

## Jeremiah Chapters 24-25 John Karmelich

1. If you haven't been reading my Jeremiah studies so far, the short version is Good called him to be a prophet shortly before the land of Israel was completely wiped out by the Babylonians. All this took place about 2,600BC. One of the things he predicted was that the Israelites will return to the land in exactly seventy years. We know Jeremiah was alive when all this took place. The prophet Daniel who lived a little longer than Jeremiah read his scroll while he was captive (senior officer) in Babylon. (Daniel 9:2). If you have any doubts that Jeremiah predicted the future as opposed to seeing the Babylon army and wrote it "after the fact", the seventy-year prediction is either a lucky guess or proof that God gave him history in advance. In this lesson I'll discuss that prediction in detail and even show you an interesting way that it helped to predict the exact birth date of Israel as it stands today. Even if you could care less about all that stuff, at the least, you'll have a better understanding of how and why the bible predicts some aspects of the future and what all of that means for you and me as we use our lives for a witness for Jesus.
  - a) OK John, you lost me. All I got so far is that Jeremiah predicted the Israelites captivity was going to last exactly 70 years. That is ancient history. I've got my own problems. Why do I have to waste my valuable time reading this stuff? Assume we already believe that God knows all things. Assume we already believe the Israelite captivity from the first siege to the time they were allowed to come back to that land lasted exactly seventy years. (If you care about the exact years, it was 605BC to 535BC). Besides that, why should we care?
  - b) First prophecy is one of the greatest ways to prove the bible is the word of God. No other so called, "Holy Book" has the 100% accuracy of predictions. About 30% of the bible gives predictions of the future and yes it has a perfect record to date. My point is with that type of track record of success, why do we have our doubts about what the bible says about all of the end time predictions? The reason it's full of predictions many of which have already come true like this 70-year prediction is so we'll trust it with all of it's promises of how we will live forever let alone Jesus return! OK, there's a good reason alone to study this.
  - c) For those of you who already believe all that, keep in mind that I'm convinced the reason Jeremiah was written is to remind us of how God expects us to live. A key reason God is giving them this 70-year prediction is to show that "I'm not through with you as a group". Yes you've messed up badly and that's why you're in the penalty box. However, I still got unconditional promises to fulfill, so Israel as a national concept isn't over yet. Like most of the Evangelical world, that includes the concept that Israel must exist as an entity in order for the return of the Messiah to come rule over the world. Anyway, the point for you and me is if we mess up, it doesn't affect God's ultimate plan for humanity but it can blow our chance to use our lives as a witness for Jesus.
  - d) OK enough of all this, time for the details of these two chapters;
2. Chapter 24 takes place during the reign of the final king of "South" Israel" before the Babylonians did a complete "wipe out" job. A little history is helpful here. The Babylonians conquered Israel in three stages. In the first two they did damage and decided who'd be in charge while they were "flexing their muscles". By the third time their king had enough of their rebellion and wiped them out completely. Bottom line, this chapter takes place a few years before the final "wipe out".
  - a) Anyway, in this chapter, Jeremiah sees two baskets full of figs: A basket full of good ones and other one of bad ones. The interesting thing is the "good ones" represent the Israelites who were settling down in the Babylonian Empire. The idea is God will help them thrive as a nation even in captivity. Only a small percentage of them actually return to Israel as the rest get too comfortable within the Babylonian Empire. The bad ones represent those Israelites who die fighting the Babylonians.
  - b) The idea is just as bad fruit is good for nothing but to be thrown away, so those who make the effort to fight God's will of the captivity, are in effect thrown away.

- c) Bottom line, Chapter 24 is a short chapter predicting the temporary end of Israel as God's people united to be a witness for Him. That leads to Chapter 25 where the essential point is the fact that even though "this is the end", it's also "not the end". Chapter 25 gives one of the most famous predictions in the bible: The Israelites would be in captivity for a total of 70 years. Why 70? One of the final verses of 2nd Chronicles tells us: The short version is God told the Israelites back when they first came in the land, to not farm it one year out of seven. God would provide enough crops to get through that. Apparently there were a total of 490 years since Joshua where that agreement was violated. So He's saying in effect, "Israel you owe me 70", thus this time frame.
