

Jeremiah 22-25 • The Lord is our Righteousness

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Chapter 22 is an interesting chapter because it records some messages given to some of the last kings of Judah. These are the last kings of Judah, by the way. After this point, after the Babylonians conquer Jerusalem, there will be no more kings, until the coming of the King of Kings. And that's kind of an interesting sort of a dynamic, is it not?

So we're right at that place. Let me show you on the screen a list of the, this is the historical order of the last four kings of Judah:

The HISTORICAL order of the last 4 kings of Judah:

- Jehoahaz (also called "Shallum")
- Jehoiakim
- Jehoiachin
- Zedekiah

I put these here because the different names are used for us in the text, and I don't want you to get confused. We start with Jehoahaz, who is also referred to as Shallum, okay? And he is referred to Shallum in Jeremiah so that's important to remember. And then we have Jehoiakim, and then Jehoiakin. Sounds a lot similar does it not? And then finally Zedekiah, who is the last king of Judah. And the reason we're making this point is because in this chapter, Jeremiah is given a message to give to the king of Judah. And then the Lord begins to speak about, prophetically, about the fate of a few of those kings.

So it begins this way:

Thus says the Lord: "Go down to the house of the king of Judah and speak there this word,"

Can I stop just for a moment to say that this, I don't know how Jeremiah felt about hearing this directive from the Lord to go to literally the house of the king of Judah. In other words, the palace and to give this message. But this was a dangerous thing. This was a dangerous thing to do. This would be something akin to you being called by the Lord to go to the White House and begin to

speak the, you know, the words of the Lord. And the chance of somebody just kind of having a bad day and deciding to arrest you or do worse is very high. So, you know, when Jeremiah hears these words, you have to kind of wonder what's going through his heart, perhaps. But in verse two, he's told to say:

"(2 and say,) "Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, who sits on the throne of David, you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates." (Now we don't know exactly which king of those last few was on the throne at the time, but the message was clear.) 3 Thus says the Lord: (verse three) Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. 4 For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people. 5 But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord that this house shall become a desolation. 6 For thus says the Lord concerning the house of the king of Judah:

"You are like Gilead to me, like the summit of Lebanon, (which are beautiful things) yet surely I will make you a desert, an uninhabited city.

7 I will prepare destroyers against you, each with his weapons, and they shall cut down your choicest cedars and cast them into the fire.

8 And many nations will pass by this city, and every man will say to his neighbor, "Why has the Lord dealt thus with this great city?" 9 And they will answer, "Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and worshipped other gods and served them."

Make no mistake about it, the judgment of the Lord was coming because of idolatry, the sin of idolatry. Now verse 10 begins a specific recording and a message to King Jehoahaz, who again is referred to as Shallum in these verses, all right. Notice what the Lord says:

10 Weep not for him who is dead, nor grieve for him, but weep bitterly for him who goes away, for he shall return no more to see his native land.

11 For thus says the Lord concerning Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, and who went away from this place: "He shall return here no more, 12 but in the place where they have carried him captive, there shall he die, and he shall never see this land again."

Now, can I just remind you of something important here in Jeremiah? These prophecies are not given in chronological order. We've already seen the Babylonians come and set up their siege against Jerusalem, but now we've gone back in time. See, that siege took place during the reign of Zedekiah. But we are now, we've gone back and Babylon at this particular point hasn't advanced itself against Jerusalem.

And the nation that is kind of flexing its muscle right now is Egypt. And Egypt is going to cause some trouble for Judah, but then Babylon is ultimately going to come and cause trouble for Egypt. They're going to take over Egypt. But right now, Egypt is kind of the nation that is giving them the most trouble, although the Lord has been telling them that the Babylonians are coming eventually.

Now we read about this actually in 2 Kings and I want to put this on the screen for you so we can see it together. And actually read it together because this is what we are going to read about what was just prophesied:

2 Kings 23:31-34 ESV)

Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done. And Pharaoh Neco put him in bonds at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and laid on the land a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away, and he came to Egypt and died there.

And that's exactly what God prophesied through Jeremiah. He said, if you're going to, if you're going to mourn for the one who has taken away, for he will be taken away and he will not return. But remember Pharaoh Neco is the one who is hassling Judah right now. And it was Pharaoh Neco who actually killed King Josiah, who was a godly king. In fact, the last of the godly kings and he was killed in battle. And his sons took the throne after him and did an absolutely horrible job of ruling.

