Consequences of Disobedience
Jer 7:11-15; 2 Kings 23:36-37
SS Lesson for 07/22/2007

Devotional Scripture:  2 Chron 7:11-22

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The concept of the outline of the lesson came from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator. The lesson examines Disobedience. The study's aim is to show that when God's people disobey Him, He punishes them. The study's application is to understand the consequences of disobedience to God and to learn from the examples given in God's Word how to avoid the pitfalls of disobedience.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

“If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.” This was the strategy of Adolf Hitler’s minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels. Goebbels and the Nazis perfected the modern art of misinformation, the concept of the big lie. Goebbels thought that the more outrageous the lie, the better, because the populace would think it was too extreme to be false. As strange as that theory may seem to us, the Nazi propaganda machine successfully deceived the German people for over a decade. Yet the big lie technique did not originate with the Nazis. The history of human governments is littered with examples of lying kings and conquerors. Jeremiah the prophet was incensed by the ongoing deception of God’s people by the leaders of Judah. Jeremiah was particularly enraged by the deceptions of those who claimed to be speaking for God. He denounced this as villainy. As a true prophet of God, Jeremiah revealed God’s displeasure: they “have spoken lies, which I did not tell them to do” (Jeremiah 29:23). Jeremiah also castigated the people who trusted “in deceptive words that are worthless” (7:8). We as believers are called to be discerning of the truth. We have confidence that the Word of God is truth (John 17:17). Scripture is given to us as a measuring stick for all matters in life. Scripture is “the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). While some leaders in government are more truthful than others, history promises that the future holds more lying leaders. Today’s Honest Abe may be replaced by tomorrow’s Deceiver. The unfailling Word of God stands above all of this. God is the God of truth (Deuteronomy 32:4). God’s Word is not a mixture of truth, opinion, and falsehood. It is all truth, and it has the power to transform and change us. The more we study God’s Word and incorporate its teachings into our lives, the less likely we are to trust in lies. The writings contained in the book of Jeremiah are drawn from his four-decade ministry as a prophet of God to the nation of Judah. The book opens with prophecies from the thirteenth year of Josiah’s reign, approximately 627 B.C. (Jeremiah 1:2). The book closes with events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (39:2). The book is somewhat unusual for the prophets, for it contains both oracles (the words of the prophet delivered to the people) and narrative (accounts of historical events during this period). The book of Jeremiah bears testimony that that prophet suffered a great deal for his prophetic ministry. Although he was assured by God that he was chosen even before birth, he protested about his inadequacy (Jeremiah 1:5, 6). Later he complained that his prophecies had made him an object of derision in public (Jeremiah 20:7, 8). Yet when Jeremiah tried to ignore God’s prophetic voice in his life, it was as if his bones were on fire and he could not hold the words in (Jeremiah 20:9). This prophet’s words caused him to be beaten and thrown into prison (Jeremiah 37:15). Later he was thrown into a dungeon-like cistern, where he wallowed in the smelly mire (Jeremiah 38:6). Most of Jeremiah’s words are sharp and condemning. This has caused him to be seen as the prophet of doom and gloom. Because of this, we have adopted the English word jeremiad, meaning an angry tirade. In English literature, a Jeremiah is symbolic of a person who is a persistent and vocal pessimist. Yet Jeremiah also has a hopeful side. One of the most stirring passages in all the Old Testament is Jeremiah’s vision of the new covenant. He foresaw this as a time when the law of God would be a matter of the heart, not just observance (Jeremiah 31:33), and a time when God would no longer remember the sin of the people (Jeremiah 31:34). Jeremiah’s vision of fresh, new beginnings was adopted by the author of Hebrews to explain the new covenant that has been given to the church as the people of God (see Hebrews 8). This week’s lesson is drawn from one of the prophet’s warnings against evil among the people of Judah. It is a biting condemnation of hypocrisy, particularly in worship.
"A man had a fine canary whose song was unusually beautiful. During the summer, it seemed a shame to keep the bird inside the house all the time. So the owner placed the cage in a nearby tree for the bird to enjoy the sunshine and the fresh air. Many sparrows frequented the tree and were attracted to the cage. At first the canary was frightened, but soon enjoyed his companions. But gradually and almost imperceptibly he lost the sweetness of the song. "By the end of the summer his *singing* was little more than the twitter of the sparrows. Spending his summer in the wrong environment caused the canary to lose his finest song" (Lock, "Church Music Today," Christianity Today, November/December 1985). In this life, consequences for our choices are inescapable. In the lesson this week we learn about what happens to a people who disobey God. God created us for His pleasure, and we are called upon to obey Him. He feels sad when we disobey Him, much more than any earthly father would feel sad when a child disobeys. As any good parent does when his children disobey, we have often spanked our children and disciplined them. They learn early that disobedience leads to some form of punishment. Our loving God does the same thing with us because He loves us so much. It hurts Him when we stray from what He wants us to do, and His punishment seeks to bring us back to a right relationship with Him.

