

Mend Your Ways

Jer 7:1-15

SS Lesson for 08/09/2015

Devotional Scripture: Isa 1:11-20

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

Key Verse: Jer 7:3

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

GOD'S OFFER (JER 7:1-7)

Hear the Word (1-2)

Hear so that belief is confirmed (Rom 10:14)

Hear so that faith is strengthened (Rom 10:17)

Hear because it is the Word of God (1 Thess 2:13)

Hear to understand better (Mark 4:22-24)

Hear because it makes us part of the family of Jesus (Luke 8:21)

Hear because it is a blessing (Luke 11:28)

Safe dwelling (3)

Safe dwelling because of obedience (Deut 4:40)

Safe dwelling because of repentance (Jer 18:7-8)

Safe dwelling because of humility and prayer (2 Chron 7:14)

Safe dwelling because God makes it so (Jer 33:4-9)

GOD'S WARNINGS (JER 7:4-15)

Do not worship the temporary (4)

Do not worship the temporary, instead fix our eyes on God (2 Cor 4:18)

Do not worship the temporary, instead set our hearts on things above (Col 3:1-3)

Do not worship the temporary, instead seek things of greater value (Heb 11:24-27)

Do not worship the temporary, instead look for the enduring (Heb 13:14)

Always seek justice (5-7)

Justice that comes from righteous wisdom (Ps 37:30)

Justice that comes from the plans of the righteous (Prov 12:5)

Justice that comes from doing right (Prov 21:3)

Justice that comes from insight (Ps 119:98-100)

Beware of the wicked (8-9)

Wicked who are intent on cruelty (Ps 71:4-5)

Wicked who prey on the weak and needy (Ps 82:4-5)

Wicked who should be expelled (1 Cor 5:13)

Wicked who are unbelievers (Rom 15:31)

Don't put faith in worldly things (10-11)

Because the world thinks the things of God are foolishness (1 Cor 2:14)

Because the world seeks answers through human ideas (Acts 17:16-21)

Because the world uses human wisdom, which God frustrates and destroys (1 Cor 1:16-21)

Because the world is being veiled by Satan (2 Cor 4:3-4)

God's wrath is against those who reject Him (12-13)

Rejecting God through ignoring God's call and advice (Prov 1:24-26)

Rejecting God will cause God's anger to burn (Isa 5:24-25)

Rejecting God through backsliding (Jer 15:6)

Rejecting God through oppressing and deceiving others (Isa 30:12-13)

Continued unbelief will result in eternal separation from God (14-15)

Separation from God because of iniquities (Isa 59:2)

Separation from God through not having anything in common with righteousness (2 Cor 6:15-17)

Separation from God because of unfaithfulness (Deut 32:19-20)

Separation from God because of wickedness (Prov 15:29)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM DR. THOMAS CONSTABLE

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson wants us to see what God has laid out for us as a condition for retaining our favored position by **Mending Our Ways**. The **study's aim** is to see understand that God is sovereign and can do anything He sees is beneficial in the long run for His people. The **study's application** is to order our lives so as to honor God, escape discipline, and live under His blessings.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Jer 7:3

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place."

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Chapters 7-10, often known as Jeremiah's temple address, focus on God's punishment of the people because of their false religion. The people believed that God's punishment would never extend to Jerusalem or to them (cf. 5:12-13) because of the presence of God's temple and because of their outward display of religion (cf. 6:20). Jeremiah's temple address destroyed this false hope and exposed the festering sore of idolatry that was producing spiritual gangrene in the people. The events described in chapter 26 probably indicate the people's response to this message.

