

## “Jeremiah & Lamentations” (Route 66)

Let’s turn in our Bibles... to the Books of JEREMIAH... Briefly, we will look at LAMENTATIONS... these two books are RIGHT NEXT to each other...

Jeremiah is actually the LONGEST Book of the Bible... MOST people think that is PSALMS, but... PSALMS has 30,147 words... Jeremiah has 33,002 words... And—while PARTS of Jeremiah are in prose—MUCH of this Book takes the form of poetry...

Which is what Lamentations is... Lamentations is a POEM written BY JEREMIAH... as he PERSONALLY WITNESSES the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 BC...

See, up to this point, the PROPHETS have been warning that JUDGEMENT IS COMING upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah... But JEREMIAH actually SEES IT HAPPEN...

Dr. Graham Scroggie writes: “*Jeremiah is a book to be known and loved.*” – It has been called: “*A prophetic autobiography.*” – We know MORE ABOUT Jeremiah than ANY OTHER Old Testament prophet...

And, the WAY his Book comes about is interesting. – In Chapter 36, God will TELL Jeremiah to... take ALL of his sermons—all of his poems and essays—and put them down in writing.

And, he EMPLOYS A SCRIBE by the name of BARUCH... Baruch takes all of Jeremiah’s writing and compiles them into a SCROLL...

But Baruch ALSO gathers lots of stories ABOUT Jeremiah and LINKS THE PIECES TOGETHER... So, this Book READS more like an ANTHOLOGY... Now, the Book is NOT arranged CHRONOLOGICALLY...

- In Chapter 1, there’s a **SHORT INTRODUCTION**...
- In Chapters 1—20, there’s a **COLLECTION OF WRITINGS AGAINST JUDAH & JERUSALEM BEFORE** the Babylonian Captivity...
- There are **PROPHECIES AGAINST FOREIGN NATIONS**—in Chapters 25 & 46—51...
- In Chapter 44, we have **JEREMIAH’S LAST PROPHECY**, when he addresses the Jews who flee to EGYPT during the Babylonian invasion...
- And then—in Chapters 26—45, there are **EVENTS WRITTEN ABOUT JEREMIAH in THIRD PERSON** (probably by Baruch)...
- There’s an **HISTORICAL APPENDIX** in Chapter 52, which is ESSENTIALLY the same thing as 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings Chapters 24 and 25, and the DESTRUCTION of JERUSALEM...

Now—if you’re a NOTE-TAKER—I encourage you to write this down... This is the FIRST POINT in my sermon... Here we go... WRITE down: **I WILL NOT LIKE KEVIN BY THE END OF THIS MESSAGE.** – That’s point Number 1... (It’s spelled ‘K—E—V—I—N’...)

POINT NUMBER 2 is... **JEREMIAH'S AUDIENCE DID NOT LIKE HIM AFTER HEARING HIS MESSAGE...** And BOTH AUDIENCES are GOD'S PEOPLE...

So, the Book BEGINS with: **"The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah..."** – Verse 2: **"TO whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign."** – Verse 3...

**"It came also in the days of Jehoiakim... until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah... until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive (to BABYLON) in the fifth month."**

So, THESE VERSES not only "set up" what the ENTIRE BOOK is **ABOUT**... They **ALSO** tell us the TIME-FRAME Jeremiah served as a PROPHET...

He is **CALLED** around 626 BC, and CONTINUES until a short time **AFTER** the destruction of Jerusalem [in 586 BC]...

*"Preceded by Jonah, Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, & Nahum... He was a contemporary with Zephaniah & Habakkuk IN the land... and—for a time—with Ezekiel & Daniel in the east. Jeremiah saw 5 kings on the throne of Judah... and was TO Josiah what Isaiah had been to Hezekiah."*

So—like Habakkuk (which we saw last week)—Jeremiah STARTED his ministry in the days of Josiah... when there was **TREMENDOUS NATIONAL REFORM...** But it had LITTLE effect on the people. – *"You can't LEGISLATE spirituality"* (we said that last week)...

And, he is CALLED from a YOUNG AGE... In Chapter 1, Verse 4, he says: **"the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'"**

In Verse 6, we read Jeremiah's protest... He says: **"Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak... I am only a youth."** But the LORD said to me," Verse 7... **"Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak."** – **"Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you..."**

**YOUNG PEOPLE... PLEASE SEE** God wants to **USE** US at a YOUNG AGE... God called DAVID at a young age, TIMOTHY at a young age... SAMUEL was just 3 YEARS OLD! – At THIS point, Jeremiah is estimated to have been between 17 to 20 years old...

