

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Fourth Quarter 2015: *Jeremiah*

Lesson 13 “Lessons From Jeremiah”

Read for this week’s study

Jeremiah 2:13, 6:20, 7:1–10; Matthew 9:12; Deuteronomy 6:5; Jeremiah 10:1–15, 23:1–8.

Memory Text

“Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth’” (Jeremiah 23:5, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Jeremiah’s Lord
- III. Rituals and Sin
- IV. Religion of the Heart
- V. Twilight of the Idols
- VI. The Remnant
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “We’re now at the end of our study of Jeremiah. It’s been an adventure; a lot of drama, emotion, and energy has been expended in the saga of our prophet. (...) This week, let’s take a look at some of the many lessons we can learn from this revelation of God’s love for His people even amid many thunderous warnings to them about where their actions will lead.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. All the texts from Jeremiah assigned to this week’s study (except for Jeremiah 6:20) have been studied before in one of the preceding lessons. Is this our opportunity to look again, and learn some new lessons that we may have missed in studying the 52 chapters of Jeremiah?
3. Because Jeremiah is one of the prophets, it is crucial to have a good grasp of the central message of the Biblical prophets (as mentioned in the material for Lesson 7): **The basic prophetic message can be summarized into three points: 1) You have broken the covenant, you must repent! 2) No repentance? Then judgment is coming! 3) Yet there is a glorious future time of restoration coming** after the judgment through a righteous King, son of David, the Messiah.

4. Considering the first point: there are usually three major indictments against God's people: idolatry (and syncretism), social injustice for all, and religious ritualism instead of relationship. The prophets show that idolatry isn't just a legal problem; it violates the relational aspect of the covenant. They proclaimed that social injustice is as serious a sin as idolatry. One of the most important theological truths coming out of the prophetic message is that when we are unfaithful to God, we damage our relationship with him, and we damage ourselves. When Israel became more enamored with formalized ritual, they lost the concept of their relationship with God. A proper relationship with God requires a proper relationship with people.
5. Most of the prophetic texts present one of the three major points or expound on one of the three main indictments. You cannot take the first step in an interpretive journey, unless you are familiar with these overall emphases in the specific book being studied.
6. Step 1: Understand the text in its original context. What did the text mean to the original biblical audience? Remember, what it *means* must be connected with what it *meant*! Step 2: Identify the differences between the biblical audience and us today. (We are not under the old covenant, not facing the covenant curses from Deuteronomy. We are not facing invasion from the Babylonians or Assyrians. We do not live in a theocracy. Our country is not equivalent to ancient Israel.)
7. Step 3: Cross the principlizing bridge. Ask the question: What is the theological principle behind the text? Is the text expressing a principle (which is eternal), or an application (which is temporary, cultural, local)? If the text deals with application, what is the principle behind it?
8. Step 4: Where are we in the Bible Story? "What is the time?" How does this relate to the rest of the Bible story? How does the prism of the cross influence our reading of the Old Testament? How does the New Testament move this forward? Step 5: How do we live it out in our time and our culture today? How can individual Christians apply this in their lives? What can we do as a community of believers to live out the biblical values in our society?
9. "Seventh-day Adventists understand that at the center of the great controversy exists a crucial issue: What is the character of God? What is God really like? Is He the arbitrary tyrant that Satan makes Him out to be, or is He a loving and caring Father who wants only the best for us? These questions really are the most important questions in the entire cosmos. After all, what would our situation be if God were not kind and loving and self-sacrificial, but mean and arbitrary and sadistic? We'd be better off if no God existed than to have one like that." (Sunday's lesson) What is the nature and character of God revealed in the book of Jeremiah?
10. "There is no question that in the book of Jeremiah, the Lord was seeking to get people away from the cold, dead, but very organized rituals that came to dominate their faith, rituals that they believed covered their sin. As said earlier, yet it is worth repeating, the vast majority of Jeremiah's struggles were with leaders and priests and people who believed that because they were the chosen ones of God, the

children of Abraham, the covenant people, they were just fine with the Lord. What a sad deception, one that we, also of Abraham's seed (Galatians 3:29), need to watch out for." (Monday's lesson)

