

# The Prophets & Kings

## From Rehoboam To Zedekiah

### Book 1

#### A Daily Devotional Study Guide

Week 45

## “Innocent Towards Evil”

**Study:** Jeremiah 4:11-22

**Reading:** Romans 16:17-20, 1 Kings 3:1-12

**Memory:** Isaiah 40:7

**M**y highschool classmates and I were often amazed at some of the things that came out of the mouth of the smartest girl in our class. She received straight A's and aced almost every test and exam she took, but when it came down to practical sense, we were awestruck at how many times she didn't appear to have any. Things that seemed so simple to understand about practical living seemed to go right over her head. The foolish things she said at times would leave us scratching our heads, wondering how she could be so smart and so foolish at the same time.

Today, we are going to see how the people of Judah were very smart regarding the things of the world, but very foolish regarding the things of God.

### What Does the Bible Say?

The picture of God's judgement that was presented here was that of a hot wind coming from the desert. This was not a light breeze that would be helpful with winnowing wheat, but a strong wind stirring up sand and heat from the desert. This wind was like a roaring fire and would be sent to bring destruction on the people of God (vs 11-12).

When God chose to bring judgement it was not going to be slow and methodical, but the enemy would attack like rushing storm clouds. The attack would be swift and powerful, giving the people of Judah no ability to withstand its power. The only hope for Jerusalem was for the people to repent and turn back to God. They needed to cleanse their hearts from their sin and turn away from evil thoughts. This destruction had been proclaimed and it would happen, unless the people repented (vs 13-15).

A warning alarm was to go out through all the land as the people were called to prepare for battle. Their enemies would surround Jerusalem and this was all a result of their sin. God wanted to make it absolutely clear that all of this was happening to them because of their own choices. By their disobedience and neglect of God, they were bringing judgement

upon themselves. The punishment they were going to face was going to be severe and cause great bitterness (vs 16-18).

The message that Jeremiah was called to deliver was not one he wanted to deliver. The visions he received and the message he was called to share brought great pain to his heart. The weight of the destruction he was called to warn about was very heavy for him to carry as he could hear the enemy trumpets and was given visions of the destruction they would bring. The enemy would destroy the tents of the Israelite soldiers and wipe out the dwelling places of the people. This brought continual agony to his mind and he wondered how long he would have to bear these horrific visions (vs 19-21).

God declared that his children were foolish and void of understanding. They didn't think that God would actually bring the disaster that He declared. They were experts in doing what was evil, but they had no understanding when it came to doing what was right (vs 22).

## **How Does this Apply to Me?**

In Romans 16:19 Paul encouraged his readers "to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil." This is the same desire that God had for the people of Judah, but they lived the opposite. They knew all about the evil of the world around them, but knew very little about the righteousness of God. It is very easy for you to be like the people of Judah in today's society. Through today's media, you have immediate access to much of the world's philosophies and ideals. It takes work to fill your mind with the wisdom of God, but finding the foolishness of the world comes quite easy. Take time to evaluate what you take into your mind on a daily basis and let God reveal to you any areas where you are thinking like the foolish world around you.

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- \* *Thank God for giving you true wisdom through His Word.*
- \* *Ask God to help you be wise towards good.*
- \* *Praise God because His wisdom is so much greater than the world's.*

## **Thought for the day**

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What was going to come towards the people (vs 11)?

What was clarified about this wind (vs 11)?

What do you think verse 12 means?

*\*\*\*Jeremiah was describing how great of wind this was going to be. This terrible wind was a picture of the terrible judgment that was going to come upon the people of Judah.*

How was the attacking enemy described (vs 13)?

What was Jeremiah's response to the vision of the attacking army (vs 13)?

What were the people of Jerusalem challenged to do (vs 14)?

What would God do as a result (vs 14)?

Where did a voice come from (vs 15)?

What did that mean?

*\*\*\*Dan was the northernmost point of Israel and the hills of Ephraim were just north of Jerusalem. This appears to be a picture of the message of the coming army traveling from the north to bring destruction.*

What were the people to be warned of (vs 16)?

