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¹ These are the words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests from the town of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. ² The Lord first gave messages to Jeremiah during the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah. ³ The Lord's messages continued throughout the reign of King Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, until the eleventh year of the reign of King Zedekiah, another of Josiah's sons. In August of that eleventh year the people of Jerusalem were taken away as captives.

JEREMIAH'S CALL AND FIRST VISIONS

⁴ The Lord gave me this message:

⁵ "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations."

⁶ "O Sovereign Lord," I said, "I can't speak for you! I'm too young!" ⁷ The Lord replied, "Don't say, 'I'm too young,' for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you. ⁸ And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and will protect you. I, the Lord, have spoken!" ⁹ Then the Lord reached out and touched my mouth and said,

"Look, I have put my words in your mouth!

¹⁰ Today I appoint you to stand up against nations and kingdoms. Some you must uproot and tear down, destroy and overthrow. Others you must build up and plant."

¹¹ Then the Lord said to me, "Look, Jeremiah! What do you see?" And I replied, "I see a branch from an almond tree." ¹² And the Lord said, "That's right, and it means that I am watching, and I will certainly carry out all my plans." ¹³ Then the Lord spoke to me again and asked, "What do you see now?" And I replied, "I see a pot of boiling water, spilling from the north." ¹⁴ "Yes," the Lord said, "for terror from the north will boil out on the people of this land. ¹⁵ Listen! I am calling the armies of the kingdoms of the north to come to Jerusalem. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

"They will set their thrones at the gates of the city.

They will attack its walls and all the other towns of Judah.

¹⁶ I will pronounce judgment on my people for all their evil—for deserting me and burning incense to other gods. Yes, they worship idols made with their own hands!

¹⁷ Get up and prepare for action. Go out and tell them everything I tell you to say. Do not be afraid of them, or I will make you look foolish in front of them.

¹⁸ For see, today I have made you strong like a fortified city that cannot be captured, like an iron pillar or a bronze wall. You will stand against the whole land—the kings, officials, priests, and people of Judah.

¹⁹ They will fight you, but they will fail. For I am with you, and I will take care of you. I, the Lord, have spoken!"



2

THE LORD'S CASE AGAINST HIS PEOPLE

¹ The Lord gave me another message. He said, ² “Go and shout this message to Jerusalem. This is what the Lord says:

“I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness.

³ In those days Israel was holy to the Lord, the first of his children. All who harmed his people were declared guilty, and disaster fell on them. I, the Lord, have spoken!”

⁴ Listen to the word of the Lord, people of Jacob—all you families of Israel! ⁵ This is what the Lord says:

“What did your ancestors find wrong with me that led them to stray so far from me? They worshiped worthless idols, only to become worthless themselves.

⁶ They did not ask, ‘Where is the Lord who brought us safely out of Egypt

and led us through the barren wilderness—a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought and death, where no one lives or even travels?”

⁷ And when I brought you into a fruitful land to enjoy its bounty and goodness, you defiled my land and corrupted the possession I had promised you.

⁸ The priests did not ask, ‘Where is the Lord?’ Those who taught my word ignored me, the rulers turned against me, and the prophets spoke in the name of Baal, wasting their time on worthless idols.

⁹ Therefore, I will bring my case against you,” says the Lord.

“I will even bring charges against your children’s children in the years to come.

¹⁰ Go west and look in the land of Cyprus; go east and search through the land of Kedar. Has anyone ever heard of anything as strange as this?

¹¹ Has any nation ever traded its gods for new ones, even though they are not gods at all?

Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols!

¹² The heavens are shocked at such a thing and shrink back in horror and dismay,” says the Lord.

¹³ “For my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned me—the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!

THE RESULTS OF ISRAEL'S SIN

¹⁴ “Why has Israel become a slave? Why has he been carried away as plunder?”

¹⁵ Strong lions have roared against him, and the land has been destroyed. The towns are now in ruins, and no one lives in them anymore.

¹⁶ Egyptians, marching from their cities of Memphis and Tahpanhes, have destroyed Israel’s glory and power.

¹⁷ And you have brought this upon yourselves by rebelling against the Lord your God, even though he was leading you on the way!

¹⁸ What have you gained by your alliances with Egypt and your covenants with Assyria?

What good to you are the streams of the Nile or the waters of the Euphrates River?

¹⁹ Your wickedness will bring its own punishment. Your turning from me will shame you. You will see what an evil, bitter thing it is to abandon the Lord your God and not to fear him. I, the Lord, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, have spoken!

²⁰ Long ago I broke the yoke that oppressed you and tore away the chains of your slavery, but still you said, ‘I will not serve you.’ On every hill and under every green tree, you have prostituted yourselves by bowing down to idols.

²¹ But I was the one who planted you, choosing a vine of the purest stock—the very best. How did you grow into this corrupt wild vine?

²² No amount of soap or lye can make you clean. I still see the stain of your guilt. I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken!





