

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2015: *Jeremiah*
Lesson 5 “More Woes *for the Prophet*”

Read for this week’s study

Jeremiah 23:14, 15; Jeremiah 20; Acts 2:37; Job 3; Jeremiah 18:1–10, 18–23.

Memory Text

“O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, everyone mocketh me” (Jeremiah 20:7, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Godless Priests and Prophets
- III. Jeremiah in the Stocks
- IV. A Fire in His Bones
- V. “Cursed Be the Day”
- VI. Plans Against the Prophet
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “When unfair and unjust sufferings and trials come (and no question, so many of them are unfair and unjust), we don’t have to be left alone with a sense of meaninglessness and purposelessness that people who don’t know the Lord often feel. We can know something of the big picture, and the ultimate hope God offers us, no matter how dismal the present is, and from this knowledge and hope we can draw strength. Jeremiah knew something of this context, though at times he seemed to forget it and instead focus only on his woes.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Does it mean that if Jeremiah did not forget the big picture and did not focus only on his woes, he would not have those feelings of discouragement in his difficult situations? When Jesus was in Gethsemane, did he forget what he prophesied about his own resurrection and did he focus on his woes—are we saying this was the reason he was deeply distressed and troubled and said to his disciples: “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”? (Mark 14:33.34) What is the role and function of emotions and knowledge in the life of a Christian?
3. In 1904 Russian physiologist I.P. Pavlov got the Nobel Prize for Medicine for discovering that emotions are not classically conditioned, i.e. we do not choose our

own emotions. Yet 110 years later we still sing in our songs: “all fear is gone” (Because He Lives), “fear I cannot know” (Anywhere with Jesus), etc.! So do we choose our emotions or not? Does simply knowing something change our emotions? If so, how does this happen?

4. “When reading the Bible, especially the harsh warnings and threats that God uttered against the people, many people think that the Lord is portrayed here as harsh, mean, and vindictive. This, however, is a false understanding, based only on a superficial reading of the texts.” (Sunday’s lesson) So what does a “deep” reading of the Bible reveal about God’s character?
5. “The job of the prophets has always been to convey God’s message, not to count how many people accept or reject it. Generally, the number of those who accept what the prophets preach at the time they are preaching it is low.” (Monday’s lesson) If that is the case and we claim to be a prophetic movement that has a prophetic message, why are we so obsessed with the numbers, baptisms, statistics that we dutifully publish in our yearbook? In many parts of the world this is the primary means of evaluating the effectiveness of pastors and elders!
6. “Though no one would have been too happy to be the focus of such a prophecy (20:1-6), as a leader, Pashur was especially offended. As with most people, his initial reaction was to reject the message; after all, who would want to believe something that horrible? More than that, using his position, Pashur made the mistake of punishing the messenger.” (Monday’s lesson) Pashur was genuinely convinced that he was serving God and protecting the people from alarming rumors that could prove harmful! Isn’t that responsible leadership? In what ways do people use their power and position today to hurt, harm or silence others who bring messages which they find upsetting or wrong?
7. What is the significance of Jeremiah’s words in verse 20:7 (the memory text)? “His words at first seem almost blasphemous. One wonders, though, why he would say that the Lord had deceived him when, right from the start, the Lord had warned him that he was going to face fierce opposition.” (Tuesday’s lesson) The lesson concentrates on his words from 20:9 and concludes: “All through these verses, we see the struggle Jeremiah faces; we can see the great controversy raging both outside and inside him. One minute he’s praising God for rescuing the needy from the wicked; the next, he’s cursing the day he was born.” (Tuesday’s lesson)
8. “Few Bible characters whose lives are presented in any detail in the Bible come away without their weaknesses and faults exposed. This goes even for the prophets. As stated before, the God these prophets served is perfect; the prophets who served Him were not.” (Wednesday) Does the fact that Jeremiah curses the day he was born make him an imperfect prophet?
9. Common signs of success nowadays include things like significant groups showing awe and respect, the presence of rich and famous people, recommendations from celebrities, ample funding, popular leaders, catchy signs, nice space, and a quality website. But is it possible that God in his mercy has called us to a place of

desperation as he did with Jeremiah, with Jesus and with Paul? Their ministry thrived and found its completion and fullness in the bottom of a cistern, in the Garden of Gethsemane, shipwrecks, beatings, public crucifixion, imprisonment, human contempt, appearances of failure and abandonment by the big crowds. God caused their ministry to bear great fruit in settings of desperation. Is it possible that may be our calling also? If it is, are we willing to receive that calling? Or do we want to follow God only in popularity and success?

