

Jeremiah 11-12

Good evening, Church.

Tonight, we will continue our journey through the Old Testament here on Wednesday Nights.

We are in the prophet Jeremiah's writings.

We have come to Chapter 11 and will go through Chapter 12.

Let's pray, and we will get into it...

We have come into a new section here in the book of Jeremiah.

The prophet completed his message at the gate of the Temple.

We enter into a time when Josiah, a godly King, died.

Remember, he was used to bring reformation to Judah, and a temporary spiritual reform took place.

But the prophet, through that time, was sent by God to proclaim destruction and judgment.

Because God saw into the heart of it all, the people did not truly repent but were more going with what was popular at the time.

They put on an outward religious appearance and concealed their inward treacherous hearts.

Understand that there is no higher sin in God's Word than hypocrisy and religious pretending.

God wants our hearts; He must have our hearts, or none of this is worth anything.

Josiah, the godly king in the end, disobeyed the Lord and took his army out to fight against the Egyptians, and his disobedience led to his death.

Then, what the prophet knew to be true came true, and as soon as this godly king was gone, the people were again drawn away from Yahweh to their idols.

Jehoahaz took the throne of Judah, but he was an evil man, and he immediately began to undo all that his father had done.

He only reigned for a couple of months before he was taken captive in Egypt, and then Jehoiakim, his brother, took over where he left off.

And under Jehoiakim, the nation of Judah began its final descent into ultimate rebellion against their God.

They fell headlong into moral decay, leading to their demise at the hand of Babylon, as Jeremiah warned.

Can you imagine living in godly times, where the Temple Worship was revived, and things were prosperous and sound, and there at the Temple, Jeremiah is warning that disaster is coming?

No wonder, in his early ministry, he had no converts.

Now that the nation's heart will be rock hard in its rebellion, it will be even more challenging for God's faithful prophet.

Jeremiah will be sent to preach to the people in the following two chapters on the broken covenant.

When God called the nation of Israel out of Egypt, He established this covenant. This agreement would allow

for fellowship with Him and an enjoyment of all the benefits of this special relationship.

He would be their God and watch over, protect, and provide for them.

Blessings were promised to them, and their enemies would be defeated before them.

God would establish them as a nation.

All this was conditioned upon them keeping their end of the covenant, keeping the Law that God had established for them.

God promised that if they abided by the Law He had given them, He would bring blessing upon them.

But if they broke the covenant, God clarified what would befall them.

Deut. 30:1-3 “Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, 2 and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today,

you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3 that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you.”

They would be driven out of the land into captivity if they broke the covenant.

As long as they obeyed, God promised blessing.

And there were these blessings and curses laid out for the people.

After laying out the immense blessings, God would bring to the nation for their obedience... God said this in....

Lev 26:14-34 'But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, 15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, 16 I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the

eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.

18 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. 19 I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. 20 And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.

21 'Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. 22 I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate.

23 'And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, 24 then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times

for your sins. 25 And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. 26 When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.

27 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, 28 then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. 29 You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. 30 I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and My soul shall abhor you. 31 I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not smell the fragrance of your sweet aromas. 32 I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. 33 I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a

sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. 34 Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

If they do not obey and they break the covenant with the Lord, we see this progression of disaster until they are ultimately driven out of the Land and scattered.

And the time has come in Judah's history for this to unfold.

Moses warned them over a thousand years earlier about what would happen.

God gave them mercy, a chance after chance.

He is so long-suffering and is just waiting for repentance.

He brought droughts and pestilences; they were defeated in battle but still did not repent.

And we are now where the covenant is broken; although they could obey and be blessed above measure, they chose to rebel.

You see, mankind was created for fellowship with God.

That fellowship was based upon man's obedience.

God put all the trees of the Garden of Eden before Adam and told him to eat freely, except that one tree.

But he disobeyed and ate the forbidden fruit.

And our merciful God still desired fellowship with man, and God later established the Law, and if mankind could abide by that Law, He would be their God, and they would be His people.