- i) Yes the literal time frame is marked from the first Babylon Invasion to the time of a new king of a new empire that conquered Babylon and let the Israelites go home. I'll argue it also calculates a second time frame from the final destruction of Israel to when the temple was rebuilt. In this lesson I'm also going to share a theory that is popular in recent times. It has to do with a passage from Leviticus 26:14-45. It's a prediction that if Israel still won't listen God will make their punishment exactly seven times worse. Ezekiel predicts in Chapter 4 of his book Israel will suffer 430 years. Since there was 70 years under the Babylonian captivity, that leaves us 360. There's nothing significant that occurred either 360 or 430 years after he made that prediction. However, 360 years times 7 years from the return from Babylon comes out to exactly the date in 1948 when Israel was reborn. If one uses the third time of Babylon destroying Israel "once and for all", it comes out to 1967 the day Jerusalem became under Israel control again. Yes it's complicated and a strange theory but it fits well with the 70-year captivity being part of that formula.
3. OK, enough weirdness, back to Chapter 25. This prediction was written some years prior to what was predicted in Chapter 24. The point is not only will Israel be wiped out and the 70-year period is beginning, but it's a prediction that the "wipe out" is coming. Jeremiah lists almost all nations in the vicinity of Israel as if to say, "I'm (God) in charge and if I say the Babylonians will run a major empire here, deal with it". Therefore, these chapters say that not only will Israel be wiped out, so is everybody in the neighborhood. Why? Because all of them were in close enough proximity to Israel to know that they claim their God is the only God and not a regional thing. Since Jeremiah is publicly predicting this, the idea's the word would spread that Egypt and all others in the area would get the idea that God's not to be messed with. The underlying idea is all nations are going to be judged based on what they knew of God and what they did with that info!
- a) Bottom line, is most of this text is more of the "bad news coming" with a glimmer of hope that it's not over yet. Again, in the book of Daniel he reads Jeremiah meaning the book is in it's whole form by the time Daniel was an older man reading it. Daniel took Jeremiah's book literally and said in effect, "If God says 70 years, 70 it is." Daniel figured that period was almost up and that lead to one of the greatest bible predictions of Daniel Chapter 9. I am not going to go over that here other to say Jeremiah Chapter 25 is necessary in order to have "Daniel 9". You can google my commentary on Daniel 9 if you want those details.
4. So what do you call this lesson? Easy, "What's coming". Because it talks about the future both of Israel then and now, and reminds us that no matter what we're going through in life, no matter if it's good or horrible, God's still in charge, He knows all things and He states in advance what will come of our world whether we're part of the solution or part of the problem.
- a) My hope isn't that you read this lesson to learn a lot of ancient Middle East history. What is my desire is that each of us grow closer to God by understanding what He desires of us as a witness for Him. God's timetable is God's timetable. However, we are not privileged to know the specifics of our own time table. All we can do is pray for His guidance and do use some of the time He's given us to make a difference for Him. It is the greatest purpose one can have for living. Yes specifics and details are coming in the details of this lesson. It is a good excuse to start on those details since I just brought it up!

5. Chapter 24, Verse 1: After Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and the officials, the craftsmen and the artisans of Judah were carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the LORD.<sup>2</sup> One basket had very good figs, like those that ripen early; the other basket had very poor figs, so bad they could not be eaten.
- a) Let's start with a "time stamp". I'll make it easy for you. The last Israel king is now on the stand. That king was placed there by Nebuchadnezzar to state in effect, "I'm in charge so deal with it. I just took your last king into captivity so you Israelites deal with the fact you are on your "last legs" and I'm in charge. Enjoy being king but don't rebel against me!"
  - b) The point being is that when Jeremiah wrote this section of the book Israel was in trouble, and they were of course scared as to what's going to happen to them. In other words, the Babylonian captivity as I mentioned happened in three phases. In Phase 1 and 2, a lot of the Israelites were taken into captivity including their king, so Nebuchadnezzar is saying in effect "this is your last warning, better be on your best behavior or else!"
  - c) Anyway, Jeremiah is still in Jerusalem while all of this is taken place. By this point in his life, he has been preaching against the common destruction for decades. Israelites had to be taking Jeremiah seriously at this point or at the least thinking, "Hey maybe we need to be listening to what he has to say because our enemy is still at our doorstep!"
  - d) Anyway with all of this in mind, Jeremiah had a vision of two baskets full of figs. One of the baskets had prime "ripe" figs ready to be eaten and the other had rotten ones ready to be thrown away. Again, this is not literal, just an illustration. For those who don't know, figs grow well in Israel and is one of the main fruits that are grown there to this day.
  - e) Also notice the verses mention that besides the king and princes being taken to Babylon, I want you to notice the text singles out "craftsmen and the artisans". What's the deal with that? It's the idea of "Don't waste good." It's the idea of saying "This person has a gift for this or that skill, as opposed to killing them, let's put their skills to use". Therefore, we're reading of the fact that it's not just the king and his sons taken, but also the skilled people in the land of Israel.
