Jeremiah Chapter 8

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Chapter 8

Theme: Rather than repent or mourn to avoid the terrible punishment coming, Judah obstinately resisted.

Outline:

1-3 Judgment to Mock Even the Dead Jews

4-7 Brutish Obstinance Against Repentance

8-9 Presumptive Hypocrisy with Scriptures

10-12 Presumptive Hypocrisy by the Leaders

13-17 Certain Desolation Should Cause Grief

18-22 God's Desertion Made Jeremiah Grieve

Preparatory Reading: Jeremiah 7; Jeremiah 9; Jeremiah 23; Zephaniah.

Related Links:

A. *Introduction to the Book of Jeremiah … here.*
B. The Bible Cannot Profit.
C. Nehushtan*! (Brass Serpent).*
D. Actions Speak Louder than Words.

Introduction:

A. This chapter is very similar to the previous one, and the combination will assist full comprehension.
B. The previous chapter condemned Judah's presumptive hypocrisy for trusting in Jehovah's temple.
C. This chapter will include condemnation for Judah's hypocritical trust in having Jehovah's scriptures.
D. God's fury against Jerusalem and Judah for their sins burns even hotter here by desecrating the dead.
E. The chapter will close with a call for mourning by the people and actual mourning by Jeremiah himself.

Judgment to Mock Even the Dead Jews – Verses 1-3

1 At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings

of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and *the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves:*

A. The time is clear throughout – war by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon – and ruin (Jer 7:32).
B. The previous chapter ended with death and burials but not enough space to bury all.
C. The besieging Chaldeans would open the fancy graves of Judah and desecrate the dead.
    1. Soldiers want spoil to justify the effort and risk they must put forth in a long siege.
    2. The siege of Jerusalem took 18 months, which would infuriate soldiers (Jer 52:4-6).
    3. The rich often have so much, especially royalty and officers, to bury some valuables.
    4. They would open the graves for spoil and desecrate the bodies in anger from heaven.
    5. If we have learned anything this far, we know the desecration was God's judgment.
D. Grasp the degree of destruction and desolation by opening up sepulchers for the bones.
E. The five classes of persons here are the same five identified earlier (Jer 2:26: 1:18; 4:9).
F. Lesson: God is holy and creative enough to judge rebels far worse than you can imagine.
G. Lesson: It is descriptions like this that reveal His holy character and hatred for sinners.

2 And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.

A. Rather than return the bones to their coffins or graves, they scattered them like dung.
    1. A five-fold creative description here is His mockery of their worship of the heavens.
    2. Appreciate God's inventive judgment on these rebels that chose the moon over Him.
    3. Why did these gods not save their devotees? Now they are like dung before the gods.
    4. There was no affection, servants, time, reason to gather to rebury. Ultimate dishonor!
    5. The use of words like dung in the Bible are inspired by One far holier than you are.
    6. God counted these kings, princes, priests, prophets, and people no more than dung.
B. Josiah, led by God in holy zeal for His honor and worship, had done this very thing in his revival and vengeance on idolatry; now it was reversed on those reversing Josiah.
C. Lesson: God dishonors America worse than this with sexual perversity (Rom 1:24-27).

3 And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have

driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

A. The LORD of hosts, who could have easily saved them from the Chaldees, ruined them.
   1. Those that were not killed in Jerusalem, but fled to various places, would be in fear.
   2. Moses foretold this kind of terror 1000 years earlier (Lev 26:36,39; Deut 28:65-67; Job 3:20-22; 7:15-16; 15:21-22; I Kings 19:4; Jer 20:14-18; Jonah 4:3; Rev 9:6).
   3. Death itself is not the worst judgment, for the desire to die while alive can be worse.

B. This cannot mean the holy remnant God saved in Babylon or elsewhere like Jeremiah, for they were exhorted by this same prophet to prosper in Babylon's peace (Jer 29:4-7).

C. Lesson: Sin can bring His judgment of anguish, grief, and pain of soul worse than death.

Section Lessons

1. Lesson: God is holy and creative enough to judge rebels far worse than you can imagine.
2. Lesson: It is descriptions like this that reveal His holy character and hatred for sinners.
3. Lesson: God dishonors America worse than this with sexual perversity (Rom 1:24-27).
4. Lesson: Sin can bring His judgment of anguish, grief, and pain of soul worse than death.

