

Jeremiah

the prophet

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The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

Jeremiah

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the Prophet: his calling (Jeremiah 1:5-9, 18--)

"Then, the Word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I consecrated you, and I ordained you a prophet to the nations. Then I said, Alas, Lord Jehovah! Behold, I do not know [how] to speak, for I am a youth. But Jehovah said to me, Do not say, I am a youth; for you shall go to all to whom I shall send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you, says Jehovah. And Jehovah put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And Jehovah said to me, Behold, I have put My Words in your mouth." (Jer1:4-9)

Well, for the topic of this study, having now read these verses, we could just as easily pronounce, "Amen!" and conclude this study. But let's make some observations, as we have recently also just considered Ezekiel's call as a prophet.

In that study we exhorted, If you have "wondered about" being in the ministry, or have been thinking about your life, thinking about "which career" to go into, and in amongst your list of options, you also have listed "Ministry", and you are 'weighing' in you mind the pros and cons about the ministry, then, let me repeat here, "FORGET IT! DON'T DO IT! GO INTO SOME OTHER CAREER!" If your motivation for the Lord's work is

merely a 'balancing' of choices, as -YOU- are mapping out your own life, then, whatever you do, DO NOT go into the ministry! I am being deadly serious! Christendom is already overloaded with your predecessors, who are leading hordes down the "broad way" to "destruction". (Mt7:13) And when I just said "deadly", remember God's Word to Ezekiel about the "blood" of those who were not warned by you, whose blood is now on your hands. (Eze3:18,20) If you decide to "go" anyway, understand that God did not send you (Jer14:15), and you bear the consequences when you stand before God who didn't call you.

So, how does God's call come? At what point does God make the decision that you are to be His messenger? The Word of Jehovah came "unto" Jeremiah. God says to Jeremiah that his call was before he was ever born. Remember John the Baptist, when Mary comes to Elizabeth's house, John, still in the womb, "leaped" at the sound of Mary's voice proclaiming Jesus' impending birth. (Lk1:41), as John was proclaimed to be a prophet "even from his mother's womb". (Lk1:15) Paul says, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace." (Gal1:15) If you are in the ministry at God's call, He has specially hand-picked you for the task He has assigned. And there is NO QUESTION as to His call upon your life. And if you began fulfilling your call later in life, I expect you can reminisce back through your life, and see how God was preserving and preparing

you for 'now'.

And as we see from so many who became great prophets, their own flesh was of the inclination to resist God, to resist being God's messenger. Moses pleaded with God to "send somebody else". Saul/Paul, although being trained up as a pharisee, was wreaking havoc with the Church until God knocked him down and got his attention. And here, Jeremiah is objecting: I am so young. I'm just a kid. I don't know how to speak. I don't know what to say. Just as Paul encourages Timothy to "let no one despise your youth" (1Tm4:12), God here says, Don't say you're too young, because I am sending you. (vs7)

Are we understanding? God's messenger never goes under his own authority. If a person does such a thing, they are an impostor. When it is God's messenger, -GOD- does the sending. He makes Himself known to the messenger. In the O.T. God instructed through Moses that, "Then He said, Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, Jehovah, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream." (Num12:6) In the day of Christ's Church, it is the Holy Spirit who gives the call, as in, "the Holy Spirit said, Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts13:2) Again notice, the Holy Spirit "says" and "calls". The individuals did not decide on their own that they "wanted to" do something, and then took the matter to some church council, board or pastor for approval. When God calls, such a call does not require the approval of some man-made council or agency...

Because notice: "For behold, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land; against the kings of Judah, against its princes, Against its priests, and against the people of the land. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, says Jehovah, to deliver you." (Jer1:18-19)

Indeed, God's messenger does not have a life of ease. His job is not to make everybody "happy" and cheer everybody up with "uplifting thoughts". His life is one of confrontation, because God's message is to the Rebellious House. The rebels oppose the message, and thus, the messenger. Their hearts are hard and their necks are stiff. But God's messenger must be faithful anyway, even if they lash out verbally, send nasty e-mails, or as in Jeremiah's case, end up in a pit, left to die. Jeremiah was dropped into the pit, and then apparently, people were throwing water in it? ...or perhaps it was a well, and the water levels came up, almost to drowning him? Read about it in Lamentations 3:53-54. But Jeremiah trusted in God's promise for deliverance (vs55-57), just as He had promised, "Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you, says Jehovah." (1:8)

And just like with Ezekiel, the commission to Jeremiah was the same.

Jeremiah pleads with the Lord about his inability to speak. What does the Lord do? "Then Jehovah put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and Jehovah said to me: Behold, I have put My Words in your mouth." (vs9) The messenger's message is -GOD'S- WORD. In his vision Ezekiel was given a book to eat. (Ezek2:8-10) Jeremiah has God's 'hand' upon his mouth. Whatever the visual effect, it is -GOD'S- direct anointing. If the person's abilities were developed as fishermen, doctors, musicians or what-have-you... it seems that, typically, the people whom God calls are not "gifted" in the area of ministry to which they are called. But God takes their weaknesses and gives -HIS- enablement. Thus, in so many instances, that very transformation becomes a form of "proof" of God's call upon their lives; and of His Word through their mouths, pens and keyboards.

the Prophet: distress and burden (Jeremiah 4-5)

"My stomach, my stomach! I am convulsed to my heart! My heart groans within me; I cannot be silent because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the ram's horn, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is devastated. Suddenly my tents are destroyed, my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard and hear the sound of the ram's horn?" (Jer4:19-21)

Over the years there has been a category of "christian" that carries its nose just an angle or two higher in the air, and 'sniffs' it's own self-righteousness at others, and they call it "trusting in God". If somebody else should be displaying any sort of emotional sadness or distress, this person will 'snif' at them, that God calls the Christian to "victorious living", and that if a person is truly "in tune with" God, they will not ever feel situations of sorrow or anxiety. After all, Peter says, "casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares about you" (1Pt5:7) Thus, if they are feeling distraught about anything, that such a state automatically means the person must have sin in their life, or at the least, is not "as close to" God as the 'sniffer' is.

Well then, if we follow such thoughts to their conclusion, I guess, even though he was a specially-chosen prophet of God, doing God's bidding, Jeremiah must not have been very "close" to God, because he seems about ready to ask somebody to "please pass the Alka-Seltzer". Due to the coming war, he obviously has an upset stomach. His insides are churning from the emotional stress of it all. After all, remember his calling: is as a "youth", and I expect everything he is becoming privy to is a bit overwhelming to such a young fellow. But for his stress and sorrows to be labelled as "sin", however, is simply not Scriptural. After all, God devoted an entire book to nothing but Jeremiah's "Lamentations".

Question: When a person puts their trust in God, does God somehow remove all physical/emotional characteristics from us? Obviously, the answer is, "No!" Even Jesus, God's Son, at the death of Lazarus and seeing the sadness of everybody gathered around his death, "wept". (Jn11:35) Because Jesus felt, emoted and empathized with sadness, was Jesus somehow "less close" to the Father at that moment? Jesus was "without sin". (Heb4:15) Again, the answer is obviously, "No!"

Obviously, anybody who is yet possessed of human attributes, will have times of sorrow, worry, concern, terror, etc. But that is when we take those anxieties and "cast them" upon the Lord. Peter did not say that we "don't have" anxieties. But rather, when those cares come along to torment us, we roll them over to the Lord. When the Lord "prepares a table for me in the presence of my enemies" (Ps23:5), our human psyche

may have 'moments', but when we trust in our Shepherd as we follow Him, then we can say, "I will fear no evil". (Ps23:4) Notice, it doesn't say, "I will not fear", but rather, I will not fear "evil". Yes, when things come along, we may suddenly "get scared". A few months ago when one of those earthquakes "BOOMED" right under my work place, with a sound almost as though a person was right inside the middle of an explosion, you can be sure my heart rate increased rather dramatically quickly at the spur of the moment. That's the way we are designed by God. But I have not been 'afraid' of these things. God has given me a job to do, and my work is not yet finished. He is not going to allow something to incapacitate me until it is finished.

There's a lot of people (even so-called "Christians") who are scampering about in recent weeks, all full of paranoia over world-wide events of the past couple of months. Following this quack-pot and that pied-piper... those proclaiming all sorts of "Scriptural" -numerology-, selling spiritual snake-oil, and getting people into a panic to be sure they have gas masks, and a whole host of other survivalist stuff.

So, Jeremiah has an upset tummy. What does he do about it? Does he find the nearest drug store to get his "plop plop fizz fizz"? Or...?

O Jehovah...how can this be? You have stricken them, but they are not paying any mind. (5:3) They are being just like America recently. We have seen God allowing judgment, but instead of repenting, the nation is boasting in its own goodness and resolve to "go get the bad guys". [Ed: Please note that I am not saying we shouldn't retaliate; sit idly by and let them come after us again. Not hardly! These they should do, but not ignore God's wake-up call to repentance.] And while everybody talks about "how great" we are, what I am actually seeing as I interact with people, is a satanically induced angry militance. That 'spirit' is there when people call on the phone, and I see it in traffic as I drive in it, and as it passes by my store daily.

So, in his inner turmoil, Jeremiah reasons to himself, "So I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish; for they do not know the way of Jehovah, nor the judgment of their God." (5:4) In other words, 'they don't know any better'.

And truly, except for the "church" that -should- know better because it has the Scriptures, isn't this the case with society, as a whole? They don't know better. Well, in their consciences they do (Rom2:15). But they are following the gods of this world in their "times of ignorance" (Acts17:30).

So, knowing that most are in ignorance, what does the prophet do? Go get a gas mask, stock up on antibiotics, purchase all sorts of survival gear, build a secure bunker under his house? You know, there is this one e-list I'm on from a person who claims to be in "ministry"; but I

must say that a very high percentage of his e-mails of late have been of instructions on how to create a "safe room" in the house, how to build air filtering systems, where to purchase gas masks and other ingredients for bio-terror antidotes, and all such related stuff.

What does Jeremiah do? "I will go to the great men, and will speak to them; for they have known the way of Jehovah and the judgment of their God..." (5:5a) You see, this is Jeremiah's mission. This is his heart. This is his calling, to go and proclaim, Thus says the Lord. As God had commissioned him, "...whatever I command you, you shall speak" (1:7)

Thing is, Jeremiah -KNOWS- "...But these have broken the yoke together and have torn off the bonds! ...Everyone who goes out from them shall be torn in pieces, because their sins are many and their backslidings are multiplied" (vs7b) He knows that they know better because they have heard the message but have refused to repent; and he knows judgment is deserved and is coming...!

Is it any wonder, then, that his stomach is upset, and his gut is wrenched in agony...!!

the Prophet: inspector/examiner (Jeremiah 6:27-30)

"I have set you up as an inspector, and a fortress among My people, that you may know and examine their way. They all stubbornly rebel, walking in slanders; they are bronze and iron; they are all corrupters." (vs27-28)

Years ago I had this temporary job at a firm that specialized in winding toroidal (donut-shaped) transformers and inductors, very much the likes of which one can find in one's computer's power supply if you were to open it up and look inside. Most of these, after being tested, potted with epoxy or krylon, and having the leads trimmed, would then be treated to the solder pots. These little pots would be heated up, and solder melted into them, such that a pool of molten solder would be in there, much like creamy tomato soup in a small Chinese teacup. The trimmed leads of these units would be dipped into the molten solder a certain distance to do two things. Melt/burn off the lacquer insulation from the wire, and to leave the ends of the leads "tinned". As a person would dip unit after unit, as the lacquer begins to collect in the pot, it develops a yucky scummy 'film' over the surface of the molten solder. Periodically the operator would have to take a blade and scrape/skim the surface of the solder and draw all the crud off to the side and outside the pot. If this crud was not scraped away, and new leads were dipped in, the lacquer would not melt off very effectively, the ends would not get tinned very well, and the crud would lump onto the leads, leaving a royal mess.

Now, having just now (at random as I'm writing) chosen the word "crud" to use here, I decided to look up the word; just to make sure it might not be too 'offensive' for anybody. Guess what "crud" means... "a coating or an incrustation of filth or refuse. Something loathesome, despicable or worthless". Ahh! A most 'perfect' word, indeed, for this application! The reason the lacquer needs to come off the wire is because with magnet wire, the lacquer is the insulation. If it is left on, no electrical connection is possible. However, if the pot is not skimmed, and the wires get incrustated with 'crud', at the very best, any electrical connection will be erratic and unpredictable; and at worst, the crud completely coats the ends of the leads like yet another layer of insulation.

Now, also, when the pot is skimmed, the crud that piles up to the side is totally worthless. It's all icky and gucky! To be thrown away. Not useable for anything. It is rejected. If the pot is not skimmed, and leads are dipped, and left incrustated, they are rejected; unless the pot is subsequently skimmed, and the leads are fluxed and re-dipped.

Notice what God says about Israel. "The bellows are scorched" (vs29) When stoking the fire to melt metal, a much hotter fire is created by

blowing air (oxygen) onto it. In God's economy with Israel, the fire was stoked, and the bellows were "scorched" because they were so close, getting the fire nice and hot. God was at-the-ready regarding Israel, to have her be pure. But the process was "in vain" because the pot was not being skimmed... "for the wicked are not drawn off". Just like in my experience where the units were rejected and the crud worthless, "Rejected silver they call them, because Jehovah has rejected them". (vs30)

"..for the wicked are not drawn off.."

Hmm! Sounds like a topic we have considered in the past, eh! Recently a pastor from a local [???-brand] church (the name contains the words "landmark" and "baptist" in it) came in to my store. By its label, a staunch, conservative right-proper-KJV-only church. Once business had been conducted, and a little friendly chit chat was happening as he was ready to find the door, I asked him, off-the-cuff in the context of everything else we were chatting about, "Do you invite the unsaved into your meetings?" 'Yes'. When I asked him about 'keeping out the profane' (Ezek22:26, 44:7-9, 2Chr23:19, Lam1:10) from God's presence, his response was something on the order of, We want to win them for Christ... we'll get them 'in' ANY WAY WE CAN. I didn't bother replying to that answer; it was not the proper time or place to take that topic any further.

But notice God's Word to Jeremiah here. The problem with Israel was that the "wicked were not drawn off". They were trying to dip their leads into the solder pot with all the crud on top. And then, they were wondering why they had no "connection" with God.

How is the connection with God broken? When there is sin in one's life. "But your iniquities have come between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Is59:2) And as a "congregation" we are told "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers". One of the reasons Believers meet together is for "fellowship". Well, "..what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" (2Cor6:14) When judgment comes, "the ungodly shall not stand..nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous". (Ps1:5)

Ever wonder why your congregation seems to be stagnating? Why it doesn't seem to receive God's blessing? Why your fellowship is cold? Why there are continual disputes? etc? Are you inviting the unsaved into your fellowship? If so, then, what else could you possibly expect! You are not "drawing/skimming off" the wicked. You might be like this above-mentioned pastor... you want to win them "any ol' way you can". Well, when Paul spoke of becoming "all things to all men" (1Cor9:22) he did not have in mind to do things contrary to God's ways. He might have been "all things" to people, but he is also the same one who wrote to

not be "unequally yoked". God's ways are not "carnal, but mighty through God". (2Cor10:4)

You might 'think' you're being "soul winners", but you are being disobedient. God said, "Be holy, because I am holy" (1Pt1:16) The term "holy" has nothing to do with the "feeling" of a halo hovering overhead, but "holy" means, literally, "cut apart and separate" from sin and sinners. Yes, we witness to them in the "hiways and hedges" where they are, but we do not fellowship with them where "two or three" are gathered in Christ's name, with Christ "in the midst". "Behold, to -OBEY- is better than sacrifice, and to -HEED- than the fat of rams [yes, and also than soul winning]. (1Sam15:22)

Just a thought to consider in this matter: it would be more obedient to go into a tavern to witness to somebody, than to invite the unsaved into a congregational meeting designed for worship, teaching, exhortation and the fellowship of Believers. Did I hear a big "Gasp!" out there? Don't you know that respectable people just don't go to places like that? Remember that Jesus was also criticized for eating -with- "tax collectors and sinners" (Mt9:10-13) He was -where- they were. When He reached those of Samaria, He went -to- them. (Jn ch4) Jesus was the physician who made "house calls". Thing is, today, nobody makes house calls anymore! Trouble is, when the infected (with sin) person is brought to where all the healthy people are, they infect everybody else that was well. Think about it... it is easier to catch diseases in a hospital, than just about any other place on earth.

But notice about Jeremiah. While these leads are being dipped, and crud being skimmed off, there is somebody who does a "quality control" process. Obviously, the operator at the solder pot is checking the quality, to know how frequently to skim the solder. But there is also a final quality control inspection before the product goes out the door. Perhaps, a supervisor who goes around periodically so see how the operators are getting along. If things are not quite right, instructions are given as to how to improve performance or quality.

One of the duties given to Jeremiah, the prophet (this series is looking at the "prophet"), was as "an inspector". This was not a job he took on for himself. Remember, he didn't really even want the job, "I don't know how...I'm only a youth!" (1:6) But this was the job given to the prophet. Check out the quality. Look for flaws. Give instructions as to how to fix problems. Haul out the rejects. Yes... -LABEL- the rejects as "REJECTED".

Yes, people whine and complain when sin is exposed and labelled as "sin". People howl and scream and walk out on Godly men as they are preaching God's Word from the pulpit. How -DARE- you point at my 'lifestyle' and call me an "unregenerate sinner"! Well, that's part of the prophet's job description. Remember, a faithful prophet is one who

seeks to "turn people from their evil way..." (Jer23:22) That cannot be done without labelling sin as "sin".

Remember, when he was called, God said, "I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." (1:10)

My! What an awesome task! But you know, after Judah has been under siege, and is finally taken captive; Jeremiah will have also been imprisoned by Israel's leaders... almost to the point of death. But you know (when we get there we will look at it more closely), when Nebuchadnezzar's officials are sorting out the matter of Judah and Jerusalem and the captives, they know about Jeremiah. While Israel rejected God's Word, Babylon, at least, respected Jeremiah's -position- as God's prophet. While everybody else is being prepped for exile, they come along and find him, retrieve him from out of the masses of the people, and honor him by giving him his freedom to live wherever he pleases. (ch40)

the Prophet: in the 'gate' of the House (Jeremiah 7)

"Stand in the gate of the house of Jehovah, and proclaim there this Word, and say, Hear the Word of Jehovah, all Judah, who enter in at these gates to worship Jehovah." (7:2)

While it is true that the temple in Jerusalem was not set up like our "church" buildings with massive meeting rooms to hold hundreds of people and a podium from which to preach, there is quite a picture here. God's house was supposed to be a place representing Jehovah's presence in Israel. But in Ezekiel it is recorded how God's glory left from the Chubrim (in the Holy of Holies) to the threshold (Ezek9:3), and then, once judgment was meted out, His glory left the temple entirely. (Ezek10:18) Here, Jeremiah is not proclaiming from-the-temple, but "outside" the temple, at-the-gate. This will happen at other times, too. (17:19, 26:2, etc)

These writings/studies are not -about- "VW", but a little personal observation is in order. Not so much any more, but for awhile there, there used to be periodic queries as to VW's "authority". Who is VW accountable to? Is there a board of directors to help keep it on a straight course? What is its church "affiliation"? Well, for years I tried to work 'within' the system. But it wasn't until I had come out, for good, that VW began. VW is not tied to any organization, just like Jeremiah was told to proclaim "at the gates". I would not be accepted "into" most congregations, as most of my past persecution came from church leaders; in the same way we will see Jeremiah being attacked by the religious leaders (as we continue the series).