  - f) OK, that's the illustration. Time for the point:
6. Verse 3: Then the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "Figs," I answered. "The good ones are very good, but the poor ones are so bad they cannot be eaten."<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me:<sup>5</sup> "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: `Like these good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians.<sup>6</sup> My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them.<sup>7</sup> I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.
- a) The short version: The good figs represent the Israelites who've been taken captive or just deserted to the Babylonians and are now living there. The bad figs represent the Israelites who are dealing the inevitable!
  - b) Keep in mind that despite the recent history, the Israelites were still fighting Babylon as to keep their country alive. Part of the internal politics had to do with looking to Egypt for a helping hand versus simply giving up. God was saying in effect, "Do you trust Me or not? My (God's) will is for all of you to surrender as that's My will right now!" The key point is the fact that Jeremiah is asking Israel to surrender. The Israel army obviously wasn't crazy about that idea.
  - c) If you ever have doubts that God cares about His people, notice how much He's doing all He can do to preserve their lives. Yes surrendering doesn't seem like a good option. That is God's point. Just as God wants us to surrender to His will, so He wants the Israelites to trust Him even when things seem like they're at their worst. So what about tragedies with no apparent solution in mind. Why does God allow horrible things to occur to us?

- i) That leads to the classic issue of why does God allow evil? The standard answers apply such as 1) Free will 2) We live in a fallen world and 3) God ultimately allows all things for His glory even though it often means our suffering. All we can do in tough situations is make the best decisions we can. Of course we can pray for God to help but He's never forced to do anything. As I was taught many years ago, we should pray like it's all up to Him and then make decisions as if He won't". Then if He does intervene we can be grateful He does and go from there.
- d) Meanwhile, back to Jeremiah. Imagine being told that the "solution" to surrender to those who are trying to kill you? You have to imagine how scary that is. Real change is always a scary thing. To give up one's lifestyle is hard enough, but to be told that the only way to survive was to be taken captive a thousand miles away? Trusting God's hard enough with little changes. Trusting Him with something like that had to be more than one can bear. I can see why the false prophets who preached, "everything's going to be ok" was a popular idea at that time.
- e) OK John this is all sad. How do we relate? Obviously we don't get a prophet telling us the next thing we need to do. My view is that we use the bible to guide our lives and then we simply make the best decisions we can with the information we have. For the Israelites, it had to be a matter of thinking, "Well, the Babylonians did come through here twice. They put new people in power but they didn't relocate everyone? Why would they want me to go there? They already took the "best of us" as mentioned earlier in the chapter. Even if I believe God wants me to move, why would I want to move a thousand miles away when this is my home? Yes it was God's will to give up. My point is simply I can understand a hesitancy to want to change.
- f) Notice that Jeremiah was promising good things if they gave up. Yes I can make the same case for surrendering your life to Jesus with good eternal things, but I know I'm preaching to the choir here! Jeremiah's essentially saying that even though they won't be in the land of Israel, they're still going to be "His people" and God will guide them. When they were finally taken into captivity and were allowed to come back to Israel 70 years later only a small percentage made the return journey. A large percentage of Jewish people chose stay in what we call Iraq today. The term is "Persian Jews". There is a large number of them. I even as a real estate appraiser had to appraise a Persian Jewish retirement home. All that I'm saying is even after 2,500 years, the impact of that event is still around to this day.
- g) So since Jesus came, are the Jewish people around the world still "His chosen"? Yes in the sense that Jesus needs an "Israel" to "set up shop". Salvation is based on our trust in Jesus paying for our sins. Our rewards in heaven and the time we get to live depends on what it is we do with that information. However I beat that point to death. I just wanted you to notice that God told Jeremiah to preach the fact that if they surrender, God still has a great future planned for them. God wanted an Israel to exist when Jesus showed up back then, and He has gathered them again in my opinion for that reason. When is His business!
- h) Speaking of that, notice Verse 7 says, " I (God) will give them a heart to know me". That has to be "post Jesus" as let's be honest, the land of Israel is pretty secular today and let's not forget the whole, "They blew it on Jesus First Coming" part, so it is future.
  - i) Keep in mind, prophecy is usually "patterns". The short-term prediction was about Israel's return to the land after the 70-year captivity. The long term has to do with Jesus ruling the world from Israel where the Israelites will all "know God".
- i) OK John we all get the "glorious future" aspect of Christianity and Jesus return. How does any of this affect my life today? Part of the answer is to know God's plans so we are not "sweating the small stuff". Part of the answer is to realize that despite all their sins we read of God having good plans for their future. That's a comforting thought right there. I would say in summary, the issue is about surrendering every aspect of our lives to Jesus, as that's when and how He can use us to make a difference for Him.