11. "If one ever wanted to find a situation that fits what has been called 'cheap grace,' the term certainly applies here [cf. Jeremiah 7:9, 10]. The people do all these sinful things and then come back to the temple and 'worship' the true God and claim forgiveness for their sins? God is not mocked. Unless these people change their ways, especially how they treat the weak among them, they are going to face harsh judgment." (Monday's lesson)
12. Who are the weak in our society today? Minorities? Illegal immigrants? The poor? The elderly? Children? Women? The Unborn? The biblical interpretative challenge for us is to realize that we may bring a lot of cultural/political baggage which can cloud the issue. The goal is to be aware of that and intentionally anchor our views in biblical theology rather than the secular culture around us.
13. "So much of the book of Jeremiah is directed toward the nation as a whole. Time and again he talked about Israel and Judah corporately... Without doubt, in the book we get a sense of the corporate nature of the Lord's calling to this nation. Of course, it's the same in the New Testament, where time and again the church is understood in a corporate sense (see Ephesians 1:22, 3:10, 5:27). (...) Though both Testaments of the Bible talk about the corporate nature of God's church, true faith is a matter of each person, himself or herself, making a daily surrender to the Lord, a personal choice to walk in faith and obedience." (Tuesday's lesson) What would a community of surrendered believers walking in obedience look like in today's North America, South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia?
14. "What are some of the things that we can be in danger of making into idols? What about things like digital devices, money, fame, even other people? (...) Of course, we know intellectually that none of these things are worthy of worship. We know that in the end, nothing that this world offers us, nothing that we make into idols, can ultimately satisfy our souls and certainly not redeem them. We know all these things, and yet, unless we are careful, unless we keep before us Jesus and what He did for us and why He did it, we can so easily be swept up in a modern form of the idolatry that Jeremiah so passionately railed against." (Wednesday's lesson)
15. "Even amid that prevailing apostasy and doom, God always had a faithful people, however small in number. Though as in many of the prophets, much of the emphasis in Jeremiah was on apostasy and unfaithfulness—because these were what the Lord wanted to save the people from—all through sacred history, the Lord had a faithful remnant. This, of course, will continue down until the end of time (see Revelation 12:17)." (Thursday's lesson) The prophets do not proclaim a restoration after the destruction that simply returns to the current status quo. The theological and relational picture of God's people in the future is different and better. How will the words of our memory text (Jeremiah 23:5-7) ultimately be fulfilled?

16. What makes Jeremiah a great biblical hero? What can we learn from him and his book? How would our understanding of God and His character be impoverished if we did not have this book in the Bible?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

But now at the rock, Moses shows no concern for God's reputation. Instead, he's angry, when God isn't. And Moses stands at the rock and says, "You ungrateful rebels; must we bring forth water from this rock?" And he hits it twice. And I'd venture, before his rod hit the rock twice, he realized what he'd done, and he repented.

But why would God take that so seriously? Isn't this where the whole great controversy began? When a highly trusted person who came from the very presence of God, and reflected the brilliant glory of God, and therefore was regarded as speaking with almost unlimited authority—Lucifer, the Light-bearer, began to misrepresent God. He began to picture God to the angels as exacting, unforgiving and severe, a harsh God who laid arbitrary requirements on His people, just to show His authority and test their obedience. The whole disastrous controversy that has spread throughout this universe began when a highly trusted person began to obscure and pervert and twist the truth about God. And I doubt anybody in the audience in the wilderness gave that any consideration at all.

But the angels knew. They knew how that whole thing began, and they could understand why God would take it so seriously. And God could turn to the angels and say, "Any questions about why I'm not letting Moses in? He's always been my best friend, and he will remain my best friend. But he did something, and I've forgiven him. But I must go on record before my family in the universe that the most destructive thing you can ever do is to misrepresent me. That's where it all began, and that's why it's costing me so much to clear up all these misunderstandings."

