

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JEREMIAH 19-21

In Jeremiah 19 God speaks through a cracked pot.

And you might say, *“That’s no big deal, God speaks through a crackpot every week at CC!”* Well, in tonight’s text God literally speaks through a cracked pot. He uses a broken jar to speak to the nation Judah.

When it comes to learning, studies show that you recall 10% of what you hear - but 50% of what you see.

This is why God often employs visual aids. He would call on His prophets to dramatize Divine warnings...

Isaiah walked naked and barefoot among the people to proclaim the *bear facts* of God’s judgment... Ezekiel laid on his side.... Hosea was told to marry a prostitute.

In Jeremiah 13, the Prophet Jeremiah buried a sash, a priestly undergarment, by the Euphrates River. It was intimate apparel. But when Jeremiah went to retrieve it, it had rotted... Which is what had happened to the nation’s intimacy

with God. Their relationship decayed.

Here in Chapter 19 we find another prophetic visual.

Chapter 19, “Thus says the Lord: “Go and get a potter’s earthen flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests.”

The Hebrew word “*get*” actually means “*buy*.” Jeremiah was to purchase a jar he would later break...

For God had purchased, *or redeemed*, Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Thus, the jar represented the Hebrew nation which God would break and humble.

The jar he purchased was 4” to 10” in diameter. It had a narrow neck and was used to pour water.

The point to keep in mind is that hot clay can be shaped and reshaped, but once it hardens and breaks it’s impossible to repair. It ends up discarded. It’s scrap.

Both Chapters 18 and 19 revolve around the potter and his pottery. Chapter 18 is God’s personal message to Jeremiah. Whereas, Chapter 19 is God’s public proclamation to the nation. God’s intention was to mold Israel into valuable

vessels - beautiful bottles - pure pottery - if only they'd been soft and supple and pliable.

Instead, the people were hard-hearted and head-strong. As a result God had to break their self-sufficiency and pride. He decided to bring judgment.

Well, Jeremiah was to take his clay flask and take with him leaders of the people and priests. This was like a joint-session of Congress - the leading politicians.

Verse 2, “*And go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the Potsherd Gate; and proclaim there the words that I will tell you...*”

The “*potsherd gate*” was probably located on the southwest wall of the city - near what is today the Dung Gate. In the first century the area had become the city's garbage heap. A constant fire burned in the valley to incinerate the trash. This is why Jesus called the place of eternal punishment “*Gehenna*” which means “*Valley of Hinnom.*” In the spiritual domain Gehenna is where the worm doesn't die - the fire isn't quenched.

At the time of Jeremiah the Hinnom Valley was a place synonymous with idolatry. Baal was worshipped, and children were sacrificed to Molech in this valley.

It's here that Jeremiah leads this group of Jewish dignitaries. At the scene of their crimes he publicly pronounces judgment upon them and upon the nation.

Many people believe this was more than a warning, this was the announcement that activated God's judgment. This was the trigger that began the Babylonian invasion and the judgment God predicted.

God says in verse 3, "and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle."

Literally, "his ears will vibrate... or rattle..."

The catastrophe will bring shrill noises - sounds of trumpet blasts - sounds of war and invading armies.

"Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this place with the blood of the innocents (they have also built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire

for burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind)...” They were burning their children, innocent babies, as offerings to Baal.

This was similar to the sacrifice made to Molech, god of the Canaanites, that God outlawed in Leviticus 18.

These idols were made of hollowed out metal. Fire burned inside them. The metal became glowing hot.

The priests beat their drums to drown the screams of the babies as they were laid in the out-stretched arms of the idol... This was so foreign to God’s thinking. He looked on this practice and called Jerusalem *“an alien place.”* This was never God’s intention for His people.

God says of human sacrifice, *“I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind...”* This shines a light on God’s command to Abraham when He told him to offer his only son, Isaac, on the altar. Apparently, God never intended for Abraham to go through with the deed. He asked Abraham to *“offer”* Isaac - *not kill him.*

Of course, God never asked mankind to offer a child sacrifice - *“the blood of the innocent”* - on the altar, since He was prepared to do so Himself. God later

offered His only Son, Jesus, for the sin of the world.