So, there we have the issue related to Jehoahaz. The next message that comes to us in verse 13 and following is to Jehoiakim, who was placed on the throne by Pharaoh Neco. And that was something that the pharaohs would do... or, not the pharaohs, but really any conquering country. I mean, the pharaohs did it, but, but other, any, sometimes other conquering, Babylon even does, did it. They would conquer a people and then they would depose the reigning king and they

would put maybe his brother or nephew or relative on the throne. But they would threaten him within an inch of his life. And they would basically put him there to be a puppet king and to do what the conquering king asked of them to do, which was, of course, pay tribute and obey, be obedient.

And so Jehoiakim was put on the throne by Pharaoh Neco, all right? All right. Verse 13:

"¹³ Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness. and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbors serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages, ¹⁴ who says, 'I will build myself a great house with spacious upper rooms, who cuts windows for it, paneling it with cedar and painting it with vermilion.

¹⁵ Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him.

¹⁶ He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me declares the Lord.

¹⁷ But you have eyes and heart only for dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence."

¹⁸ Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah,

"They shall not lament for him, saying, 'Ah, my brother! or 'Ah, sister!' They shall not lament for him saying, 'Ah, lord! or 'Ah, his majesty! With the burial of a donkey, he shall be buried, dragged and dumped beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

And we read about the demise of Jehoiakim in 2 Chronicles chapter 35, on the screen so you can see it here with me. It says:

2 Chronicles 35:5-7 (ESV)

Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and bound him in chains to take him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried part of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon and put them in his palace in Babylon.

So this is really the first conquering of Jerusalem by the Babylonian empire, but they didn't destroy the city at this point. They just came in and flexed their muscle and basically took Jehoiakim, and you know, left. And said this is now our city...belongs to us.

And so there, but the Jews are still going to rebel even though God has been telling them the Babylonian invasion was My idea. It was My discipline upon you for your lack of obedience and your rebellion against Me. So if you will just submit to what they do, it's going to go well for you. But if you resist you're going to die and they would not listen. This was the message that God, you're going to hear this coming through Jeremiah as we go on.

So in verses 20 through 23; now the next four verses, it's kind of a general prophecy against Jerusalem and her rulers. But you're going to notice in these verses the Lord refers to them as shepherds. And that was kind of a word that they would use to describe rulers at that time, and it didn't necessarily have a spiritual connotation. It just meant they were shepherds of the Lord's flock in a, in more of a political sort of a sense.

So it says in verse 20:

"20 Go up to Lebanon, and cry out, and lift your voice in Bashan; cry out, from Abarim, for all your lovers are destroyed (speaking of the gods they worshipped.)

21 I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, 'I will not listen.' This has been your way from your youth, that you have not obeyed my voice.

22 The wind shall shepherd all your shepherds, and your lovers shall go into captivity; then you will be ashamed and confounded because of all your evil.

23 O inhabitant of Lebanon, nested among the cedars, how you will be pitied when pangs come upon you, pain as of a woman in labor!"

Now as we begin verse 24, we're going to see a prophetic message that was given to Jehoiakim. But you're going to see that he is mentioned or called Coniah. And you got to kind of hang with all these names. It's a little bit like Lord of the Rings, I got to be honest with you. There's a lot of names and sometimes there's several names for one person. But Coniah, was also known as Jeconiah, who was also known as Jehoiakim. So, there you go and pay attention because there will be a test.

Okay, here we go, verse 24:

"²⁴ As I live, declares the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, (was the) were the signet ring on my right hand, yet, I would tear you off ²⁵ and give you into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans."

What is the Lord saying here about Jeconiah, or if you will, Jehoiakim? He says, even if you were my signet ring, and a signet ring was a special ring that a king would give to his top advisors, his top officials. And the ring was, would have a, the crest, the symbol of the king. And when the king would create an edict, or a rule, or a law, in the land they would put a blob of... kind of a hardening clay on there. But while it was still soft, they would press the signet ring into the clay, and that would, of course, make the image of the crest of the king. And everybody would know that was an official document, okay?

So people who received a signet ring were trusted officials of the king. And the Lord is saying, even if you were a trusted official and you wore the signet ring, in other words, saying that you had my authority, and that was something that a man with a signet ring of the king could do. He could create his own edicts in the name of the king. And sometimes they did and just say, the King says, so there you go. You know, that's it. So even if you were one of my trusted officials, God says, I would tear you off. You can kind of see how the Lord feels about Jehoiakim can't you, referring once again to him as Coniah.

