise up “an assembly of great nations from the north country,” “the Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple” (Chapter 51:11).

Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars. Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshingfloor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out. The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon

the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant. (Jeremiah 51:27-37)

Ararat, Minni and Ashchenaz are ancient nations probably towards the northern parts of Armenia. There will be a conglomeration of nations with the Medes leading to render God's vengeance on Babylon for her sins inasmuch as Babylon was used in the beginning to judge other nations. "Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few" (Isaiah 10:7).

Israel, to the contrary, would be God's instrument in the judgment of nations in the distant future, including Babylon.

The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts is his name. Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms; And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider; With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid; I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers. And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD. Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. (Jeremiah 51:19-25)

Jesus Christ Is Coming!

T. Tow

Je- sus Christ is co-ming Dawn is draw-ing nigh! The dark night is turn-ing now to

The first system of the musical score for 'Jesus Christ Is Coming!' consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The lyrics are: 'Je- sus Christ is co-ming Dawn is draw-ing nigh! The dark night is turn-ing now to'.

day Wake up, wake up Chris- tians, lift the ban- ner high

The second system of the musical score continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'day Wake up, wake up Chris- tians, lift the ban- ner high'.

Sound the Gos- pel and the Word dis- play Glo- ry, Glo- ry Christ is com- ing 'gain!

The third system of the musical score continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'Sound the Gos- pel and the Word dis- play Glo- ry, Glo- ry Christ is com- ing 'gain!'.

Glo- ry, Glo- ry, let all saints pro- claim Ev- er wat- ching pray- ing,

The fourth system of the musical score continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'Glo- ry, Glo- ry, let all saints pro- claim Ev- er wat- ching pray- ing,'.

faith and hope our song, Lo, He comes from heav'n to save His own.

The fifth and final system of the musical score concludes the piece. The lyrics are: 'faith and hope our song, Lo, He comes from heav'n to save His own.'.

CHAPTER LII

THE LAST DAYS OF JERUSALEM

(As retold by Arthur Stanley, Dean of Westminster)

It was at midnight, on the ninth day of the fourth month — answering to July — long afterwards kept as a fast by the Jewish nation, that the breach was made in the walls. By that time the famine had so exhausted the inhabitants, that there was no further power of resistance. The entrance was effected by the northern gate. Through the darkness of the night, lit up, if at all, only by the nine days' moon, the Chaldean guard silently made their way from street to street, till they suddenly appeared in the centre of the Temple court, in the middle gateway which opened directly on the great brazen altar. Never before had such a spectacle been seen in the inviolable sanctuary of Jerusalem. The number, the titles, of the chiefs who took the chief places were all recorded. They were six. Two of them bore a name famous in the Babylonian annals — Nergal-Sharezer, or Neriglissar; two were known only by their official designation — The Chief of the Eunuchs and the Chief of the Magicians; the other two were Samgar-nebo and Sarsechim. These sat like kings in the lofty archway. Round them were the lesser princes of the Chaldaean court. By their side stood, or seemed to stand, one clothed in a long white linen robe, with the inkhorn of an Eastern scribe in his girdle. Was it the invisible messenger thus made visible for a moment in the Prophetic vision? Or was it the Royal Recorder,

always attendant on the great King, and thus used as a symbol of the Recording and Protecting Angel? Then the sleeping city awoke. It might well seem as if from the desecrated Temple was heard the rushing wings of the departing cherubs, as if Jehovah had indeed cast off the altar, round which these savage warriors stood, the sanctuary, which they had made their own. A clang and cry resounded through the silent precincts at that dead hour of night, as if with the tumult of the great festivals. The first victims were those who, whether from religious or superstitious feelings and duties, were habitual occupants of the sacred buildings; the princes who there pursued their idolatrous rites; the Prophets who crowded there in the vain hope that the Temple was impregnable; the young Levites and Priests who were bound to defend the sacred shrine with their swords and lives. The virgin marble of the courts ran red with blood, like a rocky winepress in the vintage.

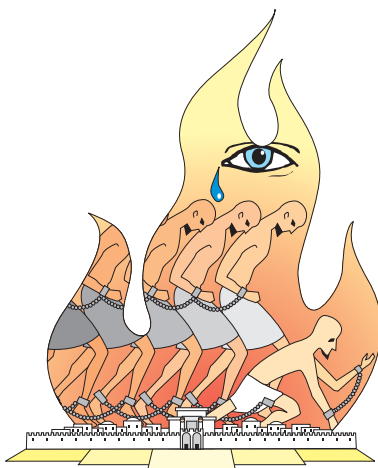
The alarm soon spread to the palace. In the twilight of the early summer dawn, these dreadful scenes were dimly discerned from the palace below; and before the sun had risen, the King, with his wives and children, and the royal guard, escaped, not by any of the regular gates, but by a passage broken through a narrow alley, confined between two walls, at the south-eastern corner of the city, which the Chaldaean army had not been able completely to invest. They passed out with their heads muffled, either for disguise, or to express their sense of the greatness of the calamity, and bearing on their shoulders such articles of value as they hoped to save. As in the case of David, the object of the king was to escape to the east of the Jordan. He and his companions descended, unobserved, by the royal gardens, and down the steep descent to Jericho. There he was overtaken by the Chaldaean soldiers, who had received intelligence of his flight from deserters; and in that wide plain, the scene of the first triumph of Joshua, was fought the last fight of the expiring monarchy. His troops fled and were scattered to the winds. 'Swifter than the eagles of heaven they pursued' the fugitives down 'the mountains'

