

# OpenTheo

## Jeremiah 11 - 13



### Jeremiah - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg delves into the biblical references and subtext in Jeremiah chapters 11-13, touching on themes such as obedience, conditional oaths, and the consequences of disobedience. He also draws parallels between Jeremiah's imagery of the olive tree and Paul's use of it in Romans 11 to discuss the state of Israel and the broken covenant. The segment includes insights on historical context, prophetic denouncing, and the consequences of sin.

### Transcript

In chapter 11, there is the apparent subtext of the discovery of the book of Deuteronomy by Hilkiah the priest, which happened during the course of Jeremiah's ministry. And although he doesn't give any information about the setting of this process, he doesn't give the date so as to assure us that it's given, you know, maybe shortly after the book was found, there are things in the prophecy we're about to read which sound as if his audience has recently become aware of the book of Deuteronomy. And that he's making reference to it.

For example, in verse 2, he says, hear the words of this covenant. Now, he's not presenting a covenant. He's alluding to a covenant as this covenant, as if it's, you know, this book of Deuteronomy, which is the covenant document that God gave through Moses.

He's exhorting people to listen to this covenant. This covenant seems to be referring to something else rather than what he's presenting here de novo. And so the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, hear the words of this covenant and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and say to them, thus says the Lord God of Israel, curse it is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant.

Now, that would be directly taken from Deuteronomy 28, where the blessings and the curses were enumerated by God. If you were if you're obedient to me, these blessings will come upon you. And if you're disobedient, these curses will come.

And there's quite a long catalog of curses in Deuteronomy chapter 28, beginning at

verse 15. And so based upon what is read there in Deuteronomy, he can say authoritatively that there's the curse has come upon Judah and Israel and whoever is breaking the covenant. Says curse it is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt from the iron furnace.

Now, the iron furnace is a term also taken from Deuteronomy. It's referring to the Egyptian bondage. He refers to it as the iron furnace in Deuteronomy 420.

And Jeremiah clearly picks up the language from there. When I brought them out of the land of Egypt from the iron furnace, saying, obey my voice and do according to all that I command you. So shall you be my people and I will be your God.

This is, of course, the way that God framed the covenant, that he would be their God. They would be his people conditionally upon their obedience. This is not an unconditional relationship.

God did not make the Jews unconditionally his chosen people, but they could be his people. If they are obedient to him. That I may establish the oath which I've sworn to your fathers to give them a land flowing with milk and honey as it is this day.

Now, God says, be obedient to me so that I can establish the oath that I swore. The idea being the oath was conditional and and he swore some good things to them if they meet the condition. So be obedient so he can keep his oath.

It's quite clear that God would not keep his oath if, in fact, they were disobedient. So this is important because there are people today. And in fact, the Jews of Jeremiah's own day believe that simply being Jewish made them God's people.

And there are even Christians today who think this about the Jews. They think that being Jewish makes them God's people just because of their race. This is not what not what God says.

This is not what even the Old Testament says. Some people think, well, the New Testament seems to take away from the Jews their special privileges. Now, the Old Testament does.

The Old Testament is what declares them not to be God's people when they're disobedient. The New Testament just records a new phase of their disobedience when they rejected the Messiah. Then I answered and said, so be it, Lord.

So all that is all that we've had up to verse five is what God was telling Jeremiah, not what Jeremiah was telling others. And so he says, yes, Lord, I'm going to tell him that. Then the Lord said to me, proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, hear the words of this covenant and do them.

For I earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, obey my voice. Yet they did not obey or incline their ear. But everyone walked in the imagination of his evil heart.

Therefore, I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but which they have not done. Now, even the history of how God commanded them these things and they disobeyed seemingly would presuppose a knowledge of the book of Deuteronomy, or at least of the books of the law, some of the books of the law, because it's in the books of the law that this history is recorded of God bringing them out of Egypt and so forth. Now, even though the Jews had lost the books of the law prior to their rediscovery in Josiah's day, they had lost or ignored them or forgotten them.

They would remember the Exodus simply by virtue of the fact that keeping Passover was a continual remembrance of it. But the specifics of the covenant that God made with them when they came out of Egypt and the curses and blessings and the conditions and so forth would not be known intuitively. And if they had forgotten their laws, if they'd even forgotten that the book of the law existed, which seems to be the case, because when Hilkiah the priest found it, he said, what is this? You know, he didn't know what it was.

That's how much Judaism had been operating without their Bible and without even knowledge that their Bible existed. So without those books of the law, it seems like it'd be impossible even for Jeremiah or anyone else to be familiar with the history and what God had said. Of course, we might say, well, God would just reveal it directly to Jeremiah.

But it's more likely that he is responding to the rediscovery of this information and making and basically bringing God's contemporary application to their situation, because they have, in fact, earned themselves the curses that are in the book. Verse nine. And the Lord said to me, a conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear my words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers. Now, up to verse eight, he's simply recalling the disobedient of an earlier generation of Jews that God had told them be obedient.