Why is this? That which calls itself "church" is no longer -Christ's-Church. There is an expression God uses over and over throughout the book, "...this house, WHICH IS CALLED by My name.." (7:11,14,30 32:34, 34:15, etc) Notice this passage starts with Him saying "house of Jehovah" (7:2). But as we saw God's glory depart in Ezekiel, throughout the rest of the book, God labels it as a pretend-temple. Why?

"Has this house...become a den of robbers in your eyes?" (7:11) "Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods..and then come and stand before Me in this house..and say, We are delivered (it's OK) to do all these abominations?" (7:10) It's OK to do all these things, because, "God accepts you JUST AS YOU ARE..." You can go forward, make a commitment, and God's graeeesss doesn't care what your "lifestyle" is. Today's society (as well as the so-called 'church') has reinvented "sin" into "lifestyle". And thus, His grace has been turned "into licentiousness". (Jud1:4)

But God says, You do all these abominations, and then presume to come and stand before Me as though everything is all peachy??

So Jeremiah stands at the gates, speaking to those who come and go to the temple; just like those today who have "come out of her" and are proclaiming to those who are yet 'in' the place that is "called by Jesus' name". Israel was saying, "The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, this is the temple of Jehovah" (7:4) Jeremiah says they were "lying words". There are those in Israel today who have nothing other than the "3rd temple" on their minds. In their minds, Israel's primary fault is that they haven't yet "built the temple". And for Gentiles, it is "the church, the church, the church". What "church" are you affiliated with? Where do you go "-to- church"? Since 9-11, apparently the churches have been filled...people seeking "comfort". As long as the "heart" (Rom2:29) is not right with God, all this talk of temples and churches is nothing but "lying words".

So, just as Jeremiah stood at the gates proclaiming repentance and "go out of her midst; and let each man deliver his soul from the fierce anger of Jehovah" (51:45), there are some today who "did not sit in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoice" and "sat alone because of [God's] hand" being "filled..with indignation" (15:17), who proclaim God's Word, "Come out of her, my people, so that you not share in her sins, and so that you not receive of her plagues." (Rev18:4)

Do not pray for them (Jeremiah 7)

"Hear the Word of the LORD, all Judah, who enter in at these gates to worship the LORD.." [Listen, all you church members who call yourselves "Christian".] "..Make your ways and your doings good...amend your ways and your doings.." (~Jer7:2-3) "Will you steal, murder and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods...and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered [it is Okay] to do all these abominations?" (vs9-10)

"Therefore..I will cast you out of My sight..." (vs15) "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord! Lord! shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven" In that day many will claim to be "Christian" and "then I will say to them I never knew you! Depart from Me, those working lawlessness!" (Mt7:21-23)

What should the True Believer into Jesus Christ do about these pretenders? Dialogue with and 'love on them'? Jeremiah was told, "Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up cry nor prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you." (Jer7:16)

Jeremiah, do you not see what they are doing? (vs17) They, as a family unit, prepare and sacrifice to the queen of heaven. (vs18) They burn incense to Baal. (vs9) "And I will make them a horror to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem" (Jer15:4) What did Manasseh do? He built all sorts of altars and graven images to the baals and the host of the heavens in God's temple. He burned his children in sacrifice... all the abominations of the pagan... and set them up -in- God's temple, the one Solomon built from David's blueprints... (2Kg21) the temple that the "unclean" should not at all "in any way go in". (2Ch23:19)

Surely the "church" today doesn't do these things?! It was not all that long ago that we observed how the "church" has many "likenesses" (Ex20:4). And when we made those observations, many readers became quite upset... not in holy anger, that these things are being done; but that we should proclaim them to be abominations. The cross, pictures of Jesus, the inscriptions "IHS". Images of Isis and Horus are in the churches. [I have not researched to see what a modern equivalent of Set/Baal might be, whether or not there is one.] And what of the annual heathen tradition which usurps all these other images. God said "Do not learn the way of the nations..." (Jer10:2) And then vs3-5 describes "O Tannenbaum", the tree addressed as a -god- in its song of dedication. However, this abomination is brought right up to the altars of most churches, during the time of the winter solstice, when pagans celebrate fertility.

Jeremiah, have you seen what they do? They "...have done evil in My sight..they have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, in order to defile it." (vs30)

God says, "I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear; and I called you, but you did not answer" (vs13) Therefore, Jeremiah... don't pray for them.

God says, "Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people; and walk in all the ways that I have commanded you...but they did not listen, nor bow their ear, but walked in their own plans, in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward." (vs23-24) Therefore, Jeremiah... don't pray for them.

Jeremiah, "...speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you; you shall also call to them, but they will not answer you" (vs27) because "...they do not know Me, says Jehovah" (9:3) They are 'pretend christians'. Changelings.

God promises, "I will bring evil on them, which they shall not be able to escape.." and when that happens, "...and though they shall cry to Me, I will not listen to them. (11:11) And you, do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them..." (vs14)

You see, dear reader: while God is gracious and merciful and "slow to anger" (Nu14:18, etc), there is a limit to His patience. While He is "longsuffering, not purposing that any should perish" He is also not "slow concerning His promise" because the Day of the Lord -will- come. (2Pt3:9-10) You see, there comes a time for every individual where God pronounces, "...the time is at hand. He acting unjustly, let him still act unjustly. And the filthy, let him be filthy still. And the righteous, let him be righteous still. And the holy, let him be holy still." (Rev22:10-11) Where is that "line"? God knows for each individual.

Many are doing, as we have suggested often in the past... "hedging their bets". Many don't believe Jesus is coming again. Many don't believe there will be such a thing as a rapture, where Believers are "caught up" to be "with" Christ. (1Th4:17) Many think that "if they were wrong" about events, that after the Rapture occurs, they can get saved then. But just in case they are wrong about that, they are preparing for earthly "survival". But guess what! If you heard the Truth now, but refused to believe it, don't count on any second chances!

Listen to this very carefully! Your eternal destiny is at stake! After the Rapture, when the deceiver is "revealed" (2Th2:8) his work is going to be effective upon those who 'now' are in unbelief. Notice: "...with all deceit of unrighteousness in those who perish, BECAUSE they -DID-

NOT receive the love of the truth, so that they might be saved." (vs10) Notice the verb tense there. When they had a chance, they -DID-NOT- [past tense] receive the Truth. While God does not "purpose" (2Pt3:9) any for destruction now, then He will. "For this cause God SHALL SEND them strong delusion, THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE A LIE... SO THAT all those who do not believe the truth, but delight in unrighteousness, MIGHT BE CONDEMNED." (2Th2:11-12)

If you are not believing in Him -now-, the signs and wonders you seek -then- will be "lying wonders". (vs9) "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.." (Heb3:7-8)

If you insist on "wandering" and not "restraining your feet" then God says that He "does not accept" you. He will remember your iniquity. (Jer14:10) And He exhorts Jeremiah, "Do not pray for this people for good" (vs11) And furthermore, after they have crossed that 'line' and when they find themselves in dire straights He promises, "I will not hear their cry; and when they [worship] I will not accept them. But I will consume them..." (vs12)

Now, even if some "great men of God" [prayer warriors] were to rise up and pray, God will not hear. "Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My soul could not be toward this people. Send them out of My sight, and let them go out... to death, to the sword, to famine, to captivity. (Jer15:1-2)

Why? "...since they do not turn from their ways." (vs7) -REPENTANCE-

Dear reader: if you refuse to REPENT before God, God does not hear you. Sin separates between you and God, so that He refuses to hear. (Is59:2) Many of you have been deceived. Many of the staunchest pharisee "fundamentalists" thumping their KJV-bibles are telling you that you don't need to repent. That salvation does not include the "work" of repentance. But remember that the act of crying out to God for His mercy because of your sin is not a "work". It is a "place" of utter despair and helplessness. It is a place of full acknowledgement of your sin nature, your utter depravity. As Job says, "I am vile!" (Job40:4)

There is no "self-worth" in salvation. You cannot come 'proudly' to God. You must be "humbled" and "sorrowful" over your sin. (Jas4:9-10) You must "despise" it and yourself (Job42:6) and cry out for God to be "merciful to me, the sinner". (Lk18:13) There is no "self-empowerment" in salvation. If you are self-empowered, it is IMPOSSIBLE for you to be saved. Did you get that? If you are self-empowered, you CANNOT be saved. Christ did not die for you. He died for the ones who are "yet being WITHOUT STRENGTH". (Rom5:6)

If you've truly been deceived, God will overlook, but now "..strictly

commands all men everywhere to repent." (Acts17:30) If you do not, no amount of 'praying' will save you!

the Weeping Prophet:

SOITOW (*Jeremiah 8:18-22, 9:1,10*)

"I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint within me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people from a distant land..." (8:18-19) "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (9:1) "I will take up a weeping and a wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness; because they are burned up, so that no one can pass through them; nor can men hear the voice of the cattle. Both the birds of the heavens and the beasts have fled; they are gone." (9:10) "

I am not one to cry too much. I would never make a 'proper' guest on the Oprah show, because I am not one to pull, twist and turn on people's emotions; and am continually disgusted every time a news 'report' decides to focus on "how did that make you feeel?"

But there are some things I do shed tears about. I was in tears the first time I saw the WTC towers collapse as I was first turning on the TV, seeing what I was seeing, and thinking to myself, "Are the people still -in- there??" as the buildings went crumbling. I have a real hard time holding it together whenever I see those documentaries of the Holocaust. By the end of "Schindler's List" I was weeping uncontrollably. The other day I let out a little, "Oh no!" when the news reported the death of that lion in the Afghan zoo. (Perhaps some of you have seen him: the lion whose face was deformed due to bombings, and Taliban cruelties. Well, he was getting 'on' in years. But still..) And lately, my heart is wrenched regularly at the news of yet more bombings and killings in Israel; as the Israeli government continues to refuse to step out in faith in God and not cave to world opinion, and 'take-care-of' the problem the way David would have done.

Jeremiah is known as the "weeping prophet". An entire book is devoted to his "Lamentations". Notice what he weeps about...

"Is not Jehovah in Zion? Is not her King in Her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images, with foreign vanities?" (vs19)

Dear Believer: How do you see the unregenerate? (This includes both, those of the world as well as those in the [c]hurch) In the previous lesson of this series, God told Jeremiah "do not pray for them". (7:16) Do you observe that and conclude, 'Well, Hmph! They got it comin' to them. They deserve everything they'll get. Judge them, God! Go, God, go! Get 'em real good!' Or, do you 'weep' for them?

As the disciples were coming back from their shopping trip, the woman

is calling all her male acquaintances to meet Jesus, Jesus says to the disciples, "Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (Jn4:35b) In Samaria that day was a harvest of souls.

But Jeremiah looks and sees, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (vs20) In God's plan there is a 'line' in time. ".the time is at hand. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." (Rev22:10-11)

Having become a Christian at such a young age, in childhood, I do not have a 'memory' of what a life without Christ is like. I have only known a lifetime of belonging to Jesus Christ. Thus, I have suspected that this one dream I had (during my college days) was from the Lord to 'teach' me what vs20 is about. In the dream, I was on my 'death-bed', and was not saved; and I knew I was dying. But also, for the sake of the dream, it was no longer possible for me to become saved. It was "too late". Several people came by to 'visit', confirming the 'finality' of my fate. In the dream, I was "unjust" and I could only remain "unjust still". While I have had many disappointments in life, none compared to that sense of hopeless emptiness. The 'inevitability' of my impending death... without God.

Notice Jeremiah's sense of Israel's condition: "I am in gloom; horror has seized me." (vs21)

Yes, there is something else I often have tears about. As we continually study God's Word, and frequently must answer the retorts of the false prophets and pretend [c]hristians, as Paul wrote, "For many conduct themselves, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ:" (Phil3:18) Tears at the hard-heartedness and blindness to God's Truth. Sometimes, even, tears of 'indignation' at the perversion of God's Word. Sometimes the soul cries out, "Oh, Lord; how long?" (Isa6:11)

Well, Jeremiah asks, "How long?": "How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?" (Jer4:14) "Woe to you, O Jerusalem! Will you not be made clean? How long will it still be?" (Jer13:27) "How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies?" (Jer23:26) "How long will you vacillate, O backsliding daughter?" (Jer31:22) "

While God's prophet knows God's message to the rebels, and obeys in terms of "do not pray for them", it does not stop the "gloom and horror" of it all! While the people are blindly, willfully, doing "their-own-thing", the prophet knows what's coming to them. And so the heavy heart cries out...

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has

the healing of the daughter of my people not come?" (vs22)

the Prophet: can I leave yet? (Jeremiah 9:1~)

"Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place for travelers, that I might leave my people and go away from them! For they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." (vs2)

How much do you 'enjoy' being around '[c]hristians'? Do you go to church regularly, attending one of the apostate congregations, and you come away "blessed"? Do you enjoy "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together", even though you hear the preaching and see the pagan idolatry, and read something different in the Scriptures? Do you become engaged in 'dialogue' and come away feeling 'stimulated' at having 'exercised' your mind and wits? When those females were up on the platform leading in "worship", with their bodies wiggling to the beat of the music, or that lady led in "worship dance"... what was going on in your mind? When you see all the corruption around you, do you still desire to "agree on the -essentials-" for the sake of "unity" and "brotherly love"?

Notice the prophet... ".that I might leave my people and go away from them!" Why? They are adulterers, treacherous; they lie and do evil.(vs3) They "supplant and assail" each other. (vs4) They "deceive" and "speak lies" (vs5)

And notice that this is not "by chance" that the people are this way. It is not that they are ignorant and "don't know better". No! Notice: "through deceit they -REFUSE- TO KNOW ME" says Jehovah. (vs6)

For a True Believer, there is no fellowship with those who refuse God. There is no "winning" them, either. (That's why Jeremiah was told to not pray for them.) It is not possible. They might have the label "Israel/Church", but they do not know God. They are unbelievers. Their lives demonstrate their unbelief. Any "fellowship" with such is an "unequal yoke". (2Cor6:14) There -is- NO FELLOWSHIP!

And so, yes, I can 'relate' to the prophet's sentiments. There are different ones I communicate with, ones I 'know' to be Believers, and we often say to each other, things similar to...

"Can we go -HOME- yet?"

the Prophet: infirmities, "I must bear it" (Jeremiah 10:19-20)

"Woe to me for my ruin! My wound makes me sick. But I said, Surely this is an infirmity, and I must bear it." (vs19)

What is this "wound"? Was it from persecution? The immediate context doesn't seem to indicate. But Jeremiah has an affliction. Paul had an infirmity about which he "besought the Lord three times". But when God replied, "My grace is sufficient.." he learned that part of its reason was so that he would not become "haughty" due to the "abundance of the revelations" God was giving through him. (2Cor12:7-9)

It is not always "God's will" for people to be well. Paul, the apostle, performed many signs and miracles, healing people. (Acts19:12, 28:8) And yet, for Paul, himself...God said, 'No'.

Why does God allow sickness for His own? In Paul's case, to keep him humble. In Jeremiah's case? He doesn't say. Just, "..I must bear it." Somebody I know has had cancer reappear. What? For the "third" time, now? For what purpose? Well, as people seek to comfort her, she is being a witness for Christ by encouraging them, more than they initially sought to encourage her. She is "displaying" Christ. But for sure, it is not without tears and anxieties on her own.

When somebody years ago lost a spouse, the ministry continued. The expression was that it was "what was -required- of him". Just as Ezekiel was told to not weep or make any visible mourning when his wife died. It was a witness against Israel. (Ezek24:16-18)

God often takes the most-unlikely-seeming circumstances and uses them 'specifically' to demonstrate His power. Recall when the Philistines sent the Ark of God back to Israel on a cart, hitched up to two "milk cows". (1Sam6:10) If you've ever been on a farm, or otherwise been around animals, you know that the maternal instinct is the same for them as for people. When my uncle would shear his sheep, the ewes and lambs would be bleating, looking for each other. The lambs no longer recognized their mothers, being freshly shorn. Go out to the pasture to vaccinate and ear-tag new-born calves, mama gets a tad-bit irritated at anything coming between her and her new-born. Usually, it would take two; one to catch the calf and do the necessary chores, and the other, to keep mama at bay. The Philistines hitched up two cows, with nursing calves back at the corral, set them loose, to pull God's Ark to Israel... ON THEIR OWN, without being led or directed by man. "Lowing as they went". (vs12) Yes, they were not happy with their calves being back at the barn, and themselves going another way, but God's hand upon them directed them to Israel.

As this series continues, we will see many things that will be "required" of the prophet. But for now, we observe his attitude about his infirmities. If God requires something of us, do we run away like Jonah? Or do we suck-it-up and say, "This is what I must do"?

Blessed is the one who can be of Paul's attitude, "Therefore most gladly I will rather exult in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell upon me." (2Cor12:9)

the Prophet: correction (Jeremiah 10:23-25)

"O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. O Jehovah, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing." (vs23-24)

When reading much of Scripture, one is often left wondering about the proximity of the writing of various parts. In most Bibles that have paragraph markers, this passage is in the same paragraph with the previous lesson on Jeremiah's "infirmities". Thus, we might be left wondering 'what' brings about Jeremiah's 'contrition' before God here.

Let us observe two possibilities from the context of the passage.

Is it possible that Jeremiah's "infirmity" was the Lord's chastening? We know that Corinth experienced sickness and death because of sin. (1Cor11:30) When "healing" is addressed in Jac5:15, it is hand-in-hand with "sins" being "forgiven". However, if it is God's chastening of the prophet, we don't seem to be told 'what' the prophet is guilty of. Typically, God does not rebuke or chasten somebody without it also being recorded 'what' the fault was. After all, since God called Jeremiah to the same "rebellious house" that Ezekiel was, God's promise was, "Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you.." (1:8) And we will see how Jeremiah suffers at the hands of Israel. And so, when vs19 speaks of "wound", that would seem to be most consistent with persecution. Thus, I suspect we need to look elsewhere for an understanding.

Thus, let's observe another possibility. Jeremiah observes what he is in the midst of. "...the shepherds have become stupid, and have not sought Jehovah." (vs21) Translated to today... the pastors and conference speakers are idiots! For all their boasts of being "men of God", the truth is, they do -NOT- seek after God. And thus, the prophecy of Judah's "desolation". (vs22)

I expect Jeremiah is doing some introspection, as he sees all the evil around him. 'Look at all this spiritual corruption around me... But... what about me?' The taunts come from all the big-shots, 'Just who do you think you are? Do you mean to suggest that you are right, and ALL OF US are wrong?' As the prophet is proclaiming against them, yes, as an "inspector/examiner" (6:27) of them, the natural thoughts will be, 'well, really now, who am I to be doing all this?'

And truly, any prophet of God worth his salt introspects regularly. Because we are all "flesh and blood" and not worthy of Heaven. (1Cor15:50) Perhaps the prophet is heeding what Jesus would teach? "...First remove the beam from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the twig from your brother's eye." (Mt7:5)?

Look at all this evil around me. And yet, if I look within my own heart, I see all sorts of dirt that would like to spring up and corrupt my own way, too, but for the grace of God. Yes, look at all this evil I am proclaiming against, but in reality...

"..the way of man is not in himself...to direct his own steps.." (vs23)

Including -me-!

Thus, what is the cure? "Jehovah, correct me.." (vs24) What is involved in "correction"? Please pardon the crudeness here (I'm from Spokane); does it always involve a 'butt-whoopin'? If a ship is at sea, and the captain orders a "course correction", what does that entail? Adjust the rudder. A course correction for a space craft would require some rocket thrusts. An obedient dog... a slight nudge of the leash, or soft-spoken voice command. For an obedient child of God, or prophet: "...And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left." (Is30:21)

Yes... all this corruption surrounds me, and I'm proclaiming against these "works of darkness" and "reproving them". (Eph5:11) But, Lord, how is -my- life before You? Do I need a nudge? I 'think' I'm doing as you have instructed me, but am I doing right? I know I struggle with the flesh. But give me course "corrections" as needed.