For a human parent to offer their child as a burnt offering was a deed so despicable - so unnatural - it turned God's world into "*an alien place.*" It was not only a crime against *God*, and *the child*, and *the parents*, and *society* - it was a crime against *instinct and nature*.

And this is how God feels today about abortion. Is abortion not the letting of "*the blood of the innocents?*"

Modern science has made the mother's womb transparent. We can see the life growing in her womb.

And who can deny it's human life? It's viable from its early stages. Left alone in the womb it will grow into a healthy baby. *What did the baby do to deserve to die?*

Abortion is barbaric, it's savage... And it's interesting that what blinds parents today to deny their natural instincts, and turn on their own babies, is the same motivation that existed in Jeremiah's day. **Idolatry fuels abortion.** Not Baal-worship, but **self-worship.**

We worship ourselves and our convenience to insist on *our right to choose* over

a baby's right to live!

God is still outraged over this shedding of innocent blood. And our nation is just as deserving of judgment for allowing it to continue - 56.5 million and counting...

Verse 6, "Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that this place shall no more be called Tophet (which means "place of fire.") or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.

And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place ("*the counsel*" was "the government," and remember his audience in the valley that day were the national leaders), and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hands of those who seek their lives; their corpses I will give as meat for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. I will make this city desolate and a hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its plagues." Jeremiah is bold and brave. He takes dignitaries, the national leaders, into the valley, and tells them their flesh will be picked off their bones by turkey-vultures and scavengers.

"And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his friend in the siege and in the desperation with which their enemies and those who seek their lives shall drive

them to despair.” Jeremiah predicts that the Jews in Jerusalem will resort to cannibalism and eat their own sons and daughters. This was one of the inevitable horrors of siege warfare.

In the ancient world an invading army would surround a city and literally starve it to death.

The Romans would lay siege to a city for 15 years until all their supplies were exhausted. In the latter stages of an invasion a city’s inhabitants often resorted to consuming their own waste - even cannibalism.

This was what awaited Jerusalem. Soon the Babylonians would lay siege to their beloved city.

Which reminds me, "Hear about the cannibal that ate something that didn't agree with him?... Yea, his wife!"

Just trying to lighten up the mood a bit...

I actually read a true story of natives on South Seas island who were visited by American GIs in WW2. The natives proudly showed the soldiers their Bibles.

The soldiers scoffed, "Well, we've outgrown that sort of thing." The natives responded, "It's a good thing we haven't, or you would've been our meal by now!"

In verse 10 God gets to the visual, as if the message needs to be more dramatic. He tells Jeremiah, “Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Even so I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter’s vessel, which cannot be made whole again; and they shall bury them in Tophet till there is no place to bury. Thus I will do to this place,” says the Lord, “and to its inhabitants, and make this city like Tophet.” Even at the time the Hinnom Valley was a place where folks dumped their broken pottery.

Tophet was a mound in the valley. It means “burning place.” God will turn all Jerusalem into *a burnt place*.

Remember clay is moldable before it’s put in kiln. But once it’s fired, it becomes brittle and non-recyclable.

If it’s ever broken it’s just thrown away. And Jeremiah is comparing Judah to his broken flask. Their idolatry made them non-recyclable. They were beyond repentance. They needed to be broken and humbled first, then they can turn from the error of their ways.

One of the commentaries mentions an Egyptian practice where a man would

take a piece of pottery and etch his enemy's name in the brittle clay. He would take the jar to a sacred place and dash it to pieces.

It was as if he was invoking a curse on his enemy. In a sense this is what God is doing here to Jerusalem.

Verse 13, “And the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah shall be defiled like the place of Tophet, because of all the houses on whose roofs they have burned incense to all the host of heaven, and poured out drink offerings to other gods.””

In ancient Israel the rooftops were like your back deck, or patio. The Mediterranean climate made them the roof perfect for lounging and entertaining guests.

And it offended the true God that they had brought foreign gods, idols, into the very heart of their homes.

“Then Jeremiah came from Tophet, where the Lord had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the Lord's house...” So he walks eastward from the Valley of Hinnom through the gate into the Temple.