Verse 26, He says:

*"²⁶ I will hurl you and your mother who bore you into another country, where you are not born, and there you shall die. ²⁷ But to the land (to) (*correction of) which they will long to return, there they shall not return."*

And I want you to notice here beginning in verse 28, now the Lord utters a curse on the line of Jehoiakim or Coniah. Verse 28 says:

"²⁸ Is this man Coniah a despised, broken pot, a vessel no one cares for? Why are he and his children hurled and cast into a land that they do not know?"

²⁹ O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord!

"³⁰ Thus says the Lord: "Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days, for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah."

In other words, what God did is He cut off the line of Coniah, or Jehoiachin and said, no more shall any of this man's descendants rule and reign on the throne. You might find it interesting to know that when we get into the genealogies of Jesus, there are some interesting dynamics related to this man Coniah. And we don't have time to get into it tonight, but suffice it to say, the human lineage of our Lord Jesus, did not come through this man who was cursed, because of course, Jesus will rule and reign on David's throne.

Chapter 23 continues a message to the corrupt leaders of God's people, once again referred to as shepherds. But we're going to find in this chapter, there's also a fascinating section where the Lord speaks prophetically of the coming Messiah, and we'll see how that goes. But it begins this way:

"¹ Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" declares the Lord. ² Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord. ³ Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴ I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord."

So what is God saying here? Very simply, He is condemning the leaders or shepherds of the southern kingdom of Judah for not taking care of the people. He then promises a day when He will bring his people back to their homeland, and set people up as genuine shepherds over His people. But of course, all of this is a prefiguration of the Final Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, the One who will come. That is, of course, Jesus our Lord and Savior.

And that's when the Lord begins to speak through Jeremiah of the coming of Messiah and it is recorded for us here beginning in verse five. And there's a very interesting and important statement made in these verses that I want you to take note of, but let's read it. It says:

"⁵ Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land."

Now by the way, this has not been fulfilled as we know. Jesus did not sit on the throne of David in His first coming. He's going to do that in His second coming, right? But remember, after Zedekiah, there were no more kings over Israel. None. They were done. They were gone. So, Jesus is the next king that is going to rule and reign on the throne of David, in the lineage of David. And this is going to happen.

But it says that in verse six, and this is very important, I want you to take note of this: *"In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely."* And by the way, that word saved that is given us there in verse six, is the same word that is also translated delivered, all right. So Judah will be delivered and Israel will dwell securely. And check out this last statement: *"And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord Is our righteousness.'"*

Isn't that cool. The Lord, He says, and again, prophetically, the Lord is our righteousness, is what He will be called. And the reason that's such an amazing statement is because that's what Jesus came to do. He came to be our righteousness. We are not righteous before God.

Isn't it funny that people think of Christians or the non-believers refer to Christians as those "self-righteous" people. If they only knew what Christianity was all about, they would realize that the reason that we've come to Christ is that we recognized we're not righteous, nor could we ever be righteous. It's not possible! We cannot be righteous in and of ourselves, okay? What we have to do, or what we do when we come to Christ, is we receive His righteousness. That's not self-righteousness. That's Jesus righteousness. He has imputed to us His righteousness, right?

And so, Christians are not self-righteous. If they are, they're not Christians, bottom line. If you meet a self-righteous Christian, then you have not met a Christian. A true born-again believer understands I have zero righteousness in me, none, zip, zilch. The only righteousness that I have today is what has been given to me by Him. It's not, and it's really, you know, imputed. That's the word we like to use. Here's how Paul described it in his letter to the Romans in chapter three. I love this. He says:

Romans 3:21-22 (ESV)

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

"But now the righteousness of God (notice it's not of man, it's of God) has been manifested (apart from the law, that means apart from keeping rules, obeying commandments, keeping feasts, food laws, and things like that) apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it- (he says) the righteousness of God (is what comes to us) through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe."

So, are you righteous before God? Yes you are. How are you righteous before God? By faith. By faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, we stand righteous before God. And isn't that incredible that here about 550, 575 years or whatever, before Christ was born, Jeremiah prophesies that this branch that the Lord will raise up to rule and reign on the throne of David will be called "the Lord is our Righteousness." That is so beautiful!