**Major Theme Analysis**

*Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV*

**Disobedience Gets the Attention of God (Jeremiah 7:11)**

11 "Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the LORD.

God looks at His people's obedience first

*First because judgment begins with the family of God (1 Peter 4:17-18)*

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

*First because the ax of God's judgment is at the foot of the tree of His own people (Matt 3:9-10)*

9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

*First because those who have been given much, much will be demanded (Luke 12:47-48)*

47 "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. 48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

*First because God's people with be judged strictly (James 3:1)*

3:1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

*First because of accountability (James 4:17)*

17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.
Christians should have a special awe of God's name and house

Awe because we are to always enter God's house with praise (Ps 100:4)
4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

Awe because God's name and house are holy (Hab 2:20)
20 But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.

Awe because we are unclean before a holy God (Isa 6:1-7)
6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Awe because God's dwelling is holy (Zech 2:13)
13 Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

Awe because any where God is it is holy ground (Acts 7:30-33)
30 "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. 31 When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: 32 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. 33 "Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground.

God always sees what we do

God sees because His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole world (2 Chron 16:9)
9 For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."

God sees because His eyes are upon the righteous (Ps 34:15)
15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry.

God sees because the ways of man are before God's eyes (Prov 5:21)
21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, And He ponders all his paths.

God sees because God's eyes are in every place (Prov 15:3)
3 The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good.
God sees because He sees through His seven Spirits (Rev 5:6)

6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Disobedience Causes Destruction (Jeremiah 7:12-15)

12 "But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.
13 "And now, because you have done all these works," says the LORD, "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer,
14 "therefore I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.
15 "And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren-- the whole posterity of Ephraim.

Disobedience leads to wickedness (12)

Disobedience leads to wickedness because it causes my own actions to recoil on me (Ps 7:15-16)

15 He who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made. 16 The trouble he causes recoils on himself; his violence comes down on his own head.

Disobedience leads to wickedness because it is caused by bad choices (Prov 1:29-31)

29 Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, 30 since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, 31 they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.

Disobedience leads to wickedness because I cannot do evil and still be in the will of God (Jer 18:9-10)

9 And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, 10 and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

Disobedience leads to wickedness because it proves that I don't know God (Titus 1:16)

They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Disobedience leads to wickedness because it proves I am stubborn and have forsaken God's word (Jer 9:13-14)

13 The LORD said, "It is because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them; they have not obeyed me or followed my law. 14 Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts; they have followed the Baals, as their fathers taught them.

Disobedience leads to wickedness because it violates God's covenant (Deut 17:2-5)

2 If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the LORD gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God in violation of his covenant, 3 and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars of the sky, 4 and this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, 5 take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death.

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Disobedience leads to wickedness because it dishonors God (Rom 2:23-24)

23 You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? 24 As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Disobedience leads to wickedness because it shows that I have forgotten all God has done for me (Heb 8:9)

It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

God always warns about the consequences of disobedience (13)

Warnings through God's word using past examples (1 Cor 10:11)

11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

Warnings through God's word about false prophets (Jude 1:4)

4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Warnings through messengers about turning back to God (Jer 25:4-5)

4 And though the LORD has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention. 5 They said, "Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your fathers for ever and ever.

