

Jeremiah: Lesson 13

## Lessons From Jeremiah

**Memory Text:** “Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.” (Jeremiah 23:5)

**Setting The Stage:** We’ve come to the end of our study in the book of Jeremiah. We’ve heard the prophets message, we’ve witnessed the difficulties he encountered, we’ve listened to God’s merciful pleas to an obstinate people, we’ve watched the great controversy between Christ and Satan play out in the experiences of God’s ancient church, and we’ve learned a lot.

Although written for a particular people and a definite time, “all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” (1 Cor. 10:11)

What have we learned? Faithfulness and obedience to God are crucially important. God values a heart religion over a cold formal one. It pays to listen and correct your course even if it hurts. We should trust God more than anything else (and we can!). There are wonderful blessings that attend revival and reformation, but curses when there’s a refusal to respond to the word of God and the message of His prophets.

Let’s look at several key lessons we have learned from our study of the book of Jeremiah.

### Sunday – Jeremiah’s Lord

Jeremiah 31:3; 1 John 4:8

Does it matter who God really is? Does it matter if He is who He says He is, or not really? Does it matter what the character of the next president of the United States is? Why? Character matters. You should be able to trust that what he says he will do, he will do (uphold the Constitution, protect the citizens, etc.). But a proper concept of the character of God is far more significant. If you listen to common thinking today it doesn’t matter whether you are Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, New Ager, a seeker or believer (all having different views of who God is), because although we are on different roads, they will all bring us to the same destination – heaven, nirvana, paradise. Can this be true?

The stability of the entire universe rests on a proper understanding of the character of God. How you ask? The devil sowed his seeds of doubt in heaven, and war broke out. In the Garden of Eden the devil led the first pair to doubt God’s intentions for them and they rebelled. And we’ve rebelled ever since. Is God love, or is He really a

tyrant, as the devil would like us to believe? A wrong belief leads to wrong motives and action, which in turn affects our character, and eventually our destiny.

Can we get a right understanding of the character of God in Jeremiah's book, even amidst the thunderous warnings? What do the following texts tell us about Jeremiah's God?

**Jeremiah 2:13:** "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water." God is the source of life and invites us to draw life from Him.

**Jeremiah 5:22:** "'Do you not fear Me?' says the Lord. 'Will you not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it.'" God is sovereign and invites us into the safety of His presence.

**Jeremiah 11:22:** "Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine.'" God warns of the consequences of being disconnected from Him. This is love.

**Jeremiah 31:3:** "The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you.'" God cannot stand the thoughts of anyone being lost. God is not willing that nay should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

**1 John 4:8:** "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

Isn't this the type of God you would rather serve? When it's all said and done, it will be seen that God is love (see Great Controversy, p. 651)

### **Monday – Rituals & Sin**

Jeremiah 6:20; 7:1-3; Matthew 7:21

God is a personal God. He is not abstract, distant, or indifferent. His efforts to bring back His wayward people helps us to see that He is real, close, and interested in us. But a false concept of God leads to strange practices and an empty religion. Jeremiah repeatedly dealt with a people who, in many ways, believed because they were the descendants of Abraham they were okay with the Lord. Can we, the "seed of Abraham" fall into the same trap?

**Jeremiah 6:20.** Sheba is identified as Yemen. Gold, incense, and precious stones were exported from here. Sweet cane is referring to the sweet calamus, which was grown in India and southern Arabia. The root, stem, and leaves, when crushed,

would exude a fragrant essence. Didn't God want their gifts? Not if they didn't come from warm, loving hearts. The gifts of the Magi were no doubt accepted as they came from genuine, worshipful hearts.

Jeremiah's point here is that no mere external service is acceptable to God. The observance of the entire ceremonial system was useless unless it was accompanied by genuine heart religion.

**Jeremiah 7:1-4.** There was a fanciful trust in the temple, like it was a charm to protect the city and its inhabitants. Their attachment was nearly superstitious. Again, we see here an empty religion that places its faith in words and outward forms. What's worse, they professed to know the Lord all the while deciding to do their own thing.

**Matthew 7:21:** "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."

Lessons? Can we fall into the same trap as Israel of old and place our faith in our church membership, or think that because we return a faithful tithe or attend church that doing these things will make us right with God when in fact we're holding a grudge or disobeying God in something, or neglecting to do what He's asked us to do in another? Can we be led to think that behavior doesn't matter in our walk with God, that He's ready and willing to forgive presumptuous sins? May God help us to always be honest in our relationship with Him.

## **Tuesday - Religion of the Heart**

Romans 14:12; Jeremiah 29:13

How are we saved, individually or corporately? When God communicated regarding His people, He often spoke to them or about them as a nation. You see this both in the Old and New Testament. For example Jeremiah referred to God's people as His "choice vine" (Jer. 2:21), His "heritage" (Jer. 12:7-9), His vineyard (Jer. 12:10), and His "flock" (Jer. 13:17). Paul spoke of God's people as the "church" (Eph. 1:22; 3:10; 5:27). Yet salvation is a personal business. We're not saved in clusters. What did Paul write in Romans 14:12? "So then every one of us shall have to give account of himself to God."