But again, as we see here in Jeremiah, man failed.

And really, the whole history of Israel was one of ups and downs, seasons of obedience, and then disobedience.

So, ultimately, they would be driven from the land.

Interestingly, when we get to the twelfth chapter, God will promise to bring them back again.

Israel's history very clearly teaches us that man could never live up to the Law; our sinful nature always comes up short.

Today, we relate to God through the New Covenant, which opens up fellowship with God again.

Today, we must believe in the completed work of redemption through Jesus Christ.

We admit that we can never keep that ominous Law, and we repent of our sins and come to Jesus, who gives us New Life, His Holy Spirit, and we are brought into a close relationship with the Living God through this New Covenant.

We praise God for this New Covenant because we could not live up to the Old.

Let's consider Judah's failure now as Jeremiah begins in verse 1 of Chapter 11...

The Broken Covenant

11:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2 "Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; 3 and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant 4 which I commanded your

fathers in the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God,' 5 that I may establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers, to give them 'a land flowing with milk and honey,' as it is this day."'''

And I answered and said, "So be it, Lord."

Now, we see that the prophet is sent throughout the country and the city of Jerusalem with this message from God.

Remember when the Israelites came into the Promised Land? They came to Shechem, and some tribes stood over on Mt. Ebal, and the other half stood on Mt. Gerizim to pronounce the blessings and curses of the covenant.

The people there made it known that they understood the conditions of the covenant and promised to keep it.

But despite their vow, they fell extremely short.

And the Lord, through Jeremiah, is reminding them about the ramifications... **Jer.11:3**"Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant 4 which I commanded your fathers in the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you;

Because the Old Covenant depended on their obedience, they now had to feel the weight of their rebellion.

Today, the curse was taken for us upon the cross...

The New Covenant is based upon our faith in what Christ has done for us.

Verse 6...

6 Then the Lord said to me, "Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying: 'Hear the words of this covenant and do them.

They are instructed here to listen and do all God is saying.

The Word of God is one of the world's greatest pieces of literature, the #1 Best Seller of all time.

But if we only read it to read it, we are missing the power of the Word of God.

We experience this Power when we live it out.

James wrote **James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**

Look now at verses 7-8...

7 For I earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, "Obey My voice." 8 Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone followed the dictates of his evil heart; therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but which they have not done."

Throughout their history, all along the way, God was crying unto them to follow and obey, to keep this covenant.

But they turned a deaf ear to Him and followed the dictates of their hearts.

God tells them now that the curses will come...

Verse 9...

9 And the Lord said to me, "A conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10 They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers."

God tells the prophet here that a conspiracy has taken over the men of Judah and Jerusalem.

Maybe this was a spiritually coordinated conspiracy designed by the Deceiver and the spiritual forces of wickedness in high places.

The apostasy they were lost in was part of a deep-laid plot to turn the people's hearts away from the Lord.

The Canaanite fertility rites were so attractive to the sensual nature of the Jews that they could not resist the temptation and allure of it all.

Understand that today, there is a spiritual conspiracy still taking place by our enemy...

He uses our flesh and carnal nature to try to steal our hearts away from the Lord.

The Canaanite practices may not be used, but now the Deceiver has screens in front of our faces all day long with images and depictions that appeal the same way.

Look at verse 11 now...

11 Therefore thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will surely bring calamity on them which they will not be able to escape; and though they cry out to Me, I will not listen to them. 12 Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they offer incense, but they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble. 13 For according to the number of your cities were your gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of

Jerusalem you have set up altars to that shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal.

14 "So do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble.

There seems to be this place that the Scriptures show us where a man's heart has hardened so much toward the working of the Spirit that he no longer hears the voices of God and that man goes beyond the point of repentance.

Jesus, in His ministry, quotes the prophet Isaiah and says of the Pharisees, **John 12:39 Therefore they could not believe...**

It is concerning to me that Jesus did not say that they would not believe but could not.

