

## WEEK 33, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 5-8

### OVERVIEW:

God's instruction for Jeremiah to search for the righteous (5:1-9); God's promise to judge the wicked (5:10-6:30); Jeremiah's first message to the people concerning their faith in the temple and external religion (7:1-8:3); Jeremiah's message concerning rejecting the truth of God's Word. (8:4-22)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Before God actually begins to EMPOWER Jeremiah to preach against the sin of the people in chapter 7, He takes the events recorded in the first six chapters to IMPASSION him. As chapter 5 begins, God doesn't send Jeremiah on a "search-and-destroy" mission — but a "search-so-I-won't-destroy" mission! God wants Jeremiah to understand the depths to which His people had apostatized, and why His judgment against them was so deserved. Just as God told Ezekiel in his day to search for one single man to "make up the hedge and stand in the gap" (Eze. 22:30), God tells Jeremiah to see if he, too, could just find one man somewhere in the land who simply sought truth and executed judgment. (5:1) But just as Ezekiel's search ended with the pitiful words, "But I found none," Jeremiah's search produced the same empty result. The people were so incredibly perverted in their thinking, they even viewed God's mercy as weakness! (5:11-13) Through the "fiery" preaching of Jeremiah (5:14), God promises the invasion of a mighty army to destroy them.

As you read 5:31, allow it to not only acquaint you with the horrific spiritual climate of Jeremiah's day, but to remind you of the horrific spiritual climate of our own day: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priest bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so." God said something strangely similar through what the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy concerning our day: "After their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

As we move into chapter 6, it becomes clear why Judah had become so debauched that God says that "from the least of them even to the greatest of them everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest every one dealeth falsely." (6:13) The key is in verse 10. Very simply, the people had come to the place that the Word of God held no delight or significance in their hearts. It is a great commentary on how our world has gotten to the place it has, and how churches have gotten to the place they are. Week after week in most churches, both from the pulpit, and in the personal lives of the people — truth sits forsaken. And perhaps this is a great time to be reminded that the goal of our 52 Weeks of Pursuit isn't simply to go through the Word of God, but to so delight ourselves in the God of the Word, that we allow His Word to go through us, and find a resting place everywhere it "reproves, rebukes, and/or exhorts" us! (2 Tim. 4:2)

As we come into chapter 7, God now takes the things He revealed to Jeremiah in chapters 1-6, and turns him loose to carry out the six-fold ministry He delineated to him in chapter 1 and verse 10. God strategically places Jeremiah at the entrance to the Temple so he can specifically confront those who thought that because of their great Temple and their great involvement there (7:4), that they were doing fine spiritually. Oh, may we never confuse "blessings" and "busyness" at church with spirituality! God's words through Jeremiah are just as potent and pertinent today as they were then: "For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a

man and his neighbour; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever." The New Testament equivalent is 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The entire chapter emphasizes the fact that our personal and holy God is neither impressed, nor the least bit interested in external religion!

In chapter 8, Jeremiah's message to the people was similar to his message in chapter 7. The same attitude the people had about themselves spiritually because they were in possession of the Temple (7:4), they had about themselves because they were in possession of the Law of Moses. (8:8) Again, it is such a reminder that God is interested in so much more than that we simply attend church services and read our Bible. Obviously, those things have their place, but God is interested in holding His rightful place as Lord in our lives!

Because of the many implications and applications of Jeremiah's words to those of us living in the last days of the Laodicean Church Period, notice that much of Judah's problem was rooted in the fact that their spiritual leaders did not properly proclaim the truth of God's Word. (8:8-12) Their prophets turned the truth of God into lies (2 Tim. 4:4), telling the people that God was going to be okay with them continuing to live the way they were living. Oh, where are the "Jeremiahs" that will unashamedly, lovingly, and yet, dogmatically proclaim the truth of God's Word regardless of the consequence in these spiritually dark Laodicean days.

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As THE ONE WHO DEMANDED A CLEANSED TEMPLE — Jeremiah 7:1-11 (Mark 11:17)

## WEEK 33, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 9-12

### OVERVIEW:

Jeremiah's life amid a deceitful people (9:1–9); Jeremiah's grief over Judah (9:10–26); Judah's idolatry and exile (10:1–25); Israel's history of covenant breaking (11:1–17); Jeremiah's enemies plot against him (11:18–23); Jeremiah's complaint concerning the wicked (12:1–4); God's challenge to Jeremiah (12:5–13); God's promise to restore Israel. (12:14–17)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Jeremiah was definitely the right man for the job! What was needed was a prophet that would not only clearly communicate God's MESSAGE — but God's HEART! Jeremiah gave the people both. We saw God's heart in Jeremiah as chapter 8 came to a close in yesterday's reading (8:18–22), as Jeremiah said that because of Judah's refusal of her King and Healer, he was unable to find comfort for the sorrow and pain in his heart. As chapter 9 begins today, we hear Jeremiah cry out, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." (9:1) What Jeremiah provided the people of Judah, giving God's message and God's heart, is exactly what Laodicea needs of its pastors. Sadly, it seems that it is most generally, one extreme or the other. Either a pastor is all heart and no truth — or he is all truth and no heart. Pray earnestly that God will allow your pastor to have both! Pray that he will give the message just as God gave it — and with God's heart! Pray that although he must preach a message of "reproof" and "rebuke" in these Laodicean days (2Tim. 4:2), that he will also preach with a heart that loves and breaks for the people. ("exhort with all longsuffering" — 2 Tim. 4:2)

The more Jeremiah began to understand just how devastating God's judgment would be (9:9–26), the more earnestly he preached, and the more he longed for God's people to repent. In the context, verses 23 and 24 let us know that God's judgment could have been stayed if the people, rather than glory in everything but God, would simply have sought to "understand" and "know" Him! Note also that these are two great verses to meditate upon to bring us into the glorious wonder of our God! Jeremiah said, "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD." (Jer. 9:23–24) That is exactly why Paul said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. 6:14) It is only through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that we can "understand" anything about God (1 Cor. 2:14), or "know" Him at all. It was through the cross that our Lord "exercised lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth!" (9:24)

As Jeremiah preaches his heart out in chapter 10, he declares the greatness of the one "true God" (10:10) saying, "There is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might." (10:6) His point is to confront Israel with the fact that God is not just their national deity, but the Creator (10:11–12), the only "living God," the "everlasting King," and the One who will unleash His judgment upon the whole world. (10:10) He also shows how that when God's people bow to the gods of other nations, the Lord turns them over to be consumed by those nations. (10:25)

As we move into chapters 11 and 12, we find that even though God had warned Jeremiah of the opposition and adversity that would inevitably come his way (1:17–19; 9:1–3), it is apparent that Jeremiah somehow thought that it might happen otherwise. It is the same syndrome that continues today. Though God clearly told us, “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33), and “Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12), somehow it seems to take us off guard when it actually happens to us. Even though God said through Peter, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Pet. 4:12), again, it is amazing how amazed we are when it actually unfolds in our lives! The Lord reveals to Jeremiah in 11:18–23 a plot to take his life by the men of Jeremiah’s hometown, and in chapter 12, tells Jeremiah to prepare for even worse times. (12:5–13)

One of the beautiful things that continues to surface through the Book of Jeremiah, is that God’s ultimate purpose behind exercising His judgment is to restore and renew. Chapter 12:14–17 points to the compassion of the Lord, and His willingness to not only deliver Israel, but all nations.

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO “THE DAY OF THE LORD”:

- 10:10 – “at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation”
- 11:11 – “I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape”
- 11:12 – “the time of their trouble”
- 12:12 – “the sword of the Lord shall devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land”

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

In the ONE WHOSE JUDGMENT IS INESCAPABLE — Jeremiah 11:11 (2 Thess. 1:7–9)

As the ONE WHO WILL DEVOUR WITH HIS SWORD — Jeremiah 12:12 (Rev. 19:19–21)

## WEEK 33, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 13-17

### OVERVIEW:

The object lesson of the ruin of Judah (13:1–11); Israel described as a drunken nation (13:12–14); Jeremiah pleading to the nation (13:15–27); Judah's drought and Jeremiah's intercession (14:1–22); God's refusal to answer Jeremiah's prayers (15:1–9); Jeremiah's complaint against God (15:10–18); God's call for Jeremiah's repentance (15:19–21); Jeremiah's personal renewal (16:1–17:18); God's message through Jeremiah concerning the Sabbath. (17:19–27)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As chapter 13 begins, God wants to give Jeremiah an object lesson concerning the people of Judah. He instructs him to get a "linen girdle," which was what we would call today, a linen belt or waistband — and put it around his "loins" or his waist. He then told him to remove it, and to hide it in a hole in a rock near the Euphrates. After many days, God told him to go back to retrieve it, only to find that the belt was totally ruined and "good for nothing." God explained to Jeremiah that, like the belt, Judah would become "good for nothing" because of her pride, her refusal to hear the Word of God, her wicked imagination, and her idolatry. (13:9–10) God's desire for Judah was for them to "be unto [him] for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory" (13:11), but sadly, verse 11 ends by saying, "but they would not hear." As God's people in a different dispensation, His desire for us is that we also "be unto [him] for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory." We might need to ask ourselves, "Are we hearing Him?"

Even after God had revealed to Jeremiah all that He had concerning Judah's inevitable fate, Jeremiah's heart still caused him to plead, to weep, and to yearn for Judah to repent and give glory to God once again. Would to God we had Jeremiah's passion for the glory of God and the souls of men!

God's punishment first manifested itself in chapter 14 with a terrible "death" or drought. Jeremiah's heart led him to ask God to be merciful to them and remove the drought, but God told Jeremiah that they were getting what they deserved (14:10), and even told him to stop praying for them! (14:11) Even then, Jeremiah continued to pray on their behalf. As chapter 15 begins, God tells Jeremiah that it wouldn't matter who was interceding on Judah's behalf, even if it were Moses or Samuel (that's some pretty major props for those two fellas!), His judgment was going to be unleashed. In 15:10–18, Jeremiah becomes rather upset with God about his role. He complains that all he had ever done was what God wanted him to do, but all it had ever gotten him was pain and heartache. (15:15–18a) He even charges God at the end of 18 with being a liar! Jeremiah was actually beginning to sound much like the people to whom he was called to minister. In verses 19–21, basically, God tells Jeremiah that he better sort things out in his head and in his heart, and get back to the task God had intended for him. Jeremiah was simply going to have to find a way to carry out his mission — even though he would never receive any encouragement from the people to whom he was seeking to minister. Imagine, in Jeremiah's entire ministry, a 40 year span (627-587 B.C.), he never saw one convert! Bless his heart!

In chapter 16:1–8, once again, God gives an object lesson. Jeremiah is given a series of three strange commands in order for God to make His point. First, he instructs him not to marry (16:1–4), because his wife and children would only be mercilessly killed by the armies God would use to punish Israel's sin. Second, God tells Jeremiah not to mourn for the dead (16:5–7), because in light of what was about to happen in Judah, they would be better off than the living. And third, he was not to participate in feasts of any kind, because all it produced was just wishful thinking

in a land that was without hope. God tells Jeremiah that these three things would provide him the opportunity to warn the people of the impending judgment to come, and the need to repent. At the end of chapter 16 (16:14–18), God points to a time following His judgment upon them, when He would deliver Israel out of her oppression and bondage, just like He did in delivering them out of Egypt.

In chapter 17, God affirms to Jeremiah that, once again, Israel's idolatry was etched in their hearts with "a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond." (17:1) Because of their unfaithfulness to Him, God warns Jeremiah against trusting them for anything, and urges him to trust in Him alone. Verse 9 is a classic, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it?" May we all meditate on that for about the next 20 years!

In 17:12–18, Jeremiah offers an incredibly humble and powerful prayer for renewal, asking God for spiritual healing, deliverance from his oppressors, and for courage. Immediately, God charges Jeremiah with the responsibility of standing at the gates where all who came in or out of Jerusalem could hear, and confront them about their observance of the Sabbath — or lack thereof! He tells them that if they don't stop carrying things in and out of the city on the Sabbath, God would allow an invading army to see to it that all activity in the city ceased!