Verse seven, as we go on here in Jeremiah:

"⁷ Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when they shall no longer say, (and this is actually repeated elsewhere in the book; we've seen it already) 'As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt, (no, he says, that's not what they're going to say) ⁸ but (they're going to say,) 'As the Lord lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the north country (referring to Babylon or the Persian kingdom) and out of all the countries where he had driven them."

Verses nine and ten. This is kind of a poignant section of Jeremiah where Jeremiah expresses his own personal grief over the false prophets and how they had just so deceived the people and taken them for a spiritual ride. He says:

"⁹ Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me; all my bones shake; I'm like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the Lord and because of his holy words.

¹⁰ For the land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Their course is evil, and their might is not right."

So all that concerning the prophets, the false prophets. So now the Lord speaks to Jeremiah's grief and He says:

"¹¹ Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their evil, declares the Lord. ¹² Therefore, their way shall be to them like slippery

paths in the darkness, into which they shall be driven and fall, for I will bring disaster upon them in the year of their punishment, declares the Lord.

13 In the prophets of Samaria I saw an unsavory thing: (remember that was the northern kingdom of Israel that has been long gone at this time) they prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray.

14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his evil; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah."

15 Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets: "Behold, I will feed them with bitter food and give them poisoned water to drink, for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone out into all the land."

16 Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. 17 They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'"

18 For who among them has stood in the counsel of the Lord to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?

19 Behold, the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked.

20 The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly.

21 "I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.

What does it mean? "...yet they ran;" Messengers in those days would be given a message to run and go tell the king or to tell the people of something. You'll remember you can read about that sometimes in the days of David, when there was a battle. And perhaps David was even back, still back at the city awaiting news on how the battle went they would run with a messenger. They'd be given a message by the commander of the army and told to run to the city to give the message.

And so he's saying to them I did not send them to run with a message and yet they ran anyway. They ran to give their message even though I didn't send them. And they spoke even though I didn't speak to them.

He says in verse 22:

"22 But if they had stood in my council, (in other words, if they had taken time to wait in my presence) then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds."

And so, you know, you can just see how this just is so grievous to the Lord that these false prophets just spoke so freely to the people of Judah. And gave them false hopes and told them, Jeremiah is saying lies. The Lord is not going to let this city fall. It's the presence of the Lord is here. It will never fall.

Verse 23 and 24 are really just a couple of quick verses that speak about how foolish and futile it is to oppose or reject God, which, of course, the false prophets were doing. He says:

"23 Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? 24 Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord."

No matter where they go, no matter what they say, I'm going to be there. I'm going to hear what they say. And so He goes on speaking of the false prophets saying:

"25 I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed! 26 How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, 27 who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forget my name for Baal?'"

You know, I actually get asked quite often these days about dreams. And people will, they want to know how they are to think about dreams. Because some of them are having dreams that they're wondering about. And some of them are hearing others talk about their dreams. And they're wondering if there's any truth to what these people are saying. And so they will often ask, and largely this is people from other countries believe it or not, but they will ask, you know, is there any truth to this sort of a thing?

And we have to be careful, you know, because there's a lot of weird people. They're doing a lot of weird things. And they're having dreams and whether they're having real dreams or they're making them up it's sometimes very difficult to tell. And particularly for new believers or people that don't know the word very well. They're challenged to say, well, is, was that genuine? Was that the real deal, or is this something I should pay attention to?

Because, you know, we are told in the scripture that in the latter days, in the last days, that God will pour out His Spirit. And that there will be dreams given in the latter days. So we can't reject dreams out of hand, but by the same token, we're foolish if we embrace everybody's dream and everybody's interpretation of their dream. Because those things can be wild and wacky.

And so it's just like anything else that we hear when somebody comes along and says, this is what I think. Well, we're supposed to compare that to the Word of God. It's the same thing with dreams. When you hear of a dream or you hear somebody had a dream, we should not just embrace it as soon as we hear it we should say, oh, that's interesting. I'm going to compare that with God's Word and see if that measures up.

Because if there's anything in your dream that violates God's Word, I'm not going to accept it. I'm just going to assume that really wasn't a dream from the Lord. That was probably just a result of that pepperoni pizza you had last night or something like that. Or some indigestion during the nighttime hours. I don't think that's from the Lord because God is not going to violate His own word. He's not going to contradict Himself.

And so we have to be very careful. If somebody comes along with a new revelation that just, that you can't possibly compare to God's Word. Because it's like, it's all...I'd be very very cautious, very careful. Because we're told in the Word to test everything. And if we can't test it by the Word, then we got a problem, you know?

