

Introduction to Series

We are going to start a new series on the Book of Jeremiah. Today, I want to set the context for this series. In order to understand God's message to Israel through Jeremiah, we must understand what they were doing, what they were experiencing and what they were thinking. We will discover in this series that the message of impending judgment by God is just as relevant to our nation today.

So first, let me go through a timeline that will help us understand where in the Story of God's People these events occurred.

Timeline Of the Nation of Israel

Around 1500 BC the Israelites left Egypt.

Around 1450 they entered into the Promised Land. And from that point forward the 12 brothers started to fight with each other.

If you remember Jacob favored Joseph and clearly favored him above the others. This caused the other brothers to sell Joseph and fake his death...That discord in this family continued long after their reconciliation in Egypt. Each of these tribes had issues with the others. The twelve tribes of Israel did not play well together.

This continued in their respective tribes from that point forward. Benjamin (one of Rachel's tribes) took up arms against the other tribes. Israel's first king, Saul, was of the tribe of Benjamin. When David was crowned king—David was from the tribe of Judah (one of Leah's tribes)—the Benjamites rebelled. After a long war, David succeeded in uniting all twelve tribes (5:1-5). That was what made David a great King. He finally got them to live in peace not only with those around them, but with each other.

Around 1012 BC David is Anointed King and in 1003 BC the Ark of the Covenant is moved to Jerusalem

David dies and Solomon reigns...Solomon's Temple is dedicated in 959 BC

One of Solomon's servants, Jeroboam, rebelled against him and tried to take over the kingdom. He had been told by a prophet that God was going to give to him the 10 tribes of the North as his Kingdom.

The reason God said, "Because they have forsaken me....and have not walked in my ways." Sure enough, when Solomon died Jeroboam made his move and took the ten tribes of the North. Solomon's Son Rehoboam wanted to fight them but God did not allow it

The Nation of Israel divides in 930BC

Only Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to King Rehoboam. The northern tribes crowned Jeroboam as their king. Jeroboam further consolidated his power by instituting a form of calf worship unique to his kingdom and declaring that pilgrimages to Jerusalem were unnecessary. Thus, the people of the northern tribes would have no contact with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

"So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day" (1 Kings 12:19). The northern kingdom is called "Israel" (or sometimes "Ephraim") in Scripture, and the southern kingdom is called "Judah." From the divine viewpoint, the division was a judgment on not keeping God's commands, specifically the commands prohibiting idolatry. From a human viewpoint, the division was the result of tribal discord and political unrest. The principle is that sin brings division and God is in control of all human events.

Further, the Assyrians began to populate Israel with people from other nations they had defeated. Verse 24 says, "And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities." The descendants of these foreigners and the remnant of Israel were later simply called "Samaritans." During the time of Christ, the Samaritans were despised as an "unclean" people because of their mixed ancestry and rejection of temple-based worship.

The Lord had long warned Israel of judgment, going all the way back to Moses' stern warning in

Deuteronomy 28:62–65 (ESV) 62 Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God. 63 And as the Lord took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. 64 "And the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. 65 And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the Lord will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul.

God sent Elijah and Elisha two of the greatest prophets in Israel's history to warn them. But they ignored them.

2 Kings 17:13 (ESV) 13 Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets."

2 Kings 17:15 (ESV) 15 They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the Lord had commanded them that they should not do like them.

2 Kings 17:16–17 (ESV) 16 And they abandoned all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. 17 And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger.

God would warn and punish the Northern Kingdom for their dramatic rejection of Him. When they did not respond to the warnings of the prophets, God rose up the nation of Assyria to implement His judgement on them.

The Captiol city of The Northern Kingdom Israel was Samaria. That is where the had set up their false worship of calves and their own temple. In 722 BC, MAP The Assyrians invaded and destroyed the Northern Kingdom. Just as God had warned. They then tried to take over the Southern Kingdom of Judea but God prevented it. The Northern Ten tribes became lost....blending into other cultures.

Verse 18 notes, "Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only." Though a remnant remained in the north, the nation of Israel was under Assyrian rule, and tens of thousands were deported and made servants in Assyria.

