

Tom Ruggirello - The Weeping Prophet

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I was looking for an opening hymn that would adequately describe the experiences of Jeremiah the prophet, and I Need the Every Hour just seemed like a good choice because he faced extraordinary challenges, as we will see. In one sense, his ministry was a failure because he could not help Israel avoid the tremendous trouble and difficulty that their disobedience brought to them. He had no family and he likely died in Egypt, far from home, and so he faced extraordinary experiences in his life.

And as we examine his life and all the details, you might ask, why would anyone want to be a prophet of the Lord if he had to go through all those experiences and the cost was so high? But I think you all know the answer to that. No matter what God instructed him to do or say, he understood really what you all know, what an honor and privileges to serve the great God. The promises that he was allowed to share with Israel and to the world for that matter, will someday change everything. Because in reality, his ministry did not end with his death.

The hard part is over for him. But he will soon awaken to new and wonderful opportunities, and unlike his previous life, he will be honored and obeyed along with the other ancient worthies, and so this wider perspective will finally make his somewhat sad and difficult story complete, and I have to tell you, brethren, I can't wait to see him rewarded with the honor and love he so richly deserves, along with so many others who have gone before us.

Well, here's a brief outline of what we will cover today. First, we're going to take a brief look at his youth and see how young he was, or how young he may have been when his ministry began. We'll then read about the warning message that God gave him to share with Israel and the resulting abuse that he endured. But despite the dire warnings and judgment message he gave, he was also used to share the wonderful message of hope, a message that he was willing to convey to the very people who abused him. Most men wouldn't.

Many men wouldn't be willing to do that, and lastly, we'll briefly look at how his ministry paralleled our Lord's earthly ministry. Now we only have time to touch on a few of those connections. So I have a more detailed outline. If anyone wants a handout that explores the parallels between his life and our Lord's, please see me after the meeting.

So there's a lot to cover. Now. The psychological element of this story is very important because despite being rejected and abused by the people, Jeremiah never expressed bitterness in those who mistreated him. He was to witness the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of most Israelites to Babylon, which caused him to write a letter of comfort to the captive brethren in Babylon. You don't do that if you are bitter towards the one you're writing to.

So I thought that said a lot about his character. So one of the highlights of his story is how he tried to comfort the very people who abused him. That says a lot about him. Well, let's see how his story begins. Jeremiah's ministry was determined even before his birth.

His book opens like, then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Now, two things stand out in that passage.

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For God to say that he knew Jeremiah before he was formed in his mother means that he knew the character that would develop and that would make him a suitable messenger, and you think about that ability of God to know those things and without affecting them necessarily before birth, just shows us the amazing ability that our heavenly Father has. In our study today, we were talking about the people in the tomb. The ability to recreate those very individuals with the same characteristics and propensities when you're talking about billions of people and not make one mistake shows us the tremendous ability of our heavenly Father to do that without interfering with free moral agency. Now, the other thing that stood out was that Jeremiah was ordained as a prophet unto the nations.

That, of course, means that his prophecies are not limited to Israel, as we will see in the later chapters regarding the fall of Babylon. That's referred to in the book of Revelation and the soon to be inaugurated new covenant. His message is tremendously deep, and so his prophecies are in reality more significant for us today than they were even in Jeremiah's day to ancient Israel. Now, he was young when he learned what God had in mind for him.

And his natural response is not surprising, and I caught that point that was made about Moses, how Moses argued with God about being used. Well, let's look at how Jeremiah responded. He said, ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, say not I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee.

And whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said unto me, behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.

My goodness, what a calling. How would you have responded if the Lord had said those things to you? I think many people would have walked away feeling that this is just too overwhelming of an assignment. But think about that. If they did, what a privilege that they would have left behind.

And that will become very evident when those who accepted God's calling come back in the resurrection. The price of discipleship can be high, and we've seen it over and over again. But the joys that come with it are far higher and grander. For some, that will only be seen in the resurrection. I think we've already seen it ourselves.

When God said Jeremiah would prophesy that nations would be rooted out, pulled down, and destroyed, he left that subtle message right at the end that I thought was really neat. The last five words of Jeremiah's commission offered a ray of hope when he added the words to build and to plant, and, you know, that's so typical of God to do something like that. Yes, trouble is necessary. Man's systems must be done away with.