7. Verse 8: " `But like the poor figs, which are so bad they cannot be eaten,' says the LORD, `so will I deal with Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the survivors from Jerusalem, whether they remain in this land or live in Egypt. <sup>9</sup> I will make them abhorrent and an offense to all the kingdoms of the earth, a reproach and a byword, an object of ridicule and cursing, wherever I banish them. <sup>10</sup> I will send the sword, famine and plague against them until they are destroyed from the land I gave to them and their fathers.' "
- In my introduction, I stated that Chapter 24 took place during the reign of the final king of Judah (the Southern Kingdom). His name was Zedekiah. Verse 8 is my proof.
  - I also mentioned the "internal politics" had to do with running away to Egypt or giving up and surrendering to the Babylonians. That issue is also stated in Verse 8.
  - With all that said Verses 8-10 is pretty much bad news. Like rotten fruit that just needs to be thrown away, so God's going to regard the Israelites who choose not to surrender. The language gets pretty graphic in Verses 9-10. Bottom line is to not surrender means one has a choice between dying by a sword, famine or plague! I'm positive that one of the reasons Jeremiah was accepted as a prophet is this literally came true. Both Kings and Chronicles tells us that this king was caught trying to escape Jerusalem during a siege and it cost him his life.
  - Coming back to my discussion about "why should we care", while the specifics here don't apply to us, the principal does. When we ignore God's will for our lives, if we do that long enough we too can become like rotten fruit to God. Again, the issue isn't salvation, it's the issue of being a witness for Him. When we fail to do so, we too can suffer horribly or just simply live a wasted life after that. OK, that's enough fear for Chapter 24, lets try "25".
8. Chapter 25, Verse 1; The word came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. <sup>2</sup> So Jeremiah the prophet said to all the people of Judah and to all those living in Jerusalem: <sup>3</sup> For twenty-three years--from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day--the word of the LORD has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.
- The first thing to realize here is Jeremiah is "backtracking". Chapters 24 and 25 go together but they take place years apart. I suspect Jeremiah wrote it this way, because even though this chapter took place years before Chapter 24, it's Jeremiah saying in effect, "Remember I told you a long time ago that we'd be in captivity 70 years?" Think of it this way. Chapter 24 told us what the Israelites should do "right before the end". Chapter 25 in a sense gives more details about why the Israelites should be like the "Good figs" and choose to give up!
  - To make it easier, I said on the last page Chapter 24 took place during Zedekiah's reign. In Chapter 25, Verse 1 it says "fourth year of Jehoiakim". Yes I get those names confused too. All you have to remember is he's one of the final kings during the period the Babylonians were wrecking havoc in the area, but he's not the final guy.
  - Jeremiah puts his own time stamp here. He states how long he's been at it when telling us the specific date of the 70-year prediction. In other words, Jeremiah didn't know when the time period started, he just knew it was going to last exactly 70 years. This was 605BC. It was also an important year because it was also the year the Babylonians won a major war over the Egyptians. The reason I'm getting into all this ancient history is Jeremiah's saying that the Babylonians are now the "big boys on the block" and we should listen to God and accept the captivity period that's coming soon.
  - Also keep in mind that for the 23 years Jeremiah's been preaching (Verse 3) he states that the Israelites have not taken him seriously. The same year of that big victory is also when Nebuchadnezzar was no longer just the head general. His father died making him king. It is a matter of saying, "Hey folks, I know you haven't been taking me seriously all this time but I'm telling you God is speaking through me and the fact that Nebuchadnezzar is king, is a good clue we should be trusting God now that things are horrible!

- e) Yes I could give a lecture about taking God seriously or the fact that most people refuse to take Him seriously because they don't want to change their lifestyle. What's my concern is what are we as Christians doing to take our relationship with Him seriously? The biggest mistake Christians make (myself included) is we can volunteer to do way too much until we've over-committed. We think in order to impress God we must push hard 24-7 and do everything possible. While I don't argue that doing what God calls us to do can be hard at times, the mistake we make is we don't let Him guide us. Every day I pray for guidance as how to best live my life to His will. Then I make the best decisions based on what should be done at that moment. To me, that's living the Christian life "in a nutshell". Praying for His guidance, living by His rules and making the best decisions we can using our spiritual gifts to make a difference for Him.
  - f) Anyway, before I got on my soapbox, I was discussing the fact that Jeremiah was stating a key fact of his life to date. For 23 years Jeremiah preached to whoever would listen to him the fact that the Israelites were not using their lives to make a difference for God. The key point is there's a "too late" with God to be used by Him. I don't know when each us reach a "too late" point, but trust me, you don't want to push it! The Israelites refused to change their lifestyle and still gave God "lip service" while worshipping Baal and all that entails.
  - g) All of that reality of not living as God pleases leads perfectly to the next few verses.
