Jeremiah, chapter 25 and 26. For the many visitors we have this morning, we are going through the prophet Jeremiah. We're determined to complete this series of studies---though I think the devil has been doing all he can to interrupt them. But we continue this morning with chapters 25 and 26.

*The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon)... which Jeremiah, the prophet, spoke to all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. "For 23 years---from the 13th year of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah to this day---the* ***WORD OF THE LORD*** *has come to me; and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have* ***NOT LISTENED****. You have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear, although the Lord persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets saying, "****TURN NOW*** *every one of you from his evil way and wrongdoings, and dwell upon the land which the Lord has given to you and your fathers from of old and from forever. "Do not go after other gods to serve and worship them or* ***PROVOKE ME TO ANGER*** *with the work of your hands. Then, I will do you no harm.*

*"Yet you have not listened to me," says the Lord, "that you might* ***PROVOKE ME TO ANGER*** *with the work of your hands to your own harm. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Because you have not obeyed my words, behold, I will send for the tribes---all the tribes of the north,' says the Lord, 'and for Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon,* ***MY SERVANT****. And I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all these nations roundabout. I will utterly destroy them and make them a* ***HORROR****, a* ***HISSING****, and an everlasting* ***REPROACH****. Moreover, I will banish from them the* ***VOICE*** *of mirth and the* ***VOICE*** *of gladness, the* ***VOICE*** *of the bride groom and the VOICE of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 'This whole land shall become a* ***RUIN*** *and a* ***WASTE****, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon* ***70 YEARS****.*

*'Then, after 70 years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the* ***CHALDEANS*** *for their iniquity,' says the Lord, 'making the land an everlasting waste. I will bring upon that land all the words which I have uttered against it--- everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against* ***ALL*** *the nations---for many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of* ***THEM****, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.' "*

*Thus, the Lord, the God of Israel said to me, "Take from my hand this* ***CUP OF THE WINE OF WRATH****, and make all the nations to whom I send you* ***DRINK IT****. They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword which I'm sending among them."*

*So I took the cup from the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to whom the Lord sent me,* ***DRINK IT****---****JERUSALEM AND THE CITIES OF JUDAH****...its kings and princes---to make them a* ***DESOLATION*** *and a* ***WASTE****, a* ***HISSING*** *and a* ***CURSE****, as at this day.* ***PHARAOH, KING OF EGYPT****...his servants his princes, all his people and all the foreign folk among them; all the kings of the land of* ***UZ****, and all the kings of the land of the* ***PHILISTINES****...Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod;* ***EDOM****,* ***MOAB****, and the sons of* ***AMMON****; all the kings of* ***TYRE****; all the kings of* ***SIDON*** *and the kings of the coastland across the sea;* ***DEDAN****,* ***TEMA****,* ***BUZ****, and all who cut the corners of their hair; all the kings of* ***ARABIA*** *and all the kings of the mixed tribes that dwell in the desert; all the kings of* ***ZIMEI****, all the kings of* ***ELAM*** *and all the kings of* ***MEDIA****; all the kings of the north, far and near---one after another---and* ***ALL*** *the kingdoms of the world which are on the face of the earth. And* ***AFTER THEM****, the king of* ***BABYLON*** *shall drink. Then you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, 'Drink. Be drunk. Vomit. Fall and rise no more because of the sword which I'm sending among you.' "*

*And if they* ***REFUSE*** *to accept the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'You must drink; for behold, I begin to work* ***EVIL*** *at the* ***CITY WHICH IS CALLED BY MY NAME****. And shall* ***YOU*** *go unpunished? You shall* ***NOT*** *go unpunished! For I am summoning a* ***SWORD*** *against all the inhabitants of the earth,' says the Lord of hosts."*

*You therefore shall prophesy against them all these words and say to them, “The Lord will* ***ROAR*** *from on high, and from his holy habitation utter his voice. He will* ***ROAR*** *mightily against his fold and* ***SHOUT****, like those who tread grapes, against ALL the inhabitants of the earth. The clamor will resound to the ends of the earth. For the Lord has an* ***INDICTMENT*** *against the nations. He is entering into* ***JUDGMENT*** *with all flesh; and the* ***WICKED*** *he will put to the* ***SWORD****," says the Lord.*

*Thus says the Lord of Hosts, "Behold,* ***EVIL*** *is going forth from nation to nation and a great* ***TEMPEST*** *is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth. And those slain by the Lord on that day, shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be* ***LAMENTED*** *or* ***GATHERED*** *or* ***BURIED****. They shall be on the surface of the ground.* ***WAIL*** *you shepherds and* ***CRY*** *and* ***ROLL******IN******ASHES****, you lords of the flock, for the days of your* ***SLAUGHTER*** *and* ***DISPERSION*** *have come, and you shall* ***FALL*** *like choice Rams. No* ***REFUGE*** *will remain for the shepherds nor* ***ESCAPE*** *for the lords of the flock."*

*Hark! the* ***CRY*** *of the shepherds and the* ***WAIL*** *of the lords of the flock. For the Lord is* ***DESPOILING*** *their pasture, and the peaceful folds are* ***DEVASTATED****, because of the fierce* ***ANGER OF THE LORD****. Like a* ***LION*** *he has left his covert; for their land has become a* ***WASTE****, because of the* ***SWORD*** *of the oppressor and because of his fierce* ***ANGER****.*

*In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord, "Thus says the Lord, 'Stand in the court of the Lord's House and speak to all the cities of Judah which come to worship in the House of the Lord, all the words that I command you to speak to them---do not hold back a word. It may be (perhaps) they will listen, and everyone turn from his* ***EVIL WAY****, that I may* ***REPENT*** *of the* ***EVIL*** *which I intend to do to them because of* ***THEIR EVIL DOINGS****. You shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord, 'If you will* ***NOT LISTEN*** *to me to walk in my law, which I have set before you, and to heed the words of my servants, the prophets---whom I send to you urgently, though you have not heeded--- then, I will make this* ***HOUSE*** *like* ***SHILOH****, and I will make this* ***CITY*** *a* ***CURSE*** *for all the nations of the earth.' " ' "*

*The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the* ***PRIESTS*** *and the* ***PROPHETS*** *and all the* ***PEOPLE*** *laid hold of him saying, "****YOU SHALL DIE!*** *Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord saying, 'This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without inhabitant?' " And all the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.*

*When the* ***PRINCES*** *of Judah heard these words, they came up from the king's house to the house of the Lord and took their seat in the entry of the* ***NEW GATE*** *of the house of the Lord. Then the* ***PRIESTS*** *and the* ***PROPHETS*** *said to the* ***PRINCES*** *and to all the* ***PEOPLE****, "This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears."*

*Then* ***JEREMIAH*** *spoke to all the princes and all the people saying, "The Lord sent me to* ***PROPHESY****---against this* ***HOUSE*** *and this* ***CITY****---all the words you have heard. Now therefore,* ***AMEND*** *your ways and your doings, and* ***OBEY*** *the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will* ***REPENT*** *of the evil which he has pronounced against you. But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. Only know for certain that, if you put me to death, you will bring* ***INNOCENT BLOOD*** *upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants. For, in* ***TRUTH****, the Lord sends me to you to speak all these words in your ears."*