I'm giving you a land. You can keep this land. You can have the blessings I promised if you're obedient to me.

And he says, but they would not. But now he says, now this generation, Jeremiah's generation, which is many centuries later, a much later generation of Israelites, they have not done any better. He says these people have turned back to the iniquities of

their forefathers.

Their forefathers did bad, and now this current generation is making the same mistake. Verse 11. Therefore, this says the Lord, behold, I will surely bring calamity on them, which they will not be able to escape.

And though they cry out to me, I will not listen to them. Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods whom they offer incense to. But they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble.

For according to the number of your cities were your gods, O Judah. According to the number of your streets of Jerusalem, you have set up altars to that shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal. Therefore, do not pray for this people, God tells Jeremiah.

This is the second time he said it. The first time was back in chapter 7, verse 16. He will say it again in the future.

Do not pray for them. God's done with them. For now, anyway, this generation of Jews.

Or lift up a cry of prayer for them, for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to me because of their trouble. What has my beloved to do in my house, having done lewd deeds with many? And the Holy Flesh is passed from you. When you do evil, then you rejoice.

The Lord called your name Green Olive Tree, lovely and of good fruit. With the noise of a great tumult, he has kindled fire on it, and its branches are broken. It's obvious that this particular verse provides the imagery that Paul takes up in Romans chapter 11.

He speaks about Israel as an olive tree, but not only as an olive tree, but an olive tree that has some of its branches broken off. This imagery of Israel being called a green olive tree, and then at the end saying its branches have been broken, is a reference to the fact that the branches, the Jews of Jeremiah's time, were going into captivity. They'd be broken off from the land of Israel and from God and the covenant, so they are removed from Israel.

Although at this point, when Jeremiah was talking, they were not removed physically from Israel. They would be, but they've been broken off from God. How? Well, as the chapter says, they broke the covenant.

The connection to God is the covenant. Loyalty to the covenant is what connects people to God. In fact, it's what constitutes the olive tree and its legitimate branches.

The olive tree, Israel, is defined by covenant faithfulness, and therefore, he says, you've broken this covenant. And therefore, these branches, these Jews, have been broken off from what's Israel. Now, Paul is taking that same concept and applying it to his own time.

And in Romans chapter 11, which I would think would be a familiar passage to all, Paul picks this up and says in verse 16, but if the firstfruits is holy, the lump is also holy. What that means is, under the law, whenever they made their first cakes and so forth from the harvest, they would offer the firstfruits of it to God, which was a way of signifying that the whole harvest was really the Lord's. And they're giving him a token of it to show that the whole lump, the whole batch is really the Lord's.

But they just give him the firstfruits as a token of that. He says, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, meaning the Gentiles from another source, not the original Israel, if you were grafted in among them, and with them you became partaker of the root and the fatness of the olive tree, that means you Gentiles are now part of Israel, the olive tree.

Do not boast against the branches that were broken off, but if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say, then, branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief, they were broken off.

And you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear, for if God did not spare the natural branches, meaning the Jews who have not believed in Christ, he may not spare you either. Therefore, consider the goodness and the severity of God on those who fell severity, but toward you goodness.

If you continue in his goodness, otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. So they've been broken off because of unbelief, you've been grafted in because of faith, you can be cut off if you lose faith, and they can be grafted in if they quit being in unbelief.

In other words, the entire connection to this tree, whether you're a natural branch or a foreign branch, is based on what Paul calls faith. But what Paul calls faith suggests the whole relationship of good faith. It's not just believing facts about Jesus, it's embracing those facts.

It's being faithful to the covenant. And so Israel, Paul defines as an olive tree because he's following Jeremiah's lead on this. And as Jeremiah did, he said that those Jews who are unfaithful to the covenant are broken off branches.

They're not part of Israel anymore, not part of the tree. But Jesus is the new covenant. God has given him as a covenant to the nations, according to Isaiah.

And Jeremiah also talks about the new covenant. And faithfulness to the new covenant means faithfulness to Jesus. So Paul takes Jeremiah's imagery, where Jeremiah's talking about people being unfaithful to the old covenant of Deuteronomy, and Paul applies the same principle to being unfaithful to the new covenant, to Christ.

Jews who don't believe in Christ have broken the covenant, and they're not part of the

tree anymore. Gentiles who obey Christ, who are faithful to Christ, they are faithful to the covenant, and therefore are in the tree. So Israel is defined not by ethnicity, but by covenant faithfulness in both testaments.

It's never a racial thing, merely. Now, Isaiah 11:17, Now, they've hurt themselves. They've sinned against themselves.

He doesn't mean that they are the primary and important victim of their sin. God is always the important one who is injured and offended in sin. But this sin has been to their own undoing.