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the HOPE OF ISRAEL — Jeremiah 14:8 (Titus 2:13)

## WEEK 33, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 18-22

### OVERVIEW:

God's lesson to Jeremiah at the potter's house (18:1–10); Jeremiah's message to Judah based on the lessons from the potter (18:11–17); Israel's opposition to Jeremiah (18:18–23); Jeremiah fights his calling (19:1–20:18); Jeremiah's message of opposition to kings. (21:1–22:30)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

God is most certainly the Master Illustrator. He has masterful ways of using things in His physical creation to teach us spiritual truth, just as Romans 1:20 says He does. As we move into chapter 18, God is employing this teaching technique in the ministry of Jeremiah — just as He had in the two previous occasions in 13:1–7 and 16:1–9. This time, God takes Jeremiah on a little "field trip" to the potter's house to make His point. God shows Jeremiah that He (God) is as the Potter, and Israel is as the clay — and He can do with them whatever He jolly-well wants! The real point He wants Jeremiah to see, is that if Israel would repent, He would instantaneously fashion them into a beautiful and usable vessel, but if they chose to remain rebellious and obstinate, He could mar them in an instant, right in His powerful hands — and as the Potter, it would be perfectly within His right to so!

Based on what God showed Jeremiah in His object lesson in 18:1–10, He then tells him to get out there and call the nation to repentance. (18:11) Obviously, knowing and understanding God's sovereignty ("as seemed good to the potter to make it" — 18:4) and God's omnipotence ("as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand" — 18:6) puts a whole different "umph!" behind a preacher's message! As is evident in 18:18, the "umph!" of the message wasn't well received, and as it has consistently done throughout Jeremiah's ministry, it only brought more hatred and opposition from the people to whom he ministered. As chapter 18 comes to a close, it becomes obvious that Jeremiah has gotten fed up with the people, and calls upon God to just go ahead and give them what they deserved.

In chapter 19, God wants to use another object lesson in making a point to the people, that was similar to the one He used to make His point to Jeremiah in 18:1–10. He tells Jeremiah to take "a potter's earthen bottle" —and to go preach to Judah's king and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He was to preach a strong message about God's judgment that would come upon them because of their idolatry and rebellion. In effect, Jeremiah said, "You're kind of like this jar," and then he smashed it to smithereens right in their face! (19:10–12) Jeremiah continued on, "And God is going to smash you into a million tiny pieces just like that — and you won't be able to glue yourself back together!"

Well, needless to say, the message didn't go over real well with the supposed religious leaders — much less the people in general! In chapter 20, Pashur, "the chief governor in the house of the Lord" — smacks Jeremiah right in his face and slams him right into the stocks in the city jail. Jeremiah tells him, "Just for that, God has changed your name from Pashur (meaning "freedom") to Magormissabib" ( meaning "terror on every side") — and Jeremiah prophesied the "terror" (20:4) that would soon come upon Pashur, and all those who believed his lies. (20:6)

But once again, the opposition of the people was wearing on Jeremiah. He registers his complaint against God for calling him to such a long, difficult, and painful ministry. He even communicates that he felt as if God had deceived him. In effect, he tells God, "You may be able to take this because You're stronger than me, but I just can't take it

anymore!” (20:7–8) He even vows that he’s never going to preach again, and never even mention the name of the Lord to anybody. (20:9) But what Jeremiah found was that God’s Word was so deeply embedded in him, that it burned like a fire in his bones, and that the only way to find relief was through preaching! Would to God that His Word would be that deeply embedded in us!

So, Jeremiah preached on. He had come to grips with the fact that it was the right thing to do — recognizing that just because it was right, didn’t make it easy. In fact, biblically, it might be better stated, if it’s right — it won’t be easy! Paul, most certainly, could vouch for that! (2 Cor. 11:24–28)

As we move into chapters 21 and 22 in today’s reading, it becomes apparent that Jeremiah had nailed some things in his relationship with God — and the ministry to which he had been called. It is evident that he has matured as a believer and a prophet. And just as God had told Jeremiah back in 1:17–19, that he would be called to preach to and receive opposition from kings, princes, priests, and the people of the land, in this next section (chapters 21–29), Jeremiah preaches to each of these groups of people, likewise, receiving the retaliation God had prophesied from each. Each time, however, the more seasoned and mature Jeremiah is able to hand the opposition over to God, rather than blame Him for it.

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the one who pronounces judgment upon those who refuse to obey His word — Jeremiah 19:15 (John 5:22)

## WEEK 33, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 23-26

### OVERVIEW:

Jeremiah preaches about the Righteous King who would rise to the throne (23:1–8); Jeremiah preaches against the false prophets (23:9–40); Jeremiah preaches against the people (24:1–25:38); Jeremiah preaches against false worship and false prophecy. (26:1–29:32)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As was mentioned in yesterday's reading, in chapters 21–29, Jeremiah is called on by God to preach to those to whom He referred back in 1:17–19: "kings, princes, priests, and the people of the land." Beginning in 21:1, all the way into 23:8, Jeremiah has been preaching against the kings. Though God pronounced "woe" upon these wretched shepherds ("pastors") who were leading Judah to destruction, God begins to point to a different day, when a righteous King from David's line would rise to the throne! "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (23:5–6) Of course, that righteous Lord and King from David's Branch (i.e. line or ancestry) is none other than the King of kings Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ! Little did Jeremiah or those to whom he was preaching realize that he was actually preaching about what would happen 2000 years after our Lord's first coming! (1 Pet. 1:10–12)

In the remainder of chapter 23 (23:9–40), Jeremiah turns from preaching against the kings, to preaching against the prophets. It is amazing how history repeats itself. (Ecc. 3:15) So many of the things Jeremiah preached as he opposed the prophets of his day, he could come and preach in opposition to many of the preachers in our day! Check out 23:16–17: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you." Again, much like in Laodicea, the words that are so often spoken in the name of the Lord, or in the name of "preaching" — leave people void of the truth of God. (2 Tim. 4:4) Preachers are to preach a message "out of the mouth of the Lord" (i.e. the Word of God!!!), not out "of their own heart." (23:16) God has already given His commentary on men's hearts through Jeremiah back in 17:9. Our hearts are so deceitful and desperately wicked it is near nigh impossible to even know what's actually going on in them! Spare us the message you feel the Lord has laid on your heart, preachers, and just give us the Lord's heart as it has been revealed in His Word! ("out of the mouth of the Lord" — 23:16) The message from the prophets in Jeremiah's day (23:17), like many of the preachers in our own day, was void of the message of God's impending judgment. The people were told they were "going to be all right" (i.e. "No evil shall come upon you"), even though they willfully and blatantly lived for self, self-satisfaction, and self-gratification. (i.e. "after the imagination of his own heart" — 23:17)

In 23:22, God says that if those given the responsibility of heralding His Words would have "stood in his counsel," so that the people would have actually heard the Words of the Lord — the people would have turned from "their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." Note in this verse, that God reveals to us that "evil" is not limited to our specific actions (i.e. evil things we "do") — "evil" is also a "way" in which we find ourselves (as in, a "way of life," or the "course of our life" — Eph. 2:2).

Would to God that every preacher in Laodicea would read 23:31 just before they walk out to preach: "Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith." Woah! Or, maybe better stated, "Woe!"

In chapters 24 and 25, Jeremiah turns the focus of his preaching against the people. Something we want to be sure we don't want to miss out of this section is that though the people had horrific spiritual leadership, God still held them responsible for their actions. We all need to recognize, that at the Judgment Seat of Christ, God will not receive the argument, "But my pastor didn't preach the Word!" That may be true, but the fact remains, God has not only given every single one of us His Word — He has even placed the resident Truth Teacher (the Holy Spirit) inside each one of us! (1 Joh. 2:27) We will all be held personally responsible for our stewardship of God's Word and God's Spirit!

Note also, that just like in Laodicea, one of the reasons that Judah had such terrible spiritual leadership, is that the people didn't want godly counsel or leadership! (2 Tim. 4:3) The way Jeremiah was treated is more than proof of that. God says of our day, that the people do "not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts... heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they... turn away their ears from the truth ... and unto fables." (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

In chapter 26, Jeremiah begins to preach against, not only the kings, the prophets and the people — but the priests as well. In verses 7–15, the priests and the prophets actually call for Jeremiah's death. Notice in 26:2–8, that carrying out the Lord's perfect will comes with a very significant cost! "Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12) Yes, it'll cost us — but the rewards are out of this world! Literally!

#### SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

25:29 – "For I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth."

25:30 – "The Lord shall roar from on high."

25:31 – "He will give them that are wicked to the sword."

25:33 – "At that day"

#### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As THE KING RAISED UNTO DAVID A RIGHTEOUS BRANCH — Jeremiah 23:5 (Matt. 2:1; Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:31–33)

As THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS — Jeremiah 23:6 (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21)

## WEEK 34, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 27-30

### OVERVIEW:

Jeremiah's cry to reject the false prophets and false prophecy concerning Babylon (27:1–22); Jeremiah's cry to reject the false prophets and false prophecy concerning the Babylonian captivity (28:1–17); Jeremiah's letter to those already taken into captivity urging them to reject the false prophets, and to seek the Lord (29:1–32); Jeremiah's message about Israel's future restoration. (30:1–24)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

At the beginning of King Zedekiah's reign, the Lord prophesied that Babylon, under the leadership and rule of Nebuchadnezzar, would overthrow Judah. The Lord commanded that Judah serve the one that He had used to discipline them. (27:8) The prophets of Judah told the people not to serve the king of Babylon, just as did the "diviners, dreamers, enchanters and sorcerers." (27:9) It is a definite sad state of affairs when those who are presumably speaking for God are saying the same thing as those who are speaking for the Devil! Jeremiah passionately warns the people not to hearken to their lies. (27:9,14,16) He tells them that God would ultimately restore them, but not before being brought into captivity. (27:22) Chapter 27 teaches us that though a "positive" message from a stereotypical Laodicean "preacher" (2 Tim. 4:3-4) feels a whole lot better on the ears than a "negative" message from a non-stereotypical Laodicean preacher (2 Tim. 4:2) — God's "negative" message will have a whole lot more powerful ramifications in our lives than their supposed "positive" one! May we never lose sight of Jesus' words in Revelation 3:19 to those of us living in this "negative" Laodicean Church Period: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten!" In other words, the results of Jesus' "negativity" through His preachers is actual a very positive thing!

Chapter 28 lets us know that in the same year that the events of chapter 27 were taking place, Jeremiah encountered what must have been one of the "well respected" and "big name" prophets of Judah — a man by the name of Hananiah. His message from "the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel" (28:2) was that God had broken Babylon's power over Judah, and that within two years, all of the vessels that had been taken out of the Temple would be returned, along with all of the exiles. Man, what a positive message that was! The only problem with it — is that it wasn't true! God had said no such thing! (28:15) Jeremiah tells Hananiah that Babylon's yoke was not a yoke of wood that would be easily broken, but was a yoke of iron, and that he was a liar. Jeremiah then prophesied Hananiah's death for his sin of misleading the people, and he died — verifying which one of them was truly speaking for the Lord. Even so, the people still refused to listen to the words of the Lord through Jeremiah.

In chapter 29, Jeremiah writes a letter to the Jewish people who had already been taken into captivity. He tells them not to listen to the false prophets who have been prophesying their soon release. He tells them that the captivity is actually going to last 70 years, and that they should go ahead and make the best of it by building houses, planting gardens, and strengthening their families — because this would be the place where most of them would die. Our gracious God even wrote to them through Jeremiah, saying that if they refused to listen to the false prophets and would seek Him, their lives in captivity in Babylon would be blessed, and actually be better than those who lived in the freedom of Judah! And once again, they refused to listen to Him.

In chapter 30, Jeremiah's message actually turns in more of a positive direction. Though the positive nature of his message pertained to a future time, (actually, the time of the Great Tribulation and Second Coming of Christ when God will restore the nation of Israel not only to her homeland, but to her Messiah), the break from the negativity of

Jeremiah's message had to be refreshing to him. Do recognize that all of the events that are taking place in the Middle East today are simply setting the stage for what God was prophesying through Jeremiah in this chapter. It is an exciting time to be alive if for no other reason than that! Lift up your head, my brothers and sisters, our redemption draweth nigh!

**SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":**

- 30:7a – "That day is great, so that none is like it."
- 30:7b – "The time of Jacob's trouble" (Specifically, the Tribulation Period).
- 30:8 – "In that day."
- 30:24 – "In the latter days."