*Then the princes and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord." And certain of the elders of the land arose and spoke to all the assembled people saying, "****MICAH OF MORESHETH*** *prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "****ZION*** *shall be plowed as a field,* ***JERUSALEM*** *shall become as a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the* ***HOUSE*** *a wooded height." 'Did Hezekiah, king of Judah, and all Judah put him to death? Did he not* ***FEAR*** *the Lord and* ***ENTREAT*** *the favor of the Lord; and did not the Lord* ***REPENT*** *of the evil which he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great evil upon ourselves. There was another man who prophesied in the name of the Lord---****URIJAH, THE SON OF SHEMIAH*** *from* ***KIRIATH-JEARIM****. He prophesied against this* ***CITY*** *and against this* ***LAND*** *in words like those of Jeremiah. And when King Jehoiakim, with all his warriors and all the princes, heard HIS words, the king sought to put him to death. But when Urijah heard of it, he was afraid and fled and escaped to Egypt. Then, King Jehoiakim sent to Egypt certain men---Elnathan, the son of Achbor, and others with him---and they fetched Urijah from Egypt, and brought him to King Jehoiakim, who slew him with the sword and cast his dead body into the burial place of the common people."*

*But the hand of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, was with Jeremiah, so that he was not given over to the people to be put to death.*

Just go back to chapter 25 verse 15. *"Take from my hand this cup of the wine of* ***WRATH****."* And then at the end of verse 30: *"The Lord will shout like those who* ***TREAD GRAPES****."* We will sing Winston Churchill's favorite hymn, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored." It's number one on your bulletin. We'll sing the chorus. "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!"

***SINGING (1:40)***

Now, the two chapters of Jeremiah we've just read are among the LEAST KNOWN in his book. Hands up --- those who would've been able to recite even one verse from memory, from these two chapters I've just read. Not one!!

***Chapters 25 and 26 are Back to Front***

So, we're dealing with a little-known portion of scripture this morning; but I hope that by the end of this morning, you really will have got right into it and that God will have spoken to you. There are ***NO*** quotable quotes in it. There are ***FEW*** remembered details. And the ***FIRST THING*** that strikes you, very forcibly, is that the two chapters are ***BACK TO FRONT***. Did you notice that? If you were listening or watching or reading carefully, you must have noticed that chapter 26 was in the ***BEGINNING*** of the reign of Jehoiakim, and chapter 25 was ***FOUR YEARS LATER***, in the fourth year of his reign. Why is that? Well, the ***HEBREWS*** wrote ***BACKWARDS***. Did you know that? We write from here to here (left to right). The Hebrews write from here to here (right to left). They, therefore, often think backwards! And it's a very ***PRACTICAL*** way of thinking.

Our western, theoretical approach to truth usually thinks ***FORWARDS***. Let me illustrate it. Here is a medical student. He goes to college to learn medicine. He is training to be a doctor, and all his training is ***THEORY***. And so, he is taught to think ***FORWARDS***. And he is told about a certain germ which causes a certain disease which produces certain symptoms. And that's the logical forward progression: cause to effect. And that's theory. But when he becomes a general practitioner, and he's got to practice, do you think he begins that way? No fear! [i.e., ‘definitely not’!] He begins with ***SYMPTOMS***, and he works ***BACK*** to the disease, and the cause. Are you with me now? Hebrew is a very practical language. It's not so much concerned with ***THEORIES***, but with ***PRACTICE***. And therefore, throughout the Bible---and particularly in Jeremiah---you often have the ***EFFECT*** described before the ***CAUSE***. The ***VEREDICT*** given before the ***EVIDENCE***.

We're familiar with this technique in the cinema. It's called ***FLASHBACK***, and that is what is happening between 25 and 26. Twenty-five describes the situation in the ***FOURTH*** year of Jehoiakim, which was a ***HOPELESS*** situation. Absolutely hopeless! There was, by then, no reversing of the tragedy that was going to come. And then chapter 26 tells you the ***CAUSE*** of the hopelessness by saying, that ***FOUR YEARS PREVIOUSLY*** Jeremiah gave them ***ONE LAST WARNING***, after 23 years of preaching! And they had their last chance. And because they had refused it in the ***FIRST*** year of Jehoiakim, ***FOUR YEARS LATER***, Jeremiah had to say, *"It is now* ***TOO LATE****."* In the ***FIRST*** year, he said, "There is ***STILL TME*** to listen." In the ***FOURTH*** year, he said, "It is now ***TOO LATE*** to listen."

***A Time Comes When It’s Too Late To Listen To God***

And the ***FIRST*** thing I want to say is this. There comes a point in everyone's life ***WHEN IT'S TOO LATE TO LISTEN TO GOD***. God may be wonderfully patient. God may speak to you over 23 years. And it just struck me that it's 23 years since I finished my theological training, and I've been preaching for 23 years since my training --- exactly the same length. I was in the ministry before I did my training as well. So, I've been in the ministry a bit longer. But 23 years he had been doing this, so I identified with that. And over 23 years, God had been saying his word. There comes a point when it's ***TOO LATE***.

I'll never forget a man coming to me once, and he said, "You know, during the war, in the middle of a battle, God spoke to me." And he (the man) said, "I promised God that if he brought me back to my wife and kids at the end of the war alive and safe and sound, that I would be his man from then on." And he said, "I came back from the war to my wife and kids; but I didn't come back to God." And he said, "Now, about 18 years later..." He said, "Is it too late? Or can I have a second bite at the cherry?" I said, "The fact that you have come and ***ASKED*** that shows me that God is speaking to you." And ever since he's been a lovely servant of the Lord. And his son has sung in this building in the last month or two, for he is one of the four, who sings from the Gold Hill group.

Can you have a ***SECOND*** bite of the cherry? ***YES***! Thank God! He's so ***PATIENT***, that he'll go on for 23 years with someone. But there will come a day, when he will say, *"It's* ***TOO LATE*** *to listen."* It could come ***BEFORE*** your death. It will most certainly come ***AT*** your death, when God says, *"I can't speak to you anymore."* And this is the lesson we're going to have to learn this morning. For the ***ONE WORD*** that goes right through chapters 25 and 26 is this.... You'll find it there if you underline it. I hope you always look for KEY WORDS. And the key word in both chapters is ***'LISTEN'***...***LISTEN***. And in chapter 25, the word is ***'LISTEN***!'. *"****LISTEN****, while there's time!" "****LISTEN****!'" "****LISTEN****!"* And in chapter 26, the word is *"You have* ***NOT LISTENED****."*…You have ***NOT LISTENED***. So, the theme this morning is ***LISTENING TO GOD***.

Now I'm going to take the chapters in ***REVERSE*** order, because that's more ***WESTERN***, and that's easier for you to grasp. So, I'm going to take chapter 26 first, and then chapter 25. All right? And we'll put it back in the normal order of ***CAUSE*** and ***EFFECT***, the normal order of ***CHRONOLOGY***, the normal order of the calendar. We'll tackle the ***FIRST*** year of Jehoiakim --- see what went wrong. And then we'll understand the very harsh message of chapter 25. But in Hebrew thinking, they said, *"Look at the* ***VERDICT FIRST****, and then look at the* ***EVIDENCE******SECOND****."* And even in chapter 26, when Jeremiah is on trial, they give you the ***VERDICT*** first, and then the ***EVIDENCE*** that led up to it. Again, ***HEBREW*** thinking --- just back to front to us. Or is it ***WE*** who are back to front? I'm not quite sure. They're certainly more ***PRACTICAL*** than we are.

***New Leadership Brings A New Chance To Listen To God***

Now, Jeremiah, in chapter 26.... The year was 609 BC...That doesn't really matter at all. If it did, it would've been put in. But if you're interested, it was 609 BC, and a ***NEW KING*** was on the throne. And therefore, there was the chance of a ***NEW*** start. When you get a ***NEW*** sovereign, there's hope that a new direction may be taken. When you get a change of prime minister, there's hope there's going to be a change of direction. It's a crucial point when somebody comes to power --- ***NEW***. [And I have a very practical suggestion---regarding Mr. James Callahan, Prime Minister---to mention at the end of this sermon.] But there's an opportunity when there's a ***NEW*** leader, to take a ***NEW*** direction. He's not set in his ways. He's feeling his way. And so, Jeremiah, at the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim --- if you like, at the beginning of the reign of King James Callahan --- said, "Right, I'm going to ***SPEAK*** and see if the nation will ***LISTEN***."