God summoned Jeremiah to **stand at the** entrance to the temple and announce His **message** to those coming there **to worship**. The message was similar to that just recorded: the people had to **reform their ways** (cf. 3:12; 26:13) if they wanted to continue living there. Jeremiah answered the objection voiced by the people to his message. They believed judgment would not come because in Jerusalem was located **the temple of the LORD** (repeated three times to emphasize their belief in its protecting power). The people of Judah viewed **the temple** as a talisman or good luck charm that could ward off any attack. But **God** did not value buildings over obedience. God's protection would remain only if the people would **change their ways** (7:5; cf. v. 3). Jeremiah listed three examples to illustrate the change God wanted. The first two related to actions toward fellow Israelites, and the third related to actions toward God. (1) The people were **not** to **oppress** the helpless in society—people who could not easily protect themselves if wronged (cf. Deut. 14:29; 16:11; 24:19; Ps. 94:6). (2) They were **not** to **shed innocent blood** (cf. Deut. 19:10-13; 21:1-9). (3) And they were **not** to **follow other gods**. If these evidences of faithfulness to God's covenant were observed, God would allow the nation to **live... in the land**. But for the people to trust in **the temple** building rather than in obedience to the covenant for their protection was to put their faith **in deceptive words that were worthless**. Judah felt so secure because of the presence of God's temple that she believed it was **safe to do all** kinds of **detestable things**. Her vileness had actually turned the temple into **a den of robbers** (cf. Matt. 21:12-13). What she failed to realize was that God had **been watching** and was aware of her deeds. Jeremiah pointed to Israel's past to expose the fallacy of believing that the mere presence of God's temple would avert disaster. He asked the crowd to remember **the place in Shiloh** where the tabernacle of God had first dwelt (Josh. 18:1; Judges 18:31; 1 Sam. 1:3; 4:3-4). They were to observe what **God did to it because of Israel's wickedness**. The Bible is silent on the fate of Shiloh; but after the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 4:10-11) the priests evidently fled to Nob (1 Sam. 22:11) and Shiloh was abandoned as Israel's central worship center (cf. Ps. 78:56-61). Archeological studies also indicate that the village of Shiloh was destroyed about 1050 B.C., probably by the Philistines. The point of Jeremiah's message was that **what God did to Shiloh** He would also **do to the... temple**. If Judah did not change her ways God would **thrust her from His presence just as** He had done with the Northern Kingdom (**Ephraim**) in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:5-20, esp. v. 20). The temple bore God's **name** (Jer. 7:10, 12, 14; cf. v. 30) in the sense that it was a symbol of God's presence (His "name" refers to His revealed attributes). God prohibited Jeremiah from interceding for Judah because He would **not listen** (cf.

11:14; 14:11-12). The nation's sin had progressed to the point where Jeremiah's pleas were futile. To illustrate how degraded **Judah** had become God highlighted one aspect of her idolatrous worship. Throughout Judah, families were uniting to prepare **cakes of bread** (flat cakes possibly formed into the image of the goddess; cf. 44:19) **for the Queen of Heaven** (probably Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess of love and fertility). The families were also offering **drink offerings** (usually wine) **to other gods**. Yet such idolatrous rituals were only **harming** those who participated in them; their false worship did not damage God. For the people would bear the consequences of their actions when God's **anger** and **wrath** would be **poured out** on all Judah. The people of Judah offered all the correct **sacrifices**, but they failed to realize that God had given another **command** at Sinai. He had called on Israel to **obey** Him and to **walk in all the ways** He established for them. Unfortunately Israel refused to **listen or pay attention** to this command of God. Though God continually **sent** His **prophets** to warn the people, they refused to **pay attention** (cf. 25:4-7). Jeremiah was not to expect the response of people in his day to be any different from people's response in the past. Indeed God told Jeremiah that the nation would **not listen** to him. So Jeremiah was to **cut off his hair**, a sign of deep mourning (cf. Job 1:20; Isa. 15:2-3; Jer. 48:37; Ezek. 7:18), and **take up a lament** (*qnâh*, "funeral dirge") for the nation. The time of mourning could commence because the destruction of Judah was assured. God had already **abandoned** that **generation to His wrath**. God continued to elaborate on the sin **of Judah** which brought her judgment. **The people had set up... idols** in the temple itself so that even **the house** of God was **defiled** (cf. Ezek. 8:3-18). Outside the city **they had built the high places of Topheth** (cf. Jer. 19:6, 11-14) which were located **in the Valley of Ben Hinnom** (cf. 19:2, 6; 32:35; also called simply the Valley of Hinnom). Here they practiced child sacrifice, burning **their sons and daughters in the fire** (cf. 2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chron. 33:6; Jer. 19:5). The origin of the word "Topheth" (*tōpet*) is uncertain, but possibly it came from a word for "cookstove" or "oven." The change in vowels was deliberate; the vowels from the word *bōšet* ("shame") were transferred to the other word to emphasize the shameful character of the practices there. This "high place of shame" was located in the Valley of Hinnom, immediately south and west of the city. In this valley the refuse from the city was burned. In Greek the Valley of Hinnom (Heb., *gē'-hinnōm*) became known as Gehenna (*geenna*) to picture the fiery corruption of hell (cf. Matt. 5:22, 29-30; 2 Peter 2:4). God vowed that the name of this place would be changed to **the Valley of Slaughter** because of the great number of **dead** bodies that would be burned after the destruction of Jerusalem. The prediction about **birds** and **beasts** eating the **carcasses** affirms the Mosaic Covenant because of the people's disobedience (Deut. 28:26). **Joy** will be gone (cf. Jer. 16:9; 25:10) when the city would **become desolate**.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