Brutish Obstinance Against Repentance – Verses 4-7

4 Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?

A. God had more to say by Jeremiah. He was not done reasoning with them. What mercy!

B. Why such fury by God to desecrate Jewish dead and cause the living to wish for death?

C. Because even hard sinners should repent when told the violence of the previous verses.
   1. A rhetorical question – will not sinners arise in repentance? – would not most do so?
   2. A rhetorical question – will a man backslide and not return? – will not most do so?
   3. These questions, either natural or moral, have positive answers due to the next verse.

D. Though He knew they would not return, He yet reasoned with them (Jer 7:27; Hos 14:1).

E. Lesson: Never fall and not get back up; never backslide and not return; God is gracious.

5 Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

A. Since the answers in the previous verse should be positive, why will not Judah do so?

B. Judah will not return. Their backsliding is perpetual. They will not repent and reform.
   1. What caused their unusual rebellion? Deceit of peace by the prophets (Jer 5:30-31).
   2. What caused their unusual rebellion? Lying trust in the temple (Jeremiah 7:4,8-15).
   3. What caused their unusual rebellion? Lying trust in the scriptures (Jeremiah 8:8-9).

C. Lesson: If you find yourself persisting in some sin, then know that you trust in some lie.

6 I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

A. The LORD listened to hopefully hear repentance after warnings and argument, but no.
   1. The horrific threat and simple reasoning here should have caused self-examination.
   2. These rebellious and stubborn Jews rushed like a warhorse back to their wickedness.
   3. Horses in battle are glorious (Job 39:19-25), but courage and speed in sin is horrible.

B. When confronted by God, His word, or His preachers, men should question themselves.

C. The right response – right speaking – is to ask yourself about any offence to God.

D. All men talk to themselves; David showed us how (Ps 42:2,5,11; 43:5; I Sam 30:6).

E. By God's greatness, His hatred of sin, and the ruin it cases, *Self, what are you doing?*

F. If you do not do this, you are dumber than the birds that are next used in argument.

G. Lesson: Every encounter with God should bring self-examination, *What have I done?*

7 Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.

A. God reasoned by dumb birds about the Jews, thus the brutish obstinance of this section.
   1. These four species of birds know by instinct that they should do this or that on time.
   2. But Judah could not, rather would not, see the general and specific signs of judgment.
   3. From Moses through the day of this writing, they had been warned about judgment.
   4. From Babylon's earlier expeditions and its rising power, they should have feared.

B. Jesus also mocked the Jews for forecasting weather but missing the time (Matt 16:1-4).

C. Lesson: When we persist in sin against threats and offers, we are dumber than the birds.

Section Lessons

A. Lesson: Never fall and not get back up; never backslide and not return; God is gracious.

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Presumptive Hypocrisy with Scriptures – Verses 8-9

8 How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, ***certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.***

A. God by Jeremiah had just mocked their intelligence, so they claim divine wisdom here.
B. Compare this to the vain fantasy that the temple in Jerusalem would save them (Jer 7:4).
    1. Just as the Jews foolishly trusted temple buildings to save them, here it is scripture.
    2. This is a remarkable rebuke of Judah for trusting hypocritically in their scriptures.
    3. God responded by mocking His scriptures and scribes, if presumed on by sinners.
    4. The rebel Jews would use this argument again against Jeremiah's words (Jer 18:18).
C. There was no profit or value in God's scriptures or scribes unless they were obeyed.
D. The scriptures have no value unless obeyed; both testaments were written to change men (Deut 4:5-8; 30:19; Ps 19:7-11; Romans 15:4; II Tim 3:16-17; James 1:21-25).
E. The Bible is like other religious things, like the temple, requiring holy submission.
F. Lesson: The KJV Bible is truly an incredibly treasure, but worthless without obedience.

