This morning we come to the last study in the book of Jeremiah. I don’t know if you realized it, but Jeremiah is the ***LONGEST*** book in the whole Bible. I expect you have realized it by now, for we began the study of it 12 months ago this Sunday, and it's been a long journey. And now we've reached the end---a little sadly in a sense. I always feel I'm parting company with someone I've got to know very well, when we finish the study of one of God's men. Now we're going to read the last chapter in a moment---chapter 52---but I felt that it would be very helpful if I just read right through chapters one to 31---but not the whole of them just picking... picking out a verse here and there that will give you the flavor, and bring back to your memories some of the things that we've said and thought about.

So, if I just go straight through the first 31 chapters, picking out one or two verses per chapter... if you underline verses, you may well find you've underlined the same ones. But let me just go through.

*"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; and before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you," says the Lord, "to deliver you."*

**Then came a series of questions from Jeremiah.** *"What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went FAR from me, and went after worthlessness and became worthless? Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? Is Israel a slave? Is he a home- born servant? Why then has he become a* ***PREY****? Have you not brought this upon yourself by* ***FORSAKING*** *the Lord your God when he led you in the way? And now what do you gain by going to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile; or what do you gain by going to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates?*

*"How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine? How can you say, 'I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baals?' But where are your gods that you made for yourself? Why do you complain against me? Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of sick darkness? Why then do my people say, 'We are free. We will come no more to thee.' Can a maiden forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Where have you not been lain with? You have played the harlot with many lovers, and would you return to me?*

*"And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with* ***KNOWLEDGE*** *and* ***UNDERSTANDING****? I thought you would call me, 'My father.' Break up your fallow ground. Behold, he comes up like clouds, his chariots like the whirlwind. They are skilled in doing evil, but how to do good they know not. I looked on the* ***EARTH****, and lo, it was waste and void... and to the* ***HEAVENS****, and they had no light.*

*"Let us fear the Lord our God, who gives the rain in its season---the autumn rain and the spring rain---and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest. They have healed the wound of my people* ***LIGHTLY****, saying, 'Peace. Peace,' when there is no peace. Stand by the roads and look, and ask for the* ***ANCIENT PATHS****, where the good way is, and walk in it and find rest for your souls. Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. Is there no* ***BALM*** *in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this: that he* ***UNDERSTANDS*** *and* ***KNOWS*** *me, that I am the Lord, who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight," says the Lord.*

*"I know oh Lord, that the way of a man is not in himself---that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, oh Lord, but in just measure, not in thy anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. Therefore,* ***DO NOT PRAY*** *for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good, who are accustomed to do evil. For both prophet and priest ply their trade through the land, and have no knowledge.*

*"Thy words were found, and I ate them; and thy words became to me a joy, the delight of my heart. But the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it? Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O Israel. If I say I will not mention him or speak anymore in his name, there is in my heart as it were, a burning fire hidden in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. Why did I come forth from the womb, to see toil and sorrow and spend my days in shame? I set before you the way of life and death. 'Behold the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'when I will raise up for David a* ***RIGHTEOUS BRANCH****. And he shall reign as king, and deal wisely, and shall execute* ***JUSTICE*** *and* ***RIGHTEOUSNESS*** *in the land. Am I a God at hand,' says the Lord, 'and not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?' says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth.*

*"Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream; but let him who has my words speak my word faithfully. 'What has straw in common with wheat?' says the Lord. 'Is not my word like* ***FIRE****,' says the Lord, 'and like a* ***HAMMER*** *which breaks the rock in pieces?' Take from my hand this cup of the* ***WINE OF WRATH****. It is I, who by my great power and my outstretched arm, have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. But seek the* ***WELFARE*** *of the city where I have sent you into exile and* ***PRAY*** *to the Lord on its behalf, for in* ***ITS*** *welfare you will find* ***YOUR*** *welfare. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart; I will be found by you.*

*"Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued my faithfulness to you. 'Behold the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'when I will make a* ***NEW COVENANT*** *with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt---my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband,' says the Lord. 'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' says the Lord. 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be my people, and no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother saying, "Know the Lord." For they shall* ***ALL*** *know me... from the least of them to the greatest,' says the Lord. 'For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.' "*

Well now, with that flavor of the message of Jeremiah, let's read the final chapter of his book. And I just remind you of the last phrase of chapter 51: *"Thus far are the words of Jeremiah,"* which would've seemed a very suitable ending for the book; and yet there's ***ANOTHER CHAPTER***. And we read it now.

*Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. Surely because of the anger of the Lord things came to such a pass in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence.*

*And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and they laid siege to it and built siegeworks against it round about. So, the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. On the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine was so severe in the city, that there was no food for the people of the land. Then a breach was made in the city; and all the men of war fled and went out from the city by night by the way of a gate between the two walls, by the king’s garden, while the Chaldeans were round about the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. Then they captured the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he passed sentence upon him. The king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and also slew all the princes of Judah at Riblah.****HE PUT OUT THE EYES OF ZEDEKIAH, AND BOUND HIM IN FETTERS, AND THE KING OF BABYLON TOOK HIM TO BABYLON, AND PUT HIM IN PRISON TILL THE DAY OF HIS DEATH.***

*In the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month—which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard who served the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. And* ***HE BURNED THE HOUSE OF THE LORD,*** *and the king’s house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard,* ***BROKE DOWN THE WALLS*** *round about Jerusalem. And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive some of the poorest of the people and the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the artisans. But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard* ***LEFT SOME OF THE POOREST OF THE LAND TO BE VINEDRESSERS AND PLOWMEN.***

*And the pillars of bronze that were in the house of the Lord, and the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of the Lord, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and* ***CARRIED ALL THE BRONZE TO BABYLON****. And they took away the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the dishes for incense, and all the vessels of bronze used in the temple service, also the small bowls, and the firepans, and the basins, and the pots, and the lampstands, and the dishes for incense, and the bowls for libation. What was of gold the captain of the guard took away as gold, and what was of silver, as silver. As for the two pillars, the one sea, the twelve bronze bulls which were under the sea, and the stands, which Solomon the king had made for the house of the Lord, the bronze of all these things was beyond weight. As for the pillars, the height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, its circumference was twelve cubits, and its thickness was four fingers, and it was hollow. Upon it was a capital of bronze; the height of the one capital was five cubits; a network and pomegranates, all of bronze, were upon the capital round about. And the second pillar had the like, with pomegranates. There were ninety-six pomegranates on the sides; all the pomegranates were a hundred upon the network round about.*

*And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the threshold; and from the city he took an officer who had been in command of the men of war, and seven men of the king’s council, who were found in the city; and the secretary of the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land, who were found in the midst of the city. And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. And the king of Babylon smote them, and* ***PUT THEM TO DEATH*** *at Riblah in the land of Hamath.* ***SO, JUDAH WAS CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE OUT OF ITS LAND.***

*This is the number of the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year, three thousand and twenty-three Jews; in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred and thirty-two persons; in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred and forty-five persons; all the persons were four thousand and six hundred.*

*And in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of* ***JEHOIACHIN*** *king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth day of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he became king, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah and* ***BROUGHT HIM OUT OF PRISON****; and he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king’s table; as for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king according to his daily need, until the day of his death as long as he lived.*

***A Seemingly Difficult Chapter***

Going home in the car last Sunday morning, my elder daughter---who is now at her training college in Winchester---said, rather sadly, "I'm going to miss the last study in Jeremiah." And, after discussion, we agreed that 51 was really the climax, and that 52 was going to be a bit of a climax---anticlimax anyway---so that she'd reached the peak with the New Jerusalem last Sunday morning; and she went off happy. And I told her, quite frankly, "I've read through chapter 52, and I just cannot see why it's there... and what we're gonna say next Sunday morning. So, you just go away with chapter 51 and leave it there."