But then the world will be ready to rebuild and to plant things that will endure. God does that over and over again when he's giving a condemnation message, he always puts a ray of hope in there. Now, Jeremiah never witnessed either of those things in his life, and of course, that means he still has important work to do when he returns with the other ancient worthies. This humble, consecrated man deserves the honor of helping to build and to plant in God's kingdom.

How wonderfully fulfilling that will be for him and for other faithful men and women whose ministries were so difficult because their full reward still awaits them, and I can't wait to see that. Now, when

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Jeremiah said he was a child, the word simply means a youth. But we get a clue what this age may have been when we look at the age of King Josiah. He was only eight years old, as you know, when he became king of Israel.

And we're told that in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek after God. So Josiah was 16 when he first sought the Lord. It's that word young. It's the same word that Jeremiah used for himself. Now, that's not conclusive proof that Jeremiah was also 16 when he began his ministry, but it does give us the idea of how young he may have been somewhere around 16 years of age.

So it's Certainly understandable why he would hesitate, and I thought again, the contrast between his reaction and Moses reaction. He didn't react after this, he just accepted. Here's a 16 year old accepting such an amazing responsibility to serve God and to speak to his people. A message I believe he knew would be difficult to receive.

So the question here is, when are we too young to serve the Lord? This teenager, his discussion with God show us that age is not really particularly relevant. Jeremiah quickly realized that instead of seeing himself as too young, and he understood that he was being offered the privilege of speaking for the great creator of the universe. So rather than being intimidated of standing before kings and crowds of people, he realized that God is far greater than anyone he would be speaking to, and so he saw that distinction as the reason to accept his calling.

Now, the historical context is important here. The ten tribe kingdom of Israel had already been taken captive to Assyria. So here only the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained and lived in the area of Jerusalem. In chapter one, Judah is described as a seething or a boiling pot, and they were told that trouble would come from the north, from Babylon.

But there was this sense among the people that as long as God's temple was in Jerusalem, they were safe. They wouldn't believe Jeremiah when he told them that they would not be safe if they continued to mix their worship of BAAL and other idols into the worship of God. Despite his rejection, Jeremiah remained a gentle and compassionate person. In fact, McClintock's and Strong says that the mind of Jeremiah was of a softer and more delicate texture, and brethren, maybe because of that delicate nature, at one point he was so sorrowful and depressed by the terrible treatment he received that he decided to stop speaking.

And I think that was mentioned in our study today. He said, the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak anymore in his name. But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay.

Oh, thank you. I have one, thank you. Sounds like I need one, right?

Thank you.

Well, the internal struggle that he was facing shows that he really was a good choice to deliver a message of impending doom. Because he wasn't interested in just condemning people. He really wanted to help. He wanted to help Israel avoid the trouble that was coming, and then in Jeremiah 2, God enumerates the sins of Israel, says, this is God speaking.

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What unrighteousness. Have your Fathers found in me that they have gone far from me and have walked after vanity and are become vain. I brought you into a plentiful land to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof, and when ye entered, ye defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination. Has a nation ever changed its gods, that they are not gods at all?

But my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols. God then directed Jeremiah to search for any repentant heart. He said to him, go up and down the streets of Jerusalem. Look around and consider. Search through her squares.

If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city. What does that remind you of, boy? Those words are reminiscent of God's reaction when Abraham pleaded for Sodom. It was an amazing interchange with Abraham and God when Abraham asked whether God would relent from destroying the city if 50 righteous people could be found, and God graciously agreed. Abraham then continued to reduce the number.

Remember, first the 30 and then 20, and finally 10. Would God spare Sodom if even 10 righteous individuals remained? And God said, for the sake of 10, I will not destroy it, and now in Jeremiah, we see the same desire in God. His heart is not in destruction, his heart is in blessing.

That's what he prefers to do. But before you can bless sinners, their sinful ways have to be dealt with. Because that's what good fathers do. They look for the best of what's needed in their children. When those whom God is trying to correct accept and understand what he is doing and why, their repentance always leads to God's blessing.

That's a fundamental principle of divine plan, and it reveals the wisdom and love of our great Creator's heart. He is a father who knows what his children truly need to prosper and grow, and his goal is to remove every sinful tendency in the human heart because it is in their best interest to do so. With the same goal in mind, Jeremiah was instructed to stand at the temple gate and preach in what is often referred to as the Temple sermon. He warned the people not to trust the temple's mere existence as a guarantee of their safety.