9 The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?

A. Those most knowledgeable of the Bible in Judah had no wisdom due to sins against it.
    1. When facing God's wise threats and reasoning, the best of them flunked the lesson.
    2. In fact, God promised they would fall just like the common people (Jer 6:15; 8:12).
    3. They were cast out of their offices and killed and desecrated by the Chaldean army.
B. There is no wisdom in those that flatter the scriptures or themselves about the scriptures.
    1. Jews were notorious for missing the benefit of scripture by phylacteries (Matt 23:5).
    2. They foolishly memorized its details but not its intent (Matt 12:1-7; 22:29; 23:23).
    3. Jesus told them if they would search the scriptures they could know Him (John 6:39).
    4. Paul rebuked the Jews for possessing scripture without obeying it (Romans 2:17,23).
    5. RCC popes and priests will kiss the Bible, but they will not submit to its commands.
C. Lesson: Even if you memorize it, study it, or preach it, disobedience steals its wisdom.

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Presumptive Hypocrisy by the Leaders – Verses 10-12

10 Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them

that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest ***is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.***

A. The verses here are very similar to the same judgment given earlier (Jeremiah 6:12-15).
B. Jeremiah blasted them here for their presumptive hypocrisy with scripture (Jer 8:8-9).
C. He warned them of Chaldean oppressors coming that would take their wives and assets.
    1. It will not matter to Chaldeans to take wives, fields, or houses and give them away.
    2. The rebels here, showing widespread sinning, are all ages and standings in
D. Covetousness is a terrible sin, for the New Testament calls it idolatry (Eph 5:5; Col 3:5).
    1. First, it is discontentment with what God has given you (ultimate ungratefulness).
    2. Second, it is desiring what God gave others or they earned over you (wicked envy).
    3. Third, it implies powerfully that God Himself is not enough for you (Heb 13:5-6).
E. Prophets and priests dealt falsely as noted elsewhere in scripture (Is 56:11; Mic 3:9-11).
    1. The false dealings of the prophets included abominations by the context following.
    2. Ministerial false dealings include their lies about peace connected by the use of *for*.
F. What a terrible indictment of the nation! They deserved judgment! Is America different?
G. Lesson: Hate covetousness. It is lose-lose-lose. You cannot have, enjoy, or please God.

11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

A. The prophets primarily – preachers – lied against warnings of judgment (Jer 5:30-31), and the priests took advantage of the false doctrine to keep their jobs and take the tithes.
B. They promised peace to the people without repentance or reformation, which was a lie.
C. How did they heal the hurt of the Jews slightly? By false words, not required repentance.
    1. They provided no real healing, but rather slighted the grave danger and its remedy.
    2. They did it lying about national peace, for the coordinating explanation requires it.
    3. They did not deal thoroughly with the cause or the danger, but slighted both aspects.
    4. To understand these words fully – see slighting a wound and providing a slight cure.
    5. These lying imposters told the patients they were not that bad and all would be well.
    6. As an example, mothers sometimes blow on a peeled knee, though it fixes nothing.
    7. As an example, a doctor may treat symptoms but leave a dangerous infection intact.
D. Compare what the people wanted to hear at another time – smooth things (Is 30:8-11).
E. Lesson: Preachers must not slight the danger of sin or the degree of repentance for it.

12 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they ***were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.***

A. We take this primarily of prophets and priests, who boldly committed sins beside lying.
   1. We make this choice of ministers by the plural pronoun and the recent antecedent.
   2. We make this choice of ministers by a distinct group falling with the general people.
   3. We make this choice of ministers by them being cast down from an exalted office.

B. These brazen ministers had no shame and were guilty of abominable sins before God.
   1. Telling lies about the condition and peace of Judah against the truth was abominable.
   2. But these wretches were also guilty of other sins like Eli's son (Mic 3:9-11; 7:2-4).

C. The God they claimed to represent and preach for would come and throw them down.

D. They would not be exempt from judgment; they would be cast down from their offices.

E. Lesson: Ministers first and then people must hate any compromise of revealed truth.

F. Lesson: Ministers first and then people must cultivate repugnance for abominable sins.

G. Lesson: False preachers, think Charismatics, are brazen without shame for their folly.

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Certain Desolation Should Cause Grief – Verses 13-17

13 I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.

A. Back and forth the prophet goes, from descriptions of sin to descriptions of judgment.

B. Here the LORD Jehovah describes consuming the land that flowed with milk and honey.
   1. Grapes would disappear by soldiers eating them, lack of rain, lack of servants, etc.
   2. There would no figs on the fig tree for the reasons given for grapes and God's fury.
   3. Soldiers eating the produce intended for them is found in the context (Jer 5:17; 8:16).