Jeremiah is being like the horse with its ears 'back', listening for the rider's commands; the dog at its master's side, looking up and listening for the master's commands. Not the wayward horse that must have a strong hand on the reins, or the dog huffing and puffing, straining against the leash.

"Lead me, O Jehovah, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; Make Your way straight before my face." (Ps5:8)

the Prophet: can't take it? (Jeremiah 11-12)

"Righteous are You, O Jehovah, when I complain to You; yet let me speak with You about Your judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are all those who deceive with treachery at ease?" (12:1)

Before we address Jeremiah's situation, let us see what he is surrounded by. God reminds, "Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant.." (11:3) Well, that is all Israel has been doing... disobeying God. So, as God reminds of the curse, Jeremiah agrees, "Amen, O Jehovah." (11:5b)

As God continues reviewing Israel's rebellion, He reminds Jeremiah, "Therefore, do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them.." (11:14)

But notice that what Jeremiah does, proclaiming to/against Israel, he does so with full revelatory "knowledge" of Israel's condition: "And Jehovah gave me knowledge of it, and I made it known; for You showed me their doings." (11:18)

While Believers are exhorted to "come out from among them and be separate" (2Cor6:17), there are times God brings His prophets to full understanding of just-how-evil the evil is, against which they are commissioned to proclaim. The prophet often has to "be there" to see it and experience it.

But when a prophet like Jeremiah, in docile naivete, being in agreement with God, sees the evil, and with God's abhorrence of that evil boldly proclaims against it, those who are doing the evil plot against God's prophet. And such naivete, due to the pure heart, does not understand or suspect that evil has been plotted. (11:19)

"To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled." (Tit1:15) When my unequal yoke was still with me, and we would discuss the animosities of in-laws and various family situations, she being one who periodically spoke of the "darkness within" herself and understood their hearts, would inform me that I did "not understand" the hearts of those in-laws who were continually plotting against me. While I never had to say a word about their life-styles, my own righteousness apparently spoke volumes to their consciences. But she knew that my naivete could not fathom that which motivated them. Even when they conceived and carried out treachery against me, I "didn't see it coming", because I could not imagine the kinds of things people devise in their hearts... until after the fact!

In "free" societies, a Christian will experience 'politics'. The plots

will seek to either smear one's reputation by spreading gossip and lies, or will make things politically impossible to stay within a fellowship. (Yes, folks, we're talking about "church" here; that which calls itself by Christ's name, just as Israel was called after God's name) In Jeremiah's case, however, they are plotting to 'kill' him. (11:21)

But notice God's word to Jeremiah about their schemes. "...I will punish them.." They "shall die by the sword.." (11:22) God reminds Jeremiah of His promise to him back when he was first called into ministry: "...I am with you to deliver you..they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, says Jehovah, to deliver you." (1:8,19)

But Jeremiah contemplates all this, and starts complaining: Why are all these evil people prospering and at ease? Today he would see them as 'pretend [c]hristians'; they speak the words, but God is not in their hearts. So, "how long" shall all this evil abound, distressing God's created earth and living creatures? (12:1-4)

Aren't these some of the thoughts a True Child of God has about the world in which we live? And yet, while we see the evil the way God does, do we wish to impose our own 'emotions' and time-table over God's plans? Do we let these emotions rise up to depress us and render us incapacitated? Do we begin to feel self-pity with, "I just can't take it anymore!" ??

"If you have run with footmen, and they wore you out, then how can you compete with horses? And if they wearied you where you feel secure in the land of peace, then how will you do in the swelling of the Jordan?" (12:5) If you can't keep up with a runner, how will you compete, running against a cyclist? If you can't handle a sideways snide remark about your "intolerance" for "different ideas" because you want so desperately to 'fit-in' and 'have-friends' and not be 'alone', how can you expect to go up against a church board/council when they decide to "discipline" you for sticking to God's Word, when it goes against their apostasy? If you can't handle economic/health adversity, if Islamic inquisition-like persecution were to face you, how could you expect to hold up under that? It's like the old saying, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen." If you make a claim to being God's minister (there are many ministers on this mailing list), then expect adversity. Don't expect everybody to "like" you. You are not called to be "popular" or "famous". If you are a true servant of God, people will NOT 'flock' to you. Yours will be the smaller congregation, and you will likely be living a struggling existence.

Well, remember Jesus' words about the cost of following Him? "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword." (Mt10:34) And Jesus goes on to explain how it is "family" who will be most at odds with the Believer. True Christianity

does -NOT- include so-called "family values".

Sorry to bring in a personal example again, but: After my unequal yoke had left, in my naivete I met with her father. He was all "supportive" and emotionally "understanding". Little did I understand that he was gaining ammunition to use against me. Notice God's word to Jeremiah: "For even your brothers and the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you. Yea, they have called out a multitude after you. Do not believe them, though they speak pleasant things to you." (12:6) And also, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for these things their fathers did to the false prophets." (Lk6:26)

Yes, while we are to strive if at all possible "to be at peace with all men" (Rom12:18), and are to be "harmless as doves", we are also to be "wise as serpents". Yes, a minister/prophet is labeled a "shepherd". (12:10) In Israel they were "destroying" God's vineyard. Today's unregenerate preachers are also leading the so-called "church" in their apostasy, down the "broad" way to "destruction". (Mt7:13)

But while God's true servant serves as a "shepherd", he is also a "sheep" under the "Good Shepherd". (Jn10:11,14) Thus, Jesus warns to be "wise" because He sends out His ministers as "sheep in the midst of wolves". (Mt10:16)

So, to you who are God's ministers: "You therefore endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one serving military duty entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him... Consider what I say, and the Lord will give you understanding in all things. (~2Tm2:3-7)

See Also Addendum: Why, Why?

the Prophet: entreaty for his people (Jeremiah 14-15)

"O Jehovah, though our iniquities testify against us, work for Your name's sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against You." (14:7)

This is Jeremiah entreating God on behalf of Israel. Notice how he includes himself, "-our- iniquities", and "-we- have sinned.." Why does Jeremiah need to repent?

In many ways this is not at all unlike Daniel who prayed, "..we have sinned and have committed iniquity and have done wickedly.." (Dan9:5) He goes on to expound upon Israel's rebellion to God, and then implores God's mercy upon His people and Jerusalem. And it is in the context of such confession on-behalf-of Israel, that God sends Gabriel to expound the prophecies to Daniel, the ones dealing with the "70 weeks"

Daniel, himself, was living a righteous life. He prayed three times a day, such that it landed him in the lion's den. His righteousness gave him the standing of being a "man greatly beloved" (Dan10:19) in Heaven. But he was praying for "we" sinners... in 'advocacy'.

Well, Jeremiah is doing a similar thing. He is a man standing "in the gap" (Eze22:30) for Israel before the Lord. How many of today's self-proclaimed prophets put themselves in-along with their apostate congregations to seek God's mercy? They are not "laying down [their] life" for the sheep (Jn10:11,15) but are rather stealing, killing and destroying. (vs10) They are building up empires, wealth and fame for themselves.

But notice God's exhortation back to Jeremiah. Israel is soooo far gone to a point of no return that God says, "Do not pray for this people for their good" (14:11)

But God, have You not heard what all the other prophets are proclaiming? Israel "..shall not see the sword, nor shall [they] have famine; but [will have] sure peace in this place." (14:13)

Ah yes...bring me your 'seed money', help grow my empire, repeat the Prayer of Jabez hundreds of times everyday, and all your dreams and wishes will come true. God's wrath and judgment? What are you talking about! Don't you know that God is pouring out 'revival' all over the world? We are taking over governments to set up a 'Godly' world, after all, see our 'christian' president! And then we will welcome Jesus to come and sit upon the throne we have prepared for Him. The 'church' will have victory over satan as we conduct prayer warfare.

And Jehovah said to me... (This is where our truth comes from; God and His Word, the Scriptures): "The prophets prophesy lies in My name; I did not send them, nor have I commanded them, nor did I speak to them. They prophesy to you a false vision and a worthless divination, and a thing of no value, and the deceit of their heart." (vs14) That's right, folks: all those health-and-wealth prophets today are NOT believers. They are NOT God's servants. God did NOT send them. Their message is a LIE! And...Who is the "father" of lies? (Jn8:44)

Notice the judgment against the false prophets: that which they say will not come? Well, "by sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed" (14:15) Not believing that Jesus is coming as He promised, they are telling everybody that they are going through God's wrath... Indeed, they are!

And against their apostate congregations: "the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword...I will pour their evil upon them" (14:16) Indeed, the apostate [c]hurch' is to receive God's wrath, too!

Well, isn't there any kind of second chance? "Have You utterly rejected Judah? ..Do not abhor us...do not break Your covenant with us." (vs19-22)

Well, just as today's Laodicea has been "vomited" out of Christ's mouth (Rev3:16), God tells Jeremiah about Israel: there is no more entreaty left on their behalf. While Jeremiah will become known as one of the 'major' prophets, he is 'now' a prophet in a place of despair and frustration. In this place of pleading with God on Israel's behalf, God replies with past people of greatness... Moses and Samuel.

God was about to totally wipe out Israel even before they became a viable nation, due to their rebellion and making the golden calf, and was prepared to make out of Moses a nation. And Moses falls on his face before God and stays His judgment by his entreaties on their behalf, and for the sake of God's great name. (Ex32) And Samuel, of course, we remember for being the one through whom Saul is rejected, and David is anointed.

During Jeremiah's time Israel had rebelled to such a degree that judgment would no longer be turned back. Even "though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My soul could not be inclined toward this people. Send them out of My sight, and let them go out." (15:1) Get 'em outta here!!

If they ask, "Where shall we go?"

"Those who are for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for the famine, to famine, etc" The dogs will drag and the carrion birds will feast on their bodies, to "make them a horror to all

kingdoms of the earth" (15:2-4) Yes, the "..supper of the great God.." (Rev19:17)

Why? Because Israel had "forsaken" God. (vs6) They had not merely slipped up and gotten their feet dirty while walking in the world, such that they needed washing (Jn13:10), even like David who sinned but then repents (Ps51). But they had "gone backward". They had "drawn back to destruction" (Heb10:38-39) They didn't "lose" their salvation. They 'rejected' it out-of-hand. They said, "We -WILL-..." do our pagan practices as we worship the Queen of heaven. (Jer44:17,25)

With such rebellion and apostasy, there is no more intercession left that God will hear. Israel had been privy to God's blessing and had tasted of God's 'bread of Heaven' (Ex16:4, Jn6:31,33, 1Cor10:3-4, Heb6:5), but they "turned aside". There was nothing left of God's mercy for Him to be "pleased with" them. (1Cor10:5) There was no more "to renew again to repentance". (Heb6:6) They had committed the "sin unto death" for which there was no more "prayer" that God would accept. (1Jn5:16)

Thus, while Jeremiah let his "..eyes run down with tears night and day.." (14:17) for Israel...

(Dear Believer: Do you weep for the apostate?)

God's verdict was: "Do not pray for this people for their good."(14:11)

the Prophet: born into strife (Jeremiah 15:10-11)

"Woe is me, my mother, that you have borne me, a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!" (vs10a)

A couple of years ago when we took a break from this series in Jeremiah, we ended on chapter 14. So far each section has been titled with: "the Prophet". While we have seen the prophet's call, his heart, and God's exhortations to him; much of our observations have been regarding Israel's CONDITION; if you will, the 'reasons' for God calling/sending Jeremiah. As we resume the series with chapter 15, the thrust is going to turn now more directly to Jeremiah, himself. His own EXPERIENCES, life and circumstances as he proclaims for the Lord, and as Israel reacts to him (the man), how they treat him. His own personal mental struggles and heartaches as he bears up under attacks and persecution. What God requires of him as a "prophet", one who -proclaims- God's Word, and how the Lord provides for him.

Not all Believers are called of God to be a "prophet" (preacher); but all Believers do proclaim God's Word in some manner or another: in daily life, in verbal witnessing, in confrontations with apostate church leaders, etc. Thus, I believe we will all draw much encouragement for ourselves, as we experience some of the same struggles. Yes, the remainder of this series will be primarily to believing [C]hristians. Through Jeremiah we will come to realize more and more that, those things we wrestle with, some of which may be "fiery trials", are not "unheard of" (1Pt4:12), "...knowing that the same afflictions are experienced by your brethren in the world." (1Pt5:9) And as we see what Jeremiah's life was like, perhaps we will conclude that we've actually got it 'pretty easy' by comparison!

So, Jeremiah moans: Poor me! With all this strife that surrounds me, Mom, why did you bother giving birth to me? Somewhat like Job in his misery, "Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night in which it was said, A male child has been conceived...Lo, let that night be barren! Let no joyful shout come into it!" (Job3:3,7)

As this is being written/prepared, I was talking with somebody just last evening who is despairing of life. He had a particular recent event over which he was sorrowing. But life for him, in general, is one of regularly hitting the bottle. And only in his mid-30s, life is so lacking, that he is resigned to the fact that his life will continue only perhaps another 10 years, or so; that this is an 'inevitable' situation for him; that, after all, there is nothing after this life, anyway. When I spoke of God's Book of Life, he pretty much volunteered that his own name is in the "Book of Death"...not accepting that there even could be something like God's Book of Life.

This person is in despair, and spends his time drinking his life away. Others simply commit -direct- suicide, and get-it-over-with quickly. Some do so at the hands of the police; create a threatening situation which forces the police's hand where they 'have-to' shoot the person.

Well, Job... and here, Jeremiah does not contemplate suicide. But is so worked up over the evil that surrounds him, which he is often forced to be the brunt of, that he complains: "Why" must I be in this situation?

What Jeremiah is facing is the same thing many -true- Christians face at the hands of [c]hristians and [c]hurch leaders. (Remember, Israel/Judah was a theocracy. As a society it was as though they were an organized living 'church'. Imagine the pastor being the governor, and the elders being the government council and judges. Everything functioning as though it was 'church' social, activities, work-days, etc.)

When the faithful believer is true to God's laws, but the church leadership is not, such a situation pits the 'lone' -individual- against the 'many' who comprise the pastor, elders, and the entire congregation who think the pastor is "just great".

So... Just who do you think you are? Do you think you're 'better' than us? We are engaged in our activities, and you haven't joined in (perhaps the Lord hasn't happened to burden you to join the rest in that particular activity, or perhaps their activity is wrong/sin); So, you think you're better than us! Hmph!! Or, if the pastor is leading the congregation down a wrong path, and you, the 'lone' individual stand up to it, refuse to go along with the crowd; and when asked "why", explain from Scripture the wrongness of the direction; or perhaps you see the corrupt direction the congregation is taking, and knowing you cannot change it/them, you resign, doing so with a letter explaining "why" you are leaving... And BOY, OH BOY! Do you get attacked! Just what are you saying? That YOU 'ALONE' are "Right", and ALL THE REST OF US ARE WRONG??? Just who do you think you are to be so presumptuous! Remember God's judgment against the sin of presumption! (Num15:30, 2Pt2:10) Look at our pastor's 'credentials', education and experience. And just 'who' are you??? to be making such accusations. You are not 'qualified' to be so "judgmental". Are you trying to "divide the body"? Don't you know that God judges those who "sow discord among the brethren" (Pr6:19 KJV) Christians are supposed to "love one another" (Jn15:12); and what you are doing is stirring up "hate". We are supposed to obey our pastors in what they say (De17:11, Mt23:2-3, Heb13:17); you know, that "chain-of-command" -thing- that "Jesus taught". (Mt8:9)

But what did I do? I opened the Scriptures, and merely presented, "God's Words...Thus says Jehovah..." (1:9, 2:2) I have not done harm to anyone, "I have neither loaned with usury (stolen), nor have men loaned to me (I'm not in debt)" just presenting, 'This is what the Bible says' "...yet every one curses me." (vs10b) I speak from the Bible, and they

(who claim to be "Christians") attack me for speaking Biblical truth, saying, "That's your 'interpretation' of the Bible. TO US IT MEANS..."

But the Bible is right there, written, black-and-white. It's meaning is not lofty in the heavens out-of-reach, nor buried deep in the sea with unfathomable meanings, "But the Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." (De30:11-14)

So, why does it seem like, WHEREVER I GO, it is always the same scenario? I come to a new church, and immediately get accepted because they like the music by which I minister to them; but as soon as anything gets into some nitty-gritty regarding Scriptural doctrine, or how Christians should -do- what the Bible says, and -not-do- what it says not to; if I stand on the Scriptures, "everyone curses me". (vs10b)

OK...so my past had to do with music. Yours is something else. But do these few paragraphs resound with the 'reality' of your experiences? Why do these words sound sooo familiar? Because, yeah, I've been there, too. And like we see from the passage... this is NOTHING NEW just to us. It was Jeremiah's experience, too.

Oh, and... Are they not ever-so convincing with their arguments! Especially, the first few times it happens, you are yet young, and they use that "you think you're right and we're all wrong" argument! After all, being raised in democratic-type societies, where people vote, and the "majority" rules...we are raised up as societies to "go along" with the majority.

Ah, but... what does God's Word say about that?

"You shall not follow the majority in doing evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after the majority to thrust aside justice." (Ex23:2)

But most congregations operate on the "majority-rule" concept. Pastors are voted-in by the majority. Congregational business meetings conduct their affairs by majority vote; often-times, after the meeting was characterized by knock-down drag-out verbal fights. Boards of elders/deacons make decisions by majority vote. So, when there are lone-dissenters, when the predominance of the congregation is of the 'pretend' [c]hristian variety who conduct their affairs the way the world does, they attack the 'lone' individual, who happens to be a -True- Believer, whose heart yearns after God's Holy Word.

The conflict is between Godliness and evil. Between God's followers, and the followers of satan; even though those of satan make claims to belong to God, and they "make claims for Jesus"

Now, we know the command is to "come out of her My people" (Rev18:4), as Jeremiah proclaimed at the "gate" of the temple, and was told, "do not pray for them". (ch7)

And yet, there are times God specifically uses the Godly 'within' such groups, 'until' it is His time for them to leave. God was specifically -keeping- Jeremiah in the midst of the turmoil: "Jehovah said, Truly I will not free you for good." (vs11a) Why?

"Truly I will cause the enemy to entreat you in the time of evil and in the time of affliction." (vs11b)

As we progress through the series, these who are harrassing Jeremiah will come to ask his advice, at the Word of the Lord; although they will also disobey it. The ruler will come to him privately to ask advice when he is in prison. And when Babylon comes to take the captives away, the Babylonian officials will take special note of Jeremiah, and give him his freedom. Jeremiah was God's 'light' within their darkness. (Mt5:14)

Please allow some little personal musings a moment: What will be the total sequence of events before the Lord comes for the Church? Will they have begun to collect True Believers into their concentration camps, along with other political dissidents? When all these people are being herded around in confinement, what is the overall mood going to be? As the sound of the guillotine (Rev20:4) is heard, and fellow-prisoners are despondent as they are dreading their turn, what will be the role of Christ's Believers? As I've thought about, and wondered about the possibility that the day might come where I find myself in such a place, I've thought about 'how' the Lord might use me to minister to fellow-prisoners. Remember, Joseph had done no wrong, but was in prison in Egypt; and his righteousness was so evident, the guards entrusted him with responsibilities. (Gen39:21-22) And God used him to minister to Pharaoh's servants when they were troubled by their dreams; proclaiming God's word to them. (Gen40)

How will Believers minister to "the enemy" in those places? How will they answer the interrogations of the officials? Jesus said, "But when they deliver you up, do not be anxious about how or what you should speak, for it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." (Mt10:19-20)

This is my personal thought here, based on the examples we have from Scripture. A Believer should not worry over how to 'escape'. Remember the fact how when Paul and Silas remained in the prison after the earthquake opened the doors, the jailer came in repentance to Christ. (Ac16) If they had escaped, that might have been a missed opportunity. And Paul spoke of his own imprisonment: "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out

for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my bonds are in Christ;" (Php1:12-13)

Thus, dear Believer: Should the time come where we find ourselves in such confinement due to our witness for Christ, we should consider it as our new mission field; and let them see "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col1:27)

the Prophet: indignation (Jeremiah 15:15-21)

"O Jehovah, You know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on those who persecute me. In Your long-suffering do not take me away; know that for Your sake I have suffered rebuke." (vs15)

So, what's the deal? Is Jeremiah seeking Israel's restoration and forgiveness (14:7), or does he want revenge?

