

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2015: *Jeremiah*
Lesson 12 “Back to Egypt”

Read for this week’s study

Jeremiah 40:7–16; Jeremiah 41– 43; Exodus 16:3; Numbers 16:13; Jeremiah 44.

Memory Text

“May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in accordance with everything the LORD your God sends you to tell us” (Jeremiah 42:5, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Political Anarchy
- III. Seeking Divine Guidance
- IV. Returning to Egypt
- V. Taken Into Exile
- VI. Open Defiance
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week’s lesson brings us toward the end of the saga of Jeremiah the prophet. However, this is not a “and they lived happily ever after” ending. In a sense, one could summarize this week’s study, and even a good portion of the book of Jeremiah, by saying that what we see here is an example of the limits of grace. That is, grace will not save those who utterly refuse to accept it.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Though the reasons for the assassination [of Gedaliah] weren’t given, the fact that it had been done by someone of the ‘royal family and of the officers of the king’ (Jeremiah 41:1, NKJV) suggests that these elitists still had not accepted the idea that the chosen nation needed to submit to Babylonian rule. Because Gedaliah had been put on the throne by the king of Babylon (see Jeremiah 40:5), these people might have seen him as a treasonous puppet who was disloyal to the nation and who therefore had to be eliminated along with his court.” (Monday’s lesson)
3. Was Gedaliah a bit naïve? Did he have too much faith in human nature? He did not take precautions to protect his life. Ishmael, who was loyal to Zedekiah (41:1) rejected the rule of the governor. His love for the fallen king was greater than his

love for God, others, and the nation. What could have been a peaceful transition became a civil war – all because of one man’s mistaken zeal and lack of judgment.

4. Encouragement came to Jeremiah through the words of a Babylonian officer who knew about Jeremiah’s prophecies. If you were given the opportunity to go anywhere you wanted to go, where would it be? Jeremiah chose to remain with the hurting people of the land, who did not listen to him for decades!
5. ‘Back to Egypt!’ was Israel’s cry whenever they found themselves in trouble. It was true in the days of Moses (Exodus 16:3; 17:3; Numbers 11:4-6; 14:1-5) and Isaiah (Isaiah 30:1-5; 31:1-3), and now in the trying days after the Babylonian conquest (41:17). God had told them to stay in the land, but they were unwilling to obey. They had already made up their minds to go, but they thought it would be good to ask the prophet to pray for them: “Pray for us! We will obey!” How pious their words, chosen as our memory text, sounded! But one cannot fool God. How might our words sound to God when we sing: ‘All to Jesus I surrender’ or ‘Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold’?
6. “When God’s Word does not agree with our intentions or desires, we tend to have doubts about its divine origins. This is what the people and the leaders did with Jeremiah.” (Tuesday’s lesson) Everything that Jeremiah predicted had come true, yet people called him a false prophet! (43:2-3) Once you have decided to disobey the Lord, how easily excuses for rejecting God’s truth can be found. Imagine how painful it must have been for Baruch & Jeremiah to endure the slander of those arrogant people!
7. “Jeremiah 43:1–7 does not say why the people thought Baruch wanted this [people taken to Babylonian exile] to happen, any more than Scripture explains why the children of Israel thought Moses wanted them to die in the wilderness after they had left Egypt. People in the thrall of emotions and passions may not have sound reasons for their thinking. How crucial it is then that we keep our passions and emotions submitted to the Lord!” (Tuesday’s lesson) Why is it that emotions have such a powerful influence on our thinking? How can we protect ourselves from making decisions based on our emotions?
8. When God did not have a body that represented Him and His values, some of God’s people ended up in Assyrian exile (to be dispersed and never to come back), and some in Babylonian exile. In their desire to find safety, those who remained decided to go back to Egypt. They forgot their story, they forgot their God. Is it possible that we can forget our story, our purpose for which God called our movement?
9. “What startling answer did the captives give to Jeremiah when he confronted them for what they were doing in Egypt? (Jeremiah 44:15–19).” (Thursday’s lesson) We can see that the change in geography did not bring a change in their hearts. They not only practiced their idolatry, they even defended it! Before King Josiah’s reform, when they bowed down to idols, “they had plenty of food, were well off, and saw no trouble” (44:17) Is it possible that we use outward circumstances as a measure of God’s approval of our behavior even today? Is prosperity a sign of God’s approval?

10. “If someone says: ‘I don’t believe in Jesus, I don’t even believe in God, and yet look at how well my life is going. In fact, I would say that my life is going better than yours, and you are a Christian,’ how would you respond?” (Friday’s lesson)
11. “Why is it mistaken to assume that grace comes with no conditions? Conditions are not the same things as works, or something that gives us merit before God. How can we learn to differentiate between the false teaching of salvation by works (legalism) and the false teaching that salvation is non-conditional (cheap grace)?” (Friday’s lesson) What is the theological significance of saying that salvation/grace are conditional?
12. The lesson does not mention it, but we do not want to end on a sad, low note. See Jeremiah 46:27.28. After the judgment of chapters 43, 44 and 46, comes hope beyond judgment. There will be a glorious restoration. The problem of rebellious human hearts will be finally resolved. “I will save you ... I am with you...” What an encouragement! If we leave the study of the prophets with a pessimistic, depressed outlook on life, we have failed to grasp one of the most critical elements of the prophetic message.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

After just three and a half years, Jesus, the Gentle One says, “It’s better that I go now.” Especially since they now recognized that He was God; and now the disciples would stop thinking things through—they would simply run to Him and ask Him their questions; they would accept His answers on the authority of who He was. It seems like the right thing to do.