We all know about so-called good-luck charms. The rabbit's foot, the horseshoe, and the four-leaf clover are staples of that ilk, at least in North America. In some cultures, certain insects or animals are seen as bringing good luck. But skepticism regarding the power of good-luck charms is well advised. If we have a friend who sees no need to fasten a seat belt because a "dream catcher" hangs from the rearview mirror for good luck, we will probably try to persuade that person to put more confidence in the seat belt. Thoughtfulness in this regard can have a connection with how we view our relationship with God. While probably few Christians see the Christian-themed knickknacks in their houses to be godly good-luck charms, it's easy to treat particular religious routines as such. Danger looms when we perceive our standing with God in light of reliance on such practices. Faithfulness to routine is one thing; having faith in the routine is quite another! We easily note and critique such misplaced faith when displayed in others, don't we? But it may not be so easy to recognize the problem when it is our own. Today's text will help us in that regard.

The prophet Jeremiah ministered in the late seventh and early sixth centuries BC, during the final years of the monarchy of Judah (Jeremiah 1:1-3). That was the southern part of Israel's divided kingdom. In that day, Judah was confronted by the aggressive Babylonian Empire. The Babylonians oppressed Judah over a period of several years, treating it as a vassal kingdom (2 Kings 24). The Babylonians ultimately laid siege to Jerusalem, put it to the sword and torch, destroyed its temple, and took its people into exile (2 Kings 25). From one

perspective, these events could appear to be a simple issue of power politics: Babylon was strong; Judah was not. But from the perspective of Jeremiah, these events fulfilled warnings that God had given his people long ago. As God gave Israel the land of promise, he had warned that they must receive it as a gift, with gratitude reflected in obedience. Submitting to God's law would mean blessing; disobedience would mean return to captivity (Deuteronomy 29:14-29). That penalty was partially realized as Jeremiah delivered the prophecy of today's lesson, since the territory of Israel's 10 northern tribes had been overrun by the Assyrians about a century before Jeremiah began prophesying (2 Kings 17:5-23). But God had granted Judah a miraculous deliverance in that same era (18:13-19:37). That deliverance had become a source of misplaced confidence by Jeremiah's day. Many believed that God would never allow his temple to fall. It was against such a perspective that Jeremiah directed the warning in our text.

Major Theme Analysis

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

God's Offer (Jer 7:1-7)

- 1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,
- 2 "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!'"
- 3 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

Hear the Word (1-2)

Hear so that belief is confirmed (Rom 10:14)

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

Hear so that faith is strengthened (Rom 10:17)

17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Hear because it is the Word of God (1 Thess 2:13)

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Hear to understand better (Mark 4:22-24)

22 For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you — and even more.

Hear because it makes us part of the family of Jesus (Luke 8:21)

21 He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

Hear because it is a blessing (Luke 11:28)

28 He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Safe dwelling (3)

Safe dwelling because of obedience (Deut 4:40)

40 Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time.

