

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2015: *Jeremiah*
Lesson 10 “The Destruction of Jerusalem”

Read for this week’s study

Ezekiel 8; Romans 1:22–25; Jeremiah 37:1–10, 38:1–6; Jeremiah 29:1–14; Daniel 9:2.

Memory Text

“Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jeremiah 29:7, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Weeping for Tammuz
- III. The Unhappy Reign of King Zekediah
- IV. The Fall of Jerusalem
- V. All Your Heart
- VI. The Seventy Years
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Zdravko Stefanović

The Fall of Jerusalem

1. Tale of two cities (Jeremiah 29)

In answer to people’s inquiries about exile, Jeremiah receives a message from the Lord. How does the focus in this oracle shift from Jerusalem to Babylon? Is the teaching to love one’s enemies limited to only the New Testament?

Someone once said, “Where there is life there is hope.” How long would Judah’s captivity last? What kind of plans did God have for His people in exile? How were they to turn to their Lord? List some of the blessings that God’s people enjoyed in Babylonia.

2. Reasons for Jerusalem’s fall (2 Chronicles 36: 15-21; Jeremiah 36-38)

The exile to Babylon was God’s way of disciplining his people. Why Babylon of all the countries? Explain the expression “till there was no remedy.” What did Jesus say

about the way God's prophets were treated in Jerusalem? Who did Jerusalem represent?

Chapters 36-38 contain only a few of the many mistreatments of Jeremiah by the leaders of Judah. After Jehoiakim burned Jeremiah's scroll in hopes of undoing the prophecy, what did he intend to do to the prophet? How was Jeremiah abused before he was cast into prison during Zedekiah's reign? Was mistreating the prophet another attempt to try to undo the prophecy he was proclaiming? Who came to his rescue when he was thrown into a cistern to die of starvation?

3. Destruction of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 39, 52)

After a siege that lasted for several months, the army of Babylon destroyed Judah's capital. Explain the act of the Babylonian officials as reported in Jeremiah 39:3. Who was carried into exile? Was anyone left in the land of Judah? How was Jeremiah treated during the invasion?

Nebuchadnezzar was stationed at Riblah in the land of Hamath north of Israel. Why was the punishment on Zedekiah so severe? Who else was executed? Why does the author specify that the temple was set on fire under Nebuzaradan's command? Which book of the Bible describes the atrocities committed during the destruction of Jerusalem?

4. Hope of the return (Jeremiah 52; 2 Chronicles 36; Ezra 1)

The report about the tragic destruction of Jerusalem and its temple does not end on a negative note. How does the last chapter in Jeremiah end? Did you know that the last chapter in 2 Kings ends the same way?

The last book in our English Bible is called Malachi. What is the name of the last book in the Hebrew Bible? How does its last chapter end? Which book in our Bible comes after this book? Why is there such an emphasis on the temple? Was this institution really that important in Bible times? What would be an equivalent in importance for us today? Would it be something bigger than an earthly edifice?

Consider this quote: "To limit Jeremiah's and the other prophets' teachings to the small nation of Israel, or to its descendants, as Jewish commentators, scholars, thinkers, and religious leaders have done throughout time, is wrong. They were prophets to the world, even as the God they envisioned, the God of universal justice, mercy and love is not a parochial or territorial deity, but the one and only God of the Universe, to whom all beings, regardless of color or race, all created in the image of God, are equal and the same." (Schreiber, 148)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

As these women were brought in, they had their own religions, and Solomon was a gentleman, a very wise and gracious philosopher and gentleman. And he thought, "I'm not going to lay my religion on these people." So very generously, in the full ecumenical spirit, he built for each of his new wives a shrine where she could worship her own god.

And soon Jerusalem was dotted with these shrines. And Solomon thought he could preside over all of this without becoming confused. Though through Moses God had said, "Don't be so confident. Don't even run the risk of getting close to these heathen. Don't marry them. You're not that strong." And isn't the history of Israel the history of the influence of these intermarriages with these other nations, and the gods of these foreign women apparently being very attractive and very seductive, and the Israelites following after these heathen deities? Even wise King Solomon was seduced by this thing.