So the Southern Kingdom was protected by God as He had made a promise to the lineage of David and the City of Jerusalem. The two remaining tribes in Judea were Judah and Benjamin.

Sadly despite the warnings of the prophets, they too rejected God. Instead of learning from the lesson of the Northern Kingdom and seeing God's warning, judgment and destruction through the Assyrians, they thought that God would always protect them because of their lineage with David and the promise of Messiah to come.

Even though the prophets had been warning both the North and South of God's coming judgment, those in Judea in the South thought they had escaped and wicked Israel...the Samaritans...the 10 Northern Tribes...were destroyed.

So in the year 627 called went to a small town north of Jerusalem...and called a young 18-19 year old teenager to be His prophet to Judah. That man would serve as God's prophet for 40 years. He was Jeremiah. His message? The Army from the North is positioning to pounce...repent before it is too late.

MAP

605 BC Babylon defeats Assyria and Egypt. They control the Northern Kingdom now. Judah gets nervous and aligns with Egypt who rule over them for 4 years 609-605.

During this time, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are giving warning after warning but it falls on deaf ears. KEY EVENTS

605 BC Daniel is taken to Babylon.

Finally in 587 Babylonians invade and destroy Jerusalem...taking a Remnant of Exiles with them to Babylon from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah.

70 Years later their punishment is over and they are allowed by God to return and rebuild the walls and temple under Nehemiah and Ezra

The Ten Northern Tribes are considered lost...they intermarried and are mixed in with Gentiles. Any of us could be in that lineage and not know it.

Those who we consider Jewish today are those who descended from the Southern Kingdom of Judah and are from the families of Benjamin and Judah. Benjamin from Leah and Judah from Rachel.

So...Enter Promised Land...Unite under David...Split North and South...Assyria Destroys and scatters North...Babylon captures South. Jeremiah will witness the rebellion of Judah and the complete and total destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. It will tear his heart apart. He is called the weeping prophet, not because he was soft, but because what he witnessed was so horrible.

That is the timeline. We are looking at a time about equidistant between David as King in 1000BC and Jesus arriving. We are specifically looking at 620-580 BC.

That is the time of Jeremiah the Prophet

So what is a prophet?

In a general sense, a prophet is a person who speaks God's truth to others. The English word prophet comes from the Greek word prophetes, which can mean "one who speaks forth" or "advocate." Prophets are also called "seers," because of their spiritual insight or their ability to "see" the future.

Prophets had the task of faithfully speaking God's Word to the people. They were instrumental in guiding the nation of Israel and establishing the church. They are the foundation that led to Jesus. More than 133 named prophets are mentioned in the Bible, including 16 women.

The prophets came from a variety of backgrounds, spoke to different audiences, possessed unique styles, and used assorted methods. Most of the Old Testament prophets' messages concerned the people of God;

Most prophets of God were men, but the Old Testament also mentions prophetesses such as Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah. All prophets shared some characteristics that made their ministries "prophetic."

Usually, the prophets God sends are despised and their message unheeded. Isaiah described his nation

Isaiah 30:9–11 (ESV) 9 For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; 10 who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, 11 leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."

Jesus lamented that Jerusalem had killed the prophets God sent to them

Luke 13:34 (ESV) 34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

Of course, not everyone who "speaks forth" a message is actually a prophet of God. The Bible warns against false prophets who claim to speak for God but who actually deceive the people they purport to inform.

In the New Testament we have many warnings against false prophets. Jesus taught, Matthew 7:15–16 (ESV) 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"

Then he warns them about end times.

Matthew 24:23–24 (ESV) 24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

Revelation speaks of a false prophet who will arise in the Tribulation and deceive people around the world

Revelation 19:20 (ESV) 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

To avoid being led astray, we must always "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1).

1 John 4:1–3 (ESV) 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

A true prophet of God will be committed to speaking God's truth. He or she will never contradict God's revealed Word. A true prophet will say, with the prophet Micaiah just before his fateful confrontation with Ahab, "As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what my God says" (2 Chronicles 18:13).