It would've taken him 15 minutes max. “And said to all the people, “Thus says

the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will bring on this city and on all her towns all the doom that I have pronounced against it, because they have stiffened their necks that they might not hear My words.’” His message wasn’t “Get Your Hopes Up” or “Your Best Life Now.” Jeremiah preached doom against a people who’d stubbornly resisted God.

And trust me, this didn’t win Jeremiah many friends.

His display in the valley had humiliated the priests and leaders. *He didn’t step on their toes, He stomped on them.* And in Chapter 20 the Jewish hierarchy is going to pull out all the stops to shut up the Prophet.

Remember in Chapter 11 Jeremiah's enemies, the priests from his hometown of Anathoh, had plotted an assassination attempt... In Chapter 18 they tried to discredit him - slander and assassinate his character...

Now in Chapter 20 they ratchet up their opposition. They try silence Jeremiah with intimidation and torture.

Chapter 20:1, “Now Pashhur the son of Immer, the priest who was also chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things.”

The name “*Pashhur*” will show up again in chapters 21 and 38, but it’s not

same guy. Each of these three Pashhurs are all sons of different people. Actually, the word "*Pashhur*" could be a title rather than name.

"Caesar" was the name of the first Roman emperor, but it became the title of all his successors. "Pharoah" too, was not a name, but the title of the ruler of Egypt. And likewise, "*Pashhur*" could've been the title for the captain of the Temple guard - the Temple head-usher.

It was *the Pashur's* job to keep order in the Temple precincts, and carry out the wishes of the priests. In John 18:3 the soldiers who arrested Jesus were not Roman troops, but a detachment of the Temple guard. They were ancestors of those who hassled Jeremiah.

Verse 2, "*Then Pashhur struck Jeremiah the prophet*" Deuteronomy 25:3 gave specific instructions on how a public flogging was to be carried out. "*Forty blows he may give him and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.*"

If the executioner exceeded forty lashes; he himself was sentenced to the same punishment. So it became customary to stop at 39... as a safety precaution.

So for being obedient to God, Jeremiah was hung over a post, and beaten 39 times with a cat o'nine tails.

“And (they) put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord.” The gate of Benjamin was north of the Temple, on an elevated platform - on the highest spot around.

This was the site of the “stocks,” or in Hebrew “*mapecket*.” It means “crooked or causing distortion.”

Usually stocks were for simple restraint, but this device was designed for torture. It somehow stretched the body out of joint and inflicted excruciating pain. These stocks were like putting Jeremiah on the rack.

And remember it was the religious leaders of the day who ordered his torture. Sometimes, the fiercest opponents of a true move of God is the institutionalized church. Religion frequently persecutes true godliness.

Verse 3, “And it happened on the next day that Pashhur brought Jeremiah out of the stocks.” The 24 hours of torture was intended to silence the prophet.

Here’s how much good it did... “Then Jeremiah said to him, “The Lord has not called your name Pashhur, but Magor-Missabib.” The word means “Fear on every side.” Again it speaks of God’s judgment. Judah will be surrounded by ferocious and fear-inducing armies.

“For thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and your eyes shall see it. I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive to Babylon and slay them with the sword. Moreover I will deliver all the wealth of this city, all its produce, and all its precious things; all the treasures of the kings of Judah I will give into the hand of their enemies, who will plunder them, seize them, and carry them to Babylon.’”

Jerusalem was the capitol of Judah. It’s most secure and prosperous city, yet it’ll be ravaged by the enemy.

“And you, Pashhur, and all who dwell in your house, shall go into captivity. You shall go to Babylon, and there you shall die, and be buried there, you and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied lies.” And it’s pretty obvious the effect the rack had on Jeremiah. Rather than shut him up, persecution emboldened him.

Over our 240 years of American history the Christian Church has enjoyed an amazing degree of freedom and even respect. But realize, around the world today and in the annals of Church history this is a rarity. More often than not, the Church has been under attack.

Prosperity is the anomaly, not the norm. But this isn't necessarily a bad thing. Historically, persecution intensifies our determination and purifies our devotion.