And, he tries to AVOID GOD'S CALL on his life... In Chapter 20, he says: **"Everyone mocks me."** – **"...the word of the LORD was made to me a reproach and a derision daily."** – **"I said: 'I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.'"**

But then, he says: **"Your words were found, and I ate them... And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart..."** – **"[It] was in my heart like a burning fire... Shut up in my bones; I [became] weary of holding it back, and I could not."**

**THIS** is what happens when we have a GENUINE EXPERIENCE with God's Word... We **WANT** to TELL people! – Nobody has to **MAKE** us, we don't take **CLASSES** on how to do it

We READ God's Word... He SPEAKS to it... and we **WANT** to go TELL people...

Now... God's Word **THROUGH** Jeremiah is HARSH... God COMPARES the idolatry of His people to a PROSTITUTE... From the ESV—God says: **“On every high hill and under every green tree you bowed down like a whore.” “You have played the whore with many lovers.”**

As you can imagine—this CAUSES Jeremiah's ministry to be VERY UNPOPULAR. – I mean, these are NOT the kinds of Verses you put on T-SHIRTS or BUMPER STICKERS...

Jon Courson writes: *“Jeremiah was... not the greatest [prophet]... That... goes to Isaiah... He was not the most mystical prophet. That honor goes to Ezekiel... Jeremiah was not the most successful prophet. That [was] Jonah, who spoke ONE TIME and [a whole] city repented. But – without a doubt – Jeremiah was the most **courageous** of prophets.”* – G. Campbell Morgan said:

*“None was more heroic than Jeremiah.” – “Called in a decadent age... to a stiff-necked people to proclaim unwelcome truth, he had his full share of the consequences that accompany such a task.”*

Jon Courson writes: *“[His] enemies... threw him in a dungeon... Family and friends rejected him. Other prophets & priests made fun of him... Placed in stocks, beaten, humiliated, ridiculed.”* – He was *“branded a traitor.”* – *“And yet—for 42 years—Jeremiah proclaimed the message God had laid on his heart... And—for 42 years—not a single person responded.”*

David Guzik writes: *“[Jeremiah's]... ministry was a tremendous display of faithfulness and courage in the face of great **dis**-couragement... with very [little] results.”*

Now... the REASON Jeremiah's ministry was SO HARD... is **NOT** because he was not telling the TRUTH, or PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD... It's because the GENERAL POPULACE... of **GOD'S** PEOPLE... had become CONVINCED that GOD had OTHER PLANS

They had been **MIS**-LED by “spiritual leaders” who PROPHESED FALSELY in God's name... This idea runs **THROUGHOUT** the Book of Jeremiah...

- Chapter 5, Verse 2: **“As the LORD lives,’ surely they swear falsely.”**
- In Chapter 6:13: **“...the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely.”**
- In Chapter 29:9: **“...they prophesy falsely to you in My name...”**
- In Chapter 14: **“The prophets prophesy lies... I have not sent them... nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision... a worthless thing...”**
- In Chapter 23: **“the prophets... prophesy lies... saying, ‘I have dreamed!’ – They are prophets of the deceit of their own heart...”**
- God says: **“I am against those who prophesy false dreams... and cause My people to err by... lies and... recklessness... I did not send them [nor] command them.”**

But the **BIGGEST INDICTMENT** is Chapter 5, Verse 30. The Lord says: “**An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely... the priests rule by their own power**” –And **THEN** God says: “**My people LOVE to have it so.**”

Adam Clarke writes: “[The people] were perfectly satisfied with [the] state of things.” – David Guzik says: “God’s people were perfectly happy to have false prophets and corrupt leadership. **[It] reminds us that popularity among God’s people is never to be regarded as a guarantee that one speaks for the LORD or leads in [a] godly manner.**”

THINK ABOUT THAT... Just because a MINISTRY is **POPULAR**... it is NOT EVIDENCE that it is being **BLESSED BY GOD**... or a GUARANTEE that **TRUTH** is being proclaimed...