Those who, like Jeremiah, tried to keep silent found they could not. Those who, like Jonah, tried to avoid their responsibility were corrected. Others, like the unnamed prophet from Judah who directly disobeyed the divine command, lost their lives.

How did one become a prophet?

A prophet was called by God to be a prophet.

Isaiah and Ezekiel were given visions of God's glory (Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1).

God told Jeremiah that he had been picked out prior even to his birth:

A common description of the source of the message is that "the word of the Lord came" to the prophet

Jeremiah 1:4–5 (ESV) 4 Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 5 "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."

A prophet sometimes had a unique appearance. Elijah was known for wearing "a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist" (2 Kings 1:8). Elijah's mantle that he left for Elisha was also seen as a symbol of the prophetic office (2 Kings 2:13–14). God told Ezekiel to shave his head and beard (Ezekiel 5:1). Other prophets were set apart in other ways: Jeremiah, for example, was told he could not marry (Jeremiah 16:2); Hosea was told to marry a prostitute (Hosea 1:2). All prophets were recognized as those through whom God spoke (even if their message was not welcome).

A prophet often led a hard life. Isaiah was sent to a people "ever hearing, but never understanding" (Isaiah 6:9), Ezekiel ministered to "a rebellious people" (Ezekiel 12:2). The queen of Israel sought to take Elijah's life (1 Kings 19:2). Jeremiah was thrown into a cistern, where he "sank down into the mud" (Jeremiah 38:6). Speaking to the Jewish leaders of his day, Stephen asked this condemning question:

Acts 7:52–53 (ESV) 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered,

Ok so who is Jeremiah?

Jeremiah was born in Anathoth, just three miles northeast of Jerusalem in the hill country of Benjamin. His father was Hilkiah. Jeremiah's ministry extended from 626 to 586 b.c., making him a contemporary of Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and Habakkuk.

At the time of his call he was a youth (1:6), still financially dependent on his parents, so he could have been born c. 645 b.c., though no certain date can be established. He became a priest and lived in an area allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (1:1), so he was possibly a descendant of Abiathar, high priest during David's reign. David's Son Solomon essentially relegated him to non-existence.

Thus, Jeremiah was from a small town, served a small tribe, and perhaps came from a deposed priestly lineage. He lived close enough to Jerusalem to understand its people, their worship, and their daily activities. He was far enough removed from Jerusalem that he was not afraid to criticize what he saw happening there. But he was likely too young, too inexperienced, from a no where place, and from a priestly line that had been discarded...perfect....exactly the kind of person God uses.

Jeremiah had a difficult life. His messages of repentance delivered at the temple were not well received. His hometown plotted against him, and he endured much persecution in the pursuit of his ministry. At God's command he never married. A faithful preacher, he apparently had only two converts: Baruch, his scribe, and Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian eunuch who served the king. These are the only two mentioned in the entire book who respond favorably to Jeremiah's preaching. I feel better already.

The Condition of Judea was not good. Jeremiah was instructed by God to speak to a nation that was in serious rebellion and in the last warning stage of God's patience. They chased false gods and mocked God of their fathers.

Their Gods

Baal was the name of the supreme god worshiped in ancient Canaan and Phoenicia. The practice of Baal worship infiltrated Jewish religious life

In general, Baal was a fertility god who was believed to enable the earth to produce crops and people to produce children. Different regions worshiped Baal in different ways, and Baal proved to be a highly adaptable god.

According to Canaanite mythology, Baal was the son of El, the chief god, and Asherah, the goddess of the sea.

During the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, at the height of Baal worship in Israel, God directly confronted the paganism through His prophet Elijah. First, God showed that He, not Baal, controlled the rain by sending a drought lasting three-and-one-half years.

Then Elijah called for a showdown on Mt. Carmel to prove once and for all who the true God was. All day long, 450 prophets of Baal called on their god to send fire from heaven—surely an easy task for a god associated with lightning bolts—but “there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention” (1 Kings 18:29).

After Baal's prophets gave up, Elijah prayed a simple prayer, and God answered immediately with fire from heaven. The evidence was overwhelming, and the people “fell prostrate and cried, ‘The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!’” (verse 39).