It's a very strange ending, isn't it? A little bit of history---clearly not written by Jeremiah himself, added by someone else... probably his secretary ***BARUCH***. It's out of place in time.

Incidentally, most of the book is, as we've discovered. The technique is known in the cinema as ***FLASHBACK***, but Jeremiah discovered it long before. And there's this constant moving around. And this chapter belongs with chapter 39, which describes ***THE FALL OF JERUSALEM.*** And I nearly took it with 39 when we came to that chapter. I'm glad now that I didn't, because I've been wrestling with ***ONE QUESTION***: believing that not only the ***HUMAN EDITOR*** added this chapter, but that the ***DIVINE EDITOR*** behind him wanted this book to finish on this rather flat, historical, mundane note without a single mention of the prophet Jeremiah in it. The ***ONLY TIME*** the name *'Jeremiah'* occurs, it's ***SOMEONE ELSE***---as you may have noticed. Without a single word from the Lord in it, it's nevertheless part of the word of God and the ***ENDING*** to one of the greatest books of the Bible --- certainly the greatest in ***SIZE***, and one of the greatest in ***MESSAGE***--- and yet it finishes on this mundane note with a bit of history. And I still find straight history rather boring.

***The Context of the Chapter in Six Parts***

Well, I've wrestled with that question. I've come up with ***FOUR ANSWERS***, which I'm going to share with you in a moment. Before I do so, let's just very briefly in five minutes ***SUMMARIZE*** ***THE CHAPTER***. It describes the ***LAST DAYS*** of a once great nation. It's therefore a very sad chapter. It describes what happened to its king, its buildings, its leaders, its people, even its furniture and its treasures ... and they all went. It (the ***FIRST SECTION***) ***BEGINS*** with that puppet King ***ZEDEKIAH***, a pure politician trying to play off the great powers one against another and coming badly unstuck. And Zedekiah managed to ***ESCAPE*** from the city when he realized all was lost. He went out of the one part of the city wall that they were not guarding because it was a ***GARDEN*** rather than houses---the king's garden. Some of you have seen the trees that stand on that spot now, right at the bottom end of the spur of the hill of Zion. And he escaped out through that garden with his troops.

They ***DESERTED*** the civilians---which is a comment in itself---and they went down the valley towards that deep rift in the earth's crust called the ‘***ARABAH’***, in which lies Jericho and the Dead Sea. And there they were ***CAUGHT***. And they did ***THREE THINGS*** to Zedekiah. **1)** They ***FIRST*** of all made him ***HOPELESS*** by destroying all of his sons in front of his eyes. He would, therefore, know that the royal line he hoped to found was finished. **2) *SECONDLY***, they made him ***HELPLESS*** by gouging out those eyes that had watched his son's assassination---and from now on he had to have everything done for him and had to be led around. **3)** ***THIRDLY***, they made him ***HARMLESS*** by shutting him up in prison where he couldn't even talk to his own people. And he spent the entire rest of his life in a ***BABYLONIAN DUNGEON*** with time only to think. And one can only guess at Zedekiah's thoughts. I would like to guarantee that most of his thoughts were centered on another man called ***JEREMIAH***, the only man still free.

How he must have wished that he'd ***LISTENED*** to Jeremiah. By a strange coincidence, his own grandfather had the ***SAME NAME***. It seemed as if this name was going to haunt him all his life, and it's mentioned here: *"Zedekiah, the grandson of Jeremiah."* To distinguish that one, it says, *"Jeremiah of* ***LIBNA****,"* whereas, our Jeremiah was of ***ANATHOTH***. But there he must have pondered on this strange coincidence: that he wouldn't have been in the ***WORLD*** at all but for one Jeremiah, and he might still have been on the ***THRONE*** if he'd listened to another. And this man spent the rest of his days thinking that one through.

The ***SECOND SECTION*** of this chapter talks about the ***BUILDINGS***. After three days, the captain of the guard of Babylon came with orders for systematic ***DEMOLITION*** of that entire city; and Kathleen Kenyon's excavations in the last few years have abundantly ***PROVED*** the truth of every part of this narrative.

On the hill of Zion there is hardly the remains of a single house, it's ***BARE ROCK*** now. There are a few Arab homes there, but there's no point in looking now for most of the ancient city of Jerusalem --- It's ***GONE***! Modern Jerusalem---even medieval Jerusalem---is much further to the north. The first one has disappeared. There has been more archeology done in the city of Jerusalem in the last 10 years than in the previous hundred, and yet they have discovered little but the ***BROKEN WALLS*** of this city. Every house was raised to the ground including the greatest house of all, the house of God.

The ***THIRD THING*** that is described in this chapter is what happened to the ***PEOPLE***. Most of them were taken off to ***BABYLON***. Now Zion wasn't a huge city. It was perhaps the ... it was smaller than Park Barn Estate, and therefore, the total number recounted here (4,600) figures as the ***POPULATION*** of that city. And they were all taken off, except a few of the very, very poorest, who were left to keep the vineyards going and the fields going ... and that's all. For the ***REST***, the city was ***EVACUATED***.

The ***NEXT THING*** that is described is what happened to the ***TEMPLE FITTINGS***. Since most of them were of precious metals they were taken off ... the gold, the silver. And because some of them were so huge ... that great ***BRONZE SEA*** (as it was called), a gigantic basin supported by four bronze bulls on a bronze pedestal --- that was ***SMASHED*** with sledgehammers. And the ***GREAT COLUMNS*** --- the two great bronze hollow columns outside the Holy of Holies, the holy place --- they too were ***SMASHED*** to smithereens, and they were carted off. These metals were precious. And so, those Jews had to watch Solomon's beautiful temple---the house of God---systematically ***SMASHED*** and taken away.

The ***NEXT PART*** of the chapter describes what happened to their ***LEADERS***. In those days when a nation was defeated, it was automatic that its leaders, both religious and political, were ***KILLED*** so that they could never lead again. Rob a nation of its best brains... rob a nation of its best thinkers... take the leaders, and it will be years before they recover. And that's been known in modern times also. Remove the leaders and you make the people that much slower in their recovery. So, the leaders were ***ASSASSINATED***.

