

# *Jeremiah*

## *The Crisis Continues*

Lesson #7 for November 14, 2015

Scriptures: Jeremiah 9; 10:1-15; 26; Romans 1:25; Acts 5:34-41; 17:30.

1. As we suggested back at the beginning of this series, the book of Jeremiah is almost an autobiography of the life of Jeremiah. This lesson continues the challenges we studied in our last lesson. As we noted in lesson 5, the book is not organized chronologically.
2. As we look back on the experiences of Jeremiah and the people of Jerusalem, their reluctance to follow the advice of Jeremiah seems incredibly foolish and sad. God continued to call for repentance and offer them forgiveness. But, we need to remember that 1 Corinthians 10:11 tells us that what happened in the Scriptures happened for our benefit and our instruction, especially those of us who live near the end of this earth's history. Have we learned anything?
3. Read Jeremiah 9. This chapter is primarily a funeral lament. God through Jeremiah was lamenting the terrible things that had happened to His people. But, He also outlined why those things were happening. The people were unfaithful, liars, dishonest, continually doing evil, refusing to acknowledge God, deceitful, untrustworthy, slanderers, violent, deceitful, with tongues like deadly arrows, etc. (Compare 2 Kings 17:7-23.) What should God do with people behaving like that? What would God say about our world today? He repeated the warning that had been given many times, saying that when the people had abandoned God and stubbornly worshiped Baal, there was nothing more even God could do for them. So, God concluded by telling them to teach their children how to mourn because death was coming. "Dead bodies are scattered everywhere like piles of manure on the fields." (Jeremiah 9:22, *GNB*)
4. So, what was God's advice after this lament? Jeremiah 9:23-24 is a very interesting response.
  - <sup>23</sup> The LORD says, "The wise should not boast of their wisdom, nor the strong of their strength, nor the rich of their wealth.
  - <sup>24</sup> If anyone wants to boast, he should boast that he knows and understands me, because my love is constant, and I do what is just and right.

These are the things that please me. I, the LORD, have spoken."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation* (2nd ed., Jeremiah 9:23–24). New York: American Bible Society.
5. What are the implications of these verses? Do we ever want to boast of our wisdom? Or, strength? Or, wealth? Do you know anyone who boasts of his knowledge about God? Should we? Think of the implications of the following quotation.

Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and to the world. Few think of its relation to God. Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. **The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God.** Every departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him. When there came upon Israel the

calamities that were the sure result of separation from God,—subjugation by their enemies, cruelty, and death,—it is said that “His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.” “In all their affliction He was afflicted: . . . and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” Judges 10:16; Isaiah 63:9.—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 263.1. [Bold type is added.]