ISRAEL, AN UNFAITHFUL WIFE

²³ “You say, ‘That’s not true!
I haven’t worshiped the images of Baal!’
But how can you say that?
Go and look in any valley in the land!
Face the awful sins you have done.
You are like a restless female camel
desperately searching for a mate.
²⁴ You are like a wild donkey,
sniffing the wind at mating time.
Who can restrain her lust?
Those who desire her don’t need to search,
for she goes running to them!
²⁵ When will you stop running?
When will you stop panting after other gods?
But you say, ‘Save your breath.
I’m in love with these foreign gods,
and I can’t stop loving them now!’
²⁶ Israel is like a thief
who feels shame only when he gets caught.
They, their kings, officials, priests, and prophets—
all are alike in this.
²⁷ To an image carved from a piece of wood they say,
‘You are my father.’
To an idol chiseled from a block of stone they say,
‘You are my mother.’
They turn their backs on me,
but in times of trouble they cry out to me,
‘Come and save us!’
²⁸ But why not call on these gods you have made?
When trouble comes, let them save you if they can!
For you have as many gods
as there are towns in Judah.
²⁹ Why do you accuse me of doing wrong?
You are the ones who have rebelled,”

says the Lord.
³⁰ “I have punished your children,
but they did not respond to my discipline.
You yourselves have killed your prophets
as a lion kills its prey.
³¹ O my people, listen to the words of the Lord!
Have I been like a desert to Israel?
Have I been to them a land of darkness?
Why then do my people say,
‘At last we are free from God!
We don’t need him anymore!’
³² Does a young woman forget her jewelry,
or a bride her wedding dress?
Yet for years on end
my people have forgotten me.
³³ How you plot and scheme to win your lovers.
Even an experienced prostitute could
learn from you!
³⁴ Your clothing is stained with the blood of the
innocent and the poor,
though you didn’t catch them breaking into
your houses!
³⁵ And yet you say,
‘I have done nothing wrong.
Surely God isn’t angry with me!’
But now I will punish you severely
because you claim you have not sinned.
³⁶ First here, then there—
you flit from one ally to another asking for help.
But your new friends in Egypt will let you down,
just as Assyria did before.
³⁷ In despair, you will be led into exile
with your hands on your heads,
for the Lord has rejected the nations you trust.
They will not help you at all.

4

- ¹ “O Israel,” says the Lord,
 “if you wanted to return to me, you could.
 You could throw away your detestable idols
 and stray away no more.”
- ² Then when you swear by my name, saying,
 ‘As surely as the Lord lives,’
 you could do so
 with truth, justice, and righteousness.
 Then you would be a blessing to the
 nations of the world,
 and all people would come and praise my name.”

COMING JUDGMENT AGAINST JUDAH

³ This is what the Lord says to the people of Judah
 and Jerusalem:

- “Plow up the hard ground of your hearts!
 Do not waste your good seed among thorns.”
- ⁴ O people of Judah and Jerusalem,
 surrender your pride and power.
 Change your hearts before the Lord,
 or my anger will burn like an unquenchable fire
 because of all your sins.
- ⁵ Shout to Judah, and broadcast to Jerusalem!
 Tell them to sound the alarm throughout the land:
 ‘Run for your lives!
 Flee to the fortified cities!’
- ⁶ Raise a signal flag as a warning for Jerusalem:
 ‘Flee now! Do not delay!’
 For I am bringing terrible destruction upon you
 from the north.”
- ⁷ A lion stalks from its den,
 a destroyer of nations.
 It has left its lair and is headed your way.
 It’s going to devastate your land!
 Your towns will lie in ruins,
 with no one living in them anymore.
- ⁸ So put on clothes of mourning

- and weep with broken hearts,
 for the fierce anger of the Lord
 is still upon us.
- ⁹ “In that day,” says the Lord,
 “the king and the officials will tremble in fear.
 The priests will be struck with horror,
 and the prophets will be appalled.”
- ¹⁰ Then I said, “O Sovereign Lord,
 the people have been deceived by what you said,
 for you promised peace for Jerusalem.
 But the sword is held at their throats!”
- ¹¹ The time is coming when the Lord will say
 to the people of Jerusalem,
 “My dear people, a burning wind is
 blowing in from the desert,
 and it’s not a gentle breeze useful for winnowing grain.”
- ¹² It is a roaring blast sent by me!
 Now I will pronounce your destruction!”
- ¹³ Our enemy rushes down on us like storm clouds!
 His chariots are like whirlwinds.
 His horses are swifter than eagles.
 How terrible it will be, for we are doomed!
- ¹⁴ O Jerusalem, cleanse your heart
 that you may be saved.
 How long will you harbor
 your evil thoughts?
- ¹⁵ Your destruction has been announced
 from Dan and the hill country of Ephraim.
- ¹⁶ “Warn the surrounding nations
 and announce this to Jerusalem:
 The enemy is coming from a distant land,
 raising a battle cry against the towns of Judah.
- ¹⁷ They surround Jerusalem like watchmen
 around a field,
 for my people have rebelled against me,”
 says the Lord.
- ¹⁸ “Your own actions have brought this upon you.
 This punishment is bitter, piercing you to the heart!”