

Jeremiah 04 - A Call to Repentance; An Imminent Invasion; Sorrow for the Doomed Nation

II. Thirteen prophecies of judgment upon Judah (Jer 2:1—25:38)

(1) Nine general prophecies of judgment that include offers of repentance (Jer 2:1—19:15)

(B) Second message: coming judgment and the necessity for repentance (Jer 3:6—6:30)

(b) Israel's call to repent (Jer 3:12—4:2)

(ii) Definition of repentance (3:22b—4:2)

(c) Judah's call to repent (4:3-4)

(d) Coming judgment (Jer 4:5—6:30)

(i) Invasion described (4:5-22)

(ii) Destruction described (4:23-31)

Jeremiah 4

(b) Israel's call to repent (Jer 3:12—4:2)

(ii) Definition of repentance (3:22b—4:2)

1 "If you will return, Israel," declares the LORD, "*Then* you should return to Me. And if you will put away your detestable things from My presence, And will not waver,

1 "If you will return, O Israel," declares the LORD, "*Then* you should return to Me. And if you will put away your detested things from My presence, And will not waver,

1 "Israel, if you return to me," declares the LORD, "Return to me, remove your detestable idols from my presence, and don't waver.

1 If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

- In other words they are not going to be taken off into captivity, if they will repent. They don't repent, so they are put into captivity.

2 And *if* you will swear, 'As the LORD lives,' In truth, in justice, and in righteousness; Then the nations will bless themselves in Him, And in Him they will boast."

2 And you will swear, 'As the LORD lives,' In truth, in justice and in righteousness; Then the nations will bless themselves in Him, And in Him they will glory."

2 If you swear, 'as surely as the LORD lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations will be blessed by him, and in him they will boast."

2 And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

(c) Judah's call to repent (4:3-4)

3 For this is what the LORD says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: "Break up your uncultivated ground, And do not sow among thorns.

3 For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, "Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns.

3 For this is what the LORD says to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, "Break up your unplowed ground, and don't sow among thorns.

3 For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

- Here Jeremiah is going to use two rhetorical analogies, one out of agriculture, and one out of physiology

-- The first is, he is not speaking about real ground here, he is talking about the untilled heart. No farmer sows on unplowed ground. Their hearts are hardened, and they need to be plowed.

4 "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your hearts, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will spread like fire And burn with no one to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds."

4 "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds."

4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD and remove the foreskin of your heart, you men of Judah and residents of Jerusalem, or else my wrath will break out like fire and burn with no one to put it out, because of your evil deeds."

4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings.

- Obviously not a literal physiology. He is using it as a rhetorical device.

— Circumcision is of the heart, we learn this in Deut 10:16; Rom 2:29.

— Paul says circumcision is of the heart, he is quoting from the Torah (Phil 3:3). The inward reality should replace the outward sign. Circumcision was introduced as a sign to Abraham, but what He is saying here is that true circumcision is not an outward sign, it is an inward reality.

(d) Coming judgment (Jer 4:5—6:30)

(i) Invasion described (4:5-22)

5 Declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say, "Blow the trumpet in the land; Cry aloud and say, 'Assemble, and let's go into the fortified cities.'

5 Declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say, "Blow the trumpet in the land; Cry aloud and say, 'Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fortified cities.'

5 Declare in Judah, make known in Jerusalem, by saying, "Blow the trumpet in the land, cry out, and say, 'Gather together and let's go to the fortified cities!'

5 Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities.

- Different trumpet, this isn't the Temple trumpet, this is the trumpet that might be analogous to Rev 8-9. "...Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities."

— He is suggesting that the rural people take advantage; it is sort of futile here when He says, "Blow the trumpet." Those that are in the outlying areas, go into the cities to protect yourselves from the coming invasion. It is not going to do any good, but they can hold out for a while. In those days, you retreat to the fortified cities in time of stress.

Evil From the North

6 "Raise a flag toward Zion! Take refuge, do not stand *still*, For I am bringing evil from the north, And great destruction.

6 "Lift up a standard toward Zion! Seek refuge, do not stand *still*, For I am bringing evil from the north, And great destruction.

6 Raise a standard in the direction of Zion. Flee! Don't stand around! For I'm bringing calamity from the north, along with great destruction.

6 Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.

Some commentators say that these invaders from the north are the Scythians, and you will find good scholars that will tell you it is wrong. It is clear that the invaders that Jeremiah is talking about are the Babylonians. It may seem strange to think of Babylon coming from the north, but that is the fertile Crescent issue. Since they have to go around the Arabian desert, they have to go up, and then come down from the north. Even though they are east routed, they have to make that swing. So the enemies of Israel typically come in from the north.