Yet in the great controversy God does not ask for that. So even gentle Jesus said, “It is better that I go, and I’ll send the Holy Spirit who will come as a still small voice. He’ll come to be a Teacher and a Guide to lead you into the truth. You won’t see Him. He won’t intimidate you. He only works with evidence. Most particularly He’ll help you understand the Bible.” For God does speak to us. He does answer our questions. But He does it through what we call His Word. We talk to God, and He talks to us as we study the Scriptures. That’s why I believe that really thoughtful study of the Scriptures is a form of prayer. That’s conversing with God as with a friend. Now some people pray a great deal, but never hear God speak back because they never spend much time reading the Bible.

But if one reads the Bible and then responds to God, there is conversation as one thinks along, and says to God, “That’s marvelous, what I’ve just read.” This is conversation with God as with a Friend, and that’s the meaning of prayer. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, session 4, “God’s Way of Restoring Trust” recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>*

Surely it's clear in the epistle to Rome that all that God asks of us is that we trust Him, because if we trust Him, without reservation, with no cheating, with a complete willingness to listen, He can heal and save and restore us. But if I'm forever violating that trust, that relationship with Him, if sometimes I'll listen and sometimes I don't, sometimes I'm honest with Him and sometimes I'm not, will He condemn me? Do you doctors condemn your patients who are foolish enough not to take their medicine and then become more and more seriously ill? Now you might correct them; that's for sure. You might show great concern. You might if need be sound very stern and severe. You might read them the medical equivalent of the Third Angel's Message, if you persist in this you're going to die. You might well do that. But you wouldn't condemn them, would you? What good would it do to send them home condemned and humiliated? Corrected to be sure. Whenever we violate our relationship of trust in God He can't trust us. Sometimes we're with Him, sometimes we're not, it's a very irregular relationship. Sometimes we're so honest and sometimes we cheat, we're looking for alibis, we're always rationalizing. He cannot heal us and we lose. This is a rebellious, untrusting, untrustworthy relationship. And that's why sin is so dangerous. That's why sin results in death, not because our Heavenly Father and physician will kill us, but the man who doesn't trust God, the man who's cheating will reap the consequences. He will die, for God cannot heal this person who doesn't trust Him. And I think this is such a correction to the definition so often used, sin is just breaking this or that rule and you know what God does to sinners. This suggests that breaking our trusting relationship with God is the most dangerous thing we can do. The consequences are very disastrous both in this life and in the end, but not at the hands of our gracious God. If we persist in cheating He will let us go and reap the consequences. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 14, recorded January, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/27MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/28MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

But a crisis of distrust developed in the family. And as we reviewed last time, our Heavenly Father has been accused of being unworthy of our trust. Specifically, He has been accused of being arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. And thus sin entered our universe for the first time. For the Bible describes sin (in its essence) as a violation of mutual trust. Sin is much more than a mere breaking of the rules, serious as that might be. Repeatedly throughout the Bible sin is described and illustrated as a breakdown of trust and trustworthiness—a suspicious and stubborn unwillingness to listen. It is an unwillingness to listen to the One who is so eager to help us in our predicament.

But doesn't the Bible specifically state that sin is breaking the rules? How about the key text we've learned from childhood up, "Sin is the transgression of the law" 1 John 3:4. Actually, that's a rather free translation. Not all free translations are in *The Living Bible*, there are some

in *The King James*; that's one of them. The Greek word that John used, if you'll forgive pronouncing the Greek, is *anomia*, a-n-o-m-i-a, and it means literally, lawlessness, rebelliousness. In other words, sin is described as a state of mind. And anyone in that state of mind is a continuing threat to the peace and security of the family. I would say that sin has not been dealt with until our lawlessness has either been changed or eliminated. And that's why I chose the translation I did for this Bible Reference Sheet. You notice the first verse there; it's the familiar verse, 1 John 3:4. But I'm using Williams' version, which I like very much: "Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." (Williams)

That's precisely the word. *Sin is lawlessness*. Now the hazard of regarding sin as primarily breaking of the rules is that it tends to encourage an impersonal, even fearful relationship with our God. This is what He wishes to eliminate. If we regard sin as primarily a breaking of the rules, God's commandments may be regrettably misunderstood as arbitrary regulations designed to show His authority and test our willingness to obey. If we obey, we're rewarded. If we disobey, we're destroyed. Do you want to live under those circumstances?

