

# SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**JER. 26:1** In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from the LORD, saying,

**2 Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word:**

**3** If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.

**4 And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you,**

**5** To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened;

**6 Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.**

**7** So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

**8 Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded**

**him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.**

**9** Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

**10 When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house.**

**11** Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man *is* worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

**12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.**

**13** Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

## NOTES

# God's Faithful Justice

Lesson Text: Jeremiah 26:1-13

Related Scriptures: 2 Kings 23:34—24:6; 2 Timothy 2:22-26;  
Jeremiah 7:21-28; Mark 11:15-19; Matthew 26:57-68

TIME: 608 B.C.

PLACE: Jerusalem

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you" (Jeremiah 26:13).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

### **A CONTROVERSIAL SERMON— Jer. 26:1-6**

**Choosing a central location (Jer. 26:1-3).** At the beginning of King Jehoiakim's reign, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah as it had done so many times before. To give the greatest publicity to his message, the Lord commanded Jeremiah to stand in the courtyard of the temple, where all the people were assembled.

Since those living in the cities of Judah had gathered to worship at the temple (vs. 2), this likely occurred during a feast day. It was the perfect place to condemn the people's misplaced trust in the temple instead of the Lord Himself to protect them.

There was a severely misguided faith placed in the mere existence of the temple. Some viewed it as a kind of shield or talisman that guaranteed their safety. The temple stood as a symbol of the Lord's presence, and that, some believed, made it impervious and invincible.

The people's misplaced faith in the temple led to leniency with sin, blatant compromise with idolatry, and indifference toward God's message.

God's words emerge as the predominant focus of the scene in Jeremiah 26:1-2. The words came to Jeremiah through direct revelation. God commanded Jeremiah to speak His message to all the assembled worshippers. The content of the message was the words the Lord commanded Jeremiah to speak.

Moreover, Jeremiah was forbidden from withholding even one word of what the Lord had commanded him to speak. The message of the Lord was to be delivered with absolute precision without leaving out or altering even the smallest detail. No deviation from the words was permissible. No tampering with the divinely given message would be tolerated.

Despite the sin and guilt that the people had piled up for decades, Jeremiah 26:3 reveals the astonishing mercy of God. The Lord was willing to turn away His hot wrath from them if only they repented and returned to covenant living. Even though judgment was imminent and on the brink of eruption, God still offered the way of escape to this nation that was long defiant and desensitized to their sin.

**Proclaiming a public rebuke (Jer. 26:4-6).** In all likelihood, Jeremiah preached more than what is found in verses 4-6, but nevertheless, these verses record the substance of the sermon. Hanging over the heads of the people is the clear and present danger of invasion, destruction, and captivity. Jeremiah presented them with an ultimatum that resembles what Moses so often gave in Deuteronomy.

If they refused to listen to God and the words of the prophets, then both the temple and the country of Judah would face cataclysmic destruction. At the same time, the offer of preservation, protection, and the provision of blessing were clear, conditioned upon their obedience.

In this excerpt of Jeremiah's sermon, we again see the message of God being of paramount importance. The people are warned about breaking God's law (vs. 4) and are called to obey the words of the prophets whom the Lord had sent to them (vs. 5). The implication is that the people's relationship with the Lord was dependent on their response to His words through the prophets.

The most disastrous result of the people's rejection of the words of the Lord was nothing less than the destruction of the temple. Jeremiah warned that soon the temple would become like the ancient town of Shiloh where the sacred tabernacle was housed (vs. 6). The reference to Shiloh alludes to the capture of the ark of the covenant—God's throne seat—by the Philistines centuries earlier (cf. 1 Sam. 4:12-21).

This was not the only time that Jeremiah mentioned Shiloh as an object lesson to God's sinful people (Jer. 7:12-14). In 1 Samuel 3, the young prophet Samuel received a message from God concerning Eli, the priest, and his sons. Eli violated the law by

failing to restrain the wickedness of his sons. The Lord announced that He would judge Eli's household. God used the Philistines to kill Eli's sons, and Eli died when he heard the news that the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant during the battle. Israel, too, acted wickedly. They treated the ark as a talisman, trusting its presence on the battlefield to grant them victory. But they were defeated, and the ark was captured. And now, in Jeremiah's day, the Jews again were treating the ark and its temple as a talisman.

### **A PUNISHMENT SOUGHT— Jer. 26:7-10**

Instead of seeing the astonishing grace that God was willing to lavish upon them for repentance, the people were outraged to the point of violence. After finishing his sermon about the imminent destruction of the temple and Jerusalem (vs. 7), the priests, false prophets, and all the people simultaneously seized Jeremiah with great fury (vs. 8).

The rage of the crowd is seen most clearly in the Hebrew construction lying behind the statement "Thou shalt surely die!" (vs. 8). Intense and emphatic, the construction indicates a resolved determination to have Jeremiah killed for his offensive message. To the credit of the crowd, they listened closely and carefully to Jeremiah's message and recounted it back to him verbatim (vs. 9). Offended and outraged, the people were appalled that Jeremiah would dare declare the destruction of their precious temple. This was a mighty blow to their deepest misplaced security that must not go unpunished.