The Scythians have never invaded Judah; Israel maybe, but not Judah. That is a very important fact to know. This will keep you from getting tangled in Jeremiah, you will

recognize right up front that we are dealing with the Babylonians and there is lots of evidence (we will get to later) that supports this. But clearly from textual issues we know that Jeremiah had in mind the Babylonians, not the Scythians. The reason it is important is because of Ezek 38: there the Scythians come from the uttermost parts of the north, they don't just come from the north. And in fact, that invasion has not yet happened.

This destruction is going to be the Babylonians under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, who later becomes the king of Babylon. He is the Lord's anointed, he is used by God to be His instrument of judgment, and Jeremiah understands that, but it makes for a very unpopular theme, since Judah is very pro-Egypt, Babylon's rival. Judah keeps getting into these political alliances. Jeremiah tells them not to do it, the Babylonians are going to win, and furthermore it is of God. Judah doesn't listen, they keep getting into these treaties, and they get smashed. Of course Jeremiah's theme song, even though Zedekiah subsequently is a friendly king, his second lieutenants are the old guard and pro-Egypt. Zedekiah is very useless in trying to protect Jeremiah from his enemies.

7 "A **lion** has gone up from his thicket, And a **destroyer of nations** has set out; He has gone out from his place To make **your land** a waste. Your cities will be ruins, Without an inhabitant.

7 "A lion has gone up from his thicket, And a destroyer of nations has set out; He has gone out from his place To make your land a waste. Your cities will be ruins Without inhabitant.

7 A lion has gone up from his thicket, and a destroyer of nations has set out. He has left his place to make your land a waste. Your cities will be ruined, and without inhabitants.

7 The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; *and* thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.

- "...lion" - as a symbol, happens to be the same symbol that Daniel sees in Dan 7 in Babylon

- "...destroyer of the Gentiles" - an OT allusion to the Antichrist; see [Allusions to the Antichrist](#)

— He is also called the "Spoiler" in Jer 6:26-27

- "...thy land" - the Antichrist is turning his attention from the Gentiles to now destroy the Jews

8 "For this, put on sackcloth, Mourn and wail; For the fierce anger of the LORD Has not turned away from us."

8 "For this, put on sackcloth, Lament and wail; For the fierce anger of the LORD Has not turned back from us."

8 So, put on sackcloth, mourn and wail, because the burning anger of the LORD has not turned away from us."

8 For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us.

9 "And it shall come about on that day," declares the LORD, "that the heart of the king and the hearts of the leaders will fail; and the priests will **tremble**, and the prophets will be astonished."

9 "It shall come about in that day," declares the LORD, "that the heart of the king and the heart of the princes will fail; and the priests will be appalled and the prophets will be astounded."

9 "On that day," declares the LORD, "the courage of the king and the leaders will fail. The priests will be appalled and the prophets astounded."

9 And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, *that* the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.

- "...tremble" - he is speaking here of the prophets and including himself because he himself will express amazement over some of the things that God will show him. But he is also speaking of the false prophets, who say everything is going to be alright.

10 Then I said, "Oh, Lord GOD! Surely You have utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, '**You will have peace**'; yet a sword touches the throat."

10 Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Surely You have utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'You will have peace'; whereas a sword touches the throat."

10 Then I replied, "Ah, Lord GOD, you have completely deceived this people and Jerusalem when you said, 'You will have peace,' while the sword is at their throat!"

10 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.

- Verse 10 is one of the problem verses: there are some translational problems with it, and so we are not going to focus a lot on it. We know that God never deceives His people so this whole thing is a combination of things: what the translation really says, and there are some arguments about that; and secondly, what does it really mean? There are about three different schools of thought, but none of them are really resolved too well.

- "...You will have peace" - Jeremiah never prophesied peace, so it doesn't mean what it says literally, in any case

— Part of the problem is translation, and part of it may be trying to get an inference of the tone that presented that here. It turns out in the Septuagint version they translated it

slightly different, implying the tones of the verbs and such that it was the words of the false prophets.

— Other scholars say that there is a permissive first cause sort of concept here, that God permitted others to deceive them and that is what Jeremiah has an eye toward (Ex 9:12; Eph 1:11; 2 Thess 2:11; 1 Kings 22:21-23)

— There isn't a first cause, second cause kind of structure. God did not deceive them; he poignantly warned Israel

— So this is some sort of expression, partly maybe in the translation, and partly maybe in our understanding of the tone of Jeremiah. "Then said I," doesn't mean he is right. "Ah, Lord God! Surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reaches into the soul." It is an expression, if nothing else, confusion.