Their Sacrifices

Before the Hebrews entered the Promised Land, the Lord God warned against worshiping Canaan's gods. ,

Deuteronomy 6:13–15 (ESV) 14 You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you— 15 for the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.

But Israel turned to idolatry anyway. They worshiped in High Places....PHOTO

The Hebrew word for high place is bamah—mountaintop, open-air altars on elevated knolls near towns. According to 1 Kings 14:23, the Canaanites "built for themselves high places and sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree.

They built altars and worship places high on the mountains. Mentioned 117 times, high places were centers for Canaanite idol worship that the Jews were commanded to tear down. But instead, these places became idols that subtly seduced God's people year after year—they couldn't stay away!

Baal worship was rooted in sensuality and involved ritualistic prostitution in the temples. At times, appeasing Baal required human sacrifice, usually the firstborn of the one making the sacrifice (Jeremiah 19:5). The priests of Baal appealed to their god in rites of wild abandon which included loud, ecstatic cries and self-inflicted injury (1 Kings 18:28).

Jeremiah 19:3–5 (ESV) Behold, I am bringing such disaster upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. 4 Because the people have forsaken me and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, 5 and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind—

High places were not harmless shrines—God's people were seduced to flagrant sin at these altars. Isaiah rebuked them: "Are you not children of rebellion ... who inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every luxuriant tree, who slaughter the children in the ravines?" (Isaiah 57:4-5).

King Ahaz, preceding his son Hezekiah long before Jeremiah in Isaiah's day, had set up a system of sacrificing children to the god Molech in the Valley of Hinnom just outside Jerusalem

Hezekiah led in reforms and clean-up (Is. 36:7), but his son Manasseh continued to foster child sacrifice along with gross idolatry, which continued into Jeremiah's time

Religious insincerity, dishonesty, adultery, injustice, tyranny against the helpless, and slander prevailed as the norm not the exception.

So as Judah was falling further and further into a moral abyss....the world powers were shifting as well.

The seemingly unbeatable Assyrians had centralized power over the Northern Kingdom in the new capital of Samaria. They ruled a large empire but began to implode and weaken. Another world power arose to challenge them and in 612 BC Babylonians invaded and captured the capitol city Nineveh. 7 years later the Babylonians would conquer Egypt to Judah's south.

For our purposes here, we need to understand that the Babylonians began to invade and conquer the Southern Kingdom Judah in several phases. The first exile, in 605BC, took the prominent people in Jerusalem that King Nebuchadnezzar thought he could use in Babylon- professionals, wealthy, prominent leaders and craftsmen. This group included Daniel. The next major exile occurred with the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC.

I think it is important to note that the Assyrians and the Babylonians had completely different ideas about how to deal with conquered nations.

The Assyrians desired to destroy the culture, religion, and political structure of everyone they conquered. They did this by distributing everyone all around their empire. Thus when they conquered the 10 Northern Tribes they interspersed everyone and blended their culture and religion- thus the Samaritans.

The Babylonians on the other hands wanted to keep the culture, religion and leadership structure of those they conquered. They desired to adopt and steal what was working and incorporate it into their Babylonian Culture.

The reason this is important to us is that the exiles to Babylon were allowed to live together, worship together, and keep their leadership structure in place. Thus God had provided for this Remnant to be ready to return when His time of Judgement (70 years) was complete. They were separated from their homeland and Jerusalem and the temple but not from each other.

God protected His remnant by using the Assyrians to punish the 10 Northern Tribes. They would be lost forever. The tribes to the South God punished through the Babylonians who would keep the Remnant together. God is in control of human history. Nothing is overlooked.

God's Message through Jeremiah

The main theme of Jeremiah is judgment upon Judah however in that judgment was a promise of the future messianic kingdom Since God's judgment was imminent he concentrated on current problems as he sought to turn the nation back from the point of no return.

A secondary theme is God's willingness to spare and bless the nation only if the people repent.

Though this is a frequent emphasis, it is most graphically portrayed at the potter's shop.

Jeremiah's Messages from God tend to reflect 5 main points. They are a decree of Judgement. God explaining why He was doing what He was doing.