***FINALLY***, there is a very careful account of the ***NUMBERS*** that were taken away, showing---as we know right through the Bible---that God is interested in ***NUMBERS*** and keeps careful ***RECORDS***. And you notice that it isn't just around 3000, it's 3023, which shows, because it is in the word of God, that God doesn't talk in terms of ***'ABOUT*** *so many at the meeting'*. God is the only one who knows at this moment exactly HOW MANY there are in this service ... ***EXACTLY***!! Somebody could count; but God has ***ALREADY*** counted, because he ***KNOWS*** every individual, he ***KNOWS*** where they are. And he counted these, because he wanted to bring some of them back to this land. God keeps his ***EYE*** on his people. And if there are 99 safe in his fold, there's one that isn't, and God has got his ***EYE*** on that one.

***FINALLY***, in the last paragraph (and this concludes the summary) there is one little statement that a previous king of Judah (who had been deported after reigning only three months at the age of 18 and had spent the rest of the time in prison in Babylon), one of Zedekiah's predecessors ... that, in fact, after some years in prison, he was brought ***OUT*** of prison and treated very well --- not by Nebuchadnezzar, but by Nebuchadnezzar's son. And Nebuchadnezzar's son only reigned for 12 months. But we know that that man, ***EVIL-MERODACH*** was a good deal less of a tyrant than his father. And though he didn't last very long, he was ***KINDER***. And he brought ***JEHOIACHIN*** out of prison and felt that he'd been badly treated (being kept in prison since his 18th year), because he had not fought against Nebuchadnezzar. He had ***SURRENDERED*** when Nebuchadnezzar came. And so, it was ***PUT RIGHT***, and he was allowed to sit at the king's table and given a daily allowance.

Do you know that such is the amazing, incredible confirmation of the Bible through archeology, that when they dug up the remains of the Ishtar gate in Babylon, they found Jehoiakim's ***RATION*** ***BOOK***! They found a tablet, with written on it: Jehoiakim's ***NAME*** and his ***DAILY ALLOWANCE***. Those who doubt the truth of God's word... You know it's these ***LITTLE*** things! You can't invent a fact like that. Doesn't it give you ***CONFIDENCE*** in the rest of God's word? That that last little paragraph of this book, with a seemingly irrelevant statement, nevertheless has been proved to be ***ABSOLUTELY CORRECT***. So much of the Bible has been demonstrated this way, that I find no difficulty in accepting the rest of it. I think it was Abraham Lincoln who said, "Accept all in the Bible you can on the basis of ***REASON***; accept the rest on the basis of ***FAITH***, and you will live and die a happier man." That's not a bad basis in approaching this book. You don't need to leave your reason behind, but it won't take you all the way. Accept as much of it as you can on the basis of ***REASON***, and there is good reason to do so. Accept the rest on the basis of ***FAITH***, and you'll live and die a happier man.

***Why This Chapter is Placed at the End of the Book of Jeremiah?***

Now having given you the content of the chapter, which you can read for yourself when you get home.... ***WHY IS IT THERE***... at the end... at the climax? Why should we get into this kind of history --- after such dramatic words from God?... And last Sunday... boy.... about Babylon? Wasn't that something? And yet today, it's all a bit ***'FLAT'***. Part of that *'flatness'* is, you know, that there is more excitement in ***ANTICIPATING*** something than in it happening. Have you noticed that? Even disaster is more exciting in ***ANTICIPATION***. It's strange but, you know, it happened in Paris and other capitals in Europe, at the beginning of first World War when they were invaded and overrun. In the weeks ***BEFORE*** they were invaded, there was tremendous tension-- ***EXCITEMENT***. All kinds of things were happening within the city. But the ***DAY*** the enemy marched in, there was a terrible ***FLATNESS***. The worst had happened, and there's an awful sense of ***FLATNESS*** and ***DEPRESSION*** when that comes.

And this is the sense we get in this chapter when we get to it. But ***WHY IS IT THERE***? I'm going to give you ***ONE GENERAL REASON***, and ***THREE PARTICULAR REASONS***. And you can either take all of them or take your pick. I'll leave you to judge.

***1) The General Reason: It Connects the Words and Deeds of God***

The ***GENERAL REASON*** is something that is true of the whole Bible, and it is this: This book is not just a record of the ***WORDS*** of God. It is a record of the ***DEEDS*** of God. And either without the other becomes meaningless. If we only had the ***WORDS*** of God in this book but not his ***DEEDS***, then people could say, "Words! Words! How do we know it's true?" If we only had the ***DEEDS*** of God---If we only had the ***HISTORY*** of God---then people would be free to put whatever interpretation on the history they would like. And people do that.

What we've got in the Bible is ***HISTORY***, which is the ***DEEDS*** of God. And we know these historical events to be the ***DEEDS*** of God, because they are accompanied by the ***WORDS*** of God. And the ***WORDS*** explain the ***DEEDS***, and the ***DEEDS*** take meaning from the ***WORDS***. And the two belong together. That's why the Bible is a mixture of what God ***SAYS*** and what God ***DOES***. It's a mixture of ***PREACHING*** and ***HISTORY***. And we've got to have the ***HISTORY*** to prove that God means what he ***SAYS***. That's what it's saying --- this chapter. Let me give you one ***EXAMPLE***. Jeremiah has spoken frequently about the *'anger of the Lord.*' And the vast majority of people in Britain do not believe that that is true. They say, "It is only ***WORDS***." Words of preachers, who are known as *'Hellfire Georges'*--and that, "God doesn't get angry." "God is a nice old boy." "God is a nice man." "He is a nice grandfather." "He is benevolent." "He is loving." "He just wants us to be happy, and pat us on the head say, 'There, there.' ***ANGER*** of the Lord? ***WRATH*** of God?"

And this is true, not only of people in Britain, it is true within the ***CHURCH ITSELF***. Some years ago, a group of representative Christian leaders met together to discuss a united outreach to Britain. And there was one man there who said, "I do not believe that we are sufficiently united yet, to do this together." And they said, "Rubbish, we all believe in the same God." He said, "We do not." And they said, "What you mean?" He said, "Well, may I tell you what God I believe in?" And that man took his New Testament, and he opened it at ***ROMANS ONE***. And he said, "*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven. Men have given God up, so God is giving men up. And his anger is revealed, in disobedience to parents, homosexual relationships, a spirit of rebellion.* And this is a sign in our society, of the anger of God." And man after man said, "No, we don't believe in a God like that. We don't believe in a God of wrath. We don't believe in a 'God of anger." And that meeting came to absolutely nothing. But the Bible is full of the ‘***ANGER OF THE LORD***.' It is also full of the teaching of the ***'LOVE OF THE LORD.***' But I am using this as an illustration. Jeremiah is full of the teaching of the ***'ANGER OF THE LORD***.' The New Testament is full of the teaching of the ***'ANGER OF THE LORD***.' Even Jesus himself was ***ANGRY***, and a study of his ***ANGER*** is a most revealing study. And yet people say, "I don't believe it. I don't accept that God is like that. I don't believe that God could be ***ANGRY*** with Britain, and that the ***TROUBLES*** we're going through could be a ***SIGN*** of his ***WRATH***. I don't believe it."