Dear Believer: Do you ever feel 'torn' inside as you see all the apostate corruption around you? On one hand your eyes "run down with tears" (14:17) as your heart yearns after the lost state of those you know; and yet on the other hand, within your spirit is a righteous holy anger that wells up against the wickedness. And so, at the taunting of the unsaved (pretend) so-called '[c]hristians', you begin to feel 'guilty' for being sooo "unloving", because of this that is in your heart.

But you read and know the Scriptures that exhort us to not be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers. (2Co6:14) You do not "walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful"... so why are you not -feeling- "blessed"? (Ps1:1) You are not "sitting in the council of the mockers" nor "rejoicing" with them. Because of your loathing of their wickedness you "SIT ALONE". (vs17) Where does this so-called "unloving" attitude of 'vengeance' come from?

Jeremiah says, "..for You have filled me with indignation". (vs17)

Yes, dear Believer: this holy anger comes from the Lord. God's 'wrath' is due upon this world. Paul says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness..." (Rom1:18) Due to God's indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom8:9) we also "have the mind of Christ". (1Co2:16b) In other words, those things that please God please us; and those things that God hates fill us with 'indignation'. What is "indignation"? According to the dictionary: Anger aroused by something unjust, mean, or unworthy. Thus, the psalmist proclaims: "Do I not hate them, O Jehovah, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies." (Ps139:21-22) Yes folks...this is how 'christian' psychology's favorite "self-love" and "self-esteem" chapter ends.

So, what does God do for Jeremiah? OK, dear one: Stand aside and let Me zap them for you. ?? No. "I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; and they shall fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you to save you and to deliver you, says Jehovah." (vs20)

You see, dearly beloved: It is not always God's intention for us to "get along" with everybody. Jesus said that we are the "light of the world". (Mt5:14) But what happens when moths and bugs find the light at night? They come to the light, and go charging and bumping into it. And depending on what kind of light it is, they maybe get zapped. But a lot of DEAD bugs are retrieved from light fixtures.

You see, folks...our mission is not necessary to 'save' -everybody-. We are not "soul-winners" to all sinners. To many we are testimonies to their death: "...the aroma of death unto death.." We are not called to be 'salesmen' who are "peddling the Word of God" but "as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ, in the sight of God." (2Cor2:16-17)

We do not (as some erroneous translations say) "make disciples", but we are to "instruct all the nations" (Mt28:19) as we are "witnesses" to Jesus Christ. (Lk24:48) In a court of law, quite often the 'witness' who testifies in the case results in the -JUDGMENT- of the accused.

Just as Jesus promised the Church, that we "have affliction" (Jn16:33); here God promises Jeremiah that Israel will "fight against" him. But just as Jesus also promised that the "gates of Hades shall not prevail" against the Church (Mt16:18); so, too, God promises "...they shall not prevail against you.."

This...a reminder of God's promises when He first called Jeremiah to the ministry. You see, God knows "...our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Ps103:14) He knows that our emotions can play up, and cause us to get down, even though intellectually we remember God's original promise: "Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you, says Jehovah" (1:8) God had also said, "Do not be dismayed at their faces, lest I shame you before them." (1:17) They will fight you, but "they shall not prevail against you." (1:19)

So, forget about ecumenism! Forget about unity-in-diversity! "Come out of her My people" (Rev18:4) Make a separation between you and them. Is this not the direct OPPOSITE of what christendom is doing? There are very few, a paltry few who proclaim as a doctrine: Biblical "Separation"

When the apostates are going down their "broad way" to "destruction" (Mt7:13)[Note in the context: that's talking about those claiming to be 'christians' who call out: "Lord, Lord" (vs21) That's not even talking about the world with no claims to 'christianity'!], we are not to seek-them-out. If they seek you out, "let them turn back to you" BUT (and note this well) "...DO NOT RETURN TO THEM" (vs19) As Paul says, "...not to keep company with anyone named a brother..." the fruits of whose deeds show him to be a liar... "...not even to eat with such a person." (1Cor5:11) ...having "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.." (Eph5:18)

And as you separate yourself from them, take along the righteous with you.

WHAAAAT??? Advocating "church splits", you say??? Indeed!!

God says to Jeremiah, that if he is functioning as God's "mouth", proclaiming God's Word, that he will "..take the precious out from the vile.." (vs19)

So... How does a Believer hold up under such responsibilities? such negativity? It is such a 'thankless' position to be in. Right? If such Godly indignation is at work, how can we claim that "the joy of Jehovah is your refuge"? (Neh8:10) How can we "rejoice always"? (1Th5:16)

For those who are "called by [God's] name"; a True Believer and "disciple"; by true definition: we are CHRIST-ians... (Ac11:26)

"Your Words were found, and I ate them; and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Jehovah the God of Hosts." (vs16) The Scriptures!

And as for that indignation? Vengeance? Deliverance from our enemies? The tables will be turned upon them...

Jesus promises: "Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie; indeed I will make them come and bow the knee before your feet, and to know that I have loved you." (Rev3:9)

Even so, Amen!

the Prophet: don't get married (Jeremiah 16:2)

The Word of Jehovah also came unto me, saying, You shall not take a wife for yourself, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place" (v1-2)

There is a false teaching (that's been around for decades) that somebody forwarded to me awhile back (aspects of British-Israelism); I have since deleted the file and don't remember all the details; but it follows the basic gist of a tale that, when all the sons of a particular king (I think Zedekiah? 2Ki25:7) in the Davidic line were murdered, that there supposedly weren't any 'sons' left to succeed on to the throne, that the daughters who survived escaped and migrated northwest, and ended up in the regions of the UK, accompanied by Jeremiah. From everything else that I read of that teaching, while I don't recall if it was stated directly, I was left to suspect the implication that it would have also then been necessary (from that tale) for Jeremiah to have fathered offspring with these royal princesses, in order for today's British crown to supposedly be sitting on the heads of alleged 'heirs' to "Israel".

Of course, we know there were many sons to both David and Solomon, and when the exiles came back from Babylon, Zerubbabel, was governor, and was of the Messianic line (Mt1:12, Ez2:2, etc) to continue the lineage of the prophecies regarding David's throne.

And Jeremiah, being a faithful prophet of God, we know he did not father the British royal lineage, as this passage tells us clearly, that God commanded him NOT to take a wife.

So, on another subject, does this passage then suggest papal/priestly celibacy? Well, the Scriptures do not apply to pagan religions. But since that entity from Rome claims to be "christian" and has deceived many, and many who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ also look to Rome for their doctrinal guidance, does this mean that pastors should be celibate? No. The O.T. priests married, although the rules for their marriage were strict: they were to only marry virgins. (Lev21:14) And in the coming Kingdom age the priests will be required to marry only virgins or widows of priests. (Ezek44:22) Paul commands that pastors/leaders be husbands of "one wife". (1Ti3:2, Tit1:6) And even the one the pagans erroneously claim was the "first pope", Peter, was also married. (1Co9:5)

So, what is the deal with Jeremiah?

God's prophets, while receiving historical notoriety by being named in the Scriptures, such notoriety was also often accompanied by stringent requirements upon their own lives. You want a career as a cook? Then be ready for the 'heat'. You want to be a 'leader' such as a pastor or

prophet/preacher? Then, be willing to accept the life God requires of you to go along with that position, along with God's stricter judgment of you. "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." (Jac3:1)

Jeremiah was told to NOT MARRY. Hosea, on the other hand, was commanded to marry a prostitute. (Hos1:2) Some, who cannot see anything past their own sense of self-piety suggest that Hosea "didn't really" marry a "prostitute", because "God WOULDN'T ASK that of a prophet". You know... the opposite of "what would Jesus do?" What God WOULDN'T DO? Well, Ezekiel was required to lie on his sides for over a year, "laying seige" against a clay tablet, as a sign to Israel. (Ezek4) God required of Isaiah to walk about naked, as a sign to Ethiopia and Egypt, even with bare bee-hind. (Is20) This, required by the same God who commanded a certain standard of dress so that priests not expose their nakedness. (Ex20:26) But who also used other graphic language at times, to get His point across, "Therefore I also have drawn up your skirts over your face, that your shame may be seen." (Jer13:26)

One quality about God that many seem to overlook, is that God often behaves towards sinful man -AS- sinful man has lived his life. They assume that, since "God is love" (1Jn4:8), that He WOULD NEVER DO anything "hateful" or "evil". They overlook: "...with the pure You show Yourself pure; and with the perverse YOU SHOW YOURSELF TWISTED." (2Sa22:27)

As with Ezekiel and Isaiah, Jeremiah's own life was a 'sign' to Israel. If Ezekiel was required to not cry or mourn publicly when his wife died (Ez24), can you imagine the sorrow and heartache to one like Jeremiah, whose eyes were -already- a "fountain of tears" (Jer9:1) because of Israel.

God said about those who should be born, that they would die horrendous deaths: "They shall die from deaths of diseases; they shall not be mourned, nor shall they be buried. But they shall be as dung on the face of the earth. They shall be destroyed by the sword and by famine; and their carcasses shall be food for the birds of the heavens and for the beasts of the earth." (vs4)

Furthermore, Jeremiah was to keep his distance from those in mourning. Remember, as he had come out from them and was not to return (15:19), when their calamity came he was not to empathize with their grief either by sitting, eating and drinking with them. (vs8)

The "holy and just one" (Ac3:14), Jesus Christ, spoke to the unbelievers, "...you will die in your sins" (Jn8:21,24) Jesus had no empathy for their judgment. Jeremiah, a 'righteous' man-of-God, similarly was to have no empathy for Israel's sorrows of judgment. God had appointed him as a 'bronze wall' against them. (15:20) There is not

much in the way of condolences, empathy and tears from a wall of bronze.

The coming judgment is spoken of as being for "-THOSE- who dwell on the earth" (Rev3:10b) And those in God's presence, observing and serving in God's holy courts of Heaven proclaim, "You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things, for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink, for -THEY- are deserving." (Rev16:5-6)

Jesus said of the coming judgment, "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!" (Mt24:19) If Jeremiah had married and had children, and then judgment came; it's just the nature of a man to mourn for his family. Was God sparing him, in order that he could maintain his calling as the "bronze wall"?

In order to follow Christ, Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, and WIFE and CHILDREN, and brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." (Lk14:26)

Other than the husband/wife couple mentioned in Ac18, Aquila and Priscilla, God did not call husband-and-wife 'teams'. Moses' wife lashed out in anger against him and could not handle God's holiness (Ex4:25-26), returned to her father's house, and later her father brought her back to Moses in the wilderness once all the judgment of Egypt was complete. (Ex18) Moses did not have his wife-at-his-side while he struggled through all the events in Egypt; she had abandoned him! And we know how Solomon's wives enticed him away to idolatry. (1Ki11:4) Other than some like Jeremiah, Hosea, Peter, etc. Scripture does not tell us much about the prophets' wives. God did not call the wives; He called the prophets. God reveals Himself 'personally' when He calls -that- 'individual'. (Num12:6)

Is God calling you to ministry? Should you get married? If God leads, and "only in the Lord" (a Believer). (1Cor7:39) If you are married, should you seek to be loosed? No. Be content in that state in which God has called you. (1Co7:27,24)

If you're married, you'll be like Peter. If you remain single, you'll be like Paul and Jeremiah. Paul understood the benefits of singleness, in terms of a person being able to devote the 'entirety' of their lives to the Lord's service. (1Cor7:32) And in Jeremiah's case it enhanced his position as that "bronze wall" against Israel; and spared him a -lot- of grief and heartache, within the context of that which God required of him.

Are you in service to the Lord? Then, in whatever is required of you, remember that "...You are not your own... For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are

God's." (1Cor6:19b-20)

the Prophet: I've been faithful (Jeremiah 17:12-19)

"As for me, I have not hurried away from being a shepherd who follows You; nor have I desired the woeful day; You surely know the going forth of my lips before Your face." (vs16)

One of the arguments the apostates throw back in the face of God's faithful servants is: What makes you think that -you- (alone) are right, and ALL OF US are wrong? You are being prideful and presumptuous, calling yourself 'righteous', God will judge you! You better repent of this pride (or else)!

Besides Jeremiah, we have other examples: "Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Ac23:1) What was their reaction to this statement? The high priest commands somebody to hit him in the mouth. (vs2)

John writes: "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error." (1Jn4:4-6) In other words, we are confident that, if 'we' have God's Word, and somebody disagrees with 'us', then we know that their disagreement with us indicates that they are not of God, because 'us' includes the indwelling Holy Spirit; God Himself.

How is Jeremiah able to make claim to being faithful? Because he knows Who it is that he is being obedient to. Like Paul says in the midst of his trials as God's minister, "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep safe what I have committed to Him until that Day." (2Ti1:12)

Jeremiah knows the "glorious high throne" as the place of his "sanctuary". (vs12) What is a sanctuary? A holy (set apart) place of REFUGE. He knows that Jehovah is the "Hope of Israel". (vs13) God is the "Fountain of Living Waters". Jesus was not the first to use that image of Salvation and Eternal Life. (Jn4:14) Whatever Jeremiah's "infirmity" was (10:19), he knows that God is the one who can heal it. (vs14) Just as Jonah calls out "Salvation is from Jehovah" (Jon2:9); Jeremiah knows that his salvation is from God, and he gives praise to God.

The apostates are scoffing: Jeremiah, you've been preaching gloom and doom for a long time, now. But HERE WE ARE! God hasn't zapped us yet. You keep telling us that God is going to judge, but we don't see it.

Some prophet you are...Har! Har! Har! C'mon, show us some sort of sign or fulfillment, and then we'll believe you. (vs15) Well, this they threw at Jesus, too, didn't they, when He was on the cross: "He saved others; He has no power to save Himself. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." (Mt27:42) "...if He is the Christ, the chosen of God" (Lk23:35) after a ministry full of, "...we want to see a sign from You." (Mt12:38)

Later on in ch29 a false prophet is going to try to flamboyantly publicly discredit Jeremiah's calling, and at Jeremiah's mouth he will be judged (we'll address that when we come to it), but for right now, it seems that Jeremiah is receiving 'generic' taunts. C'mon, show us something spectacular and 'prove' that you are really a prophet.

So how does God respond? Oh, right you are, Jeremiah. You do have things rough, don't you. Why don't you take some time off and rest awhile. Stay in your house and continue praising Me and worshiping. Hmm?? No!

"Thus Jehovah said unto me: Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, by which the kings of Judah come in, and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; and say to them, Hear the Word of Jehovah, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates! Thus says Jehovah, Take heed to yourselves... But they did not obey, nor extend their ear, but made their neck stiff, so that they might not hear nor receive instruction...." (vs19-23~)

In other words: Jeremiah has been faithful, Jeremiah looks to God for deliverance and reviews in his own heart that he is being faithful; and as Jeremiah gets this all sorted out, God commands him to GO PREACH some more. Don't change the message: 'Obey God and be blessed; disobey and be judged.'

I expect any minister of God experiences this same thing, as I do from time to time. When the message is proclaimed, the enemy taunts and gives convincing-seeming arguments for why you are doing wrong. But then in that secret place of the holy sanctuary with God, God's messenger reviews in their heart God's call, and their own obedience to that call; and the result is that God's prophet comes back out of his corner 'swinging'. The team is getting bested on the court, so they take a "time-out" and get pumped by the coach, and they go back out with fresh determination to score some baskets. They don't 'quit' till the game is over. "...forgetting those things which are behind and stretching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are complete, be of this mind..." (Php3:13-15)

Dear fellow-minister in Jesus Christ:

If you've been proclaiming God's Word faithfully, don't change the message. Don't water it down. Don't soft-pedal it. After all, that's what the apostasy is about: "Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak pleasant things." (1Ki22:13) (be more 'loving') ...as they also take the barbs (that pierce the heart Ac2:37) out of God's Word with all their progressively worse and worse perversions.

The very first temptation proclaimed, "Has God indeed said...?" (Gen3:1) That's the same taunt from the enemy today: Are you -sure- you have been called by God? How can you be so contrary, when EVERYBODY ELSE is saying these other things? And look how 'happy' they all are! And you seek to tear down their self-esteem!

Just remember Paul's words: I know Whom I have believed. Remember that the Word is -God's- Word. If we speak any less, we are just as disobedient as the ones to whom we've been sent. But let us conduct ourselves in such a way that, when the enemy taunts, we can commune with the Lord, KNOWING we are being faithful.

the Prophet: verbal plots (Jeremiah 18:18-23)

"Then they said, Come and let us devise schemes against Jeremiah. For the Law shall not perish from the priest, nor wisdom from the wise, nor the Word from the prophet. Come and let us strike him with the tongue, and let us not pay attention to any of his words." (vs18)

Later the people are going to physically confine Jeremiah, but notice right now they say, "..let us strike him with the tongue" This is how the persecution starts. With -words-. First time the apostles were brought before the council, when the lame man had been healed, they merely "threatened" them. (Ac4:15-22)

Now, please notice their arguments; the same arguments we have observed in the past that happen to God's faithful servants in our own time:

"The Law shall not perish from the priest." Translate that for today: I am an ordained preacher/pastor (see my certificate on my office wall?). Why should I listen to you? You're a nobody. Don't you know that God appointed "pastors and teachers"? (Eph4:11) And pastors are to be given "double honor". (1Ti5:17) I'm up here on 'my' pulpit, and you are to be subservient to me, while I parcel out the Scriptures and explain them down-to-the-level of the "laity". My job is to protect 'my' flock from such as you. You are not welcome to come back until you come and bow to 'me', repenting of what you've been saying.

"..nor wisdom from the wise.." You mean to say that you, all by your own little self, are -right-, and all of us with our seminary degrees and credentials, and the authors of the books we read, written by degreed scholars... are -wrong-? Just what are your credentials? What school did you go to? Did you go to any school at all? Our credentials come from ABC and XYZ Semitaries, where the famous Dr. Hoity Toity, PhD was my thesis advisor.

"..nor the Word from the prophet.." You're a self-appointed prophet? Well, see? We're prophets, too.

So...pastors who formerly hated each other with loathing suddenly become bosom-buddies as they commiserate over you; just like Pilate and Herod became "friends" on the occasion of Jesus' crucifixion. (Lk23:12) When a certain other church hears that you're back in town, they collect a gathering of the former board members you were condemning through God's Word, and get you cornered, and try to elicit a confession of wrong-doing from you for your stance against -them- those years prior, the "elders"...elders" the ones God put "in charge", thus they rule, thus you were being disobedient to God's chain-of-command hierarchy order of authority, even though you were standing upon God's Word, and

they ousted a true man-of-God who had been teaching them the Scriptures... but the Word he taught was stepping on toes, because the church was a congregation of wolves, as were these elders. Or, a pastor who is living in sin, knowing the church respects your stand upon God's Word, gathers an unlikely assemblage of outcasts, half of whom are not even regularly connected to the church but are this man's friends, to contrive a false accusation, saying that you are trying to usurp his 'position' as pastor, to take over his position to oust him, to become pastor in his place... because... and here's the supposed 'fault': Some of the people in the church decided one Sunday to meet at a pre-designated restaurant, and invited you to join them, but did not tell the pastor; and the meal was just a "meal" for "fellowship" of kindred hearts...but, oh, it was "plotting" against the pastor (even though his name never once came up). Of course, those he gathered for your little lynching were not some of those that had fellowshiped over that meal that day, either.