Since we all have sinned, should we be fearfully awaiting the execution of the sentence? Unless perchance God should find some legal way to give us yet another chance? And if we turn down that second chance, oh will He punish us with even greater severity for our ingratitude! Would this understanding help produce the peace and the freedom, and the freedom from fear that God desires so much in His universal family?

Actually though, I believe if rightly understood you *can say* that sin is a breaking of the rules. But look again at the rules. Look at God's commandments, the ten in particular—The Decalogue. All those Ten Commandments require is that we love God, and we love each other. And if we really did that we would have peace and freedom. In fact in the tenth of the Ten Commandments it says that we should not even *want* to sin. If we lived in that state of mind, not even wanting to do anything unloving, we would have freedom to be sure, and all kinds of peace and good will.

But can love be commanded? Or produced by force or fear? To put it vividly, has God said to us, "Children, you either love me, and love each other, or I'll have to kill you. Do I make myself clear?"

Have you husbands ever tried that on your wives and children? Did it work? If you husbands should see your wives and children standing trembling in front of you, and all saying in unison "Oh, yes, daddy. We love you very much," would you be pleased? Would you be satisfied? Then you're a brute. And the God some of us worship would never settle for that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #2, "What Went Wrong In God's Universe?" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}

Satan has ability to suggest doubts and devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue and mark of intelligence in them to be unbelieving and questioning, and quibbling. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and teachable spirit. All should decide from the weight of evidence. {RH, September 16, 1873 par. 10}

Faith in a lie will not have a sanctifying influence upon the life or character. No error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it. Sincerity will never save a soul from the consequences of believing an error. Without sincerity there is no true religion, but sincerity in a false religion will never save a man. I may be perfectly sincere in following a wrong road, but that will not make it the right road, or bring me to the place I wished to reach. The Lord does not want us to have a blind credulity, and call that the faith that sanctifies. The truth is the principle that sanctifies, and therefore it becomes us to know what is truth. We must compare spiritual things with spiritual. We must prove all things, but hold fast only that which is good, that which bears the divine credentials, which lays before us the true motives and principles which should prompt us to action.—Letter 12, 1890. {2SM 56.1}

Those who desire to follow a course which pleases their fancy are in danger of being left to follow their own inclinations, supposing them to be the leadings of God's Spirit. The duty of some is indicated sufficiently clear by circumstances and facts; but, through the solicitations of friends, in harmony with their own inclinations, they swerve from the path of duty and pass over the clear evidences in the case; then, with apparent conscientiousness, they pray long and earnestly for light. They have earnest feeling in the matter, and they interpret this to be the Spirit of God. But they are deceived. This course grieves the Spirit of God. They had light and in the very reason of things should have understood their duty; but a few pleasing inducements balance their minds in the wrong direction, and they urge these before the Lord and press their case, and the Lord allows them to have their own way. They have so strong an inclination to follow their own course that He permits them to do so and to suffer the results. These imagine that they have a wonderful experience. {3T 73.2}

Impressions alone are not a safe guide to duty. The enemy often persuades men to believe that it is God who is guiding them, when in reality they are following only human impulse. {RH, August 24, 1911 par. 14}

We must study the truth for ourselves. No man should be relied upon to think for us. No matter who he is, or in what position he may be placed, we are not to look upon any man as a criterion for us. We are to counsel together, and to be subject one to another; but at the same time we are to exercise the ability God has given us, in order to learn what is truth. Each one of us must look to God for divine enlightenment. We must individually develop a character that will stand the test in the day of God. {GW92 129.2}

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought. {Ed 17.2}

The Holy Spirit will not compel men to take a certain course of action. We are free moral agents; and when sufficient evidence has been given us as to our duty it is left with us to decide our course. {RH, July 17, 1888 par. 4}

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature, that by beholding, we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. {GC88 555.2}

Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him. By earnest attention and prayerful thought he must learn the meaning of the words of truth, and drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles. {COL 59.5}

It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. {PP 596.2}

True religion ennobles the mind, refines the taste, sanctifies the judgment, and makes its possessor a partaker of the purity and the holiness of heaven. It brings angels near and separates us more and more from the spirit and influence of the world. It enters into all the acts and relations of life and gives us the "spirit of a sound mind," and the result is happiness and peace. {CH 629.3}

It was by deception that Satan seduced angels; thus he has in all ages carried forward his work among men, and he will continue this policy to the last. Should he openly profess to be warring against God and His law, men would beware; but he disguises himself, and mixes truth with error. The most dangerous falsehoods are those that are mingled with truth. It is thus that errors are received that captivate and ruin the soul. By this means Satan carries the world with him. But a day is coming when his triumph will be forever ended. {PP 338.3}

God's dealings with rebellion will result in fully unmasking the work that has so long been carried on under cover. The results of Satan's rule, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, will be laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The law of God will stand fully vindicated. It will be seen that all the dealings of God have been conducted with reference to the eternal good of His people, and the good of all the worlds that He has created. Satan himself, in the presence of the witnessing universe, will confess the justice of God's government and the righteousness of His law. {PP 338.4}