Like pouring gasoline on a fire, far from quenching the flame, it spreads. As the church father, Augustine, put it, "The martyrs were bound, imprisoned, scourged, racked, burnt, torn, butchered - and they multiplied."

Even in the fact of persecution, Jeremiah stayed strong. He refused to wince, or blink, or back down...

God had told him at his calling, 1:17, "Do not be dismayed before their faces." Don't shrink away at the sight of mere men. Don't be intimidated... He obeyed.

In Chapter 16 God told the prophet to conceal his feelings - both his joy and grief - lest he misrepresent God before the people. Jeremiah was called by God to keep a poker face - a stiff upper lip. **Publicly**, Jeremiah was instructed to play his cards close to his vest.

Yet **privately**, Jeremiah let it all hang out! He was quick to express to God his disappointments and frustrations. He was strong before the people, but he melted in the presence of God. Peer into his prayer life and you'll find that he was truly the weeping prophet.

Above all else, Jeremiah was honest. He never minced words. He was brutally frank with God.

Listen to him in verse 7, “O Lord, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed.” *Lord, you forced me into the ministry. I didn't enlist. I was drafted. I didn't sign up for this... I never wanted to be a prophet. I was strong-armed!*

And “I am in derision daily; everyone mocks me.”

Publicly, Jeremiah had been obedient. He kept a stiff upper lip, but privately, nobody likes to be mocked - to be the brunt of the joke. Everybody likes to be liked.

And this continual rejection wore on him. “For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, “Violence and plunder!” That was the message the Lord gave him to share.

But because of the harsh message, “The word of the Lord was made to me a reproach and a derision daily.”

The Jews rejected God's message, but they took out their anger on the messenger and threw mud at him.

Don't be surprised when this happens to you. The Christian Gospel is good news, but the good news begins with bad news - *we've sinned and need to repent*. And this is the part of the message people don't always want to hear. Don't be surprised when they take out their resistance to the message on the messenger.

This had been Jeremiah's experience, and in verse 9 he wants to resign. In fact, he turns in his letter. Listen to his complaint, **"I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name."** *That's it! I'm done. I quit!*

Jeremiah is tired of the ministry - of being a prophet. He's weary of the abuse he's gotten from serving God.

Yet, God told him to brace himself, the road would be hard. He would be opposed by kings, princes, priests, even the people - add it all up and that's *everybody!*

It's one thing to be warned of hardship - give it a nod, an acknowledgement - but it's an altogether different thing to go through the fire. Jeremiah hadn't grasped the enormity of all he'd been called on to endure.

He had sacrificed so much - family and friends - rank and riches - marriage and

munchkins. In his mind Jeremiah was doubting if it was worth it to serve the Lord. The prophet had so little to show for his efforts.

He served for 40 years and had no radio ministry, no mega-church, no conference speaking opportunities.

Jeremiah preached for four decades and didn't have a single convert. I suppose, *he was into stocks... but not the kind you buy and sell*. Jeremiah felt like a prophet without profit. He truly had a non-profit status.

Jeremiah felt that he and his ministry were a failure.

Spiritual service is a tough task for a host of reasons: *the demands, persecution, sacrifice* - but for me what makes ministry so difficult is its lack of tangible markers. **Success in ministry is hard to measure!**

In business there's a bottomline. Just look at the spreadsheets - the numbers. But in ministry numbers are not necessarily a mark of success. In fact, numbers can be deceptive. A big crowd, a big budget, a big building - "*big*" doesn't always indicate God's approval.

The Mormons have lots of people and they're a cult. Jeremiah had no one, yet he was precious to God.

This is why a pastor or Christian minister has to learn to keep his eyes on Jesus

and God's calling for his life, not tangible markers. *We walk by faith, not by sight.*

Jeremiah wanted to retire. At the moment his ministry seemed too much to bear. He turns in his resignation in verse 9, *"I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name..."* Yet something happened, *keep reading, "But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not."* Jeremiah *threatened to quit, tried to quit, but he just couldn't quit.*

After turning in his resignation, Jeremiah went home and couldn't sleep. He opened his Bible, and started to read. God's Word caused a case of divine heartburn.