And of course these pastors and leaders spread a false report about you around their spheres of influence: Don't listen to him. He's whacked out crazy. He is being prideful. He has a lot of emotional self-esteem issues from his childhood...that's why he is the way he is. He thinks he's better than us. He hasn't yet learned about "graeesssss".

Well, remember from our last lesson, how Jeremiah reviews in his heart before God: I've been faithful... "I have not hurried away from being a shepherd who follows You" (17:16) And now as they are lashing at him with their tongues, notice his reasonings with God: I've done good for them, and this is how they repay me? "Should evil be repaid for good?" (vs20a) And he reviews before God (As if God needs a reminder! But -we often need the reminders, don't we.), what we've observed in prior lessons, how he has pleaded with God on Israel's behalf: "...I stood before You to speak good for them, to turn away Your wrath from them." (vs20b)

But remember how God told Jeremiah on several occasions, "Do not pray for this people for their good". (7:16, 11:14, 14:11) Furthermore God said, "Send them out of My sight..." (15:1)

Thus, Jeremiah the prophet, being of God's mind, just as we who are True Believers "have the mind of Christ" (1Co2:16), in agreement with God, lists off the things that are appropriate for God's wrath to accomplish against them: death through famine, sword, war. Agreeing with God that they have 'crossed the line' over which there is no turning back nor forgiveness... "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." (Rev22:11) God, don't forgive them. (vs23)

Now, notice one thing that Jeremiah DOES NOT DO. And this is in stark

contrast to today's charismania camp who presume they are engaged in "spiritual warfare" or "prayer warfare". Like some prayer meetings I have been in, where these of this spirit pray -to- satan, telling satan: You better watch out, satan, because -WE- have got you wrapped around -OUR- little fingers, and -WE- are going to smash you to smithereens.

No! No! No! What does Jeremiah say?

Praying to God, now: "..nor blot out their sin before -YOUR- sight, but let them be overthrown before -YOU-; deal with them in the time of -YOUR- anger." (vs23)

In other words... Jeremiah is in agreement with God. Notice that Jeremiah did not gather some other people to "agree" together, and now they are praying to God to comply with -THEIR- agreement. But his agreement is 'with' -GOD-, and says, essentially: In Your own good time, Lord, give them Your wrath as You know is fitting.

As the angels cry out in John's vision:

"You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things, for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink, for they are deserving. And I heard another out of the altar saying, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." (Rev16:5-7)

the Prophet: I won't speak anymore (Jeremiah 20)

"Now Pashur...heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. Then Pashur struck Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks..." (vs1-2)

First of all, who was Pashur? He was the priest's son, and "chief officer" in the house of Jehovah. (vs1) We're talking 'top dog' in the religious establishment. Predecessor to the same hierarchy that dragged Jesus (Lk22:66) and His disciples before the council. (Ac4:1)

Predecessor to the same ones who crucified Jesus, and martyred Stephen. As Stephen would say a few centuries later as he was about to be stoned, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they, who received the Law by the command of angels and did not keep it, killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers." (Ac7:52-53) Pashur and this incident, certainly, was one of the cases in Stephen's message.

Like we repeat regularly: Most of the Christian's persecution comes from church -leaders-, preachers, so-called Bible teachers, and chat room moderators. It's what my experience has been, and it is what subscribers relate to me. In my experience, as most of my earlier life was spent on-the-platform in ministry, the 'ordinary' folk were receptive to God's Word as it manifested itself through the ministry, and they loved it; just as it says about Jesus: "And the large crowd heard Him gladly". (Mk12:37) But it was when the temple rulers stirred up the crowds that they yelled, "Crucify Him!" (Mk15:11) The Gentiles were receptive to the Gospel message Paul preached, until the Jewish rulers came along and stirred them up, and they stoned him, thinking they had killed him. (Ac14:19) As Jesus said, "They will put you out of the synagogues [churches]..." (Jn16:2) So, indeed, the Believer's confrontations are most-often with pastors, elders and other church/denominational leaders. The ones with the degrees and ordinations behind their names. Indeed, as is taunted: the Believer is bucking up against a depraved chain-of-command.

And what is the message Pashur is so upset about? God is judging the rulers (19:3), they are corrupt and idolatrous (19:5), they will become bird feed (19:7), during the judgment they will eat their own offspring. (19:9) And Jeremiah has been so bold as to come into their turf (the court of Jehovah's house) and proclaimed: "Thus says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will bring on this city and on all its towns all the evil that I have spoken...because they have hardened their necks so that they might not hear My Words." (19:14-15)

Oh, but... you're so negative and judgmental! Don't you know you're not supposed to "judge...lest ye be judged"? What makes you think YOU'RE so great, that you can criticize us?

But you see, Jeremiah makes it VERY CLEAR -WHO- the message is from. It is not Jeremiah's -own- 'opinions', nor his own feelings and interpretations. He -clearly- identifies the source of the message: Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel. It is not Jeremiah's -own- words, but God's. And isn't that what the Believer experiences today! The pretenders sit in their circles commiserating as to what the Word "means-to-them"....and when the True Believer who may happen to be sitting in their midst proclaims, "It is written" or "This is WHAT IT SAYS" Oh! You're so judgmental! Jesus teaches us to "love" one another, and not judge. But the Believer is not judging: he is merely proclaiming, Thus says the Lord. This is what the Bible -SAYS-!

As a quick little 'aside' here: When people come to you asking "what do you think about...?" or "what's your opinion regarding...?" or "don't you think that...?" the child of God should be prepared to respond, rather, with: "IT IS WRITTEN". It doesn't really matter what I 'think'. What does God's Word -say-? If the Believer keeps their discussions out of the theoretical 'opinions', and sticks with the 'facts' of God's -written- Word, argument and debate is greatly simplified. Of course, to be able to proclaim "it is written", one must actually be -reading- the Scriptures regularly, eh...

In the previous lesson they were merely -talking- against Jeremiah. Now Pashur puts Jeremiah in the stocks. (vs2) Confinement. In free societies they dis-member you from the church; they ask you to not return; if you want to return, you must be ready to bow-the-knee to them, worship and repent to them. History proliferates with accounts of imprisonment and torture of Believers at the hands of Catholic, Protestant and Islamic leaders.

So, the next day when Jeremiah is set free, what does he do? Cower away, keep-my-mouth shut, let the sleeping dog lie, until I'm out-of-range and 'safe' again...?? (vs3) Today many might call names on their captors of things like: You S.O.xxx..! Well, Jeremiah calls his captor a prophetic name, "Magor-Missabib" (terror on every side). Does Jeremiah recant his message; the reason for which he was bound? No. Your friends will fall by the sword, you will see it, you will go into captivity, you will die and be buried in Babylon...you along with all your fellow liars. (vs3-6)

You mean to tell me that you think I'm a false prophet? Are you calling me a liar? Mmmm??? Just who do you think you are; you don't know me, and you presume to call me an 'unbeliever'? I'm a born-again, spirit-filled christian, just as good as you are! So there!!! Hmph!!

Well....if the shoe fits...

So now... Jeremiah is by himself, and goes into another self-pity party. It was one thing to hear -words-. But now he's experienced being bound hand and foot in the stocks.

"O Jehovah, You have deceived me..." (vs7a) How could Jeremiah be thinking such thoughts? Hadn't God promised, "they shall fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you..." (1:19) At the beginning of his ministry God had promised to be with him, to "deliver" him. Being bound in the stocks doesn't look very much like "deliverance"! Being "struck" doesn't feel very much like non-prevailing.

Well, Jesus promised a similar thing. He said "...the gates of hades shall not prevail.." against the church. (Mt16:18) But He also promised, "In the world you have affliction; but be of good courage, I have overcome the world" (Jn16:33) The history of the years since has documented the torture and martyrdom of Christians (True Believers), but the Church of Jesus Christ has prevailed. And as we shall see, by the time we reach the end of this book, when the rest of them are being killed, and shackled together for the long trip to Babylon, Jeremiah is going to be given a stipend by the Babylonian officials, given his freedom, to live wherever he wishes. He will have survived.

On a related theme, in these last days: There are those pretend christians who taunt the Believers who expect and wait for the Lord's return, alleging that the church is supposed to experience God's wrath, taunting: What makes you think you should get off scott-free from persecution?! Well, indeed, until the Lord returns, many Believers -do- experience persecution, just as Jesus promised. And as the forces of evil close in, it could well-be that Believers will spend some time in concentration camps, be tortured and martyred; subject to the wrath of satan. But in the end, when Jesus comes, the True Believer is the one who will be raptured out, while the rest go through -God's- wrath.

Notice Jeremiah's complaint. "I am in derision all the day; everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I cry out, I cry violence and devastation; for the Word of Jehovah has been a reproach and a derision to me all the day." (vs7-8)

Notice that word "EVERYONE". You that have experienced it: You think that -you- are right, and -ALL- OF US are wrong? Typically, when a Believer is taunted in this manner, he/she faces it all 'alone'. There is typically not another Believer close-by to hold your hand, so you can give each other encouragement. Remember, Jeremiah didn't even have a wife to go home to, to receive comfort; he had been told not to marry. (16:2) Just the same way Jesus died on the cross...all alone; even His disciples scattered from Him. (Mt26:56)

And indeed...when a Believer proclaims the 'negativities' of God's Word (you know the message: DON'T REBEL and DON'T SIN AGAINST GOD!), and now -everybody- is taunting, the flesh goes into this mode of self-analysis: Well, perhaps they are right? Perhaps I shouldn't be so harsh? Perhaps I -should- take into account people's feelings? Perhaps there -

really- are "gray areas" that people have their own personal rights to? Perhaps I -should- use 'softer' rhetoric to say the same thing, without so many barbs?

[VW: I am chagrined to have to admit that this is what I did for 20 years; especially when one of the people whom I respected, who took me aside and counseled me, was from one of those solid conservative Bible schools of the day, from the Canadian prairie provinces, so looking at that school's credentials and this person who was an alumna (instead of the Lord and His Word) I listened to that person... and 'softened'. I had also 'recently' switched to the NASB perVersion. :VW]

However, I never did what Jeremiah does next. "Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak in His name any more." (vs9a)

But indeed, there are many who do just this. They make claims to following God, but bump heads with the opposition. They see the 'cost' it takes to follow Christ, and wimp out! They never speak of Christ. They even start to stop behaving like a Christian. They stop reading their Bibles. They become as-though 'deactivated'. They stay in that state.

Fortunately for Jeremiah, being God's servant, God did not disconnect from Jeremiah. And to those who might be of the false notion that God's Word is "only alive when God -makes- it alive", hear Jeremiah's testimony: "But His Word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with holding it in, and I could not." (vs9)

I can testify to this! I might have 'softened'. And being a music major, and then getting into professional and music ministry, I thought -that- was my ministry. And yet, at the height of my music years there was yet this 'NAGGING' at my heart for the proclamation of God's Word. It took many years, and God knocking me up-side the head to get my attention; but you-all are now witnesses to what 'won' out in my life.

And indeed...when God gives His message, I can attest that it is, truly, "like a burning fire". God doesn't need to -make- it alive... IT -IS- "ALIVE", and burns till it bursts forth!

And yet, Jeremiah is whimpering and afraid. When the apostles were commanded to not preach in Jesus' name, they boldly replied, "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Ac5:29) But here Jeremiah is cowering as they threaten: If you keep preaching, we'll report you. (vs10) And the less-threatening ones are sitting by, waiting for him to "stumble and fall". On one hand he has God's Word in his heart, bursting to come out; and on the other hand, the rebels crouched around him, waiting to pounce at the least false move he might make.

In Jeremiah's heart a huge big-time struggle is going on. On one hand,

he is confident in God's might; and in God's judgment of the wicked. (vs11-12) And as he considers this, he is able to "sing" and "praise" God. (vs13)

And yet, emotionally, he is exhausted and defeated. Just as he had moaned to his mother for having borne him into a world of strife (15:10), here he is continuing in the same despair: "Cursed be the day in which I was born; let not the day in which my mother bore me be blessed" (vs14) Wishing that he had been aborted or still-born. (vs17) He is feeling quite low and full of "shame". (vs18)

Dear Believer: Consider a moment. Consider the stature of this man, Jeremiah, who is called one of the -major- prophets in the O.T. He was of such faithfulness to God that an entire -large- book of the Scriptures is attributed to him. A special prophet consecrated "out of the womb". (1:5) In that aspect he shares a stature along with the likes of John the Immerser who, "being filled with the Holy Spirit" before birth, "leaped" in Elizabeth's womb at the sound of Mary's voice (Lk1:15,41,44) Of John, Jesus proclaimed, "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Immerser" (Mt11:11) So, consider the greatness of Jeremiah in God's sight.

But at this moment Jeremiah is certainly -not- 'feeling' very "great". He was also 'human', just as we are. And so, if someone of Jeremiah's standing with God could feel a tad bit "low" due to persecution, who are we to not also experience similar momentary despairs. As we are reminded to resist satan: "knowing that the same afflictions are experienced by your brethren in the world." (1Pt5:9) Jeremiah is just such a "brethren" who experienced the "same afflictions" we do...whose account we are blessed to have in the Scriptures to read about. Thus, don't take onto yourself the feelings of 'guilt' the goody-two-shoes Bible-belt pretend-christians would heap upon you for feeling a bit low once in awhile. They like to teach that a Christian should always be smiling, and should "never wear a frown", so they pump each other up to "c'mon everybody...smile!" as they sing, "Open up your heart and let the sunshine in!" Remember that Paul also had times of "despair" (2Co1:8) Notice that Peter does -not- say that the Believer NEVER HAS anxieties; but rather, to "cast" them upon Jesus. (1Pt5:7) Those anxieties satan hurls at us, as Paul says, "...we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead" (2Co1:9)

Thus notice something a minute: When Jeremiah is looking at self, he moans in self-pity...Oh, why was I ever born into such depravity? But when he looks to God, he is able to sing and praise, as Paul proclaims: "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep safe what I have committed to Him until that Day." (2Ti1:12)

Hebrews ch11 is the so-called great "Faith Chapter". As you read through those verses you read of people being outcast, starved, naked, being sawn and tortured in many ways. And as the writer considers the "great cloud of witnesses" watching our progress, the methodology by which we persevere is to be "...LOOKING UNTO JESUS, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb12:2)

Yes... "take up the cross and follow" JESUS CHRIST. (Mt16:24)

the Prophet: broken-hearted (Jeremiah 23)

"My 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 has overcome, because of Jehovah, and because of the Words of His holiness. For the land is full of adulterers. Yes, because of cursing the land mourns; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their strength is not right... Behold, a tempest from Jehovah has gone forth in fury, a whirling tempest. It shall whirl upon the head of the wicked. The anger of Jehovah shall not turn back, until He has executed and until He has fulfilled the purposes of His heart; in the **LATTER DAYS** you shall diligently consider it with understanding." (9-10,19-20)

While the religious leaders, we spoke of in the previous lesson, are taunting God's messenger: Who do you think you are? You think you're better than us! You shouldn't judge us! what is it that is truly going on in the **-heart-** of the messenger? Why does the prophet proclaim gloom and judgment from God? If you read this entire chapter, you see quite an indictment from God upon those who are supposed to be feeding God's sheep; who instead have let the wolves in and scattered the sheep.

Is it that the prophet feels a position of 'loftiness' over the religious leaders, and is refusing to submit to their self-imagined 'chain-of-command'? No! It is a matter of **-HOLINESS-** and their rebellion against God's holy standards. For all the sins that could be enumerated, notice the one that is chosen to describe them:

ADULTERERS

This term has two applications, 1) spiritual and 2) physical. And as we see this passage extending God's mention of judgment for these things, even to the "latter days" (vs20), we know this passage speaks of more than merely Israel. It is also for **-our-** world, today.

In the O.T. God speaks of Israel's "adultery" with regard to their idolatry. (Ezk23:37) In the N.T. Jacob addresses the church: "Adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore purposes to be a friend of the world is shown to be opposing God." (Jac4:4) Notice this wording from our Lord's earthly half-brother, supporting Jesus' pronouncement that it is **NOT POSSIBLE** to "serve two masters". (Mt6:24) If a person calls themselves a "Christian", but lives like the world...they are not merely dangling one foot in the water, while keeping the other on dry land. They are actually 'kicking' with that foot, splashing water in our Lord's face. They are not merely 'indifferent' to the Lord; Jacob says they are (actively) **-OPPOSING-** God.

It's called "adultery" because Israel was said to be -married- to God. God proclaimed to Israel: "For your Maker is your husband; Jehovah of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel." (Is54:5) And the Church is the "bride" of Christ. (Eph5:32) You that are erroneously "replacement" theologians please don't get your noses bent out of joint at this, and e-mail me about the New Jerusalem being called the "bride of the Lamb" (Rev21:9-10) Remember that the New Jerusalem includes both Israel and the Church; the gates are named with the Israeli tribes, and the foundations with the names of the apostles. God the Father and Son are "One". (Jn17:21) And Jew and Gentile have -both- been reconciled -to- GOD. (Eph2:16) It is not a different Savior: that was Jesus Christ. It is not a different salvation: that always has been through the blood of Jesus Christ, beginning with Adam, Eve and Abel. It's just different covenants and dispensations. But whether it's a Jewish Believer, or a Church (Gentile or Jew) Believer, "adultery" against God is the same: it is a claim to belonging to God, while turning aside and indulging in the world in things that are contrary to God's holiness. Whether O.T. or N.T. covenants, God's -holiness- has always remained the same. N.T. "grace" is not "license". (Ju1:4) God's "grace" is not His 'permission' to claim His name, but also indulge in the world's impurities. (Like a bride claiming to love her husband, but asking if she can also go hang out with her old boyfriends. Surely the husband wouldn't mind?) God's grace is that which saw us in this world's sin, and saved us 'anyway', -OUT-OF- the WORLD! "...unto good works.." (Eph2:10) That's what "holy" means....a "separation".

The original Hebrew word actually involves the meaning "to cut apart". It's like having a cutting board on which is a piece of meat, and the person takes a knife and -cuts-, 'separating' the fat from the rest. The piece of chicken is there, and the knife is used to 'separate' the skin from the meat. The veggies are there, and the knife 'separates' the tops from the radishes, carrots, onions, etc. The tops are thrown out, and the meat is prepared for cooking/eating. You don't cut the tops off the carrots, and then start munching on the leaves. (unless you're a rabbit)

But that's what Israel did, and what today's church does. The false prophets impress people with those huge bushy green leaves, -because- they are so -big- and impressive-looking, while rejecting the 'meat'.