10. Jeremiah is a great biblical hero. We can learn so much from him. He is able to tell God the truth about how he feels (see, for example, 18:18-23). In doing this he demonstrates how safe he knows his relationship with God is. He knows that God is not going to zap him for being honest. In fact, not being honest would run the risk of his “numbing out”, or having bitterness leak out and damage others around him. By abiding in God and being brutally honest, we can grow into a maturity we would not experience otherwise!

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

According to the first chapter of Romans, this indicates the meaning of God’s “wrath.” Paul describes how God pours out His “wrath” on those who reject and suppress the truth. Three times he explains that God “gives .up” such people and “turns them over” to the results of their rebelliousness. See Romans 1: 24, 26, 28.

How consistent this is with what we know about God! Since faith and love cannot be forced, what else can God do but sadly give up those who reject Him?

God’s wrath, as Paul seems to describe it, is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable consequences of their own rebellious choice.

Surely no more awful sentence could be pronounced upon a sinner than for God to say, “Leave him alone.”

These were the terrible words pronounced over Israel in the days of the prophet Hosea. Long had God sought to persuade His rebellious people to return. But they mocked His love and spurned His every advance. What now is left for Him to do but give them up? Without His protection, the results would be terrible. {Maxwell, A. Graham. *I Want to be Free*, 11-12. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970}

The point is that we are being considered by our future neighbors and friends; and they're worried. Wouldn't you be, if you were an angel? They're going to let some of us in. They had a wall once before, and Satan capitalizes on this. Ellen White says he has an exact knowledge of every sin he's ever tempted us to commit. We sometimes think our sins are rather private, and when they're forgiven nobody knows them anymore. No, they know them. They're headlines throughout the universe. They're not forgotten. It wouldn't be fair to forget our sins and then put David's in the Bible. We preach about David's sins. Nobody's sins are hidden; they're all well known up there.

And the devil arises and says, "Let me show you that God once more has made a mistake. He says Jones is safe to save." And he lists all the things he's tempted us to do. And Ellen White has a tremendous speech in his mouth. "Look at all the sins that have marked their disloyalty to God. Look at their selfishness", et cetera, et cetera. How he dares make such a speech is almost unbelievable! And then he points to all the records and says, "Look at all the sins they have committed." If you had just heard your life described, and it was put to the vote, would you vote for yourself? I mean would you hang your head and wonder what's going to happen? But then Christ arises, as she describes it, and He does not excuse our sins.

He says, "The devil has told the truth. Jones did everything he's mentioned. In fact, due to the shortness of time, he left out a lot he could have mentioned." And there comes a murmur in the crowd and it's Jones' guardian angel, and he says, "Look, I was there, do you want me to fill in?" And the Lord says, "No, we've heard quite enough. Jones, on the record looks simply frightful. But let me tell you; that record is irrelevant, and it's out of date. It describes the kind of person Jones used to be. But Jones has a new heart and a right spirit within him. He was born as I told Nicodemus had to be, of the spirit. This doesn't describe Jones."

You see, God is not concerned about our sinful past, He's only concerned about the kind of people we are now. And if I were an angel, I wouldn't be concerned with whether or not God had forgiven Idi Amin; I'd want to know if it was safe to live next door to Idi Amin. When the prophet Isaiah meets King Manasseh in the hereafter, and he's innocently carrying a pruning hook or something to prune his vines; the last time he held one in his hands he was sawing poor Isaiah in half in a hollow log. And will God say, "Well, don't worry about him carrying that saw, I forgave him." That wouldn't reassure me at all; I'd want to know if he could be trusted with a sharp saw. And that's why Jesus said to Nicodemus "Not unless ye be forgiven." No, He said "Not unless you be born again." It's a healing ministry; new hearts, right spirits. David finally got the message and said, "Sacrifices won't do it, I need a new heart, I need a right spirit, I need truth in the inner man." Now he didn't say, "I'll stop offering sacrifices" because Christ hadn't yet come. But he says, "I'm going to start offering them for a different reason now." As Hebrews says, all the sacrifices were a constant reminder of sin, and that sin leads to death. He

says, "I'll go on doing that." But no more were they sacrifices "to propitiate the wrath of God", and things like that.