4. The leaves of grapevines and fig trees faded due to a divine dearth (Jer 3:3; 14:1-6).
5. These two farm products were key to Israel, but the dearth affected all (Jer 14:1-6).

C. The things He had given could be stored produce eaten either by soldiers or in the siege.

D. The things He had given could be a general threat of Canaan's fruitfulness taken away.

E. Lesson: God's promises of good can end by your disobedience, if they are conditional.

F. Lesson: What you think is secure and cannot be easily altered, He can remove with ease.

14 Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

A. The best explanation here is Jeremiah representing the nation reacting to their situation.

B. Rather than sit still with repeated warnings and now the sound of war, they chose action.

C. But their choice of action was not repentance at all but hope in their various fantasies.
1. First, they spoke of getting together in walled cities, thinking there was safety there.
2. Second, they would be silent there, to avoid offending the Chaldeans or God or both.
3. Third, they knew the reason to move and be silent – they had sinned against Jehovah.

D. They knew God had put them to silence with nothing to say to their enemies or to Him.
1. They were guilty, and as such, they had no appeals to make that made sense to them.
2. Gall is a bitter substance like wormwood, and Judah was now bitter with great fear.
3. But fear and some foolish notion of guilt, no matter how gripping, is not repentance.

E. They admit their sins in a fashion here, though there is no evidence it was sincere at all.
1. The constant assessment throughout is never hearkening to or heeding the preaching.
2. The following verses have God sending worse trouble – metaphorical cockatrices.
3. Thus, what do we read here? It is only admission of some guilt without repentance.
4. Real repentance grieves and grovels before God (Is 9:13; Job 33:27-28; Ps 51:1-19).
5. Think! The generation God killed in the wilderness said the same (Numbers 14:40).
6. Think! Judas Iscariot said he sinned by betraying the innocent Christ (Matt 27:4).
7. Think! Many will say to Jesus, *Lord, Lord,* in the Day of Judgment (Matt 7:21-23).
8. Think! Joseph's brothers knew they sinned, but it was not sincere (Gen 42:21-22).
9. Think! Pharoah called for Moses to declare he was a sinner and wicked (Ex 9:27).

F. Lesson: There is only one action to be taken in trouble – examine, confess, repent, now.

G. Lesson: Learn the horrible truth that deceitful hearts may have guilt but do not repent.

15 We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and *behold trouble!*

A. The people continued their speech, represented by Jeremiah, of their hopeless situation.
B. They thought warnings by the prophets would not happen for lasting peace and health.
    1. They heard many sermons by their false prophets of lasting peace without obedience.
    2. But they were wrong, very wrong; now they had to flee to Jerusalem and be silent.
C. They considered the wrong things – their loss rather than God's offence at their sins.
D. Lesson: Do not focus on your troubles but rather on the trouble you caused God by sin.

16 The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.

A. There is no doubt about the male pronoun – it is Nebuchadnezzar with the Chaldeans.
    1. Dan was a city in the most northern part of Israel, where his army would first appear.
    2. Chaldeans brought horses, which are terrifying against only infantry (Jer 4:13; 6:23).
    3. The chariot horses and cavalry horses had strong ones that neighed with great power.
    4. God loves horses that are used in war; you can read His description (Job 39:19-25).
B. This formidable army, with horses and chariots, must eat, so they had devoured Judah.
C. Soldiers eating produce intended for them is found in the context (Jer 8:13; 5:17; 8:16).