Why was God bringing judgement (vs 17)?

What did God want to make clear (vs 18)?

How did Jeremiah feel when he saw these visions (vs 19)?

What did he see in this vision (vs 19-20)?

What question did he ask in verse 21? Why?

# “God’s World”

**Study:** Jeremiah 4:23-31

**Reading:** Genesis 1:1-5, Job 12:13-25

**Memory:** Isaiah 40:7

One of the favorite things I remember playing with as a child was a small rug that my mom had painted which was made to look like a city. I would take my matchbox cars and zoom up and down the roads of that little city, stopping at the grocery store, the school, the church and of course, the local Radio Shack. My dad loved Radio Shack and had worked there for a few years before I was born. In this make-believe world, I was the one who was in control of everything. It was my world to do with as I pleased.

Today, we are going to be reminded that this world is not our world. Though men of this world do the acting in it, it is ultimately God that is in control of what takes place.

## What Does the Bible Say?

Jeremiah was given a vision of a land that had become a waste land. He appears to reference Genesis 1 which described what the earth was like before God created it. This was probably meant to be a way to descriptively describe the complete destruction that would happen to the land. The severe judgement upon the people of God by the Babylonian empire was pictured as a great annihilation. It would be so severe that even the mountains would shake at the sight of it. Jeremiah is most likely not being literal in this word picture, but revealing how the great destruction would change much of the landscape that the people of Judah had known. The land would change from a land of abundance to a land of desolation. Not only would the people be destroyed, but much of the nature around them would be torn up and changed. It was made clear again that though this would be performed by an earthly army, it was actually a judgment from the Lord. It was clarified though, that even through this desolation that this was not the end for Judah (vs 23-27).

The earth was pictured as going into great mourning because of the judgement of God. He was making it absolutely clear that this was His

declaration and He was not going to change it. God was not going to use a natural disaster to destroy His people, but was going to use a great army. The cities of Judah would be abandoned as the people would flee to the caves and the wilderness. Many of the cities would be destroyed to the point that no inhabitants would be left in them (vs 28-29).

Knowing they were going to face destruction, the people of Judah would choose to act like a woman who would put on her finest clothes and make herself as beautiful as possible in attempt to attract the people who despised her. Though they would try to make their land appealing to the enemy to avoid destruction, it would do them no good. All Jerusalem would cry out with cries like that of a woman giving birth to her first child. They would cry for help because they were being destroyed, but there would be no one there to help them (vs 30-31).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you wonder why God chose to call prophets to give incredible descriptions of the judgement that was to come? Why didn't He just send destruction instead of taking all the time that He did to speak through the prophets? As I think about that question, several thoughts come to my mind. First is that God wanted the people to repent. The more severe the judgement would be, the more chance the people would have of recognizing their sin and need to turn back to God. God also wanted to make clear that though the attack and destruction was coming from the Babylonian army, they would be directed by God Himself. He wanted His people to realize that He was the One in control, even though other men were responsible for the actions. These are great lessons for you to learn. God's desire is always for you to repent since He doesn't want to bring punishment into your life. He also wants you to understand that He is in control of every circumstance that comes your way in life.

## Suggestions for Prayer

- \* *Thank God for revealing Himself to you through His Word.*
- \* *Ask God to help you listen and submit to His plan.*
- \* *Praise God because He is in sovereign control of this world.*

## Thought for the day

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What did Isaiah see (vs 23)?

How is this a similar description to that in Genesis 1?

Why do you think he said the mountains and hills were shaking (vs 24)?

What did Jeremiah not see (vs 25)?

What point do you think was being made?

How was the land described before the destruction (vs 26)?

How was the land described after the anger of the Lord was finished with it (vs 26)?

What was going to happen to the whole land (vs 27)?

What was God not going to do (vs 27)?

Why is that significant?

What is the earth and sky pictured as doing (vs 28)? Why?

What was God making clear at the end of verse 28?

How was God going to judge the cities (vs 29)?

What would the inhabitants attempt to do (vs 29)?

How was Judah described at the beginning of verse 30? Why?

