

Jeremiah 44-45 • A word for those who refuse to trust God and a word to Baruch

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This is the first of the last 3 teachings or studies in the Book of Jeremiah and in the way of kind of giving you a road map, I want to put up on the screen for you what we're going to be covering tonight, and then in the next 2 installments after that.

The final chapters of Jeremiah

Chapters 44-45 • A word to those who fled to Egypt, a message to Baruch

Chapters 46-49 • Judgement for the nations

Chapters 44-45 • Judgement for Babylon, A Summary of the Fall of Jerusalem

This evening, we're only going to cover 2 chapters and one of them is actually quite short and that is chapters 44 and 45, which is a word that the Lord gave through Jeremiah to those who fled to Egypt. And then there's also in chapter 44, or excuse me, 45, a personal message to the scribe of Jeremiah, a man by the name of Baruch, who we actually met in some previous chapters.

Then the next time we gather, which is going to be a 2 weeks from tonight, we're going to cover several chapters that evening: 46, 47, 48, and 49 and that is going to be one clump section of the prophecies that were given to the nations; and that means to the surrounding nations to Israel, and we'll do that in one night.

And then, we will finish out the last 3 chapters of the Book of Jeremiah on the final week and that will be 2 chapters dealing with judgment for Babylon. And then the final chapter is going to be a summary, kind of a revisiting of the fall of Jerusalem. And Jeremiah, of course, was there and he's going to give us an eyewitness account of the time when the Babylonians came and decimated the city and so forth.

So again, we're covering chapter 44 and 45 this evening. So, you're going to recall that after the city of Jerusalem fell, the Babylonians decided, no more

kings on the throne in Jerusalem and over Judah and they put a man over the area as a governor and that was Gedaliah, you'll remember. He was a good man, but he was fairly trusting, and when he got word that there was an assassination plot that was afoot, he didn't believe it. Even when somebody said, hey, let me foil this assassination plot, Gedaliah said, no, I don't think what you're saying is true, I really don't think it's going to happen. Well, it did, they assassinated him and they were some radical patriots, I guess you would probably call them, who really weren't all that patriotic at all.

And he was assassinated by a man, a Jew, who really did the assassination at the behest of the king of Ammon, if you'll remember because the king of Ammon, it was in his best interest to destabilize the region. Meaning, if he could get the governor assassinated who had been appointed by Babylon, he knew the Babylonian army would come to try to resolve that issue and that would keep the Babylonians out of his own country a little bit longer.

And so, they assassinated Gedaliah, but the people, the remnant of Jews who were left living there in the region and the Babylonians did leave a few people there; the poor people, essentially, they left them there to work the land. And they figured they would leave poor people because they can't mount much of an attack. These are really quiet people who are just going to be busy working, doing what they ought to be doing. But these people were very afraid because they knew, they assumed, the Babylonians were going to come and they were going to punish them. Not really trying to even ascertain who assassinated the governor that they had put into place, but they would come and perhaps even kill all the people, that was their fear. Their fear was the Babylonians are going to come and they're just going to kill everybody, so they were afraid.

Let me ask you a question, have you ever been afraid? Yeah, every single one of us has. Next question, have you ever run for your life? Yeah, me too, I've done that as well and that is what they are determined to do. Instead of running to the Lord and saying, God help me, Lord help me, they are determined to run for their lives. And what they want to do is go to Egypt and find safety there, alright?

So, you'll remember that we ended our study last time with the people coming to Jeremiah before they went to Egypt, and they said, Jeremiah, give us a word from the Lord, because remember they were afraid. They were afraid about the Babylonians and so they said, Jeremiah, tell us what the Lord says. Jeremiah said, I will, he sought the Lord and he said, this is the message from God.

The message was, stay here, do not leave, I'll take care of you right here, don't go, I'm able to take care of you. And as soon as Jeremiah said that message, the people said well, we're not going to do that. So they asked him on the one hand, give us a word from the Lord and on the second that they received that word, they said, we're not going to do it. So they went, they went to Egypt and they took Jeremiah with them along with his scribe Baruch.