9. Verse 4: And though the LORD has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention. <sup>5</sup> They said, "Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your fathers for ever and ever. <sup>6</sup> Do not follow other gods to serve and worship them; do not provoke me to anger with what your hands have made. Then I will not harm you."
- a) My loose translation, "You all brought this on yourself! Whether you accept it or not, you have been separated from the world to be a witness for Me. Deal with it!" What we easily forget is that living God's way brings us far more peace and joy in life than trying to do it our own way. We easily sin, because let's be honest, sin is tempting.
  - b) If you say I never heard of Baal until I read the bible. Just realize Baal worship is all about doing things to get rich. It's about trusting in "earthly things" to provide. Baal included a lot of cheap sexual rituals to turn Baal on. So now we have promises of cheap sex as well as promises of financial success. I'd say those temptations are alive and well today! If we want to live the Christian life, the secret is to do it through His power working in us. We make the mistake of trying to do it on our own power and that's where we mess up!
  - c) Anyway, these Israelites were living "however they felt like". I get the impression they'd just ignored Jeremiah's warnings and went on with their lives as if he didn't matter. That is why the Babylonian captivity was needed. It's God's way of saying, "Don't mess with Me, your arms are too short to box with Me" to borrow some old clichés.
  - d) The good that the Babylonian captivity did is, it got the Israelites "as a whole" off idols. I am not saying they were perfect after they returned, but it did "the trick" of turning them away from following false gods. The question for you and me is what does it take to turn every aspect of our lives over to God? How can we avoid being punished if we fail to use our lives as a witness for Him?
  - e) Anyway, the Israelites were set in their ways so the punishment at that time had to come.
10. Verse 7: "But you did not listen to me," declares the LORD, "and you have provoked me with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves."
- a) Keep in mind horrible destruction was about to occur. Lots of the Israelites were going to die because they refused to listen. While all of this is horrible, ask in effect, "What choice did God have? He obviously tried lesser messages to get their attention. The message we need to realize is that what God desires is a relationship with us and He'll do what He has to do to restore and develop that relationship. Bottom line the Israelites did bring this on themselves. Our job is not to make the same mistake.

11. Verse 8: Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: "Because you have not listened to my words, <sup>9</sup> I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the LORD, "and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. <sup>10</sup> I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. <sup>11</sup> This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.
- a) OK, time for the bad news. (The good news comes in Verse 12, please hang tight for that!) This set of verses is more than a warning, it's a you've brought this on yourself statement. Here we get a bunch of details not to prevent the disaster, but so that they'll know for sure God ordained it and it's a horrible thing they must deal with!
  - b) Keep in mind preaching all of this didn't bring Jeremiah any joy. It's not like he thought I know you reject my message so let me tell you joyfully tell you the punishment!" Realize these are Jeremiah's people. He had the "pleasure" to announce it will all come to an end because the Israelites failed to be God's witnesses. These verses tell us some of the horrid details. Let's get them over with:
    - i) Nebuchadnezzar was the name of the king of Babylon. Before he was king, he was the head general who lead the first two invasions of Israel. Here God calls him his servant. It's strange to think of a non-Jewish king who doesn't worship God as His servant. It's the idea that God will use who He'll use. I'd argue that Daniel became a strong witness to that king and he eventually got saved, but we'll have to see one day ourselves. Anyway, Jeremiah's saying, the Babylonians are coming again!
    - ii) The point is when he comes with the army, it won't be pretty. They're going to do a siege on the Israelites one city at a time until lots of people die and the survivors will be taken captive into the Babylon Empire. The land of Israel literally became a wasteland for 70 years during the captivity.
    - iii) OK enough of the bad news. Time for the good news:
12. Verse 12: "But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the LORD, "and will make it desolate forever. <sup>13</sup> I will bring upon that land all the things I have spoken against it, all that are written in this book and prophesied by Jeremiah against all the nations. <sup>14</sup> They themselves will be enslaved by many nations and great kings; I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands."
- a) A natural question the Israelites would ask is, "Yes we're bad but what about them?" They are worse as they weren't called to be Your people and lets face it they don't really care for all of this "one true God" stuff. It's another reminder that judgment begins with us. Thank God that the worst that can happen to us is we get minimal eternal rewards in heaven. To be the lowest person in heaven is still better than the least punished person in hell! Yes we will be judged, but like these Israelites the judgment is based on the issue, "What did each of us do with what information we had about Jesus or could have known?"
  - b) Anyway, back to the question of what's going to happen to everyone else? That's the main topic of the rest of the chapter as Jeremiah's going to go nation by nation through all of the neighborhood to explain that the Babylonians aren't just picking on the Israelites. They're intent on making all of the Middle East under their control. So if that was true, why's the Israelites so special? Because God set them up to be His witness to the world. So yes they brought this on themselves and God's allowing the Babylonians to do all this damage as a part of dominance of all the Middle East at that time!