The Bible burned in his bones. It stirred him. DL Moody once said, *"I know the Bible is inspired because it inspires me."* The Scriptures lit a fire in Jeremiah.

God's love, His promises, even His judgments warmed Jeremiah - they brought his passion to such a boil that he had to speak the truths God had spoken.

He'd tried to resign from speaking, but after reading God's Word he couldn't stay silent. The Pashhur tried to button his lips, but God's Word kept loosening them.

And this is the mark of a true man of God. He doesn't turn it *on and off*. He's not just "pastor" because it's his job. He's driven. He's propelled by God's Spirit, and his love for God's Word. Ministry is not just his trade or profession. It's his passion!

Three times in his letters the Apostle Paul said he was "made a minister." It wasn't just an occupation. *God put it in his heart. God worked it in his life.* Before a man enters the ministry, the ministry needs to enter him.

Once an old farmer wrote to the church headquarters asking for a pastor to come and start a church in his country community. The superintendent wrote him back and asked him, "*How big a man do you want?*"

The farmer replied, "We're not picky, but when he's on his knees we would like to have him reach heaven."

Jeremiah was a man of God who reached to heaven.

He says in verse 10, "For I heard many mocking: "Fear on every side!" "Report," they say, "and we will report it!" All my acquaintances watched for my stumbling, saying, "Perhaps he can be induced; then we will prevail against him, and we will take our revenge on him." Notice the irony here, it was the scorn and opposition

Jeremiah faced that caused his initial discouragement, and made him want to quit.

But now it's the same scorn and opposition that motivates him to continue on. If he quits, he'll prove the skeptics right. He'll play right into his enemies' hands.

It's ironic, but the same reasons he thought about quitting become the same reasons for carrying on.

I remember the first time I went through the book of Jeremiah and got to this passage. I too wanted to quit.

I prayed, "Lord, folks are hard-hearted. They're stuck in tradition. They don't want to be taught Your Word."

Then I read the Scriptures and it put a fire in my heart. "Lord, people need to be taught Your Word. They need a church that teaches the Scriptures. Send them someone to start a CC-type church!" And low and behold, I'd signed up for the same job I wanted to quit.

Often the reasons a pastor wants to toss in the towel are the very reasons he needs to stick it out. We need to view *people's problems as God's opportunities*.

Verse 11, "But the Lord is with me as a mighty, awesome One. Therefore my

persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper. Their everlasting confusion will never be forgotten. But, O Lord of hosts, You who test the righteous, and see the mind and heart, let me see Your vengeance on them; for I have pleaded my cause before You. Sing to the Lord! Praise the Lord! For He has delivered the life of the poor from the hand of evildoers. Cursed be the day in which I was born! Let the day not be blessed in which my mother bore me!”

Remember these chapters are like reading Jeremiah’s journal. We get a glimpse of his feelings...

And notice here, the severity of his mood swings - *in just this one chapter*. In **verse 9** he’s depressed and ready to quit. In **verse 11** he rises up in faith and prays for victory - vindication. In **verse 13** he sings praises to God. Now in **verse 13**, he curses the day he was born.

Talk about an emotional rollercoaster!

Yet we’ve all been there. There’ve been times when a storm - an emotional upheaval - was raging inside.

This is why we should learn quickly in the Christian life to never trust in our emotions. They’re fickle and fleeting. Our faith is not based on emotion, but truth.

Here, Jeremiah let's his emotions get the best on him.

In his book, "Pain's Hidden Purpose," Don Baker makes an interesting point about tough times. He writes, "Pain speaks a strange language. It plays funny tricks on us. It makes us think things, and say things and even believe things that are not true."

Pain contorts our perspective, and twists our reality, and stretches our trials out of proportion. When the pain subsides and God brings relief we see life more clearly, but in the moment pain can blur our outlook.

I don't believe Jeremiah meant most of what he says in this passage. I'm sure he regretted a lot of what he felt and said, but he was honest to God. He didn't bottle up his feelings. His prayers were *real* and *raw*.