Meanwhile, the officials of the city, who also heard the explosive sermon, detained Jeremiah and sat at the gate of the city (vs. 10). The gate was not merely an entrance into the city; it was a place to handle civil and legal matters. The purpose of the gathering,

therefore, was to try Jeremiah and condemn him as a blasphemer. If he was found guilty, the officials would put him to death as the priests, prophets, and people demanded.

Once again, in verses 7-10, the all-authoritative message of God is the focus. The people heard Jeremiah speaking the words of the Lord (vs. 7); Jeremiah finished speaking the words the Lord had commanded (vs. 8); and finally, the crowd was furious that Jeremiah prophesied in the Lord's name against the temple (vs. 9). The issue with the people of Judah had always been centered around God's words through His prophets. They had not listened to His words in the past, and they were not prepared to listen in the present.

### **A CALL TO REPENTANCE— Jer. 26:11-13**

The angry mob held their bogus trial before the officials of the city, with the accused prophet standing outnumbered and alone. They pronounced the prophet worthy of death—not for murder, arson, or even disturbing the peace—but for disturbing their false sense of peace about the security of Jerusalem. Jeremiah's words about the future destruction of the city were deemed so irreverent and dangerous that they passionately lobbied for the death penalty (vs. 11).

Jeremiah was given an opportunity to speak and defend himself (vs. 12). Serving as his own defense attorney, Jeremiah pointed to his own divine call as the basis for his authority and message. He was not a self-appointed impostor like the prophets calling for his death but a divinely chosen, sovereignly sent spokesman of the Living God to a once-great nation now steeped in sin.

Instead of backing off or easing up on his apostate audience, Jeremiah summoned them to repentance. Their humble repentance was the only way

that the Lord would withhold the savage but well-deserved judgment He had promised against them. According to Jeremiah, authentic repentance manifests itself in these two ways: amending their lives and deeds and listening once again to the voice of the Lord.

Should this rebellious nation comply with these eminently gracious terms, the Lord would relent of the evil He had spoken against the city. Although His wrath stood ready to burst forth, He was eager and willing to reconcile with His people. There was still time to relent, repent, and yield to the words of God spoken through His prophet.

—Jerod Gilcher

## **QUESTIONS**

1. Where did the Lord command Jeremiah to deliver His message (Jer. 26:1-2)?
2. Why was this a perfect place to deliver God's message (vs. 2)?
3. What was astonishing about God's message to His sinful people (vs. 3)?
4. What would happen if the people did not obey God's message (vss. 4-6)?
5. What historical event provides the pattern for God's warning (vss. 5-6)?
6. To what did the people turn instead of repentance (vss. 7-8)?
7. Why were the people outraged at Jeremiah (vs. 9)?
8. What was the significance of the city gate where Jeremiah was held (vs. 10)?
9. What was the stated charge against Jeremiah (vs. 11)?
10. To what did Jeremiah point in defense of the message that he preached (vss. 12-13)?

—Jerod Gilcher

# PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God is not silent about human culture (Jer. 26:1-2).
2. Every word God speaks is important (vs. 2).
3. God desires to bless rather than judge (vs. 3).
4. God will judge those who do not obey His message (vss. 4-6).
5. God's words apply to every level of society (vs. 7).
6. Preaching God's words may engender a hostile reaction (vs. 8).
7. Many people cannot accept that God would judge them (vs. 9).
8. Sometimes people wrongly think they can sit in judgment of God's words (vss. 10-11).
9. God's message will prevail no matter what people say (vss. 12-13).

—Glenn Weaver

# RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. How might we be tempted to soften God's Word to avoid persecution?
2. Why is God's willingness to judge or forgive consistent with His character?
3. Why is it dangerous to persecute someone who preaches the Bible?
4. How are God's past dealings with sinful behavior instructive for us (Jer. 26:4-6)?
5. How did the priests and prophets fail to obey God's words (vss. 4-8)? What can we learn from their example?
6. Why were the people incensed that Jeremiah would preach against Jerusalem (vs. 11)? Do we have a corresponding object in our culture?

—Glenn Weaver

# Golden Text Illuminated

**"Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you" (Jeremiah 26:13).**

The golden text for this lesson reveals the interplay between God's severity and tenderness, His judgment, and His mercy. In the face of Judah's persistent sin and disobedience, God pronounces a severe judgment through Jeremiah. Yet even in this pronouncement, God's heart for repentance and restoration shines through.

Throughout Scripture, we see God's righteous anger against sin juxtaposed with His unfailing love and compassion for His people. He is a God of perfect justice who cannot tolerate iniquity and must punish wrongdoing. Yet He is also a God of boundless mercy who desires to forgive and restore those who turn to Him in repentance.

In the context of Jeremiah's prophecy, Judah had sunk deep into idolatry and moral decay. They had turned their backs on the God who had delivered them from slavery, provided for them in the wilderness, and established them in the Promised Land. They had ignored the warnings of the prophets and persisted in their sinful ways.

As a result, God pronounced judgment on Judah through Jeremiah, warning of the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people to Babylon. Yet even in this dire warning, the golden text reveals God's heart for repentance and restoration. He pleads with His people to amend their ways, turn from their sin, and obey His voice.

—Gene Kissinger