What were the actions of Judah compared to (vs 30)?

What was the cry of Jerusalem going to be like (vs 31)? What do you think was meant by this?

What was Jerusalem going to experience (vs 31)?

What point do you think God was attempting to make through this?

## *“Blessings Become A Curse”*

**Study:** Jeremiah 5:1-9

**Reading:** 1 Timothy 6:1-10, Proverbs 30:7-9

**Memory:** Isaiah 40:7

**A**s with many children, Christmas was one of my favorite times of the year. One of the things I loved about Christmas was all the gifts my parents would give. When I became a parent, I wanted to do the same for my children. For the first several years, I would often encourage my wife to overdo it and buy way more for our children than we needed to. Yet, one of the things I began to discover was that the more we gave our children the less they seemed to be happy and satisfied with what they received. I started to realize that we were giving our children too much which actually led to discontentment rather than the feeling of being blessed. We began to cut back a little and found that our children were much more appreciative when they received less.

Today, we are going to see how we can easily allow our blessings to turn into something that is very harmful for us.

### **What Does the Bible Say?**

Chapter 5 begins with a call to search the city of Jerusalem in an attempt to find a man who does what is right and who seeks after truth. This search would turn up empty indicating that all the people of Jerusalem had become corrupt. If there was even a small group of men who sought after God in Jerusalem, it could have been enough to spare the city. One of the great problems the city had was that many people claimed to follow God, but yet they lived a completely different way. God was not looking for perfection among His people, but was looking for people who wanted to follow Him and believe the truth of who He was and what He said. Instead, they lived making up their own rules and rejected God every time He tried to correct them. Instead of repenting and turning back to God, they hardened their hearts and turned away from Him (vs 1-3).

A conversation is pictured in verse four where it appears that Jeremiah declared that it was the poor and unlearned people who didn't follow God. They weren't the wise men of the land and didn't have the

understanding to follow God. He determined he would go to the leaders of the land and surely they would listen to God and choose to follow His ways. Yet, they too, just like the poor, had chosen not to be servants of God. They had released themselves from what they felt like was bondage to God, only to find themselves dealing with the results of this terrible mistake (vs 4-5).

As a result of their rejection of God, the people would not be safe, even in their own cities. Three predatory animals, a lion, a wolf and a leopard, were mentioned to picture the destruction that would come. Just as these animals were feared and would pounce on their prey, so would God bring enemies of Israel to pounce on them and tear them apart. This was all going to happen because of the great wickedness of their sin and their choice to reject and turn from God (vs 6).

God had no choice but to punish them. He had been a wonderful Father to them, providing abundant food and possessions. Yet, they chose to attribute their wealth to other gods and turned from their husband and became like prostitutes. They were compared to well fed horses who weren't satisfied with their own food, but each sought the food of the other. God could not allow these actions to go unpunished and His justice required that He bring action upon Judah (vs 7-9).

## **How Does this Apply to Me?**

How do you treat God and all the blessings He showers you with? Do you neglect Him and run after the things of this world, or do you live in thankfulness to Him, surrendering your life to Him? It is very easy to let the great things that God blesses you with become the very things that pull you away from Him. This is a danger for everyone. A pastor may be blessed with a large congregation, but that blessing could cause Him to become full of pride, thinking that He was the one responsible for great church growth. A businessman may find great success in his work, but instead of thanking God and using his wealth for good, he can easily hoard what he has and let the pleasures his money can buy take his heart from Christ. A mother could be blessed with children, and yet, let the worry and fear for her children cause her to live a life void of peace because of the very blessing she was given. There are many other ways this can happen and it is vital for you to allow the blessings of God to continue to be blessings rather than turn into a curse.

What type of search is pictured in verse 1?

What things were being looked for (vs 1)?

What did God say He might do if He found what was being searched for (vs 1)?

What did the people declare (vs 2)?

How did they live differently than what they said (vs 2)?

How are you tempted to do the same in your life?

What does God look for (vs 3)?

What do you think is meant by this?

What did God attempt to do to get their attention (vs 3)?