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the LORD WHO WILL BE RAISED UP AS DAVID THEIR KING — Jeremiah 30:9 (Matt. 2:2; 1:1; Luke 1:31–33)

## WEEK 34, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 31-33

### OVERVIEW:

God's promise that Israel will be His people (31:1–14); God's promise of mercy to weary Israel (31:15–26); God's promise to make Israel secure (31:27–30); God's promise of a New Covenant with Israel (31:31–40); God's instruction to Jeremiah to buy a field (32:1–15); God's explanation to Jeremiah (32:16–35); God's promise to bring the exiles home (32:36–44); God's promise to keep His promises. (33:1–26)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Jeremiah continues his positive message for Israel in chapter 31, though, as was discussed in yesterday's reading, the ultimate fulfillment of his prophecy won't be until the Second Coming of Christ. In verse 28 of chapter 31, God says through Jeremiah, "And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord." In other words, just as careful as God was to PUNISH Israel — He will be just as careful to BLESS them.

Verse 31 of chapter 31 is very significant. God speaks of a New Covenant that He would make with the house of Israel and Judah. As we have made our way through the Old Testament, we have seen God make at least three major covenants. The first was what we call the Abrahamic Covenant, in Genesis 17:7-8: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Coupled with what God had told Abraham in Genesis 12:2–3, the Lord promised to give Abraham heirs, a great name, a homeland, fame, protection, and the blessing of all nations through him.

The second major covenant was the covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai. (Exo. 20; Lev. 27) We refer to it as the Mosaic Covenant because this covenant with Israel was mediated by Moses. In contrast with the Abrahamic Covenant, this was not an unconditional and everlasting covenant.

The third major covenant, what we call the Davidic Covenant, was God's promise to David of an everlasting kingdom. Through Nathan the prophet the Lord told David, "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever." (2 Sam. 7:12–13) As Jeremiah repeated in chapter 23:5, the coming King of Israel, or Messiah, whose kingdom would be eternal, would come through the kingly line of David.

It must be understood that God's promise of a New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31–34 would certainly not negate the everlasting covenants that He had previously made with Abraham and David. This covenant would actually participate with and work in conjunction with them. One of the tremendous beauties of this New Covenant is whereas the Mosaic Covenant was filled with God constantly saying, "Thou shalt" — this covenant is filled with God saying, "I will!" Oh my, what a blessed contrast! (See how many times you can find God saying, "I will" in 31:31–40, and then in chapter 32:36–44, where God picks up the subject again!) Recognize, also, that though this is an everlasting covenant that God made specifically with Israel and Judah, we have been permitted to participate in the blessing of this New Covenant by God's sovereign plan and grace. Paul said in Romans 11:17, that we, "being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree."

After the glorious promises of this future New Covenant in chapters 30 and 31, in chapter 32, God brings things back into Jeremiah's present situation, and the impending judgment that He was about to unleash upon Israel and Judah. Just before Babylon's final siege of Jerusalem, God tells Jeremiah to do something that certainly must have seemed strange to him. Purchasing property just before your entire city is overtaken by a foreign enemy is not exactly what you would call a wise business deal, to say the least! Yet, that is precisely what God tells Jeremiah to do. As we have seen God do repeatedly throughout Jeremiah's ministry — this is yet another object lesson God intended to use to illustrate His point. This time, His point was that though judgment would come, He would restore the people back to their homeland. He wanted to drive home the fact that there is nothing too hard for Him. (32:17,27) He would bring the people back to their land, and they would enjoy the blessing of His New Covenant with them. Again, we now know that these promises will be fulfilled during the Great Tribulation as Israel turns to her Messiah, and will be enjoyed by the Nation of Israel as He returns at the end of the Tribulation to establish His Millennial Kingdom.

Chapter 33 is a joyous chapter as it focuses on God's character. It reminds us that the truth of God's Word is grounded in the trustworthiness of His person. He will perform every single thing He has ever promised (33:14) — and it will be fulfilled just as He said... right when He said... and just how He said. It is true for Israel and Judah — and, praise the Lord, it's just as true for you and me!

**SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":**

- 31:29 – "In those days." (Specifically, the Tribulation Period)
- 31:31 – "Behold, the days come."
- 31:33 – "After those days."
- 31:38 – "Behold, the days come."
- 31:15 – "In those days, and at that time."
- 31:16 – "In those days."

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the ONE WHO FORGIVES SINS — Jeremiah 31:34 (Matt. 9:6; John 8:10–11)

By JEREMIAH, WHO ACTED AS A KINSMAN-REDEEMER IN PURCHASING THE LAND OF HIS COUSIN — Jeremiah 32:6–14 (Lev. 25:25,44; Ruth 2:20; 3:12–13; Gal. 4:4–5; Titus 2:13–14)

## WEEK 34, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 34-38

### OVERVIEW:

God's faithfulness to the Davidic Covenant (34:1–11); Israel's unfaithfulness to their fellow countrymen (34:12–22); Israel's unfaithfulness to their God (35:1–19); Israel's rejection of God's Word (36:1–32); Jeremiah preaches against a false sense of security and self-deception (37:1–10); Jeremiah is imprisoned (37:11–21); Jeremiah is delivered (38:1–16); Jeremiah presents Zedekiah alternatives. (38:17–28)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

We enter into the second and third sections of the Book of Jeremiah in today's reading. Whereas the first 33 chapters detailed the fate of Judah, chapters 34 and 35 detail the fate of Jerusalem, and chapter 36 to the end of the Book is basically detailing the fate of the Gentile nations. This is the fulfillment of what God said to Jeremiah when He first called him: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations...See, I have this day set thee 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." (1:5,10)

As chapter 34 opens, Babylon is about to overtake Jerusalem. God tells Jeremiah to go and tell King Zedekiah that the city would, in fact, fall to the Babylonians, but that he would not be killed in the invasion. The fact that God was willing to spare this wicked king's life is not only a testimony of His incredible mercy and grace — but a testimony of His faithfulness to keep His promises. As we have talked about, in the Davidic Covenant, God had promised that David's lineage would survive. Though the covenant was obscured in the fact that David's kingly line would actually live in exile, the covenant was not revoked.

In verses 12–22 of chapter 34, God speaks through Jeremiah to show Israel that they had not been faithful to one another by not obeying His plan for releasing on the seventh year, those, who for financial reasons, had sold themselves into slavery. In chapter 35, He uses the example of the faithfulness of the Rechabite family to reveal to Israel their unfaithfulness to Him. And oh, in the same way that the family of Rechab stood as a shining light in the midst of the darkness in Jeremiah's day, may our families likewise bring glory to God against the "lukewarmness" (Rev. 3:15-17) and apostasy of our day! (1 Tim. 4:1)

Chapter 36 is absolutely classic in terms of revealing the divisive nature of the Word of God — and its utter indestructibility! Because Jeremiah had been forbidden to enter the Temple (36:5), he was forced to dictate the words of the Lord for Baruch, the Scribe, to write into a scroll and deliver to the leaders of Israel — once again, calling for Israel's repentance. The words were so powerful that the Temple officials sent them to the king. As the words were read to the king by Jehudi, before he could get to the fourth "page," the king grabbed it out of Jehudi's hand, took out his pen knife and began cutting it to shreds — just before throwing it into the fire! It's a very interesting story, and very easy to follow. But there is more than meets the eye that is really going on here. The chapter actually opens up to us one of the clearest explanations in the entire Bible about the whole process of the inspiration and preservation of Scripture!

The process of inspiration is described in verses 4 and 6 — and interestingly enough, it is precisely how 2 Peter 1:21 says it happened: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God SPAKE as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Jeremiah SPOKE his words to Baruch the scribe, but the words Baruch wrote weren’t actually JEREMIAH’S WORDS — they were the very “WORDS OF THE LORD!” (36:4)

Jeremiah restates the process in verse 6 as he says to Baruch: “Go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the Lord.” And the way the story unfolded and how God orchestrated the recording of it, it is apparent that God wanted to make sure we totally understood exactly how the actual process of inspiration and preservation works. In verse 17, God records the words of the Temple leaders to Baruch: “Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?” Baruch responded in verse 18: “He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book.” In other words, what Baruch had in written form, were the very words of God — what is often referred to in theological circles as the “original manuscripts.” But it is important to note, that what happened in this chapter to Jeremiah’s “original manuscripts,” is the same thing that happened to the entirety of the original manuscripts in history. They were totally destroyed! But remember, God not only “inspired” His Word and words — He also promised to “preserve” them! (Psa. 12:6–7; Matt. 5:18) And notice in Jeremiah’s account of how this actually unfolded, that though the “original manuscripts” were no longer in existence, “somehow” God had no problem remembering exactly what they said — and He certainly had no problem producing a copy that contained “all the words of the book (the “original manuscript,” as it were) which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire!” (36:32)

The reason this is so significant, is that many people today balk at the very idea of believing that the Bible we are able to actually hold in our hands (as opposed to original manuscripts that do not exist!) — is the very word and words of God... just as He intended them. Every word, in fact! (Pro. 30:5) However, it only stands to reason, that if God went to the “trouble” of inspiring His words in/on original manuscripts (that He obviously did not intend to keep in existence — or we’d have them!) — it certainly is no trouble for Him to preserve them in a Book that we can actually wrap our hands and our lives around!

Another contention people seem to with those who have a faith-based view of the Bible (i.e. have faith in God’s promise to preserve His Word! — Psa. 12:6–7; Matt. 5:18) has to do with the italicized words in our King James Bible. You see, when the “original manuscripts” were being penned, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament was written in Greek and Aramaic. Obviously then, most translations of the Bible into other languages were translated out of copies of manuscripts that were written in these original languages. And since there is no such thing as a “word for word” translation (for the simple fact that in translating from one language to another, some words do not have a corresponding equivalent!) — as the King James translators we’re translating the Bible into English, the italicized words were “added” to convey the meaning of the original language when there was no English equivalent. And the argument is, how can we believe that we hold in our hands “every word of God” (Pro. 30:5), if there are words that have been “added?” But the question we need to ask ourselves is — is that actually uncharacteristic of how God has previously worked in the whole process of inspiring and preserving His Word? Notice that the last verse of Jeremiah 36 says that not only did the copy God produced contain every single word of the “original,” check this out — “And there were added besides unto them (in other words, besides the words that were written in/on the “original manuscripts!”) many like words!” (36:32)

In chapters 37 and 38, Jeremiah continues to hammer the message of Jerusalem's destruction per God's instruction, and is cast into prison for carrying out God's will. For a detailed unfolding of chapters 37 and 38, refer to the outline provided in today's "Overview."

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

By JEREMIAH, WHO STOOD AS A FAITHFUL WITNESS TO THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD — Jeremiah 38:2–10  
(Matt. 26:59)

## WEEK 34, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 39-43

### OVERVIEW:

The destruction of Jerusalem (39:1–10); God's deliverance of Jeremiah and Ebedmelech (39:11–18); Jeremiah's release (40:1–16); the plot against Gedaliah, Babylon's appointed governor over those remaining in the land (41:1–10); the hostages taken by Ishmael are rescued (41:11–18); the Jews request a word from God through Jeremiah (42:1–6); Jeremiah delivers God's Word (42:7–22); the people reject God's Word (43:1–7); God's rejection of the people. (43:8–13)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

That fateful day of which Jeremiah had been prophesying had finally arrived. Verse one of chapter 39 says that Nebuchadrezzar and "all his army came against Jerusalem, and they besieged it." Those who had been called to be the holy people of God — blessed with a holy standing before Him... with a holy Temple... in a holy land... had finally desecrated their holy calling. King Zedekiah escaped in the middle of the night out of a secret passage way, but was overtaken in the plain and brought before Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon. (39:4–5) Nebuchadrezzar killed Zedekiah's sons right "before his eyes" (39:6) — just before he "put out Zedekiah's eyes." (39:7) Imagine, the last thing you ever seeing being your own children being slaughtered — and then, going the remainder of your life knowing full well that it was because of your own sin! It is an amazing phenomenon, that as parents, we can choose to be so willfully blinded to the consequences of our sinful choices upon our own precious children! Sadly, the example of Zedekiah's selfishness and cluelessness regarding the affects of his sin upon his children, has historically, represented the rule rather than the exception — right up to this present day! (Gal. 6:7–8)

Just as God promised Jeremiah when He first called him (1:17–19), Jeremiah's life was spared in the whole demise of the nation. (39:11–18) And how ironic it is, that Jeremiah was shown more kindness by the King of Babylon than he had ever received from the previous four kings of Judah! In chapter 40, Jeremiah is actually freed by the Babylonians, being presented with the option of either being provided for in Babylon — or remaining with the remnant that had been permitted to stay in the land. (40:4) In the great spirit and tradition of Moses before him, Jeremiah "chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of Egypt." (Heb. 11:24–26) Or, in this case, Babylon!