And that other -physical- meaning of "adultery": Of all the sins the world commits, I think it would be safe to say that adultery is the most 'prolific' and shamelessly flamboyant. If commerce doesn't promote it, they use it to promote other things. Musical so-called "entertainment" has pretty much ceased to be about -music-, and has pretty much given itself over 99% to sexual perversion; and whatever that remaining 1% might be...? That's given over to the occult. And yes, it has been in the churches for years. For years it has been the case that, if a person saw some musical 'act' on TV, one could not tell if it was supposed to be "christian" or otherwise, unless one turned up the volume. If the

word "Jesus" popped up occasionally, it was assumed to be "christian". But by the attire and wiggly hips, otherwise, the two could not be differentiated. Now-a-days, Britney, Christina, and Beyonce are of such a "slutty" nature that there are now "degrees" of evil. But seeing as how so-called "christians" have engaged the 'gangsta' rap format for awhile, and considering how they now have their so-called "worship dance", I wonder how long it will be before the "working girl" -slut-on-stage group orgy shows will also start appearing in those places people call "church"?!! Unless the Lord continues to be "longsuffering"... mark my words... it -will- happen! Everything else from the world has! Why would this be any different!!! (My only question is: when that day comes, HOW will they seek to justify it? And what Scriptures will they pervert to 'support' it?! Perhaps: Beyonce calls herself a "devout christian" and she does it; so it's OK for us...?? Who knows!! I shudder at the thought! vs9)

"For the land is FULL OF ADULTERERS." (vs10)

And so, when God's messenger has God's heart within, understanding God's holiness (separateness from sin), and then sees those -claiming- to be followers of God, behaving -just- like the world... do you now understand how it is not "pride" or self-righteousness that burdens the prophet to proclaim God's Word of condemnation against the perversity?

It is HEART-SICK-NESS at the utter perversity and depravity. It is sorrow over the poor sheep who seemingly haven't got a clue, seeing as how it's the perverted shepherds who are leading the sheep in their depravity. It is the heart yearning to do as Jesus' other half-brother Judas writes: a -rescue- mission... "snatching them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh." (Ju1:23) Here! Take my hand and let me lead you out of this mess! Let me pull you out and 'away' (holiness) from all this filth!

Perhaps you say, as many do: "Yet they say, YAH does not see, nor does the God of Jacob perceive it. Understand, you stupid ones among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who chastens the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge? Jehovah knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." (Ps94:7-11)

Yes... Understand, "you stupid ones...you fools!" You think God doesn't see? "Am I a God near by, says, Jehovah, and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him? says Jehovah. Do I not fill the heavens and earth? says Jehovah. (vs23-24)

God goes on to say, "I have heard what the prophets have said..." (vs25) who tell lies in God's name, claiming to have seen visions and a "word from the Lord", but their purpose is "to cause My people to forget My

name by their dreams which they tell..." (vs27) The pastors who lead their flocks in "worship" to try to get them "spirit-filled", while they proclaim their 'new' revelations....and after they've spent all their time at that, the pastor closes the service saying, "We won't have any Scripture tonight, because we've had the spirit."

What does God expect of His messengers? "...he who has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says Jehovah. Is not My Word like a fire?" that burns up the chaff "...and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (vs28-29)

"Jehovah says, Behold, I am against the prophets who use their tongues and say, He says." (vs31)

And the prophet God sends to proclaim all this to the false prophets expresses: "My heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake (shudder)" (vs9a) God's faithful messenger trembles at the prospect, knowing himself to be a no-body, but God's Word within him is "like a burning fire..." that cannot be held in. (20:9)

With this combination of awesome realities, is it any wonder that God's messenger is sometimes stupified, as though "like a drunken man"! (vs9)

the Prophet: what burden? (Jeremiah 23)

"And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask you, saying, What is the burden of Jehovah? You shall then say to them, What burden? I will even forsake you, says Jehovah" (vs33)

There is a website I know of that, when you approach its opening page, and see listed the various topics and 'what' the website is about, covering some spiritually controversial topics, quite prominently situated in the midst of it all is a graphic/picture of a trash can, with accompanying explanation that if the visitor wants to react to the postings with a rebellious and hard heart, that their e-mails will end up in the trash can, unanswered; and in case the visitor doesn't quite 'understand', the link goes to an even -larger- picture of that trash can.

While I am not that bold (although I've chuckled at that trash can), I do have an e-mail folder with the label "xxxxxx" where I 'file' such messages, myself. Often a person's first message will go there, unanswered. Sometimes, after 2 or 3 exchanges. That folder, then, provides an 'archive' by which to search backwards (by way of reminder) for those who make it their mission and purpose to periodically send barbs. When certain ones 'continue' to send things (of several different types of categories), I also set a 'filter' against them, with an automated response, letting them know their e-mail has been -trashed- 'unread'.

Why?

What happens if a dog is barking and snarling at you, if you yell back at it? It only barks and snarls more. Like Jesus warned about casting the pearls of God's wisdom before swine, that they will merely, "...turn and tear you to pieces" (Mt7:6b) Paul warned that there would be many "vicious wolves" (Ac20:29) and that these wolves would be the leaders.

This chapter is about those "wolves" Paul spoke of, only, the ones of Jeremiah's time. They were "destroying and scattering" the sheep. (vs1) That's not something a true shepherd does; it is something wolves do. While they -claim- to be shepherds (pastors), they LIE. They -claim- to have a message from God, but God says of them, "I did not send them" (vs32, 14:14-15)

God tells them to SHUT UP! "...you shall mention the burden of Jehovah no more.." (vs36a) "You shall not say, The burden of Jehovah" (vs38b)

Why? Because their "burden" is not from God, but "every man's words shall be his burden". (vs36) They are proclaiming words from their own thoughts, claiming it to be a vision or revelation; a "word from the

Lord" But God says they "have perverted the Words of the living God, of Jehovah of Hosts our God".

Therefore what does God promise? "I will even punish that man and his house" (vs34) "..I will completely forget you, and I will forsake you and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and will cast you out of My presence." (vs39)

How often have you sat in your church pew, listening to the pastor blather on-and-on, seemingly enamored at the sound of his own voice, and have wished you might have the courage enough to stand up and tell him: Would you just SHUT UP already! They are so big on themselves and their own perceived status and wisdom. Well, in this passage this is precisely what God is telling them, through his prophet. As Paul says, "..whose mouths must be stopped.." (Tit1:11)

And remember how God has told Jeremiah several times to NOT 'pray' for them? (7:16, 11:14, 14:11) and that he is a "bronze wall" against them? (15:20) and when their misery comes to not join with them in mourning? (16:8) Well, here he is essentially told to not be a counselor or 'seer' for them. In those days they would go to the prophet (seer) to ask a word from God. (1Sa9:9, 2Sa24:11, etc)

When somebody looks at Scripture as to what God (literally) -SAID-, you call that person "judgmental". You travel far-and-wide to the huge conferences of various famous public speakers, you watch TBN faithfully, you buy dozens of books by this charlatan and that pied piper, you have your weekly 'therapy' session, go to your regular 'support' group meetings, and regularly attend that 'church' that "charges-you-up" each week telling you just how 'great' you are in God's sight. But your life is empty, so you go to that one who had proclaimed to you what God -SAID-... whining that your life is empty, and you want their counsel (added on top of all this other stuff).

Guess what God says to you....?

"Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress." (Jug10:13-14)

You don't want God's Word... but you come wondering if God has a word to me on your behalf? Has God laid a 'burden' on my heart on your behalf? But you don't want to obey what you already know?

Thus: "What burden?" There is none! Get lost! BE GONE with you! Your case is in the trash can! Shoo! Get outta here! God will not hear you! (Is59:1-2)

the Prophet: ***do not diminish a word*** (*Jeremiah 26*)

"Thus says Jehovah: Stand in the court of Jehovah's house and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to bow down in Jehovah's house, all the Words that I command you to speak to them; do not diminish a word. It may be that they will listen, and each man turn from his evil way, that I may be moved to compassion from the evil which I purpose to do to them because of the evil of their doings." (vs2-3)

Now, after so much 'negativity' that God has been commanding Jeremiah to project, why the change here? After telling Jeremiah to "not pray" for the people, and that there is "no burden", why is God suggesting the possibility of "compassion" on their behalf?

Let us remember that this book is a 'collection' of prophecies, writings and historical accounts, which covers the time period of several kings, beginning with Josiah. (1:2) I suspect we cannot view it, necessarily, in 'timeline' form. Many of the utterances don't include a 'time' anchor. But this passage does. And notice that ch26 is at the "beginning" of Jehoiakim's reign, and ch24 is 'after' Jehoiakim's son Jeconiah has been taken captive: thus, ch26 happened 'before' ch24. Thus, the book is a 'collection'...not necessarily always in chronological order.

So, to answer the question: Jehoiakim is Josiah's son. Who was Josiah? We won't look up the passages here/now, but he was the king who eradicated his father Manasseh's idols out of the land, after they found a copy of the Law. He had humbled himself before God, killed the pagan priests; even went so far as to go up to the northern territories and destroy Jeroboam's altars. And he stayed God's destruction, at least through his reign. But now his son is on the throne, and the kingdom has again returned to idolatry and evil. It is in this context that God commissions Jeremiah to go and "speak", with the qualifier: "do not diminish a word" (vs2b) Perhaps (with a fairly recent memory of 'good' Josiah) "they will listen" and repent, so that there can be "compassion" on them. (vs3)

Never forget, folks...for all the gloom, doom, wrath and judgment this book proclaims against Israel (Judah), it is not God's -desire- or "purpose" to condemn, but is "longsuffering" (2Pet3:9), but He continually calls out and pleads, "Turn! Turn from your evil ways! For why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezk33:11)

But how do the people react? Notice again that it is the PRIESTS and PROPHETS who arrest him (vs8); and they all agree, "You shall die the death!" (vs8b) Why?

Jeremiah isn't being 'politically correct' in his preaching. And don't you suppose God -knew- this would be the reaction when he told Jeremiah to "not diminish a word"? Jeremiah is proclaiming destruction against the king and the temple. (vs9-11) That would be like for me to proclaim, "Down with America, Down with Bush, Down with the church! It's -all-corrupt!" (Oh, that's right....that's what I do, isn't it! So, how soon before they come and take me away?) The political winds are blowing from the direction of Babylon...and they have their "homeland security" in place, and anybody proclaiming "hate speech" needs to be considered a traitor and a 'threat' to security and the morale of the military.

Oh, that's right. Sorry! I should 'respect' the rulers. I won't say anymore. Hmmm?

"Jehovah sent me to prophesy..." (vs12) These are -not- 'my' words. These are not my thoughts. (Today: I do not 'hate' you) I am merely the -messenger-. That's what it means to be "sent". The one 'sent' carries the message -of- the 'sender'...in this case, Jehovah.

It is -God's- message against the church and nation. It is not -my- 'wrath' that is coming...it is GOD's!

So now, listen to me (before it's too late)... ".make your ways and your doings good, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God. And Jehovah will show compassion regarding the evil that He has spoken against you." (vs13)

But "as for me" ...I'm just the messenger... "I am in your hand. Do with me as seems good and right to you." But understand that killing me will put innocent blood on you because ".truly Jehovah has sent me to speak all these words in your ears" (vs13-15) Whatever you do to me, you are doing to God; you are not rejecting me, but God. (1Sa8:7-8)

Jesus stated it like this: "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the Word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My Word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you on account of My name, because they do not know Him who sent Me. He who hates Me hates My Father also" (~Jn15:18-23)

So, the prophet's attitude: Do with me whatever you will, "For we are not able not to speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Ac4:20)

But it was not yet Jeremiah's time to die. There was yet a glimmer of righteousness left over from Josiah's time; God also had another

servant: Ahikam, the son of Shaphan the scribe during Josiah's reign and righteousness, kept Jeremiah from being executed. (vs24)

God says "speak", and His child -speaks-; not minding the potential cost. As Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah replied to Nebuchadnezzar, "If it is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods nor prostrate ourselves before the golden image which you have set up." (Dan3:17-18)

They were faithful, and God rescued them out through the flames. Jeremiah was kept from execution. But many others in faithfulness to God also were "...tortured, not accepting deliverance.." (Heb11:35)

Therefore, whatever the cost, "..do not diminish a word.."

the Prophet: politically incorrect (Jeremiah 27)

As the prophet is learning to "not diminish a word" (26:2) of God's message, what is required of him? What is the message? It is God's message. God is telling those about to be captured into exile the same message He will be telling Nebuchadnezzar a few years later, that "the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of men, and that He gives it to whomever He desires." (Dan4:32) Please read this passage for yourselves. Essentially...

God, by His great power, made the earth, man, the animals, and He says, "...and have given it to whom it seemed right to Me." (vs5) And so he goes on and says, "And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant. And I have also given him the beasts of the field to serve him." (vs6) And God continues to say that for the 'present', Babylon is to become the world's super power, having dominion over all the nations.

Thus, what is the message to the local people? Stand up for your rights, people! Fly your flags from your pickup trucks! Hold political rallies in solidarity...let's drum up our patriotism against the invaders! ???

Jeremiah makes some "bonds and yokes" for himself, and walks around 'wearing' them. (vs2) He makes more sets, one for each king of the surrounding nations, and sends them with the same message. That message is...?

Nebuchadnezzar is coming from Babylon and will have victory over all of us. Don't fight him; but yield to him in submission. If you submit, you will get to stay on your lands and live in peace. If you resist, it will not go well for you.

Today, it is the New World Order. Marxist communism was thought, by the masses, to have died with the Berlin wall; but the forces that propelled communism are still at work in the NWO. What communism boasted, that they would take over the whole world, today is nearly a reality. And so as they continue passing more and more laws curtailing -individual- 'freedoms', what does the Christian do? "Let every soul be subject to the higher authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are ordained by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will receive judgment on themselves." (Rom13:1-2)

B'b'uuuut! Isn't that "un-American"??? If America is a "Christian nation", should not Christians rise up and fight? Should we not be organized as militia cells here and there, armed-to-the-teeth, prepared to do battle? Would it not be 'treasonous' to go along with the forces that now pretty much have everything in place to institute martial law,

circumventing the constitution?

Remember: God made it all. He initially established the boundaries of the nations. (Ac17:26) And also: "Jehovah has made all things for a witness; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." (Pr16:4) And if you're worried about the "wicked taking over"; God even has that under control: "For the wicked are reserved for the day of calamity; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath." (Job21:30)

Therefore, today Jeremiah's message might sound something like this: Don't get yourselves involved with those so-called 'christian' militia groups. Don't be protesting and participating in anti-government rallies. Yes, we might be coming to understand that Bush and Ashcroft are anti-Constitutional leaders, and during a second term will likely sell this nation out fully to the NWO and the UN, and establish martial law, and other things. But until the "man of sin" is unveiled (2Th2:3) and the beast's "mark" is instituted, in these days prior to the commencement of the 70th week: wear your helmets, wear your seat belts, continue to pay your taxes (even though you know much of it goes to causes that are loathsome). Be subject to the "higher powers".

Just a little observation here: Notice part of 'what' Nebuchadnezzar is going to carry away. The temple "pillars". (vs19) Solomon built those pillars, calling them Jachin and Boaz. (1Ki7:21) But what had God said about sacred pillars? "...you shall...break their sacred pillars.." (Ex34:13) If Israel was supposed to destroy the pagan sacred pillars, did that mean, suddenly, that they were to build their own? Remember, Solomon was influenced greatly by his many pagan wives. (1Ki11:4)

So...while a so-called follower of God built pagan obelisks, notice how God is getting rid of them. At the hand of a pagan king! Whom God calls, "My servant". (vs6)

What God's people have refused to do; staying pure and weeding out those who are perverse (1Co5:13b)... God is doing at the hands of the pagans, whom He calls His "servants".

These days, when I hear of various big organized "churches" coming under government attack, when I see 'what' those churches are, I have tended to not get overly excited about it. God's kingdom is not comprised within those organizations. Regarding God's Kingdom they will not say, "See here; or, See there; for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Lk17:21) As catholicism has been under indictment over sexual perversities (something that has characterized that organization for centuries, and is only just now being held accountable for it), I am reminded how "God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled" (Rev17:17) to destroy the pretend 'church'. Yes, it is going to appear more and more like the government is wiping

out the "churches"...but that, too, is God's design; because they are not Christ's -true- Church. In wiping them out, God is destroying Babylon's 'pretend' church along with its churchlings.

The True Church of Jesus Christ -cannot- be destroyed, because it is comprised of every True Believer. The government might pass laws saying, "Stop praying" ...but they have no authority over what is God's, in the -heart- of each Believer. They have no ability to stop that which is the very essence of the Believer in Christ. All they can do is destroy these bodies...but they have no authority over our souls and spirits.

(Mt10:28)

the Prophet: rebukes false prophet (Jeremiah 28)

"Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah: Jehovah has not sent you, but you make this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus says Jehovah, Behold, I will drive you from off the face of the earth. You shall die this year, because you have taught rebellion against Jehovah. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month." (~vs15-17)

What was Hananiah's sin? Unlike Jeremiah (ch27), he was politically correct: the yoke of Babylon is being destroyed, our king is going to be restored to us, all the temple treasures are imminently about to be restored to us, "..for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon" (vs2-4)

God wants prosperity for you; He wants you to have a huge church, all furnished impressively. And if you listen to me and follow me, having faith, it will happen.

What does Jeremiah reply? "Amen. May Jehovah do so. May Jehovah establish your words..." (vs6)

For all the gloom and doom Jeremiah is called upon to proclaim, is his message something he enjoys? Indeed not! He is called upon to proclaim destruction...but in his heart he wishes that prosperity were possible. Jeremiah knows God's message to Israel, so he essentially says: When a prophet proclaims in God's name, a true prophet is known when his prophecy comes to pass. When his prophecies are fulfilled, he is known to be a true prophet, "..that Jehovah has truly sent him" (vs9) This is what Moses had declared to Israel: when it is a false prophet, his prophecy does not come to pass. (De18:22) Essentially, Jeremiah is challenging Hananiah to make his prophecy -specific-.

You see: this is the characteristic of today's false prophets. They squint up their eyes, and proclaim: I'm seeing an "s", a "sam", a "steve", a "stu"? Asking the people in question: Is that right? The word is coming, it's coming, it's just about there, I can almost see it. And even the 'best' prophets only have a 70% 'success' rate. That means, at best, they are 30% wrong; but usually more. They are false prophets.

So Hananiah takes up Jeremiah's challenge. He waxes graphic, taking Jeremiah's yoke (that he is apparently still wearing), breaks it, and proclaims "within two years" Nebuchadnezzar will be defeated.

Now, Jeremiah knows the guy is a false prophet. But notice, "And the prophet Jeremiah went his way". (vs11) He did not have a "quick response". He let the false prophet have the "last word"... for the moment.

Why? Because God had not yet given him a response.

There's many people who assume that, when we are exhorted to "always be ready to give a defense" (1Pe3:15), that that means that our minds are to be attorney-like, able to "think-on-our-feet", always ready for a "quick-comeback". And if a person is not as wittily gifted, that it must indicate a heart that somehow is lacking in spiritual preparation. NOT SO! Remember, when Elijah experienced the fire, wind and earthquakes, that God "was not in" them. (1Ki19:11-12) It was only after the boistrous were over, that God spoke to him in the "whisper of a small voice" (vs12b) Hananiah has just been stirring up quite a commotion, breaking things, making loud utterances. Just like today's so-called "worship" and "prophecy" meetings. God was not in all that.

It wasn't until "after" Hananiah's big commotion that God gives Jeremiah a message for Hananiah. (vs12-13) So Jeremiah goes and confronts Hananiah, and says, essentially:

You've broken the yoke of wood, but all the Word of Jehovah (that I've been proclaiming) will come to pass. And Jeremiah is so bold as to proclaim to him: "Jehovah has not sent you, but you make this people to trust in a lie" (vs15)

Ooooh, HOW DARE YOU! How DARE YOU call me a non-christian! I'm a born-again spirit-filled christian, just like you are! So there! Hmph! You don't know me, and you presume to call me a "non-christian"? You are calling me a false prophet? God is gonna "get you" for that!