This has **REALLY** been on my heart lately... To use a word that is **OFTEN** over-used... I have been **BURDENED** about this... Paul the Apostle said a:

**“...time will come when [people] will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap-up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”**

PAUL is describing a TIME... that LOOKS like CHURCH... right? People are GATHERED together... They HAVE TEACHERS... they are SITTING and LISTENING to SOMETHING...

But it ISN’T SOUND DOCTRINE... It is “**according to [the peoples’] OWN desires...**” – They have “**[heaped] up for THEMSELVES teachers...**” – They’re turning aside to what Paul calls “**fables.**” – STORIES... **UN-TRUTHS... MADE-UP STUFF...**

And—RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE of this—Paul says to Timothy: “*People aren’t gonna WANNA hear the truth... They’re gonna WANT to have their EARS TICKLED... They’re gonna want to SIT and LISTEN to TEACHERS—YES... but NOT TO THE TRUTH...*”

In the middle of this, Paul says to Timothy: “**[And] I charge you... before God and the Lord Jesus Christ... Preach the WORD! Be ready in season and out of season... be watchful in all things, endure afflictions... Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**”

THAT is my calling! This is my COMMISSION... **before God**... People WONDER why I take what I do so seriously... **READ THIS VERSE!**

My role is **NOT** to TELL people what they want to hear... You realize we could have a BIGGER church, right... We could have a MUCH BIGGER church—**EASILY**—if I would just START TALKING ABOUT POLITICS from the PULPIT...

Like, this seems to have become the SECRET to MODERN-CHURCH GROWTH...

There are PROBABLY MORE people who WANT me to speak about POLITICS... than to TEACH the doctrines of repentance, death, hell, judgement, salvation, justification...

People would RATHER me tell you who to VOTE for... than to talk about the **RAMPANT... UN-BIBLICAL DIVORCE RATE** crippling the modern-day church...

People would rather **BELIEVE** that homosexuality is somehow WORSE than a person being addicted to porn... Or caught-up in the idolatry of COVETEOUSNESS... but not honoring God with our FINANCES...

ONE is WHAT PEOPLE WANT... But, it's NOT HOW WE GROW... VERY FEW PEOPLE nowadays... seem to actually have an APPETITE—and the DISCIPLINE—to SIT and listen to **DOCTRINE** be espoused from the pulpit...

Now—if you ASK me—who is to BLAME: the PASTORS or the PEOPLE... I'd say YES... G. Campbell Morgan said, of Jeremiah's day: *"Prophets, priests, & people were united in [this]..."*

PASTORS have erred in that we have CREATED a church environment where we NO LONGER teach the Word of God, and—BECAUSE of that—many peoples' appetites have **SHIFTED** to CRAVE something else...

But rather than SOUND THE ALARM and say, *"Wait a minute! We're not teaching people the Word of God!"* – It seems that we have just ADAPTED to ACCOMDATE the APPETITES and FEED PEOPLE FALSELY... THIS was the state of affairs in Jeremiah's day...

And he comes on the scene, and is **VILLIFIED** for saying: *"Your religious leaders are not telling you the truth."* – Here's a GOOD EXAMPLE... Remember the famous *"Potter and the Clay"* passage from Jeremiah Chapter 18? – God says to Jeremiah:

**"Speak to the men of Judah and... Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now everyone from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good."'"**

The VERY NEXT VERSE says: **"And they said, "That is hopeless! – We will walk according to our own plans, and we will—everyone—obey the dictates of his evil heart."**

EVEN THOUGH... Jeremiah Chapter 17 says: **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..."** – People say to me: *"Oh, I'm just trying to FOLLOW MY HEART."*

I say: *"DON'T! – DO NOT FOLLOW YOUR HEART."* – Our HEARTS are DESPERATELY WICKED, and will DECIEVE us... We need the **TRUTH**... of GOD'S WORD...

Now, DESPITE Jeremiah's warnings, Babylon **DOES** INVADE Judah... they DESTROY the city of Jerusalem... This is where the Book of LAMENTATIONS is inserted... Lamentations is Jeremiah **LAMENTING** the Fall of Jerusalem...

