

Trust & Obey

Jeff Rogers / Empty Nesters Bible Study

Jeremiah 40-44

The forty-fourth chapter of Jeremiah contains the prophet's last recorded words. Jeremiah 45 is a short prophecy given to Baruch two decades before (605 B.C.; see 45:1). Chapters 46 through 51 contain prophecies previously given against the nations. The oracles against Egypt were spoken in 605 B.C. (46:2), while the judgments against Babylon were announced around 594 B.C. (51:59). Chapter 52 is an appendix to the book that, as the Bible indicates (51:64b), was not written by Jeremiah himself. Thus chapter 44 contains the last recorded words of Jeremiah.¹

This is a good place, therefore, to recount the many sufferings of the Weeping Prophet. *He was ignored, rejected, scorned, and humiliated. He was beaten, imprisoned, and put in the stocks. He was falsely accused and condemned as a traitor. Twice he was cast into a dungeon and left for dead.*²

Finally, Jeremiah's devotion to the people of God carried him into exile. He spent his last years in Egypt, the land of the Sphinx and the pyramids. He must have lived there for some time, for by the time he uttered his last words, the Jews had scattered along the Nile: "This word came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews living in Lower Egypt—in Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis—and in Upper Egypt" (44:1).³

I. Understand the History

- A. Jeremiah is freed to return to the remnant (Jeremiah 40:4-6a)
- B. Gedaliah, the Babylonian appointed governor of Judea, was assassinated by Ishmael (son of Nethaniah) (Jeremiah 41:1-3)
- C. Johanan (son of Kareah), prepares to lead the people to Egypt, fearing Babylonian reprisals for Ishmael's murder of Gedaliah (Jeremiah 41:17-18).
- D. The remnant, under Johanan's leadership, pauses to ask Jeremiah to pray (Jeremiah 42:2-3) and promises obedience to the Lord's voice (Jeremiah 42:5-6) (Contrast the life (41:17) to the lips (42:6).
- E. After ten days, Jeremiah provided the remnant the Lord's answer (Jeremiah 42:9-16)
- F. The remnant's disobedient actions (Jeremiah 43:2, 4, 7) and the promised judgment (43:10-13)
- G. God's promised supervision of the remnant's destruction (Jeremiah 44:25b-27).
 1. The blatant rejection (44:15-17)
 2. The utter short-sightedness (44:17b-18)

II. Comprehend the Applications

- A. **As the mind goes, so goes obedience.** (Romans 12:2, *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*) Compare 41:17, 42:2-3, 42:6; 43:2; 44:16.
 1. The warning against doublemindedness (James 1:5-8, esp. vs. 8) (**James 1:8**, *He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*)
 - a) *Double-minded* – Seen in a duality, division, opposing thoughts or intentions, resulting many times in indecisiveness. It is saying one thing and doing another.
 - b) *Unstable* – ceaseless motion (unrest); lacking stability, fixity, or firmness. (Squishy!)
 2. The single-minded example of John the Baptist
 - a) (Matthew 11:7-11; **Matthew 11:7**, *As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"*)
 3. The Challenge to Believers to grow strong roots.
 - a) **Ephesians 4:14**, *So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*

¹ Ryken, Philip Graham. *Jeremiah and Lamentations: From Sorrow to Hope*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

B. As the family goes, so goes the nation.

1. The imperative of fatherly leadership
 - a) The past challenge (Jeremiah 44:9)
 - b) The present abdication (Jeremiah 44:15)
 - c) The brazen disobedience (Jeremiah 44:25)
2. The historical precedent.
 - a) Adam (Genesis 3:6, Eve ate the forbidden fruit)
 - b) Abraham (Genesis 12:10-20, Abram went to Egypt)
 - c) Jacob (Genesis 31:30-35, Rachel hid her false gods)

C. As obedience goes, so goes the blessing.

1. The Conditional Promise
 - a) The Blessing (Jeremiah 42:10, 11-12)
 - b) The Curse (Jeremiah 42:13-18)
2. The New Testament Example
 - a) A Concise Question (Luke 6:46)
 - (1) The question evokes a word of warning.
 - (2) The question is cause for investigation.
 - (3) The question should cause examination.