So the words that you're about to hear and the prophecy that comes through Jeremiah, is given while they're in Egypt to this remnant of Jews that have attempted to escape with their lives to Egypt, but in disobedience to the Lord. You ready? Chapter 44, verse 1, *"The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Judeans who lived in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros," (ESV)* So they've spread out you see by this time, all these Jews have spread out into these various areas.

"² Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You have seen all the disaster that I brought upon Jerusalem and upon all the cities of Judah. Behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them, ³ because of the evil that they committed, provoking me to anger, in that they went to make offerings and serve other gods that they knew not, neither they, nor you, nor your fathers." I want you to stop for just a moment and notice how the Lord begins to address this remnant of Jews that have gone to Egypt out of disobedience.

He begins by saying, why did you have to run in the first place? Well, it was because the Babylonians came and decimated the land. Do you know why the Babylonians decimated the land? It was because your people, you included, violated my covenant, you disobeyed me, you worshipped and served other gods out of disobedience. And therefore, I brought discipline in the form of the Babylonian army to come and to take the city, He's reminding them.

Now, you just remember, they are there in Egypt because of their disobedience. And He's reminding them that they are continuing to walk in the same attitude, that nothing has changed. They have not looked at their situation and learned anything from it. Rather than saying, what are we doing? Why did we go to Egypt? Why did we even think about going to Egypt? God told us not to. The only reason we want to go to Egypt because we think we're in trouble from the Babylonians and the reason we were in trouble from the Babylonians in the first place is because of our disobedience. So why are we adding disobedience upon disobedience? And that's what the Lord is trying to bring out. Verse 4, *"Yet I persistently sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying, 'Oh, do not do this abomination that I hate!'" ⁵ But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn*

from their evil and make no offerings to other gods.” God's saying, I constantly sent prophetic messages to them, telling them to turn from their worship of other deities.

“⁶ Therefore (because they refused to turn) my wrath and my anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they became a waste and a desolation, as at this day.” And you know, the Lord could have very easily added right here, just as Jeremiah told you it would happen, or just as I told you through Jeremiah. In other words, the Lord could have easily said at this point, did not Jeremiah prophesy these things to you, and now you saw them come to pass with your own eyes. So what made you think that when he told you not to go to Egypt, that, that wasn't me. I have proven myself and spoken through my servant Jeremiah over and over again and even though you see those prophecies played out one by one, you refuse to listen. You can understand the level of hard heartedness that is actually going on here, can't you? It's really incredible.

Verse 7, *“And now thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel: Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, (I want you to notice that) to cut off from you man and woman, infant and child, from the midst of Judah, leaving you no remnant?”* All right, I need you to stop here for a minute because this verse is important to understand from the context of the Mosaic Covenant and what it means to these people. Remember that the blessing of the Lord was the land, the whole Mosaic Covenant was the blessing of the Lord in the land. God said, I'm giving you this land and I will bless you in the land and He even apportioned that land to various tribes and groups and families, and it was theirs and they took it very seriously.

Very seriously, to the point where they even made provision if someone died without an heir to take over their land, they had provisions in the law to keep that man's name alive. You'll remember that was the Levirate marriage and we won't get into it. It's talked about in the old Testament there but there were provisions made in the old Testament because this was an incredibly important thing to maintain your family line, so that your name might not be blotted out of Israel.

What God is saying to these Jews who've run for their lives to Egypt at the fear of the Babylonians is, why have you done this? Why have you forsaken your heritage? He's going to tell them here in a minute that they're going to actually die in Egypt, they're never going to get home. Except for a few refugees who continue to have faith in God, like Jeremiah and Baruch and a few others that went along against their will. But the vast majority of them are going to die

right there in Egypt and they're never going to be able to go home, they're never going to go back to their family heritage, they're going to lose it, they're going to completely lose it.

And that's why the Lord says, why have you committed this great evil against yourselves? And this is really an interesting perspective to think about as it relates to the disobedience that we often engage in when we go against the Word of the Lord. We don't often stop to think about what we're doing to our own lives, how we're stealing from our own blessings, the heritage of the Lord, the blessing of the Lord in our lives, we fritter it away through our disobedience and this is something we often don't think about.

And furthermore, the Lord says in verse 8, *“Why do you provoke me to anger with the works of your hands, making offerings to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have come to live, so that you may be cut off and become a curse and a taunt among all the nations of the earth?”* And so you can see that these people had not yet given up their paganistic practices and again, they saw the fall of Jerusalem. They were told through Jeremiah, it was because they had taken up the worship practices of these pagan deities. They saw it happen and they have not gone back, they have not repented of their pagan ways.

And here the Lord asks them some questions. He says, *“⁹ Have you forgotten the evil of your fathers, the evil of the kings of Judah, (some of them) the evil of their wives, your own evil, and the evil of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah and in the (very) streets of Jerusalem?”* He says, have you forgotten what you did there? *“¹⁰ They have not humbled themselves even to this day, nor have they feared, nor walked in my law and my statutes that I set before you and before your fathers.*

¹¹ “Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will set my face against you for harm, to cut off all Judah. ¹² I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to come to the land of Egypt to live, and they shall all be consumed. In the land of Egypt they shall fall; by the sword and by famine they shall be consumed. From the least to the greatest, they shall die by the sword and by famine, and they shall become an oath, a horror, a curse, and a taunt.” You know what's so sad about this, is that these are the very things that they ran to Egypt for because they were afraid of dying by the sword.

They were afraid of dying by famine, they were afraid of all the other things that the Lord is saying, now they will come upon you because you ran from these things instead of running to me. Instead of coming to me and saying,

Lord, I need you, confessing your weakness and allowing me to be your strength, you will actually experience these very things.

It brings back, of course, to remembrance what happened to the nation of Israel when they came first to Kadesh Barnea, which is at the very border of the promised land, the very first time. They'd been in the wilderness for 2 years, hearing the word of the Lord, learning how to obey the voice of the Lord. They came to the edge of the promised land, you'll remember they sent in the spies. The spies came back with a bad report saying, there's no way we can take this land and what did the people say? They said we can't go in because we will die and our children will be killed, we're afraid for our children!, that's what they said.

And you know what God said to them? He said, I've heard what you said and so here's, what's going to happen. You said you're afraid for your children and you've given into that fear to the place where you refuse to obey my voice? Well, it's your children who will actually go in and take the land and you who were afraid and wanted to run for your lives back to Egypt, you will drop in the wilderness. And so they spent the next 38 years saying goodbye to that generation of people until the full 40 years were up and the children were able to go back and take the land.

Isn't it fascinating that the very thing that people are most afraid of, ultimately, when they come to that place of resisting obedience to God, resisting trusting God, it's like that comes in some way, shape or form. So it's so sad, you know, rather than running to the Lord, God, you are my fortress, you are my stronghold, you are my shield, you are my strength. No, I'm just going to run for my life, take care of myself.

Look what the Lord goes on to say in verse 13, *"I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence,"*¹⁴ *so that none of the remnant of Judah who have come to live in the land of Egypt shall escape or survive or (look at this) return to the land of Judah, to which they desire to return to dwell there. For they shall not return, except some fugitives."* So He's basically telling all the people who wanted to go to Egypt to run for their lives and out of disobedience to the Lord, that they were never going home, they would in fact die there in Egypt.

I want you to notice the response of the people because this is very telling.

"¹⁵ Then all the men who knew that their wives had made offerings to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt, answered Jeremiah: ¹⁶ "As for the word

that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you. ¹⁷ But we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our officials, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no disaster.”

This is almost incredible to read, it really is. They're saying, no, we're going to continue to serve our pagan deities because back when we were doing it, things were good. They still refuse to take responsibility for their actions and the things that had come upon them.

It is just mind blowingly darkened as far as understanding, but listen carefully to verse 18. *“But since we left off making offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.”* So there's this period of time, you know, after Jerusalem fell that they stopped their regular practices because circumstances being what they were, as difficult as they were, they weren't able to do it.

So they said, we stopped and boy, you know, as soon as we stopped, things just all fell apart. And that's what they are associating the falling of all those things and all the difficulties too, to the fact that they hadn't kept up their offerings to the queen of heaven. Isn't that just incredible? But I want you to notice what they're doing here, because this is important. They are injecting belief according to circumstantial evidence, they're looking at the circumstances of their lives and they're basing their belief off circumstances.

Now, why am I highlighting that for you? Well, the reason is because Christians do it today, I hear it all the time, all the time, I mean regularly. This is as common as the day is long. To hear Christians talk about what's going on in their lives and determining their belief in God, His favor or disfavor based on circumstances and not on the Word of God. In other words, it is experience, not revelation, okay?

We are to base our belief in God on revelation, you know, but so many Christians, I mean, good grief. How many times has someone written to me, explained their circumstances, and then said, my only conclusion is, God is no longer hearing my prayer and He does not love me and is not caring about me in any capacity any longer, that's my only conclusion. And I have to come back and say, your conclusion is flawed and here's why, you have based it solely on circumstantial evidence rather than on the Word of God.

You know, we sing songs about how He's good, He's a good, good Father. We sing it over and over again and yet it just doesn't get into our hearts. Because our circumstances will trump what we hear in the Word of God. The Word of God tells us that all these things related to the attributes of God. It talks about His love, it talks about His patience, it talks about His mercy, it talks about His grace and over and over and we read these things in the Bible and we see them played out many, many times in life as well. And then something happens in our lives and often what happens in people's lives is very natural.

I mean, I've seen people lose faith because they lost like a grandparent to death and I want to say, how long did you expect your grandparent to live? Do you know what they used to refer, how they referred to death in the Old Testament? They called it, going the way of the whole world. I'm about to go the way of the whole world, that was a euphemism for death, because everybody did it! Do you know that every single character in the Bible, along with every single family member of yours from years past, they all have something in common, they're all dead, none of them have survived. And yet, I have seen people lose faith because grandpa died, he was only 92, why did God take my grandfather? And it's hard to, I mean, how do you even respond?

I am assuming God doesn't care about me because of these circumstances. Now it might be something else like, you know, the loss of a job and that can be devastating, I understand that. Though, I mean, the loss of your livelihood, that's..., family breakups, devastating, somebody gets in an automobile accident and sustains some serious injuries, devastating, hard things to go through. Somebody receives, you know, bad news at the doctor's office, it can be devastating. But the minute that we take those things and we base our understanding of who God is, and how He acts and deals in our life according to those things, we've stepped into very dangerous ground, very dangerous ground.

Because we're either going to believe the Bible or we're not. And if you're not going to believe the Bible, you might as well close it and not pick it up anymore. I mean, if you're not going to believe it, it's not going to do you any good. There comes a point in our Christian walk, where every single one of us is going to come smack dab up to a particular determination or decision that we have to make. Am I going to believe what God says? Am I going to take Him at His word? And He's either trustworthy in what He says or He's not, it's not kind of grey shades or something like that. It's either yes or no. And if it's yes, then let's do it, but if it's no, what are we wasting our time for?

I've challenged people to go out and burn their Bible and that may sound very irreverent, but I do it more as a shock therapy than anything. Because you do

know that we call people who call themselves Christians but live like God isn't really there, we call them practical atheists. They're Christian by confession, they perhaps even believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save them from their sin, but in their daily life, they act as if He doesn't exist. They lose their job and they go into a tailspin. They get some kind of fearful news and they just lose it. There's no faith, there's no trust, there's no hope that is founded in the Lord, their God, it's all in this world and it's sad to see.

And they become very circumstantial Christians because, you know, at any given time in our lives, our circumstances can stink, right? I mean, to high heaven. I've gone through, in the last 30 years, even just pastoring this church, I've had some really rotten circumstances come across my path and I know you have too. So what are we going to do? Are we going to base our belief on those circumstances? Or are we going to base our belief on the Word of God and in obedience to His Word?

I was having a rather uncomfortable conversation just today with a young woman who is divorced, has 3 kids, and has her boyfriend living in their home. And she wrote to me and said, "you know, I know God kind of frowns on that." And I had to come back and say, "no, no, let's not play patty cake here, He, there's more to it than that. This is flat out disobedience on your part and you're teaching your children immorality, it's as simple as that, you're teaching them sexual immorality."