The Scorching Wind of Judgment

11 At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, "A scorching wind from the bare heights in the wilderness, in the direction of the daughter of My people—not to winnow and not to cleanse,

11 In that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, "A scorching wind from the bare heights in the wilderness in the direction of the daughter of My people—not to winnow and not to cleanse,

11 At that time, it will be told this people and to Jerusalem, "A scorching wind from the barren heights in the desert is coming toward my people, and it's not for winnowing or cleansing.

11 At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse,

12 a **wind** too strong for this—will come at My command; now I will also pronounce judgments against them."

12 a wind too strong for this—will come at My command; now I will also pronounce judgments against them.

12 A wind too strong for that is coming at my bidding. Now I'm judging them as I speak."

12 *Even* a full wind from those *places* shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them.

- "...wind" - the Hebrew word for wind is *ruwach*, which is also the word for "spirit"

The People's Response to Judgment

13 "Behold, he goes up like clouds, And his chariots like the whirlwind; His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are ruined!"

13 "Behold, he goes up like clouds, And his chariots like the whirlwind; His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are ruined!"

13 Look, he comes up like clouds, and his chariots are like a whirlwind. His horses are as swift as eagles. Woe to us—we're destroyed!

13 Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots *shall be* as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.

14 Wash your heart from evil, Jerusalem, So that you may be saved. How long will your wicked thoughts Lodge within you?

14 Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, That you may be saved. How long will your wicked thoughts Lodge within you?

14 Jerusalem, wash your evil from your heart so that you may be delivered. How long will you harbor evil schemes within you?

14 O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

15 For a voice declares from Dan, And proclaims wickedness from Mount Ephraim.

15 For a voice declares from Dan, And proclaims wickedness from Mount Ephraim.

15 For a voice announces from Dan and declares disaster from Mount Ephraim.

15 For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim.

- Dan was the northern part of the total land. So from Dan to Ephraim is the span of the nation of Israel that is the northern kingdom.

The LORD Speaks

16 "Report *it* to the nations, now! Proclaim to Jerusalem, 'Enemies are coming from a remote country, And they raise their voices against the cities of Judah.

16 "Report *it* to the nations, now! Proclaim over Jerusalem, 'Besiegers come from a far country, And lift their voices against the cities of Judah.

16 "Tell the nations, 'Here they come!' Proclaim to Jerusalem, 'The besieging forces are coming from a distant land. They cry out against the cities of Judah.

16 Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, *that* watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah.

17 'Like watchmen of a field they are against her all around, Because she has rebelled against Me,' declares the LORD.

17 'Like watchmen of a field they are against her round about, Because she has rebelled against Me,' declares the LORD.

17 They have surrounded her like those guarding a field because they have rebelled against me," declares the LORD.

17 As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD.

18 "Your ways and your deeds Have brought these things upon you. This is your evil. How bitter! How it has touched your heart!"

18 "Your ways and your deeds Have brought these things to you. This is your evil. How bitter! How it has touched your heart!"

18 "Your lifestyles and your actions have brought these things on you. This is your calamity—it is indeed bitter, for it has reached your heart!"

18 Thy way and thy doings have procured these *things* unto thee; this *is* thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.

Jeremiah's Lament for His People

19 My soul, my soul! I am in anguish! Oh, my heart! My heart is pounding in me; I cannot keep silent, Because, my soul, you have heard The sound of the trumpet, The alarm of war.

19 My soul, my soul! I am in anguish! Oh, my heart! My heart is pounding in me; I cannot be silent, Because you have heard, O my soul, The sound of the trumpet, The alarm of war.

19 "My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain. Oh, the aching of my heart! My heart pounds within me; I cannot keep silent. For I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm for war.

19 My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

20 Disaster upon disaster is proclaimed, For the whole land is devastated; Suddenly my tents are devastated, *And* my curtains in an instant.

20 Disaster on disaster is proclaimed, For the whole land is devastated; Suddenly my tents are devastated, My curtains in an instant.

20 Disaster upon disaster is proclaimed, for the entire land is devastated. Suddenly, my tent is destroyed, in a moment my curtains.

20 Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, *and* my curtains in a moment.

21 How long must I see the flag And hear the sound of the trumpet?

21 How long must I see the standard And hear the sound of the trumpet?

21 How long will I see the battle standard and hear the sound of the trumpet?

21 How long shall I see the standard, *and* hear the sound of the trumpet?

22 "For My people are foolish, They do not know Me; They are foolish children And have no understanding. They are skillful at doing evil, But they do not know how to do good."