1) He described in detail the sins that they had committed that were being punished. 2) He described the invader that He had chosen to carry out His judgement. 3) He described the horror that was to be associated with the invasion 4) the calamities of destruction and 5) a promise of one day returning a remnant. Intermixed with these judgements is a promise from God that it was not too late to avoid this if they would repent and turn back to Him.

Other themes include: 1) God's longing for Israel to be tender toward Him, as in the days of first love 2) Jeremiah's servant tears, as "the weeping prophet" 3) the close, intimate relationship God had with Israel and that He yearned to keep 4) suffering, as in Jeremiah's trials and God's sufficiency in all trouble 5) the vital role that God's Word can play in life 6) the place of faith in expecting restoration from the God for whom nothing is too difficult and 7) prayer for the coordination of God's will with God's action in restoring Israel to its land .

Jeremiah's prayers, confessions, laments, and dialogues reveal the depth of the prophet's understanding of the character of God and the nature of His relationship to people. For Jeremiah, the God of Israel was the incomparable God of all creation, the Lord over nature and history. He reigned not only over Judah and Israel but over all nations

The thread that wove together Jeremiah's knowledge of God was his understanding of the word of God. It permeated the prophet's life and speech, for God Himself promised to touch Jeremiah's mouth and infuse His words into Jeremiah's mind and speech. From then on, God's words were like an unquenchable fire burning within the prophet's soul .

Jeremiah was keenly aware of the provisions of the covenant between God and Israel. The covenant bound Israel to God in a special relationship of love, faithfulness, and hope. But the covenant had two sides. Faithfulness to the Lord and the covenant would bring blessing; disobedience would result in punishment, destruction, and exile . Jeremiah called the people to obey the words of the covenant and to turn from their idolatry and their unjust treatment of one another .

Jeremiah's message of judgment also contained a word of hope: a righteous remnant would be restored. The land had been defiled by the people's idolatry. The leaders had brought the nation to the brink of disaster and the people were exiled. But based on His everlasting love for Israel, God promised to bring the people back from captivity and restore them to blessing . Israel's enemies would be defeated, and the people would sing joyfully of God's goodness.

Jeremiah also points to the broader biblical theme of the remnant. Even where there is chaos and massive failure (as in the prophet's day), there was also a remnant saved by grace. This paradigm shows itself time and again in the unfolding historical drama of redemption, from the family of Noah saved from the Flood down through the pages of church history. Including ours.

Challenges reading Jeremiah

Jeremiah served God as a prophet during the reign of 5 different Kings of Judah. In order, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Each of them also served with a High Priest as well.

So for the most part they all sound the same. Josiah was a good king who honored God...but the progression through the next 4 went from good to horrible and all of them thought Jeremiah was crazy. In addition, there were two high priests who served alongside these kings.

So the challenge of reading Jeremiah is related to the way it is organized. This book is in no way chronological until you get toward the last half. It is as if Jeremiah had a briefcase. PHOTO

He would write down everything God told him to say and do and then he would stick it in his briefcase. Toward the end of his ministry he and a scribe named, Baruch, seemed to randomly put this book together.

Add to the confusion that the book is long and has all kinds of writings. Poetry and prose are the two most common types of literature, and these two broad categories can be subdivided. In the poetry are such things as judgment speeches, individual laments, and prophecies of future salvation. In the prose are sermons and biographical accounts

So try not to put this book in order of events, it will drive your Western Mind crazy. The better way to study this book, in my opinion, is to not get lost in the various Kings and High Priests because they were all evil and leading people to destruction. They all despised Jeremiah, his message and his God.

Just consider it 40 years of demise under various Kings. It will make the book much easier to understand. You can remember that all of them start with a J except the last one Zedekiah who was the worst and who led when God destroyed Jerusalem.

God's Message for us today

Over 2,500 years have passed since Jeremiah walked the streets of Jerusalem, courageously warning ancient Judah about its increasingly bad behavior—and what would surely happen if the nation were to allow it to continue unchanged. God is a God of mercy and patience but eventually He must bring judgment and justice.

His authoritative statements have resonated down through the ages of man—even into this present day.

