

# The Prophets

Lesson #28

Jeremiah 16:1-23:40

## Outline

### I. ***Prophecies From The Reign Of Josiah (1:1-20:18)***

- A. Signs to awaken repentance (11:1-20:18).
  - 1. Burden and blessing (16:1-21).
    - a) The loneliness of Jeremiah (16:1-9).
    - b) The cause of the judgment (16:10-13).
    - c) Restoration to the land (16:14-15).
    - d) Complete retribution (16:16-18).
    - e) The nations turn to God (16:19-20).
    - f) The goal of the punishment (16:21).
  - 2. The deceitful heart of humankind (17:1-27).
    - a) Israel's abiding sin (17:1-4).
    - b) The way of cursing and blessing (17:5-8).
    - c) Humanity's desperate heart condition (17:9-13).
    - d) Jeremiah's plea for vindication (17:14-18).
    - e) Sabbath observance (17:19-27).
  - 3. The parable of the potter (18:1-23).
    - a) The message of the potter (18:1-12).
    - b) The fickleness of Judah (18:13-17).
    - c) The plot against Jeremiah (18:18-23).
  - 4. The destruction of Jerusalem (19:1-15).
    - a) The clay jar at Hinnom (19:1-5a).
    - b) The imminent calamity (19:5b-9).
    - c) The destruction of Judah (19:10-13).
    - d) The message summarized (19:14-15).
  - 5. The lament of Jeremiah (20:1-18).
    - a) Pashur's persecution of Jeremiah (20:1-6).
    - b) Jeremiah's inescapable call (20:7-10).
    - c) Prayer for God's vindication (20:11-13).
    - d) Jeremiah's curse on the day of his birth (20:14-18).

### II. ***Prophecies From The Reigns Of Jehoiakim And Zedekiah (21:1-39:18)***

- A. The trials and conflicts of Jeremiah (21:1-29:32).
  - 1. Zedekiah's dilemma (21:1-14).
    - a) The embassy from Zedekiah (21:1-7).
    - b) The choice of ways (21:8-10).
    - c) Exhortation to the dynasty of (21:11-14).

2. Messages to the kings of David (22:1-30).
  - a) Exhortation to justice (22:1-9).
  - b) The fate of Shallum (Jehoahaz) (22:10-12).
  - c) The condemnation of Jehoiakim (22:13-23).
  - d) The rejection of Coniah (Jehoiachin) (22:24-30).
3. Messiah the King (23:1-40).
  - a) Godless leaders versus David's Righteous Branch (23:1-8).
  - b) Condemnation of the false prophets (23:9-12).
  - c) False prophecy in Samaria and Jerusalem (23:13-15).
  - d) Characteristics of lying prophecy (23:16-22).
  - e) Lying prophets versus true prophets (23:23-32).
  - f) The burden of the Lord (23:33-40).

## **Notes**

### ***Jeremiah 1:1-20:18***

- Signs to awaken repentance (11:1-20:18).
    - Burden and blessing (16:1-21).
      - The loneliness of Jeremiah (16:1-9).
        - Jeremiah is not to marry or father children as a sign to his audience that there is no hope for any families who remain in Judah.
        - The Lord will withdraw His love and pity so completely from His people that even their ability to grieve deserts them.
    - The cause of the judgment (16:10-13).
      - The answer to the Israelite's mock innocence is the same answer that has been used to justify divine punishment in many preceding generations (cf. Deuteronomy 29:25-28; Joshua 24:16, 19-20; 1 Kings 9:9).
      - However, what makes them worse than the preceding generations is the "imagination of his evil heart" of the current generation.
  - Restoration to the land (16:14-15).
    - The harsh words of judgment give way to a momentary promise of restoration.
    - The Lord draws a parallel between their subsequent return from Babylon and the exodus from Egypt.
- Complete retribution (16:16-18).
  - The Lord will send those who will use "every trick in the book" to find and capture their prey.
  - Once they capture them, there is a harsh punishment which will be reversed when the people return from exile (cf. Isaiah 40:2).