What did Jeremiah think about the ones who rejected God (vs 4)?

Who did he think would listen to God (vs 5)?

What had both the rich and poor done (vs 5)?

What animals were pictured in verse 6?

What did these represent?

What question was asked in verse 7? Why?

What did God compare the people of Judah to (vs 8)? Why?

What question was asked in verse 9?

What point was God trying to make?

What lesson do you think God wants you to learn from these verses?

# “Removing Dead Branches”

**Study:** Jeremiah 5:10-19

**Reading:** Philippians 3:12-21, Matthew 6:19-24

**Memory:** Isaiah 40:7

**E**very fall my wife goes around our house and takes time to trim many of the bushes and flowers that she has planted. She does this to remove the old dead parts and to make way for the new sprouts that will come in the spring. She takes her time to make sure the plants will be as strong as they can be and as healthy as they can be so they will continue to grow and blossom each year.

Today, we are going to see how God chose to remove the nation of Judah like a farmer would removed the vines and branches that were dying. God wasn't going to completely destroy Judah, but would remove many of the parts that were dead and unhealthy.

## What Does the Bible Say?

Just as a farmer would remove the old dead vines, God had declared that Israel would be removed from the land. The destruction was not to be a complete destruction as a few of the old vines were to be spared. Those vines were to have the branches stripped so the vines could start again with new shoots. This pictures what God was going to do to Judah because Judah had lived in sin and treated God with disdain. They did not believe the prophets who had declared destruction, nor did they believe what God had declared about His impending punishment. Just as they neglected the prophets, God was going to neglect them (vs 10-13).

Because the people had declared that they could do whatever they wanted and God was not going to punish them, God was going to cause their words to become like a fire and the people like wood. Those words were going to come back to haunt them. God had used neighboring nations to oppress them over the years, but this time He was going to bring nations that would come from a long distance away. They would come from an area that had been inhabited for a long time and they would speak a language that the people would not be familiar with. They would come with powerful and deadly weapons with great warriors to match. The crops that the people of Judah had planted would be eaten by them

and they would make easy work of their fortified cities that the people of Judah thought would be safe (vs 14-17).

Though this great destruction would come, God was not going to completely wipe the people out. God was going to leave a remnant to restart the nations. When that remnant would ask why God judged them in such a terrible way, they were to be clearly told how the people rejected God and chose to worship foreign gods. They were expelled from the land and forced to live in the lands the gods they worshiped were from (vs 18-19).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you really believe what God says? It is very easy to pick and choose what you want to believe and obey from the Word of God, but God desires that you follow everything He says. Even from the beginning of time the enemy deceived Adam and Eve by getting them to question what God really said. This same tactic is being used in our society today and the enemy lures people into believing religious ideas rather than the Word of God. God does care how you live. He does desire you to follow Him completely. He wants to be everything to you, but it is so easy to go chasing after the things of the world. Take time today to evaluate your life and let God reveal to you any areas where you are chasing after the gods of this world.

## Suggestions for Prayer

- \* *Thank God for the pruning work He does in your life.*
- \* *Ask God to help you not to chase after the gods of this world.*
- \* *Praise God because He cares how you live.*

## Thought for the day

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What was going to happen in the vineyard (vs 10)?

What were to be left (vs 10)?

What was going to be stripped from the vines (vs 10)?

What was this a picture of?

What did God say about the people of Israel and Judah (vs 11)?

How did they lie about God (vs 12)?

How do people still do this today (vs 12)?

What are ways that you have found yourself believing lies about God?

What had the prophets become to the people (vs 13)?

Why had many of the prophets become this (vs 13)?  
*\*\*\*Many prophets turned from speaking the truth of God and instead spent time declaring what the people wanted to hear.*

How is God described in verse 14?

What was God going to do with their words (vs 14)?

What did He mean by this (vs 14)?

Who was God going to bring to conquer Israel (vs 15)?

How was this nation described (vs 15)?

What would their weapons and soldiers be like (vs 16)?

What will this enemy do (vs 17)?

What was God not going to do (vs 18)?