22 "For My people are foolish, They know Me not; They are stupid children And have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, But to do good they do not know."

22 "For my people are foolish, they don't know me. They're stupid children, they have no understanding. They're skilled at doing evil, but how to do good, they don't know."

22 For my people *is* foolish, they have not known me; they *are* sottish children, and they have none understanding: they *are* wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

(ii) Destruction described (4:23-31)

23 I looked at the earth, and behold, *it was* a formless and desolate emptiness; And to the heavens, and they had no light.

23 I looked on the earth, and behold, *it was* formless and void; And to the heavens, and they had no light.

23 I looked at the earth, and it was formless and void, at the heavens, and there was no light there.

23 I beheld the earth, and, lo, *it was* without form, and void; and the heavens, and they *had* no light.

24 I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, And all the hills jolted back and forth.

24 I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, And all the hills moved to and fro.

24 I looked at the mountains; they were quaking, and all the hills moved back and forth.

24 I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly.

25 I looked, and behold, there was no human, And all the birds of the sky had fled.

25 I looked, and behold, there was no man, And all the birds of the heavens had fled.

25 I looked, and no people were there. All the birds of the sky had gone.

25 I beheld, and, lo, *there was* no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.

26 I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were pulled down Before the LORD, before His fierce anger.

26 I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were pulled down Before the LORD, before His fierce anger.

26 I looked, and the fruitful land had become a desert. All its towns were broken down because of the LORD, because of his burning anger.

26 I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place *was* a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, *and* by his fierce anger.

27 For this is what the LORD says: "The whole land shall be a desolation, Yet I will not execute a complete destruction.

27 For thus says the LORD, "The whole land shall be a desolation, Yet I will not execute a complete destruction.

27 For this is what the LORD says: "The entire land will be devastated, but I won't completely destroy it.

27 For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.

28 "For this the earth will mourn, And the heavens above will become dark, Because I have spoken, I have purposed, And I have not changed My mind, nor will I turn from it."

28 "For this the earth shall mourn And the heavens above be dark, Because I have spoken, I have purposed, And I will not change My mind, nor will I turn from it."

28 Because of this, the land will mourn, and the heavens above will be dark. Because I have spoken and decided, I won't turn back from doing it."

28 For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken *it*, I have purposed *it*, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

- God has decreed, through Jeremiah, that judgment would fall on Judah. This decree was issued only after many warnings.

29 At the sound of the horseman and archer every city flees; They go into the thickets and climb among the rocks; Every city is abandoned, And no one lives in them.

29 At the sound of the horseman and Bowman every city flees; They go into the thickets and climb among the rocks; Every city is forsaken, And no man dwells in them.

29 At the sound of the horseman and the archer the entire city flees. Its residents go into the thickets and climb among the rocks. Every city is abandoned, and no one lives in them.

29 The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city *shall be* forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.

30 And you, desolate one, what will you do? Although you dress in scarlet, Although you adorn *yourself with* jewelry of gold, Although you enlarge your eyes with makeup, In vain you make yourself beautiful. *Your* lovers despise you; They seek your life.

30 And you, O desolate one, what will you do? Although you dress in scarlet, Although you decorate *yourself with* ornaments of gold, Although you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you make yourself beautiful. *Your* lovers despise you; They seek your life.

30 You are ruined! What are you doing dressing in scarlet, putting on golden ornaments, and highlighting your eyes with makeup? You are making yourself beautiful in vain. Your lovers reject you— they're out to kill you.

30 And *when* thou *art* spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; *thy* lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life.

- The word *lovers* is not the normal word in the Hebrew, it happens to be the masculine plural participle *agab* which speaks of the inordinate affection.

31 For I heard a voice *cry* as of a woman in labor, The anguish as of one giving birth to her first child. The voice of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath, Stretching out her hands, *saying*, "Ah, woe to me, for I faint before murderers."

31 For I heard a cry as of a woman in labor, The anguish as of one giving birth to her first child, The cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath, Stretching out her hands, *saying*, "Ah, woe is me, for I faint before murderers."

31 I heard a cry like that of a woman in labor, anguish like one giving birth to her firstborn, the cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for air, stretching out her hand: "Woe is me! I'm about to faint in front of killers!"

31 For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, *and* the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, *that* bewaileth herself, *that* spreadeth her hands, *saying*, Woe *is* me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers.

- He is seeing the onslaught of the Babylonians, but there is also an overview here. Notice here the woman-in-travail idea, the woman at the beginning of birth pains.