Jeremiah is known as *"the weeping prophet,"* and Lamentations is a **RECORD** of Jeremiah's weeping... It is *"Dirge Poetry."*

In fact, this REACTION... is ONE of the reasons... that Jeremiah is compared to Jesus... In Matthew Chapter 16, Jesus asked the disciples: “**Who do [the crowds] say that I... am?**” – And THEY said: “**Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others JEREMIAH...**”

One author writes: “*Through his action and attitude, Jeremiah portrays a lifestyle similar to Jesus... And for this reason, he may be called a type of Christ in the Old Testament. He showed great compassion for his people, and WEPT over them. He suffered at their hands, but PRAYED for them. Jeremiah is one of the most Christlike personalities in the Old Testament.*”

And Jesus alludes to SEVERAL PASSAGES from Jeremiah... When He asks: “**Has this house, which is called by my name, become of den of thieves?**” – That’s a quote from Jeremiah.

When He speaks of those: “**who have eyes, and see not, and... ears, and hear not**”—that’s a quote from Jeremiah. – When He says “**you will find rest for your souls**”—Or when He speaks of the people as “**lost sheep,**” those are REFERENCES to Jeremiah...

Now, the STRUCTURE of Lamentations is pretty AMAZING... Chapters ONE, TWO, and FOUR... all have 22 Verses... And that’s because there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet... And, each Verse begins with a DIFFERENT Hebrew letter... in an ACROSTIC...

Chapter 3 has 66 Verses, because every 3 Verses, a different Hebrew letter is used... And then, Chapter 5 has 22 Verses, but – one author says – “*By the time Jeremiah gets here, he is so... emotional that, rather than following any form, [it] becomes an outpouring of his heart.*”

H.L. Ellison said: “*[Jeremiah’s] use of the [Hebrew] alphabet... symbolize the completeness—the A to Z—of [his] grief being expressed.*”

I’d say a STAND-OUT VERSE from Lamentations is Chapter 3, Verse 22... where Jeremiah says: “**Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.**”

Now, that’s a GREAT VERSE for US, right? – But—CONTEXTUALLY—Jeremiah is writing to a group of people who have JUST BEEN CONQUERED... They have seen SOLOMON’S TEMPLE DESTROYED... and they’re CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE by the ENEMY...

But Jeremiah writes that: “*...as beat down and defeated [as] the people... were... There was still a remnant with a promise of restoration.*”

See, God promised... that—after SEVENTY YEARS—the people of Judah would RETURN to their own land... In Chapter 25, the Lord declared:

“**Because you have not heard My words... I will... take... Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon... [and] bring them against this land... and... utterly destroy them... this whole land shall be a desolation and astonishment, and... shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.**” – But God says: “**...it will come to pass, when [the] seventy years are completed... I will punish the king of Babylon and... make [that nation] a perpetual desolation.**”

Now... WHY 70 YEARS? – People ASK that a lot... All the way back in Leviticus Chapter 25—when the Lord BROUGHT the Children of Israel into the Promised Land—He TOLD them:

**“...the land must be given a rest period, a sabbath to God. Six years you may plant your fields... and harvest your crops, but the seventh year is a sabbath... for the land... during which you may not plant your fields... Do not harvest crops... and do not gather the grapes... [because] it is a year of rest for the land.”** – This is called ‘*The Sabbath Year.*’

And, God TELLS them... if they DON’T observe this **“Sabbath for the land”**... He says: **“I will scatter you among the nations... Your land will [be] desolate... your cities in ruins. [And] as long as the land is desolate and you are in your enemies' land, the land will... rest and enjoy its sabbatical years... that you would not give it when you lived there.”**

So, the seventy years that the Lord **ALLOWS** the Children of Israel to be taken captive into Babylon... is **BECAUSE** they **DIDN’T** OBEY the ‘SABBATH YEAR’ command...

David Guzik writes: *“The people of [the Southern Kingdom] DENIED the land its Sabbaths over a period of... 490 years, meaning they ‘owed’ the land 70 Sabbaths... to fulfill [these] seventy years... God took [BACK] the years during the Babylonian exile.”* – We read this **VERY SPECIFICALLY** at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles Chapter 36...

And—in ANOTHER somewhat “famous” passage from Jeremiah... Chapter 29... He WRITES to the people who are **IN** captivity in Babylon to ASSURE them that God is going to bring them BACK to their own land after these 70 years...

But, guess what? – The SAME FALSE PROPHETS were at work, giving people a FALSE MESSAGE from the Lord... God says—in Jeremiah 29, Verse 8...