What was the remnant to be told (vs 19)?

## “Open Your Eyes”

**Study:** Jeremiah 5:20-31

**Reading:** Matthew 13:10-17, Ephesians 1:15-23

**Memory:** Isaiah 40:7

**W**hen I was a substitute teacher in the local public school, I was often a pretty laid back sub. There were many times where I chose not to see something I had seen or to not listen to something that I had heard. This doesn't mean that I didn't have control over the classroom, I just didn't want to have to spend my whole time correcting the students. When something was bad enough, I did take action, but I often tried my best to ignore many of the little things that took place in the classroom.

Today, we are going to see how the people of God chose not to acknowledge the working of God. Their choice to reject God in this manner stirred up the anger of God and was going to lead to severe punishment.

### What Does the Bible Say?

The message at the end of chapter 5 was directed towards all Israelites. They were challenged to open their eyes and their hearts to see and hear what God was doing. They had refused to see and hear the works of God and chose to do things their own way. They no longer feared God. They were not afraid of His judgement and they were not obedient to what He had to say. The people were reminded that it was God who had separated the sea from the dry land. As much as the waves roared and tried to overtake the shore, the ocean was futile to conquer the land. Basically God was reminding them how He was the Creator and in control of all the things that went on around them (vs 20-22).

The people did not live in respect and appreciation towards God the Creator, instead they were stubborn and rebellious. They turned aside from the ways of God and chose to follow their own ways. Though it was God who continually provided rain and caused the earth to consistently go through its cycles, they chose not to acknowledge this. One of the great evidences of the fact that there is a Creator is the consistency of the creation when it comes to seasons. This consistency

should have been enough to remind the people to follow God, but they didn't seem to notice (vs 23-24).

The reason they didn't notice God was because their sin had clouded their vision. Instead of seeking after good, they sought after their own wicked deeds. The people that were exalted in the land, were those who had gained wealth by sinful methods. These men were compared to people who hunted birds. Just as these hunters trapped birds, the wicked men would trap others in their wickedness. Many of these wicked men became rich and were considered the great men of their day, but all of their wealth was gained through wicked ways. They were like caged birds that never exercised and only ate. They grew fat and useless, spending their time indulging in their sin. They took advantage of the poor and fatherless. Instead of standing up for them, they made more money from them (vs 25-28).

God asked them if He should spare them from punishment because of their wicked deeds. By this, He was stating that He had to judge because of how the people chose to live. Not only were the ordinary people wicked, but those who claimed to be prophets propagated the wickedness. Those who were priests also made up their own rules, disregarding the Word of God. Instead of leading them closer to God, their leaders drove them further away from Him (vs 29-31).

## **How Does this Apply to Me?**

Do you have eyes that see and ears that hear? Do you see the working of God all around you? Do you fear God and obey His commands? One of the reasons that God repeated Himself many times through the prophets was because the people didn't realize they weren't following God. You are not immune to living like the Israelites. You must remember that they were just living like everyone else around them. They were following the ways of their society, but God wanted them to live differently. He wanted them not just to blindly follow the crowd, but wanted them to open their eyes to what He desired and their ears to what He was saying.

## **Thought for the day**

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Who was this message given to (vs 20)?

How were the people described (vs 21)?

How can you live like this?

What two questions did God ask in verse 22?

- 1.
- 2.

What did God say He had done (vs 22)?

How were the people described (vs 23)?

What did they not say (vs 24)?

What did they not realize God had done for them (vs 24)?

What had their sin done (vs 25)?

How have you seen sin interfere with people seeing the clear truth?

What were found among the people of God (vs 26)?

What were they compared to (vs 26)? Why?

What were compared to a cage full of birds (vs 27-28)?

What point was being made?

What did God ask in verse 29? Why?

How did God describe what was taking place in the land (vs 30)?

What was taking place (vs 31)?

How do you see this happen today?