Safe dwelling because of repentance (Jer 18:7-8)

7 If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, 8 and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.

Safe dwelling because of humility and prayer (2 Chron 7:14)

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Safe dwelling because God makes it so (Jer 33:4-9)

4 For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says about the houses in this city and the royal palaces of Judah that have been torn down to be used against the siege ramps and the sword 5 in the fight with the Babylonians: 'They will be filled with the dead bodies of the men I will slay in my anger and wrath. I will hide my face from this city because of all its wickedness. 6 "Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security. 7 I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity and will rebuild them as they were before. 8 I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me. 9 Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it.'

God's Warnings (Jer 7:4-15)

4 Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.'

5 For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor,

6 if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt,

7 then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

8 "Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit.

9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know,

10 and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'?

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.

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.

Do not worship the temporary (4)

Do not worship the temporary, instead fix our eyes on God (2 Cor 4:18)

18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Do not worship the temporary, instead set our hearts on things above (Col 3:1-3)

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Do not worship the temporary, instead seek things of greater value (Heb 11:24-27)

24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

Do not worship the temporary, instead look for the enduring (Heb 13:14)

14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

Always seek justice (5-7)

Justice that comes from righteous wisdom (Ps 37:30)

30 The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just.

Justice that comes from the plans of the righteous (Prov 12:5)

5 The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.

Justice that comes from doing right (Prov 21:3)

3 To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

Justice that comes from insight (Ps 119:98-100)

98 Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. 99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

Beware of the wicked (8-9)

Wicked who are intent on cruelty (Ps 71:4-5)

4 Deliver me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of evil and cruel men. 5 For you have been my hope, O Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth.

Wicked who prey on the weak and needy (Ps 82:4-5)

4 Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. 5 "They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Wicked who should be expelled (1 Cor 5:13)

13 God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

Wicked who are unbelievers (Rom 15:31)

31 Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there,

Don't put faith in worldly things (10-11)

Because the world thinks the things of God are foolishness (1 Cor 2:14)

14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Because the world seeks answers through human ideas (Acts 17:16-21)

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. 19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

Because the world uses human wisdom, which God frustrates and destroys (1 Cor 1:16-21)

16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. 18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Because the world is being veiled by Satan (2 Cor 4:3-4)

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

God's wrath is against those who reject Him (12-13)

Rejecting God through ignoring God's call and advice (Prov 1:24-26)

24 But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, 25 since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, 26 I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you —

Rejecting God will cause God's anger to burn (Isa 5:24-25)

24 Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw and as dry grass sinks down in the flames, so their roots will decay and their flowers blow away like dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel. 25 Therefore the Lord's anger burns against his people; his hand is raised and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and the dead bodies are like refuse in the streets. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.

Rejecting God through backsliding (Jer 15:6)

6 You have rejected me," declares the Lord. "You keep on backsliding. So I will lay hands on you and destroy you; I can no longer show compassion.

Rejecting God through oppressing and deceiving others (Isa 30:12-13)

12 Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: "Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, 13 this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant.

Continued unbelief will result in eternal separation from God (14-15)

Separation from God because of iniquities (Isa 59:2)

2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Separation from God through not having anything in common with righteousness (2 Cor 6:15-17)

15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."

Separation from God because of unfaithfulness (Deut 32:19-20)

19 The Lord saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. 20 "I will hide my face from them," he said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.

Separation from God because of wickedness (Prov 15:29)

29 The Lord is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Dr. Thomas Constable

Verse 1-2

Jeremiah received another message from the Lord. He was to go to the gate of the temple in Jerusalem and deliver a prophecy in Yahweh's name to the Judahites who entered to worship. This was probably the New or Eastern temple gate (cf. Jeremiah 26:10; Jeremiah 36:10).

". . . during the pilgrimage festivals in the temple, the pilgrims were greeted at the temple gates by a servant of the institution, who asked them to examine their moral lives prior to passing through the gates and participating in the worship (see Psalms 15, 24...). If Jeremiah assumed his role of 'preacher at the gate' in an unofficial capacity, then it is possible that the custom had lapsed at that time (as seems entirely probable from the substance of the sermon) and was consciously resumed by the prophet to his own moral and spiritual ends." [Note: Craigie, p. 120.]