Warnings through messengers about God's curses (Jer 26:5-6)

5 and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), 6 then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth."

Warnings through messengers that should not be refused (Heb 12:25)

25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?

God is consistent in His treatment of disobedience (14)

God is consistent because there is no partiality with God (Rom 2:11)

11 For there is no partiality with God.

God is consistent because those who do wrong will be repaid (Col 3:25)

25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

God is consistent because He judges according to each one's work (1 Peter 1:17)

17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;
God is consistent because He knows how to deal with both the righteous and unrighteous (2 Peter 2:9)

9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

God is consistent because He cannot lie or change (Num 23:19)

19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

God is consistent because God ensures what a man sows, he reaps (Gal 6:7)

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

No one should want to be cast out by God (15)

No one wants the fearful expectation of the judgment of God (Heb 10:26-27)

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

No one wants to fall into the wrath of God (Heb 10:31)

31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

No one can stand before the anger of God (Ps 76:7)

7 You alone are to be feared. Who can stand before you when you are angry?

No one wants to have God destroy their body and soul (Matt 10:28)

28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

No one wants the wrath of God to come (Col 3:5-7)

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

Tranquility? (from NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

In Hebrew, the word Shiloh means “tranquility, rest.” When the Israelites conquered the land of Canaan, they set up the tabernacle at Shiloh. This remained the seat of worship for some time. The tabernacle was still there in the early years of Samuel. When the Philistines returned the Ark of the Covenant after its capture, it was not returned to Shiloh. Instead, it ultimately was sent to Jerusalem. The town of Shiloh began to decline; this continued into the days of Jeremiah. How interesting that a place named tranquility would come to represent desolation. Because of its positive Old Testament connotations, many churches have been named Shiloh. One of the most interesting was a small country Methodist church in southern Tennessee near a spot on the Tennessee River called Pittsburgh Landing. A major battle of the American Civil War was fought there on April 6 and 7, 1862. Much of the battle swirled around the church building itself. Some 100,000 soldiers fought there, suffering over 23,000 casualties. How ironic that a place whose name means “tranquility” would be the scene of such horrible violence and death. Yet that is a message of Jeremiah. God has been patient, but ultimately he will wreak vengeance upon the faithlessness of his people. Shiloh was desolate, and Jerusalem would be destroyed. Such is eventually the case with all who abandon God’s paths to seek their own way.
Disobedience is Seen as Evil by God (2 Kings 23:36-37)

36 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebudah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.
37 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

Disobedience always affects one's family

Abigail saved Napal's life (1 Sam 25:21-35)

21 David had just said, "It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the desert so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. 22 May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!" 23 When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said: "My lord, let the blame be on me alone. Please let your servant speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. 25 May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name is Fool, and folly goes with him. But as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my master sent. 26 "Now since the LORD has kept you, my master, from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, may your enemies and all who intend to harm my master be like Nabal. 27 And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my master, be given to the men who follow you. 28 Please forgive your servant's offense, for the LORD will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the LORD's battles. Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live. 29 Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my master will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God. But the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. 30 When the LORD has done for my master every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him leader over Israel, 31 my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the LORD has brought my master success, remember your servant." 32 David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. 33 May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. 34 Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak." 35 Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, "Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request."

A believing wife could sanctify an unbelieving husband (1 Cor 7:13-14)

13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

Families can be affected in their devotion to God (1 Kings 11:4)

4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

Families can be affected through accountability (Josh 7:20-26)

20 Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: 21 When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. 23 They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the
LORD. 24 Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. 25 Joshua said, "Why have you brought this trouble on us? The LORD will bring trouble on you today." Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. 26 Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.

Families can be affected through snares (Judg 8:27)
27 Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshipping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.