  - c) Again, the reason we should care is just as God wiped them out for failing to be a witness for Him, so He can do the same for us. It may not be on a grand scale, but He can end us at any time or make our lives ineffective if we fail to use it as a witness for Him.

- d) OK let me take a deep breath from all this bad news and focus on the good news for a bit. It starts with the fact the captivity will last exactly seventy years. As I stated before, in the book of Daniel, he interpreted that literally and in Chapter 9 prayed for God to do a great work in Israel when that happens. God rewarded Daniel by showing him a lot of history in advance including a wonderful detailed prediction that leads exactly to the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. Please read my lesson on Daniel 9 if this is new to you.
- i) Speaking of other lessons I've written, if you've never done a detailed study of the book of Ezekiel and the predictions of Chapter 4, please see my lesson on that. It's on the internet so "google it". The short version is Ezekiel predicts Israel will suffer for exactly 430 years. Well nothing significant happened 430 years later. By taking the 70 years out leaves 360 years. Back in Leviticus 26:14-45 God says that if we're still ignoring Him, he'll make our punishment seven times worse. If you start with the first time the Babylonians invaded Israel and take  $360 \times 7$  years, it comes out to exactly 1948. If you use the third and final destruction date, it comes out exactly to 1967 when Jerusalem came under Israel's control again.
  - ii) The calculations are a bit complicated as the Jewish year is 360 days and one has to deduct for leap days. However, if you study my lesson on Ezekiel 4, I go into all of those details. My simple point here the 70 years of captivity is significant in more ways than one!
  - iii) The other reason God said 70 years was in effect that the Israelites "owed him 70". That's' from 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:21. The short version is the Israelites were supposed to let the land rest every seventh year. For 490 years the Israelites failed to do that, so God said in effect, "You owe me 70". Again the calculations of that are tricky to get and when I teach 2nd Chronicles I should lay all those details out!
- e) OK John, the thing about the seventy years tying to the modern rebirth of Israel is neat. It is still all ancient history. Why should we care about this stuff? For starters, it reminds us that God keeps His unconditional promises that that the Messiah would come to Israel as it stands as a nation. If I can't trust God's unconditional promises to Israel, how can I ever trust in His unconditional promises to us through Jesus? Therefore it's necessary that way!
- i) Next it's a reminder that God knows history before it occurs. A perfect God cannot learn by definition. God created time and space so He lives outside of time. When we get to heaven, we enter a world where time doesn't exist.
  - ii) It's a little like watching a long parade from a helicopter. You'll see the whole thing as one big movement. That's how God sees history. So if we trip and fall down in the next ten minutes, it may be a surprise to us, but not to God.
  - iii) Think of it this way. Daniel said he'd been preaching for 23 years in this chapter. I figure he started when he was say 16, so he was roughly 40 when he made it. That means he was not alive when the 70 years was up. Therefore Jeremiah made it and didn't get to live to see it happen. History records he died in captivity before all of this took place.
  - iv) What if we already accept the fact God is perfect and knows all things? Why else should I care about all of this? Because the bible is full of predictions about all the events tying to Jesus return. That way we'll recognize it when it occurs. All that I am saying is if the "70" is accurate, we can trust God with all the end time stuff! No I don't know when it will begin. I simply trust the bible with it's 100% accuracy of it's predictions to date.
- f) Meanwhile a few final thoughts on these verses. They state that Israel will be enslaved by many nations. That implies God knew of the Persian, Greek and Roman Empires coming and it's not just the enslavement of the Babylonians. It's also a support that God ordained the modern return of Israel to that land. The final sentence says in effect He'll repay all of the evil done to Israel by those nations. That's why I don't mess with Israel!

13. Verse 15: This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. <sup>16</sup> When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them."
- a) Speaking of "the other nations" that's going to be the topic for the next 10 verses or so.
  - b) The bottom line from Verse 15 all the way to Verse 26 is that Babylon is setting up a large empire and all the nations in the area will become part of it.
  - c) So here's the big question: Why list all these nations one at a time? Why not say the same thing that I just said, "Everybody in the area will be wiped out and become part of it! Why give all these details? Part of the answer is to show the surrounding world that Jeremiah's a prophet of God. If his book gets spread around the Middle East to show how he predicts all of this in advance, it's another way to show those nations that God is God, deal with it! By listing all of these nations, the people who were from those nations can read Jeremiah's words and say, "Hey he mentioned us too, and told us we're going down for the count!" I could also add comments about "The" God being greater than all the other gods. Yes, but won't the Babylonians still think their god is greater? Daniel deals with that in his book!