He (Jeremiah) chose his ***TIME*** carefully. He chose his ***PLACE*** carefully. In modern terms, he was a master of the media, and he knew how to get across to the people. The Lord, of course, guided him in this. And the Lord led him to the ***TEMPLE*** during a ***NATIONAL FESTIVAL***, when the whole nation was gathered together in one place, and everybody was talking. And in the most public way possible, he used the media of his day to get across his message. He must have known that he took his life in his hands to do so...He must have known this. Any man who speaks to a nation that's got away from God, and says what God is saying, takes his life in his hands--- And is running great risks! Smooth talk will keep the people, but the word of God will not.

And Jeremiah must have known he was taking his life in his hands, to challenge the whole nation at the ***TIME*** of the accession of this ***NEW KING***. He was a man of few words, but he held back not one word, because God said, *"You must* ***SPEAK*** *every single word I tell you, and you mustn't miss one word out."* Because God knows, the pressure is on you, when you're preaching, to leave things out that somebody's not gonna like. And so, God said, *"Hold back, not one word. Tell them what I tell you. No more, no less."* So, Jeremiah ***TOLD THEM***.

And he told them this... He said, *"Before you entered the land, you received the Law of God---the way to live, the way to conduct your national affairs, the principles of happiness and holiness. You received the Law. Ever since you got into the land, you've had* ***PROPHETS*** *sent to you, to remind you to keep it. You cannot plead* ***IGNORANCE****! You can only admit* ***DISOBEDIENCE****. You are not ignorant. You knew how you ought to have lived---you had the* ***LAW*** *before you came into the land, and you've had* ***PROPHETS*** *since you came in. You've had the* ***LAW*** *and the* ***PROPHETS****; and you have* ***NOT LISTENED****---you have not heeded; but,”* says Jeremiah, *"this is* ***GOOD*** *news! It is an appeal based on God's* ***MERCY****!"* He says, "***IF***!"... "***IF***!" And that means that the statement is ***CONDITIONAL***. Notice that it's a ***CONDITIONAL*** statement---it's a prediction that could alter. He says, "***IF***!"... *"****IF****, with this new king you will* ***LISTEN****...* ***IF****... then God will* ***REPENT****."*

I wonder if you realize that we have in our hands, the power, to make God ***REPENT***. Have you ever thought of that? You know, we say "Prayer changes ***THINGS***." It also changes ***PEOPLE***. But did you ever realize that prayer changes ***GOD***??? It's startling! ***MOSES*** succeeded in changing God's mind by prayer. And here we have a very definite condition attached: *"****IF*** *you will listen" --- "****IF*** *you will amend your ways and your doings" --- "****IF*** *you will put things right" --- "****THEN*** *God will repent."*...And the word 'repent' means *'change his mind'*... *"And he will* ***NOT*** *bring the national disaster upon you, that is on its way."*

***By Listening in the PRESENT, You Can Change the FUTURE***

Now that's the message. Very simple. Notice... that it was a reminder of the past. *"You've had the Law and the prophets, whom God sent to you persistently."* Notice... It contains a ***WARNING FOR THE FUTURE*** (to which we will come in a moment)... as to what the national disaster will be if they ***DON'T LISTEN***. But he's primarily concerned with the ***PRESENT*** and their response at that moment. He says, *"Look what God has done in the* ***PAST****. I warn you what he will do in the* ***FUTURE****. But the* ***PRESENT*** *is the moment when you can* ***CHANGE THE FUTURE****. You can't change the* ***PAST****, but you can change the* ***PRESENT****. And if you change the present, you can alter the* ***FUTURE****."*

And that is the glorious ***FREEDOM*** in which we live. We are not Muslims. And Muslims say, "Allah Kareem!" (God is generous) "In sha' Allah!" (The Lord wills) ---"It's all settled and sealed!" It's ***FATALISM***! I don't believe in a God like that. I believe in a God who says, *"****IF*** *my people ....* ***THEN*** *I will change my mind."* You see, now that's --- that's a ***COOPERATIVE*** relationship. It doesn't mean that there's inconsistency in God. God always acts consistently with his character, which is ***RIGHTEOUSNESS***. Which means, that ***IF*** people will ***NOT LISTEN***, he must ***PUNISH*** them. But it means also, that ***IF*** they ***WILL*** listen, he can change his mind and ***NOT PUNISH*** them. He has not changed his character one little bit. And it's lovely to have a God who ***NEVER*** changes in ***CHARACTER***. It's also lovely to have a God who ***WILL*** change his mind, ***IF*** we ***REPENT***. And so, there's an "***IF***" here. And there's an "***IF***" about God, as well as about men here. "***IF****"..."****THEN***."

***Warning About the FUTURE: Parallels Between Jeremiah and Jesus***

Now the warning about the future, which Jeremiah added, is this, "***IF YOU DO NOT LISTEN, THEN this HOUSE"*** (meaning the temple), ***"and this CITY will be ruined --- DESOLATE."*** It was like telling a Roman Catholic that St. Peter's and the Vatican City would be abolished. I want you to get the feel of this. You see, in Jerusalem they looked on this ***TEMPLE*** and this ***CITY*** as inviolable---as sacrosanct. They looked on this ***TEMPLE*** and ***CITY*** as the house and city of God, and therefore believed, they were immovable as God. And Jeremiah dares to say, *"God would not hesitate to* ***DESTROY*** *his own* ***HOUSE*** *and his own* ***CITY****, IF you* ***DON'T LISTEN*** *to him."* In other words, the strength of a city does not lie in its cathedrals, but in its ***CHARACTER***. Do you understand? That's what God is saying. The strength---the sign of the presence of God---is not a religious building nor the fact that God has founded the city. It is the ***PRESENT RELATIONSHIP*** of the people who live within it to the ***GOD*** who first started it. That's the message. And to the Jew, that was not only ***TREASON***, it was ***SACRILEGE*** to talk about the house of God and the city of God like that. And they were sheltering under what had become a fetish---a superstition---that because they had such a big religious cathedral, if you like, in their city, that they were always all right---they were always under the shadow of the cathedral.

Look, God wouldn't hesitate to destroy a cathedral city. It's the ***CHARACTER*** of the ***PEOPLE*** in the city that matters. And that gives you the feel of it, doesn't it? Because we can't get out of sight of Guildford Cathedral. And it kind of gives us a feeling that that golden angel there means the angels have a special interest in Guildford, and that somehow, it's all right as long as the cathedral is standing there. Don't you believe it! Don't you believe it! That's the trap they had fallen into. And the result was that immediately, they planned his ***DEATH***. And in the rest of the chapter, the word ***'DEATH'*** occurs eight times, and it is always applied to Jeremiah. They turned what he said around so much, that they thought they had a case for ***CAPITAL PUNISHMENT***. And I want you to notice --- It was the ***PRIESTS*** and the ***PROPHETS***---the ecclesiastical leaders, the religious people---who did it. (Is this beginning to remind you of someone else?) And they then tried to get the ***CIVIC AUTHORITIES*** to agree to the ***DEATH SENTENCE***. (Does that remind you of someone else?) You know there's nothing new under the sun, is there? And you're coming to this table for ***BREAD*** and ***WINE***, in a short while. See, human nature doesn't change. And the ***RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES*** were so angry at this threat to their security---this man who challenged their city, their temple, which was their livelihood---that the ***PRIESTS*** and the ***PROPHETS*** ganged up on him. And they reported him to the ***CIVIC AUTHORITES***. And they got the ***PRINCES*** together into the court---which was then the gate, the ***NEW GATE*** into the Temple, which was the main court---the assizes (where the law is administered). And the ***PRINCES*** sat. And then the ***PRIESTS*** and ***PROPHETS*** said to them this, *"He said, in the name of the Lord, that this* ***TEMPLE*** *would be* ***RUINED*** *and this* ***CITY*** *would be* ***RUINED****."*