So we need to be careful, but we also need to be people who don't just reject things. Because I have heard particularly among Arab people, that many of them are having dreams about Jesus Christ. And in those dreams they are being told that, the only way to the Father is through Jesus Christ the Son. And that they must come to the cross and confess their sins and repent.

Now that's a dream that goes right with the word. There's no problem with that, right? So when you hear about that and you rejoice, you praise God. Say, well, Lord, thank You that in these last days You're giving dreams that are actually

bringing people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, that's wonderful! You know. But some of these other yahoos that are coming up with dreams, you know, you just got to be really careful. So, yeah.

Verse 28 says:

"28 Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word, speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the Lord."

And I love verse 29, this is worth taking your time to meditate:

"29 Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"

Wow! You know, I, I read that today, while I was studying. And Sue came in the room, just, right after I read this. And I was kind of staring off into the nothingness, I think, while I was thinking about this. And she kind of looked at me and was like, you know, you okay? Yeah, I'm just thinking about this verse because it's just, you know, there's a lot to it. *"Is not my word like fire?"* And is not my word, He says, *"...like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"* Wow.

"30 Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who steal my words from one another. 31 Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who use their tongues and declare, 'declares the Lord.' 32 Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the Lord, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and the recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the Lord."

So God is speaking directly against these deceivers. Now, beginning in verse 33, we're faced with a little bit of a challenge. And I want to tell you this before we kind of read this section. Because what God is doing here in this section is He's using a little Hebrew word play. And that's difficult for us because we don't speak Hebrew, I assume, and it can be a little bit challenging. But it all centers around one Hebrew word that could be translated two ways. It's the Hebrew word that is translated either burden or oracle.

And you'll notice in some Old Testament prophetic books, it will say the burden of the Lord was given to so and so, and He spoke saying. Or you might look at that very same passage in another Bible and it says, the oracle of the Lord that was given to so and so and He spoke saying, because it's the same

Hebrew word. But burden, it, although it was a word that was sometimes given or used to describe a message, it had a dual meaning. Because it could also mean like a burden you put on your back, something that's heavy, something that is going to weigh you down or fatigue you is probably a good way of putting it.

Here's what's challenging about this passage. At times the word burden is meant, and at times the word oracle is meant. And there are other times when both meanings are meant. And to make matters worse, here in the ESV that I'm reading from, they simply use the word burden throughout the entire passage. They don't switch to oracle, even though that is, you'll see that is kind of what is meant. And in fact, the very first verse, verse 33, you can see the difference. And maybe I'll be able to illustrate this. It says:

"³³ When one of this people, or a prophet or a priest asks you, 'What is the burden of the Lord?'" (And what that means is, what is the message? Give me a message from God. That's what they're asking, okay. But they refer to it as a burden.) you shall say to them, 'You are the burden,..."

Now do you see how the word has switched to something heavy that causes fatigue. So they're saying, give me the message of the Lord. And they're saying, but they refer to it as a burden, what is the latest burden of the Lord? You're the burden. You're the latest burden to the Lord. And He says, *"...and I will cast you off, declares the Lord."* Wow! And God does not want them to use this term anymore. And you're going to see that as we go on; verse 34:

"³⁴ ... as for the prophet, priest, or one of the people who says, 'The burden of the Lord,' (He says,) I will punish that man and his household. ³⁵ Thus shall you say, every one to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, 'What has the Lord answered?' or 'What has the Lord spoken?' (That's what you ought to say.) ³⁶ But 'the burden of the Lord' (no) you shall mention no more, for the burden is every man's own word, and you pervert the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God. ³⁷ Thus you shall say to the prophet, 'What has the Lord answered you?' or 'What has the Lord spoken?' ³⁸ But if you say, 'The burden of the Lord,' thus says the Lord, 'Because you have said these words, 'The burden of the Lord.' when I sent you sent to you, saying, 'You shall not say that the burden of the Lord,'" ³⁹ therefore, behold, I will surely lift you up and cast you away from my presence, you and the city that I gave to you and your fathers. ⁴⁰ And I will bring upon you everlasting reproach and perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.'"

Wow! God says, do not use that anymore because you know what, you are My burden. You are fatiguing to Me because you have lied and you've given a false message.