  - d) One can also read this on another level. One can think God only cares about the Israelites and everybody else is going to hell. By showing how much He cares for the other nations listed in this chapter, it's a subtle proof that God cares for all people. Yes Jeremiah speaks of all of their destructions, but the fact they're even mentioned one by one is a subtle way of saying God cares for all of them, and us as well!
  - e) OK enough of the big picture. Let me discuss these verses and get through the rest of the chapter as we go through all of those ancient nations. A word picture used sometimes in the bible is God's wrath being compared to a wine cup being poured out. The idea here is that just like a drunk person staggers, so the effect of this war, will "stagger: everyone!
  - f) Bottom line, bad news is coming to the greater region, not just Israel.
14. Verse 17: So I took the cup from the LORD's hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it: <sup>18</sup> Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a ruin and an object of horror and scorn and cursing, as they are today; <sup>19</sup> Pharaoh king of Egypt, his attendants, his officials and all his people, <sup>20</sup> and all the foreign people there; all the kings of Uz; all the kings of the Philistines (those of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the people left at Ashdod); <sup>21</sup> Edom, Moab and Ammon; <sup>22</sup> all the kings of Tyre and Sidon; the kings of the coastlands across the sea; <sup>23</sup> Dedan, Tema, Buz and all who are in distant places; <sup>24</sup> all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the foreign people who live in the desert; <sup>25</sup> all the kings of Zimri, Elam and Media; <sup>26</sup> and all the kings of the north, near and far, one after the other--all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. And after all of them, the king of Sheshach will drink it too.
- a) Time for a tour "around the block" around Israel. Among the nations that were destroyed were a long-term enemies of Israel, the Philistines. They controlled five cities in Israel but only four are listed. History records that one was destroyed before Jeremiah wrote this. It all means one of Israel's traditional enemies for centuries got wiped out as a nation.
  - b) Some of these locations you can google if interested. Uz is in Arabia. Tyre and Sidon were both major trade cities. A bit of interesting history is the Babylonians failed to destroy the people of Tyre as they escaped to a nearby island. It was Alexander the Great many years later that completely wiped Tyre off the map. We get some nations listed that are part of what is Jordan today and the others are Arabic nations. Bottom line, bad news all around.
  - c) The important one is Egypt. They rivaled Babylon in power. At the time of Chapter 24, a great battle took place between Babylon and Egypt. The latter lost big time. Egypt never became a significant power in the Middle East ever again, even to this day. Anyway, this is Chapter 25 where we are backtracking some years before that took place. The key point here is Egypt is also "going down for the count" along with the less significant nations.
  - d) The good news is we're done describing the wipe out of the surrounding world. However we've still got 13 more verses to go and yes it's more of the bad news! Let's get through it!

15. Verse 27: "Then tell them, `This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Drink, get drunk and vomit, and fall to rise no more because of the sword I will send among you.'<sup>28</sup> But if they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink, tell them, `This is what the LORD Almighty says: You must drink it!<sup>29</sup> See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that bears my Name, and will you indeed go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, for I am calling down a sword upon all who live on the earth, declares the LORD Almighty.'
- It's almost as if Jeremiah's audience is saying, "OK we get it, everybody else is going down for the count. We get that. What about us? We're still His chosen people. Why must we've suffer so badly? Yes we're messing up with all that Baal worship, but God's temple's here and He has those unconditional promises about the Messiah. What about all of that?"
  - That's why Jeremiah goes on and one about this. We're back to "you must drink this". It's like a drinking game where people pour alcohol down someone's throat! The idea is they will be so drunk they'll barely be able to comprehend how bad this will be. Yes we're all aware this is God's city, but when we fail to be a witness for Him, location doesn't matter!
16. Verse 30: "Now prophesy all these words against them and say to them: " `The LORD will roar from on high; he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily against his land. He will shout like those who tread the grapes, shout against all who live on the earth.<sup>31</sup> The tumult will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD will bring charges against the nations; he will bring judgment on all mankind and put the wicked to the sword,' " declares the LORD.<sup>32</sup> This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Look! Disaster is spreading from nation to nation; a mighty storm is rising from the ends of the earth."<sup>33</sup> At that time those slain by the LORD will be everywhere--from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be mourned or gathered up or buried, but will be like refuse lying on the ground.
- These verses are written in poetry style, but one can grasp from reading them how tough they are to comprehend. I have to admit as I read them, I kept thinking, "This is going to be like the days of Noah and I'm not going to be one of the eight!"