So, can a person reject the Lord's Grace so much that they reach a point of no return?

We see here in Jeremiah that God said they had gone beyond it.

They would cry now, and He will not listen.

They will pray to Him, but it will be futile.

God said they had as many gods as they did cities.

There were altars on every street.

God challenges them to call out to those false gods, who were nothing, and see if they could save them.

The Lord their God would also be silent, but only to express His judgment against His people.

Of all the curses a person can experience in this life, the most terrible is the silence of God in our time of trouble.

We see there in verse 14 that God tells Jeremiah not to even pray for the people.

He also told him this back in Chapter 7, and He will tell Jeremiah this again in Chapter 14.

They had gone so far in their rebellion that God said don't even pray for them.

Think about that... at an earlier point in Israel's history, when Samuel was acting as Israel's final judge, the

people came to him demanding that he appoint a king over them, like all the other nations.

They were done with the Theocracy that they enjoyed up to that point, where God was their King; they wanted a monarchy where man would rule over them.

They were not supposed to be like the other nations; God set them apart to be their Ruler.

Samuel went to the Lord, who told Samuel to do as they demanded.

Samuel then returned to the people and gave them a scathing rebuke for rejecting God as their King.

And as he finished his denunciation of the nation, the Lord sent thunder in a great display, and the people trembled at their decision.

1 Sam 12:19 And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves."

Samuel replied 1 Sam 12:23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in

ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.

And even though the nation was in a time of backsliding, the prophet was still praying on their behalf.

But in Jeremiah's day, they have gone so far from God that God does not want Jeremiah to pray for them any longer.

It would be useless...

These were tragic times... to be so far from God that there is no longer sense in praying for the person.

I would make this note: if you are here tonight or listening online, and you are worried that you are too far gone, that God is through with you, and that there is no more Grace available.

I believe that just by the fact that you are here or listening, God is still actively working in your life, trying to get your attention, speaking to you, and calling you to Himself.

You don't want to miss this window of opportunity...

Look at verse 15...

15 "What has My beloved to do in My house, Having done lewd deeds with many? And the holy flesh has passed from you. When you do evil, then you rejoice.

16 The Lord called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit. With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, And its branches are broken.

17 "For the Lord of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced doom against you for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke Me to anger in offering incense to Baal."

The Peace Offering or Fellowship Offering was one of communion with God and each other.

They would bring their sacrifice and roast it, and the people would sit together in fellowship with God. It was an act of worship, and it was called the holy flesh, as mentioned in verse 15.

But they were playing the part of an unfaithful spouse with the false gods, and God was wondering why they even bothered with the worship in His House.

The Lord reminds them that they were likened to an Olive Tree, but now the branches were broken off, which were once beautiful but now desolate.

They were no longer fruitful or productive, and they were going to be removed.

Paul used this imagery in Romans Chapter 11, describing how God cut off the natural branches of the Jews because they were no longer being fruitful unto the Lord.

God grafted in the unnatural branches, we Gentiles; and we became the beneficiaries of the covenant blessings given to the Jews.

Paul warned, however, **Rom 11:20-24 Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. 22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness,**

if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

Paul borrowed this image from Jeremiah of the Olive Tree.

Paul would go on to say that a Deliverer would come out of Zion to turn away ungodliness out of Zion.

Under this New Covenant of Grace, Jew and Gentile are welcome to come by faith in Jesus.

But one day, Jesus will come a second time, and the Jews, as a whole, will come to faith in Jesus.

Today, blindness is mostly over their eyes; although some come to faith, most do not.

One day, God will turn His attention back toward the Jews.

In Jeremiah's day, however, they were about to be cut off.

Verse 18 now...

Jeremiah's Life Threatened

18 Now the Lord gave me knowledge of it, and I know it; for You showed me their doings. 19 But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more."

God had given Jeremiah a special insight into what was going on.