- The nations turn to God (16:19-20).
  - The reference to idols in vs. 18 opens the door to some of the most picturesque denunciations of idolatry in the book.
  - The resulting picture shows Gentiles, who now acknowledge the emptiness of their own religious beliefs, trying to persuade the people of the one, true God to let go of the practice of idolatry which the Gentiles created and then abandoned.
- The goal of the punishment (16:21).
  - The language of this verse comes from the exodus, when the Lord demonstrated His power to save His people from captivity.
  - The Lord is displaying the same "hand and might" for the same purpose: to glorify His name (cf. Hebrews 13:8).
- The deceitful heart of humankind (17:1-27).
  - Israel's abiding sin (17:1-4).
    - The "table of the heart" suggests a contrast to clay tablets, which could be worked with a wooden stylus, and could be erased before the clay hardened.
    - The "name" of the Lord is a name of power, power that exhibits the Lord's mercy and love, but also His righteous anger.
  - The way of cursing and blessing (17:5-8).
    - The contrast is between one who trusts in human power and ability and one who trusts in divine power and ability.
    - The people could not have missed the irony when they chose to worship other gods "under every green tree" (3:6).
    - This also reminds us of the fact that people face the same challenges in their lives with far different results.
  - Humanity's desperate heart condition (17:9-13).
    - This is why people are wasting their time when they trust in humans; one human cannot fathom the heart of another. The Lord, on the other hand, cannot be deceived. He can search and understand the heart.
    - The Lord judges the heart to determine the true motivation for one's words and actions.
    - The listeners are to remember who is the true resident of the sanctuary in Jerusalem, which now bears the names of false gods on the horns of the altar.
  - Jeremiah's plea for vindication (17:14-18).
    - The fulfillment of the "word of the Lord" is the only way that Jeremiah can prove that he is a true prophet.
    - Jeremiah is leaving his fate in the Lord's hands, and he is leaving the fate of his enemies in the Lord's hands, instead of taking it into his own.

- Sabbath observance (17:19-27).
  - Although they have not listened (cf. 7:24, 26; 11:8; 25:4; 34:14; 35:15; 44:5), there is still the possibility for repentance, which suggests a date before the reign of Zedekiah.
  - If they will obey the Lord, the royal court will prosper, and the people from all over the country will bring sacrifices to Jerusalem.
- The parable of the potter (18:1-23).
  - The message of the potter (18:1-12).
    - The people believe the covenant guarantees divine protection (cf. 7:1-15). Jeremiah contends the covenant also demands faithfulness to the ways of the Lord on their part (cf. Amos 3:2).
    - The people say that they have decided not to listen to Jeremiah's warnings, but will continue to worship idols instead (cf. 2:25).
  - The fickleness of Judah (18:13-17).
    - One would think that Judah's love for the Lord would be just as constant as snow on high mountains.
    - The Lord deserves the worship of His people, yet they do not do so; they "forget" and worship idols instead.
  - The plot against Jeremiah (18:18-23).
    - The plans of the people to worship idols in vs. 12 now give way to plans they are making against the life of Jeremiah. He realized the depth of the resentment and hatred toward him.
    - Jeremiah calls on the Lord to take notice of their plots against him. Their plans had been concealed, but the Lord knew every secret plot against him. The destruction of Jerusalem will mean personal vindication for Jeremiah as a prophet (37:18-20; cf. 1 Kings 22:28).
- The destruction of Jerusalem (19:1-15).
  - The clay jar at Hinnom (19:1-5a).
    - The gate leading to the valley of Hinnom was known as the Potsherd Gate (elsewhere called the Dung Gate), as broken pieces of pottery would be a normal part of a city's garbage.
    - He uses the plural "kings" because the message is not only to the reigning king but to the whole dynasty that was responsible for the apostasy.
    - The place of the calamity is Jerusalem; the disaster will be such that all who hear of it will be stunned. The Lord describes five ways in vss. 4-5 in which the people are guilty of idolatry.