Sound familiar?

Notice God's word: "You shall die this year, because you have taught rebellion against Jehovah" (vs16b)

Jeremiah is prophesying Judah's exile to Babylon. Did it happen? The O.T. and history proves it. Hananiah was proclaiming peace and prosperity. Did it happen? No.

Furthermore: "So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month" (vs17)

So, who was the -real- prophet of God? And what sort of rebuke did the false prophet receive?

If you are a True Believer in Jesus Christ, whom God has called to proclaim on His behalf, even though it may seem to take 'time' for God's word to come about, do not lose heart. If you don't always have a witty reply, and you are taunted for not having an immediate comeback, but your 'answers' to people's questions don't come until later that night,

once you've slipped under the covers of your bed, do not be dismayed. That's how God often works.

On the other hand, to you who are false prophets: Take heed to your ways! God today still works to accomplish His will. He still takes people in premature death for their rebellion. Some people you wonder about, why they should have 'died' at such a young age? Consider that it might not have been merely a 'passive' death, but that God -purposely-'took' them.

Recently somebody forwarded to me an "open letter", allegedly from the parents of the girl who died this past year from complications from the RU-486 baby-killing drugs. The whole gist of their letter was that their daughter was a 'good' girl, but fell 'victim' to the lack of adequate government regulations regarding baby-killing drugs, that it was somehow the man's fault for having "unprotected sex" with her (since he was not accused of 'rape', I was thinking: Doesn't it "take two to tango"??), that the pregnancy was "unplanned", that everything around her conspired against her. Also whining that not everybody was able to get there in time to let her know that they "loved her" before she died. There was nothing in it all to place blame upon the girl for being promiscuous. She died a "victim"..?? It wasn't her fault?

No! She had been an immoral woman, and was covering up her sin. She was in the process of 'killing' her baby; and in her case, God saw to her sin returning itself back upon herself. Godly Justice! "..the murderer shall be executed to death" (Nu35:16) More specifically regarding the pregnant woman and her child, "..if there is harm, then you shall requite soul for soul." (Ex21:22-23)

Notice the correct wording of this verse: "For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many have been PUT TO DEATH." (1Co11:30) Jesus warned one of the ones He healed: "Behold, you have been made well. Sin no more, that a worse thing not come upon you." (Jn5:14)

the Prophet: false prophet retaliates (Jeremiah 29)

"Now therefore why have you not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, who prophesies to you? For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long. Build houses and live in them, and plant gardens and eat their fruit." (vs27-28)

Shemaiah was a false prophet in exile in Babylon. Jeremiah, as we will learn towards the end of this series, was left in the land "wherever it seems agreeable" to him, by Nebuzaradan. (40:1-4) Even though Jeremiah is not in exile, nevertheless he is sending messages to the exiles via letters. (vs1) Through his prophecies, Israel is informed that their Babylonian exile will be a 70-year period; to give the land its Sabbaths. (2Ch36:21, Jer25:11) If you think about the typical life-expectancy of a person, those who went into exile for the most part will have died off, and a completely new generation (or two) will have been born, and grown into adulthood. If these people in captivity were to continue in depression over their captivity, not being married, and not having children; would not the nation die into extinction.

So, while Jeremiah had been proclaiming doom and gloom prior to the captivity; now that his prophecies have been fulfilled, and they are -in- exile, he exhorts them to "live" in the land of their captivity. Be productive, get married and have children, and prosper. (vs5-6)

He also exhorts them to "seek the peace" of the places where they live. Seek the peace of their enemies? Indeed. Why? If the place they are living has peace, they, too, will experience that peace. (vs7) Only makes sense, right? They might not be in their own land, but at least they are alive and prospering.

Remember how Hananiah was predicting that the exiles and temple utensils would return within "two years"? (28:11) And then he died for being a false prophet? (28:17) Well, Jeremiah exhorts the exiles that God -will-, indeed, restore the nation to their land; BUT, that it would not be until 70 years had been fulfilled. (vs10)

The false prophets were prophesying "good" to the exiles. Well, indeed, God -did- have good plans for them (vs11); in due course. But they first needed to be 'punished' for their unfaithfulness. The false prophets were preaching a "positive" message, exhorting the people to "think positive" thoughts...not 'reality'. Just like today's false prophets who encourage everybody, telling them all what "wonderful people" they are. Just like in the previous lesson, the girl who died for her promiscuity and murder; being proclaimed a 'good' girl with "brilliant blue eyes, engaging smile, laughter, unwavering determination and sheer gentle beauty" (based on what she did, it sounds more like a word-spin on a flirtatious, sensuous, headstrong person, not submitted to parental

authority). Calling "good evil, and evil good", Isaiah pronounces "woe" upon them. (Is5:20)

Regarding the false prophets Jeremiah proclaims: Don't listen to them, don't let them deceive you. "For they prophesy falsely to in My name; I have not sent them, says Jehovah" (vs9) And furthermore, he proclaims calamity upon the leaders who are listening to the false prophets, and following in their way.

And so, the false prophet sees God's Word being fulfilled through Jeremiah, but it disagrees with what he is proclaiming, so he wishes upon Jeremiah just as the leaders of Jesus' day did. They saw all the signs Jesus performed, and even saw Lazarus raised from the dead. So what do they plot? They "...took counsel to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and continued to believe into Jesus." (Jn12:10-11)

Why aren't you "reproving" Jeremiah? (it doesn't matter that he is a true prophet) He's not saying what we want to hear. They are "despising the chastening of the Almighty" (Job5:17) "For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and whips every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not discipline? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons." (Heb12:6-8)

Thus says Jehovah, "Israel is My son, My firstborn" (Ex4:22) That's why God punished Israel, but also did not annihilate them; but promised to return them to the land of promise, after 70 years.

"...Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." (31:3) "Through Jehovah's kindness we are not consumed, because His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness." (La3:22-23)

Since Shemaiah rebelled against God's discipline, and proclaimed against God's messenger in the midst of the discipline, "thus says Jehovah, Behold, I will punish Shemaiah...because he has taught rebellion against Jehovah" (vs32)

Now, some might view Jeremiah's words against Shemaiah as 'personal' retaliation for trying to rally people against himself. But remember, Jeremiah is merely the 'messenger'. It was God who had killed Hananiah. And it was God who punished Shemaiah for his rebellion. Can the prophet help it if he happens to be the one 'on location' at the time, to convey God's message? That's his job: "I ordained you a prophet to the nations...whatever I command you, you shall speak." (1:5,7) Jeremiah is merely being obedient.

the Prophet: buy land (Jeremiah 32-33)

"And Jeremiah the prophet was shut in the court of the guard, which was in the house of the king of Judah. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Why do you prophesy and say, Thus says Jehovah, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it..." (32:2-3)

Then God says to Jeremiah, "Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle shall come to you, saying, Buy for yourself my field in Anathoth; for the right of redemption is yours, to buy it." (vs7)

And Jeremiah prays, "...You have caused all this evil to come upon them. And You have said to me, O Lord Jehovah, Buy the field for money, and take witnesses; yet the city has been given into the hands of the Chaldeans. Then the Word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I

am Jehovah the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me? Therefore thus says Jehovah: Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it..." (vs24-28)

Before you continue reading this lesson, I strongly urge you to get out your Bible/s and read the entirety of these two chapters, because otherwise, to try to recount the whole scenario would require posting the two chapters here.

So now, let us observe: Remember in the past they have struck Jeremiah, and wanted to kill him for being politically incorrect. Well, in this passage the king has imprisoned Jeremiah. Why? For proclaiming hate speech, that the enemy is going to capture this city, its people will be taken captive to Babylon. The king will not be exempt: he will be taken captive, too.

Such talk sounds like the rantings of the terrorists, against whom we have our 'homeland security' measures in place. Osama Bin Laden proclaims "death to America"; if only we could find and capture him, he would be in custody. Well, Jeremiah was not hiding out in caves, nor sending video tapes with his messages; he was speaking out boldly. So, naturally, he was taken into custody.

Now things are looking rather desperately hopeless for everybody. Jerusalem is under siege, Jeremiah is in prison. It's not appearing like anybody is going to make it out alive. And then God does an incredible thing: Jeremiah, your relative is going to come, asking you to buy his property.

Whaaaaat?! We're all about to be annihilated, and You want me to buy

land? From this prison cell, what am I going to do with land? I'm just a heart-beat away from execution for (perceived) "treason".

Well, the relative shows up, just as God said; they conduct business and write up and sign the deed; and Jeremiah instructs that the deed be sealed in a vessel for safe-keeping. Why? The promise: "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be acquired again in this land." (vs15)

So, let's look at Jeremiah's heart, thoughts and emotions through this episode: When the relative shows up, as God had said, Jeremiah understands, "Then I knew that this was the Word of Jehovah." (vs8b) Assurance in his heart regarding God's Word.

Jeremiah even waxes bold to pray to God about God's "great power and outstretched arm" and proclaims, "Nothing is too difficult for You" (vs17) The passage doesn't say, but, is Jeremiah praying in the presence of this relative, Baruch and the various witnesses? He has done this transaction in the presence of these people, and prophesied that, even though things look grim now, God promises that in the future there will once again be a thriving economy.

But now Jeremiah is coming down off the 'high' of the occasion, as he prays, he is again looking around him. He remembers back to God's great deliverance of Israel from Egypt (vs21); but 'now' the siegeworks have been built up and Jerusalem is imminently about to be toppled. Jeremiah has been prophesying at God's mouth that destruction is coming; and as they look and listen, they see and hear it happening... God "...what You have spoken has happened; and behold, there You see it." (vs24) And so now You have told me to buy land? And yet we are about to be defeated! (vs25)

What had Jeremiah prayed earlier? 'God, You are all-powerful, and I 'know' that nothing is too hard for You! I believe. I have faith. I buh'leeeeeve!' But now, upon personal reflection: 'God, this is crazy, what You've told me to do! This makes no sense!' I suspect, the people who had been around as witnesses have now left? And Jeremiah is again 'alone' in the prison. Despair is again taking hold?

You see, folks... Jeremiah was flesh-and-blood, just like we are. But remember earlier how God had chided Jeremiah? "If you have run with footmen, and they wore you out, then how can you compete with horses? And if you feel secure in the land of peace, then how will you do in the swelling of the Jordan?" (12:5)

Isn't this what we do so often? Yes, folks, I include PB here, too. How often have I seen God work in my life, and in the circumstances regarding which He has called me to live or minister. And yet, in human frailty as "dust" (Ps103:14), as time or isolation takes its toll on the emotions, and we are in that 'lull' period, and things begin looking

tenuous and doubtful, 'fear' rears up its ugly head. We are so tied into these corrupted temples of "flesh and blood" (1Co15:50), and these 'physical' eyes do not see God's "chariots of fire" (2Ki6:17) surrounding us, protecting and sustaining us, keeping guard against the enemy.

So, what is the solution? Go find some "fellowship" of other beings of flesh-and-blood to bolster us, tell us how wonderful we are, pat us on the back saying "there-there", and the pastor gives a -dynamic- message that sends us home 'feeling' all pumped up, with batteries charged up? Do we find Scriptures to remind us how much God "luuuuuvs" us. Do we become reminded how much Jesus is our "friend" who "walks with us"?

What does God do to Jeremiah? He reminds him, Didn't you just pray: "Nothing is too difficult for [Me]"? (vs17) Well...?? How about it? Do you really believe that? "Is there anything too hard for Me?" (vs27) Where's that 'faith' you claimed to have whilst amongst the "fellowship" where you were bragging how much God means to you? Or are you like the one "...who doubts [who] is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. [?] For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (Jac1:6-8)

But notice that Jeremiah does not continue in his despair. He continues to prophesy for God. But, just like us, he needed a reminder. A gentle nudge. A "comfort" even in the midst of "my enemies". (Ps23:4-5)

Jeremiah has been faithfully proclaiming, not diminishing a word. (26:2) And God's Word is 'now' being fulfilled as the siegeworks are going up. Even though Jeremiah's word from God has been proven true, he is still in confinement. (I suppose, somehow in the king's mind, it was Jeremiah's "fault" in prophesying it, that it is happening?) Never mind that; next, Jeremiah in faithful obedience buys the land, even though there is no visible suggestion that he will actually get to go possess it; being in confinement as he is. But there, too, God's Word is proven true.

Thus, the rest of God's Word is also true...

Israel (Judah) may be going into exile, but God promises to bring them back. They are going into exile because they worshiped the baals; and regarding God "...they have turned the back to Me, and not the face" (vs33)

But God promises to give them a new heart: "Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands where I have driven them in My anger...back to this place. (vs37) Jesus reiterates this prophecy, "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

(Mt24:31) And He promises, "And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever...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....And fields shall be bought in this land of which you say, It is desolate, without man or beast; it has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and write it in a document, and seal it, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places around 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 captives to return, says Jehovah." (~vs39-44)

You see, again, the prophet has become an object lesson to the people. God promised to send a relative, asking Jeremiah to buy his land; and it happened, even in impossible-seeming times.

Thus, also: God promised to bring Israel back to her land, even after such thorough exile and expatriation. And does not this past century prove God's Word. Is that not precisely what has been happening for Israel. They are, again, a 'nation' in their heritage land. They are presently yet in unbelief. But that, too, will be fulfilled...

If you read chapter 33, God promises: "Behold, the days are coming, says Jehovah, that I will establish the good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, I will cause the Branch of Righteousness to grow up to David; and He shall execute justice and righteousness in the land." (vs14-15)

The expression "In those days, and at that time" signifying the "latter days" (Jer23:20, Dan10:14, Hos3:5, Mic4:1, etc)

God will ultimately give Israel a "new heart" (Ezk36:26) such that He says, "...they shall not depart from Me" (32:40)

All illustrated by Jeremiah, in prison, even though in emotional turmoil, but in faithful obedience to God, buying property and preserving the legal documents of the transaction.

the Prophet: written Word (Jeremiah 36)

"Take for yourself a scroll of a book, and write in it all the Words that I have spoken to you against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I plan to do to them, that they may turn, each man, from his evil way, so that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." (vs2-3)

Where did our Bible come from? Paul says that "all Scripture is breathed by God.." (2Ti3:16) Peter summarizes, "knowing this first, that not any of the prophecies of Scripture came into being from personal exposition, for prophecy was not formerly brought forth by man's choice, but holy men of God spoke as they were propelled along by the Holy Spirit." (2Pet1:20-21)

As Jeremiah sets out to dictate, and for Baruch to write, was this a collaborative effort? Did Jeremiah and Baruch get together and map out a strategy and topics, and raise funds for publishing and promotional costs? Wouldn't it be a "great idea" if we were to publish all these things, and get it on the "best seller" list?

Notice: "..this Word came unto Jeremiah from Jehovah.." (vs1b) What Jeremiah dictated was FROM GOD. It was God's Word. The rulers wanted to know "how" the scroll had come to be. (vs17) So Baruch explains; and they understand that it was God's Word, through the mouth of Jeremiah, God's prophet.

So, what sort of circulation did it receive? Since Jeremiah is in confinement, he tells Baruch to read the scroll to those at the temple. First, to the temple rulers; like today, the pastors and teachers. (vs10) Then he reads to the civic rulers. (vs12) Then, it is read to the king. (vs21) What sort of reception did it gain? The king cut the pages out, page-by-page, after they had been read, and tossed them into the fire. The king rejected God's Word. Neither did the king following him "give heed to the Words of Jehovah which He spoke by the hand of the prophet Jeremiah". (37:2)

This Word that has been written is "hate speech". It is God's Word of judgment against idolatry, beginning with God's minister's, and going all the way up the chain to the king. It is politically incorrect, and treasonous. And so, it was destroyed.

In addition, the king wanted to arrest Jeremiah. (vs26) Apparently we aren't told the whole story, because the chapter begins with Jeremiah in custody, but as the scroll is about to be read to the king, he and Baruch are told to "hide" (vs19); so apparently he is 'free' at this point? But notice, as the king seeks them, it says that "Jehovah hid

them". (vs26)

And then, Jeremiah dictates a replacement book.

Just some observations here. Not to seem like another 'promotion' for the VW-edition, this is not; but some things from this passage can be observed regarding this English translation of God's Word.

Some of the greatest criticism for its existence, even as it was in the 'beginning' stages, before anybody had seen what it was going to be (judging before they knew), was from the religiously scholarly types. Like Jeremiah had his scroll read to the temple rulers first. Now that it is finished, I've not heard any specific complaints from those same people, but at one place somebody listed it on their web-page, it was listed in a category under "questionable scholarship". Same characterizations the early disciples were labelled with as, "uneducated and untrained" (Ac4:13) So, it's in good company!

There are the occasional queries as to getting it printed (published). But just as Jeremiah 'hid', and then it says God hid him from the government...so, too, the VW-edition is not copyrighted, nor assigned a government's Library of Congress 'number'. Copyrights are to "protect" a work, but when it was the -king- who was burning the scroll, what sort of 'protection' is that? Such registrations merely serve as invitation to the government to destroy it (when that time comes).

Jeremiah's scroll was not read by the masses. It did not have wide circulation to the population at-large. But was read to a select few, who rejected it, and continued to rebel against God. Similarly, the VW-edition, I expect, will never have a wide circulation. Most of the software outfits for whom it has been formatted seem to be refusing to list it with their other offerings (which include The Message and other works of blasphemy). As of this writing, only Online Bible lists it. And other places of questionable character, and perverse doctrines, have been making changes to it, and then listing it at their websites. (Some of those same places have perverted OLB's materials, too)

And yet, God's Word is being available more widely than a person might have thought. When doing a Google search of VW's URL domain recently to see what sorts of places might be linking to it, I was amazed at the -greater- percentage of websites that link to the VW-edition, than link to other VW articles. It will never make the "best seller" list, but it is being found... some of them being of the most 'unlikely' sort of websites.

Just as Jeremiah hid himself, but when the time came that he needed to specifically be kept safe, -God- hid him; so, too, we take diligent precautions with God's Word (even posting warnings against modifying it)... but ultimately it is God who guards and circulates His Own Word.

the Prophet: arrested (Jeremiah 37)

"...Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to claim his property there in the midst of the people. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a commander of the guard named Irijah was there, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah. And he seized Jeremiah the prophet, saying, You are defecting to the Chaldeans. Then Jeremiah said, False! I am not defecting to the Chaldeans. But he did not listen to him; so Irijah arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the rulers."
(vs12-14)

Remember a couple lessons ago: Jeremiah buys some land from a relative. (ch32) Now, finally, he has a chance to go claim it; so that's what he does. But Irijah spies him.

Who is Irijah? The grandson of Hananiah. Remember who Hananiah was? The false prophet who died at Jeremiah's prophecy. (ch28)

DEFECTOR! DEFECTOR! You're defecting to the enemy! Jeremiah is taken into custody. (vs14-15)

False accusation. Since Jeremiah is known to be God's prophet, Irijah cannot dare to arrest Jeremiah for his -real- reason: "revenge" for the death of his grandfather, because then he would appear to be fighting against God; because his grandfather had been a false prophet. But Jeremiah is arrested for his 'hate speech', for being politically incorrect. If he can be accused of collusion with the enemy, then there is -apparent- 'just cause' to make the arrest.

Dear Believer: As time progresses, depending on the details of the coming sequence of events, if some of us find ourselves taken into custody prior to the Rapture, for being Christians; BE SURE OF THIS, that the charges will be trumped up. They will not dare to make the true accusation: You are being arrested for being a Christian; because, after all, our president is a "christian", and this is a "christian" nation. No! It will fall under the jurisdiction of "homeland security" with the accusations of: terrorist incitement and plots, hate speech, treason. (Or other things of that nature)

But Jeremiah finds things to be like I did when I was younger. The king gets him out of the dungeon and asks, "...is there any Word from Jehovah?" (vs17) There is. And Jeremiah gives the same message he has been giving, when God exhorted him to "not diminish a word". (26:2) They imprisoned him for speaking God's message; but they still want God's Word from his mouth.