In 40:5–6, the king of Babylon appoints Gedaliah as governor over the people who were permitted to remain in the land. Gedaliah encouraged the people to quietly and respectfully serve Babylon— assuring them that if they did, things would go well with them. (40:9) Unfortunately, a plot was devised against Gedaliah, and in chapter 41, Ishmael not only murdered him, but many others who were with Gedaliah — taking many others as hostages as well. Ishmael's plan was to flee to the city of Ammon, leaving the Jews around Jerusalem to suffer the wrath of the Babylonians. At that point, the people understood that they had two possibilities: they could flee to Egypt and trust them to help against the Babylonians — or, they could remain where God had placed them and trust Him to help them. Stating it in that fashion makes the decision they "should have made" an absolute "no brainer" — but as we look back over our shoulder and see how many times during a time of difficulty or trial we trusted the world's (Egypt's) solution, rather than trusting God — we find that in the moment, it doesn't always feel like such a "no-brainer!" May God give us the wisdom and discernment to see the choices before us as He sees them!

Surprisingly, the people of Judah actually sought Jeremiah's counsel as to what they should do (42:1–4) — pledging that whatever God said through him, regardless of what it was, they would obey it. (42:5–6) Wow! That's a switch!

God's word came back through Jeremiah, telling them that if they would remain in the land, He would protect them and bless them (42:7–12) — but that if they went to Egypt for help, He would allow them to be blasted to “kingdom come!” (42:13–18) Jeremiah suspected that they were all full of “talk” but no “walk” — and full of “show” but no “go” (42:19–22), and chapter 43 proved that his hunch was right. Rather than obey Jeremiah's words to them, which is to say, God's words to them — they accuse Jeremiah of telling them the things he did so they would fall to the Babylonians. What this really proved, is that they had planned to do what they wanted to do all along — they had just hoped that God's will lined up with their's. Recognize, that the same empty promises of surrender to God's will that will only be carried out if it lines up with what we want to do — are constantly and consistently made in our day! (2 Tim. 3:1–5) As the old saying goes, “the more things change... the more they remain the same.”

Chapter 43 ends with another of God's many object lessons through Jeremiah — this time, pointing to the fact that Babylon would conquer Egypt — just as they had Judah.

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO “THE DAY OF THE LORD:”

39:16 – “In that day”

39:17 – “In that day”

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through GEDALIAH, as he instructed the Jews to pay homage to the heathen nation that ruled over them — Jeremiah 40:9 (Matt. 22:21)

## WEEK 34, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 44-49

### OVERVIEW:

God's condemnation through Jeremiah of the remnants idolatry in Egypt (44:1–4); the people blatantly confess their affection for idols (44:15–19); God's last word concerning the faithless remnant (44:20–30); God's exhortation to Baruch (45:1–5); God's judgment upon Egypt (46:1–28); God's judgment upon Philistia (47:1–7); God's judgment upon Moab (48:1–47); God's judgment upon Ammon (49:1–6); God's judgment upon Edom (49:7–22); God's judgment upon Damascus (49:23–27); God's judgment upon the lesser nations (49:28–33); God's judgment upon Elam(49:34-39)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

When we ended yesterday's reading, the remnant had chosen to rebel against the word of the Lord through Jeremiah in spite of their extravagant promises not to do so. They went to Egypt in hopes of finding a place of refuge against the wrath of the Babylonians. Not content to simply go themselves, they forced Jeremiah and Baruch to go with them. Perhaps they thought that God would not exercise judgment against them if these two men of God were with them. Regardless of what they thought, Jeremiah's preaching against them was anything but over! Nor was God's judgment! Jeremiah walked them through the wickedness and idolatry of Judah, despite God's cry to them through the prophets, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." (44:4), Jeremiah promised that just as surely as God's "fury" and "anger" was poured out on their cities and in the streets of Jerusalem, leaving them "wasted" and "desolate" — God's judgment would fall upon them in Egypt. It is indeed amazing how even after watching the painful effects of sin on people as they incur and endure the chastisement of Almighty God, that we can deceive ourselves into thinking that "it'll be different for us," or that "we'll be the exception."

Rather than Jeremiah's message causing the people to repent, they somehow concluded that their problem was that they had not served other gods enough! Ya know, there's stupid — and then there's stooooooooopid! This is stupid with about 50 "o's," if you know what I'm saying! They resort back to worshipping the queen of heaven (Ashtoreth), reasoning that their lives had turned for the worse when they stopped worshipping her. (44:17–19) Pardon me, but have I mentioned how utterly stooooooooopid sin can make us? And before we think that this idolatry "shoe," as it were, doesn't fit us, let me remind you that in the New Testament, God identifies covetousness as idolatry. (Col. 3:5) He doesn't say that it is "like" idolatry, He says that it "IS" idolatry! And do note that at least three times in the New Testament, "covetousness" specifically refers to the desire for illicit sexual fulfillment. And what happens in that whole world of sexual sin — is no different than what was happening to this remnant in Egypt. Practically speaking, people know how sexual sin has destroyed thousands and thousands and tens of thousands of homes before them, and yet, they deceive themselves into thinking it won't destroy theirs. Oh God, deliver us from ourselves!

Chapter 45 is a short chapter with God giving His word to Baruch through Jeremiah. Baruch was one of only two people (Ebedmelech being the other one) in all of Jeremiah's 40 year ministry who had ever responded to his preaching in any kind of positive way. God wants Baruch to realize, however, that though he was bummed at how things had shaken out for Jerusalem, the reason he was bummed was because of how it had affected him — not because of how it had affected God! Again, with God letting us know that the chief characteristic of our day is that we are "lovers of our own selves" (2 Tim. 3:1–2), we must be careful that we don't deceive ourselves into thinking we're "spiritual" because of how we're repulsed by the condition of our country, and, yea, the world. Do we hurt because God hurts — or do we hurt because of how the sin of the world has affected and is affecting our lives?

In the remaining chapters in today's reading, God details His judgment upon the Gentile nations:

- His judgment upon Egypt. (46:1–28)
- His judgment upon Philistia (47:1–7)
- His judgment upon Moab (48:1–47)
- His judgment upon Ammon (49:1–6)
- His judgment upon Edom (49:7–22)
- His judgment upon Damascus (49:23–27)
- His judgment upon the lesser nations (49:28–33)
- His judgment upon Elam (49:34–39)

The nations listed basically encompassed all of the nations of the known world at that time. It seems that God's message through Jeremiah was that there is no nation who can defy Him — and not inflict His judgment upon themselves. If that be true, our nation is on a collision course with disaster!

**SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD:"**

- 46:10 – "The day of the Lord God of host, a day of vengeance"
- 48:41 – "At that day"
- 48:47 – "In the latter days"
- 49:22 – "At that day"
- 49:39 – "In the latter days"

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through GOD'S SERVANTS, THE PROPHETS — Jeremiah 44:4 (Jesus was God's "chosen Servant" — Matt. 12:17–18; Acts 3:20–21)

iah 4:2 (Zech. 3:8; 6:12; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Isa. 11:1.)

## WEEK 35, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 50-52

### OVERVIEW:

God's judgment upon Babylon (50:1–51:64); the fall of Jerusalem and Zedekiah's torment (52:1–11); the Babylonians destroy the Temple (52:12–23); the people are exiled (52:24–30); God has not forgotten and will not forsake David's descendants. (52:31–34)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

To this point, Babylon has been the tool God used to mete out His judgment upon the many nations we read about in chapters 44–49. In chapter 50, this time, Jeremiah prophesies God's judgment upon Babylon and her many gods.

Once Babylon would be defeated, the chosen people of God would once again be gathered and returned to their homeland. This was partially fulfilled in 538 B.C. when Cyrus made a decree permitting the Jews to go back to Jerusalem. The context, however, points to the fulfillment of God's promises to the Jews during the Great Tribulation. (notice all of the references to the Tribulation and Second Coming of Christ in this passage: "in those days" — 50:4; "it is the vengeance of the Lord" — 50:15; "in those days" — 50:20; "the vengeance of the Lord our God" — 50:28; "in that day" — 50:30.)

That "last days" fulfillment continues in chapter 51, as Jeremiah details Babylon's judgment. Notice that his description is very similar to the description God gave of Babylon's destruction through the Apostle John in Revelation 17 and 18. Note that God also points to Israel's restoration in the last days. Despite all of Israel's defiance against God, He still loves Israel, and has every intention of blessing her. Though the conflict in the Middle East rages today, Jeremiah (not to mention, John, Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc., etc.) points to the fact that in the very near future, the conflict will be over, and Israel will be sitting on top! That certainly is not to say that everything Israel does and is doing today is right, but don't ever forget to factor into your equation the EVERLASTING (!!!) Abrahamic Covenant: "And I will bless them that bless thee (Abraham... or Israel), and curse him that curseth thee." (Gen. 12:3) Non-Christians think that is a fatalistic viewpoint. Fatalistic as it may be, it is just a settled fact! Anyway you slice it, folks, Israel is going to end up on top, and her Messiah and King (and ours, hallelujah!!!), will rule the entire world from His throne in Jerusalem! America has made some incredibly sinful and stupid decisions in the last half of a century (or more!). Perhaps the only reason God has not unleashed His judgment upon us has been our faithfulness to bless Israel. When/if we curse them, I'm afraid we will finally be sealing our own doom!

In 51:59–64, one last time, God wants Jeremiah to give His message via an object lesson. Jeremiah "wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon," (59:60) and then told Seraiah to take it and read it in Babylon. After reading it, he was to take the scroll, tie it to a rock and cast it into the Euphrates, explaining to the people that that's exactly what God was going to do to them!

The Book of Jeremiah concludes in chapter 52 with a somewhat lengthy explanation about the fall of Jerusalem. It is almost word for word what is written in 2 Kings 18–25, 30, and very similar to what was detailed in Jeremiah 39:1–18. It recounts the city's fall, Zedekiah's attempt to escape, his capture, the murder of his sons "before his eyes," (52:20) just before he lost his physical sight.

Back in 1 Kings 9:1–9, after Solomon built the Temple, God promised to keep His name there as long as they served only Him. "But," He said, "if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my

commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people." (1 Kin. 9:6–7) The people did not live up to their end of the bargain, but as you might would imagine, God most certainly did live up to His! Jeremiah 52:12–30 is the fulfillment of God's warning to Israel in 1 Kings 9:6–7.

The Book of Jeremiah does end, however, with just a flicker of hope. After 37 years of being exiled in Babylon, Jehoiachin, king of Judah, is shown preferential treatment. It is a reminder that God has not forgotten the Davidic Covenant, and just as Jeremiah 30–33 makes clear, God will ultimately fulfill His promises to bless Israel.

**SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD:"**

- 51:2 – "In the day of trouble"
- 51:6 – "The time of the Lord's vengeance"
- 51:11 – "It is the vengeance of the Lord"

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the REDEEMER WHO PLEADS OUR CAUSE — Jeremiah 50:34 (Luke 1:68; Rom. 8:34)

As the CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE — Jeremiah 51:15 (Col. 1:16)

## WEEK 35, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: LAMENTATIONS 1-5

### OVERVIEW:

Jeremiah's lamentation over Jerusalem's destruction (1:1–22); God's justifiable wrath (2:1–22); God's incredible mercy (3:1–66); God's anger against Jerusalem (4:1–22); a plea for restoration. (5:1–22)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

"The Lamentations of Jeremiah" as the title states, is the expression of Jeremiah's incredible sorrow over the sins of God's people that had resulted in the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the entire kingdom of Judah. These five chapters are more or less a postscript to the Book of Jeremiah. They are obviously a separate Book in our English Bible, but are contained in the third section in the Hebrew Bible — called "The Writings." This Book employs acrostic poetry, much like we saw as we were making our way through Psalm 119. In chapters 1, 2 and 4, each succeeding verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 actually contains three acrostic poems.