  - Here's a question to ponder, if the Israelites were so bad, why punish everyone else? Why not just have the Babylonians conquer Israel to make that point? Yes we get that there's no satisfaction of the human ego who wants to rule more and more. We get the fact that God is making a point to the surrounding nations that God is God, deal with it! Still if the main point is to make Israel suffer for failing to be a witness for God, why have this disaster be a part of the "whole world" of that time? Part of the answer is to show the world when it is Israel is allowed to leave, "God is God". Another reason is it shows judgment on all the nations who have heard of God but still ignore it. Bottom line, it reminds us judgment is coming to everyone and we must deal with it! In fact Verse 31 states what I just said, that judgment is coming on all mankind. This event from 2,600 years ago is symbolizing what all of us take for grant it, that God will judge the world fairly based on what we knew and could have known about Him and what we did with that information! Yes many people were killed who were innocent. That's why I believe in a God who judges fairly!
  - The bottom line is this is bad news for everyone but the Babylonians. Don't worry, they will get theirs. The final two chapters of Jeremiah deal with their own fate!
  - Meanwhile back to the poetry.
17. Verse 34: Weep and wail, you shepherds; roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock. For your time to be slaughtered has come; you will fall and be shattered like fine pottery.<sup>35</sup> The shepherds will have nowhere to flee, the leaders of the flock no place to escape.<sup>36</sup> Hear the cry of the shepherds, the wailing of the leaders of the flock, for the LORD is destroying their pasture.
- If you've been with me through Jeremiah to date, or even know something about the bible you'd know that the leaders of the world are often compared to shepherds and all the rest as sheep. The idea is when one is called to leadership, one is now accountable to God for that role. Sheep are dumb animals. In these verses, God's not just talking about Israelites who were priests, but leaders of all countries listed several verses back in the chapter.

- b) Bottom line is the "shepherds" won't be able to do their jobs. They will be "overrun" by a much larger force, the Babylonian army. Notice in Verse 36, the word LORD is written in all capitals. It's the most holy name of God and often transliterated as "Jehovah". What I'm getting at is God's doing the destroying not the Babylonians. It's all part of the judgment of the surrounding world.
  - i) That leads me back to the issue of judgment. If the judgment against Israel was for a failure to be a witness for Him, what's the judgment of the world about? Failure to recognize God is God. Whether we like it or not, God created the world and He made us to glorify Him in this world. When we fail to live as He desires, sooner or later we'll be judged for how we lived. That's the symbolic act portrayed here as it is a literal judgment on the surrounding world and definitely symbolic of what the final judgment is going to be about.
  - c) It's also important at this point to realize something about Jesus. Christians tend to think of Him as this nice guy going around doing miracles patting kids on the head so to speak! The return of the Messiah is one of judgment. One of the main things Jesus will do when He returns is set up "shop" to rule forcefully over the world. He's going to rule over all of the world whether they like it or not. The world will be forced to live by God's rules. All I am saying is we can choose to bend the knee to Jesus or be "forced to" one day before we are sent away in hell for failure to do so. (See Romans 14:11 on that.)
  - d) Anyway these verses are about the failure of leaders of the nations as the Babylonians will overrun that world. It's also symbolic of God's ultimate judgment.
  - e) Two verses left.
- 18. Verse 37: The peaceful meadows will be laid waste because of the fierce anger of the LORD. <sup>38</sup> Like a lion he will leave his lair, and their land will become desolate because of the sword of the oppressor and because of the LORD's fierce anger.
  - a) Bottom line, nobody will escape God's judgment! The word picture is to visualize some sort of peaceful meadow with animals grazing. Then God comes along and says in effect, "I'm in charge, deal with it!" Yes it's about how the Babylonians will destroy everyone that is in the neighborhood so to speak, but the underlying message is about His judgment. It's one reason why this book is still studied to this day.
  - b) The good news is we made it through this section. The next chapter starts another section on a different topic, so it ends here.
  - c) To close remember that I called this lesson "What's coming". If you made it this far, you're obviously aware by now that it's about God's judgment on the world then, now and yes in the future on judgment day as well. I'm well aware this lesson is tough stuff. However, it is necessary to read of His judgment as it's just as much a reality of Jesus First and Second Coming, so we must learn and accept all of this.
  - d) However, that's enough torture for one lesson. Time to close in prayer.
- 19. Heavenly Father, in spite of the judgment to come, in spite of all the horror that occurs around us, we thank You that You've separated us in order to be Your witness to the world. May we always remember that You created us to glorify You. Further, You want to work through us to bring the people who You've called but aren't saved yet, to You and closer to You. May we work through the Spirit to be used by You in a mighty way. May we never waste the opportunity You've given us to be a witness for You. We can't change the past, but we can learn from it. Make it obvious to us what is Your will for us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen