

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2015: *Jeremiah*
Lesson 4 “Rebuke *and* Retribution”

Read for this week’s study

Jeremiah 17:5–10; Jeremiah 17:1–4; Jeremiah 11:18–23; John 3:19; Jeremiah 12:1–6, 14:1–16.

Memory Text

“Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise”
(Jeremiah 17:14, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Two Ways
- III. The Sin of Judah
- IV. The Warning to Jeremiah
- V. A Lament
- VI. A Desperate Situation
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we’ll start to look at the trials of Jeremiah, whose ministry seemed to consist of nothing but rebuke and retribution: he giving the rebuke, the leaders giving him retribution.” (Sabbath afternoon) We (personally) and the Church (corporately) exist today in an environment of religious consumerism. Therefore people ask: What do I get out of this? They want to be successful. Somehow we see the success as the outward sign of God’s blessing. And so it was also in the time of Jeremiah. And when his message was mostly about rebuke and coming catastrophe/crisis, no wonder they responded the way they did!
2. Though we are called by God for His mission, we will also be subject to the entanglements of consumeristic choices and the ways of the world. God has called us to love and serve His children, but they have freedom to make their own choices, and they face their own temptations and desires. Just as in the times of Jeremiah, those who try to deliver God’s message or build up a church today may find themselves treated in confusing or hurtful ways, or joined and then abandoned for the next exciting prospect.

3. "The Bible presents to us only two options on how to live: we either follow the Lord with all our heart and soul, or we don't. As Jesus said, in words that many have found troubling, 'He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth' (Luke 11:23). This is a powerfully unambiguous statement about spiritual realities greater than what appears to the naked eye or than what common sense would seem to tell us." (Sunday's lesson)
4. What is the context in which Jesus said these words in Luke 11? What is being discussed? Jesus' opponents launch a propaganda attack against Him by saying: "Do not just look at outward effects of Jesus' ministry. Understand what is going on behind it! Then you will see that he is in league with the Devil himself!" Jesus of course agreed that there was a hidden meaning behind what He was doing, but He gives a precisely opposite meaning from what they were suggesting! Why do you think the author/editor chose this text and not Luke 9:50 which has a similar message to this one in 11:23? What factors determine which texts we choose and apply to various life situations?
5. "With good reason, Jeremiah 17:9 warns about the deceitfulness of the human heart. The Hebrew text says that the heart is more deceitful than 'everything.' The horrific physical effects of sin, as bad as they are, aren't as bad as the moral and spiritual effects. The problem is, because our hearts are already so deceitful, we can't fully know just how bad they really are." (Sunday's lesson) If we cannot know how bad our hearts are, what hope do we have? What is God's solution to the problem? How fair is the traditional protestant/evangelical application of this to "total depravity," when the text speaks about Judah's political dalliances of the day?
6. Monday's lesson talks about "sin engraved on the heart with an iron tool" (17:1). "What does that image say about just how deep and intense the work of purifying our hearts is? What's the only way to accomplish it?" (Monday's lesson)
7. In Tuesday's lesson, notice the parallel between the reaction of people of Anathoth (Jeremiah's hometown) in Jeremiah 11:18-23 and that of the people of Nazareth against Jesus (Luke 4:14-20). What are the lessons for us?
8. "We can see, too, Jeremiah's humanity exhibited. He wants those who have done evil to him to be punished. He's not speaking here as a theologian; he's speaking as a fallen human being in need of grace who, like Job and like many of God's faithful people, doesn't understand why these things are happening to him." (Wednesday's lesson)
9. Compare this with: "What comes after, though, comes directly from Jeremiah's own heart, written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is the heartfelt cry of a human being who simply doesn't like the situation he is in and is crying out about it." (Lesson 5; Tuesday's lesson) So when do prophets speak as fallen human beings, as theologians, or under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? How safe is it to attribute what we like to inspiration and what we do not like (what does not agree with our own theology) to human fallen-ness?

10. Talking about the drought that struck the land in Jeremiah 14:1-10, the lesson says: “Jeremiah saw the eagerness of the people, but he knew well that they didn’t seek the Lord, only the water. This saddened the prophet further. Jeremiah was also praying, not for water, but for the mercy and presence of God. (...) God saw the hearts of the people and knew that if He were to remove the drought, then the repentance would also disappear. The people did everything to try to change their situation, including going to Jerusalem, praying, fasting, putting on sackcloth, and making offerings, but they forgot one thing: true conversion, true repentance.” (Thursday’s lesson) How would God’s mercy and presence, for which Jeremiah prayed, be manifested in this situation? How should we—how do we—pray in times of national calamities?
11. “They [the people of Judah] were looking only to remove the results of the problem, not the problem itself, which was their sin and disobedience.” (Thursday’s lesson) This applies not only to the drought at the time of Jeremiah, but also to our interpretation of texts or events like the death of Jesus! What would an interpretation that includes the problem in the universe, rather than just the results of the problem that we face, look like?
12. “How do we understand this: ‘Do not pray for this people, for their good,’ (Jeremiah 14:11-16)? God told this to Jeremiah, even though Jeremiah earlier presented a great example of intercessory prayer” (14:7). (Thursday’s lesson) What is the meaning of “praying without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)? What about the text in 1 John 5:16? “If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that.”

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

They’ve changed gods. And when we get to Romans, the most terrible thing that people have ever done, as described in Romans 1, is that they have gone after other gods. They have preferred Satan’s lies to the truth. But those who have done the most damage with this are those who still call God by His right name but are actually siding with the adversary. And of course the extreme example is to be seen when people, in God’s name, crucified God’s Son and rushed home to keep God’s Sabbath—all in the name of Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That’s the ultimate confusion and deception. And immediately when you think of that, you wonder about us. Could we do the same? He goes on to describe the condition that has come because of this. And then in verse 17 he adds: “But have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the LORD your God, when he led you in the way?”

What can He do if you will not follow Him? He knows the right way. If you were to go another way, there will be consequences. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations, recorded February, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

And that doesn't suggest that God is unwilling to pardon. He's forgiveness personified. But is there a condition it would make no sense to forgive; because there is no hope, there is no remedy, there's nothing more He can do? It would be like praying that God would heal someone who absolutely will not listen. There's no point to it.

Is it that Israel had reached this point? Remember 2 Chronicles, at the end, when He let them go into captivity, "There was no remedy." Did Jesus pray any longer over Lucifer when finally he had reached the place where the truth, spoken in love, would not touch him at all? There does come a time when nothing more can be done. Now, I think we need to be very careful in deciding that about each other. I don't think we're able to know this. I think we go on anyway. But I think that John and Jeremiah are simply warning us in very serious terms: There is a condition even God cannot remedy. If we finally in our stubborn rebelliousness, reach the place where we have lost both the desire and the capacity to respond to truth, since the truth spoken in love is God's only means of persuasion, then that's the end. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations, recorded February, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy. It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light rejected, every

warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. . . . {GC 36.1}

No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. "Man turns from God, not God from him." Our heavenly Father follows us with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests with the sinner. By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power. Thus he passes on from one stage of resistance to another, until at last the light will fail to impress, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. Then even "the light that is in thee" has become darkness. The very truth we do know has become so perverted as to increase the blindness of the soul. {MB 93.1}

God speaks to men through His servants, giving cautions and warnings, and rebuking sin. He gives to each an opportunity to correct his errors before they become fixed in the character; but if one refuses to be corrected, divine power does not interpose to counteract the tendency of his own action. He finds it more easy to repeat the same course. He is hardening the heart against the influence of the Holy Spirit. A further rejection of light places him where a far stronger influence will be ineffectual to make an abiding impression. {PP 268.2}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. {DA 311.2}