From an historical standpoint, the Book of Lamentations deals with the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. From a doctrinal (or prophetic) standpoint, the Book deals with the events during and surrounding the Tribulation Period.

In chapter 1, Jeremiah likens the city of Jerusalem to a grieving widow. He describes the fact that once she was a "princess" — but has now become a "tributary," or a slave. (1:1) At one time she was surrounded by "friends" (1:2) and "lovers" (1:2), but now everyone has forsaken her, leaving her to grieve and weep alone. In verse 4 of chapter 1, Jeremiah even gives human attributes to the roads leading to Jerusalem, saying, "the ways of Zion do mourn." Whereas at one time, they had been filled with incoming worshippers, now they were totally desolate. The picture Jeremiah describes in this chapter is heartbreaking and pitiful. Having to actually put the reality of Jerusalem's condition into words becomes even more than Jeremiah can handle. By the time he gets to verse 16, he says: "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water." Oh, that our hearts would break — and our eyes would leak as did Jeremiah's for the similar condition of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the last days of the Laodicean church period. (Rev. 3:14–22)

When God called His son, Israel, out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1), He led them with the cloud of His glory. Chapter 2 begins by explaining that at this point in their history, once again, the Lord covered them with a cloud. Sadly, however, it wasn't the "cloud of his glory" — it was the "cloud of his anger." Whereas in times past, the Lord fought on Israel's behalf against their enemies, now the Lord Himself fought against Israel like one of their enemies. (2:2–5) Again, Jeremiah "laments" as he is forced to describe Israel's awful condition: "Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people." (2:11) Jeremiah recognized, however, that they had gotten exactly what they deserved (2:19), because they listened to their false prophets (2:14), and had stubbornly refused to repent of their idolatry. Verse 15 of Chapter 2 is perhaps the saddest of all of the tremendously sad verses in this Book: "All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?" Applied to our Laodicean condition, while Christians are "whooping it up" about all of the so-called "wonderful" and "spiritual" things that are taking place, we have to wonder if the world isn't looking at the church and saying, "Is this the glorious church of the Lord Jesus Christ — the beautiful, chaste virgin Bride that is without spot or blemish or any such thing?" (Eph. 5:27; 2 Cor. 11:2) May God give us many Jeremiahs in these last days who will lament our grievous condition.

After two and a half chapters of solely focusing on the pitiful condition in the land, in the middle of chapter 3, Jeremiah lifts his eyes to the Lord. In the midst of all of the sorrow and ruin, he is reminded of the mercy and compassion of the Lord, and the incredible fact that “His compassions fail not” (3:22), and “are new every morning.” (3:23) It brings Jeremiah to declare, “Great is Thy faithfulness!” In other words, “We have certainly failed You, O God, but You will not fail us!” May we, with Jeremiah, praise the Lord today for His marvelous, infinite matchless mercy and grace!

In the remainder of chapter 3, Jeremiah calls upon the people to stop their whining... to search their hearts... to confess their sin... and to get right with God! He then calls upon God to bring punishment upon those He used as the instrument of His wrath against Jerusalem.

Chapter 4 lets us know just how horrendous the situation in Jerusalem had actually gotten. Children were being mistreated and abused by their parents — and believe it or not, the situation had become so desperate that some mothers were actually eating their own children! God says that His punishment against this city would even be greater than His punishment of Sodom!

Chapter 5 continues the description of the deplorable situation in Zion, and ends with Jeremiah crying out to God, “Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.” (5:21) The good news is, in the very near future, God is finally going to answer Jeremiah’s prayer!

**SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO “THE DAY OF THE LORD:”**

- 2:1 – “In the day of his anger.”
- 2:22 – “In the day of the Lord’s anger.”

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through JEREMIAH’S SORROW OVER JERUSALEM — Lamentations 1:12–22 (Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34)

As the MERCIFUL SAVIOUR — Lamentations 3:22 (Jude 1:21)

## WEEK 35, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: EZEKIEL 1-5

### OVERVIEW:

Ezekiel receives a vision of God's glory; Ezekiel receives his commission; Ezekiel is instructed to physically typify the siege and judgment of Jerusalem.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we make our way into the Book of Ezekiel today, let's seek to get our bearings about what is actually unfolding in this powerful Book. First of all, recognize that the name Ezekiel means "strengthened by God." Along with Jeremiah and Daniel, Ezekiel is called upon by God to prophesy against Israel during the time of exile. (Eze. 1:1–2) The first two verses of chapter one provide for us the historical context of the book.

To understand the actual tone of Ezekiel's message, it is essential to understand how Ezekiel fits into the story of the Old Testament. The Old Testament breaks down into six natural chronological divisions.

1. Genesis – The time of Genesis begins with the creation of the world, and ends with Jacob's sons in Egypt.
2. Exodus – The time of Exodus begins with Jacob's sons in Egypt, and ends with Joshua leading the nation of Israel to possess the Promised Land.
3. Judges – The time of Judges covers the period in Israel's history when a variety of judges ruled.
4. Kings – During the time of the kings, a host of different kings ruled Israel. Keep in mind that after the reign of Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). The Northern Kingdom was ultimately defeated by Assyria and carried away captive in 722 B.C. The Southern Kingdom was ultimately defeated by Babylon and carried away captive in 606 B.C.
5. Exile – The time of Exile covers the nation of Israel's 70 years of exile.
6. Return – The time of The Return covers the time of Israel's return to their homeland — and the time when both the temple and Jerusalem were rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah.

The exile had been prophesied as far back as Moses (Deuteronomy 28), and as recently as the prophet Jeremiah. (Jer. 25:11–12) Israel's disobedience culminated in the fact that they had failed to keep the Sabbath for the land. (2 Chr. 36:21) God had kept track of Israel's failure to let the land rest, and had decided to exile Israel for seventy years in order that the land finally might have its rest. This is a chilling reminder of the consequences of sin. There is no doubt that Israel had grown accustomed to ignoring the Sabbath for the land. Note, however, that God had kept track! God will not ignore sin. (Gal. 6:7)

Judah had temporarily turned to God under the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C). After Josiah was killed by the Egyptian army, however, Judah (southern kingdom) plunged back into sin under their four remaining kings:

1. Jehoahaz (609 B.C.)
2. Jehoiakim (609–598 B.C.) — Daniel was taken captive during his reign.
3. Jehoiachin (598–597 B.C.) – Ezekiel was taken captive during his reign.
4. Zedekiah (597–586 B.C.) – He was more of a puppet king under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

The exile had begun in 606 B.C. and ended in 536 B.C. During those 70 years, both Daniel and Ezekiel were taken captive to Babylon. Eventually, Babylon, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, would burn the temple and destroy Jerusalem.

Ezekiel and his wife are among 10,000 Jews taken into captivity along with king Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:11–18) Ezekiel is 25 years old when he is taken to Babylon. He is thirty years old when his ministry begins in 592 B.C. (Eze. 1:1) He ministers for 22 years (570 BC). Recognize that Ezekiel and his 10,000 fellow countrymen were actually more colonists than they were captives — being permitted to farm tracts of land under somewhat favorable conditions. Ezekiel even had his own house. It is important to remember that Ezekiel is already in captivity while he is prophesying to the Jews who had not been taken captive.

Ezekiel chapter 1 records one of the most incredible visions in the Word of God. The vision includes four living creatures flying through the air like a flash of lightning... a crystal sea... creatures with multiple eyes and faces ushering in a throne... and an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. Ezekiel is ushered into the presence of the Lord and catches a glimpse of the Second Advent. Just like Isaiah (Isa. 6:1–8) and the Apostle John (Rev. 4–5), Ezekiel is so overwhelmed by the revelation of Christ in all of His glory, the most comfortable position he could find was on His face! Ezekiel's response will be the response of every person when they see Christ in all of His glory. What a contrast to the nonchalant way much of Christianity approaches the Lord Jesus Christ today! There is no room for pride or selfishness in the presence of God Almighty. One day every knee will bow to the Lord Jesus Christ! (Rom. 14:11) Hallelujah!

Chapters 2 and 3 record God's commission for Ezekiel. He is to prophesy to the nation of Israel during the 70 year exile. One of the key take-aways that we can apply from this passage is that Ezekiel paints a picture for every preacher — and every Christian for that matter, of what it really means to be entrusted with the stewardship of the Word of God. The picture begins with having an encounter with Christ. Notice in chapter 1, Ezekiel comes face to face with Christ. (1:28) Notice, however, that the encounter didn't just involve what Ezekiel saw, but also what he heard. Speaking in the first person, Ezekiel says, "and I heard a voice of one that spake" (1:28), "and the Spirit entered into me when he spake." (2:2) And likewise, realize that our effectiveness as a steward of the Word of God must begin with a daily encounter with Christ, that results in our hearing His voice and being filled with His Spirit. (2:2; Eph. 5:18) But the question is, how could we possibly have an encounter Christ — knowing that He doesn't (and won't) appear to us in a vision like Ezekiel's? Very simply, we encounter Christ by so yielding ourselves to Him that we position ourselves before Him through the pages of His holy Word. Through the written revelation of the Word of God, we, too, get a glimpse of Christ in all of His glory (Eph. 1:18), and hear, as it were, His voice.

And yet, notice further that it isn't enough for us to just "hear" God's words — we must also "receive" those words in our heart. God instructed Ezekiel, "All my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart." (3:10) We must receive God's words into our heart to such a degree that they change the way we think, speak, act and react. And notice also that God tells Ezekiel to receive "all" His words. Over the course of this prophecy, God is going to give Ezekiel some very difficult things to say and do. When it comes to God's Word, we must learn that we can't "pick and choose" what we will obey and what we will not obey. The fact is, sometimes the Word will be sweet — sometimes it will be bitter. Sometimes it will comfort — sometimes it will sting. Regardless of which it is, we are responsible to "receive" it... and to receive "all" of it!

But notice, that after "receiving" God's words, God then instructed Ezekiel to "speak" His words. (2:7; 3:23–27). And just like Ezekiel was responsible for receiving "all" of them, he was also responsible for "speaking" all of them. God commanded him to "speak my words unto them" (whether the people liked it or not — 2:7) — and "when I speak

with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD." (3:27) Would to God that every pastor and every believer in the world would approach the responsibility of their mission like that! First, allowing God to speak His word to them... them receiving it in their hearts so they are filled with Spirit, having made personal application of the Word in their own lives... and then, join the Apostle Paul in saying, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God!" (Acts 20:27) Our counsel to others must not be conclusions based on our own life experiences and opinions. We are responsible for declaring the Word of God.

It is also interesting to note in these chapters, that Ezekiel's actions mirrored his spoken words. God continually asks Ezekiel to demonstrate His truth to Israel by the way He lives (as seen in the sign of the tile, shaving, burning hair, lying on each side, and imprisonment). Our life must reflect the truth of God. Our actions must speak even louder than our words!

And with all of these things in place, you would think that Ezekiel was ready to go speak to the people. But God knew that if he would truly be effective in imparting His words to them, there were still a few other things that would need to take place. Ezekiel would first need to go and identify with the people. That's why Ezekiel says in 3:15, that he "sat where they sat." Before Ezekiel spoke a word to the people, he sat quietly for seven days with those who would be the recipients of his/God's message. Oh, may we learn from Ezekiel's example, that we must be willing to spend time with people — and be willing to listen to them, before we expect them to listen to us. How can we expect to share the love of Christ with people with whom we are unwilling to identify? The old cliché is so true — "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care."

Finally, God gives Ezekiel a warning. He wanted Ezekiel to realize that he would be held accountable for the mission He had assigned to him. He wouldn't be held accountable for the response of the people — He would simply be held accountable to hear, receive, and speak the words of God. (3:15–21) At the Judgment Seat of Christ, we, too, will be held accountable for the mission God has assigned to us (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10) — and God will not hold us accountable for how people responded to our message, but He will hold us accountable for whether or not we heard the Word of Christ, received the Word of Christ, and shared the Word of Christ! (Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 4:16)

Are you encountering Christ daily by surrendering yourself before Him through the pages of His Word? Are you actually listening to His words — and receiving them in your heart? Does your life give evidence of the filling of the Spirit? Are you actively and purposefully seeking to identify with those around you, so you might be effective in communicating God's truth to them? And are they able to see and hear God's truth by observing it in how you live your life?