Years later, after the Babylonian captivity, Ezra is confessing to God how Israel had come so far short, and that God had sent them into the discipline of Babylonian captivity because they really needed it. And Ezra says, "You haven't punished us nearly as much as we deserve because we knew we shouldn't mix with the heathen the way we did. And now after returning from Babylonian captivity," Ezra says, "we've done it all over again." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – 1&2 Kings*, recorded November, 1981, 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 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/17MMPOGIA66> (Part 1- 1 Kings)

<http://pkp.cc/18MMPOGIA66> (Part 2- 1 Kings)

<http://pkp.cc/19MMPOGIA66> (Part 1- 2 Kings)

<http://pkp.cc/20MMPOGIA66> (Part 2- 2 Kings)

Well, someone has already mentioned, were they supposed to be there in the first place? So they were in a difficult and complicated situation of their own making. Number one, should they have gone to Babylon in the first place? Why did God give them up to Babylonian captivity? Wasn't it because of hundreds of years of stubbornly resisting the messages of the prophets that we read at the end of 2 Chronicles? So number one, they shouldn't have been there in the first place. Number two, should they have *still* been there? No, the seventy years were up. They should have gone home. On two counts they shouldn't have been there. So truly that predicament was of their own making, and yet God came to help them. But when we're in a predicament of our own making, God may have to stoop very low to meet us where we are and employ methods that are far short of the ideal. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio

series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job, recorded March, 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/25MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

I think that Jeremiah is magnificent here in his understanding. Surely the book of Jeremiah makes it plain, that like all the prophets, the most important thing is that we know about our God. And of course, when we come to know Him, we realize that all He'd ask of us is trust. In simplest terms, "I'd like to be your God, and you be my people. I do own the whole universe that I have created. Ah, there isn't a thing we couldn't do together. But there are a lot of things I cannot command. I cannot force your trust, your love, your willingness to listen. I certainly can't force you to call the Sabbath a delight. I can't do that. But I offer it to you. You have everything to win if you will join me."

But suppose we don't like this, even though we have an infinitely patient God who persistently sends messages for 800 years. And He disciplines; look at Judges. Remember how He disciplined and they'd come back. And then they'd misbehave. He'd discipline them. Over and over and over again. There does come a point where even the infinitely gracious One sees no point in warning any further. And the angels are right with Him. It makes no point to go on any further. Then He lets them go; and this is His wrath; Romans 1 and Hosea 11. God's wrath is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway; they'd rather worship the queen of heaven, thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequence of their own rebellious choice. But He hasn't given up forever yet, has He? Because when He let Judah go into captivity, some wonderful people went off, like Daniel and others. And God says, "Seventy years, you'll be back. If you want to, you can come back." How many came back? And when they came back, look how they misbehaved. So what does God do? He sends some more representatives. He sends Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and later on Malachi. And later on He sends His Son. And then that's the end of the line. They killed Him. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations, recorded 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)

What can He do? But He doesn't abandon them. He sends them off into captivity seventy years, and on the way He says, "By the way, you'll come back in seventy years." At the end of the seventy, most of them didn't care to come back. So He works with the ones who do, and He protects the ones who didn't come back. And so we see Him working. The only one who looks consistently good is God, that's for sure. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Obadiah, Jonah & Micah, recorded 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/45MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/46MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on. He has an increased measure of understanding. In becoming a man of obedience to God, he has the mind of Christ, and the will of God becomes his will. {1SM 338.1}

He who places himself unreservedly under the guidance of the Spirit of God, will find that his mind expands and develops. He obtains an education in the service of God which is not one-sided and deficient, developing a one-sided character, but one which results in symmetry and completeness. {1SM 338.2}

Sin not only shuts away from God, but destroys in the human soul both the desire and the capacity for knowing Him. Through sin, the whole human organism is deranged, the mind is perverted, the imagination corrupted; the faculties of the soul are degraded. There is an absence of pure religion, of heart holiness. The converting power of God has not wrought in transforming the character. The soul is weak, and for want of moral force to overcome, is polluted and debased. {PK 233.1}

Pure religion has to do with the will. The will is the governing power in the nature of man, bringing all the other faculties under its sway. The will is not the taste or the inclination, but it is the deciding power which works in the children of men unto obedience to God or unto disobedience. {5T 513.1}

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will; and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not *desire* to be set free, if we *will* not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7, 8. {SC 34.2}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

Men put God out of their knowledge and worshiped the creatures of their own imagination; and as the result, they became more and more debased. The psalmist describes the effect produced upon the worshiper by the adoration of idols. He says, "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." Psalm 115:8. It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed. Man will rise no higher than his conceptions of truth, purity, and holiness. If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. The worshipers of false gods clothed their deities with human attributes and passions, and thus their standard of character was degraded to the likeness of sinful humanity. They were defiled in consequence. {PP 91.2}

It is growth in knowledge of the character of Christ that sanctifies the soul. To discern and appreciate the wonderful work of the atonement, transforms him who contemplates the plan of salvation. By beholding Christ, he becomes changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. The beholding of Jesus becomes an ennobling, refining process to the actual Christian. He sees the Pattern, and grows into its likeness, and then how easily are dissensions, emulations, and strife adjusted. The perfection of Christ's character is the Christian's inspiration. When we see him as he is, desire awakes to be like him, and this elevates the whole man; for "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." {RH, August 26, 1890 par. 7}