I believe that Moses' sin is the most destructive sin a person can ever commit. And it's not just disobedience. It's not destroying a symbol. It is misrepresenting God. Now how often have you ever prayed at night, "If today, to my children I left the impression Lord, that you are in any way arbitrary, vengeful, exacting, unforgiving and severe, then I'm sorry for that more than some other terrible things I may have done." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 - Leviticus, recorded October, 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/5MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

But if God were as Satan has pictured him, how easily he could have blotted out his rebellious creatures and started over again! If all God wanted was unthinking obedience, how easily he could have manipulated the minds of men and angels and forced them to obey!

But love and trust, the qualities God desires the most, are not produced by force—not even by God himself.

That is why, instead of destroying or resorting to force, God simply took his case into court. In order to prove the rightness of his cause, to demonstrate that his way of governing the universe was the best for all concerned, God humbly submitted his own character to the investigation and judgment of his creatures.

Paul understood this when he exclaimed, “God must prove true, though every man be false; as the Scripture says, ‘That you may be shown to be upright in what you say, and win your case when you go into court’” (Romans 3:4, Goodspeed).

The Good News is that God has won his case. Though all of us should let him down, God cannot lose his case. He has already won! The universe has conceded that the evidence is on his side, that the devil has lied in his charges against God.

“It is finished,” Jesus cried (John 19:30). By the life that he lived and the unique and awful way he died, Jesus has demonstrated the righteousness of his Father and answered any question about God’s character and government (see Romans 3:25, 26).

Paul was proud to be a bearer of this Good News, and he knew what it was all about—“in it the righteousness of God is revealed” (Romans 1:16, 17). {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 30-31. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-04>

The people of Israel in the days of the prophet Amos devoted much time to worship, the giving of offerings, the singing of hymns, and prayer. But their hearts were not in it—and the Bible speaks of the heart as the place where a man does his thinking. See Matthew 9:4; Proverbs 23:7.

Such thoughtless worship was utterly unacceptable to our intelligent God, and through Amos He sent them this startling message:

“I loathe and despise your festivals;
Your meetings for sacrifice give Me no pleasure.
You may bring Me your burnt offerings, your meal
offerings,
Or your thank offerings of fat cattle,
And I shall not so much as look at them.

Let Me have no more of your noisy hymns;
My ears are dosed to the music of your harps.
Instead, let justice roll on like a mighty river,
And integrity flow like a never-failing stream!" Amos 5: 21-24, Phillips.

Their worship was a fraud. They may have known the specified procedures, but they knew very little about God.

Particularly was this shown by their observance of the seventh day. Even while apparently honoring God on that holy day, they could hardly wait for it to end. "When will the Sabbath be over," they would cry, "so that we may offer our corn for sale?" Amos 8:5, Phillips.

Then fresh from their Sabbath worship they would turn again and "grind the faces of the poor," making their measure short but their prices high, cheating with "biased scales," and selling for grain the sweepings from their floors. See Amos 8:4-6, Phillips.

Why did they bother to worship at all? Evidently, the god they knew required such ritual and form, and they had better be faithful if they expected to avoid his displeasure and receive his rewards.

But to such mistaken worshipers God replies,
"When you come to appear before Me,
 who requires of you
 this trampling of My courts?
Bring no more vain offerings;
 incense is an abomination to Me.
New moon and Sabbath and the calling of assemblies—
 I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.
Your new moons and your appointed feasts
 My soul hates;
they have become a burden to Me,
 I am weary of bearing them.
When you spread forth your hands,
 I will hide My eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
 I will not listen;
 your hands are full of blood.
Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
 remove the evil of your doings
 from before My eyes;
cease to do evil,
 learn to do good;
seek justice,
 correct oppression;
defend the fatherless,

plead for the widow.

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.” Isaiah 1:12-18, RSV.

Later in the same book God explains the cause of the emptiness and meaninglessness of the people’s worship. “This people draw near with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, while their hearts are far from Me, and their fear of Me is a commandment of men learned by rote.” Isaiah 29: 13, RSV.

If today our worship should be such mere repetition and conformity, without sincerest concern as to the sense or meaning, what an insult to our intelligent God! And God will say to us, “Who requires this trampling of My courts?”