Families can be affected through children (1 Sam 3:11-14)
11 And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. 12 At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family-from beginning to end. 13 For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. 14 Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

Disobedience is sometimes learned from home life

Family deaths can cause delays in following Jesus (Matt 8:19-22)
19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." 21 Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 22 But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Homesickness can cause one not to be fit for service in the kingdom of God (Luke 9:61-62)
61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Hesitating or allowing family members to look back from following God can be disastrous (Gen 19:15-26)
15 With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished." 16 When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the LORD was merciful to them. 17 As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!" 18 But Lot said to them, "No, my lords, please! 19 Your servant has found favor in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can't flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I'll die. 20 Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it--it is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared." 21 He said to him, "Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. 22 But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." (That is why the town was called Zoar.) 23 By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. 24 Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah--from the LORD out of the heavens. 25 Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities--and also the vegetation in the land. 26 But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.
Probabilism (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

A theory of moral theology known as probabilism came into being in the seventeenth century A.D. The main idea is that if you can find a good ethical motive behind an action, even if it is highly improbable, then the action can be defended as allowable. For example, if a merchant cannot sell his wine at a fair profit, he can add water to it and sell it as pure in order to make the profit. If servants are not being paid a proper wage by their master, they may take property from the master that will make up the difference. If necessity forces a person to take wood from someone else’s pile, he is not obligated to restore it. If someone has committed a crime, he may swear in a loud voice, “I have not done this crime” and then in a subdued voice add, “today.” Thus the total statement is true, and he is exonerated from falsehood. The result of probabilism is to take moral laws and turn them inside out. Jeremiah condemned this kind of thinking centuries before Christ. This condemnation still stands.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

We do not live in ancient Jerusalem. We do not worship at Solomon’s temple. We need not fear Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army. But Jeremiah’s word should still be heard in our churches today. Are our efforts to worship God motivated by a true heart, or are they the empty acts of self-serving hypocrites? As one who has ministered in many different churches for several decades, I have observed various hypocrites in action: the church staff member who complained about the miserly giving of the congregation, yet didn’t give proportionately himself; the elder who griped about the rambunctious behavior of the youth group while having an affair with his secretary; the worship leader who focused the singing time on herself, then grumbled that the people weren’t singing; the Sunday school teacher who carried the biggest Bible I’ve ever seen, yet was so dishonest in his business dealings that no one in the church would patronize his store; the committee member who had just paid cash for a new SUV, yet moaned when a missionary asked for funds to replace his 10-year-old van, which had in excess of 300,000 miles on it. But I know the biggest hypocrite even more intimately. He is the one who wants Sunday worship only according to his tastes, not for God’s glory. He is the one who gives far less than he could because he spends so much on his own whims. He is the one who looks down on those who don’t know the Bible as well as he, but often turns a deaf ear to Scripture that confronts his life. That hypocrite is me.