17 For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.

A. Pass on from literal horses, for God would send metaphorical cockatrices to bite them.
    1. If we submit to the grammar and punctuation, then cockatrices are a kind of snake.
    2. God would send the worst poisonous snake into Judah to bite them, thus venomous.
    3. These serpents would not be charmed or deterred from their intent to bite and poison.
    4. Such a metaphor fits the Chaldeans perfectly as not to be charmed (Jer 4:30; 5:15).
B. Hardly anything causes fear quite like being bitten by a venomous snake, thus our God.
C. Lesson: The folly of sinners is to think they can talk their way out of or avoid judgment.
D. Lesson: God knows your worst fears, and He can easily bring them on you for rebellion.

Section Lessons

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God's Desertion Made Jeremiah Grieve – Verses 18-22

18 When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.

A. We understand Jeremiah himself being internally overwhelmed by the coming wrath.
   1. That Jeremiah had such sensitivity to the pain of these rebels, see his, *Lamentations*.
   2. Another prophet telling of military destruction was also overwhelmed (Isaiah 22:4).
   3. He introduced his sorrow here, explained the predicament, and stated his great grief.

B. Whatever means Jeremiah took to comfort and relieve the grief, his heart stayed faint.
   1. Real soul anguish is not assuaged by pleasure or recreation that ordinarily comfort.
   2. If the calamity is great enough, you cannot avoid feeling it or thinking about it often.
   3. Use of wine or strong drink, comforting at other times, would not work (Pr 31:6-7).

C. In what follows, Jeremiah views the situation in Judah and personally grieves about it.

D. Lesson: God can afflict your heart such that the joy of previous comforts will not work.

19 Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?

A. The people that dwell in a far country causing grief are the Chaldeans (Jer 4:16; 5:15).

B. Jeremiah first spoke personally (Jer 8:18), but he represented the people and God here.
   1. He represented the people by asking how this could occur with their God and King.
   2. Not only was Jehovah their King but they also had a king from David's blessed line.
   3. Jeremiah answered them by what he had preached – their idolatry had angered God.
   4. If they would make any such appeal about Jehovah, why had they chosen other gods?
   5. The prophet defended God's integrity instantly, even in his own thoughts of Judah.
   6. Jeremiah understood the situation perfectly, yet he had sorrow before and following.

C. Lesson: It is your duty and wisdom to examine your situation and define it accurately.

D. Lesson: Do not settle in self-examination with selfish cries of want, but rather of guilt.

20 The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

A. Jeremiah returned immediately to represent the cry of the people that caused his sorrow.
B. The Jews counted on all kinds of deliverances e.g. Egypt, but no nation came to help.
C. One season of hope after another had passed, and they saw no sign of deliverance.
D. Lesson: Hope without repentance will never be realized for guilt and trouble will return.

21 For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

A. Jeremiah returned to his own grief after representing the people in the previous verses.
B. He felt the fear, the consternation, the confusion, and the hopelessness of Judah's Jews.
    1. How was he black? The color, worn at funerals, is opposite joy (Jer 14:2; Ec 9:7-8).
    2. He was astonished at what was happening – the horrific desolation he had preached.
C. Lesson: A good man, like Jesus, grieves at foolish ruin (Luke 19:41-44; Jonah 4:5-11).

22 Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

A. Jeremiah asked for a cure or remedy for the horrible situation he foresaw and now saw.
B. Prophets used similitudes; this is no exception, for no balm or doctor could help here.
    1. The context dictates the sense of Gilead's balm (a region east of Jordan), so it must be some sort of healing salve from plants in the region that could remedy wounds.
    2. Judah needed a doctor to restore her health from the dire diagnosis he had just given, and the same place of Gilead must have been known for doctors for this metaphor.
    3. These are metaphors for the simple solution of repentance preached by the prophets.
    4. There was a remedy, an easy cure for the sick and dying nation, repent and amend!
C. The structure of the final question implies positive answers to the previous questions.
D. Judah, the chosen people and promised land, surely had means to recover them both.
E. But as Jeremiah answered for God previously (v.19), they had lost God's salvation.
F. The next chapter has Jeremiah's grief for Judah's pain and many sins (Jer 9:1-22), but he also identified the causes of their disease and sure death without repentance.
G. There is nothing in this verse about Jesus being a balm or cure for sin-sick souls. No.
H. Lesson: There is always a cure and remedy for chastening – confess and repent, now.

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