Now listen to his sermon. He said, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, reform your ways and your actions and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, this is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not Oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. If you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors forever and ever.

Brethren, if I could understand Hebrew, I would have loved to be standing in the temple gate and cheering and saying, right on. That's the message, and I would love to listen to the passion of this man's sermon. He knew his message meant life or death to those who were listening to him, and the impending destruction of Jerusalem weighed heavily on his heart. After turning a deaf ear to his words, Jeremiah later said, my anguish, my anguish, I am pained at my very heart.

I cannot hold my peace because I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. He mourned because he understood what the consequences would mean. But you know, his sorrow wasn't just for the people. He also mourned at the fierce opposition he faced. In chapter 11, he wrote this.

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He said, I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying, let us destroy the tree and its fruit. Let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more, and when he was mocked, he said, I am ridiculed all day long. Everyone mocks me Whenever I speak, I cry out, proclaiming violence and destruction.

So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long.

One notable experience for Jeremiah occurred when God told him to dictate his message to his scribe, Baruch, who read it publicly in the temple, and then when a portion of the scroll was later read to King Jehoiakim, the king cut it up into pieces and he burned it in his fire pot. But of course, that didn't silence the message. Jeremiah was instructed to dictate the words once again, have them written on another scroll with additional warnings that now included personal condemnation of Jehoiakim himself, and shortly after this, Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon, and he was either killed in battle or died by some other means.

The Scriptures aren't clear, except. Except the fact that he was killed. His son then reigned for only three months before he also rebelled against Babylon and was taken captive, and Zedekiah was made the new vassal king in Jerusalem. Because of his many warnings, Jeremiah was accused of being a secret supporter of Babylon, a spy, you might say.

He couldn't have been farther from the truth. But despite his denials, he was beaten terribly and imprisoned. Zedekiah then later intervened and had Jeremiah put in the prison courtyard a sort of house arrest. That was a little easier for him. But other officials were angered when Jeremiah continued to warn anyone he could that those who stayed in Jerusalem would either die by the sword or by famine.

He told them that the only way to survive was to leave the city and, of all things, surrender themselves to the Babylonians. But that was simply another unbelievable part of his message. They said that Jeremiah's continued preaching was undermining the confidence of their own soldiers and that Jeremiah should be killed. King Zedekiah finally said, behold, he is in your hands, for the king can do nothing against you, and I thought, how cowardly was that?

But I think he may have quietly intervened because Jeremiah wasn't killed, scriptures say. So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Melchijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern. It had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud.

Well, it must have been devastating for this righteous man, not only to have God's message so pointedly rejected, but then to be treated so badly himself. He was under the incredible stress of personal rejection and mistreatment, along with the knowledge that the people he was trying to help would soon suffer greatly. Brother, I want you to look at this picture for a moment longer. It's obviously computer generated after I described what was happening. But the image conveys something that words alone cannot express.

I see a man who from an early age was willing to do whatever the Lord instructed him to do. Now, he didn't know he would end up here like this, especially since he was trying to help his people. But the fact that he continued to preach an unpopular message tells us that he was willing to pay any price. A couple of weeks ago, brother Aaron Read Lamentations 3:23, a passage I'm sure we all love, verses 22 and 23. Read.

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It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness. This is the man who wrote those words. He goes on to say, the Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.

The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. As we look at what Jeremiah was willing to endure, we see that these were not empty words, empty philosophical words. He thoroughly believed them, and he was willing to lean on his faith in the goodness of God. Many men, and I might say most men, would have walked away from their commitment if this was the price they were asked to pay.

But, brethren, here is a visible definition of spiritual heroism, that he stayed in his loyalty to God no matter what the price was, and as I thought about that image and looked at it, Jeremiah sinking in the mud, I said to the Lord, I would be willing to do that for you. But our life is so different, isn't it? Most people could care less about what we say or what we do, but there's a principle here that I think we can all believe and stand for, and as I thought about that, I imagined this feeling of a parental pat on my head, the Lord saying, someday you may have that privilege, but for now, be faithful with what I have put in your hands.

Brethren, there's a powerful message I never want to. Whatever the Lord asks us to do, if we really understand who we're dealing with, the answer will always be yes.