Therefore, they're hurting themselves. They're hitting themselves in the head with the hammer. And so by their sinning, they are invoking the wrath of God.

That is not good for them. They're sinning, as it were. They've done this against themselves.

Verse 18, Now the Lord gave me knowledge of it, and I know it. Now what? There was a conspiracy against Jeremiah by his townspeople. He was from the priestly city of Anathoth, three miles from Jerusalem.

But the priests were all very compromised, as Jeremiah has been saying. Just because they were Levitical priests doesn't mean they were the good guys. In fact, they were bad guys.

They were compromised. They were, you know, ruling by their own power. They were allowing idols to be worshipped and abominations to be done in the temple, even innocent blood to be shed in the precincts of the Lord's house.

Jeremiah has said all these things. And this is the priest's fault. He was a priest too from that town, but he was an uncompromised priest.

He was a prophet, a faithful man. The other priests were all evil. And the priests of his hometown began to plot to kill him.

And I don't know how he learned of it. He said, The Lord made me know it. The Lord revealed it to me.

And it might have been strictly by revelation, or God might have providentially allowed the information to leak somewhere from some person, sort of like when there was a plot by 40 men to kill Paul. They said they were not going to eat or drink until they killed Paul. Well, God obviously providentially allowed that Paul's nephew happened to be within earshot of the conspirators.

How likely is that to happen? And so Paul was apprised of it, even though it was a secret conspiracy. That kind of thing could have happened to Jeremiah, or it might have been

by direct revelation since he was a prophet. And he says, Now the Lord gave me knowledge of it, and I know it.

For you showed me their doings. But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter, and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more. So they wanted to kill Jeremiah.

But, O Lord of hosts, you who judge righteously, testing the mind and the heart, let me see your vengeance on them, for to you I have revealed my cause. So again, his wishing ill on those who were trying to kill him. Therefore, thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life, saying, Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, lest you die by our hand.

Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine, and there shall be no remnant of them. For I will bring catastrophe on the men of Anathoth, even the year of their punishment.

So this priest would, every descendant of theirs would be wiped out in Anathoth, of those local priests. All right, let's turn now to chapter 12. Jeremiah now is speaking not to the people, but to God.

He's not a happy camper, and there's reasons for that. One, things are going badly for him, and also he just doesn't like the message he has to give, and it just seems like everything is rotten for him. His own fellow priests at Anathoth are plotting to kill him, and it seems like people, although God has denounced them and said judgment will come upon them, at this point, the bad people are prospering, they're doing fine.

It doesn't seem like judgment is coming upon them, whereas the righteous, like himself, things don't go well. David and others in the Psalms made these same complaints. In fact, in Psalm 73, the sons of Asaph complained of this very thing.

The writer of Psalm 73 said that he almost backslid, he almost fell away from God, because he considered how the wicked prosper, and the righteous are victimized by them, and God doesn't seem to intervene. It seems like there's no God. It seems like God is at least not doing his job, and it tended to make him have his doubts.

He says, my feet had almost gone, my steps had well and I slipped, but he says, then I went into the house of God, into the tabernacle, and I then understood that their end is not good, and then at the end he said, it's good for me to draw near to God. Things aren't going well for me, the psalmist said, but it's still good for me to draw near to God. It's always better to draw near to God, even if you're persecuted, even if it seems like the wicked are the ones who are getting the short-term advantages.

The psalmist came to terms with that. He almost didn't. He says, initially it almost ruined his faith, but he then began to reflect more realistically on the way things are going to go for the wicked, and he said, well, I'm in better condition seeking God.

Jeremiah is wrestling with the same issues. In the beginning of chapter 12, he says, righteous are you, O Lord, when I plead with you, but let me talk with you about your judgments. Now, God, I'm going to just start out saying I know you're right, but there's some things I don't understand I need to talk to you about.

The way you judge situations, the way you, you know, administrate your kingdom here, it seems like the wrong people are getting blessed. He says, why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? You have planted them. Yes, they have taken root.

They grow. Yes, they bear fruit. You are near in their mouth, but far in their minds.

That reminds us of what Isaiah said, which Jesus himself quoted. Isaiah 29, 13, these people draw near to me with their lips, but in their hearts they're far from me. Jesus said that applied also to his own generation.

Isaiah had said it, and that's who Jesus quotes, but he could have quoted Jeremiah on the same point. You are near to them in their mouth, but far from their minds. They talk a good religious talk, but it's not sincere.

It's not in their hearts. But you, O Lord, know me. You have seen me, and you have tested my heart toward you.

Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter. Again, he kind of ventilates his anger toward them. How long will the land mourn, and the herbs of the field wither? The beasts and the birds are consumed for the wickedness of those who dwell there, because they said, he will not see our final end.

Now, what he's saying is, God, I need to talk to you about your judgments, because these people are the ones you're supposed to be judging. These people are the ones who are happy. They're bearing fruit.