And I know she loves and cares very much for her children. I know that, but she got very mad at just, you know, she says, "well, this sounds like legalism to me." I said, "yeah, well, obedience can look like legalism at times." I imagine people probably accused Jesus of legalism when He said, if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off, throw it away. (Matthew 5:30) And obviously Jesus wasn't telling us to mutilate our bodies, but He was speaking of the radical step that sometimes life requires of us, or that we, sin requires of us to get rid of that sin in our lives and that's not legalism, that's obedience. And sometimes obedience is really, really, really hard. Like, cut off your hand type hard, gouge out your right eye type hard.

It's a bloody mess to obey the Lord sometimes and there's just no 2 ways around it. She didn't like it, anything that I had to say related to that. And, you know, I wasn't trying to be purposely hard, but, you know, there were times that, there's times that you have to just kind of call it what it is. And even though Jesus, you know, you'll remember the woman caught in the act of adultery and they all wanted to stone her to death and Jesus said, fine, great stone her to death, but those of you who are without sin, you guys cast the first stone and they started

with the oldest dropping their stones and walking away. And Jesus went to the woman and He said, you know, is there anyone here to condemn you? She said, no, there's no one, He said, neither do I condemn you. But you notice He didn't stop there, He said, go now and leave your life of sin, let it go, get rid of it, cut it off. That was not an easy word, leave your life of sin.

You've been spared, you've been forgiven, now let's see some repentance, let's see some obedience, right? Obedience is hard, don't let anybody tell you that it isn't, but it's worth it. So we're not going to give into circumstantial evidence to form, to formulate our belief in God, we're just not going to do that, you know. Because if we do, good grief, one day we'll believe God is good, next minute we're going to believe He's a monster because my day happens to be going bad or I'm in a stupor, you know or something like that. No, God is who God is and He doesn't change. My life changes, my circumstances change, my mood changes all the time, God doesn't change. He's always good.

It goes on here in verse 19, it says, *“And the women said, “When we made offerings to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, was it without our husbands' approval that we made cakes for her bearing her image and poured out drink offerings to her?”* I don't know what they're really kind of saying other than they knew and they're complicit, I suppose, as if to kind of somehow deflect, you know, the accusation.

“²⁰ Then Jeremiah said to all the people, men and women, all the people who had given him this answer: ²¹ “As for the offerings that you offered in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, (the ones they were just talking about) you and your fathers, your kings and your officials, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them? Did it not come into his mind? ²² The LORD could no longer bear your evil deeds and the abominations that you committed. Therefore your land has become a desolation and a waste and a curse, without inhabitant, as it is this day.” You remember they were just saying that, ever since we stopped making these offerings to the queen of heaven, things have been terrible, and all these terrible things have happened since we haven't made these offerings to the queen of heaven.

Look what he says in verse 23, he says, guys, *“It is because you made offerings and because you sinned against the LORD and did not obey the voice of the LORD or walk in his law and in his statutes and in his testimonies that this disaster has happened to you, as at this day.”* ²⁴ Jeremiah said to all the people and all the women, *“Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who are in the land of Egypt.”* ²⁵ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of

Israel: You and your wives have declared with your mouths, and have fulfilled it with your hands, saying, 'We will surely perform our vows that we have made, to make offerings to the queen of heaven and to pour out drink offerings to her.' Then confirm your vows and perform your vows! (if that's what you're going to do)

²⁶ Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: Behold, I have sworn by my great name, says the LORD, that my name shall no more be invoked by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, 'As the LORD God lives.' ²⁷ Behold, I am watching over them for disaster and not for good. All the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, until there is an end of them. ²⁸ And those who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah, few in number; and all the remnant of Judah, who came to the land of Egypt to live, shall know whose word will stand, mine or theirs." God's just laying it out. He's saying, fine, you've set your course, I have done my best to communicate the situation as it exists and this is the way it is, and you've made your bed and now you have to sleep in it. And that's essentially what's being said here.