of the pass of Adummim, 'and laid wait for him in the wilderness' of the Jordan valley. In him and his royal house the spirit of David held out to the last, and when he was ensnared, like a lion in the hunter's net, the weakness of his character was forgotten in the greatness of his fall, and a long sigh was heaved in remembrance of the opportunity that had still been open to him. 'The breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord, is taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.' He and his family were carried off in chains to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar was encamped awaiting the double result of the sieges of Jerusalem and of Tyre. Even at this final moment it was the vengeance of his broken oath that pursued the unfortunate Prince, alike from the exiled prophet, and from the conquering King.

A solemn judgment was pronounced upon him. His courtiers and his sons were executed in his sight; and then, according to the barbarous usage of the East, his eyes were put out, and he was taken to Babylon, where according to later traditions, he worked like a slave in a mill — a fate the more tragical, because contrasted with the comparative ease of his nephew Jehoiachin. The singularity of his fate is made by Josephus the chief argument for the predictive power of the ancient Prophets, as reconciling, in this unexpected manner, the apparent discrepancy between Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

There was a long suspense at Jerusalem. It was not till nearly a month had elapsed, the tenth day of the fifth month, a day again memorable in Jewish annals, as a 'day 'of misery,' when the siege of Titus closed in like manner — a day tragical as the 10th of August in European history — that Nebuzaradan, captain of the royal guard, came with orders from Nebuchadnezzar to put the finishing stroke to the work of destruction. The Temple, the palace, the houses of the nobles, were deliberately set on fire. The very bones and framework of Jerusalem appeared to be wrapt in

flames. The walls and gates seemed to lament and cry as they sank into the earth. The sepulchres, even the consecrated catacombs of the Kings, were opened, and the bodies thrown out to the vultures and beasts of prey, which flocked to their frightful feast outside the walls. Jackals wandered even over the sacred hill of Zion. Some of the princes were hung up by their hands on the Temple walls; others were carried off to execution at Riblah, including the two chief priests and other great officers of the court and camp that were found in the city. The havoc and carnage in the streets was such that passers-by avoided everyone they met, lest they should be defiled by their bloody touch. Age and youth, men and women, alike fell victims to the passion of cruelty of the conqueror. The spoils of the Temple, those sacred vessels whose fate had been so furiously contested by the prophets of the contending factions, were swept away to adorn the temples or tables of the Babylonian court; and there is a pathetic earnestness in the tone of the historian, as he tells how even the brazen laver, even those two beautiful pillars which had remained uninjured through so many devastations, which had seemed the pledges of durability and stability, at last, with all their prized and delicate ornaments, were broken to pieces, and carried off as mere fragments of metal to Babylon, never to return. . . .



A ONE-WORD COMMENTARY ON LAMENTATIONS

Following the Book of Jeremiah is Lamentations by the same author.

What Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations we who went through WWII in Singapore need no explanation, except for the part that tells of mothers eating their own babies: “Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long?” (2:20). “The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people” (4:10). These statements are for real! They are in fulfilment of the curse Moses had put on Israel in the day she would turn away from their God and serve idols and their own wicked ways:

The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates. (Deuteronomy 28:56,57)

When I read of the ravages of hunger that seized the inhabitants in the siege of Leningrad in the Reader’s Digest after WWII many years ago, I was horrified by accounts of husbands

eating their wives. This merely echoed what the Bible says of the bitterest extremes to which war can drive us, unbelievable to obese sons and daughters of an opulent age. Our suffering in WWII was short of this maddening cannibalism.

Dear Reader, there is one reason why mankind is spared over half a century of a Third World War. It is His desiderative will that has spared us:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (II Peter 3:9-10)

“In times like these” soon to come, let Christians slumber no more, but wake up, take up the cross and follow Christ. Let us serve Him with renewed fervency, whether part-time or full-time. “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14). Let us “accelerate missions” into the 21st Century and with increasing momentum until Jesus comes to save us from a nuclear burning earth. Awake!

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (2 Peter 3:11-13)



Books By The Same Author

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- 📖 **In John Sung's Steps (The Story of Lim Puay Hian)**
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