They're taking root. They're secure. They're prospering.

Now, I don't get it. Seems like you should draw them out like sheep to the slaughter. How long are you going to let them ruin things for everybody else? They are the ones who are bringing these disasters.

Their behavior is that which caused all the birds to flee, and the places to be, the beasts to be consumed, and the herbs to wither. All the judgment that's coming upon us is their fault. So, kill them.



Now, again, that doesn't sound very Christian. But first of all, Jeremiah isn't a Christian. Secondly, he's in conditions that we are not in, and we might be inclined to feel the same way.

God, this whole land is going down the tubes because of a few people in power who are destroying it for everybody else. Why should they be allowed to do that? Why don't you take them out, God? After all, there's a lot of people suffering from these people. This is a national disaster, he's saying.

So, I mean, his sentiments are certainly understandable. But God kind of rebukes him in verse 5. If you have run with the footmen, God says to him, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace in which you trusted they wearied you, then how will you do in the flooding of the Jordan? That is, you haven't seen anything yet, Jeremiah, and you're already fainting. You're already wearing down.

You're going to see much worse things. It is hard to run in a race. It takes exertion.

And that's even if you're running only against other footmen. But there are times when you'll run in a race that seems like your opponents, your contestants who are running against you, they're on horseback. That's unfair.

You're going to need supernatural assistance here. And you need it now, not when the horses come, but when the footmen are here. When you are running against footmen, you're getting weary.

And, you know, if you're not drawing upon God's strength, then you'll find that you're going to get weary even with the footmen. And then, you know, what happens when things get worse? You're going to collapse. You're going to hit the wall.

You're not going to be able at all to run. And remember what Isaiah said about this in Isaiah chapter 40. Isaiah 40, verse 28 and following, Isaiah said, Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary.

There's no searching of his understanding. So God has unlimited energy. He never gets tired, never faints or is weary.

He gives power to the weak. And to those who have no might, he increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.

But those who wait on the Lord shall exchange their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary.

They shall walk and not faint. In other words, the race does weary people. Even young men get tired running in a race.

Not only old men, but youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. It's exhausting to run in a race. And even a man in good shape in his prime will eventually tire, but not the person who's waiting on the Lord.

He can run in a race and not become weary, not faint. Why? Because he's exchanging his temporal and limited strength for God's unlimited strength. It's God, in verse 20, who does not faint or get weary.

God has strength that is inexhaustible. That's what you need. Whether you're going to run against footmen or against horses, but if it is God's strength you're running in, then it doesn't matter whether it's footmen or horses because God's faster than them all.

You can win the race if you're not running in your own strength. And waiting on the Lord, and with the result that you renew your strength, means you exchange your strength for His. The word renew in the Hebrew means to exchange.

And it says in verse 29 there of Isaiah, he gives power to the weak, and to those who have no strength he increases strength. So God gives His strength to people who are out of their own. They've come to the end of themselves, the end of their own resources.

Then they have to look to God, and then He gives them supernatural strength. And you know an example of someone running against horses through supernatural strength is Elijah the prophet. Elijah, when he prayed that the rain would come after three and a half years of drought, and he saw a little cloud arising, he knew the downpour was near, and he went and he told the king, he says, you better get on your horse and get home before the mud clogs your chariot wheels.

You're going to have a downpour here. You better hurry on home, to Jezreel. And the king did.

He drove his horse there, but Elijah on foot outran him and got there first. Now, it would be funny to see that happening, see a man running faster than a horse. It would look almost comical.

It's a little awkward seeing a man run anyway. In most cases in Jewish society a man wouldn't run. It was considered undignified.

But imagine a man running so fast that he's passing up horses and chariots. But obviously this was not in his own strength. Elijah was not an ordinary man.

He was a man filled with the Spirit, and no doubt it was a miraculous thing. It was not in his own strength that he ran. And so God says to Jeremiah, you've been running with footmen, and you're already weary.

You must be depending on yourself. You must be depending on your own resources.

You're going to not be able to keep it up, especially when you have to run against horses.

People can't do that. You're getting weary in a land of relative peace. This is not really the hard stuff yet.

What happens when the Jordan floods, which is just an image of when there's disaster, which hasn't yet come. For even your brothers, the house of your father, he means apparently the people in Anathoth who are plotting against him, even they have dealt treacherously with you. Yes, they have called a multitude after you.

Do not believe them, even though they speak smooth words to you. In other words, they're going to try to lure you into an ambush. If they start trying to speak kindly to you and say, oh, you come on over to our house.

We haven't had dinner with you for a while, or whatever. If they start being friendly to you, they're luring you into an ambush. Don't believe them.

I have forsaken my house, meaning the temple. I have left my heritage, meaning Judah. I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.

My heritage is to me like a lion in the forest. It cries out against me. Therefore, I have hated it.

My heritage is to me like a speckled vulture. The vultures all around are against her. Come, assemble all the beasts of the field.