And because of this, there were those plotting against Jeremiah, trying to take his life.

Like a lamb, he was innocent and did not realize that they were leading him to the slaughter.

And there, even in his hometown, people were conspiring against the prophet of God.

Verse 20...

20 But, O Lord of hosts, You who judge righteously, Testing the mind and the heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them, For to You I have revealed my cause.

21 "Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life, saying, 'Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, lest you die by our hand' — 22 therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; 23 and there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring catastrophe on the men of Anathoth, even the year of their punishment.'"

We see here Jeremiah called to the Lord to wipe them out...

This is interesting... Today, it seems it is popular to be a soft boy in Christian circles...

When people do wicked things, people want to bless them... “You cannot get too riled up; turn the other cheek.”

I am studying Nehemiah in one of my classes, and I love his zeal for the ministry when things get out of whack.

Neh. 13:25 So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God.

I think there is a time when Christian men have to stand up and say enough is enough.

When I was in Ukraine, for many reasons, sometimes unnecessary reasons, kids that were born with mental illnesses or deformities were severely abused, and some were locked in closets and left to starve.

There were armed Christian men who busted down doors to rescue these Children from those situations and take them to ministries that would adequately take care of them.

There comes a time when men must stand up and do the right thing in the name of the Lord.

Jeremiah here is asking for vengeance and to see it with his own eyes.

He was being threatened to stop prophesying, or he would be killed.

He did not stop and kept preaching the Word of God, and here, he even asked for retribution for the men of Anathoth from his hometown.

We don't see godly men emasculated in God's Word...

They were men of strength and boldness... They were not cowards or Pacifists...

Look now, starting in verse 1 of Chapter 12...

Jeremiah's Question

12:1 Righteous are You, O Lord, when I plead with You; Yet let me talk with You about Your judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? 2 You have planted them, yes, they have taken root; They grow, yes, they

bear fruit. You are near in their mouth But far from their mind.

Jeremiah asks the Lord the age-old question: "If God is just, fair, and good, why do the wicked prosper, and His people end up being mistreated?"

If God is really in control, why does He allow His followers to suffer and the wicked get away with evil?

This is a recurring theme from the Old Testament writers.

I can't say that this question is fully answered...

Job did not get an answer; David or Asaph indeed did not, and here Jeremiah will not.

But the premise is essential: Jeremiah declares, "Righteous, you are."

Asaph started his questioning with the same premise in **Ps. 73:1 Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart.**

He will say that he saw the wicked prosper, but he was almost wiped out.

But he begins with the affirmation: I know God is good, but I don't understand how a good God allows this other stuff to happen.

I think it is okay to question things without challenging God.

If we have questions for God, begin with the affirmation, "I know you are righteous, I know that you are good, but can I ask you about your judgments on this Lord?"

The ultimate conclusion is to look at the end of all things.

Now, the wicked seem to be prospering, but in the end, they will face an eternity apart from God.

Now, the righteous will suffer, but we have an eternity with God in the end.

Verse 3...

3 But You, O Lord, know me; You have seen me, And You have tested my heart toward You. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, And prepare them for the day of slaughter. 4 How long will the land mourn, And

the herbs of every field wither? The beasts and birds are consumed, For the wickedness of those who dwell there, Because they said, "He will not see our final end."

The people thought they were going to wipe Jeremiah out without him seeing.

Jeremiah knows that God will deal with these people in the future, but he is asking God to do it now.

He wants instant justice.

It was the patience of God, the longsuffering of God, that was getting to Jeremiah.

And this is how it usually goes for us, too...

We enjoy the patience of God when He is dealing with us, but we look out at the wickedness of this world, and we want Him to act now!

He is patient with all men and women... And this is a good thing because we are reminded that He is patient with us...

When you ask God to act quickly with others, remember how patient He was with you, and you will find Grace enough to wait with Him.

Next is a verse my father used to share with me when I would tell him that I was weary in the ministry, growing tired, and people were wearing on me.