Chapter 24 is a very short chapter. It has a very simple message about those who had already been taken captive to Babylon. And we know that early on, some of the people were taken captive to Babylon, as we've already read. And by the way, do you know that in those early captivings of people, among them was Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? They went very early on as very, very young men into the Babylonian kingdom. And Daniel stayed there long enough for the entire 70 years of exile.

And in fact, it was Daniel who got to sifting through Jeremiah's prophetic writings and found what we're going to read here in just a bit, that God had prophesied 70 years of exile. And he knew they were very close to the end of that.

But this chapter says:

"¹ After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, together with the officials of Judah, the craftsmen and the metal workers, and had brought them to Babylon, the Lord showed me this vision: behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the Lord. ² One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. ³ And the Lord said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I said, "Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten."

⁴ Then the word of the Lord came to me: ⁵ "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans.

⁶ I will set my eyes on them for 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 pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

⁸ "But thus says the Lord: Like the bad figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten, so will I treat Zedekiah the king of Judah, (who was by the way I remember, the final king of Judah) his officials, the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt. ⁹ I will make them

a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a reproach, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them. ¹⁰ And I will send sword, famine, and pestilence upon them, until they shall be utterly destroyed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers."

Why? Why is God going to bless the people that were taken off to Babylon, and why is He going to punish those who remain behind? It's very simple, actually. It's because He'd been saying through Jeremiah for years that Jere..., that the Babylonian empire and their invasion was His form of discipline. And to submit to that form of discipline meant to just give up.

In fact, He told them, He's, you're going to see this later in Jeremiah. He's going to tell him, just give up. Those of you who give up and go to the king of Babylon and just say, I give up, I'll spare your lives. And here's why...they were submitting to the Lord's discipline. Do you hear me? They were submitting.

They were saying, you know what we need this, we deserve this. And so by surrendering and submitting to the Lord's disciplinary hand, God said, I'll spare you. But He said, all the Jews who stay holed up in the city and hold out to the last minute and think we're still going to get away, we're still going to escape, we're going to, we're not going to submit to the disciplined hand of the Lord, He says, they will die. And they did. And they did.

And that's why the Lord said, for those who have already gone to Babylon, I'm going to keep My eye on them. I'm actually going to bless them and then I'm going to bring them home.

Last chapter Chapter 25:

"²⁵ The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the peoples of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), ² which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: (here it is) "For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, to this day, the word of the Lord has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened. ⁴ You have neither listened nor inclined your ear to hear, although the Lord persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets, ⁵ saying, 'Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds, and dwell upon the land that the Lord has given to you and your fathers from of old and forever. ⁶ Do not go after other gods to serve and worship them, or provoke me to anger with the work of your hands. Then I will

do you no harm.' 7 Yet you have not listened to me, declares the Lord, that you might provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm.

8" Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, 9 behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the Lord, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. (I, and so that's more than just Israel, right?) I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. 10 Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon (here it is) seventy years. (That's what Daniel is going to find later on in the Persian kingdom. And he's going to realize that time is almost up.) 12 Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste."

The reason he adds the, and the land of the Chaldeans there is because by the time 70 years were up, the Babylonian empire had already been conquered. They were conquered by the Medo-Persians and so, and that happened, you'll remember during the reign of Daniel, he saw that happen to remember that famous handwriting on the wall that was the night that Babylon fell and the Medo-Persians took over. And so, you know, the Lord is including that in here in this prophecy. Verse 13:

"13 I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations.

14 For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands."

Now, Jeremiah is given an interesting vision of the Lord's wrath. And it says:

"15 Thus the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: (and this is a vision here) "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. 16 They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them."

17 So I took the cup from the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to whom the Lord sent me drink it: 18 (Drink it) Jerusalem and the cities of Judah,

its Kings and officials, to make them a desolation and a waste, a hissing and a curse, (as it is) as at this day; ¹⁹Pharoah king of Egypt, his servants, his officials, all his people, ²⁰and all the mixed tribes of them; all the kings of the land of Uz and all the kings of the land of the Philistines (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod); ²¹Edom, Moab, and the sons of Ammon; ²²all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, (all) the kings of the coastland across the sea; ²³Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who cut the corners of their hair; (that was a pagan practice) ²⁴all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed tribes who dwell in the desert; ²⁵all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of Media; ²⁶all the kings of the north, far and near, one after another, and all the kingdoms of the world that are on the face of the earth. And after them the king of Babylon shall drink.