**“Do not let your prophets and... diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD.”**

One author writes: *“The false prophets among the Jews in Babylon likely told the Jews that they would soon be allowed back to Judah and... should plan accordingly.”*

But **JEREMIAH’S** MESSAGE is: **“Thus says the LORD... to all... whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters... take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands... that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace, you will have peace.”**

THESE VERSES... are God trying to **REASON** WITH HIS PEOPLE... that they’re going to be in Babylon **LONGER** than they THINK... and they should SETTLE DOWN... and GET COMFORTABLE... and actually “seek the peace” of the nation who had DESTROYED THEIR TEMPLE??? – I mean, isn’t **BABYLON THE ENEMY!!!**

Can you IMAGINE how UN-POPULAR this MESSAGE was??? – But, THIS SAME DYNAMIC is at work in the world today...

There is LOTS of stuff happening in the United States... Big changes... Things that Christians do not necessarily want... And yet—rather than being voices of reason, where we point people to Jesus—there are many Christians just fighting for the COUNTRY—to preserve the COUNTRY.

Instead of promoting a message that God is in control, God is orchestrating all things, God HAS US right where He WANTS us... Nothing has taken Him by surprise, and He can be trusted...

Listen to these passages, ALONGSIDE Jeremiah's MESSAGE to HIS people in Babylon...

Romans Chapter 13... **“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. [Because] there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves...”** – Paul says: **“He is God's minister to you for good... Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.”**

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2—**“submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors... [Because] this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men...”** – 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2...

**“I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men... [for] all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet & peaceable life in all godliness & reverence. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior...”**

SOMEHOW... MANY CHRISTIANS have become the FIRST IN LINE to wave the banner of ‘Civil Disobedience’ as claim it as the WILL OF GOD... Is it POSSIBLE that we have SPIRITUAL LEADERS who are TELLING us the WRONG THINGS???

William Newell said: *“[Our] Savior suffered under Pontius Pilate, one of the worst Roman governors Judea ever had; and Paul under Nero, the worst Roman Emperor. And neither our Lord nor His Apostle denied or reviled the ‘authority!’”*

Let me just ask you... Was BABYLON EVIL? – Yes... Did BABYLON do EVIL THINGS? – Yes, they did... Did they OPPRESS GOD'S PEOPLE? – Yes, they did... Had GOD PUT BABYLON IN CHARGE... Yes, He had... And now, God SAYS to His people:

**“Seek the peace of [Babylon]...”** – BE A BLESSING **“where I have caused you to be carried away captive... [because] in its peace, you will have peace.”**

This is almost the SAME thing Paul says... Pray for **“all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life...”** – People say, *“Kevin, you don't understand what's going on in our country!”* – Did GOD establish our country? – YES, he did...



Did God KNOW you were going to LIVE here? – Yes, He did... Does God KNOW what is HAPPENING in our country? – Yes, He did...

Do we have a GOVERNMENT? – Are we told to SUBMIT to the GOVERNMENT? – IS GOD’S WORD TRUE? – See... Because IF we start answering NO to ANY of those questions... We start to have a MUCH BIGGER THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM to sort out...

God tells **His** people—on the heels of telling them to SETTLE DOWN, and BUILD HOUSES, and PLANT VINEYARDS, and RAISE FAMILIES, and SEEK THE **PEACE** of BABYLON!!!

He says: **“I know the thoughts that I think toward you...”** – This is God saying: *“I KNOW what I’m doing.”* – And I have **“Thoughts of PEACE,”** toward you, **“NOT of evil... to give you a FUTURE and a HOPE.”**

A lot of times, WE take this Verse... and we APPLY it to mean: *“Yes! God’s going to give me what I want! – He’s got a FUTURE and a HOPE for me!”*

Yeah... and that future INCLUDES living unto the Lord—and seeking the PEACE OF BABYLON—WHILE YOU LIVE THERE... OR, as JESUS said it:

**“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you... pray for those who spitefully use you & persecute you... To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back... For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps... who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously... love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.”**

God says: **“After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.”** (the land of Judah)

Now... THERE IS—like a LOT of the prophecies we have looked at—a **“NEAR FAR FULFILLMENT”** to Jeremiah’s words... I’ll CLOSE by highlighting TWO of them...

In Chapter 23, Verse 5, Jeremiah writes: **“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”** – Now, this is SIMILAR to Isaiah Chapter 11, which reads:

**“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”** – He **“shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.”** – These are PROPHETIC REFERENCES to the MESSIAH...