Jesus spoke of such worshipers coming up in the resurrection of the wicked at the end. When they discover to their horror that they are lost, they present themselves at the gates and cry, “Lord, Lord, open up for us. Did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast our demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in your name? Think of all the tithe we have paid, all the offerings we have given—enough to buy many tickets to the kingdom!”

But the Lord sadly replies, “I know what you have done. But you did it all for the wrong reason. Go away! I never knew you. We never were really friends.” See Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 25:11, 12. *And genuine friendship is the essential quality God desires in our relationship with Him.* {Maxwell, A. Graham. *I Want to be Free*, 19-22. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970}

A most significant verse about God is in Isaiah 29:13. What was wrong with their worship? They were busy with their worship. Just as when Jesus came, they were never more religious. They tithed, they health-reformed, they kept their Sabbaths, they memorized the Scriptures. But it wasn’t doing them any good! Jesus quotes this later on in Isaiah 29:13. “The Lord said: ‘Because this people draw near with their mouth.’” Remember He also says, “Who requires you to trample my courts?” They came, and Amos says they sang a lot. “They honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me.” The heart is where a man does his thinking, his best thinking! Amos continues, “And their fear of me [and that is their reverence, their worship of me] is but a commandment of men learned by rote.” Unthinking, mechanical worship is an utter insult to our intelligent, gracious God. And it doesn’t do us any good! It destroys us to simply do these things because we’re supposed to. And if we Adventists, when we’re asked why we do something or don’t do it—if all we can say is, “Well, because God said so, and I believe it, and that’s all there is to it,” that’s something learned by rote. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 - Isaiah*, recorded January, 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/33MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/34MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

How about John 5:39? Surely it's a good thing to search the Scriptures, but Jesus said, "You are abusing this thing." "You search the Scriptures"; He did not give it as a command, you know. The Greek could go either way; the form in the Greek could be the indicative, which means 'you are searching', or the imperative, a command to search. And it certainly would be a true thing to say 'search the Scriptures.' But in the context it's a criticism. Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures; I know you do, because you think in the book you have eternal life." That's bibliolatry; they had made a god out of the book. So the Gentiles were not the only ones, when they came into Christianity, who brought in the essence of idolatry with them. The Jews brought it in too, though they never set up idols any more. They had made an idol out of the book. And they read it as a code book, with deeds to be done, and sins to be shunned, and there was life in the book. And Jesus said, "The Scriptures testify of me. I'm the only one who can give you life. But you obviously are not coming to me that you may have life." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, #5, recorded March, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/5MMGALATIANS66>*

Naturally those who remain loyal to God are the special target of Satan's final effort to deceive. Revelation 12, the chapter that first mentions the war in heaven, describes these people—the loyal ones, as being the special objects of Satan's wrath. He goes to make war on these that are called the remnant . . . the ones left over, the few. Notice Revelation 12:17, next on the sheet. These people who are the object of his special wrath are: "All those who obey God's commandments and are faithful to the truth revealed by Jesus" (GNB).

They do not accept Satan's lies. If we count ourselves among God's loyal people, knowing that we will be the special object of his effort to deceive, we would do well to notice Satan's successes through the centuries in deceiving— especially saints. He doesn't tempt saints into the more usual gross indulgences, the things that saints would never think of doing. Rather we need to notice the insidious methods he has used to turn even saints and angels against our Heavenly Father, even while they professed to be God's chosen people. You recall his success among the brilliant angels in Heaven. How could he possibly deceive them right in the very presence of the Father?

There is more recorded about Satan's deception of God's chosen people on this earth in the Promised Land. You remember that after the discipline of Babylon and the great revival and reformation that took place under Ezra and Nehemiah, God's people in the Promised Land never worshipped idols again. Oh, how they read their Bibles, and paid their tithe, and watched their diet, and were so very careful not to be contaminated by association with unbelievers. Oh, how they waited for the coming of their Messiah, the Christ. You see they all were eager Adventists. More than that, they were Seventh-day Adventists, weren't they? {Graham

Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #17, “Satan’s Final Effort to Deceive” recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/17MMCAG>*

Someday soon the adversary will make a last, desperate effort to win us all to his side. He will appear as an angel of light—the Light Bearer again, Lucifer, the Morning Star. See 2 Corinthians 11:14. He will even proclaim himself to be God. See 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Just as he tried to persuade Jesus to worship him in the wilderness of temptation, so he will seek to win our worship now. See Matthew 4:9.