(a) **Matthew 7:21**, *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

(b) **2 Thessalonians 2:9–10**, *The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, 10 and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.*

- b) A Clear Illustration (Luke 6:47-49)
- c) A Crucial Application (Luke 6:46-49)
 - (1) Martin Luther, *“It is faith alone that saves, but the faith that saves is not alone.”*
 - (2) **1 John 1:6**, *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*
 - (3) **James 2:17**, *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

Luke 6:46–49

46 *“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?*

47 *Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like:*

48 *he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.*

49 *But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”*

In his notes on this verse Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) wrote, “I think the difference here pointed out between these two covenants, lies plainly here, that in the old covenant, God promised to be their God upon the condition of hearty obedience; obedience was stipulated as a condition, but not promised. But in the new covenant, this hearty obedience is promised.”



KNOWLEDGE OF SELF AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

There is a mutual dependence between our knowledge of ourselves and our knowledge of God. As soon as I am aware of myself as a self, I realize that I am not God; I am a creature. I have a birth date, a time when my life began on earth. My tombstone at my death will not engrave eternity as my starting point.

My sense of creatureliness drives my thinking back to my Creator or "up" to my Creator. I cannot contemplate God or anything else outside of myself until I am first aware of myself. Yet I cannot grasp the meaning of myself fully until I understand myself in relationship to God. Ultimately then, anthropology, the study of mankind, is a subdivision of theology, the study of God.

The crisis of modern humanity is found in the rupture between anthropology and theology, between the study of human beings and the study of God. When our story is told in isolation or divorced from the story of God, then it indeed becomes "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing." If we are considered without reference to God, we become a "useless passion," as philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre declared.

What is a "useless passion"? A passion is an intense feeling. Human life is marked by intense feelings. They include such passions as love, hate, fear, guilt, ambition, lust, envy, jealousy, and a host of others. As creatures we have deep feelings about our lives. The question haunts us: Are all these feelings useless? Is all our striving and caring merely an exercise in futility, an excursion of vanity?

The meaning of our lives is at stake. Our dignity is on the line. If human beings are considered alone, apart from relationship to God, then they remain alone and insignificant. If we are not creatures made by and related to God, we are cosmic accidents. Our origin is insignificant and our destiny is equally insignificant. If we emerge from the slime by accident and finally disintegrate into a void or abyss of nothingness, then we live our lives between two poles of absolute meaninglessness. We are peeled zeroes, stripped naked of dignity and worth.

To assign dignity to a human being temporarily, that is, between the poles of a meaningless origin and a meaningless destiny, is to indulge ourselves in pure unvarnished sentiment. We tease ourselves with self-delusion.

Our origin and our destiny are tied to God. The only ultimate meaning we can have must be theological. The question we ask was asked by the psalmist:

"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor" (Ps. 8:3-5).

To be created by God is to be related to God. This incapable relationship insures that we are not useless now or feeling. In creation we receive a crown of glory. A crown of glory is a tiara of dignity. With God we have dignity; without God we are nothing.

9:21 death. The actions of death are poetically personified as a stealthy thief or a conquering army. **children . . . young men.** See 6:11; Lam. 5:13-15 and notes. Death usually carries off older people,

but now it will remove the children and young men as well, leaving the community without hope for the future.

9:23, 24 See theological note "Knowledge of Self

and Knowledge of God." Wisdom, might, and love are natural places for sinful human beings to place their trust. Yet none of these things can withstand the outpouring of God's wrath.

Pain hurts and we want it to stop.

Fear of the unknown outcomes.

Jealousy, we want what God has not ordained for us.

Fairness, life is not fair, and we want fairness.

Love, if God is so loving; the pain would not be present.

God does not coddle our fears with false promises...

- The Word of the Lord in the Old Testament was/is perhaps more than we could ever imagine. The Word of the Lord was meant to be seen with the eyes and heard with the ears, and there are several examples of this in Scripture:
 - Abraham and the word of the Lord (Gen 15:1,17)
 - Samuel and the word of the Lord (1 Samuel 3:1, 4, 21)
 - Jeremiah and the word of the Lord (Jeremiah 1:4-5, 9)
 - **John 1:1–2, 14**, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

D.

E. What verdict would God give on your life?

1. Do we forget God in our daily life?

2. Do we establish our own righteousness rather than pursuing Christ's righteousness?

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3. Do we rebel against the Lordship of Christ when given clear instructions & commands?
 4. Do we add any other “gods” in our life (money, positions, fame, stuff)?
 5. Do you love God like a newly married bride?