

**Bible Study • By Faith – An In-depth look at Hebrews 11**  
**Lesson #49 • Hebrews 11:35b-38**  
Victory Over Circumstances  
**“Some Died by Stoning”**  
**Life & Times of Jeremiah • Part 2 of 6**  
**• H A N D O U T •**

► In this study-lesson, a clarification regarding to whom God is addressing will help prevent confusion as we work our way through the material. Since the Northern Kingdom of Israel has already fallen to Assyria, when God addresses “Israel,” He is probably speaking to those who are now scattered in exile throughout the Assyrian empire. But, there are, however, a remnant living among the people of Judah from the Northern Kingdom, who fled before Israel's total collapse and who took refuge in the vicinity of Jerusalem. There are also times when God speaks only to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. I believe the content in each case will tell us to whom God is addressing.

As we begin this study, the time-line is the reign of King Josiah. Josiah has torn down the pagan altars and the Asherah poles across the land. The priest, Hilkiah, [*possibly Jeremiah's father,*] has found the book of the Law and it has been read to the people. Consequently, a short period of spiritual reform was accomplished.

God speaks to His prophet, Jeremiah, concerning the spiritual condition of His people. He even compares Judah to Israel and makes a stunning declaration:

*Jeremiah 3:6-11 • During the reign of King Josiah, the Lord said to me, "Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it.*

*"I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery.*

*"Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense," declares the Lord.*

*The Lord said to me, "Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah!"*

Q: How does the Lord picture the Northern Kingdom of Israel in this passage?

Q: How does the Lord picture Judah's response to Israel?

Q: What is the stunning declaration made by the Lord?

Q: Israel was deeply entrenched in idol worship and had outright refused to listen to the prophets God sent their way. Prophets like Amos. So, why did God consider Judah's sin worse than Israel's sin?

### God outlined a Plan for Israel's restoration ...

▶ God told Jeremiah to invite Israel – those scattered in exile throughout the Assyrian empire – to return to Him. The key to their successful return was to be transparent before God and acknowledge their iniquity.

*Jeremiah 3:14-16 · "Return, faithless people," declares the Lord, "for I am your husband. I will choose you—one from a town and two from a clan—and bring you to Zion. Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.*

▶ As a means of encouragement to these people who had become disenfranchised under the authority of a cruel people – the Assyrians – Jeremiah prophecies that there is a time of blessing coming in the future where both kingdoms will be restored. In this future time, all the nations shall be gathered in Jerusalem and the Lord Himself will reign. He predicts a time is coming when the Ark of the Covenant – the symbol of God's supernatural Presence with His people, will no longer be the center of worship and it will not be replaced once it was gone. In this future time, the people will no longer follow the dictates of their evil hearts because they will have become transformed.

Q: What are the historical facts which this prophecy represents?

### Chapter 4 contains a description of the terror of the coming judgment. The Lord begins by addressing both the Nation of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem with profound words ...

*Jeremiah 4:3-4 · This is what the Lord says to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: "Plow up the hard ground of your hearts! Do not waste your good seed among thorns. O people of Judah and Jerusalem, surrender your pride and power.*

*Change your hearts before the Lord, or my anger will burn like an unquenchable fire because of all your sins.*

Q: What is the basic message of this passage?

### The Lord gives Judah warning ...

*Jeremiah 4:5-6 · "Shout to Judah, and broadcast to Jerusalem! Tell them to sound the alarm throughout the land: 'Run for your lives! Flee to the fortified cities!' Raise a signal flag as a warning for Jerusalem: 'Flee now! Do not delay!' For I am bringing terrible destruction upon you from the north."*

► And so the die is cast. God's people have made the choice not to surrender their pride or turn away from their idols and return to the Lord. The whole land will become desolate because the Lord has declared it to be so.

Q: Why does the Lord warn Judah by first, telling them to sound the alarm and flee, but then tell them destruction is coming and they can't stop it?