The Manateext for June 16 had a profound thought that was relevant to this discussion. The text said, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous nevertheless. Afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby, and brother Russell's comment ends like this. He said, the deepest shades of sorrow become memory's most hallowed resting places, where the day star shines the brightest.

Brethren, that is a profound statement.

I had to think about that for a while. The reason remembering God's hand in past trials can become a hallowed resting place is because each memory helps form a foundation of trust in him.

I think maybe that's why the brethren tend to live such long lives, because this life is creating the vital memories that that will give us strength and courage in the future. Memory is essential to the ability of being faithful. How he has delivered us in the past gives us strength for future experiences. When we see devotion like Jeremiah's, as painful as it was at times, it should inspire us, and brethren, I pray for that same depth of devotion in each one of us here today.

There may be times when the price of discipleship is high, but when we understand who we are serving and the heroes that have gone before us, we should offer nothing less. Their example should inspire us to do the best we can with what the Lord has put in our hands.

I mentioned King Josiah earlier in reference to his age, but he also has an interesting connection to Jeremiah. Josiah, you know, was a great reformer and the First King Jeremiah encountered in his ministry. In the eighth year of his kingship, Josiah began a great reformation of Israel. Now, we don't know what prompted that, but we know it wasn't Jeremiah, because his ministry didn't begin until five years later, in Josiah's 12th year. But in Josiah's 12th year still.

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Prior to Jeremiah, Josiah began purging Israel of all its idols, even grinding them to powder. Finally, in his 18th year, he turned his attention to Solomon's temple, which had been neglected and in disrepair, and while doing that, a marvelous discovery was made. It says that Hilkiah the priest found the book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses. Brother Russell and other scholars suggest that that last phrase given by Moses may mean by the hand of Moses or in the handwriting of Moses.

And if that's true, my goodness, what a discovery. The original writings of Moses would have been over 900 years old at the time. The fact that it was lost in the first place may indicate the indifference of those who were supposed to care for it. As idolatry crept into the Jewish culture, the law of Moses simply became less significant. But the discovery was providential because it became a guide to Josiah's ongoing reformation.

When the scroll was read to him, Josiah tore his clothes and he instructed Hilkiah to ask the Lord what would happen to his people, seeing that they had strayed so far from the law, and God's answer, in effect, was that Judah would be severely punished. But because of Josiah's work and humble heart, he wouldn't see it in his lifetime. Josiah was then even more diligent in helping the people repent and follow God's law, and the people responded wonderfully.

And it says, for all the days of Josiah, they did not depart from serving the Lord. But we have to wonder, if Josiah's reform was so effective, how in the world could Judah have been so corrupt during Jeremiah's life? Because their ministries overlapped, and of course, the difference was in the reformer. Josiah was the king, but Jeremiah was the lowly son of a local prophet.

Because of his powerful position, Josiah's reform brought outward conformity. Idols were destroyed, the temple was restored, outward worship of Jehovah was reinstated. But the history of it shows that he had followed many evil kings. Idolatry and moral decay were deeply rooted in the people's heart. They conformed to Josiah's reformation because they were commanded to, not because they loved God or loved God's law or saw its real benefits.

God told Jeremiah that very fact when he said, yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord. Take away the foreskins of your heart, and so, once again, the Scriptures clearly show that good outward conduct just isn't enough. He can read the heart and bless those who try to conform their lives because they want to, not because they have to.

There's a principle, of course, that spans the ages.

The only thing we know about Jeremiah's feelings for Josiah happened when Josiah was killed in battle, when he was around 39 years of old. Years of age, the Scriptures say. This Jeremiah lamented for Josiah. That's all we know, says all the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentation to this day and made them an ordinance in Israel, and behold, they are written in the lamentations.

Well, here's a description of the challenges Jeremiah faced in trying to convert the heart of people.

It says, for from the last to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain, and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly saying, peace, peace when there is no peace. You know, we sometimes use that last phrase in our witnessing about current world conditions. World leaders want you to know that everything is

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peaceful.

Don't worry about it. But in the original context, it was those who opposed Jeremiah's message of coming destruction who essentially said, everything is fine. Don't listen to Jeremiah, he's so extreme.

But none of that was true. He knew what was coming, and as he continued to preach and the people continued to ignore him, the Lord's final verdict came down. It says, because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the people of the north, and my servant Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, declared the Lord, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and, and against all the surrounding nations.