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the APPEARANCE OF A MAN UPON THE THRONE — Ezekiel 1:26 (Rev. 1:13–17)

## WEEK 35, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: EZEKIEL 6-11

### OVERVIEW:

God judges Israel for their idolatry (Chapter 6); the severity of God's judgment (Chapter 7); the vision of Jerusalem's sin (Chapter 8); the vision of God's judgment on Jerusalem (Chapter 9); the vision of the cherubim and God's glory (Chapter 10); Israel is warned about the false security of Jerusalem. (Chapter 11)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we make our way through the Book of Ezekiel, we will find a particular title that is repeated throughout the Book. The title "Son of Man" is attributed to Ezekiel some 93 times. This title appears a total of 193 times in the Bible. In Daniel 7:13, the prophet Daniel attributes this same title to the promised Messiah, which is why the title appears 84 times in the New Testament in reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is apparent by the Jew's reaction to our Lord using this title to refer to Himself in the Gospel of Luke, that they understood that this title had specific Messianic implications. Luke 22:66–71 says:

"And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth."

It also becomes apparent as we make our way through this Book, that Ezekiel is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ezekiel ministered to the nation of Israel as a prophet and a priest during the time of exile — just as our Lord will minister to Israel as a prophet and a priest during the time of tribulation. Note also that the period of judgment and restoration pictured in Ezekiel foreshadows the judgment and restoration of Israel during the tribulation and the millennial reign of Christ.

There is also another key phrase we find repeated throughout the Book of Ezekiel. The phrase, "know that I am the Lord" appears 77 times in the Bible — 63 of them in the Book of Ezekiel alone. And the reason it is repeated so many times in this Book, is that the situation in Israel during Ezekiel's ministry was, quite simply, the fact that they "didn't know the Lord!" They had forgotten who God was. Israel had turned to idolatry (6:4; 8:5–16) — having replaced God with man-made images. Israel had also been guilty of trusting in their wealth (7:19) and in the walls of Jerusalem (11:3) for security. Through their exile, judgment, and eventual restoration, God's purpose was to remind Israel that He is "the Lord!"

Ezekiel's visions of God's judgment are precise and severe. Israel's idolatry had begun at God's Temple, causing God to remove His presence (8:6) — therefore, it would be at God's Temple where His judgment would begin. (9:6) Throughout the entire Old Testament, we find that Satan constantly desired to destroy the place where God's glory was intended to dwell. Satan was successful during the exile, when Babylon, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, burned the Temple in 586 B.C. The temple was rebuilt later — only to be destroyed again by Rome in 70 A.D. May this reality serve as both a reminder and a warning — that our enemy wants to destroy the place where God's glory is currently intended to dwell — that, of course, being in us! And may we realize, that just like in Ezekiel's day, the enemy desires that we would turn to other gods (idolatry) through covetousness — and that we would turn away from God in an effort to find security and safety in temporal material riches and our own "self-

made" walls. And just as God instructed that judgment begin at His sanctuary (9:6), we must evaluate our temple (our heart) to see if, like Israel, we have forgotten who God is. Perhaps the phrase God repeated to Israel throughout the Book of Ezekiel applies to us today: "know that I am the Lord!" Our security must be in the only One who can truly keep us safe — God Himself! And we must recognize, that He is "the Lord!"

God appears to Ezekiel for the third time at the beginning of chapter 10. (1:4; 3:23; 10:1) It is during this encounter that God reveals to Ezekiel that Israel would one day be restored. (11:17–20) This final restoration will usher in the millennial reign of Christ. And how awesome it is, that even in the midst of tribulation, God promises deliverance.

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD:"

- 7:7 – "The day of trouble is near"
- 7:10 – "Behold the day"
- 7:12 – "The day draweth near"
- 7:19 – "The day of wrath of the Lord"

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the ONE MAN CLOTHED WITH LINEN — Ezekiel 9:2 (Rev. 1:13)

## WEEK 35, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: EZEKIEL 12-16

### OVERVIEW:

Ezekiel's actions illustrate the exile (chapter 12); God warns the false prophets (chapter 13); God warns Israel that judgment is inevitable (chapters 14 and 15); God reminds Israel of His grace in saving them and their decision to forsake Him. (chapter 16)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

God continues to call the prophet Ezekiel not only to speak His truth, but to illustrate it through outward demonstrations. Leaving with his "stuff" through the wall in 12:1–16, illustrates the captivity of Israel's current king, Zedekiah. (2 Kings 25:1–10) Ezekiel's trembling in 12:17–20 illustrates the desolation that Israel will experience during the exile. And perhaps one of the greatest takeaways from this section is recognizing that what God was asking Ezekiel to do in declaring His message — is no different than what He asks us to do! We, too, are to speak through our actions, as well as with our words! This is the New Testament truth wrapped up in the word "conversation." Paul tells us in Philippians 1:27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." In other words, the way we live our lives (our "conversation") ought to communicate a message that reflects that we have been transformed by the power of the gospel. The reality is, whether for good or for evil, we not only speak with our lips — we also speak with our lives! Paul makes the distinction between speaking through our lips and through our lives very clearly in 1 Timothy 4:12, as he tells Timothy to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Obviously, our "words" are what we say with our lips — our "conversation" is what we're saying through our life! And thus, the old adage, "What your life is saying is so loud, I can't hear the words you're speaking!" In light of these truths, we all would do well to ask ourselves a few very pertinent introspective questions:

"What message am I communicating to my Savior through the life He sees me living?"

"What message am I communicating to my family through the life they see me live in our home?"

"What message is my life communicating to those in my sphere of influence who are lost?"

Even though Ezekiel passionately warns Israel of impending judgment, there are still those who refuse to take God seriously. Ezekiel's audience has adopted a "proverb" (12:22) that basically said (paraphrase), "With the passing of time, every warning of Ezekiel has proven false." God had had enough of their smart mouths and pompous attitude — and says to Ezekiel in 12:23–25: "Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God." In other words, brace for impact, because the hammer is about to fall! It is amazing how every generation somehow convinces themselves that they can live their lives like they want, and there won't be consequences for their sin. The Bible is clear, however, sin always has a payday. (Gal. 6:7; Num. 32:23) We must be careful not to confuse God's longsuffering with apathy towards sin.

While Ezekiel was barking about the coming judgment of God upon their nation, the other “so-called” prophets in the land were prophesying “peace and safety” (Eze. 13:10,16; 14:9) — and the people chose to believe their message — further demonstrating Israel’s arrogance. We see the same thing taking place even in our times, as Paul prophesied to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:3–4: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

Notice also that the prophets in Israel also foreshadow the soon-coming Antichrist, who will come to power at the beginning of the tribulation period proclaiming a message of peace and safety, at a time when God’s vengeance and wrath will about to be unleashed on the earth. (2 Thes. 5:3; Rev. 6:2; Daniel 8:25) Just as God’s judgment was inevitable during the ministry of Ezekiel — so His judgment will be inevitable during the coming tribulation.

Chapter 16 serves as one of the most brutally descriptive images of our sinful condition — as well as His grace! This chapter is so graphic, and so powerfully indicting upon the Jews that some of the ancient rabbis did not allow it to even be read publicly! God likens Israel to an abandoned child who was born of wrong parents (16:3), and left for dead in a field. (16:4–5) God sees Israel lying in her own blood — and says, “Live!” (16:6) God then blesses Israel with beauty (holiness), clothing (righteousness), and jewels/crown (rewards). He anoints Israel with oil (a type of the Holy Spirit) and makes her His bride. (16:7–14) But despite God’s amazing grace, Israel prostitutes herself to other nations and other gods. She continuously involves herself in spiritual adultery. (16:15–59)

Ezekiel 16:60 contains one of the most powerful and beautiful words in the entire Bible: “Nevertheless.” Despite Israel’s broken promises, and lewd spiritual adultery in God’s very face, God still remembers His covenant, and promises an everlasting covenant. What a beautiful, yet solemn picture, of the reality of our life. It’s not because of our goodness or obedience that God keeps His word to us. It is because of God’s grace. Like Israel, we, too, continually forsake our God... “nevertheless!” (Eph. 1:11–14; 4:30)

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the BRIDEGROOM — Ezekiel 16 (Matt. 9:15; John 3:29)

## WEEK 36, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: EZEKIEL 17-20

### OVERVIEW:

The parable of the eagles (chapter 17); Man's responsibility for sin (chapter 18); God's lamentation for Israel's captivity (chapter 19); God refuses inquisition. (chapter 20)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we move into Ezekiel 17 today, God instructs Ezekiel to speak a parable to the house of Israel utilizing the figure of eagles. (17:1–10) The first eagle represents Nebuchadnezzar — and how he came to Jerusalem and took away the king's seed (the twigs) and planted them again in Babylon. The highest branch of the cedar tree represents king Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, who was exiled in 597 B.C.

When Nebuchadnezzar removed Jehoiachin, he replaced him with a native Judean prince, Zedekiah, instead of a foreign ruler. With the help of Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah was surrounded by favorable conditions and prospered in his reign. Nebuchadnezzar's hope was that the kingdom of Judah would stay dependent on him — but it was not to be! The second eagle in Ezekiel's parable represents Egypt — and specifically Pharaoh-hophra, to whom Zedekiah looked for help. The prophet Jeremiah had warned Zedekiah not to make an alliance with Egypt (Jer. 37:5–7; 44:30), but Zedekiah ignored Jeremiah's counsel and foolishly made an alliance with them. (17:15) Although Egypt offered temporary relief from the oppression of Nebuchadnezzar, in the end, Babylon defeated Egypt and put Zedekiah to death. The sad reality is, had Zedekiah simply obeyed God's counsel to him through Jeremiah, he would have been fine.

And oh, may God help us to learn from Zedekiah's tragic mistake! Because, like Zedekiah, we often find ourselves in trials and temptations that threaten our safety, or our well-being. In those situations, we can choose to listen to the voice of God as it is revealed in His Word — or we can seek to escape the adversity by looking to worldly alternatives (Egypt). By God's grace, we must learn to tenaciously stick to what the Word of God says — and completely trust God with the outcome. Our worldly scheming will never produce a positive result.

In 17:22–24, Ezekiel reveals a messianic prophecy. The phrase, "One of the highest branches," refers to Christ — who unlike Zedekiah, will overshadow a mighty kingdom. Note the surety of God's Word in the statement, "I the Lord have spoken and have done it." God actually refers to a future event — as if it were history! God's Word is certain, folks! The surety of what He has declared is completely the same — whether He's talking about the past or the future! Oh, may that reality infuse us with confidence in His holy Word today!