Now that was ***NOT*** what Jeremiah had said, was it? He had said, "***IF***." And when they reported his preaching, they didn't put the "***IF***" in. Have you ever noticed that? How twisted it is? They turned what was a ***CONDITIONAL*** prediction into an ***ABSOLUTE*** one. They said, *"This man has predicted that certainly this* ***HOUSE*** *and* ***CITY*** *will fall."* He had said nothing of the kind. He had said, *"****IF*** *you* ***AMEND*** *your ways, you can* ***KEEP*** *it."* They didn't put the condition in. Do you know why? Because Jeremiah hadn't been prophesying against the ***TEMPLE*** or the ***CITY***, but against the ***PEOPLE*** in it. You see? And they said, *"He's been preaching against the* ***PLACES****."* They didn't mention that he had said anything about the ***PEOPLE***. Isn't that **SUBTLE**? Do you see?

Do you remember when they brought Jesus on trial? What did they say about him? They said, *"He would pull down our* ***TEMPLE*** *in three days."* Do you remember? He's gonna attack the ***PLACE***. Whereas what Jesus was talking about is ***'PEOPLE'***.

So, we get all mixed up between holy ***PEOPLE*** and holy ***PLACES***. They twisted his words, and they thought they'd got a good case. So, Jeremiah found himself in court in his own defense. He was given ***NO*** lawyer, as Jesus was given ***NO*** defense. And they said the same thing about him. *"You've heard from his own lips what he said, he deserves to die."* So, Jeremiah ***SPOKE***. And you know when I think that Jeremiah began as a 17-year-old, shy, retiring boy, frightened of other people's faces, I see what a long way he has come in 23 years. He now is not cared about himself; he's not concerned about his safety anymore. Here's a man now, 23 years later, who will stand in the court, and who will say, *"Do to me what you feel is right and good. I just* ***TELL*** *you* ***TWO******THINGS****. Let me* ***TELL*** *you what I actually said. (****First****) I said, 'Amend your ways and your doings.' I was prophesying about* ***PEOPLE*** *not* ***PLACES****. And* ***SECONDLY****, I remind you that if you put me to death,* ***YOU*** *become* ***MURDERERS****, because I came to you in* ***TRUTH****, in the name of the Lord. Do to me what you like. But that's what I said. And these are the consequences."* Now here's a ***BOLD*** man, isn't it? He's not a shy, retiring, 17-year-old afraid to get up in public in front of other people's faces. Here's a ***MAN OF GOD*** who's been made into what God said he would make him. God when he called a 17-year-old said, ***"I WILL MAKE YOU A FORTRESS***! *I'll fortify you!"* And here's the ***FORTRESS***, standing and facing ***PRINCES***, ***PRIESTS***, ***PROPHETS***, and ***PEOPLE*** and saying, *"Do to me what you like; but,* ***AMEND YOUR WAYS AND YOUR DOINGS****. That's what I said---and don't you dare become murderers. Innocent blood will be on this city if you kill me."*

And so, the ***PRINCES*** gave the ***VERDICT***, *"This man has done* ***NOTHING*** *to deserve death."* (Does that remind you of something?) See, the ***RELIGIOUS LEADERS*** saying, *"He said he would destroy the Temple. You heard it from his own lips."* And the ***CIVIC AUTHORITIES*** saying, *"This man has done NOTHING deserving of death."* How history repeats itself. And JEREMIAH and JESUS went through the same thing, with this ***DIFFERENCE***: that Jeremiah got off--he was ***RELEASED***. Why? Because certain ***OLDER PEOPLE*** had long memories and some ***ELDERS*** in the land stood up, and this is why we desperately need ***OLDER PEOPLE***. We need ***ELDERS*** in the land. I don't mean those who've got staid and starchy; but I mean those who can ***REMEMBER GOD'S WAYS***.

And the elders of the land stood up and they said, *"****Remember****,* ***remember****?"* And there were some there who could remember way back to the days of another prophet called ***MICAH***. And they said, *"Remember* ***MICAH****, he said the* ***SAME THING****. And you know perfectly well that we deserve that; and Jerusalem wouldn't be here today if Micah hadn't* ***SPOKEN*** *to us, and we hadn't* ***LISTENED****. So, you be careful what you do with this man. And remember that God* ***CHANGED HIS MIND****; and he didn't send the disaster--****REMEMBER*** *that!"*

And then, they also just ***REMINDED*** the people of another thing: that the king at that time, Jehoiakim, had already ***KILLED*** one prophet, his name ***URIAH***. Uriah had been a colleague of Jeremiah's, and he'd ***SPOKEN*** in the name of the Lord. And he'd heard that the king was going to put him to ***DEATH***. And this is where Uriah made the fatal ***MISTAKE***. Jeremiah ***STOOD*** and ***FACED*** it and said, *"Do to me what you like, but this is my message for you."* Uriah ***RAN AWAY***; and he ran to Egypt. And King Jehoiakim got an extradition order from Egypt and got him back and slaughtered him and threw him in the Kedron Valley. And so, the ***ELDERS*** of the land with their ***WISDOM***, they said, *"Remember Micah! Remember Uriah! What are you going to do? Are you going to make Jeremiah like* ***MICAH****:* ***LISTEN*** *and put it right and* ***ESCAPE*** *the disaster? Or are you going to kill him like* ***URIAH****? Are you going to allow the people who shout for the death of a prophet, to win? Or are you going to remember that you wouldn't be alive in Jerusalem today if there hadn't been another prophet who was listened to?"* You got the picture?? That's the evidence they brought.

And ***JEREMIAH*** had ***SPOKEN*** himself. The elders, particularly one called ***AHIKAM***, ***SPOKE*** on his behalf. And the last sentence in the chapter is: *"Because of this elder, Ahikam. The* ***PRINCES****---the civic authorities---****RELEASED*** *Jeremiah."* And the ***PRIESTS*** and the ***PROPHETS*** lost their case; and Jeremiah was ***FREE*** to go on preaching another 17 years.

Now that's chapter 26. We can't leave the chapter without just thinking again of ***JESUS***---how Jesus ***WEPT*** over Jerusalem. Is it, *"Oh Jerusalem. Oh Jerusalem. You stone the* ***PROPHETS****. You just don't like* ***PROPHETS****. But I would still like to gather you under my wings like a hen gathers her chicks. If only you knew---you still have a chance to* ***LISTEN****. If only you had known the day of your visitation...If only you had* ***LISTENED****. But now I can see that it's* ***TOO LATE****, it's too late."* And Jesus ***WEPT*** over Jerusalem. Jeremiah and Jesus went through very ***SIMILAR*** experiences; but the ***DIFFERENCE*** was that Jeremiah had ***ELDERS*** among the people who ***STOOD*** UP for him.