Verse 29, "This shall be the sign to you, declares the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, in order that you may know that my words will surely stand against you for harm: ³⁰ Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies and into the hand of those who seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who was his enemy and sought his life." Can you imagine what it was like to be one of those Jews who went to Egypt, put up all this big fuss, said, we are not going to obey the Lord, and for the Lord to say, all right, here's the deal, there's going to be a sign. When the king of Egypt goes under, you're going to know that I've spoken. Can you imagine what it was like to be living in the land and to get the word that the king of Egypt had been captured, had been put to death?

So He says, the same Babylonians who overtook the land of Judah are going to overtake the land of Egypt as well and you're not safe. You would have been safe had you stayed there because there you would have been in the center of my will, remember we talked about that? Safest place in the world is in the center of God's will. It might look like a tornado to the rest of the world, but it's the safest place to be. Because that's where God wants you to be and when you're where God wants you to be, it's His responsibility to take care of you, not yours. And you can just say, well, Lord, I'm here because you told me to be here, so, you know, this is your deal. When life gets rough, oh, what a

wonderful thing it is to say, you know, Lord, this is, you brought me here, you brought me here, so have at it, I'm not going to try to fix this thing. You brought me here, so I'm just going to, I'm going to assume upon you to take care of me in this place.

Can I just tell you the Lord will do that, can I tell you that it, where God guides, God provides, if He has guided you to a particular area of ministry or living or family or whatever, He will provide for you in that area. He'll take care of you, you don't need to fret, oh, how we fret.

Chapter 45 is a very short chapter and it is essentially a, well, it's not essentially, it's a personal message to Baruch, who was Jeremiah's scribe. In other words, Jeremiah would dictate his prophecies and Baruch would write them down. Wouldn't that have been a great ministry to have? By the way, we believe that the family of Baruch was a family of some nobility and you're going to notice as we get into this, in the first verse, well, let's go ahead and read the first verse.

It says, *"The word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a book at the dictation of Jeremiah, (and then it dates it) in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:"* Now, You guys might remember when we talked about this back in chapter 36. And what happened was, Jeremiah was not allowed to go into the temple precincts, he'd been barred from being in the temple and he certainly couldn't come before the king without an invitation. So he took the prophecies that God had given him and he gave them to Baruch and he told Baruch to go read them in the temple area and while people were coming and going. And Baruch did, he read them and some of the people and they said, you need, where'd you get this?

And then they asked him some questions, all right, come with us and he read to another group of people. He read the prophecy and they feared God, they became very afraid when they heard, you remember that? And so they got word then to the king to hear these prophecies as well. And the prophecies, Baruch didn't read them in front of the king, Jehoiakim, that was somebody else.

But you'll remember what happened, after the person would read a few lines of text, he would take his knife and cut it off and throw it in the fire. And the guy would read a little bit more, he'd cut it off, throw it in the fire. Which was his way of saying, I don't care, this doesn't mean diddly squat to me, this is just no big deal. All right, now, what you may remember about that is that after that, they basically said, we're going to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch, well, they escaped that arrest. They weren't caught and they were allowed to, you know,

the Lord gave them freedom, but that was probably a pretty traumatic thing for Baruch, you know.

Jeremiah, he was a prophet, he knew from the get go that nobody was going to listen to him you know, for the prophecies that he gave. But Baruch, you know, he's a scribe, you know, and to have your life threatened because you've been writing down the prophecies of Jeremiah and now the king hates your guts because of it and you're kind of on his wanted list, that's kind of a big deal, right? So let's go through here and let's read what the Lord is saying.

“² Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: ³ You said, ‘Woe is me! For the Lord has added sorrow to my pain. I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.’” So here's the deal, here's what Baruch is saying. He's saying, not only do I write down these prophecies that basically say my beloved country is going down the tubes and it's going to be destroyed at the hands of the Babylonians, but now you've added insult to injury by allowing these people to hate me for simply passing along that message. So you've added sorrow to my pain because now I am, I'm up there with, you know, I'm enemy number one of the state or something like that. So he knows that they're out to get him.