The Bible predicts that his efforts will appear to be completely successful. The whole world will worship him. See Revelation 13:1-8.

If even holy angels could be deceived back in eternity, what makes us think we won’t be taken in?

For our encouragement, the Bible speaks of a group—so small as to be described as just a “remnant”—who will not be deceived.

These will be people whose thinking is clear enough that they will reject the error. Instead, according to Revelation 14:12, they will maintain their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

And because of their continuing faith in God they will even dare, according to Revelation 12:17, to bear witness to Jesus in those troublous times. {Maxwell, A. Graham. *You Can Trust the Bible; why, after many translations, it is still the word of God*, 93-94. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1967}

Further Study with Ellen White

As the shepherd leads his flock over the rocky hills, through forest and wild ravines, to grassy nooks by the riverside; as he watches them on the mountains through the lonely night, shielding from robbers, caring tenderly for the sickly and feeble, his life comes to be one with theirs. A strong and tender attachment unites him to the objects of his care. However large the flock, the shepherd knows every sheep. Every one has its name, and responds to the name at the shepherd’s call. {DA 479.1}

As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world. “Ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.” Jesus says, “I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.” “I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.” Ezekiel 34:31; Isaiah 43:1; 49:16. {DA 479.2}

Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God. Souls guilty and helpless, liable to be destroyed by the arts and snares of Satan, are cared for as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock. {MH 162.1}

And while Christ opens heaven to man, the life which He imparts opens the heart of man to heaven. Sin not only shuts us away from God, but destroys in the human soul both the desire and the capacity for knowing Him. All this work of evil it is Christ's mission to undo. The faculties of the soul, paralyzed by sin, the darkened mind, the perverted will, He has power to invigorate and to restore. He opens to us the riches of the universe, and by Him the power to discern and to appropriate these treasures is imparted. {Ed 28.3}

Jesus spake as never man spake. He poured out to men the whole treasure of heaven in wisdom and knowledge. He had not come to utter uncertain sentiments and opinions, but to speak truth established on eternal principles. He could have made disclosures in the sciences that would have placed the discoveries of the greatest men in the background as utter littleness; but this was not His mission or His work. He had come to seek and to save the lost, and He would not permit Himself to be turned from His object. He revealed truths that had been buried under the rubbish of error, and He freed them from the exactions and traditions of men, and bade them stand fast forever. He rescued truth from its obscurity, and set it in its proper framework, that it might shine with its original luster. What wonder that crowds followed in the footsteps of the Lord and gave Him homage as they listened to His words! {CT 29.2}

Christ presented to men that which was entirely contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the love of the Father, who "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them and treated them despitefully. In all this He was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. {CT 29.3}

By his presence he could dissipate the gloomy shadow that Satan had cast between man and God. Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. Through the accumulated misrepresentations of the enemy, many were so deceived that they worshiped a false god, clothed with the attributes of the satanic character. {RH, November 17, 1891 par. 6}

Jesus came into the world to illustrate the character of God in His own life, and He swept back the misrepresentations that Satan had originated, and revealed the glory of God. It was only by living among men that He could reveal the mercy, compassion, and love of His heavenly Father;

for it was only by actions of benevolence that He could set forth the grace of God. The unbelief of men was deep seated, and yet they could not resist the testimony of His God-like example, and His deeds of love and truth. {SD 139.3}

It is Satan's special device to lead man into sin and then leave him there, helpless and hopeless, fearing to seek for pardon. But God invites, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." Isaiah 27:5. In Christ every provision has been made, every encouragement offered. {PK 325.5}

Recommended Reading: *The Ministry of Healing* Chapter 35 – "A True Knowledge of God"
<https://egwwritings.org/>