***The Fickle Crowd of People***

One ***FINAL THING*** before we leave chapter 26 is this. I want you to notice how the people ***SHIFTED SIDES.*** Did you notice that the priests and the prophets and the people brought Jesus to the princes and said, *"He deserves to die."* But after the elders had spoken, it says, *"The princes and the people said, 'He has done nothing deserving death.' "* How ***FICKLE*** is the crowd, how ***FICKLE*** are the people. They switch from one bandwagon to another. How ***EASILY*** they're swayed. How easily a crowd that shouts, "***HOSANNA***!" one day, then can, a few days later, shout "***CRUCIFY***!" The crowd ***SHIFTS*** in this chapter--shifts over. And when it realizes the ***PRINCES*** are going to ***RELEASE*** the man, the crowd ***SHIFTS*** to release the man with the princes. Which raises this ***QUESTION***: which way would the crowd go over the next four years? Would they stay with the ***PRINCES***, or would they go with the ***PRIESTS*** and the ***PROPHETS***?

***The Fickle Crowd Switched From Supporting Jeremiah***

Which way would they go? My dear friends, the tragedy is that in chapter 25, Jeremiah reveals that their support for him was very ***SHORT-LIVED*** and that they ***SWITCHED*** and they wouldn't listen. So, we turn to chapter 25, which is the ***SEQUEL***. (The event which followed that which we've just studied.) The year is now 605 BC---four years have passed. What has happened in those four years? Has there been a ***TURNING***? Has there been a ***NATIONAL REVERSAL***? No! Once again, on a national occasion---when all the tribes of Judah gathered together; when all the people are in Jerusalem--- Jeremiah comes and he says: *"****NOW****, there is no 'If’...there is no ‘If’."* ***NOW IT'S COME****! Four years ago, I gave you a* ***LAST*** *warning.* ***NOW****, I have only one message. It isn't, 'Amend your ways.' It's now* ***TOO LATE*** *to do that. And I have to tell you what's going to happen."* Four years later, ***NO CHANGE!*** Jeremiah had ***SPOKEN*** to them now for 23 years, as I've said. He was going to SPEAK for another 17. But here is a change in his message. Right up until now---the first 23 years---he always put the word ***'IF'*** in. It was always ***CONDITIONAL***. It always gave them a chance to turn around and put things right. But now, he says, "***THE CHANCE IS GONE"*** And that's why chapter 25 is such a harsh chapter. It's a chapter that ***BEGINS*** with one word and ***ENDS*** with one word: ***'ANGER'***... anger. Not Jeremiah's anger. ***GOD'S ANGER***. Wouldn't it make you ***ANGRY*** if you'd tried to help people? Wouldn't it make you ***ANGRY*** if you were a doctor and you saw someone dying of an incurable disease and you tried for 23 years to ***PERSUADE*** them to take treatment, and they wouldn't out of sheer ***STUBBORNNESS***?

And so, God was ***ANGRY***. Now the message of the ***ANGER*** of God is never popular. That's why so few preachers preach on it. But I believe that's part of God's word. It's ***FUNDAMENTAL*** to the good news of the gospel. When Paul, in Romans, says that the gospel is what? Well, it's the ***GOOD NEWS***: that, *"Everybody who* ***BELIEVES*** *may be* ***SAVED****."* That's the gospel; and that's the gospel he preached. And having said, "This is the gospel I preached," what is the next sentence? ***"For the WRATH OF GOD is being revealed from heaven"***. That's the next sentence. And as Canon Max Warren, a very fine Anglican Christian thinker, said "The gospel is always ***BAD NEWS*** before it can be ***GOOD NEWS***". Indeed, he has a chapter in one of his books entitled ***‘THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD’S ANGER'***. That's an intriguing phrase. Why is God's anger ***GOOD NEWS***? I'll tell you why. Because He ***CARES***. If He wasn't angry, it would mean He didn't care. If He wasn't ***CROSS*** with his children, it would mean He didn't ***LOVE*** them. That's why it's good news.

***The (Loving) Wrath of God***

And so, the ***ANGER*** of God---the ***WRATH*** of God---that's the ***THEME*** of Jeremiah's message in chapter 25. But the anger of God is the ***OTHER SIDE OF HIS LOVE***. There's not a contradiction here. They're ***BOTH*** part of His character, as is His jealousy for those whom He loves. It's all part of his character.

So, let's look now at the message. Jeremiah says, *"Why is God angry? Because you've* ***NOT******LISTENED*** *to Him with your* ***EARS*** *and you have* ***NOT LISTENED*** *to Him with your* ***HANDS****.”*

Now, listening to somebody with your ***HANDS*** may be a new concept to you, so we'll feel our way into it. You know what listening to somebody with your EARS is like anyway, don't you? And Jeremiah says, *"You have not* ***INCLINED******YOUR******EAR****."* Now what does that mean? Well now, my ears are virtually vertical. To incline is to put them at an ***ANGLE***, right? Now I'm gonna put mine at an angle. What am I doing? To whom am I trying to listen? You see, *"You've not* ***INCLINED YOUR EARS****."*

Is God saying something? Do you see? If you keep your ears like this, you hear a lot of sounds---from your radio, to your television, from conversation, from each other. Do you hear the ***BABEL*** of who says what. You read Time magazine this week on the article on futurology.... Some are telling us that it's gonna be bright and rosy, and some are telling us we're heading for doomsday. And you listen ***HORIZONTALLY***---keep your ears straight---and you hear all kinds of things. You've not ***INCLINED*** your ear. To ***INCLINE*** the ear to say, "***HEAVEN***, are you talking?" What is God saying in all this? "You didn't incline your ear." But it's not just inclining the ear, that's the problem. He said, *"You didn't incline your ear, nor did you* ***LISTEN*** *with your* ***HANDS****".*

Now how do you ***LISTEN*** with your ***HANDS***? He says, *"Look what you* ***DID*** *with your hands. You made idols. You made things, and you said, 'Now this is the* ***REAL*** *thing, this will* ***HELP*** *us. This is what will get us out of trouble.' You did not* ***LISTEN****. Your* ***EARS*** *were not* ***INCLINED,*** *and your* ***HANDS*** *were not doing* ***MY WILL****. Your hands were manufacturing* ***IDOLS****."* Let me put this in modern terms. Have you been impressed with the photographs of these incredible oil rigs---higher than St. Paul's Cathedral---being towed out into the middle of the North Sea? Have you been impressed with that? The government is saying, "It's gonna ***SAVE*** us, it's gonna ***SAVE*** us. You know, it'll get us out of the economic jam---these great big, gigantic oil rigs which WE have built---and we'll get the pipelines inshore, & et cetera, & et cetera." When did you last hear one of them Praise the ***GOD*** who put the oil under the North Sea? Do you see what I mean? We say, "It's marvelous. We can save ourselves with ***OUR HANDS***. We don't need to ***INCLINE THE EAR***. ***OUR HANDS*** can make that which will save us. We're so impressed that we can put a spaceship around the moon, that we forget ***WHO*** put the ***MOON*** into orbit and the ***POWER*** that was required for that."

And so, ***THE WORK OF OUR HANDS BECOMES THE GOD THAT SAVES US***. "Oh, we'll get ***OURSELVES*** out of it. We don't need to incline the ***EAR***; as long as we're busy with our ***HANDS***, we'll manage." Don't you believe it? Have you seen any of Burke's specials on 'the brain'? I just saw one; and he was demonstrating how the brain operates in (***FINGER SNAP***) that long---sending messages from one center of the brain to the other, recalling memories, deciding how to respond, and so on. And do you know what I found myself saying? "What a God to make a brain!" Other people say, "Isn't ***BURKE*** incredible? How does he remember it all?" I say, "Isn't God wonderful that gave Burke a brain like that?" Do you see what I mean? Your reaction to life depends on whether your ***EAR IS INCLINED***. Otherwise, you ***WORSHIP THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS***, and you say, "What ***WE*** can do will get us out of our mess". And Jeremiah says, *"For four years you've been saying that kind of thing. Our* ***HANDS****---not our ears---our* ***HANDS****. What* ***WE DO*** *will save us, not what* ***WE HEAR****."*

*"And so,"* says, Jeremiah, *"I give you a* ***WARNING*** *now: from the north will come Nebuchadnezzar* ***MY******SERVANT****". Did that hit you when I read it? A* ***PAGAN TYRANT****---"My* ***SERVANT****."* And Jeremiah said, "*You rejected My* ***SERVANTS*** *the* ***PROPHETS****. So, you will have My* ***SERVANT******NEBUCHADNEZZAR****".* Now to let that hit you.