I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voice of bride and bridegroom. This whole country will become a desolate wasteland. Well, Nebuchadnezzar's devastation of Judah was really one of the most catastrophic events in Israel's history, and as I read all this negativity here, I wonder, why would we even talk about it?

But there's a good lesson in understanding what displeases the Lord, and we're seeing that here. It's a divided loyalty. In the attack of Jerusalem. Remember that King Zedekiah attempted to flee, but he was captured.

And in the traditional cruelty of Babylon, his sons were slain before his eyes, and he himself was blinded and taken into captivity. So the last thing he likely saw was the murder of his sons. It marked the end of the Davidic throne in Jerusalem. At that time, of course, burning the temple removed the one symbolic source of courage that the people used. Most of the population was taken captive to Babylon, leaving only the poorest to tend the land, which included Jeremiah.

Well, no one was mocking him anymore, the Babylonians made sure of that. But as he always seemed to do after meting out punishments, God made some wonderful promises that all the pain and suffering was not permanent. The most profound expression of hope in Jeremiah's writings, of course, is the wonderful promise of a new covenant that we all cherish. In Jeremiah 31, God announced a future arrangement, unlike the covenant made at Sinai. Instead of laws written on stone, he said, I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God and they will be my people. This covenant will do what the reformation of Josiah and the ministry of Jeremiah could not achieve.

Continuing says, no longer will they teach their neighbor or say to one another, know the Lord, because they will all know me. From the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more. Jeremiah not only described the stern justice of God, but also his wisdom, mercy and love. This is the true desire of God's heart and as we see in God's dealings, that divine justice is not the end in itself, but divine justice is a necessary tool for uplifting a sinful nation and eventually a sinful world.

It was a message to every nation that has ever existed, and his prophecies relate to the greater work of that God's kingdom will do through Christ. So there's so much that relates to the future of mankind in Jeremiah's work. Well, with the majority of Jews now in Babylon, Jeremiah knew that they would be discouraged and they would long to be back home, and so he wrote them a letter because he wanted them to know that God had not abandoned them and that their captivity was

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only temporary.

This is part of what he wrote. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not harm you, to give you hope and the future. My goodness, what wonderful, comforting words that God has plans for Israel and for humanity. Despite all the abuse Jeremiah endured, he was still willing to write these words to his people.

They were now far from home and their lives had been terribly disrupted. But he wanted them to know that there was hope. God had plans to prosper them. Now it's likely that many of the people who read that message never saw Jeremiah's words fulfilled. But they will someday.

And then they will remember this extraordinary prophet and that his words of comfort truly came from Jehovah. They were not his own words. Words of comfort now become a focal point of Jeremiah's message not only to ancient Israel, but of course to all of us and to the world. God has watched as mankind took the same course as wayward Israel once took. But God's curse on mankind was prompted by the same wisdom and love that motivated him to punish Israel.

And man's experience with sin and death will be followed by blessings for a then experienced human race that will finally understand the heart of God and the immeasurable importance of righteousness and obedience. Well, brethren, there's one last area I'd like to briefly consider. I mentioned that there were a number of significant parallels between Jeremiah and in our Lord's first advent. So we're going to jump a few thousand years here. Remember, near the close of Jesus ministry, he asked his disciples, who do men say that I am?

And they answered, some say that you are John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and some say Jeremiah or one of the prophets, and one reason they may have considered Jeremiah was the sorrow that was common in both of their ministries. We've seen the sorrow that Jeremiah experienced. But Isaiah also describes our Lord as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Remember too how he wept bitterly at the tomb of Lazarus.

And then near the end of his life, he looked over Jerusalem, the same city Jeremiah lamented over, and he wept. It says, for the days shall come upon thee when thine enemies shall dash thee to the ground, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. My goodness. Jeremiah had that very same reaction when prophesying that Jerusalem would be destroyed.

And he has been known as the Weeping Prophet based on this text. In chapter 17 he said, if you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride. My eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the Lord's flock will be taken captive, and so these outpourings of grief for the same reason shows that Israel was about to be punished for their sin of unbelief in Jeremiah's day and also in our Lord's day. Similar connection between Jeremiah and our Lord concerns the story of Jesus birth after the wise men returned, they were warned not to go back to Herod.