So verse 4, now the Lord is still speaking here, *“ Thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD: Behold, what I have built I am breaking down, and what I have planted I am plucking up* (and then He tells him what that is that He's plucking up)—*that is, the whole land.*” So God is, first of all, confirming to Baruch everything I've said I'm going to do, that's the very first thing He says. I know this hurts your heart, I know this bothers you emotionally but you need to understand, this is my discipline upon the nation of Judah for their disobedience and I am righteous to do it, okay? So that's the first thing you need to understand.

Verse 5, He goes on, *“And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not, ... ”* Now, this is a personal word to Baruch and we don't know, because the Word doesn't tell us what greatness Baruch was seeking. It could be that he was really discouraged that the nation was going to fall at a time when he was kind of an up and coming scribe. Because scribes back in those days had a very high standing in the community. And he was in a position to be very comfortable in life and so that could have been what he's talking about, but we're guessing, all right. I want you to just know that, we're guessing as to what this greatness is that Baruch is desiring. But the Lord is saying to him, not to seek it. He says, do not seek great things for yourself. So whatever these aspirations were, we don't know.

He goes on to say, “⁵...for behold, I am bringing disaster upon all flesh, declares the LORD. But (and this is the incredible promise contained in these verses) *I will give you your life as a prize of war in all places to which you may go.*” And that is how we know that Baruch didn't die in Egypt. We know that Jeremiah didn't die in Egypt because God promised that He would give Baruch his life. No matter where you go, there's going to be war all around and I'm just, I'm sorry about that, but that's what's going on. What you saw happen in Judah is going to happen in Egypt and I know you went there against your will, but you're going to see war there too.

But you know, here's the deal, you're going to see it, but you're not going to get caught up in it. You're going to see it, but you're not going to die, this will not be your end, I will take care of you, I'll see you through, I'll walk you through these circumstances, and you'll come out on the other end, and you'll be okay. So, don't be afraid.

And you know, the fact that we have chapter 45 in the Book of Jeremiah should be rather encouraging to us I think as believers. The fact that the Lord would take time to speak through the prophet Jeremiah at a time of great national crisis to speak to one man. One man, who's discouraged, perhaps even depressed, disappointed.

Have you ever been disappointed with life? Didn't turn out the way you wanted. Things are not turning out the way I wanted, not the way I wanted. And the Lord comes to him at a time of that personal disappointment and He says, I know who you are, I know you by name and I'm going to take care of you, I'll see you through, I'll walk you through this difficult time.

And the reason I love that is because, it reminds us of the fact that God sees us. He knows what's going on in your life and He is able to speak to you personally. I hope that when you're reading your Bible or even just spending time in prayer, I hope the Lord is speaking to your heart, I hope the Lord is giving you messages of encouragement. Because I believe He wants to speak to us far more than we are willing to listen and I do believe God gives personal messages to His people. I believe that He cares about you intimately, He knows everything about your life, everything about your feelings, your emotions, your standing in society.

He knows everything about your dreams, your desires, your visions, your goals, your disappointments, your discouragements, He knows it all. And He is able to speak words of great encouragement, great comfort, great love, if we would take time to listen to the still small voice of God's Spirit as we read the Word, as

we press in on Him through prayer, and just listen for His voice. God desires to speak and I'm so glad He spoke to Baruch, it's an encouragement to all of us.

So, that's where we're going to stop for tonight and as I said, no teaching next week because of the Awana Grand Prix and then we'll be back the following week to finish the last, well, the following 2 weeks to finish our study in Jeremiah. So, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for giving us time tonight to be in the Word and all the encouragement that we receive from it tonight. What a blessing it is, Lord, to open up the Bible and dig into the scriptures. We pray, Lord, that the ministry of this Word would take deep root in our hearts for we've received some challenges tonight, Lord, not to allow circumstances to define our understanding of who you are. But instead to allow the Word to reveal that to our hearts and not to stray from that revelation, regardless of what may happen in our lives.

Father, we've heard some powerful things about just your love for us and our need for obedience and the promise that comes to those who choose to obey and walk in the center of your will.

Lord, keep us where we need to be, keep us trusting in you, keep us reaching out for you, keep us hoping in the Lord. We thank you, Father, for your grace and goodness. For we pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.