Well I see this discussion going on in Heaven. What chance do we have? Has God proved His ability to judge the human heart? Job showed that. And many other places. The last generation may show that. No angel can read our hearts; no angel can read our thoughts. If they could, they could have read Lucifer's thoughts and known, they would have known he was a deceiver. They couldn't read what his plan was. Only God can read our innermost thoughts. And so they have to look to God to say "is Jones really changed; is he safe to save?" And when Jesus says "Yes he is", then they say, "Then we'll welcome him at the gates." And so, I think they have very legitimate questions. I mean, they should be afraid that we're coming in. They have to hear Jesus say, "Don't judge the man by the record. Let me tell you, he's not that kind of person anymore; he's been changed." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Atonement and Your Picture of God, recorded May, 1993, San Diego, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMAANDP> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMAANDP> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

The victory is not won without much earnest prayer, without the humbling of self at every step. Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. The stronghold of Satan would not be broken. The will must be placed on the side of God's will. You are not able, of yourself, to bring your purposes and desires and inclinations into submission to the will of God; but if you are "willing to be made willing," God will accomplish the work for you, even "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5. Then you will "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Philippians 2:12, 13. {MB 142.1}

I saw evil angels contending for souls, and angels of God resisting them. The conflict was severe. Evil angels were corrupting the atmosphere with their poisonous influence, and crowding about these souls to stupefy their sensibilities. Holy angels were anxiously watching and waiting to drive back Satan's host. But it is not the work of good angels to control the minds of men against their will. If they yield to the enemy, and make no effort to resist him, then the angels of God can do but little more than hold in check the host of Satan, that they

shall not destroy, until further light be given to those in peril, to move them to arouse and look to heaven for help. Jesus will not commission holy angels to extricate those who make no effort to help themselves. {1T 345.2}

I have been shown that Satan has not been stupid and careless these many years, since his fall, but has been learning. He has grown more artful. His plans are laid deeper, and are more covered with a religious garment to hide their deformity. The power of Satan now to tempt and deceive is ten-fold greater than it was in the days of the apostles. His power has increased, and it will increase, until it is taken away. His wrath and hate grow stronger as his time to work draws near its close. {2SG 277.1}

God knows how Satan is working, and sends his angels to watch over his children, to protect them from the Devil's power. And the battle is constantly going on between the angels of God, and the Devil's angels. The angels of God are clothed with a complete armor, the panoply of heaven, and, although surrounded with deadly foes, fear nothing, for they are doing the will of their loved Commander. They enter the darkest places to rescue the children of God from the snares of Satan, and their presence causes the evil angels to fall back. And as the evil angels are defeated, they utter terrible imprecations against the injustice of God, and against his angels. {2SG 277.2}

I saw that the angels of God are not to force or bend the will of the individual they watch over. They are to gently chide, warn and guard. Satan can never force back these holy angels from their charge. None can do this but the individuals that they are watching over. If these individuals continue to grieve these tender, holy angels; if they go astray from their counsel and warnings, and choose an independent course of their own, they will drive these angels from them. If the will is submitted to them, they will bend it in the heavenly channel, and they will ever be on the watch for their interests, leading them from a thousand dangers, preventing their lives being taken by Satan, and, if they are inclined to go a wrong course, stand in the path before them to prevent their ruin. {2SG 277.3}

To create the soul anew, to bring light out of darkness, love out of enmity, holiness out of impurity, is the work of Omnipotence alone. The work of the Infinite, as He engages, by the consent of the human being, to make the life complete in Christ, to bring perfection to the character, is the science of eternity. {ML 340.3}

What is the honor conferred upon Christ? Without employing any compulsion, without using any violence, He blends the will of the human subject to the will of God. This is the science of all true science; for by it a mighty change is wrought in mind and character—the change that must be wrought in the life of every one who passes through the gates of the city of God. {ML 340.4}

Weaknesses that have been manifested in a vacillating will and powerless character, are overcome, for continual devotion and piety bring the man in such close relation to Christ that he has the mind of Christ. He is one with Christ, having soundness and strength of principle. His perception is clear, and he manifests that wisdom which comes from God. {1SM 338.2}

The Lord Jesus came to our world full of mercy, life, and light, ready to save those who should come unto Him. But He can save no one against his will. God does not force the conscience; He does not torture the body that He may compel men to compliance with His law. All this work is after the order of Satan. . . . {SD 182.2}

It will require a sacrifice to give yourself to God; but it is a sacrifice of the lower for the higher, the earthly for the spiritual, the perishable for the eternal. God does not design that our will should be destroyed, for it is only through its exercise that we can accomplish what He would have us do. Our will is to be yielded to Him, that we may receive it again, purified and refined, and so linked in sympathy with the Divine that He can pour through us the tides of His love and power. However bitter and painful this surrender may appear to the willful, wayward heart, yet "it is profitable for thee." {MB 62.2}

God had power to hold Adam back from touching the forbidden fruit; but had He done this, Satan would have been sustained in his charge against God's arbitrary rule. Man would not have been a free moral agent, but a mere machine (RH June 4, 1901). {1BC 1084.2}