The ***ONLY THING*** said about ***GOD*** in chapter 52.... The only thing said about God in chapter 52 of Jeremiah is this: *"Surely because of the* ***ANGER OF THE LORD****, things came to such a pass in Jerusalem."* Now do you see? It is one thing for Jeremiah to ***SAY***, "***GOD IS ANGRY***," but the ***PROOF*** of it is in the ***DEED*** of God. How do you ***KNOW*** when a person is angry? Because of what they ***DO*** about it. How did you ***KNOW*** that Jesus was angry? Well, you ***KNEW*** that he was angry because he took a WHIP, and he turned the money changers out of the temple. That is how you ***KNEW***!

It is not enough for someone to ***SAY***, "I'm very cross with you." You will ***KNOW*** they are cross with you by what they ***DO***. And that is why the Bible never makes a ***STATEMENT*** about God, without backing it up with a ***DEED*** of God that proves that he ***MEANS*** what he ***SAYS***. And Jeremiah had been saying for 40 years, "*God is* ***ANGRY*** *with this* ***NATION****. He is* ***ANGRY*** *with this* ***CITY****."* And so, chapter 52 says, "***THIS SURELY PROVES IT."*** And in plain, 'matter of fact' terms; with no purple passages; no emotional phrases; no adjectives; in simple nouns, subjects, verbs and objects; the statements are made. The king had his sons killed; was blinded; was put in prison. The people were deported. The houses were demolished. The leaders were assassinated. The furniture was broken up and taken. And it is writing underneath all of God's word, *"Amen. It is true."* God ***MEANS*** what he ***SAYS***. And if God is ***ANGRY***, he will ***PROVE IT***.

Now, that's why I'm glad this book is a book of ***HISTORY***. I find other religious books are not. Read the Koran. It is not history. Read the holy Vedas scriptures. They are not history. They claim to be the 'word of God,' but they are ***WORDS WITHOUT DEEDS.*** They have no history in them. They cannot ***PROVE*** the truth of what they ***SAY***. They cannot point to this event and that. They cannot point to a ration book, dug up in the gates of Babylon. That kind of detail is ***MISSING*** from other sacred books in the world. It is ***MISSING*** from other religious writings. But I praise God that it is ***HERE*** in this book. And history is ***'HIS-STORY'***. It is not just words! You can never say to God, "Words! Words!"

And what is true of the ***ANGER*** of the Lord (Praise God!) is also true of his ***LOVE***. To say, *"God is love,"* could be just, "Words! Words!" Unless, one day a ***CROSS WAS ERECTED*** on a hill outside Jerusalem, and his own son was ***PUT TO DEATH ON IT***. How do we ***KNOW*** that God ***LOVES***? You can't just say, "God loves the world." You have got to ***ADD***, *"God so loved the world, that he did something about it; that he gave his only begotten son."* That is ***HOW***.

And so, the ***REASON*** why chapter 52 is ***ADDED*** is this: It has got to be added. If God ***SAID*** something, then God is going to ***DO IT***. His word ***ACTS***. It produces ***RESULTS***. "*And God* ***SAID****, 'Let there be* ***LIGHT****.' And there* ***WAS LIGHT****."* And when God ***SAYS***, *"Let there be* ***DARKNESS****."* There is ***DARKNESS***. And when God ***SAYS***, "*Let there be* ***DEATH****."* People ***DIE***. And when God ***SAYS***, *"I* ***FORGIVE*** *your sins."* The sins are ***FORGIVEN***. And when God ***SAYS***, *"I give you* ***ETERNAL LIFE****."* You ***HAVE IT***!

So, the ***DEEDS*** must be there as well as the ***WORDS***. That's the general reason, and it's the reason, incidentally, why the ***APOCRYPHA*** is not in the Bible and shouldn't be. I'm sorry it was included in both the New English Bible and the Jerusalem Bible. I'm glad it's not in the Good News Bible. The ‘*Apocrypha’* is ***HISTORY***. It's interesting ***HISTORY***---it's the ***HISTORY*** of Israel. It's the ***HISTORY*** of the Jews. But it was written during 400 years when God didn't have a word to say. There wasn't a prophet from Malachi to John the Baptist. Not one word came from heaven and, therefore, that block of history was ***WITHOUT MEANING***. Interesting--yes. Courageous--yes. The story of Judas Maccabees has inspired music and song, and inspired heroism today in Israel; and yet it doesn't belong to that ***HISTORY*** which gives ***MEANING*** to life. The only ***HISTORY*** included in this book is that segment of ***HISTORY*** that is interpreted by ***GOD'S WORDS***---those ***DEEDS*** of God that are clearly seen to be his ***ACTS***, because ***HE SAID SO***. And that's why this Bible covers ***SOME*** history, but not all. It doesn't cover all the history of Israel even. It covers that bit ***WHEN GOD WAS SPEAKING***---right from the ***FIRST*** time God said, *"Let there be...,"* through to Malachi who was the ***LAST***.

And then for 400 years Israel had to WAIT for a word from God. And the scribes mulled over what had already been said, but there was ***NO NEW WORD*** from God. And then one day, after waiting four centuries, a man appeared in Elijah's clothes and began to say, *"Thus says the Lord,"* again. And that's a phrase that occurs 3,808 times in the ***OLD TESTAMENT*** but doesn't occur ***ONCE*** in the Apocrypha. And so, the Bible is made up of God's ***WORDS*** and ***DEEDS***. Or can I put it another way? And I've said this to you before. Let me repeat it in greater detail. 27% of the verses of the Bible contain a ***PREDICTION*** in them. Did you know that? Over one quarter of the verses of the Bible contain a specific ***PREDICTION*** about something that will happen in the future. Now that's a pretty bold book. It contains therefore, altogether 737 different ***PREDICTIONS***. A man would be pretty bold to make 737 ***PREDICTIONS***. Even those who claim to tell the future---the Jeanne Dixon's of this world---they don't dare to risk that number of ***PREDICTIONS***. This book contains 737 ***PREDICTIONS*** scattered through it. It's interesting that Jeremiah almost holds the record. He is second only to Ezekiel for the number of verses that contain a ***PREDICTION***. He has 812 verses predicting events to Ezekiel's 821. He is second only to Isaiah in the number of events which he ***PREDICTS***. He predicts 90 and Isaiah predicts 111. Jeremiah has the greatest number of verses about one event---222 times he ***PREDICTS*** one event and that is the record. And for actual amount of words of ***PREDICTION***, Jeremiah holds the record. These statistics may be of interest to you or maybe not.

But the ***VITAL*** one is this 737---get that fixed in your mind. ---events are ***PREDICTED*** in the Bible, the Old and New Testament. How many of those have come ***TRUE***? Let me tell you. 593 have already come TRUE. 80.5% have already ***HAPPENED***. Now that doesn't mean the Bible is 80% accurate. It has been a hundred percent ***ACCURATE***, thus far. For many of the rest of the predictions are concerned with the end of the world and ***REMAIN*** to come true. There is something even ***MORE STRIKING***. Listen, out of 737 separate events ***PREDICTED*** in the Bible, not only have 593 already happened, there are only 17 more to happen ***BEFORE JESUS COMES BACK TO PLANET EARTH***--only 17 out of 737, which are to happen before Jesus returns. And if the Bible's been right in 593, I can trust it for the other 17. Can you not? This is exciting! This is God's ***WORDS*** and God's ***DEEDS*** linking together. What God SAYS, He means... and what He ***MEANS*** he ***DOES***…. “***AMEN!”*** ---and the meaning of that word is ***'LET IT BE'***... ***'LET IT HAPPEN'***. We can say, "*Amen*," to all that is ***GOING TO HAPPEN***.