Bring them to devour. This gathering of the beasts of the field to devour Israel is reminiscent of what Isaiah said in Isaiah 5 about the vineyard that God was now going to tear down the hedge that he built and the protection around the vineyard and let the beasts of the field come in and trample it and devour it. This is a reference to Gentiles coming.

These Gentiles are the Babylonians. Verse 10, many rulers have destroyed my vineyard. So again, we have the imagery from Isaiah 5 in the same passage.

They have trodden my portion underfoot. They have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it desolate.

Desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is made desolate because no one takes it to heart. The plunderers have come on all the desolate heights in the wilderness for the sword of the Lord shall devour from one end of the land to the other end of the land.

No flesh shall have peace. Now, he's using imagery again from Isaiah 5 about the vineyard and he's calling the wild beasts in to come trample upon it. That's like Isaiah 5 said.

But in Isaiah, it said that God was complaining because he didn't get the right kind of fruit from the vineyard. He did not say who is responsible except just Judah itself. Here, he makes it the rulers of Judah.

In verse 10, many rulers have destroyed my vineyard. And in this, he is closer to Jesus' parable about the tenants of the vineyard. In Matthew chapter 21, where the landowner leased out his vineyard to tenants and they were supposed to produce the fruit for him and they refused.

This addition of the tenants into Jesus' parable goes beyond Isaiah's parable. Although, Jesus' parable begins with wording very much like Isaiah 5, but the idea of the tenants really combines with Isaiah 5, this passage, where the rulers are really the ones who are responsible for the vineyard not producing its fruit and turning into a wilderness. It says in verse 12 there at the end, from one end of the land to the other, meaning from one end of Israel to the other, no flesh shall have peace.

In Revelation chapter 14, there's a bloody war described in figurative terms. And the length of the carnage is said to be essentially the same length as the land of Israel from one end to the other. And that's the passage about the blood flowing to the horse's bridles throughout the whole land.

Here we have also the sword of the Lord devouring from one end of the land to the other. Same imagery, every portion of the land of Israel covered with blood. They have sown wheat, but reaped thorns.

They have put themselves in pain, but to no profit. But be ashamed of your harvest because of the fierce anger of the Lord. Thus says the Lord against all my evil neighbors who touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit.

Behold, I will pluck them out of their land and pluck out the house of Judah from among them. Now this seems to be talking about rescuing the remnant from Babylon at the end of the captivity. All the evil neighbors, all the evil Gentiles, God will draw Israel or Judah out of them apparently after the exile.

Then it shall be after I have plucked them out that I will return and have compassion on them and bring them back, everyone to his heritage and everyone to his land. And it shall be if they will diligently learn the ways of my people to swear by my name as the Lord lives, as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then they shall be established in the midst of my people. But if they do not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, says the Lord.

Now this is ambiguous because it talks about the evil neighbors, that is the Gentiles who had struck Israel. And it talks about him plucking Judah out of their hand, but then who is it? Is it Judah? Or is it those nations that are described in verses 15 through 17? It's

maybe deliberately ambiguous. The language sounds like it may be the nations because it says at the end of verse 15 that God will bring everyone to his heritage and everyone to his land, meaning the different countries to their own individual lands.

And it says in verse 16, if they learn the ways of my people, that is if the Gentiles learn the ways of God from God's laws and so forth, then they'll be established. And then in verse 17, if they don't obey, that is if the Gentiles don't obey, then they'll be plucked up from their land. And it says that nation, which seems to be the generic nations of the Gentiles, or at least that's one way that it would probably be understood by the Jews.

However, it seems to me more likely that that nation is the restored nation from exile and everyone going back to his own heritage would be just the Jews going back to their own tribal lands. And it's not clear, but if it is talking about Judah, which to my mind, I think it probably is, then he's saying that he'll bring them back from the Gentile lands and reestablish them, as he did, of course, through Cyrus' intervention. And then he gave them a chance to do it right again.

But if they would not do it right again, he'd pluck them out and destroy their nation again, which would be what happened in AD 70. That is to say they had one exile in Babylon. They were restored from that.

They were given the chance to be obedient this time. But if they're not obedient, their nation will be destroyed and plucked out again. And it sounds like it's saying the Babylonian exile may not be the last time God drives them out of their lands.

And we know it wasn't. Now, Chapter 13. Thus the Lord said to me, Go and get yourself a linen sash and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water.

So I got a sash according to the word of the Lord and put it around my waist. And the word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, Take the sash that you acquired, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole in the rock. So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me.

And it came to pass after many days that the Lord said to me, Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the sash, which I commanded you to hide there. Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the sash from the place where I had hidden it. And there was the sash ruined.

It was profitable for nothing, no doubt very moldy. It was buried at the riverbank, probably moist. Now, he was told not to put water on it, so he was not going to be a contributor to its degeneration, but it's just going to happen.