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

When God said in Jer 7:15 that He would cast Judah out of His sight, He of course did not mean that He would not actually see them. He is omnipresent and omniscient. Rather, His special care and provision for the people of Judah would be withdrawn. The watchful eye of protection was to be no more. The judgment in this declaration is made clear by the fact that it was not just a matter of God looking the other way; rather, He would be picking them up and throwing them away. They would reap the bitter fruit of their sinful ways. The people of Judah thought that the temple offered them special protection regardless of their conduct (vs. 11-14). But as Calvin pointed out, "God has never so bound Himself to any people or place, that He was not at liberty to inflict punishment on the impiety of those who had despised His favours" (Calvin's Commentaries, Baker). He went on to note man's tendency to become "elated and proud..."
whenever God deals bountifully with us . . . we . . . think that more liberty is given us, because God has bestowed on us more." We must guard against such insidious thinking. Judah had an important precedent to bear in mind. The people of the northern kingdom of Israel were also God's people, but they had not escaped His severe judgment when they continued in their sin. The Assyrians, who were particularly brutal conquerors, swept in and took the nation captive. The same type of future awaited Judah if they continued in their ways. The term "Ephraim" is used to represent the whole northern kingdom of Israel because Ephraim was the most powerful northern tribe and bore a large share of the blame for Israel's sinfulness. (This use of "Ephraim" is common in the Old Testament [cf. Isa. 11:13; Hos. 11:8].) When the northern kingdom split with the southern kingdom of Judah, the first king in the north, Jeroboam I, was from the tribe of Ephraim. He was the one who led the way in establishing a rival place of worship to Jerusalem, contrary to God's will (cf. I Kings 12:26-33). The people of Judah may have felt they were superior to the people of the north, but Jeremiah was warning them that they would not be exempted from punishment. The nemesis that would be sent by the Lord God as His instrument of judgment were the Babylonians, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar. They could be almost as cruel as the Assyrians. It would be a fearsome prospect to face their onslaught. We can learn important lessons from the history of God's people In the Old Testament. The judgments inflicted on Israel and Judah foreshadowed the destruction of Israel in A.D. 70 and ultimately point toward the final judgment against wickedness. The language of casting away employed in the text reminds us of Jesus' words to the false disciples in Matthew 25:41-"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." One difference, of course, between the judgment in the text and the final judgment is that even the true followers of God would suffer to a degree because of Judah's sin. Followers of Christ, though, have nothing to fear from the Last Judgment.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Sin blinds us to the truth that God sees everything (Jer. 7:11)
2. Even the presence of institutions dedicated to God is no guarantee of God's presence (vs. 12)
3. We put ourselves in the worst possible position when we refuse to listen to God (vs. 13)
4. We should be thankful for the things God gives us, but we must never put our trust in them (vs. 14)
5. It is better to learn from the mistakes of others than from our own mistakes (vs. 15)
6. The only evaluation of our lives that counts is God's (2 Kings 23:36-37)

Heart of the Lesson from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Religion is easy. How hard is it to follow rules? Following rules is not obedience, however, and God requires obedience. He always has, and He always will.

A warning against wrong priorities (Jer. 7:11-13)

This chapter of Jeremiah is often referred to as Jeremiah's temple sermon. God wanted Jeremiah to point out how wrong the people of Judah were for making the temple nothing more than a spiritual talisman. They lived as if it did not matter how they lived as long as they did their temple service. But as we have seen before, God is not interested in sacrifice and offering; He is interested in obedience (cf. I Sam. 15:22). Our world today is very much like ancient Israel and Judah. People think that it does not matter how they live during the week as long as they go to church on Sunday. Nothing could be further from the truth. What is even worse is that there are Christians who live this way. We often call them "Sunday Christians." God does not call us to live for Him one day a week. Jesus gave His all for us, and He expects us to give our all for Him. How many times will God tell us? He told Judah repeatedly. He would not warn them forever, though, and He will not warn us forever, either. His grace and mercy are wonderful, but there is a limit.

The promise of destruction (Jer. 7:14-15)

God told Judah that He would send them into exile. How much clearer could His warning have been? The northern tribes of Israel had already been consumed by the Assyrians. Did Judah think they were impervious to God's judgment? Perhaps. What are the excuses people give today? For many, it could be that they live in America, a "Christian" nation. It is true that there were many Christian foundations when
this country began, but America has gone far afield from its Christian moorings. Could it be that some people think that they are not as bad as others? This is the myth of denying the inherent sinfulness of every human being. God made it clear in His Word that "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). The original language makes it clear that in counting the righteous, He cannot even get as high as one. We all are guilty before Him. No one has any right to boast of any goodness, for "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). We are nothing before Him.

The main problem: the leadership (2 Kings 23:36-37)

It is often said that everything rises and falls on leadership. This is true. In the case we have been discussing in Jeremiah 7, 2 Kings 23 tells us the leader was Jehoiakim. God's Word tells us that he was twenty-five when he became king and that he ruled eleven years. The writer recorded one simple fact about Jehoiakim's reign: "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 23:37). This statement was made many times in the books of Kings and Chronicles. It was applied to more kings of Israel (who had a perfect record of no righteous kings) than of Judah, but there were plenty of evil kings of Judah. In fact, Jehoiakim was very much like his ancestors. What will be on our tombstone? Will it be said that we did evil in God's sight? Or will people read our epitaph and know that we loved God and obeyed Him?