Now that's the general reason why I believe God inspired the editor of Jeremiah to add this chapter: ***TO CONFIRM***. It vindicated ***JEREMIAH***, but it vindicated ***JEHOVAH*** too. It ***VINDICATED GOD***, that God is a God who ***MEANS*** what He ***SAYS***. And you dare not trifle with his words, and you dare not gamble on him being wrong. You dare not ***RISK*** God being a ***LIAR***: *"Let* ***GOD*** *be* ***TRUE*** *and every* ***MAN*** *a* ***LIAR****,"* is the only safe way.

***Context 1) Chapter 52 is a Lead-In to the Following Book: Lamentations***

Now, I give you three particular reasons you should always put a chapter in ***CONTEXT***... or I will make it ***TWO REASONS***, I think. Here is the ***FIRST***. **1)** It's a perfect ***LEAD-IN*** to the next page in the Bible... perfect lead-in, for the next page in the Bible begins a very sad poem called ***LAMENTATIONS***. The next few pages of the Bible are ***'WET WITH TEARS'***, and they are ***FUNERAL DIRGES***, which are still sung by modern Israel once a year when they remember ***THE FALL OF JERUSLEM.*** I would to God they remember the ***REASONS*** for the fall as well as they remember the fall! But still to this day, the book of Lamentations and its ***POIGNANT PHRASES OF AGONY*** speaks to the depths of our sadness. "*Is it nothing to you--all you that pass by? Is it nothing?"* Sometimes I recall those words when we stand, and we look at the ***RUIN-WALLS OF JERUSALEM*** uncovered by Kathleen Kenyon... "Is it nothing to you?" Doesn't it move you to your ***DEPTHS*** that a great nation ***SANK*** to this? "Is it nothing to you? Oh Jerusalem. Oh Jerusalem." Now if we left off the book of Jeremiah Chapter 51, there'd be ***NO CONTINUITY*** into the book of ***LAMENTATIONS***. And I believe the editor added this chapter to tell you what they're weeping over in Lamentations---to be a ***CONTINUITY*** link with that next book. I was tempted to go on into Lamentations following this study in Jeremiah. It seems to follow so easily. And the Lord told me, "No, keep it for the day that ***BRITAIN*** falls." I'm gonna keep it for then. I just pray that I will not need to expound that book in my lifetime or my time in Guildford. But he said, "That's a book you cannot understand until ***YOUR NATION*** has fallen. So, keep it." But Chapter 52 tells you the ***FACTS***. *"When your king has had his eyes gouged out and been put in prison,"...* you imagine what you would feel if that had happened to Queen Elizabeth. When you've seen your ***HOUSES*** systematically ***DEMOLISHED***... when you've seen all but a few poor people ***TAKEN OFF TO A LAND*** and know that they will ***NEVER SEE THEIR OWN COUNTRY*** in their lifetime---though their children may come back. Then you will ***WEEP***, and you'll ***UNDERSTAND*** Lamentations.

***Context 2) Chapter 52 Completes What Preceded It***

Let's go back to its context the other way. Chapter 52 certainly ***LEADS INTO WHAT FOLLOWS***, but **2)** it also perfectly ***COMPLETES WHAT PRECEDES***. Let me just go back for a moment to last Sunday morning. What was the ***THEME***? The theme last Sunday morning was the ***FALL OF BABYLON***... the ***FALL*** of that enemy... the ***FALL*** of the greatest power the world had then seen. And it was very moving to see the FALL of that... and we rejoiced. And you remember last Sunday morning---how many of you? ---80 came out and sang the ‘*Hallelujah Chorus’* here to ***REJOICE*** at Babylon's ***FALL***? That's what the Hallelujah Chorus belongs to. But you know, it's a very DANGEROUS thing for us spiritually to end ***REJOICING*** over the ***DOWNFALL*** of our ***ENEMIES***---very dangerous. It's dangerous because we should be examining ourselves and our ***OWN DESTINY***. And I'm afraid all of us can be so glad at the downfall of our ***ENEMIES***.

I remember VE day. Do you remember that? Do you remember the singing and dancing---"Hitler's dead!!" Oh, this country was shouting. "Hallelujah," then. But we needed to be thinking about ourselves and ***OUR DESTINY***. And so, it seems to me that the editor, under divine inspiration, knew that it would be absolutely ***WRONG*** for Israel to read Jeremiah's words and be left with a thought of ***BABYLON*** falling. And he knew that they must be ***CHALLENGED*** and ***REMEMBER*** and ***LEARN*** from their past, that it was ***JERUSALEM*** that ***FELL***. It was the ***CITY OF GOD*** that ***FELL***. That was the greater tragedy. That is what they must learn from. And ***'THOSE WHO DO NOT LEARN FROM HISTORTY ARE CONDEMNED TO RELIVE IT'***. And so, we are left with this thought. And we here this morning are left with this thought..."***THAT JUDGEMENT BEGAN WITH THE HOUSE OF GOD.***".. That judgment ***BEGAN*** with ***JERUSALEM***. It went on to ***BABYLON***, but it ***BEGAN*** with ***JERUSALEM***. And that's where we must ***STAY***. That's where we must abide in our ***MEMORIES***. We read Jeremiah---not thinking about even Jeremiah or Jerusalem or Babylon---but thinking about ***MILLMEADE*** and thinking about ***OURSELVES***. And so, in this very interesting way, the editor of this book brought Jewish readers back to ***THEMSELVES*** and said, "Remember this was ***YOUR*** nation, ***YOUR*** king, ***YOUR*** temple, ***YOUR*** houses, ***YOUR*** people. And even though Babylon is to fall, learn the lesson of history about ***YOURSELVES***, rather than about your enemies."

That came to home me home to me very forcibly, as I watched the military parade on the 25th anniversary of the state of Israel, as they rejoiced over the six-day war, not long previously. And I ***TREMBLED*** for them. And I remember saying to someone, "I wonder how soon it will be before God humbles this people?"... little dreaming that it would be within six months. Oh, God says, *"Learn the lesson of history. Put not your trust in missiles and tanks and horses and chariots. Put your* ***TRUST*** *in* ***ME****!!"* It means that we live in a ***MORAL UNIVERSE***, and that God deals with sin---even in his own people. Why did I say, "Even?" I should say, "***ESPECIALY*** in his own people."

That's the message of Jeremiah, surely. Yes, God will deal with evil in Babylon, but the whole of Jeremiah is that he deals with it even in his own people---and ***ESPECIALLY*** in his own people. And that's the ***MESSAGE*** we must be left with. Not Babylon, but ***JERUSALEM***. Not pagans, but ***GOD'S OWN PEOPLE.*** He deals with them, for he is a ***MORAL GOD IN A MORAL UNIVERSE***. That's the final word.