Let me tell you something that I believe. Do you know when the downfall in this country began? It began towards the end of the 19th century and about the turn into the 20th century when theologians and ministers in this country began to ***INCLINE THE EAR TO GERMAN SCHOLARS***...that's when it began. And German scholars were tearing the Bible into bits. And even as late as 1950 (when I did theology at Cambridge) they were teaching me about people like Grathoff and Wellhausen and others---German scholars who had split the Bible up. They were called the German *'high critics'*. And they were all the craze. And what ***GERMANY*** thought first, ***ENGLAND*** thought next, and ***AMERICA*** thought the day after. And theology was riddled with worship of German scholars. And it began to alter the preaching even ***BEFORE*** the first world war. And in this country, people began to denigrate the miracles. The ***SUPERNATURAL*** went ***OUT*** of our religion. Liberalism swept in and we ***INCLINED OUR EARS*** more to German scholars than to the word of God.

So, what did God do? He says, "Right, the Germans will take over." And I believe He allowed them twice in one generation to take over, because we had allowed some of them to ***MISLEAD*** us about the word of God. You may say, That's crazy. There's no connection." All right, you're welcome to that view. But after World War I, we said, "Right, we're gonna build a world in which there'll be no more war." Did we come back to God? You study the figures. Church decline began about 1910. After the second World War, it went on even more and it went ***DOWN*** and ***DOWN*** and ***DOWN*** through the crazy twenties and thirties. ***DOWN***, ***DOWN*** it went. So, God let that nation (***GERMANY***) come a ***SECOND*** time.

Now, when Jeremiah said, *"Nebuchadnezzar,* ***My SERVANT****, I will allow* ***HIM*** *to come and* ***SHAKE*** *you"*, It was the same as if he'd said in 1938, "Hitler, ***My SERVANT*** will come and ***SHAKE*** you." Do you get the feel of it now? It's an incredible situation. And, He said, *"He'll take you away and you'll suffer for 70 years in slavery."* That's history written ***BEFOREHAND***---70 years. How was Jeremiah to know that it would last the exile? Let's give you the exact dates, if I can find them quickly. The exile was to last from 605 BC to 536 BC. And Jeremiah gave ***EXACTLY*** the period, 70 years. You see, God knows history ***BEFOREHAND***. He had decided 70 years is needed to shake them; and off they went.

Now lest you think that makes Nebuchadnezzar a good man---which it doesn't---let me read the NEXT bit. Now the prophecy takes ***TWO*** very surprising turns. ***NUMBER ONE***, it says Nebuchadnezzar will then be ***PUNISHED*** himself, and his empire will be brought to ***RUIN***. What control God has of history. He can allow Hitler to chastise the western world (and even the whole world). But then Hitler's days are ***NUMBERED***, and his Reich ***COLLAPSES***. That's what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah said, *"He is My servant for 70 years to bring you all to your senses---to make you realize what's been happening to drive you to God.”* And in a sense, World War II did---our churches were packed with people ***SEEKING GOD***. There were national days of prayer called for by the government. ***DID WE LEARN THE LESSON***? Have those national days of prayer been called for in the (present) economic crisis, by the government? There's ***NOT*** ***A*** ***TRACE*** of any call as yet. And so, I just ***TREMBLE***. How will God ***CHASTISE*** us next?

That's what one trembles for, because WAR is one of God's normal ways of chastising a nation and bringing it to its senses. It's a desperate thing to do. And I believe He does it as a ***LAST*** ***RESORT***; but I believe we drive Him to it. And that's Jeremiah's ***MESSAGE***. We don't like that message, do we? It's not comfortable. But He says *"Nevertheless, after Nebuchadnezzar has been used as* ***My SERVANT****, he too will become a* ***SLAVE****. And Babylon will go to be a* ***WASTE.****"* And if you've ever seen a picture of Babylon today, there isn't a single person living in it. Even the Arabs won't camp within its walls, because they say it's inhabited by Jin or ***EVIL SPIRITS***. And the place is absolutely ***DESOLATE*** except for archeologists during the day. God's word is ***TRUE***.

***Jeremiah Brings the Message of God's Wrath To The Nations***

And then Jeremiah ***BRANCHES OUT*** in the last part of chapter 25. Do you remember when he was called at 17? God said to him, *"I want you to be a prophet to your own nation and to* ***ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD****."* What a thing to say to a 17-year-old boy. *"I'm gonna use you to speak the word to all the nations of the world."* And so now, Jeremiah spreads out his prophecy from verse 20...sorry, from verse 15 onwards to the ***WHOLE WORLD***. Listen, if I read one phrase: *'all the nations'... 'all the nations'... 'all the kingdoms'... 'all the inhabitants of the earth'... 'all the inhabitants of the earth'... 'the ends of the earth'... 'the nations'... 'all flesh'... 'nation to nation'... 'the farthest parts of the earth'... 'the end of the earth'*. I'm just reading the ***SAME PHRASE*** again and again. He'd got a ***WORLDVIEW***, and his worldview was based on this assumption: if God is forced to punish his ***OWN PEOPLE***, he must in fairness also go on to punish ***EVERYONE ELSE***. That is the meaning of that incredible phrase, *"If Jerusalem does not turn to me, I will make Jerusalem a curse for all the nations on the earth."* Wonder if you understand that? It means that if God is forced to judge his ***OWN PEOPLE***, out of fairness that brings ***EVERYBODY ELSE*** into the judgment.

That's why the New Testament says judgment ***BEGINS*** at the house of God. But if it does ***BEGIN*** there, it can't ***END*** there. What shall happen to the ***OTHERS***? Have you got it? And if the ***PEOPLE*** ***OF GOD*** force him to judge them, it hastens judgment for others, and ***OTHER NATIONS*** will get caught up in the conflict. And in chapter 25, we have a list of ***OTHER NATIONS***---south of Judah, north of Judah--- who will all get drawn into it, and who will all suffer. Not because they're innocent (because they're guilty), but because when God starts, he has to do the whole lot to be fair. And God is saying, *"If you force me to judge you,* ***JUDAH****, then I've got to judge* ***EDOM****. I've got to judge* ***EGYPT****. I've got to judge* ***UZ****. I've got to judge* ***SYRIA****. I've got to judge* ***ARABIA****. I've got to judge them* ***ALL****. You're forcing me."*

And here is a very ***PROFOUND TRUTH***. It's given in in the form of a ***PICTURE***. God says, *"You see this* ***CUP OF WINE****, Jeremiah? It's the cup of the wine of my ANGER; and I give it to you. And you must take it not only to* ***JUDAH****, you must take it to* ***EDOM****, you must take it to* ***EGYPT****, you must take it to* ***SYRIA****. And they must* ***DRINK****...They must drink.* ***JUDGMENT*** *has to come."* It's a vivid picture. Can you think of someone else again...a ***CUP*** that must be drunk? Do you understand why this is leading us to this (communion) table? *"Father, if it be possible, take this* ***CUP*** *from me." But God says, "Drink it.* ***YOU*** *must drink it, son.* ***YOU*** *must drink it."*

And the cup from which Jesus shrank, was the **CUP OF *GOD'S* ANGER** against sin. There is no other cup in scripture metaphorically speaking than that. ISAIAH talks of the cup of the wine of God's anger. ***ZECHARIAH*** talks about the cup of God's anger. The ***BOOK OF REVELATION*** talks about God treading out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. And that ***WINE***, when you drink it, is a symbol of the ***ANGER OF GOD***. But it's not a symbol of his anger against ***YOU***. It's a symbol that there was one person who took that cup and said, *"I'll drink it. I don't want to. I shrink from it."* And he drank it so that it needn't be drunk by ***OTHERS***.