**Jeremiah 17:5, 7:** "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord...Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord."

**Jeremiah 17:10:** "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings."

**Jeremiah 29:13:** "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

**Jeremiah 9:23, 24:** “Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the Lord.”

If we’re saved individually, why does God refer to His people in a corporate sense? While we’re saved individually, it will be hard for us to be saved outside the church, separated from God’s people. He put us together to help, support, cheer, encourage and challenge one another. We can’t get this being alone (Heb. 10:24, 25).

### **Wednesday – Twilight of the Idols**

Jeremiah 10:1-15; Romans 1:21-23

It didn’t really matter what period of Israelite history it was, God’s ancient people had a weakness – succumbing to the practices of the nations around them. It was like they didn’t want to be left out, or at very least they didn’t want to stand out as being different. They forged alliances with foreign countries when God told them not to. They resisted Babylon when God told them not to. They practiced idol worship when God told them not to. After all, it seems harmless at first, and it felt good doing what they wanted to do. Jer. 17:9 reminds us that it’s folly to follow the natural inclinations of the heart.

**Jeremiah 10:1-15.** The worthlessness of idols is forcefully demonstrated by highlighting the origin of idols (v. 3-5, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15). Elijah gave similar mocking on Mount Carmel.

By contrast God reveals Himself as the Creator of all things (v. 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 16). He is truth personified (John 14:6). God has life in Himself (John 5:26) and is the source of all that exists (Acts 17:28). His domain is unlimited, not hindered by space and time. God alone has the right to claim worship, and that right is based upon the fact that He is the Creator. God’s continuous activity is seen in nature. Life around us reminds us that God is God and is worthy of our worship.

“Living God” – mentioned 30 times in the Bible, and is often used to contrast the true God with false gods. John said that God is holding back the winds of strife until His servants are sealed in their foreheads with the “seal of the living God.” Has God given us something to remind us that He is our Creator? Yes He has - a weekly reminder in the seventh-day Sabbath (see Ex. 20:8-11).

If we don’t nurture our recognition of God as Creator, we are prone to make God into our own image, forget Him, and serve false gods.

**Romans 1:21-23:** “Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of

the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”

Many people worship idols. We might not bow down before a statue today, but what things can be considered an idol today? “Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god.” (Patriarchs & Prophets, p. 305) Could those things be fame or fortune; money or music; sport or TV; actors or musicians; iPhones or iPads; food or clothing; self or others; our opinions or ideas? Let’s be careful to give God first priority in all things.

### **Thursday – The Remnant**

Jeremiah 23:1-8; Revelation 12:17

**Jeremiah 23:1-8.** Seeing the prophecy is placed between a message given before Jehoiachin’s captivity and a message that immediately follows Jehoiachin’s captivity it’s likely that the message of Jer. 23 was given in 597 B.C.

“Pastors” – Literally “shepherds”; the civil rulers of Judah as well as the priests and prophets. Jeremiah presents a contrast between the false pastors and the true ones God will raise up for His people.

“Scattered my flock” – This accusation was both literally and spiritually true. As a result of neglect, tyranny, weakness, and apostasy of their rulers, the Israelites were dispersed into Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, etc.

“Bring them again” – Though there was certain doom coming to the rulers and priests, God provided hope for His faithful remnant. He would bring them back to Judah and they would be blessed. That eventually happened under Persian rule (see Ezra and Nehemiah)

“Branch” – A Messianic prophecy, referring to the coming of Christ as man’s Savior (see also Isa. 11:1). Israel had been cut down, leaving only stump and root. They had failed in their mission of being a blessing to the whole earth. But God would give them another opportunity, allowing a “Branch” to grow out of the stump. Christ was to come and accomplish on the throne of David what previous kings had failed to do. By connecting themselves with the King, God envisioned that His people would now fulfill their task of taking a knowledge of Him to the entire world.

“The Lord our righteousness” – Here was the secret of their success. God was to be their dependence. They were to surrender their lives to Him and allow His will to be worked out through them. Not their own plan, but God’s.

“They shall no longer say” – God’s people were to be known as a people who were delivered with a mightier deliverance than when they came out of Egypt.

Was this prophecy fulfilled in every aspect? When God's people came out of Babylon/Persia they did resettle in Israel. However, did they crown Christ as King? Sadly, they had Him crucified. Through the church that Jesus sought to establish during His ministry was the fulfillment of this prophecy, "Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely," to be realized.

Did the church accomplish its mission of taking the gospel to the world? The fact that we are still here tells us otherwise. There was apostasy and the dark ages, but through it all God still had a faithful remnant, living for Him, keeping His word, and obeying His commandments. Eventually, God's remnant would emerge in the last days, a movement gathering God's people out of spiritual Babylon.

**Revelation 12:17:** "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (see also Rev. 18:1-4)

I believe the Seventh-day Adventist Church meets the criteria for this remnant, and through a sanctified, faithful people, God will share a knowledge of Himself in the world (Rev. 18:1), Jesus will return (Rev. 19), and after the 1,000 the New Jerusalem will descend and God's elect will inherit the earth (Rev. 20 & 21). Then and only then will this prophecy be fully realized.