Alas, I have to tell you that Israel---though it came back---did not learn, and was therefore, occupied and reoccupied and reoccupied by Egyptians, by Syrians, by Greeks, by Romans. And it was during the ***ROMAN*** occupation that at last, God did something ***RADICAL*** and stepped back into the situation and sent ***HIS OWN SON***---not a prophet this time, but ***HIS OWN SON***. They had dealt with prophet after prophet. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you stone the prophets. Will you listen to ***MY SON***? I've sent servant after servant to you, but would you listen to ***MY SON***? And God sent his son, Jesus, to this city that had not learned from its own tragic history.

***Jeremiah is Connected With the Life of Jesus***

And I want now to explore for just a few minutes, the amazing ***CONNECTION*** between ***JESUS*** and ***JEREMIAH***, separated in time by over 500 years. They nevertheless show such affinity. Why, when Jesus was born, the country was ruled over by a Roman puppet king who was a descendant of ***ESAU***, a hated ***EDOMITE***---one of those mentioned in the later chapters of Jeremiah, one of the NATIONS. And this Edomite (Herod) was so jealous for his own position that he'd do things to safeguard it... well, a number of things. He built that incredible place at Masada to protect himself, not only from Cleopatra in Egypt, but from the Jews themselves---in case they turned nasty. But to try and ***APPEASE THE JEWS***, he said, *"I'm going to rebuild your* ***TEMPLE*** *and build it bigger and better than ever. I'll give you the best temple you ever had. Solomon's will be nothing on the one I'm going to give you."* And he started rebuilding it. And you can see today the huge foundation stones that he laid to impress this nation with his apparent concern for their welfare. And Jesus came into that very situation, when Herod was ***REBUILDING*** the temple---all the time of Jesus' life it was being rebuilt. And Jesus was born.

The ***OTHER THING*** that Herod did was this: he safeguarded his throne by ***ASSASSINATING*** every potential rival. He was *'Herod the Great'* in more senses than one. And when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, Herod---who had a castle just outside Bethlehem on a man-made hill, which you can see to this day, Herodium---Herod said, *"There's a king born!* ***KILL*** *every boy under two years."* And of all those boys---the future generation of Bethlehem---***ONE ESCAPED***, his name: JESUS. And Matthew---telling the story---quotes ***JEREMIAH*** and said, *"A voice was heard in Ramah, the weeping of Rachel for her children".* And if you remember when Jeremiah said it---when his fellow countrymen were being deported and were being led away to Babylon past Rachel's tomb---and ***ONE ESCAPED***, because at Rachel's tomb, Nebuzaradan said, *"Jeremiah, you can go free."* And ***ONE ESCAPED***. The parallel is clear. That's why Matthew used the prophecy, *"The voice of Rachel crying for her children."* But ***ONE ESCAPED***, and his name was ***JESUS***, as the ***ONE WHO ESCAPED*** when that word was said previously was ***JEREMIAH***.

And then, ***LATER*** in the story of Jesus you find ***CONTACT*** after ***CONTACT***. You find that when Jesus cleansed the temple---twice he did it, once at the beginning, once at the end... this magnificent new building that was still going up---he went in with a whip and he was angry. And what WORDS did he use? He used the words of ***JEREMIAH***, *"You've made My house into a den of robbers."* He could find no better words than the words of Jeremiah to use. When you see Jesus on the ***PALM SUNDAY*** riding in from the Mount of Olives, you see **JEREMIAH**... *"O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, how often would I,"*... And then Jesus went on to ***PREDICT*** the identical thing that ***JEREMIAH*** had ***PREDICTED*** of that city... *"O Jerusalem, a siege works will be cast up about you, and you will be* ***DESTROYED****, and not one stone left on another.*" And that's exactly what Jeremiah had ***PREDICTED***. And you know, from ***JEREMIAH'S*** first ***PREDICTION***, to its actual ***HAPPENING***, was exactly 40 years. And from **JESUS'S PREDICTION** of it happening, to it ***HAPPENING*** was exactly 40 years.

And when ***JESUS*** was ***ARRESTED*** and taken for trial, the parallel between His own imprisonment and the things they said to Him and did to Him is almost identical with the trial and imprisonment of ***JEREMIAH***. You remember when we read that chapter? I say it carefully, but I believe (to a degree) ***JEREMIAH*** also shared the ***SUFFERINGS of JESUS***. ***KNEW*** what it was to be despised and rejected of men. ***KNEW*** what it was to want to gather that city, Jerusalem, to God and find that they did not want it. ***KNEW*** what it was to be alone. ***KNEW*** what it was to cry out against God, *"Why have you left me? All the others have; but why you?"* And it is out of that lone experience of ***SUFFERING*** that I think Jeremiah comes to us ***TODAY***.

***The Book of Jeremiah: Discovering a Personal Walk with God***

And I now reach my ***CONCLUSION*** of these studies to help us. For in his lonely walk with God---thrown out of the temple, out of the public worship, out of the ritual---he discovered a ***PERSONAL WALK WITH GOD.*** He discovered a ***NEW RELIGION***. He discovered a religion of the ***HEART***. He discovered a religion that could be written ***INSIDE*** a man, that was not dependent upon external support. He discovered ***A WALK WITH GOD***. And it is at this point of ***LONELINESS*** and ***SUFFERING*** that I think Jeremiah can help you most.

***2) Jeremiah Helps Us Cope With Disaster***

I finish then with just ***THREE THINGS*** which Jeremiah ***HELPS US TO COPE WITH***. And I'm quite sure he has spoken to you as we've talked about him. **1)** ***FIRST***, Jeremiah helps us to cope with ***DISASTER***... with disaster. He is ***THE*** book for a nation sliding downhill. It is terribly difficult to cope with this, and the way most people do is to ***DENY*** that it is happening. That's the way we shield ourselves. We say, "Don't worry, it may never happen." That's the way we ***BLIND*** ourselves to what is happening. Other people in the world can see it more clearly than we can in Britain. Did you see the interviews with the Americans exchanging their travelers checks for so much more sterling on the two days that the pound plummeted? They were ***SAD***. They were asked, "Aren't you glad that you're getting more sterling for your traverse checks?" They say, "No, we're ***SAD*** to see Britain going down the drain."