# “*Failure to Blush*”

**Study:** Jeremiah 6:1-15

**Reading:** 1 Timothy 4:1-16

**Memory:** Isaiah 40:7

## What Does the Bible Say?

The people of Benjamin and Jerusalem were warned to flee for their safety. Tekoah and Beth-haccherem were told to raise the signal indicating an enemy army was approaching. These areas were north of Jerusalem and would see the attacking armies before they reached Jerusalem. Disaster was approaching, and even though warning signals were given, they would not be able to avoid this disaster. Jerusalem was compared to a delicate and beautiful child, yet that beauty was soon going to be gone (vs 1-2).

The enemy would come like shepherds taking over a land. They would pitch their tents and let their sheep roam all over the land. They would prepare for war against Jerusalem. They were eager to attack Jerusalem and did not want to wait. Many armies would try to start a battle right away in the morning. They normally did not start after noon, but the picture here is one of an army chomping at the bit to destroy its enemies (vs 3-5).

God had called the Babylonians to attack Jerusalem. They were to cut down the trees and build siege ramps to invade. Jerusalem must be punished. The people were compared to a well that continually replenished itself with fresh water, except the people continually refreshed themselves with evil. The great sickness and wounds the people of Jerusalem had caused was evident. This prophecy was given to be a warning. These things would take place if they did not turn from their evil. God was going to cause Jerusalem to become a waste land (vs 6-8).

This invasion and destruction was not going to be a small thing. Even those who would be left alive would be like grape vines that were picked over and over again, leaving less and less people. Though God was giving them warnings, He knew that they would not listen. They did not want to hear from God because they wanted to continue in their sin. The messages of God were mocked and disregarded. The increasing evil

led to the increased anger of God. He stated that He was growing weary of holding His judgement in and it was about to spill over and pour out on the young and the old in the city. Their houses would be destroyed or given to other people. Their fields and wives would be taken and abused by the enemy. The great destruction was going to happen because this wickedness was happening in the whole society, from the poorest to the wealthiest (vs 9-13).

Instead of dealing with the great problems of sin, they tried to cover it up, like one would treat a deep wound very lightly. They declared that everything was great and there were no problems, even though there were many problems. They were not ashamed of their sin, but committed them openly. They no longer blushed with embarrassment, but flaunted their evil and wicked deeds. This is why God was being forced to punish them (vs 14-15).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you get so used to sin that it doesn't cause you to be embarrassed anymore? It is easy to fill our minds with evil thoughts and evil deeds of the world around us. It is easy to accept sin as common and let the attitude of the world infiltrate the church. Things that used to be an embarrassment and now practiced without second thought, not only in the world, but in the church. For instance, there was a time when a couple would choose to live together before they were married, they would often try to hide that since it was looked down upon in society. Now, people are thought to be strange if they don't live together before they are married. When it happens so much in society, many times the church doesn't speak out against it either. It can easily become accepted even though it is completely wrong. This is just one example of how you can get so used to sin, that it doesn't phase you any more. This is why you need to be so careful that your evaluation of right and wrong comes from God and His Word and not the norms in society.

## Suggestions for Prayer

\* *Thank God for revealing right and wrong in His Word.*

\* *Ask God to help you be sensitive to what is right and wrong.*

## Thought for the day

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What were the people told to do (vs 1)?

What was coming (vs 1)?

How is Jerusalem described (vs 2)?

What were the invading armies compared to (vs 3)? Why?

What do verses 4-5 point out about the eagerness of the opposing army?

Why did God want to make it clear that He ordered this attack (vs 6)?

Why did God say He was going to judge Jerusalem (vs 7)?

Why did God warn them (vs 8)?

What can you see about God from His repeated warnings?

How bad was this destruction going to be (vs 9)?

What was happening to the warnings that God was giving (vs 10)?

How did they view the words of God (vs 10)?

How do you see this happening today?

What was God full of (vs 11)?

What was going to happen to all the people (vs 11)?

What would happen to the things they held dear (vs 12)?

How are the people described (vs 13)?

What did the people do instead of repenting (vs 14)?

Why were the people no longer ashamed (vs 15)?

How can this happen in our day?

## Memory Verses

*Isaiah 40:1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God? 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The LORD has spoken!" 6 A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass.*