He didn't make it happen. He didn't put water on it. And it says, Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thus says the Lord, In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.

This evil people who refuse to hear my words, who walk in the imagination of their heart and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash, which is profitable for nothing. Now, you might say, Well, why would he choose a sash, of all things, to be the imagery of the nation going bad, a sash that becomes moldy and rotten, good for nothing? Why that particular image? Well, he answers in verse 11, For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to me, says the Lord, that they may become my people for renown, for praise, and for glory. But they would not hear.

Now, a sash isn't an article of clothing that's good for much of anything except to bind a garment around the waist. It's got one use. It's not really a real versatile item of clothing, but its purpose is to be bound around its owner, to cling to it, to his owner.

And if it can't be used for that, it's not useful for anything. Once a sash has become moldy and rotten, well, you're not going to use that anymore, and you're not going to be able to use it for anything else either, so you just get rid of it. And so he says, Israel and Judah are like an article of clothing to me that only has one use, and they haven't fulfilled that use, and they're now unsuited for it, and so there's nothing to do, nothing for it but to get rid of them.

Verse 12, Therefore you shall speak to them this word. Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Every bottle should be filled with wine. Now this was apparently an enigmatic statement.

He was supposed to go and tell the people, Every bottle will be filled with wine, which on the surface of it sounds like he's saying, Prosperity is coming. The vineyards are going to be prosperous. We're going to have a great vintage this year.

We're going to fill all the bottles with wine. This is going to be a really good year. But of course that's not what he means, but that's how they're expected to understand it.

They will say to you, Do we not certainly know that every bottle will be filled with wine? We're expecting a bumper crop. We know this. You don't have to tell us that.

He says, Then you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with drunkenness, and I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, says the Lord. I will not pity or spare, nor have mercy, but I will destroy them. Now, his statement, the bottles will be filled with wine, means the inhabitants of Jerusalem, they're the bottles, will be filled with essentially judgment.

They'll be drunken with judgment. Sometimes in Isaiah, he said the people are going to be tottering and reeling, but not with wine. In other words, they'll be having affectations of disorientation, such as a person might have when they're drunk, but in fact, they're

drunk with the fury of the Lord.

In other words, they're stunned. It's like they're under such judgment that they are disoriented as if they were drunk with wine. This idea of God's judgment being like being filled with wine is connected somewhat with Jeremiah's later vision in chapter 25, verse 15, where the Lord told him in Jeremiah 25, 15, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, to me, take this wine cup of fury from my hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it and they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.

And Jeremiah says, then I took the cup from the Lord's hand and made all the nations drink to whom the Lord sent me. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, verse 19, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and some of the Philistine cities are mentioned, verse 20, verse 21 says, Edom, Moab, the people of Ammon, 22, the kings of Tyre and Sidon, Dedan, Tima, Buz, and some other places, Arabia, and so forth in the next verses. And he made all these drink this wine.

And he says in verse 27, Therefore you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Drink, be drunk, and vomit, fall and rise no more because of the sword which I will send among you. So that this military defeat coming on these nations is likened to being drunken and drinking this wine. For behold, I begin to bring calamity on the city which is called by my name, Jerusalem.

And should you not utterly be, should you utterly be unpunished, you shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth, says the Lord of hosts. So he's saying, if I'm going to do this to Jerusalem, my own people, how much more I can do this to Tyre and Sidon and the Philistines and those people, Egypt and all that. Now, the point is that Jeremiah is told to make these countries drink the wine cup which represents judgment.

Likewise, his own people. He says every bottle will be filled with wine. Well, these people are going to be filled with this wine, the wine of God's fury, the sword that's coming upon them, the same idea.

Now, in reading the beginning of chapter 13 and what we just read in chapter 25, it raises the question, you know, did Jeremiah have a travel agent? I mean, in chapter 13, he goes to the Euphrates River. That's not exactly a short trip from Jerusalem. It would have taken him possibly weeks to travel there on foot or on donkey or camel.

And that's where he put that sash. And then he went home and then he went back again to the Euphrates to pick it up some days later. In chapter 25, he seems to make the rounds to all these countries, Tyre, Sidon, Egypt, Edom, Moab, Philistines, Babylon even.

And, you know, did he go to all these places and actually carry a wine cup into the king's

throne room and say, here, God says drink this, you know. It's not known. That's one of the things that scholars are not sure what to make of it.

Did Jeremiah actually make all these trips or was this more like a vision that he had? Was this done in a visionary experience? Sometimes the things that Zechariah did, like in chapter 11 of Zechariah, he talks about how he did this thing, but some of the things are described almost like not natural. I mean, things that might not be possible to naturally do. And one has to wonder, is this like a vision? Sort of like a person has a dream of doing certain things, but a dream from God would be prophetic.

A vision, I presume, is like a dream only when you're awake. And so it may be that Jeremiah did these things in a vision rather than in his physical, geographical circumstances. It's hard to say.