***THEY*** could see it, but ***WE'RE*** ***BLIND***. Businessmen are telling me it's only temporary. Another couple of years we'll be back on top. How ***BLIND*** can you be. Local *'Minister's Fraternal'* said, "David, you're too pessimistic. You're too pessimistic. Britain's not too bad. There's a fund of goodwill towards Christianity." Look, the facts are ***AGAINST*** us!! In the first worldwide Gallup poll done by George Gallup---the first worldwide poll---we come second to the bottom for ***GODLINESS*** for the number of the population (the percentage) that believes in God. The top percentage is 94, but it's not Britain. It's not even in our western world. Do you know that the second bottom is 69% and its Britain, there's only one nation that's ***MORE GODLESS*** than we are, and it's Japan. It's become more materialist. But we are second bottom. Do you know that in the research done by the Bible Society---before publishing the ‘*Good News Bible’*---over the past 12 months the possession of Bibles has dropped 5% in the population. That means that if that went on, in 20 years ***NOBODY*** in England would have a Bible. And in that same research 69%---that same figure, 69%---admitted that they had not looked inside a Bible for at least 12 months. And then I get this complacency, "Don't worry, you're a ***PESSIMIST***." And other people can see it as clear as their own face in the mirror. But ***JEREMIAH*** is the one to help us through ***DISASTER***. Jeremiah is the one to help us to be honest and ***FACE REALITY***, because Jeremiah sees a HOPE at the end of the tunnel. That's why, as I've told you, I'm calling the book I'm hoping to write about this prophet *'Darkest Before Dawn'*. But only if you face the darkness honestly, will you be able to see the ***DAWN***. So, Jeremiah helps us through ***DISASTER***.

May I read a sentence from a book by Lord McCauley. Lord McCauley said this, "It is difficult to conceive any situation more difficult than that of a great man condemned to watch the ***LINGERING AGONY*** of an exhausted country... to tend it during the alternate fits of stupefaction and raving, which precede its ***DISSOLUTION***, and to see the symptoms of vitality disappear one by one, till nothing is left but ***COLDNESS***, ***DARKNESS***, and ***CORRUPTION***." Lord McCauley. ***JEREMIAH*** was a great man who had to watch that. And YOU are gonna have to watch Britain become one of the ***POOREST COUNTRIES*** in Europe, if not the world. And ***YOUR CHILDREN*** are gonna have to watch it. How are you gonna hold on? Some of you will say, "It'll get better." Some of you will shut your eyes to it. Some of you may go crazy and develop a ***GAMBLING*** craze or an ***ALCOHOLIC*** craze. And that's one of the fastest rising symptoms of the panic. But some of you will hold onto Jeremiah. You will feel like Jeremiah at times. You'll say, "God, why was I brought forth from the womb to see all this?" But ***JEREMIAH*** got through it. When you read his book, he will help YOU through it with ***UNDERSTANDING*** and with a ***WORD*** for others, and with ***HELP*** for them.

***3) Jeremiah Helps Us Cope With Depression***

The ***2)*** ***SECOND*** thing he will help you to cope with is the **DEPRESSION** that is the effect of such doom. Depression is something we ***ALL*** have to cope with. For most of us it's centered around very personal things that happen to us. But there's a ***GENERAL MOOD OF DEPRESSION*** that could come over this country. I sense it already. A feeling of ***HELPLESSNESS***. A feeling of, "What's the point of trying to save new money for the ***FUTURE***? What's the point of planning for the ***FUTURE***? What's the point of investing for the ***FUTURE***? There isn't any. So, let's just make the best of the ***PRESENT***." Now Jeremiah helps us to ***COPE*** with that. He had a thankless task. He had to preach for 40 years and know that they would not listen. He had to watch his own nation ***DISSOLVE*** destroyed. And yet he kept going. And somehow out of his very depression, there came such a ***CLOSE WALK WITH GOD*** that he had ***NO CHOICE*** but to go on telling people that the light would one day return---that dawn would one day break.

When you are ***DEPRESSED*** with the situation, go back to ***JEREMIAH***. Read the times when he was depressed; but read on and see how God challenged him, picked him up, set him on his feet and said, *"Jeremiah, I told you to* ***GO*** *and* ***TELL*** *them. Go on, keep on doing it."* And you know, Jeremiah did it without any hope of the ***RESURRECTION***. There's not a mention of an afterlife in Jeremiah, and yet ***HE*** could see it through. And ***WE'VE*** got a life before us that's wonderful. ***WE'VE*** got the resurrection as part of our faith. Can ***WE*** not cope with depression if ***HE*** could?? He was able---without a single thought of surviving the grave---to ***COPE***; and he came through with God.

***4) Jeremiah Helps Us Cope With Our Disobedience***

And **3)** ***FINALLY*** Jeremiah helps us not only with the depression that is the effect of disaster, but---and this is the most important thing---he helps us to cope with the ***DISOBEDIENCE*** that ***CAUSES*** it. For that's the real ***POINT*** of the book. Disaster isn't arbitrary. It isn't a matter of luck or chance. ***DISASER*** is related to **DISOBEDIENCE**. God has made this world a ***LAWFUL*** world. His laws protect us. Thank God for his laws. You cannot ***BREAK*** his laws. You can only ***ILLUSTRATE*** them. If you walk off a cliff, you'll ***BREAK*** the law of gravity, you think? No, you'll ***ILLUSTRATE*** it.

You can't ***BREAK*** God's laws. ***THEY BREAK YOU***!! That is the truth. You may think you've broken them, but you haven't. They've broken you. It's the same with ***HEALTH***. There are laws of health. If you break the laws of physical health, you don't break them... they break ***YOU***. And that's the ***HEART*** of the message, the ***DISOBEDIENCE***. And that's the ***HEART*** of our ***PROBELM***. *"Can the* ***LEOPARD*** *change his* ***SPOTS****,"* says Jeremiah*, "or the* ***ETHIOPIAN*** *his* ***SKIN****? Then you can do* ***GOOD*** *and stop doing* ***EVIL****."* In other words, he was utterly ***REALISTIC*** with human nature, and he recognized---as he put it---that ***SIN*** is written in our ***HEARTS***, and that ***WE CAN'T CHANGE OURSELVES***, and that we're like this, and we are ***REBELLIOUS*** and ***DISOBEDIENT***. We do think we break God's laws.

And that's the ***PROBLEM***. And he faced up to it very squarely... utterly realistically. The thing that's most vividly in my mind after this series is the picture of the ***POTTER WITH THE CLAY***. Do you remember that? Where we discovered that the usual interpretation of that passage is the ***OPPOSITE*** of the true one. That the ***USUAL*** interpretation is that the ***POTTER*** decides what shape the clay should be. But in fact, we saw that it was the ***CLAY*** that decided, and that the ***SHAPE*** the potter ***WANTED*** to make that clay, the clay ***WOULD NOT MOULD*** to that shape. And so, he had to bang it into a ***LUMP*** and make a ***POORER VESSEL*** out of it---a vessel which Jeremiah later ***SMASHED***. And the problem is with the ***CLAY***; and ***WE*** are clay that will not mould to the potter's hand. That was the ***LESSON*** Jeremiah learned: where the ***LEOPARD*** who can't change spots, where the ***ETHIOPIAN*** who can't change skin, where the ***CLAY*** that will not respond to the potter's hand.

And if we'd left it there, then Jeremiah would be an ***UNBEARABLE*** message, but he didn't leave it there. In chapter 31, he said something so profound that it became the name of the other half of the Bible---for our word, ***'NEW TESTAMENT'*** is the Latin translation of '***NEW CONENANT'***. And it was Jeremiah who first coined that phrase. And so, our very New Testament is named after that phrase from ***JEREMIAH***. He saw something ***NEW*** happening. He saw forgiveness, he saw a change in human nature. He saw a new kind of religion in which the commandments were not written in stone, but written somewhere much better.... written in the ***HEART***, so that a heart wanted to keep the law. And he saw a whole new ***COVENANT***, a whole new ***RELATIONSHIP***, a whole new ***RELIGION***. And he saw it from a distance. It didn't come for another 500- odd years, but he saw it.