Herod issued his hateful decree that all the children in Bethlehem, 2 years old and younger, should be killed, and Matthew then quotes Jeremiah saying, then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, in Ramah, was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not brethren. Can you imagine an entire town losing not only all its children under the age of two, but also in the manner they were killed. Those of you who are parents, try to remember your children when they were that age and imagine the agony of heart if soldiers were pounding on your door,

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demanding to know where you hid them.

It was devastating even for those who had no children. Now, looking at the account from Jeremiah's perspective, Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. The kingdom of Judah was primarily made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which occupied Jerusalem, and so Rachel then figuratively mourned because of the destruction Babylon would soon bring on her descendants, and so there is a direct connection then between Babylon's desolation of Judah and the killing of Bethlehem's children, which was a precursor of what was to come.

The killing began at Bethlehem, at Herod's command, and it ended with Rome's destruction of Jerusalem, the very city Jeremiah had tried to save. The parallels events brought unimaginable sorrow to Israel. So Israel's experience over the ages has been tremendously painful, filled with sorrow because of their unbelief in many cases. Now, back in Jeremiah 2, the Lord told Jeremiah why the destruction was coming. As you know, he says, for my people have committed two evils.

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out. Cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. They forsook God as the only source of life, and they looked for prosperity elsewhere. They forgot that both life and prosperity can only be found in Jehovah. Now, the symbolism of a cistern reminds us of Jesus' discussion with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

He told her that whoever drank of the water that he would give would drink an everlasting life, and this perceptive woman was able to look beyond, beyond Jesus' outward appearance, because it was obvious he wasn't an earthly king or a mighty warrior. But, you know, brethren, maybe she had had enough broken cisterns in her life to realize that she needed something better, better promises that would give her some hope. In fact, she was thirsty enough to see in Jesus the potential to drink life-giving water that he was offering. It really was a remarkable response on her part.

One of the great lessons we see from ancient Israel is not to build broken cisterns for ourselves, cisterns that cannot hold water, that do not lead to eternal life, and I'll tell you for myself, sometimes we need a prophet like Jeremiah or the words of Jesus to remind us not to waste our efforts on useless endeavors and to focus on the fountain of life. We should never take for granted where the Lord has led us and what he's given us. Brethren, what he is offering you and me is far too precious to lose sight of. Here's another possible parallel between Jesus and our Lord.

King Josiah's efforts to reform Israel really were very similar to the work of John the Baptist, who also preached repentance. Josiah's work began before Jeremiah was on the scene, but their lives did overlap, just as John the Baptist preceded Jesus, and whose work also overlapped with our Lord's ministry. The motivation of both John and Josiah really was the same, because when they condemned the sins of Israel, it was because they loved Israel, they loved the people, and they took no pleasure in its punishment, and both realized that God was worthy of Israel's worship and devotion. So the motivation was the same in both men.

Of course, there are many more parallels that we won't have time to go into, but as I mentioned, there's a handout if you're interested. But there is one more parallel I want to touch on. This is Jeremiah 32, beginning at verse 6, and Jeremiah said, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, behold, Hanameel, the son of Shulem, thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, buy thee my field, that is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is thine to buy it, and I bought the field and weighed him the money, even 17 shekels of silver.

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And I subscribed the evidence and sealed it, and took witnesses and weighed him the money and the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was opened, and I charged Baruch before them, saying, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is opened, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land. Now isn't it interesting that God would command Jeremiah to buy a field from his cousin just before the people were taken?

Captive to Babylon and lose control of their own land. It was essentially God's promise of restitution that the captivity would someday end and that field would still belong to Jeremiah, that God would make sure of it. He had the right to purchase it under the Jewish law of redemption. His cousin apparently had a debt that would be paid by selling the land to Jeremiah, and as a blood relative, Jeremiah had the right to purchase the field and release his cousin's debt.

Notice, too, that the money to purchase the field was not counted out, but it was weighed. In ancient times, a shekel was a measurement of weight. It wasn't until the Maccabees that a coin was struck in the exact weight of one shekel, and then that coin was called a shekel. But here in Jeremiah, a balance scale was used. 17 shekels of weight on one side, and silver was put on the other side to bring the scale into balance.

And of course, there's a lovely picture of the ransom. Jesus, as the blood relative of mankind, had the right to purchase the dominion of man that owed a debt to God's justice. Now, a similar story that came to mind is the parable of the treasure hid in the field, and there's something in that parable that I found of particular interest. This is Matthew 13:44 from the dialogue.