(And)... then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink, be drunk and vomit, fall and rise no more, because of the sword that I'm sending among you.'

²⁸ "And if they refuse to accept the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: You must drink! ²⁹For behold, I begin to work disaster at the city that is called by my name, and shall you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, declares the Lord of hosts.'

³⁰ "You, therefore, shall prophesy against them all these words, and say to them:

"The Lord will roar from on high, and from his holy habitation utter his voice, he will roar mightily against his fold, and shout like those who tread grapes, all the inhabitants of the earth.

³¹ The clamor will resound to the ends of the earth, for the Lord has an indictment against the nations; he is entering into judgment with all flesh, (Do you see some shades and prefigurations of the Great Tribulation here?) and the wicked he will put to the sword, declares the Lord.'

³² "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Behold, disaster is going forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth!

³³ "And those pierced by the Lord on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground.

34 Wail, you shepherds, and cry out, and roll in ashes, you lords of the flock, for the days of your slaughter and dispersion have come, and you shall fall like a choice vessel. 35 No refuge will remain for the shepherds, nor escape for the lords of the flock. 36 A voice-the cry of the shepherds, and the wail of the lords of the flock! For the Lord is laying waste their pasture, and (their) ...peaceful folds are devastated because of the fierce anger of the Lord. 38 Like a lion he has left his lair, for their land has become a waste because of the sword of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger."

Wow, you know, we've mentioned many times throughout our study here of Jeremiah that there's a lot of judgment going on in Jeremiah. There's a lot of, there's a lot of statements that are very much like this, even though they're poetic, they're challenging and they're difficult. And there's a lot of people who will read stuff like this and they will say, I thought He was a God of love. If God is such a God of love, why is there so much judgment in the Bible? How can a God of love judge like this?

Well, how can a God of love not judge like this is really the question that ought to be answered. We forget it's kind of like saying to a doctor who's going to do surgery on a cancer patient. How can a doctor go in and cut out a part of this man's body? How can he do that? He's supposed to be saving people and caring about people. How can he do that? Well, we would never say that because we know that what the doctor is going in to do is to save the patient. But sometimes to save the patient, you have to go to very radical measures to actually cut something out of the body so that the patient will live.

And judgment is as much an act of love as it is an act of justice and wrath. And that's what we forget. You cannot view the nature of God as a God of love apart from His justice and righteousness. You can't do that. You can't pick Him apart. You can't categorize the parts of God that you like to think about or talk about or read about and just stay there and never ever deal with the Jeremiah. Because this is just as much the aspect of God's nature as His love.

But I want you to understand something about God's nature that is very different from you and me. If I am going to be angry or express wrath as a human being, I have to set aside some certain aspects of my character and nature in order to express that wrath. In other words, when I get mad, I'm probably going to put aside kindness. I'm probably going to put aside love. I'm going to set those aside for just a minute because I'm going to be mad for a minute. And then I'm mad and then that kind of goes away, or after I've expressed myself, then I usually come back and I regret what I've said. Why do I regret what I've said?

Well, it's because while I was so mad that I took my kindness, my compassion, my understanding, my patience, and my love, and I just set them over here for a minute while I expressed my anger. God can't do that. God cannot suspend any part of His nature while He is expressing any other part of His nature.

In other words, when God is being loving, He is being just as just and righteous as always. And when God is pouring out His wrath, He is being just as loving, just as gracious, as He ever has been. God does not suspend any part of His character to express any other part of His character, which you and I do. But that's an important thing to remember. Especially when we're going through a book like Jeremiah, that sounds like God was just really having a, several bad years, but that's actually not the case.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank You so much for giving us these chapters and this insight and understanding. We remember, Lord, that You are a God who is just and righteous and pure and holy in addition to Your great love and compassion and mercy and grace. And Lord, even though we are seeing a focus of that side of wrath and judgment, we know, Lord, that You are still the eternal loving, gracious, God that you've always been and always will be. And we're so thankful, Lord, that You made a way for us to avoid Your wrath by sending Your Son to take that wrath for us on the cross.

Thank You, Lord, for allowing Jesus to take upon Himself our penalty, our punishment so that You were loving us while You were also expressing Your justice at the same time. We thank You and praise You. Continue we pray, Lord, to speak to all of our hearts and help us to grow in the knowledge of Your love. For we pray this in Jesus precious and Holy name, amen. Amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your evening.