It's not impossible. I mean, he had 50 years or 40-something years of prophesying. He could have had time to make these trips, but it would have been a time-consuming oracle to deliver.

But it's hard to know. Scholars aren't sure. Did he really go to these places? I mean, it could be described exactly as it is, even if it was just a vision and he was an actor in the vision and he went around to all these kings.

Now, chapter 13, verse 15. Here in Gevir, do not be proud, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before he causes darkness and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains.

And while you are looking for light, he turns it into the shadow of death and makes it dense darkness. But if you will not hear it, my soul will weep in secret for your pride. My eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears because of the Lord's flock has been taken captive.

Say to the king and the queen mother, humble yourselves, sit down, for your rule shall collapse. The crown of your glory, the cities of the South shall be shut up and no one shall open them. Judah shall be carried away captive, all of it.

It shall be wholly carried away captive. So this is a call to be humble. Don't be proud, he said in verse 15.

Verse 18, he says, humble yourself. And verse 17, he says, I'm gonna weep for your pride if you don't repent. Now, one could take this to mean that pride is itself the sin that God is judging them for.

Or it could mean that God is judging them for a lot of sins, but only their pride would keep them from humbling them. Only their pride would keep them from repenting. They have much to repent of, not just their pride.



They have to repent of adulteries and idolatries and murders and all kinds of things that Jeremiah said. Why wouldn't they do so? Well, pride would prevent that. So in a sense, pride, humble yourself, don't be proud, would not necessarily be saying that all pride is sinful, but rather that this pride is preventing you from doing what you would do if you're more wise and humble.

The arrogance of those people is also denounced by Isaiah. In Isaiah chapter two, he talked about how the looks of the haughty ones would be brought down low and every proud thing will be reduced. Isaiah frequently talked about that particular complaint of the people that were wicked, that they were proud, and it was inappropriate to be proud.

They should be weeping and mourning and humbling themselves, but they were arrogant, self-confident, and so forth. And so he tells even the king and the queen mother to humble themselves and tells them their country is going into captivity. Now, this would be a very politically charged message to be giving.

I mean, we're accustomed in the United States to having freedom of speech. In fact, one of the constitutionally guaranteed rights we have is to criticize the government. But they didn't have a constitution like that.

People before the time of the American Revolution did not have those kinds of constitutional rights. You start denouncing the king, like John the Baptist did, and you might end up in prison. What are the charges? The king was unhappy with you.

That's the only crime? That's the only charges he needs? He's the king. You don't denounce the king without facing the threat of being both imprisoned and, in John's case, beheaded. Jeremiah is now denouncing the king and the queen, telling them, you need to humble yourselves.

That would take a lot of boldness, more in his day than in ours. And I, frankly, I don't know if I'd have the boldness to go to Washington, D.C., and stand on the steps of the Capitol Building and start denouncing the politicians. I guess I probably would if God told me to.

It's not very dangerous. The worst thing that would happen is that, you know, the Capitol security would, you know, say you have to move this distance away to do that. You know, I mean, there's really no repercussions here.

But there would be in any country that had kings, and to say to the king and the queen, you need to humble yourself. You need to lower yourself. Sit down.

Your country's about ready to be taken into captivity, and you're causing it by your arrogance and your refusal to repent. Verse 20, lift up your eyes and see, those who come from the north. Obviously Babylon.

Where is the flock that was given to you, your beautiful sheep? What will you say when he punishes you? For you have taught them to be chieftains, to be head over you. Apparently he means the Babylonians are going to be your chieftains and the head over you, and that it's your fault. You have basically taught your sheep how to come under this kind of oppression.

That is, rebellion against God will bring this oppression upon you, and it's due to the king and the queen, who are being rebuked here, who have basically encouraged the behavior that brings this disaster upon them. Will not the pangs seize you like a woman in labor? And if you say in your heart, why have these things come upon me? For the greatness of your iniquity, your skirts have been uncovered, your heels made bare. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good, who are accustomed to evil.

This is a very famous verse in Jeremiah. One thing that makes it famous is it's often quoted in evangelistic context, but it's also quoted in theological debates, principally by Calvinists, because this is one of the many verses that are quoted to prove total depravity. What is total depravity? It's the doctrine that a person who's not born again, a person who's not regenerate, has no power to turn toward good, has no power to repent, no power to believe God, no power to do anything good.

They're just shot through with evil. That's the natural state of the unregenerate. It's called total depravity.

The upshot of that is that there must be a doctrine of unconditional election. If anyone's going to get saved, it's not going to be through their own choices or through any conditions that they meet, because they're totally depraved. They can't make any good choices.

They can't meet any conditions. Therefore, if God's going to save any, he'll have to choose them unconditionally. The ones he wants to save, he can't require them to meet any conditions because they can't.