Chapter 18 begins with a proverb that serves as a warning to those who want to blame others for their problems. The children of Israel were blaming their forefathers for their being exiled. They said that their forefathers had "eaten the sour grapes," and that was what had caused their "teeth" to be "set on edge" (18:2) — or caused them to suffer through the sharpness of being exiled. Notice that God flatly rejects their blame-shifting and their refusal to assume personal responsibility for their situation. This is a very significant passage for those of us living in the 21st century, because many people in our time have fallen into the same trap of blaming someone else for their circumstances, or for their being the way there are. We hear it all the time, "My Dad this..." or "My Mom that..." or "If I would have had a different upbringing..." or "If my parents would have..." etc., etc. God goes on in this chapter to teach a very fundamental scriptural principle, and that is, that each of us must take responsibility for our own actions and choices. It's true, we didn't get to choose our parents, and we can't always control our circumstances — but the fact is, we can

always control our own attitudes, choices, actions and reactions. The Children of Israel had been offered mercy — if they would have simply repented. Instead, they chose to commit the same sins as their forefathers — and then, blamed them for why they did it! Again, may God help us to take personal responsibility for our lives now — knowing that there will be no blame-shifting or finger-pointing at our ultimate accounting before Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The chapter ends with God reminding Israel that His true heart's desire is always for repentance. (18:32) May we learn the invaluable lesson of taking personal responsibility for our sin —and repenting of it with godly sorrow and godly repentance! (2 Cor. 7:10)

In chapter 19, Ezekiel records "a lamentation for the princes of Israel." (19:1) The word "lamentation" means a "loud cry." It is poetic song (usually three beats, followed by two beats) that expresses deep emotion. This lamentation is for king Jehoahaz, who languished in an Egyptian prison (2 Kings 23:31–33) — and for king Jehoiakim, who was taken captive and deported to Babylon. (2 Kings 24:1–12) They are depicted as lion's whelps. (19:2,5) The lamentation ends with a summary of Israel's current state (19:10–14). Her exile is pictured as a plant in a dry and thirsty ground. The last verse states that Israel has no sceptre to rule. Notice also, the strange terminology in 19:14, that Ezekiel's "lamentation shall be for a lamentation." (19:14). In other words, there would be the immediate lamentation of Israel's condition, and yet, Israel will also suffer a future lamentation during the great tribulation. That tribulation (lamentation) will end with Israel's Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, coming to reign over the earth from His throne in Jerusalem, and He will rule with a sceptre — a septre made of an iron rod! (Rev. 19:15)

Chapter 20 begins with the leadership ("the elders") of Israel coming to Ezekiel to enquire of the Lord. God, obviously knowing their hearts and their real motives, instructs Ezekiel to tell them that He would not be enquired of by them. He goes on to remind them that because of their "leadership," Israel had not only been disobedient — but were presently living in disobedience. The chapter ends with a vivid and descriptive picture of God's judgment with fire. (20:45–49) The leaders of Israel reply by "spiritualizing" Ezekiel's message — instead of taking it literally. They accuse Ezekiel of speaking in parables, when it is clear that this chapter is anything but a parable! This same thing takes place today: many people and denominations spiritualize what God intends to be taken literally — and take literally what God intends to be understood spiritually.

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the "TENDER ONE" planted upon a high mountain — Ezekiel 17:22

## WEEK 36, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: EZEKIEL 21-23

### OVERVIEW:

Judgment pronounced against Jerusalem (chapter 21); Jerusalem's sin (chapter 22); Jerusalem's seduction. (chapter 23)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Chapter 21 contains instruction from God for Ezekiel to sigh in the midst of the people. When asked by the people the reason for his bitter anguish, he is instructed to again remind Israel that God's judgment is imminent, and will affect every person in the entire nation. God uses the visual image of a sharp sword being removed from its sheath to illustrate His judgment in this chapter. In the historical context, the sword represents the king of Babylon. (21:19) From a prophetic standpoint, this sword foreshadows the day Christ will come in judgment upon this earth with a sword that proceeds out of His mouth — which, of course, is the Word of God! (Rev. 19:15)

Ezekiel is also instructed to make a map and trace on it two routes for the king of Babylon to follow. One route goes to Jerusalem, while the other route will take him to Rabbath of the Ammonites. Ammon had conspired with Judah in 593 B.C. to rebel against Babylon. The question was whether the king of Babylon would decide to attack Rabbath or Jerusalem. Ezekiel is instructed to illustrate how the king of Babylon would call upon his gods to decide which path to take and which city to attack. To determine his course, the king of Babylon would use three types of magic. The first type of magic was the use of arrows. The arrows would be marked with a name, put in a quiver, and whirled about. The first one to fall out would reflect the decision of the god. The next form of magic was the use of "images" or teraphims. From the record of history, we learn that these images were actually the mummified heads of children! The third, and most common form of magic was the "liver." It involved distinguishing judgment based upon the color of a sacrificed lamb's liver. Upon hearing from his gods, the king of Babylon would choose to attack Jerusalem.

The Jews were skeptical of Ezekiel's continual prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem. They doubted that the "magic" of the king of Babylon would result in his choosing Jerusalem as a target, and further doubted his ability to take the city. (21:23) Although the king of Babylon was using magic as His guide, as Proverbs 21:1 teaches us, his heart was in the hand of the Lord. God would use the king's magic to bring judgment against His people.

God instructs Israel to remove the "diadem," worn by the priests — and the "crown," worn by the kings. And pay special attention to Ezekiel 21:27. God says: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." The fact that God uses the term "overturn" three times expresses the most severe judgment against these offices (the office of priest and king). God specifically states that after their captivity, neither of these offices would be restored — that is, until our Lord Jesus Christ comes! And notice how God the Father refers to His beloved Son in this verse. He states that Christ is the only One who truly has the right to the title Priest and King anyway!

Note also, that from an historical standpoint, the "wicked prince of Israel" is Zedekiah. (21:25–27) From a prophetic standpoint, however, Zedekiah typifies the coming Antichrist.

In chapter 22, Ezekiel chronicles Jerusalem's sins. Once again, God begins by judging the leadership. He specifically mentions the prophets, priests and princes. (22:25–28). The specific sin of the priests was their violation of the law in not distinguishing between that which was holy — and that which was profane. (22:26) The sin of the princes was their desire to make money at the expense of people. (22:27) The sin of the prophets was just flat-out lying about what God had said. (22:28)

God looked for a man among the leadership to stand in the gap. The sad reality is — He found none. Even the great prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah were unable to turn the heart of a single man among the children of Israel to

repentance. There would be a man who would come 400 years later, however, who would stand in the gap for all mankind! The "God-Man," our Lord Jesus Christ! Hallelujah!

Notice in chapter 23 that the capital city of the Northern Kingdom, Samaria — and the capital city of the Southern Kingdom, Jerusalem — are likened to two sisters who are seduced into adultery by their "lovers:" the elder sister, Aholah, representing Samaria, and the younger sister, Aholibah, representing Jerusalem. Samaria was seduced by Assyria (this historical alliance is recorded in Isaiah 7:1–2, 10:5–11) — and Judah was seduced by Egypt. As we have seen, Israel is repeatedly warned in scripture not to go to Egypt for help. But as we have also seen, Israel continually disobeyed God's instruction. This culminated in Zedekiah's formation of an alliance with Egypt against Babylon. (17:15)

Through the illustration of these two harlot sisters, chapter 23 provides one of the most vivid descriptions of the seduction of sin in the entire Bible. Interestingly enough, sin always follows a specific pattern, or process. This process can be summed up in four observable steps identified in this chapter:

1. Desire. (23:5–7; Jam. 1:14)  
The process begins when sin becomes "desirable" (23:6) to us.
2. Delivered. (23:9; Jam. 1:15a)  
It continues as God allows us to be "delivered" (23:9) to the passions we are allowing to control us.
3. Defiled. (23:13,17; Jam.1:15b)  
Acting upon our passions causes us to be "defiled." (23:13,17)
4. Destroyed. (23:22–49; Jam. 1:15c)  
God then allows our sin to run its destructive course in our lives. (Jam. 1:15c; Rom. 6:23)

Note also in chapter 23, that both Samaria and Jerusalem got what they wanted — and it ended up destroying them both!

There are also several other key principles worth noting in this chapter:

- Lust for what we see will eventually lead to actions. (23:14–16)
- What we see can destroy our mind. (23:17)
- Those who seduce us in the name of "love" will eventually hate us. (23:22,28)

What a warning against the consequences of viewing pornography. And what a warning to those who covet wrong relationships!

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the One who has the "right" to be both Priest and King ruling over Israel — Ezekiel 21:27

As the One who will stand in the gap — Ezekiel 22:30

## WEEK 36, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: EZEKIEL 24-27

### OVERVIEW:

God's purging of Jerusalem (chapter 24); God's judgment against Gentile nations (chapter 25); God's judgment against Tyre. (chapter 26–27)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Chapter 24 refers to Jerusalem as a "bloody city." Twice Ezekiel speaks the word of warning from the Lord, saying, "Woe to the bloody city." (24:6,9) Ezekiel is instructed to tell a parable about a bloody stew that represents Jerusalem. Numerous times in the Word of God the shedding of "innocent blood" is mentioned as a cause for God's vengeance. (Deut. 19:10; 1 Sam. 19:5; 1 Kings 2:31) The shedding of blood in the Old Testament looked forward to "THE innocent blood" that would one day be shed at Calvary. (Mat. 27:4) It is true that the "innocent blood" of our Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us from sin — but it is also true that those who do not accept God's gift of grace will be held accountable for the death of God's only beloved Son, suffering the judgment of God's righteous wrath. God hates the shedding of innocent blood. How God must love us to have allowed the innocent blood of His beloved Son to be shed for our sin!

Ezekiel is also instructed not to mourn when his wife dies. (24:15–18) In this, God intended that Ezekiel picture the fact that there will be no time to mourn when God's judgment comes on Jerusalem. And once again, this foreshadows the coming "Day of the Lord" when judgment will be swift and calamitous. However, notice that even in God's judgment — there is mercy. In 24:25–27, Ezekiel speaks specifically to certain Jews who will escape the judgment of Jerusalem and come to Babylon. Historically, this is fulfilled in Ezekiel 33:21, but prophetically, points to those who will be saved out of the judgment of the Tribulation Period.

In chapter 25, Ezekiel's prophecies against Gentile nations. These nations are judged because they rejoiced when Israel was chastened by God (25:3,6,8) — and because they had taken vengeance on Israel when she was weak. (25:12,15) The doctrinal principle is clear: God does not take kindly to people rejoicing when Israel is chastened! Much of the world rejoices when bad news is broadcasted concerning Israel. There are many others who look forward to the day Israel will suffer during the tribulation. Those nations who bring judgment against Israel are a pawn in the hand of God to execute His sovereign plan. However, after God has used them — He will bring His judgment upon them! On a more devotional note, the lesson is clear. We should never rejoice when we see God's chastening on others. (Pro. 24:17)

Chapter 26 and 27 begin a three-chapter judgment against Tyre. The eleventh year in 26:1 refers to the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's reign. In 586 BC, the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity, on the tenth day of the month, Jerusalem was captured.

It is Nebuchadnezzar that God will use to bring judgment on Tyre. It is interesting to note in 26:7, that Nebuchadnezzar is called "a king of kings" — making him a type of the Antichrist. Just as Nebuchadnezzar ruled the kings of the world, the coming Antichrist will also stand in authority, ruling the world until the true King of kings arrives making quick work of him! (Gen. 3:16; Rev. 20:1–3)

Tyre, an ancient city of the Phoenicians, appears for the first time in the Bible in the Old Testament in Joshua 19:29. In Old Testament times, Tyre was a great commercial city. During the reign of David and Solomon, Tyre exercised great influence on the commercial, political, and even religious life of Israel. Hiram, king of Tyre, was a devoted

friend of David (2 Sam. 5:11) who helped both David and Solomon in their building projects. (1 Kin. 5:1–121 | Chron. 14:1; 2 Chron. 2:3,11) Though Tyre and Israel were friendly in the days of David and Solomon, they later drifted apart. The Tyrians then later sold Jews as slaves to the Greeks and to the Edomites. (Joel 3:4–8; Amos 1:9–10) This entire chapter is a lamentation describing Tyre as a very glorious and great trade ship destroyed by the high seas.

The prophecies set forth in chapter 26 through 28 were fulfilled literally, and with unmistakable clarity (Isaiah 23; Jer. 47:4), reminding us that everything in the Word of God will come to pass — exactly as God has detailed it. May we receive that reminder today as a blessed promise — and a stern warning!

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the One who shall “set glory in the land of the living” during the Millennium — Ezekiel 26:20

## WEEK 36, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: EZEKIEL 28-32

### OVERVIEW:

God's judgment upon the prince/king of Tyrus (chapter 28); God's judgment upon Pharaoh (chapter 29); God's judgment upon Egypt (chapter 30); the fall of Assyria (chapter 31); a lamentation for Pharaoh/Egypt. (chapter 32)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Chapter 28 concludes God's judgment against Tyre. This passage has been dated shortly before the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar (585–573 B.C.). The prince in view in 28:2 was Ithobal II, who reigned in Tyre during this siege. His bombastic arrogance is demonstrated by the fact that he actually considered himself to be God! (28:2) If the pride that this historical ruler of Tyre was exhibiting sounds familiar, it should — because it was actually being fueled by the same being that at one time said, "I will be like the most high!" (Isa. 14:12–14; Eze. 28:16–17) The precision of the imagery and the verbiage in this passage reveals that this judgment not only refers to the historical ruler of Tyre, but also to the judgment of Lucifer himself!