6. Every time we sin, we not only damage ourselves, but also we hurt and grieve God. So, what does the cross tell us about the loving-kindness, wisdom, justice, and righteousness of God?
7. When people are being killed right and left not only by enemy armies but also by people who should have been their friends, what protection is there for anyone?
8. Is there a difference between God’s justice and His righteousness? The cross deals especially with God’s vindication—proof that He is the One who has told us the truth about sin leading to death! The cross was not primarily about us, but about Him.
9. Read Jeremiah 10:1-15. Compare Isaiah 44:9-20. When God started to make fun of idols and those who produced them, how does that make you feel? Is it a time to laugh? Or, cry? Idolatry in any form is foolish. The only thing worth worshiping is a God who is worth it. Is God just making fun of idolaters because He does not know what else to do? Or, does He recognize the truth that we become like what we worship and admire: “May all who made them and who trust in them become like the idols they have made.” Psalm 115:2-8 (*GNB*). God was weeping over the destruction—the self-destruction—of His children. Why would people choose to worship an inanimate object that they have made with their own hands as if it could help them instead of worshiping the Almighty Creator God? Why were the Jews so attracted to the pagan fertility cults of their neighbors? Did they really think it would increase their wealth by improving their crops or making their animals more productive? Did they have any real evidence for that?
10. What is attractive about sin in our day? You can do what your selfishness wants! Does the Devil promise more prosperity? More leisure? More entertainment? More popularity?
11. Read Jeremiah 26:1-6. Compare Jeremiah 7:1-4, 18; 44:17-25. The people of Jerusalem were convinced that the God who had helped build Solomon’s Temple would never allow it to be destroyed. So, they thought that by sticking close to that temple, they would be safe even though they were worshiping their fertility gods right inside that temple! Then, in Jeremiah 26, Jeremiah directly attacked that idea saying that if they continued to disobey God, that temple would be destroyed just as was the temple at Shiloh. (See 1 Samuel 4.) God cannot bless us in disobedience. The Jews were doing things far worse than what the Canaanites that they had driven out or killed had done! (2 Kings 21:11)
12. Read 2 Chronicles 6:37-39; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Ezekiel 14:6; Matthew 3:2; Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30; and Romans 3:23. All through Scripture, God has appealed to us to turn away from our sinful ways, repent, and come back to Him. Finally, God reaches the place where He says repeatedly I cannot bless you because you are obeying Me; rather, I must do it for My own name’s sake. Isaiah 48:9-11. Compare Daniel 9:16-19. See the handout “For My Own Name’s Sake” under Teachers Guides, Major Prophets, and Ezekiel, at [www.Theox.org](http://www.Theox.org).
13. Is God desperate in our day to do something for His own name’s sake? Are we representing Him correctly? Or, is He going to have to do something to try to preserve His own reputation in our day in spite of us? Have we ever prayed for God’s reputation? Do we deserve punishment as suggested by the *Bible Study Guide*?
14. What was the response of the priests and the prophets and most of the people when they heard Jeremiah saying that Solomon’s Temple would be destroyed as Shiloh had been? They

wanted to kill him. (Jeremiah 26:7-11) And what was Jeremiah's response? Go ahead and kill me; but, understand that the words I have spoken are from God. And if you kill me, you are killing an innocent man who was sent to give you this warning. (Jeremiah 26:12-15)

15. What reason could one possibly give for the response of the Jewish leaders—the priests and the prophets—who wanted to kill Jeremiah as recorded in Jeremiah 9?
16. In most parts of the world today, we are not being threatened with death if we claim to be Christians. Is that because we are not representing God as we should? How do you explain 2 Timothy 3:12? “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (*GNB*)
17. Wasn't it supposed to be the work of the priests and the prophets to lead people back to God? Shouldn't they have recognized Jeremiah's calling and repeated his messages? Finally, some of the leaders and some of the people turned to the priests and prophets and repeated Jeremiah's words that he was speaking on behalf of the Lord their God, and they insisted that he should not be put to death. Then, they reminded their friends of the experience of Micah, who was not killed, in the days of Hezekiah. Jeremiah was not preaching a new message; he was just repeating what had been said more than 100 years earlier by Micah.
18. Unfortunately, Jeremiah 26:20-23 tells us that King Jehoiakim pursued another prophet by the name of Uriah and had him killed and his body thrown out into the public burial ground. So, those threats against Jeremiah were not idle ones. Jeremiah 26:24 (*GNB*) says: “But because I had the support of Ahikam son of Shaphan, I was not handed over to the people and killed.” Jeremiah had at least a few important people on his side. Unfortunately, that was not the end of the hatred of the priests and the prophets against Jeremiah. His death was temporarily averted, but their anger and desire for revenge only increased. Compare the story of Stephen as recorded in Acts 7. If you can not win the argument, kill your opponent!
19. There have been other times in sacred history when someone with a little bit of sense spoke up on behalf of some of God's faithful people. Read Acts 5:34-41 where it is recorded that Gamaliel spoke out in defense of Peter and John.