The Lord Answers Jeremiah

5 "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of Jordan?

God tells Jeremiah that he has not seen anything yet.

If the ministry is too difficult for him now, he won't last through what will come.

It will only get worse.

How are you going to contend with the horses?

Of course, Jeremiah won't be able to do it on his strength, and neither can we.

All of us are growing in our Christian walk, and understand to grow in our faith, this walk never gets easier...

The challenges and testing get harder and more difficult to make us into better servants of God.

We have to learn today to draw on the strength of the Lord while we are running with the footmen so we can contend with the horses later on.

If you think you have problems in times of peace, what will you do when it really overflows in your life?

Learn to draw on the strength of the Lord today because this journey will only amp up.

Verse 6...

6 For even your brothers, the house of your father,
Even they have dealt treacherously with you; Yes, they
have called a multitude after you. Do not believe them,
Even though they speak smooth words to you.

We see two more significant challenges that Jeremiah will face here.

Greater than the men of Anathoth coming against him will be his own family turning against him.

Greater than the treacherous words of his enemies will be the trickery through smooth, flattery words that would be used against him.

Often, a more significant challenge for the servant of God is handling praise and flattery...

I have learned those that flatter the most will soon turn on you the harshest.

Verse 7...

7 "I have forsaken My house, I have left My heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies. 8 My heritage is to Me like a lion in the forest; It cries out against Me; Therefore I have hated it. 9 My heritage is to Me like a speckled vulture; The vultures all around are against her. Come, assemble all the beasts of the field, Bring them to devour!

God still talks of this rebellious nation as the dearly beloved of His soul.

God has a stubborn love for humanity.

He does not want to let go despite all the evil.

He hated what they were doing; they were crying out against God like lions, and God hated what they were doing, but He still loved them.

God often hates what the person is doing, but His love remains for the person.

God's people are surrounded, like a speckled vulture, being pecked by all those who want to devour.

Chicken coup analogy: the weak would be pecked to death.

God was using the nations to draw them back to Himself.

Verse 10...

10 "Many rulers have destroyed My vineyard, They have trodden My portion underfoot; They have made My pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. 11 They have made it desolate; Desolate, it mourns to Me; The whole land is made desolate, Because no one takes it to heart. 12 The plunderers have come On all the desolate heights in the wilderness, For the sword of

the Lord shall devour From one end of the land to the other end of the land; No flesh shall have peace. 13 They have sown wheat but reaped thorns; They have put themselves to pain but do not profit. But be ashamed of your harvest Because of the fierce anger of the Lord."

When the judgment comes upon the land of Judah, it will make the land desolate because there will be no one there to care for it.

God spoke of the invading Babylonian armies, warning them not to take too much pleasure in their harvest upon the cities and land of Judah.

They, too, would ultimately have to reckon with the fierce anger of the Lord.

Verse 14...

14 Thus says the Lord: "Against all My evil neighbors who touch the inheritance which I have caused My people Israel to inherit — behold, I will pluck them out of their land and pluck out the house of Judah from among them. 15 Then it shall be, after I have plucked

them out, that I will return and have compassion on them and bring them back, everyone to his heritage and everyone to his land. 16 And it shall be, if they will learn carefully the ways of My people, to swear by My name, 'As the Lord lives,' as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they shall be established in the midst of My people. 17 But if they do not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation," says the Lord.

Once again, we see the incredible love of God and His mercy. He will bring His people back into the Land.

He will restore once again.

I don't know where you are tonight, but maybe you have been a long time away from God, and you know He is calling you back.

You have spent some time in captivity, bound in sin, and here you are tonight...

Respond to the Lord tonight and be healed; come to Him and be restored.

Our God is patient, longsuffering, and abundant in Mercy...

There is Grace enough for you tonight, no matter where you have come from or what is going on in your life.

God's goal is restoration. He is a fixer and a healer, ready and willing to work in your life.

Let's pray...