He said, *"I can see that what my people need is a* ***NEW*** *religion, a* ***NEW*** *nature, a* ***NEW*** *relationship with God; not like the one they had with the God who brought them out of Egypt---which they still remember every year, incidentally---not like that one. They need something quite* ***NEW****! They need a new* **RELATIONSHIP** *with God.”* And one night, a Jew called *'Jesus'* took a ***LOAF OF BREAD*** and He broke it, and He took a ***CUP OF WINE*** and He gave it to them, and He said*, "Drink of this. This is my blood,"* of what? …And He quoted, ***JEREMIAH***: *"This is My blood of the new covenant.*"... The ***NEW COVENANT***.

When Jesus ***DIED***, the new relationship became ***POSSIBLE***. It became ***POSSIBLE*** to know God intimately from, the least to the greatest. It became ***POSSIBLE*** to keep His laws. It became ***POSSIBLE*** for sins to be forgiven rather than simply winked at and overlooked. It became ***POSSIBLE*** for God's people to enjoy God's blessings forever. At first, many Jews responded to Jesus. All the early followers of Jesus were Jewish; but many of them would not listen. They went on with their ***OLD*** religion... their ***OLD*** relationship, though it didn't work.

And in AD 70, everything that Jesus predicted came true yet again. And Jerusalem was ***RAISED*** to the ground. The house of the Lord was ***BURNT***. It had only been finished six years, and it was pulled down stone upon stone. And there is nothing but the stone platform left today. And this relationship was thrown open to us ***GENTILES***! Hallelujah! And we came into Jeremiah's blessings. And do you know that one of the first big battles in the Christian Church (which involved calling a whole council together in Jerusalem) was the battle: should ***GENTILES*** come into this faith, which is Jewish? And they had a big debate. One of the apostles stood up and he quoted the Old Testament to show that Gentiles were included. And who did he quote? ***JEREMIAH***! And at that council, it was settled forever that we Gentiles can be part of Israel without becoming Jews, and that we are ***PART OF ISRAEL***. That does not mean that the old Israel has lost out. God intends to bring them back in, make no mistake. And when Paul talks about the ingathering of ***ISRAEL*** back to the fold, who does he quote in Romans nine? ***JEREMIAH***! And so, I could go on. There are 41 different ***QUOTATIONS*** from Jeremiah in the New Testament---26 of them in the last book of the Bible, the book of ***REVELATION***.

***Jeremiah’s Great Prophecy: The New Covenant and the New Man***

But I ***FINISH***, you see what Jeremiah was saying? *"My people Israel need a changed* ***HEART****, a new* ***RELATIONSHIP****, a new* ***COVENANT****, a new* ***RELIGION*** *with the same God.”* And he discovered it ***HIMSELF*** in his own heart, because he'd been robbed of the temple of his people... of everything. But he'd ***FOUND*** God and he KNEW God. He said, "***THAT'S*** what the people need, and one day they'll get it! "And they have done it.

When we studied the passage which included that phrase, "The ***LEOPARD*** and its ***SPOTS***", somebody---I don't know who.... they may be here---just jotted down one sentence on a piece of paper and pushed it in my hand at the door: "A leopard cannot change his spots, but I know that ***MY SPOTS*** have been healed by ***HIS STRIPES***." That's the ***NEW COVENANT***. Leopard can't do it, but CHRIST can. And so, I finish from the poem that we've been using from time to time: *'Are You Joking, Jeremiah*'? I read finally the part that deals with the ***NEW COVENANT***. It's in contemporary language. That may offend some of you. I hope that you'll nevertheless get the feel.

*"I sat alone and* ***DAZED*** *like the driver of a speeding car, who survives a splintering crash through the window of a store. I sat alone and rigid, as the* ***ASHES*** *fell around me... as the* ***LAND OF GOD*** *was scorched and the* ***TEMPLE*** *crackled like a box, where many people thought their God had once been caught. The last volcanic words that once I spoke so fiercely, were coming TRUE before my face; and how I wish they weren't. As blood was spilled and hair was burnt. A puff of ash, a whisp of dust, a swirling wind across the cinders* ***BLURRED*** *my vision---a bloodshot vision of God. In pain, struggling with the* ***DUST*** *again, I could see a glimmer of* ***TOMORROW****... an image of God's* ***NEW MAN*** *sculptured out of molten dust... a hot and modern piece of art that would force the sour adult to start and say, "My God, what's that?*

*"Now I see this* ***NEW MAN*** *bound to God by an endless natal cord he calls His* ***COVENANT****---that bond of* ***BLOOD*** *which He has formed to join His love to the very source of life. I see this* ***NEW MAN*** *free and bold---leaping, dancing with his God; beating out a rhythm, swinging with his God; flying with the wind and cool. I see him take a laughing girl and fling her in the air. I see him catch her in his arms to hold her close and gently kiss her hair. I watched and waited. Will this fresh, new man who knows the fierce* ***SPIRIT OF LIFE*** *that God implants within, now turn from God, and SIN?? This man* ***KNEW*** *his God, as you and I know all the features of our face. This man* ***TALKED*** *to God, as if He were a man---another kid who understood, a guy who knew just what to do in any situation. I watched to see if this* ***NEW MAN*** *would take this girl and selfishly use her and forcefully abuse her as some guys want to do. I heard God whisper to that* ***NEWBORN MAN****, "You will not harm this girl or push her all the way; for I went all the way to* ***DEATH****---used by men, abused by men--- to show how My* ***FORGIVENESS*** *works as it suffers, strains, and struggles for the person who is loved and the people I forgive.* ***FORGIVENESS*** *is the power and* ***FORGIVENESS*** *the arena for the lives of perfect men who are* ***BOUND TO ME*** *by love in My strong* ***NEW COVENENT****, in this furious dance called 'life', where* ***I NEVER LET YOU GO*** *as My hand clenches yours." I was* ***ALONE****, skin and bone, yet very* ***FREE*** *that day. "Let's celebrate," I heard God say! 'Amen.' "*

Let's pray. "*Oh God, how we* ***THANK YOU*** *for Jeremiah; but how much more we thank You for Jesus. Oh, Jeremiah told us what we needed, but Jesus* ***GAVE IT*** *to us. And Jesus'* ***DEEDS*** *fulfilled Jeremiah's* ***WORDS****; and you are* ***TRUE****. And so, Lord God, speak to every one of us in this place today. May we not go out hardened by Your word.* ***MOULD THE CLAY****. May we respond to Your hand. And Lord, as this nation of ours goes down the drain, may we look for the dawn. And may we be able to share the* ***HOPE*** *that is in us and give a reason concerning it to everyone that asks; and point men to Your* ***WORDS*** *and* ***DEEDS****, which* ***PROVE*** *each other! For Your name's sake, Amen."*