Jesus said, the kingdom of the heavens is like a hidden treasure in the field, which a man finding, he covers up, and from his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys the field. Now, this is the image I used to get when reading this parable. A man found a treasure chest or a bag of money or something of great value lying in the field, and that prompted him to sell all that he had to purchase the field. But I don't think that's right. I think if that was the case, why wouldn't he just pick up the treasure and purchase it directly?

Why cover it up and buy the field? But I think the correct picture is that the man found a gold mine or silver mine or some kind of mine in that field, and after discovering there was treasure to be mined, he covered it up so no one could see it, and then he buys the field so he could return as the owner and dig for the treasure that he knew was there. That would require considerable time and effort to extract its contents and turn the ore into a valuable asset, and I think the picture here is that Jesus saw the potential in mankind, whether it be as part of the Church, the great company Israel, or the world of mankind.

But before he could mine that potential, he had to pay the price to buy the field. Now, when Jeremiah bought his cousin's field, two documents were written as proof of his purchase. One document was a legal paperwork that would normally have been sealed in an earthen vessel for safekeeping. The second document was a copy that was left out for public display. Witnesses then signed a public register as proof of the transaction.

But in Jeremiah's case, however, since Babylon was soon take the field over, the two documents were sealed in the container. But that was not the usual case. I believe the scroll meant for public viewing is the Bible, the public record of how Jesus purchased this world with his own life. Now,

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people may not believe it, but they can read about it because it's the most famous piece of history ever recorded. The other scroll, the official sealed document, represents the legal agreement between God and our Lord that once the ransom was provided, Jesus had every legal right to this world.

Not that there's actual physical documents somewhere, but the ransom is a legal agreement that gives Jesus the right to resurrect every descendant of Adam and that he legally owns this earth. Once the sealed vessel is opened and the merit of Christ is applied, the the world will finally understand the amazing value of that transaction. Now, if my math is correct, and it's usually not, Jeremiah would have been about 126 years old when Cyrus issued his decree that Jews could return to Israel. So it's highly improbable that Jeremiah ever returned to claim that field. He wasn't married, he had no descendants to labor claim the field.

So it's understandable why he would be confused about buying something that he thought he would never have. But God made the connection for him, that this was to show that Israel's captivity would not be permanent and that the purchase of the field was a prophetic sign of Israel's future restoration to the land. It was God's promise that Israel was meant to possess the land forever.

So in summary, brethren, we saw a young man, probably a teenager, accepting God's calling despite knowing that his message would be difficult for people to accept. He suffered extraordinary physical and emotional abuse. But he was also given a wonderful message of hope, and he was privileged to give every future generation, including you and me, God's promise of a new covenant. When we want to summarize the beauty of God's plan to bless the world, we often read this precious I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people, and they shall teach no more.

Every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more. Brethren, these are some of the most precious words that have ever been written because they come from the heart of our great creator. Jeremiah will soon see his prophetic words no longer future hope, but a living reality that he will help administer. The world will finally listen to those they once ignored, hated, or even persecuted.

And again, I can't wait to see this weeping prophet weep for joy when so many wrongs will finally be made right, and whose words will prove to be inspired by Jehovah himself. Because Jeremiah's ministry so closely reflected the Lord's ministry. We will close. Oh, no, that's not the hymn I want to close with.

I'm sorry. We're going to close now with Jerusalem Awake. This is a reflection, I think, of what was in Jeremiah's heart. Hymn number 18, Jerusalem Awake, and I've asked brother Jack to close our meeting with prayer.

Foreign.

Heavenly Father, we humbly and reverently bow before you at the close of this meeting. We thank you for your greatness, dear Father, and we thank you for the lessons that we've learned this day, and we certainly appreciate what brother Tom has brought to us regarding the prophet Jeremiah. We appreciate his character, we appreciate his motivation, and we appreciate his love for you and for the understanding that he had is how you would deal with his people.

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And, dear Father, we look forward with great earnestness the coming kingdom, when all mankind will know you and love you, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all that you do for us, for the love that you show us, for the motivation you give us, and we thank you especially, and mostly for your son Jesus, who gave us life, that we might have life. We do thank you, Father, for all these blessings. Through your son Jesus.

Amen.