- The imminent calamity (19:5b-9).
  - The symbol of the frustration of the people's "counsel" will also serve as a symbol of the "counsel" the Lord has for them.
  - For these terrible violations of His law, the Lord would bring down such drastic destruction that the place called "Tophet," or the "valley of the son of Hinnom," would have its name changed to the "valley of slaughter."
  - The reference to cannibalism is the first one in Jeremiah (cf. Leviticus 26:27-29; Deuteronomy 28:53-57; 2 Kings 6:26-31), suggesting the elevated severity of their present situation.
- The destruction of Judah (19:10-13).
  - Just as one might "break" a clay jar, so the Lord will "break" Jerusalem. They knew of no way to mend a broken jar, which could only be thrown away. So Judah would be rejected because she failed to repent.
  - In Judah's downfall, the dead would be so numerous that even unclean Tophet would have to be used for their burial (cf. 7:31).
- The message summarized (19:14-15).
  - Jeremiah returns from the valley to the temple to reiterate his warnings and stress the inevitability of destruction.
  - The long-standing threat of disaster is now very close to becoming a reality. This is because the people have "hardened their necks."
- The lament of Jeremiah (20:1-18).
  - Pashur's persecution of Jeremiah (20:1-6).
    - Jeremiah is criticizing activities in the temple which Pashur oversees. He will naturally defend his own policies and practices.
    - Jeremiah mentions only death by the sword and captivity as possible fates for the inhabitants of the nation (cf. 15:1-4).
  - Jeremiah's inescapable call (20:7-10).
    - Jeremiah feels the Lord misled him in some way, that the Lord intended to hurt or embarrass him by making him a prophet and forcing him to proclaim the message of doom.
    - Jeremiah tries to lighten his load by keeping quiet, but he finds that he has an overwhelming compulsion to say what the Lord placed in him.
    - He amplifies the reason he was so determined to resign his prophetic office. He includes some of the sayings he has overheard his enemies using. They mimicked him with the phrase "Fear on every side."

- Prayer for God's vindication (20:11-13).
  - This is Jeremiah's prayer and hymn of praise for the Lord's protection and vindication. This was the hope that encouraged him.
  - A new calm enabled him to withstand all criticism and physical sufferings. His ultimate confidence was the Lord's presence as a warrior striking his foes with dread.
- Jeremiah's curse on the day of his birth (20:14-18).
  - In spite of his deep faith and confidence in the Lord, he still has moments when he thinks life is too much to bear.
  - Jeremiah held no real animosity against the man who brought news of his birth; his cry is strictly rhetorical. In the East, the messenger who brings news of a son's birth is usually rewarded.

### ***Jeremiah 21:1-39:18***

- The trials and conflicts of Jeremiah (21:1-29:32).
  - Zedekiah's dilemma (21:1-14).
    - The embassy from Zedekiah (21:1-7).
      - The words of the royal inquiry reveal an optimism which, in hindsight, is unfounded.
      - The inquiry probably comes early in the siege, because the king is hoping the Babylonians will abandon the siege.
      - The "outstretched hand and strong arm" with which He defeated Egypt and other enemies in the past will now be turned against Jerusalem.
    - The choice of ways (21:8-10).
      - The message Jeremiah addresses to the people does contain an element of hope, although one that probably did not sound very appealing to his hearers.
      - God offers only one way of life: surrender to the Babylonians. To speak of his nation in this way was a difficult duty for Jeremiah, and it was the reason they called him a traitor.
  - Exhortation to the dynasty of (21:11-14).
    - In a narrow sense, the call was to the king and his family; in a wider sense, to the entire court.
    - It was fitting for Jeremiah to address the royal family because administering justice was the prerogative of the king and not of all.
    - Because of past deliverances, the people were caught up in a wholly unwarranted confidence in Jerusalem's invincibility.
- Messages to the kings of David (22:1-30).
  - Exhortation to justice (22:1-9).