They're totally depraved. Total depravity is really a doctrine of total inability. It basically says that there's a sense in which sinners don't really have free choice.

They can't choose good. In favor of this, there are a number of verses that are often quoted. Among them, Genesis chapter 6, where it says that God saw that wickedness was great on the earth, and the thoughts and imaginations of men's heart were only evil continually.

Another is from Jeremiah 17. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Another is from Isaiah.

All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Another is this verse. Can an Ethiopian

change his skin or a leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.

In other words, you can't do any better. You're just wicked through and through. Now, the fact is, these verses and many others that they'll quote, including Psalm 14, there's none that does good, no not one.

There's none that seeks after God. Lots of verses from the Old Testament. Usually, when you're reading or listening to a Calvinist, if they're trying to make the point of total depravity, or if you happen to debate them as I do, generally, they'll string these verses together like a string of pearls.

When they say, so you non-Calvinists, like me, you believe a person can turn to God. You believe a person has free will to repent. How can a person repent when the thoughts and imaginations of their hearts are only evil continually? Sorry about this interruption.

There we go. I hate it when that does that. Of course, it's my fault.

I should have silenced it beforehand. You silenced yours, didn't you? Okay, good. That's right.

Glad it's me. Better me than you, huh? So they'll say, how can you believe that a sinner can repent when the thoughts and imaginations of his heart are only evil continually? And his heart is desperately wicked and none can know it. And, you know, like an Ethiopian can't change his skin and a leopard can't change his spots.

They can't change their evil ways. And so forth. Well, what we have to understand is all of the verses they're quoting have a context that they are ignoring.

In fact, that seems to be the strategy. Quote lines from the verses so quickly that there's no time to even consider what the context may be of each of these verses. Obviously, the verse in Genesis 6 is describing the depraved condition of the people just before the flood.

How bad things got and why God had to intervene with the flood. It's not speaking about every person who's ever lived or conditions at all times. He's describing an exceptionally bad situation before the flood.

Isaiah and Jeremiah are both describing the people of their own time. But in this particular verse, it doesn't say anything about total depravity as an inherited condition. It talks about people who have become accustomed to doing evil.

They've formed habits of doing evil and those habits have become so ingrained that they can't anymore change themselves than someone can change their skin color or an animal can change its coat pattern. That is, it's become so natural for them to sin that

they can't change. But it does not consider this to be a birth condition.

This is not an original condition. It's an acquired state. You who are accustomed to doing evil, you've accustomed yourself, you've formed habits of doing evil and you've come to a place where you really can't break those habits anymore.

That's a very different thing than arguing that all persons from birth are in this condition. This is a condition that he's describing of people who have come into this condition by their accustomed behavior. Now, I wanted to say this.

I'm not suggesting, when I say that Jeremiah is talking about the people of his time or Isaiah is talking about the people of his time, I'm not saying that there are no other people who would fit these descriptions. There are many people who fit these descriptions. At all times and in many places, you'll find people of whom this description would be apt.

But what I'm saying, it's not a generic statement about humanity. This is not an anthropomorphic statement. This is not a theological statement.

It's a prophetic denunciation. You see, Calvinists want to use this as if these scriptures are trying to teach us a theology of man. A theology, an anthropomorphic view of man.

As if these scriptures are intended to be part of a puzzle of a picture that's describing all men so that we can have a doctrine of total depravity and apply it to all people. If that doctrine is true, these scriptures do not say so. That's the only thing we can say.

Maybe the doctrine is true. I don't think it is. But if it's true, these scriptures do not contribute to it.

These scriptures are, in every case, prophetic denouncing of the condition of persons who have come to a condition that God is about ready to judge. Whether all people are in this condition or not is not within the range of consideration of these verses. Verse 24, Therefore I'll scatter them like stubble that passes away by the wind of the wilderness.

This is your lot, the portion of your measures from me, says the Lord, because you have forgotten me and trusted in falsehood. Therefore I will uncover your skirts over your face that your shame may appear. I have seen your adulteries and your lustful neighings, the lewdness of your harlotry, your abominations on the hills and the fields.

Woe to you, Jerusalem! Will you still not be made clean? So it's interesting that he does suggest they can be made clean. You don't want to be made clean. Will you means do you not want to.

Do you not want to be made clean? Will you not be made clean still? So there is still hope held out at this stage in Jeremiah's ministry. They are pretty far gone. There's no

question about that.

They certainly can't change themselves. The state they're in is too habitually wicked that it's not even part of their thinking to change. Therefore, they would definitely need to look to God to change.

But they don't. And in Jeremiah's ministry, he eventually stops holding out the prospect of repentance. He's still calling the nation to repentance at this early stage.

But later, he's just going to say, okay, the disaster is set. It's coming. No escaping it.

Just surrender to it. And so his message, in a sense, to the people will change once he sees that repentance is not even a possibility for them anymore. All right, well, we'll have to stop there and take a break.