Ezekiel mentions that this "prince" was wiser than Daniel (28:3), which indicates that there was obviously some supernatural power enabling him, but it also indicates that Daniel was well-known throughout the world by this time. When Ezekiel made this statement, Daniel would have already served in Nebuchadnezzar's court for an estimated 25 years.

While Ezekiel states that this "prince" has been successful in accumulating wealth, he also lets us know that it was his pride that brought about God's judgment. (28:6) The demise of the prince is prophesied in 28:10: "Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God." Note that the invasion of Tyre by Babylon was also prophesied in Jeremiah 27:1–7.

The word "moreover" in 28:11 marks a transition in this account, revealing to us that Ezekiel is about to go further in his condemnation of the ruler. The careful reader will observe that this particular ruler is referred to as "the king" (28:12) — rather than "the prince." (28:2) While it is true that the terms "king" and "prince" are often used interchangeably in Scripture, it is also true that secular history does not record a "king" of Tyre, only a "prince." Why the distinction? Why did Ezekiel change terms?

The answer lies in the identity of this "king." This king is said to be "full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." (28:11) While the case may be made that this description could refer to a mortal man in some sense, the next phrase cannot. This physical, earthly king had certainly not been — and could not have been "in Eden the garden of God!" Some scholars suggest that Ezekiel was simply referring to a garden that was so beautiful it could be compared to Eden. The only problem with that interpretation, is that it is very simply not what the text says! This "king" to whom the Lord was speaking, had literally been in Eden! It is apparent that the Lord by the mouth of Ezekiel is no longer speaking to the ruler of Tyre, but speaking "through the physical ruler" — "to the spiritual ruler" that at that time was "working through him!" Ezekiel is actually speaking to a being who had been in Eden over 3,000 years prior to this prophecy — none other than "King Lucifer" (Satan) himself! And lest that interpretation sound far-fetched, recognize that this is not the only time in scripture when the word of the Lord spoke "to Satan"... as he was speaking to a literal, physical man!" Do you recall that in our Lord's earthly ministry, when looking directly at Peter, and responding to what Peter had just spoken, Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, SATAN!" (See Matt. 16:22–23) Obviously, Peter had not at that moment turned into Satan incarnate — rather, Jesus was speaking to the spiritual power that was operating in him and through him at that moment. This is what is happening in Ezekiel 28:11–ff.

So, what Ezekiel 28:11–17 actually provides for us, is a very enlightening description of Lucifer (meaning “light-bearer”) before his fall. Verse 13 lets us know that God had specifically created him with precious stones and musical instruments woven into the very composition of his being. The precious stones were obviously part of his composition so that he might fulfill his role as the “light-bearer” — reflecting and refracting the light of God into every color of the rainbow throughout the entire universe as it passed through his jewels. The musical instruments that also comprised his makeup were apparently given so that he might fulfill his role as the “worship leader” of the “sons of God” — as he would provide the music to which the “sons of God” would sing in praise to the Lord. (Job 38:4,7)

Notice that 28:17 also refers to Lucifer as the “anointed cherub” — who was the epitome of perfection until iniquity was found in him. In Isaiah 14:13–14, Isaiah details that his “iniquity” was expressed through the declaration in his heart of his infamous five “I WILL’s:”

- “I WILL ascend into heaven”
- “I WILL exalt my throne above the stars of God”
- “I WILL sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north”
- “I WILL ascend above the heights of the clouds”
- “I WILL be like the most High.”

Note also that the ruler of Tyre not only pictures Lucifer, but the coming Antichrist. Within this chapter we find this ruler described as:

1. A man. (28:2)
2. A prophet. (28:3)
3. A king. (28:2,11)
4. A priest. (28:13 — as symbolized by the precious stones which were also worn by priests in the O.T.)

This ruler represents the presence of Satan (who was once in Eden), personified through a man who will seek to counterfeit the offices of a prophet, priest, and king. In 28:17–19, the judgment upon this man is also revealed. God will one day bring “fire” from within this adversary (the Antichrist) to devour him. God tells him that he will be reduced to ashes and scattered for the world to see, and “never shalt thou be anymore.” (28:19) The “man” who is the rightful Prophet, Priest, and King — who is the very “God-Man” Himself — will defeat him! This chapter ends with a promise to Israel concerning the millennial reign of this “Man” — our glorious Lord Jesus Christ! (28:25–26)

Chapters 29 through 32 record God’s judgment against the nation of Egypt. Keep in mind, Israel had turned to Egypt for help against Babylon contrary to God’s instruction. (Jer. 42:14–22; 43:7–11) Egypt had been successful in causing the Babylonians to lift the siege against Jerusalem (Jer. 37:5–7), however, in time, Egypt returned to their homeland and Jerusalem was eventually invaded and burned. (Jer. 37:8–10)

In 29:17–20, once again, Egypt is falling under the condemnation of God — and once again, God is using Nebuchadnezzar to accomplish His will. From a historical perspective, Nebuchadnezzar was running out of resources as he continued to wage war against Tyre. (29:18) God empowered him to conquer the land of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar used the spoils to pay his army to continue to fight. Chapter 29 ends with a prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ — describing Him as “the horn of the house of Israel” that would “bud forth.” (29:21)

In chapter 31, once again, God addresses Satan by speaking to and through a man. This time, the man was Pharaoh. (31:1–9) In this passage, God likens Satan to a tree in Eden that stood above all of the other trees (31:5) — and talks about how the other trees of Eden envied him. (31:8–9) During this same time period, Daniel also uses the metaphor of a tree to describe Nebuchadnezzar, who is a type of the Antichrist. (Dan. 4:10)

Recognize that God chooses to address these Gentile leaders of these Gentile nations (Tyre, Babylon, Egypt) to speak to Satan because the Antichrist's kingdom will be a conglomeration of Gentile nations who will ultimately unite during the Tribulation Period, in an effort to destroy Israel and to rule this world. (Psa. 2:2–3; Rev. 12)

By speaking to Satan through these Gentile leaders, God is continually reminding him that one day, both he and his kingdom will be destroyed. As a preview of what God holds in store for him in his future judgment, God does what He says He will do — and brings each one of these Gentile nations to ashes. We must keep in mind that the entire Bible is all about a battle for a kingdom — and God continues to remind Satan, and us — of exactly how the story is going to end!

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the horn of the house of Israel — Ezekiel 29:21

## WEEK 36, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: EZEKIEL 33-36

### OVERVIEW:

The responsibility of the watchman and the fall of Jerusalem (chapter 33); Wicked shepherds and God's Shepherd (chapter 34); Judgment against Edom (chapter 35); The restoration of Israel. (chapter 36)

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Chapter 33 begins with God's admonition to Ezekiel concerning his responsibility as a watchman for Israel. Once again, God emphasizes that it is not Ezekiel's responsibility to change the heart of the people. It is, however, his responsibility to proclaim His truth.

Because of Ezekiel's warning, the children of Israel considered their situation hopeless. (33:10) However, within God's admonition, we also find His mercy. As we have been reading the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel against Israel for the last several weeks, it may begin to seem that God takes pleasure in inflicting judgment on His people. Recognize, however, that nothing could be further from the truth! God reminds Ezekiel (and us!) that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked — but desires that the wicked would repent and live. (33:11)

May we also recognize, that our responsibility to our lost friends and neighbors is no different than Ezekiel's responsibility to his kinsman. We, too, are watchmen, entrusted with the responsibility to warn those who are presently on a collision course with God's wrath — to turn from their sin and turn to Christ (1 Thes. 1:11), and begin walking in the statutes of life and live. (33:11–16) Like Ezekiel, we are seated on the wall of a city, as it were, knowing full well God's judgment is imminent. Those asleep in the city are our own family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. God forbid that we would be silent. We would do well to ask ourselves — who have we warned of God's impending judgment this week? And with whom have we shared the incredible message of God's mercy and grace through the gospel of Christ?

Note also, that chapter 33 reveals the unfathomable depths of man's pride. Rather than responding to Ezekiel's message in repentance, the children of Israel actually had the audacity to question God's fairness in how He exercises judgment! (33:17–20) This is the typical response of man to the reproof of God's message. To this day, we still hear people questioning God with questions like, "How could a loving God send people to hell?" We must recognize that questions such as this and others like them — are nothing more than man's attempt to refuse take responsibility for his own sin. God makes very clear that regardless of their criticism of Him, however, that every man will be judged after his own ways! (33:20)

For years, Ezekiel had warned that Jerusalem would eventually fall to Babylon. In 33:21, one who had escaped Jerusalem notified Ezekiel that it had finally happened. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. (2 Chron. 36:19) Before the messenger even arrived, however, Ezekiel knew that Jerusalem had fallen. Verses 23–29 record God's word to Ezekiel informing him of His judgment the night before the messenger came. Ezekiel further warns those who were spared in the destruction of Jerusalem and scattered in the land that they were still in the path of God's impending judgment! (33:27–28)

The end of chapter 33 contains a short commentary on how many of God's people in every generation speak against their leaders. Even those in exile with Ezekiel were talking against him. (33:30) Historically, it has been one of the enemies greatest tactics against any congregation of God's people. God makes Ezekiel aware of what is actually taking place behind the apparent success in his "meetings!" God tells Ezekiel, "Sure, multitudes all flock together to

be in your presence... and sure, they all look like they're hanging on every word... and sure, it looks like something wonderful is taking place — the only problem is, they're not going to do a single thing you tell 'em!" God goes on to explain to him, "Oh, they talk a big game about how much they love — but their hearts have no interest whatsoever in following Me or My ways. Their hearts are only desirous of following after their own covetousness. The only thing they really love — is themselves!" God tells Ezekiel that he was really nothing more than the people's entertainment — and that nothing he said would change the way the people lived. I hate to sound so negative, but what God is describing to Ezekiel sounds a whole lot like what He could say to many pastor's in these last days! God help us! God tells Ezekiel, however, that once His judgment had been poured out, His people would certainly know that a prophet had been among them! (33:31–33)

Chapter 34 contains Ezekiel's condemnation of Israel's leaders. Instead of protecting and providing for God's people, they had only served themselves. They had failed to care for God's people — and had failed to meet their needs. (34:2–6) Because of the failure of Israel's leadership, the children of Israel had been scattered. (34:5–6) God says, however, that He would personally seek out His lost sheep and save them. (34:11–16 c.f. Matt. 9:36) There is still a future restoration for the children of Israel.

God then promises that He will set up "one shepherd" — even His servant David. (34:23–24) This is a reference to the Shepherd who would come from David's lineage, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ! (John 10:11) Note that the passage is pointing specifically to Christ's ministry during His millennial reign.

Chapter 35 contains a prophecy against Edom, which is called Seir. (Gen. 32:3) Mount Seir covers the mountainous area settled by the Edomites. This prophecy has already been fulfilled. Edom was first defeated by Babylon, then by Medo-Persia, and then in 126 B.C. by John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean, who compelled the Edomites to become Jewish proselytes. Since that time, there has been no trace of the Edomites.

Chapter 36 speaks to the restoration of Israel. Even in the midst of their exile and judgment, God asks creation to remember His promise to Israel. (36:1) Because of their disobedience, Israel would be scattered — but God also promises that they would be restored! God specifically says in Ezekiel 36:24 that after they had been scattered, He would gather the children of Israel out of all of the countries of the world, and bring them again into their own land. This was fulfilled in 1948 when the Jews returned to their homeland after World War II. It should be noted, that never in the history of civilization has any people ever been able to maintain their identity without a homeland. The Jews were miraculously able to do it, however, so that this specific prophecy could be fulfilled! The restoration of Israel is one of the greatest proofs that the Bible is, in fact, God's Word. Prior to 1948, many scholars scoffed at those who believed that Israel would be physically gathered together again as stated in Ezekiel 36:24. After 1948, however, it isn't hard to see at all. Blessed are those who don't have to see to believe! (Joh. 20:29)

Ezekiel 36:25–38 speaks to the restoration of Israel in the millennium. Recognize that we are presently living in that tiny "space" between Ezekiel 36:24 and 36:25! "But this I say, brethren, the time is short!" (1 Cor. 7:29)

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the ONE SHEPHERD — Ezekiel 34:23–24 (1 Pet. 5:4)