This personal experience from years ago I've shared with individuals; but don't think I have done so 'publicly' to the rest of you-all. If I

have, you older subscribers please bear with us, for the sake of newer subscribers who haven't heard it:

During my college days, before I began that 'slide' of speaking more "pleasant things" (1Ki22:13) that lasted for some 20 years, when I was still 'bold' in God's Word, I happened to be attending this particular Baptist church that had a college/career group. Periodically they would ask me to teach the Bible study. But invariably, when I would teach God's Word (I did then, sorta like I do now), the others in the group (my peers) would raise their voices in protest, openly, during the study, refuting what I was saying. Essentially, I was proclaiming God's holiness, and holy "lifestyle", which was 180 degrees contrary to the prevailing winds of hippy "do your own thing, man" mentality of that time. And they had their 'reasons' why it was OK for people calling themselves "Christian" to go ahead and live like the world. So, I would proclaim God's Word, and they would resentfully argue against it. I was sooo "judgmental", you see! But you know... For all their arguments, nevertheless, they would continue to ask me to teach lessons again; I would proclaim holiness; they would argue. This cycle repeated.

One might wonder: If they objected to God's Word so much, 'why' did they continue to ask me to teach? Wouldn't it have been interesting to know what was -really- IN-THEIR-HEARTS...! What would one suspect that, for all their verbal complaints, in their hearts, they wanted to know what God's Word says.

And thus it apparently was with Zedekiah the king regarding Jeremiah.

So, Jeremiah is kept in prison; but Jeremiah pleads his own case with the king, isn't sent back to the dungeon, and it is commanded that Jeremiah be 'fed' daily. (vs21)

So again, dear Believer: Just because people tell you to stop proclaiming God's Word, doesn't necessarily mean that, in their heart-of-hearts, they don't want to know. God exhorts us to "not diminish a word" (26:2), and He takes His Word to fulfill His purposes (Is55:11) through the agency of their "conscience" and His "law written in their hearts" (Rom2:15)

So, remain true to God's call upon your life. Don't do as I did, being persuaded to speak more "softly" for 20 years, until the Lord turned my life upside down to regain my attention. The prime of my life was, thus, wasted. And what of those I should have reached, but didn't?

In captivity Jeremiah is asked God's Word. To the one with political clout to execute him, or keep him alive, he remains vigilant in the message: God is 'judging' the king and his kingdom. Zedekiah could easily have had Jeremiah killed on-the-spot for those words. But Jeremiah remained faithful. He did "not diminish a word".

"You shall speak My Words to them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious." (Ezk2:7) Amen!

the Prophet: in the pit (Jeremiah 38)

"Thus says Jehovah, He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. But he who goes out to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life as a prize, and shall live. Thus says Jehovah: This city shall be given and bestowed into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and he shall seize it. Therefore the rulers said to the king, Please let this man be put to death. For in this way he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man does not seek the welfare of this people, but their harm." (vs2-4)

Here we go again... Jeremiah is speaking 'treason'. Psychologically his words are not beneficial to our fighting forces; men cannot win if they go to battle with a defeatist attitude. He is so negative. Surrender is not an option. Let's execute him.

Well, they take the 'chicken' way out. They don't stone him, or kill him outright with a sword; they put him into a pit, so they don't have to face him as he dies a slow, agonizing death of starvation and thirst. Is this the point where Jeremiah cries out to God what is written in Lamentations? "My enemies...have cut off my life in the pit, and cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over my head; then I said, I am cut off. I called on Your name, O Jehovah, out of the lowest pit." (Lam3:53-55)

He has sunk down in the mud of this pit, stuck, so he can't move. But apparently at times the waters also rise up over his head. How many times did he nearly drown while in that pit? All this going on in the darkness, because they have covered the top with a stone. What a horrendous way to go! And yet, he calls upon God.

So, 'how' is Jeremiah rescued? By the people called after God's name? By fellow-believers? No. By a foreigner. Ebed-melech the Ethiopian. (vs8) Those claiming to be God's people have rejected God's servant. Thus, just as God's -heathen- "servant" (27:6) Nebuchadnezzar was about to take Judah captive; so, too, God had a special servant in the Ethiopian, to rescue Jeremiah.

Who is our neighbor? Upon whom can we rely when we are in need? "..better is a neighbor that is near than a brother afar off." (Pr27:10)

Jesus told the story about the man who had fallen victim to robbers, and the priest and Levite rode by, looked at him wallowing in his blood, sniffed their noses in the air, and passed on; wouldn't lift a pinky to help. But it was the (despised) "Samaritan" who stopped, cared for him, and got him recovered. Jesus asked, "So which of these three do you suppose was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" (Lk10:36)

The Samaritan. The Ethiopian. The Stranger.

And as Israel is taken captive, notice God's blessing to Ebed-melech: "But I will deliver you in that day, says Jehovah. And you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid. For I will give you an escape, to deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword, but your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your trust in Me, says Jehovah." (39:17-18)

the Prophet: peace from the heathen (Jeremiah 39-40)

"When a man's ways please Jehovah, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Pr16:7)

For the complete context, please read these two chapters for yourselves. But essentially, Jeremiah has been taken captive, along with the rest of the people. He is in chains. (40:1)

This is what we say from time to time. As the coming times of affliction come against True Believers, we may also experience "chains". We may be rounded up in Elian Gonzalez-style midnight raids. We may be carted off to prison or concentration camps. I've read that the US government has places already prepared for these as-yet 'future' events. If the US government has them, you can be pretty sure that most other countries also have them in preparation.

As far as Jeremiah knew, he was going into captivity along with the rest of the people. Others who were faithful to God had certainly gone into captivity, most notably Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. (Dan1:6) Whatever the rigors Jeremiah had experienced at the hand of his own nation, he was expecting even worse on the trip to Babylon.

And along comes the Babylonian official, sets him free and has a man-to-man conversation with Jeremiah: You prophesied everything as it has happened, because Israel did not obey Jehovah. You see, even in Israel's disobedience, God did not leave Himself without a witness to the heathens who came to fulfill God's verdict. Rabshakeh had come against Hezekiah, taunting: What god is able to stand up to me? (2Ki18) But now, as Babylon has defeated Judah and Jerusalem, there is a knowledge of the Most High. Nebuchadnezzar would come to fully realize in a few years that "the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of men, and that He gives it to whomever He desires." (Dan4:32) As Paul proclaims that "there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are ordained by God" (Rom13:1) It would seem that this captain of the guard has come to an understanding of the Most High, and respects Jeremiah as God's messenger.

Notice the kind of freedom that Jeremiah is given. He is told, "Behold, I have set you free today..." (40:4) with the exhortation: "If it seems agreeable to you..." In other words, while some people have been placed under the leadership of Gedaliah, Jeremiah is free to make up his own mind. There is the offer of going to Babylon and being all set up with living quarters. (vs4) Or going to live with those who are under Gedaliah. (vs5) Or "go wherever it seems right to you to go". The whole land is open before you...whatever you wish...do it.

And Jeremiah is given "rations and a gratuity". (vs5b) Here's food and money to get you started, putting your life back together again, after all the evil that's been done to you.

In many ways, there are a lot of similarities to Paul under Roman bondage. Most Roman prisoners did not usually receive very kind treatment. But Paul, God's servant, whom the Jews wanted to kill, while under -pagan- Roman guardianship, was given freedom to receive visitors (Ac24:23); and when he reached Rome, he was given a rented house to live in. (Ac28:30)

In both cases; Babylon was Israel's enemy, Rome was Israel's enemy; but when God's servant was faithful in proclaiming God's Word, "not diminishing a word", God saw to it that the -enemy- authorities took humane care of His servants, and provided for their welfare.

So, dear Believer: Whatever comes our way, trust in God. First of all, be faithful. "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." (1Cor:2) And learn to -expect- opposition from that entity that claims to belong to God, the so-called "church". And when the churchlings have delivered you up for persecution (remember: Jesus said that they "will think that they offer God service" Jn16:2 in what they are doing...Most all of Paul's persecution came from "Jews who were not persuaded [un-Believers]" Ac17:5); remember how God used pagans throughout history, to keep safe His True Followers.

Babylon Destroyed (Jeremiah 50)

"The Word that Jehovah spoke against Babylon, against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. Declare among the nations, proclaim, and lift up a banner. Proclaim and do not hide it; say, Babylon is captured, Bel is ashamed, Merodach is broken in pieces; her images are withered up, her idols are broken in pieces. For out of the north a nation comes up against her, which shall make her land a waste, and no one shall dwell in it. They shall flee, they shall depart, both man and beast. In those days, and at that time, says Jehovah, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping. They shall go and seek Jehovah their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces headed there, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to Jehovah in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten. My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray; they have turned them away on the mountains. They have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place. All who have found them have devoured them. And their enemies said, We have done no wrong, because they have sinned against Jehovah, the habitation of righteousness, even Jehovah, the hope of their fathers. Flee from the midst of Babylon, and go out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be like the rams before the flocks. For, lo, I am stirring up and bringing up against Babylon a company of great nations from a northern land. And they shall array themselves against her. She shall be captured there. Their arrows shall be as those of a skillful, mighty man; none shall return in vain. And Chaldea shall be a spoils; all who plunder her shall be satisfied, says Jehovah. Because you were glad, because you rejoiced, O destroyers of My inheritance; because you are fat like a heifer in lush grass, and bellow like bulls; your mother shall be deeply ashamed; she who bore you shall be embarrassed. Behold, the last of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land and a desert." (vs1-12)

As we arrive at the end of this book, I think it should be pretty obvious that our travels have not been greatly detailed. In fact, while the lengthy book has been about Israel, their rebellion, God's promise of judgment, but also God's promise of future restoration; we have taken a path of observing "the Prophet" making all these declarations. What it is like being a servant of God. The kinds of reactions the prophet gets from the people to whom he is sent to minister. The treatment he receives from various kinds of people. The emotional ups and downs the 'person' of the prophet experiences, and God's encouragement of the man. And how the prophet, in this case 'Jeremiah', was faithful.

In the case of Jeremiah, even though Nebuzaradan gives Jeremiah his total freedom to live wherever he wishes (40:1-4), if we had looked at those chapters, we would have seen how the remnants, in spite of seeing God's judgment, continue rebelling. And as they rebelliously go down to Egypt; rather than taking his freedom from those who abused him,

Jeremiah goes with them (ch42-44) and continues prophesying God's Word to them. God had sent him to the rebels of Israel...and as long as there were still remnants, and he was yet alive, God's call upon his life had not changed.

And, by the way, we won't spend time on it now; but it was these rebels who went to Egypt, when God had told them to stay in the land (42:10-19), that became the basis for those "apocryphal" books, and those so-called "older manuscripts" upon which today's modern perVersions are based.

But we cannot close this series without addressing one final topic. The whole purpose of studying the "prophet" has been to give us insight as to how our own lives are before God. There are many Scriptural examples of Godly people, of whom Jeremiah is one. As we have studied Jeremiah's heart, his sorrow over Israel's rebellion, of their attacks upon him, and his own personal emotional despairs; the True Believer today sees him/her-self.

Well... there is another matter that applies to today. It is in our opening quoted passage. The judgment of Babylon. Why? Because Babylon was 'harsh' with Israel, excusing their treatment of Israel by saying, "We have done no wrong, because they [Israel] have sinned against Jehovah" (vs7) Israel 'deserved' everything we dished out to them.

If you check the past study series on the "Covenants & Dispensations" <http://www.a-voice.org/library/covenant.htm> you will be reminded how the coming time of "Wrath" judges Babylon: both the world political system, as well as the religious. The 'church' of Babylon conducted the Crusades, fighting what they called the "Christ killers". They seem to forget that Jesus was crucified on a -Roman- cross, and was whipped by Roman soldiers, and nailed with Roman spikes.

But even today, despite the very clear Scripture that God will restore Israel (Jer31:31-34), and that "all Israel will be saved" (Rom11:26); there is the church-of-babylon that claims that "Israel is done for"; that the "church replaced Israel". Replacement theology. The 'church' that our so-called "christian" president belongs to, as a denominational entity, believes and promotes Replacement Theology. Some in his administration have even been heard suggesting that the re-creation of the nation of Israel earlier this past century was a "mistake".

Notice this passage prophesies about "in those days, and at that time" (vs4) Terminology of the end times, of which we (today) are a part. It speaks of the devastation of Babylon. As this is being written, Babylon (Iraq) is not yet devastated. Its economy and infrastructure are being rebuilt. But -who- is the occupying power? Until their new government is established, -who- is running things over there? The military over which

this same (replacement theology) president is commander-in-chief. The same administration that has been pushing a "roadmap" for Israel, envisioning Israel giving away God's land to God's enemies; even though God proclaimed, "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me." (Lev25:23)

Notice the reasons for God's wrath upon Israel's oppressors: "The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together. And all who captured them have held them fast; they have refused to let them go." (50:33)

"And I am exceedingly angry at the nations at ease; for I was but a little angry, and they helped further the evil...whose possessors kill them and are not held guilty. And those who sell them say, Blessed be Jehovah, for I am rich. And their shepherds do not pity them." (Zec1:15,11:5)

God used the nations of the world to punish Israel...but those nations went beyond. Like a parent who should punish their child for disobedience, but takes the task way beyond the call, and abuses the child. When society learns of such parents, the children are rescued from their hands. In the same way, God is rescuing Israel out of the hands of the world.

Dear Reader: Take heed to yourself if you believe that Israel is "done for" because of her past sins. If you are part of that church-of-babylon, whether catholic, methodist, reformed, etc... "Flee from the midst of Babylon, and go out of the land of the Chaldeans.." (50:8) "And I heard another voice from Heaven saying, Come out of her, my people, so that you not share in her sins, and so that you not receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to Heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her." (Rev18:4-6)

If you refuse to leave, that's what you will receive.

At the present moment Israel is yet in unbelief. As this is being written (2/4/04) Israel's prime minister is acting like a traitor to God's people. And those entities that claim to be looking for Messiah, have not yet acknowledged that Messiah already came 2000 years ago, that their predecessors crucified Him, and as they don't yet know Him in their hearts speak of Him as "G-d", "G.d", "G_d", etc... not even willing to call Him by His title and name. Rather than being of repentant hearts, they are proclaiming that the thing that keeps Messiah from coming is their lack of building the temple.

However: "in those days, and at that time, says Jehovah" (a time that is

imminently now upon the world) "...the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping. They shall go and seek Jehovah their God" (50:4)

Notice it says both "children of Israel" -and- "children of Judah". No, the 10-tribes are not "lost". Scripture tells us precisely 'where' they went. 2Ki15:29, 2Ki18:11, 1Ch5:26 And Scripture tells us plainly that the northern tribes and Judah will again be joined together as one.

"Moreover, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions. Then take another stick and write on it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and all the house of Israel, his companions. Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand. And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, Will you not show us what you mean by these? say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand. And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. And say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, there where they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again." (Ezk37:16-22)

No, Israel is -not- "done for". If you think the church as "replaced" Israel, just keep your eyes open to the news, and watch God at work. And if you have refused to "come out of" Babylon, be anticipating God's judgment upon you.

As for Israel, whom you have despised?

God says through His prophet Jeremiah, "And I will bring Israel back to his home, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied on Mount Ephraim and Gilead. IN THOSE DAYS, AND AT THAT TIME, says Jehovah, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and it shall not be found; and the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; for I will pardon those whom I spare." (50:19-20)

Amen!

Addendum:

Why? Why? © 1998

As I was queuing this week-end's mailing, I realized that both the Morsel and Matthew studies were shorter than normal. Perhaps I should leave well enough alone, to balance out some weeks where there's quite a bit of stuff, since it's summer. But then I remembered that something stood out to me in my reading this past week in Jeremiah, which I had forgotten about, with all the writing ahead in Matthew that was going on this past week. So, if you will indulge me a bit, while I "talk" with you a bit informally, here.

In chapter 12 Jeremiah communes with God about much the same things that many of us do in these days of apostasy. "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? Lord, you have allowed them to thrive; they claim to have fellowship with You with their mouths, but their minds are far from You. Why? Why? Why?"

Furthermore, I've been faithful. Lord, why don't You just take them and wipe them off the face of the planet? How long must nature "suffer" under the cruelties? There's cruelty to animals. The earth is polluted. They just don't seem to care. There's murder, rape, shootings and killings every day, it seems, in my town. They don't seem to know that You see them. (a "rough" paraphrase of vs. 1-4)

And so God responds, "Oh, quite right you are, Jeremiah. Things are really rough, aren't they. I guess, perhaps I should start bringing to a close some of My plans for all this. Thanks for reminding Me."

Uh, no! Not hardly! It's more like, "Hey, dude! Chin up! If you can't handle the "little" stuff like it is now, what are you going to do when it REALLY starts getting bad?" (vs5)

Ok, now! Be on the alert. Your family is after you. They think you've gone off the deep end with all this preaching of gloom and doom, and need institutionalizing. So, they're going to try to lure you back home. They're going to pretend to be all "lovey dovey." But don't trust them. (vs6) Remember how [I] called you to be My prophet.(Jer1:5-10) By the way, this is what Jesus' "family" tried with Him. Check out Mark 3:21,31-35.

Now, we might individually take this verse to heart for various reasons. For you who know a bit about my life and unequal yoke who left, before she did the divorce "thing" I still "trusted" the in-laws a bit too much. ('always been more trusting of people than I should be) The Lord brought this verse to my attention at that time. And in the end, it turned out to be good wisdom.

In a spiritual sense, as many of us have come out of the organized "church" there might be periods of time of wanting to trust those old associations. They call themselves our "brothers" and "sisters." They try to claim that you are still "part of" them. And if you say to them that you are NOT their "brother" they will "lovingly" say that, well, they will still keep calling you THEIR "brother." (So "big" of them!) And yes, from the pastor and leadership-on down, they will pull all sorts of shenanigans as they "speak smooth words to you." But God exhorts..."do NOT believe them."(vs6)

After many years of being associated with the "organization" it feels somehow "wrong" to make that distance with them, doesn't it. To sever ties. But remember how God called you out with Rev 18:4 "Come out of her, my people.." Well, here God says, "I have forsaken My house, I have left my heritage..."(vs7) While there is bewilderment with many questions "why? why? why?" ...we cannot very well remain in something that God has distanced Himself from, now, can we..!

What is the condition of it? "Many rulers [shepherds or pastors] have destroyed My vineyard, they have trodden My portion underfoot; They have made My pleasant portion a desolate wilderness."(vs10)

The "organization" is ruined. It is utterly laid waste and destroyed. And who did it? The pastors! Remember, they are "wolves in sheep's clothing." (Acts 20:29-30, Mt7:15) What have they been producing all this time? Little "lambs?" No! Wolf pups.

But be assured...God will have His say. "The sword of the Lord shall devour.."(vs12) As He "pluck[s]" them out.(vs14)

However until the very end, with God, there is ALWAYS the "Mercy Option." He always gives the option for the rebellious one to repent. "If they will diligently learn the ways of My people to swear by My name 'As the LORD lives' then they shall be established..."(vs16) But if they refuse...their judgement will be full and complete.(vs17)

While I realize this mailing list includes a "mixed multitude"(Ex12:38, Num11:4), I am addressing, specifically, you who are True Believers in Jesus Christ with Paul's words...

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."(1Cor16:13,15:58)

Amen!