► Jeremiah becomes overwhelmed and physically ill by what the Lord has shown him. With anguish he says, "O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart. He then appeals to the people of Judah:

*Jeremiah 4:14, 18: 30-31 · "O Jerusalem, cleanse your heart that you may be saved. How long will you harbor your evil thoughts? Your own actions have brought this upon you. This punishment is bitter, piercing you to the heart! What are you doing, you who have been plundered? Why do you dress up in beautiful clothing and put on gold jewelry? Why do you brighten your eyes with mascara? Your primping will do you no good! The allies who were your lovers despise you and seek to kill you."  
"I hear a cry, like that of a woman in labor, the groans of a woman giving birth to her first child. It is beautiful Jerusalem gasping for breath and crying out, 'Help! I'm being murdered!'"*

Q: Why is Jeremiah so very emotional about the City of Jerusalem?

► During the Passover Celebration in Josiah's 18<sup>th</sup> year as King, the Lord spoke a very disturbing word to Jeremiah. He told him **'do not to marry or have children in this place.'** The Lord explained that Jerusalem was going to experience horrible persecution from its enemies. Those – both great and small – who were not deported would die gruesome death, and they would not even be buried. Perhaps the worst was that no one would mourn them. Because they had rejected the Lord, His hand of blessing had been removed from them. He told Jeremiah that, in his lifetime, he would see this come to pass. [Ref: Jeremiah 16:1-13]

Q: Why is God telling Jeremiah not to marry considered a unique command?

Q: Why would God do this?

► **For the remainder of Josiah's reign**, Jeremiah functioned primarily as a preaching prophet, supporting Josiah's efforts to bring the people back to Yahweh. Jeremiah condemned idolatry, the greed of the temple priests and exposed the false prophets.

It was during Josiah's 27th year as King that the combined forces of the Medes and Babylonians besieged and destroyed Assyria's City of Nineveh. Assyria's defeat marked the beginning of the end of the brutal and evil Assyrian Empire. This was good news for Judah but stressful news for Egypt. Egypt then sent military assistance to Assyria, which Josiah attempted to stop. Josiah made the decision that the Nation of Judah would make their stand against Egypt at Megiddo; Josiah was killed in that battle.

Josiah's son, **Jehoahaz**, ascended Judah's throne. He was Josiah's fourth son and was known for his shameless abuse of power. He was also an idolater and all the spiritual progress made under Josiah's leadership was reversed by Jehoahaz, sending the nation back into their pagan practices.

Q: Why would the Nation of Judah so easily reverse their spiritual commitment made during Josiah's reign?

► Meanwhile, the Egyptian Pharaoh was furious over Judah's attempt to stop Egypt at Megiddo and three months after Jehoahaz's ascension, Egypt marched in and made the Nation of Judah a tributary province of Egypt with a heavy tax burden attached. Then Egypt carted King Jehoahaz off to Egypt where they made him a common slave. He died there, never seeing his homeland again.

Egypt appointed Jehoahaz's brother, **Jehoiakim**, as the next king. He reigned for the next eleven years as Egypt's Vassal King, carrying out the wishes of Egypt and paying great sums of taxes to them.

► It was during Jehoiakim's first year that Jeremiah once again heard from the Lord:

*Jeremiah 18:1b-6; 11-13a; 15-17 · The Lord said, "Go down to the potter's shop, and I will speak to you there." So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so he crushed it into a lump of clay again and started over. Then the Lord gave me this message: "O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand. "Therefore, Jeremiah, go and warn all Judah and Jerusalem. Say to them: 'This is what the Lord says: I am planning disaster for you instead of good. So turn from your evil ways, each of you, and do what is right.'"*

*But the people replied, "Don't waste your breath. We will continue to live as we want to, stubbornly following our own evil desires."*

*So this is what the Lord says: "Has anyone ever heard of such a thing, even among the pagan nations? But my people ... burn incense to worthless idols. Therefore, their land will become desolate, a monument to their stupidity. All who pass by will be astonished and will shake their heads in amazement. I will scatter my people before their enemies as the east wind scatters dust. And in all their trouble I will turn my back on them and refuse to notice their distress."*

Q: What principle is God teaching in His Covenant People, the House of Israel?