David Guzik writes: “Jesus [came] from the stump of Jesse. The royal authority of the house of David was dormant for 600 years when Jesus came as King and Messiah. [But] When Jesus came forth, it was like a new green Branch coming from an apparently dead stump.”

R.K. Harrison said: “Jeremiah does not reveal as much about the... Messiah as Isaiah did, but... provides glimpses of Christ as the Fountain of living waters... the good Shepherd... the righteous Branch... the Redeemer... the Lord our righteousness... and David the king... New life will thus spring forth from the fallen dynasty” in Jesus.

And, the LAST thing we’ll talk about is Jeremiah’s promise of the NEW COVENANT... In Chapter 31, we read: **“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and... the house of Judah—not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt... But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel...**

**I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”**

Charles Swindoll writes: “Jeremiah... [gives] the clearest glimpse of the new covenant God intends to make with His people... God [will] put His law within them, writing it on [their] hearts [instead] of tablets of stone. Rather than fostering our relationship with God through a fixed location like a temple, God promised... that His people would know Him directly, a knowledge that comes through the Person of... Jesus Christ.”

Now... ALL THE WAY BACK in Deuteronomy Chapter 30... Think about how LONG AGO that **WAS** from the days of Jeremiah... Moses SAID to the people that:

**“It shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among... the nations where the LORD your God drives you...”** (That’s what we’re talking about TODAY, with the EXILE)...

Moses says if you: **“return to the LORD... and obey His voice... with all your heart and with all your soul,”** he says: **“the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from... the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you.”** – “And,” he says: **“the LORD your God will circumcise your heart... to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”**

I’m going to READ THIS EXCERPT from an author... Because I think it sums-up the IMPORTANCE of Moses’ proclamation... He says: “Moses says... that when Israel finds themselves sitting in exile, at any point they can turn back to God. And—in response—God will... **“circumcise [their] hearts, so that [they might] love [the Lord] with [their] heart and soul and live.”** This vivid metaphor says something is fundamentally wrong with Israel’s heart—

*the same thing wrong with all humanity. Going all the way back to... the garden, Israel has seized autonomy to define good and evil for themselves... Moses says that... God is going to **transform [their] hearts, so that they can actually listen to and love God from the heart and discover true life. This is the promise of the new heart**, which is picked-up later by the Biblical prophets (Jeremiah & Ezekiel)."*

And **IN** EZEKIEL (where we'll be NEXT week)... we get a GLIMPSE of **HOW** the Lord DOES this... God says: "**I will... put a new spirit within them,**" I will "**take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them... they shall be My people, and I will be their God.**" – David Guzik writes: "*These promises are later... spoken of specifically as a 'covenant.'*"

What God talks about with this **NEW COVENANT** is **SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION**... It is NOT AN **EXTERNAL** set of RULES AND REGULATIONS to GUIDE His people...

But an **INTERNAL** TRANSFORMATION, where God GIVES US a NEW HEART, a NEW MIND—a NEW SPIRIT—so we can KNOW HIM PERSONALLY and WALK IN HIS WAYS...

Of course, we KNOW this is fulfilled in Jesus—Who SPEAKS of the New Covenant "**in [His] blood...**" – Paul says we are "**ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter**" of the law, "**but of the Spirit.**"

This is what it MEANS to be **BORN AGAIN**... "**Born of the Spirit,**" Jesus says [in John Chapter 3]... Where God DEPOSITS HIS OWN SPIRIT into our hearts... And CHANGES us...

Now, we are no longer just trying to live-out RULES and REGULATIONS... Something **SUPERNATURAL** has taken place... where our HEARTS and MINDS and WILL have been ALIGNED with God's... And He has given us the POWER to live-after these things...

This is why the writer of the Book of Hebrews calls the New Covenant "**BETTER**" than the Old Covenant... It is **FULFILLED** in Jesus... And it is FIRST SPOKEN OF in the Book of Jeremiah...

Jeremiah is an AMAZING Book of the Bible... And I HOPE you will spend some time THIS week re-visiting it...

NEXT week, as I said... The Book of Ezekiel... This is ANOTHER PROPHET, who will LIVE—and WRITE TO—God's people **DURING** the Babylonian Exile...

So, I encourage you to SPEND SOME TIME this week READING over that Book—and PRAYING—and then, join us next Sunday morning... as Route 66 continues...