But you see, when Jeremiah was alive, Jesus had not yet drunk the cup. So, *"Jeremiah take this* ***CUP*** *and make them (the nations) drink it."* And you know they had to. It all came true. In the year 605 BC. there was a battle on the bank of the Euphrates---a crucial battle--- between the two great world powers, ***BABYLON*** and ***EGYPT***. And in those days, ***THAT*** was the West and the East. And they met on the banks of the Euphrates at a place called ***CARCHEMISH***. And that battle was one of those hinges of history. It was like ***DUNKIRK***. It was one of those hinges of history. It turned the course of world events (or perhaps nearer the battle of ***EL ALAMEIN).*** It was a ***HINGE OF HISTORY***. And the battle of Carchemish signaled the end of the western power ***EGYPT***. And from then on ***BABYLON*** swept through Syria, Edom, Ammon, Judah, right through. And Jeremiah's word came true. And every one of the nations he mentions had to drink the cup...just had to.

***The Lord Will Come As a Roaring Lion...and As a Lamb***

And the ***FINAL PICTURE*** he gives in this chapter 25 is not of a cup that must be drunk. He then ***CHANGES*** the metaphor to the picture of a ***LION*** that has got into the fold among the sheep. In those days, the Jordan Valley had a jungle in it. The jungle has gone now, but it had a jungle right down the Jordan Valley. And it was full of ***LIONS***. And they came up into the hills around Bethlehem at night looking for sheep. Sometimes they jumped into a fold, and the shepherd was in there lying with a sheep. The shepherd was lying across the opening. He was the ***DOOR,*** and the sheep were inside. And the lion would jump in; and the lives of both sheep and shepherds were in jeopardy.

And Jeremiah says to all the ***NATIONS OF THE WORLD***, *"The Lord is like a* ***LION*** *who is springing into the fold. You* ***SHEPHERDS****---you rulers of the nations, you shepherds---****WATCH OUT****. You choice rams of the flock---you lords of the flock---your life is in danger. When the Lord comes, he comes like a lion---a* ***ROARING LION*** *out of its covert.”* Listen to this verse. *"The Lord will* ***ROAR*** *from on high, and from his holy habitation utter, his voice. He will* ***ROAR*** *mightily against his fold, and shout like those who tread the grapes."* Do you see the two pictures being brought together? A ***LION*** and a ***GRAPE TREADER***: the ***WINE*** of God's anger and the ***ROAR*** of his voice. I've given you the picture.

I just want to bring you back to ***JESUS*** for a moment. The Jesus who said *"Father, take this CUP from me,"* was the ***LION OF JUDAH*** who became the ***LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN***. The one person in the world who has authority to give you a ***CUP*** of the wine of God's anger to drink, and make you drink it, is Jesus. And one day he will. For when it is mentioned in the book of Revelation about *'treading out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored'*, it's Jesus who's going to come and make the ***NATIONS*** drink the ***CUP***. But for ***YOU***, he has said, *"I will drink it...if you will believe in me. I will drink it for you."* And the ***LION*** became the ***LAMB***. But when he comes back in the book of Revelation, he's the ***LION ROARING***. He's the ***LAMB*** that had been ***SLAIN***, and he's the ***LION*** of the tribe of Judah ***ROARING***.

Can you put this together? Isn't the Bible a whole---it interprets itself. You don't need any German scholars to tell you this. The ***LION*** and the ***LAMB***...ah, together in Jesus. And the CUP of wine, ***HE*** drank so that ***WE*** need not drink it. If you've ever read C. S. Lewis' book, *'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'*, do you remember in it, ***ASLAN***...Aslan the Lion? It's a picture of JESUS. That's a book you should read. It's not a children's book. You read it---*'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'*. And the ***LION*** Aslan is killed, but comes to life again, for Aslan is ***JESUS***.

You know, he could have given ***ME*** the ***CUP*** of God's wrath to drink and said, *"You must drink."* But he didn't. He said, *"I'll drink it."* He could ***ROAR*** at ***ME*** like a ***LION***, but he came to me as the ***LAMB*** ***OF GOD***, who takes away the sin of the world,

***Listening: We Must Hear and Heed***

Right? I'm going to ***FINISH***. I'm sorry I've been long the last few weeks. That's because I'm not quite up to par, and I'm not as crisp or as quick as I'd like to be. And I'm sorry that the service is so long. But I finish by saying just ***THREE*** things. Not *'did you* ***HEAR'***, but *'did you* ***HEED'*** is the question. ***LISTENING*** is not just what you do with your ***EARS***, it's what you do with your ***HANDS*** afterwards.

To ***LISTEN*** to God's word is not just to ***HEAR*** it, it is to ***HEED*** it and it is to ***DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT***. It is to be a ***DOER*** of the word and not a ***HEARER*** only. For those who listen to the words of the Lord Jesus divide into ***TWO GROUPS***. 1) Those who build their house on ***SAND***---they've ***HEARD*** the word, but they ***DO NOTHING*** about it, and their house crashes. 2) But those who ***HEAR*** the word and ***DO IT***--- who listen with an inclined ear and busy hands---they build their house on ***ROCK***, and it stands. This runs right through scripture--- that ***LISTENING*** to God's word involves ***INCLINING*** the ear and ***DOING*** something about it. Therefore, I apply this theme of ***LISTENING***, which is run right through this passage. Forget all the ***HISTORICAL*** details now, except for just ***TWO*** things that at the beginning of the reign of a new leader, Jeremiah said, 1) *"This is your* ***LAST*** *chance. Listen, and God will change his mind."* Four years later, he said, 2) *"You have* ***NOT*** *listened and it's* ***TOO LATE****."*

***A Call to the NATION to Listen to God***

Now, bearing those ***TWO THINGS*** in mind, let me apply what we've learned in ***THREE*** directions. Number ***ONE***, this is a call to ***THE NATION*** to listen to God. Sooner or later, somebody (pray that it may be the Archbishop of Canterbury, since he started speaking)... somebody's got to say, "Don't ask each other what kind of society you want. Don't listen to each other. ***LISTEN*** to ***GOD*** and ask ***HIM*** what kind of society ***HE*** wants." Sooner or later, somebody's gonna have to be bold enough to say, "We are in our troubles as a nation because ***GOD IS ANGRY WITH US!!"*** And whoever does will not be popular. It'll be a ***PROPHETIC*** mission.