► It was during the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim's reign that the Lord gave Jeremiah another message: Jeremiah was told to write down in a scroll *everything* the Lord had ever spoken to him, beginning with the first message received when Josiah was King. The Lord explains His motive:

*Jeremiah 36:3 • “Perhaps the people of Judah will repent when they hear again all the terrible things I have planned for them. Then I will be able to forgive their sins and wrongdoings.”*

Q: What does this tell us about the Lord's heart for His people?

► So Jeremiah sent for the scribe, Baruch, son of Neriah. Jeremiah then painstakingly dictated all the prophecies the Lord had given him up to that time and Baruch wrote them in a scroll.

Once the scroll was complete, Jeremiah explained he had a problem: *He had previously preached a rather castigating sermon at the Temple gates denouncing the reversal of the good things Josiah's leadership had accomplished and the current slide back into idolatry, along with a pronouncement of impending judgment. This made King Jehoiakim furious. He disbarred Jeremiah from going to the House of the Lord or to the Palace.* [IOW: He was silenced and canceled.]

During this same general time frame, the Babylonian armies had started coming down from the north and were going to war with the nations surrounding Judah. This made the people of Judah very nervous. They called for an Assembly with a designated period of Fasting, hoping to find some kind of guidance and deliverance from the pending threat.

This made for an ideal situation for the people to hear and receive the Word of the Lord. Since Jeremiah couldn't go to the Temple and deliver the scroll as the Lord instructed, he instructed Baruch:

*Jeremiah 36:6-8 • So you go to the Temple on the next day of fasting, and read the messages from the Lord that I have had you write on this scroll. Read them so the people who are there from all over Judah will hear them. Perhaps, even yet, they will turn from their evil ways and ask the Lord's forgiveness before it is too late. For the Lord has threatened them with his terrible anger.” Baruch did as Jeremiah told him and read these messages from the Lord to the people at the Temple.*

Q: What does this tell us about Jeremiah?

Q: What is unusual about Judah calling for a fast before the Lord?

► When Baruch started reading the words which Jeremiah had dictated, not only did the people hear the Lord's prophecies and the denunciation of Judah's idolatry, but the fact that this was read at the Temple started a **chain reaction**.

One of the men who heard the reading was named Michaiah. He went to the scribe's chamber where all the officials of Judah were sitting. Michaiah repeated what he had heard Baruch read. These officials sent word back to Baruch for him to bring the Scroll and read it to them, just as he had at the Temple. So Baruch did.

After hearing the words they asked him about his source: **“Did they come directly from Jeremiah?”** Baruch explained that Jeremiah dictated them and he wrote them down, in ink, word for word, on the scroll. They took the Scroll from Baruch and gave it to Elishama, the Palace secretary, for safe keeping, explaining they were going to tell the King about the contents of the Scroll. Then they added: **“You and Jeremiah should both hide. Don't tell anyone where you are.”**

After King Jehoiakim was told about the Scroll, he asked Jehudi, one of the officials, to get the scroll and read it to him. Jehudi did as asked, reading with all the king's official's standing by.

*Jeremiah 36:22-25 · It was late autumn, and the king was in a winterized part of the palace, sitting in front of a fire to keep warm. Each time Jehudi finished reading three or four columns, the king took a knife and cut off that section of the scroll. He then threw it into the fire, section by section, until the whole scroll was burned up. Neither the king, nor his attendants, showed any signs of fear or repentance at what they heard. Nevertheless, Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah begged the king not to burn the scroll, but he would not listen.*

► Then King Jehoiakim ordered the arrest of Baruch and Jeremiah. But the Lord was hiding them.

Q: Why was King Jehoiakim being so reckless as to actually destroy the Word of the Lord?

**In any case, Jeremiah has now become “public enemy #1” and Egypt's vassal King in Judah is standing on a very slippery slope. The Most High God is most definitely going to respond to the burning of the Scroll...**



**Next Time ◆ Lesson #50  
“Jeremiah – Part 3 of 6”**