The United States still remains one of the most religious countries in the world. Yet God also asks us today, just as He did ancient Judah:

Jeremiah 7:9–12 (ESV) 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations? 11 Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord.

People who profess to follow Jesus deny the truth of His Word, deny the deity of Christ, deny the literal resurrection of Christ, and deny the coming judgment in Revelation and live lifestyles in direct contradiction to God's commands...fornication, adultery, homosexuality, gender sins, and a host of other abominations. Yet they still come to church completely unrepentant claiming to be followers of Jesus, while raising their hands to God and claiming to be delivered. Gods says...do you think I am blind?

Sexual immorality, Idolatry, murder, violence, greed, theft, injustice and yes...we too sacrifice our children. Through abortion we sacrifice future generations to our God of convenience and self importance. We by far kill more children than anything seen in Baal worship throughout Judea. Jeremiah is speaking to us.

Jeremiah 7:28 (ESV) 28 And you shall say to them, 'This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips.

Or perhaps said more directly....

Jeremiah 10:14 (ESV) 14 Every man is stupid and without (biblical) knowledge;

He doesn't stop there. It is not just that people are stupid God says....so are their leaders.

Jeremiah 10:21 (ESV) 21 For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the Lord; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered.

Jeremiah 5:30–31 (ESV) 30 An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: 31 the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?

Many seem addicted to falsehood, preferring deceit to truth. People usually don't like being disturbed by someone who would deliver straight, unvarnished truths right out of the pages of the Bible. Churches who claim to follow Jesus...endorse and support what God clearly calls perversions. Homosexuality, same sex marriages, gender identity sins, fornication (sex outside of marriage), and other prideful actions that dare God to respond in judgement.

PHOTO Many church leaders who claim to be ordained to teach the word in season and out of season are teaching their own ideas, philosophies, and lies as if they are God's truth. Incredibly, they have no fear of God.

They discount almost the entire Old Testament as historical fiction, they try to remove the deity of Jesus Christ, and they promote the enlightened thinking of Western Man above God's Truth.

They tell people what they want to hear and they fill pews with their own stench. It is disgusting to watch. What they do is inexcusable and the fact that they do it in the name of God is, in my view, the highest apostasy.

Jeremiah watched a total theological and moral meltdown of his society over 40 years. Today, our rejection of God is like a Tsunami that is gaining incredible speed. **PHOTO** Just as God promised. We are headed for God's judgment. We will implode from within if we do not repent and turn back to God. As a people, we do not seem to understand the basic cause-and-effect principle that is so implicit throughout God's Word. God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. What brought His wrath in Judea will bring his wrath one day to us.

Jeremiah 5:25 (ESV) 25 Your iniquities have turned these away, and your sins have kept good from you.

Jeremiah 2:19 (ESV) 19 Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord God of hosts.

God speaks to our churches today.

God spoke clearly to the Judeans and He speaks the same message to us today.

Jeremiah 7:2–4 (ESV) 2 "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord. 3 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. 4 Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'

Arrogant national leaders, irresponsible religious shepherds and an increasing immoral citizenry are destined for another outcome. If God severely disciplined his two nations—the northern 10-tribed house of Israel and the southern nation of Judah, sending both into national captivity—do you really think He is going to bless and protect the United States?

We worship false idols and put them in high places....We endorse the sacrifice of infants....we live utterly immoral lives....allowing any kind of abomination before God....we export our filthy morals to the world through TV, movies and media.....we deny God's truth...we deny God's existence...we deny God's creation...We deny God's Son...We deny God's eternal plans...and we do all of it...in a place that we call His church. And we do all of it under the direction and guidance of false teachers.

People today need to read the book of Jeremiah to understand God's pain and compassion. Jeremiah teaches us that God suffers because of the rebellion of his people. God cared for the people of Judah even when they had been unfaithful to him. God still cares. People must seriously consider God's call to repentance. Jeremiah's message for us today is that God will bring discipline for the rebellion of our society just as he did when Judah rebelled against divine love. Jeremiah also affirms that even during the process of discipline, God is committed to restore those who return to him in faith and obedience.

God summed it up through Jeremiah.....The fear of me...is not in you. May God save and protect His remnant. Let's Pray.