Verses 1-15

Jeremiah's Temple Sermon 7:1-15

This message demonstrates a structure that is quite typical of many others in the Book of Jeremiah (cf. Jeremiah 11:1-17; Jeremiah 17:19-27; Jeremiah 34:8-22). First there is an explanation of Yahweh's will (word, law; Jeremiah 7:1-7), then a description of Israel's departure from it (Jeremiah 7:8-12), and then an announcement of divine judgment (Jeremiah 7:13-15). A similar message, or the same message in abbreviated form, appears later in the book (Jeremiah 26:1-6). [Note: Scholars differ about what they call Jeremiah's Temple Sermon. Some refer to all of 7:1-8:3 as the temple sermon, and a few consider 7:1-10:25 the temple sermon.]

Verses 1-25

Aspects of false religion 7:1-8:3

All the messages in this section deal with departure from the Lord in religious practices, either in pagan rites or in the perversion of the proper worship of Yahweh that the Mosaic Law specified. All the material in this section fits conditions in Judah after 609 B.C., when Jehoiakim began allowing a return to pagan practices after the end of Josiah's reforms. Another feature of this section is the large amount of prose material it contains, much more than the preceding section (chs. 2-6). The common theme is worship, and the key word is "place," though this word refers to different things in different verses (Jeremiah 7:3; Jeremiah 7:7; Jeremiah 7:12; Jeremiah 7:14; Jeremiah 7:20; Jeremiah 7:32; Jeremiah 8:3). The places in view are the temple, Jerusalem, and Judah, but which one is in view is sometimes difficult to determine. From their contents we may surmise that these messages were responsible for much of the antagonism that Jeremiah received from the Judahites (cf. Jeremiah 26:7-24).

Verse 3

The prophet was to announce that sovereign Yahweh, the God of Israel, promised that if His people would repent (change their thinking, actions, and way of life), He would allow them to continue to dwell in their land.

Verse 4

The people were not to assume that just because they had the temple, the Lord would keep them safe. Many of the Judahites believed that the existence of the temple guaranteed Jerusalem's inviolability. God's supernatural deliverance of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's reign probably accounts for some of this feeling (2 Kings 18:13 to 2 Kings 19:37). Furthermore, Josiah had glorified the temple during his reforms.

"They [these Judeans] would argue that God had chosen Zion as his earthly dwelling place (cf. Psalms 132:13-14) and had promised to David and his descendants a kingdom for ever (2 Samuel 7:12-13). In the light of such promises it seemed to be a natural conclusion that God would not allow either his dwelling place (the temple) or his chosen ruler to come to any harm." [Note: Thompson, p. 277.]

"The temple building itself had become the people's object of worship, replacing the *Person* of the building." [Note: Jensen, p. 37.]

Verse 5-6

Jeremiah proceeded to explain God's promise (Jeremiah 7:3). He listed three examples to illustrate what God wanted: two related to actions toward fellow Israelites, and one related to actions toward God. True repentance meant dealing justly with one another, namely, refraining from oppressing the vulnerable such as strangers, orphans, and widows. It also meant not putting people to death without proper justification. The Mosaic Law demonstrates a profound concern for human welfare (cf. Deuteronomy 14:29; Deuteronomy 24:19-21; et al.). God-ward, repenting meant not worshipping other gods, which the people were doing to their own ruin.

Verse 7

If the people did these things, then Yahweh would allow them to remain in the land that He had given their forefathers as a permanent possession (cf. Jeremiah 7:3; Genesis 12:7).

Verse 8

The prophet also explained what the Lord meant by trusting in deceptive words (Jeremiah 7:4), which they had been trusting in but without benefit.

Verse 9

The people were committing robbery, murder, adultery, perjury, offering sacrifices to Baal, and following other foreign idols. These were all violations of Israel's law (Exodus 20:3-5; Exodus 20:13-16).

Verse 10

The Judahites would commit these sins and then come to the temple, stand before Yahweh, and conclude that He had forgiven them. They would go through this ritual only so they could go out and sin again. They apparently felt that they had an indulgence that permitted them to go on sinning (cf. Ecclesiastes 8:11). [Note: Feinberg, p. 428; Keil, 1:156.]

"They flee to the temple for protection, thinking to be safe there, believing that participation in the formal rituals of the cult would somehow deliver them from the Judge. But the temple was no sheltering place for covenant-breakers." [Note: Thompson, p. 281.]