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us” (*1 John 3:16*). No doubt we can look around in nature, in human relationships, and in the marvels of the creation itself and get a view of God's love, however much sin has damaged that creation as well as our ability to appreciate or even read it correctly. But at the cross, veils were torn off, and the world was given the starkest and sharpest revelation possible of that love—a love so great that it led to what Ellen G. White called “the sundering of the divine powers.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 924. (As quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Friday, November 13.)

20. What was Ellen White talking about when she said that at the cross there was a “sundering of the divine powers”? Is it possible to tear God asunder? What would that mean?
21. As egocentric human beings, we like to focus on what God has done for us. And that is not wrong; but, we know that He did go beyond that. We need to understand the central theme of Scripture and the impact of the great controversy. Would sin have been eliminated completely from the universe if Adam and Eve had not sinned? What about the rebellion that started in heaven? (Revelation 12) God would still have had to deal with that even if we had not joined Satan's side. Do we really understand and believe that sin leads to death?
22. We tend to make fun of people who worshiped metal idols, or stone idols, or even animals in ancient times. But, what are we in danger of making into an idol in our day?

23. What exactly should be the role of repentance in our lives on a day-by-day basis? What does *repentance* really mean? The Greek word *metanoia* translated *repentance* means “changing your mind.” God wants us to come into “at-one-ment” with Him—to be “in tune” with Him!
24. Review Jeremiah 9:23-24. What does *to know God* really mean? The word *yada'* was first used in Scripture to describe Adam knowing his wife, and then she gave birth to a son. To really know God means eternal life. (John 17:3) Is God calling on us just to develop an intellectual knowledge of what God is all about? Or, is He calling us to a much more personal and intimate kind of knowing? How can we come to know Someone whom we cannot see or physically hear? With the help of the Holy Spirit, can we understand Him? The Bible is God's story.
25. What would it mean to boast about God in our day? Repeated studies have shown that one of the most effective evangelistic tools that a person can use is to talk about what God has done for him or her. Would that be a kind of boasting about God?
26. How does God feel about those who turn away from Him? How do you understand the funeral lament in Jeremiah 9? Compare Hosea 11:7-8. But, eventually, if we continue running away from God as fast as we can go, God will let us go. (Hosea 4:16-17)
27. Does really knowing God as a Friend impact the way you live? Would your neighbors and family members be able to tell if you are truly God's friend?
28. Read Jeremiah 10:1-15. Compare Romans 1:25. It is God's plan that His love and His character become a part of our lives on a day-by-day basis. We cannot do that on our own. The Holy Spirit must come in and transform us. (*Great Controversy* 555) But, when we refuse to yield to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we will find ourselves worshipping other things—creatures instead of the Creator.
29. People have worshiped the most incredible things down through history. The ancient Egyptians worshiped frogs, flies, and almost anything that seemed to have a prodigious capacity to reproduce. People made idols out of wood, stone, metal, and sometimes beautiful combinations of the these.
30. Some of those ancient peoples probably would have said that they were not really worshipping the metal, the wood, or the stone but rather the “god” behind those materials. What is wrong with worshipping an image to God instead of God directly? (Review Exodus 20:4-6.) We know that today there are large Christian churches that have numerous icons which they worship as representing saints or God. It is sometimes suggested that those icons are necessary because uneducated people need them to understand biblical truths. Is that true? How would you answer someone who made that argument?
31. The weeping of Jeremiah as recorded in Jeremiah 9 was really the weeping of God. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. (John 11:35) But, He was about to change things at that time. His much more serious lament was over Jerusalem as He watched from the top of the Mount of Olives. (Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35) They were ready to make Him king.
32. Are we ready to stand up for God as Jeremiah did? And as Peter, John, and Stephen did? (See Jeremiah 26:17-24; Acts 5:34-41; 7.)
33. Have you ever tried to set aside all earthly distractions such as cell phone, television, iPad, tablet, computer, and television for 24-hours so you could focus on God? How much might that impact us? Would it be worth a try?

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