He writes in verse 15, "Let the man be cursed who brought news to my father, saying, "A male child has been born to you!" Making him very glad. And let that man be like the cities which the Lord overthrew, and did not relent; let him hear the cry in the morning and the shouting at noon, because he did not kill me from the womb, that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb always enlarged with me. Why did I come forth from the womb to see labor and sorrow,

that my days should be consumed with shame?”

Realize this isn't God speaking - this isn't even a man speaking from God's perspective or on behalf of God - this is just the babble and prattle of a man's pain.

Jeremiah opened his prophecy in Chapter 1, “Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” But now the wear and tear of ministry and the pain of rejection has caused him to curse his own birth.

The prophet wishes he'd died in his mother's womb.

Chapter 21, “The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, saying...” First, this is another Pashhur. He has a different dad than did the Pashhur in Chapter 20.

This Pashhur is an emissary of King Zedekiah. And here's the king's request of the Prophet Jeremiah, “Please inquire of the Lord for us, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon makes war against us. Perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all His wonderful works, that the king may go away from us.”

It's helpful to note the book of Jeremiah is not in strict chronological order. It's a collection of excerpts from his life. There's a structure, but it's not sequential.

Zedekiah was last king of Judah. By the time he took the throne the Babylonians had invaded Judah twice.

The first invasion was in 605 BC, during the reign of King Jehoiakim, a son of Josiah. Jehoiakim proved to be a wicked king. He reigned for 11 years.

A second invasion in 597 occurred after Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, had taken the throne. Babylon stripped the throne from King Jehoiachin (or Coniah), deported him to Babylon, and place his uncle, another son of Josiah, Zedekiah, on the throne. The Jews of Judah never accepted Zedekiah as a legitimate king.

Thus, if Zedekiah is on the throne in Chapter 21, it means *"the end is near."* We're in the final days before the walls are breeched and Jerusalem is sacked.

The Babylonian army is camped outside the walls, and Zedekiah is looking for a way out. He asks Jeremiah to pray, but the answer is not what he wants.

"Then Jeremiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to Zedekiah, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, with which you fight against the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans who

besiege you outside the walls; and I will assemble them in the midst of this city. I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger and fury and great wrath. I will strike the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they shall die of a great pestilence.”

Zedekiah had asked God for deliverance, instead God tells the king He'll be fighting with his enemy.

Because of their sin God will be against His own people in this battle. They need to learn a lesson.

King Zedekiah wanted to know **if God was on his side**. He should've been asking, **was he on God's side!**

Verse 7, “And afterward,” says the Lord, “I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, his servants and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence and the sword and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their life; and he shall strike them with the edge of the sword. He shall not spare them, or have pity or mercy.”

“Now you shall say to this people, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I set before

you the way of life and the way of death. He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes out and defects to the Chaldeans who besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be as a prize to him.

For I have set My face against this city for adversity and not for good,” says the Lord. “It shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it **with fire.**” Wow, what a response to King Zedekiah.

Zedekiah sought for God’s intervention, but Jeremiah says it’s too little too late. The nation’s judgment had been sealed. Jerusalem will be sacked and burned. The only way to save lives is to defect to the enemy.

This had to be a difficult message for Jeremiah to deliver. He was a Jewish patriot. He loved his nation.

For a time he preached *“turn to God and God will deliver you.”* But now their only hope is to surrender. God is now fighting with the Babylonians. Think of this, **obedience to God is now to commit national treason.**

Even though you love your country, when it becomes apparent God is on the other side, you need to follow God. *Allegiance to God trumps loyalty to country.*

How this principle might apply in the future to Christians in America is something we should ponder.

Verse 11, “And concerning the house of the king of Judah, say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, O house of David! Thus says the Lord: “Execute judgment in the morning; and deliver him who is plundered out of the hand of the oppressor, lest My fury go forth like fire and burn so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.” Jeremiah is calling on King Zedekiah to issue a formal declaration of surrender to the Babylonians. It’s the only way to be spared God’s fury.

“Behold, I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain,” says the Lord, “who say, ‘Who shall come down against us? Or who shall enter our dwellings?’ But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings,” says the Lord; “I will kindle a fire in its forest, and it shall devour all things around it.”” And needless to say, this message didn’t provide Jeremiah a bump in the polls. It incited still more persecution...