Now, my little bit in the 'Surrey Advertiser' was not sent in as a personal letter in the *'correspondence column'*; I was very upset that it was put in there! It was sent in as ***ONE*** ***CLERGYMAN'S*** comments; and the intention was that it was going to be put alongside a lot of other clergymen's comments about the statement. And I wanted to say, "This must go much further if it's to be a call to the ***NATION***." But not one other minister or clergyman sent a comment in. So, the editor went and stuck it in as a ***PERSONAL LETTER***, (when I wouldn't have written that as a personal letter). Nevertheless, it went in. It produced some pretty strong letters in reply, from all kinds of people. But it produced one reply (not to me...to someone in this congregation) from a representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury who said, "Our intention last month was to initiate a national debate, and a good way ***NOT*** to have started one would have been to use the head-on methods which Mr. Pawson is advocating. As it is, I believe we have *'the ear of the people'*." Yes, you will get *'the ear of the people'* if you just say, "What do ***YOU*** want??" The moment you say, "***GOD IS ANGRY WITH PEOPLE***," you may lose the *'ear of the people'*. But I just praise God that Jeremiah didn't stop to ask whether he would get *'the ear of the people.*' He said, *"I have* ***SPOKEN*** *to you in the name of the Lord. It's up to* ***YOU*** *to* ***LISTEN****."* He was not troubled about audience figures. Whether they bore or forbore, he didn't worry. He said, *"I'm here to* ***SPEAK*** *in the name of the Lord and I'm here to tell you God is ANGRY, and if you* ***AMEND YOUR WAYS****, He will* ***CHANGE HIS MIND*** *and the disaster will not come."* That is what I believe we are waiting for. And I believe our desperate need in Britain is not to get into discussion groups and listen to each other, but that we should have ***LEADERS WHO LISTEN TO GOD.***

***A Call to the CHURCH to Listen to God***

***SECONDLY***, I believe that this study this morning is a call to ***THE CHURCH*** to listen to God. And there are ***TWO MAJOR CHANNELS*** through which we listen. Number ***ONE***: ***SCRIPTURE***. And I think the situation in this land would be ***TRANSFORMED*** if every church were preaching solidly...scripture! And it would mean: away with these seven-minute ditties. It takes time to listen to God's word. But I believe that it's a call to the church to put the Bible back in its place--- not the Bible as interpreted by the ***HIGHER CRITICS***, but the word of God. And let it speak for itself. It was Dr. Samuel Chadwick, who is my spiritual grandfather, who said this, "I never defend the Bible. The Bible is like a ***LION IN A CAGE***. I just opened the door and let it out." And that's what we need in Britain: more preachers who are ***LETTING THE BIBLE LOOSE*** and showing that it's absolutely relevant to our situation.

The ***OTHER (#2)*** great channel for the Bible doesn't cover every question that arises. It doesn't cover every issue. The other great channel (and they're closer related) is the channel of ***THE SPIRIT***. And we must ***LISTEN*** to what the Spirit is saying to the churches today. That will come in a ***VARIETY OF WAYS***. I believe the Spirit is speaking to this church excitingly. And if you come---and I want every member who was at the last church business meeting to be there next Tuesday for our prayer meeting, because we're gonna share a vision that God is giving to the elders, which is exciting in the extreme.

And we've got to be ***LISTENING***. And God is saying some things to the churches which ***WE DON'T LIKE TO HEAR***. Let me tell you some of the things I think He's saying ***THAT WE DON'T LIKE TO HEAR***. He's saying, "Away with ***ONE MAN MINISTRIES***, and be the body of Christ with many ministers ministering to each other." That's not easy when we've all been used to having one pastor and having him visit us all. He's saying that. I'm going to be even bolder: I believe that God is saying today (the *Spirit* is saying today): *"I am not using* ***DENOMINATIONAL*** *machinery."* And there's a new generation of Christians growing up that isn't interested in ***DENOMINATIONS***...and I can't break my heart about that. I believe that God is wanting the body of Christ ***LISTENING*** to the ***SCRIPTURE*** and the ***SPIRIT***.

What then is He saying ***POSITIVELY***? Well, He's saying get into ***GROUPS*** for prayer. He's saying get into ***GROUPS*** where you can minister to one another. He's saying, ***GET TOGETHER IN A HOME*** any way---you don't need a church. He's saying, get into structures in which there are ***ELDERS*** who shepherd the flock. He's saying all kinds of things like this. And the ministry of the body of Christ to itself and then to the world, he's saying many new things through people like authors and others. And we're gonna have to learn from what He's saying in His Spirit to Christians in ***OTHER COUNTRIES***. And we British are gonna have to be ***HUMBLE*** enough to say that He's speaking more to churches ***ELSEWHERE*** than here. And we've got to ***LISTEN***.

And many of the changes that have taken place in this church, over the last five years, have taken place because some have been ***LISTENING*** to what the ***SPIRIT*** is saying to the church and to the church-es. And He's saying very new things. It's a call to the church: "***INCLINE YOUR EAR AND GET YOUR HANDS BUSY!"***

***A Call For INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS to Listen***

And ***FINALLY***, I believe this to be a call to the ***INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN*** to ***LISTEN***...to listen! Do you remember the young boy who laid down in the Temple one night? Just before he dropped off to sleep, a voice says, *"Samuel, Samuel."* He ran into the next room and the old man said, *"Uh, I didn't call you."* So, he laid down again. There the ***SECOND*** time: "*Samuel, Samuel*," and he ran through. He said, "*I heard you call."* "*No, I didn't,"* said Eli, the old priest. A ***THIRD*** time it came, "*Samuel. Samuel."* He told the old man and the old man said, *"Ah, I can see what's happening. The Lord is speaking.* ***LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN!"*** And he did.

Do you know, I received a letter from a young man who was in the service last evening when I preached about prayer, as you know? He said, "I want to tell you what occurred on Monday night." He said, "I had a little time of prayer." He said, "I was praying for the Italian disaster; and I'd started my prayer with 'Living Father, we come to You.' And he was by himself. 'We come to you as sons. Please comfort those who mourn.' I had not got further than this, when I heard a voice say, 'Sinner, do you truly love me?' I got up and went to the door and looked to see who was outside, since I was on my own."

I can't quite read the next word.

Um, "Seeing anybody could have said it since there was such a noise. So, I went back to my prayer. Again, I heard the voice say, 'Sinner, do you really love me?' I was now slightly startled, and I thought I was dreaming. It happened a THIRD time. And this time the words were slightly altered. 'I am the Lord! Sinner, do you truly love me?' I then replied, 'Speak to me further.' I felt that a stumbling block had been removed and that God was answering my prayer." He then joined some other Christians in a prayer meeting. He's always had difficulty praying out loud---he's been to see me about it, and I've tried to help him with advice. But he said, "When it came to my turn, the Holy Spirit just brought out a prayer of me...and all because Jesus had signed the petition."

Do you like that? He was ***LISTENING***. He was ***LISTENING***. *"Master,* ***SPEAK****, your servant* ***HEARS****."* That's what God's waiting for. He's waiting for it from the church---this church and other churches. He may smash all denominations. He may do incredible things with this. But He's saying, "*Will you* ***LISTEN****? Will you* ***LISTEN****? Don't just keep things going for the sake of keeping them going."*

And then finally, He says, to every one of you---as an ***INDIVIDUAL***, by name)---"*Samuel, Samuel,"..."John, John,"..."Peter, Peter."* Whatever your name is, put it in. He's waiting for you to say, "Lord, I'm ***LISTENING***. Not just with an ***INCLINED EAR***. I'm listening with my ***HANDS*** too. I want to be a ***DOER*** and not just a ***HEARER***.

Let's pray. Oh, Father, thank you so much that you're a God who talks. You're a great talker. Thank You for all the things You've said to us this morning, and for the riches of Your word. At first sight, it seemed just a bit of history (two and a half thousand years ago) that had nothing to do with us. And Lord, you've just put it right into our lives. And so, Lord, we thank You that You're such a great talker--- that You have not remained silent. But Lord, we're not very good listeners. We confess that. we're so busy keeping things going. We're so busy carrying on in the way we've always done it. Help us to ***STOP*** and ***LISTEN***. Help us for Your namesake, Amen.

*Master, speak. Thy servant heareth, waiting for thy gracious word. (Hymn) #*479.

***SINGING (3 Minutes)***