- Other passages in Jeremiah indicate that it is the failure of the king, his servants and his people to “Hear the word of the Lord” that lies at the heart of the nation’s problems.
- Vss. 6-9 give a clear picture of desolation. Gilead and Lebanon in the north are mentioned because they were regions famous for their beautiful forests.
- The extensive devastation would be a lesson to the nations of the perils of idolatry.
- The fate of Shallum (Jehoahaz) (22:10-12).
  - Jeremiah tells the nation at large that they need not mourn the death of the godly king Josiah, who had been slain at the Battle of Megiddo in 609 B.C. (cf. 2 Kings 23:29-35; 2 Chronicles 35:75; Zechariah 12:11).
  - He also says that Shallum deserves to be mourned the most because he will die in exile, not in his homeland.
- The condemnation of Jehoiakim (22:13-23).
  - The message concerning Jehoiakim is the lengthiest of this collection, perhaps showing the degree of disobedience on his part.
  - Josiah showed that he knew the Lord by doing “judgment and justice,” by standing up for the “poor and needy.” Jehoiakim’s actions are the opposite of Josiah’s.
  - Following this exposure of Jehoiakim’s evil ways, Jeremiah tells him of the disgraceful death that awaited him; there would be no mourning for Jehoiakim.
- The rejection of Coniah (Jehoiachin) (22:24-30).
  - The signet of a king was very valuable because it was used to authenticate official correspondence and documents. Jeremiah declared that even if Jehoiachin was as dear to God as a signet ring on God’s right hand (and he was not), he would be torn off for his misdeeds.
  - Jehoiachin had seven sons (cf. 1 Chronicles 3:17), but none succeeded him on the throne. Matthew’s genealogy (1:12) includes Jehoiachin but shows only who Jesus’ legal father was, not His natural one.
    - Zerubbabel, grandson of Jehoiachin, though governor of Judah in 520 B.C., never ruled as king, nor did any other descendant of his.
    - Jehoiachin’s uncle, Zedekiah, reigned after him but died before him (cf. 52:10-11).
    - Jehoiachin was thus the last of the Judean kings. In him the royal line became extinct.

- Jeremiah goes on to speak of the new King to be raised up by the Lord (cf. 23:5-6).
- Messiah the King (23:1-40).
  - Godless leaders versus David's Righteous Branch (23:1-8).
    - Like their neighbors, the Israelites conceived of their kings as shepherds, "tending" the people in their care. The kings have not been "tending" the sheep; they have "scattered" and "driven" the flock.
    - After Jeremiah has denounced the faithless shepherds of the nation and has predicted the coming of good shepherds, he describes as a climax the incomparable rule of the King Messiah, the "Branch" (cf. Isaiah 4:2; Jeremiah 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12).
- Condemnation of the false prophets (23:9-12).
  - The Lord enters an accusation of adultery, but the identity of the accused and the nature of the adultery are momentarily delayed. The designation of idolatry as adultery is well-established in Jeremiah, so it is idolatry which Jeremiah has in mind here.
  - Next to the ungodly kings, the false prophets were those most responsible for bringing about the nation's ruin. Jeremiah was disturbed and shocked at the enormity of their offenses and was so overcome with the trauma of it that he could only liken himself to a drunken man.
- False prophecy in Samaria and Jerusalem (23:13-15).
  - There was a misguided confidence held by the people of Jerusalem, who thought the chosen status of Jerusalem gave it unconditional protection.
  - In God's sight all the people of Jerusalem had become as bad as those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the prophets were the instigators. God's only recourse was to punish the prophets.
- Characteristics of lying prophecy (23:16-22).
  - The false prophet's message was one of peace and freedom from injury in direct contradiction to the message Jeremiah has been proclaiming.
  - One set of evil hearts is listening to another, rather than seeking to know the heart of the Lord.
- Lying prophets versus true prophets (23:23-32).
  - Their portrayal of the Lord is out of balance. He is purely a God of mercy and forgiveness. This is contrary to the Lord's name.
  - The contrast between "chaff" and "wheat" refers to the difference between false prophecy and true prophecy. The "fire" and

“hammer” are metaphors for ways in which the Lord destroys a worthless prophecy.

- The burden of the Lord (23:33-40).
  - The false prophets derisively called the word of the Lord a burden, when they themselves were a constant burden to Him. Since they misused the word, they were no longer to use it in their prophecies.
  - The last three verses of the chapter deal with the penalty for ignoring the Lord’s admonition. False prophecy had assumed such proportions that drastic measures had to be taken to eliminate it.