The "house" that was "called by My (Yahweh's) name" is a description of the temple that stresses that it was the building with which He uniquely associated His personal presence.

Verse 11

By treating the temple in this way, the people had turned it into "a den of robbers," a gathering place for those who stole from others and God, and violated God's Word with impunity (cf. Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).

"They have profaned God's house by making it a place of retreat between acts of crime..." [Note: Harrison, Jeremiah and . . . , p. 86.]

The Lord assured the people that He had seen what they were doing; they had not deceived Him.

Verse 12

Yahweh told the people to go to Shiloh to see what He had done to another town where He had met with the Israelites in former years (cf. Joshua 18:1; Judges 18:31; 1 Samuel 1-4). In Jeremiah's day it lay in ruins. The site was about 20 miles north of Jerusalem. The Philistines evidently destroyed the town in Eli's day, though the text does not say so explicitly (1 Samuel 4). [Note: See H. Kjaer, "The Excavation of Shiloh 1929," *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 10:2-3 (1930):87-174; and W. F. Albright, "The Danish Excavations at Shiloh," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 9, pp. 10-11.] The tabernacle that had stood at Shiloh then was still in existence in David's day, having been moved to Gibeon (1 Chronicles 21:29), and when Solomon began to reign (2 Chronicles 1:3), so it did not suffer destruction with the city. Later references indicate that the town was rebuilt (1 Kings 14:2; 1 Kings 14:4). The Assyrian invasion of the territory of Ephraim, where Shiloh stood, may have destroyed it again. Yahweh had allowed Shiloh to be destroyed because of the wickedness of the Israelites. Therefore Jeremiah's hearers should not think that He would preserve the temple from destruction in spite of their sins. The temple was not a talisman (lucky charm) that guaranteed their safety. The Israelites had formerly taken this view of the ark as well (cf. 1 Samuel 4:3).

Verse 13

The people had been sinning in the ways just enumerated for a long time. The Lord had sent them prophets and leaders who had warned them from the earliest days of their departure from Him, but they had refused to respond. The phrase "rising up early and speaking" was a favorite of Jeremiah's (cf. Jeremiah 7:25; Jeremiah 11:7; Jeremiah 25:3-4; Jeremiah 26:5; Jeremiah 29:19; Jeremiah 32:33; Jeremiah 35:14-15; Jeremiah 44:4). It occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament.

Verse 14

Consequently, the Lord promised to destroy the temple and Jerusalem as He had destroyed Shiloh. He would do this even though the temple bore His name, His people trusted in it, and He had given Jerusalem to them and their fathers.

Verse 15

Furthermore, the Lord would drive the Judahites from His sight in the land as He had driven their brethren in the Northern Kingdom from His sight: by sending them into captivity.

Verse 16

The Lord told His prophet not to waste his time praying for Him to be merciful to the people, even with earnest prayers, because they would not cause Him to relent (cf. Jeremiah 11:14; Jeremiah 14:11). The only thing that would prevent invasion, destruction, and captivity would be His people's repentance (cf. Jeremiah 7:3; Jeremiah 7:5-7).

(Adapted from URL:<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/view.cgi?bk=23&ch=7>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

God's message was stern and uncompromising. Yet despite Judah's failure, God's promise was still in force to establish David's throne forever (2 Samuel 7:16). Today we know that we have received the fulfillment of that promise in Jesus. We also should realize that we have a clear responsibility regarding how we are to live before God. As followers of Christ, we are to promote God's justice. We are not to be hypocrites who worship God outwardly while plotting rebellion inwardly. As the God of the temple would not be mocked, neither will the God of the cross—the same God.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. The prerequisite for acceptable worship of God is holiness (Jer. 7:1-3)
2. Holy places cannot deliver us from unholy living {vs. 4}
3. A genuine commitment to God will be evident in every relationship we have in life (vss. 5-7)
4. God's grace can never be claimed as giving us freedom to sin (Jer. 7:8-10;cf. Rom. 6:1-2)
5. Our sins do not escape God's sight just because we hide ourselves in a place of worship (Jer. 7:11-14)
6. Sin always has consequences, even for believers (vs. 15)