

# Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

## Jeremiah Chapters 5-6

10/22/14

### Bible Study Notes - Chapter 5

#### *Not One Is Upright - Verses 1-15*

*1 "Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, look around and consider, search through her squares. If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city. 2 Although they say, 'As surely as the LORD lives,' still they are swearing falsely." 3 O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You struck them, but they felt no pain; you crushed them, but they refused correction. They made their faces harder than stone and refused to repent. 4 I thought, "These are only the poor; they are foolish, for they do not know the way of the LORD, the requirements of their God. 5 So I will go to the leaders and speak to them; surely they know the way of the LORD, the requirements of their God." But with one accord they too had broken off the yoke and torn off the bonds. 6 Therefore a lion from the forest will attack them, a wolf from the desert will ravage them, a leopard will lie in wait near their towns to tear to pieces any who venture out, for their rebellion is great and their backslidings many. 7 "Why should I forgive you? Your children have forsaken me and sworn by gods that are not gods. I supplied all their needs, yet they committed adultery and thronged to the houses of prostitutes. 8 They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for another man's wife. 9 Should I not punish them for this?" declares the LORD. "Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this? 10 "Go through her vineyards and ravage them, but do not destroy them completely. Strip off her branches, for these people do not belong to the LORD. 11 The house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly unfaithful to me," declares the LORD. 12 They have lied about the LORD; they said, "He will do nothing! No harm will come to us; we will never see sword or famine. 13 The prophets are but wind and the word is not in them; so let what they say be done to them." 14 Therefore this is what the LORD God Almighty says: "Because the people have spoken these words, I will make my words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes. 15 O house of Israel," declares the LORD, "I am bringing a distant nation against you-- an ancient and enduring nation, a people whose language you do not know, whose speech you do not understand.*

**5:1** Jerusalem was the capital city and center of worship for Judah, but God challenged anyone to find one honest and truthful person in the entire city. God was willing to spare the city if only one upright person could be found (he made a similar statement about Sodom; see Genesis 18:32). Think how significant your testimony may be in your city or community. You may represent the only witness for God to many people. Are you faithful to that opportunity?

**5:3** Nothing but truth is acceptable to God. When we pray, sing, speak, or serve, nothing closes the door of God's acceptance more than hypocrisy, lying, or pretense. God sees through us and refuses to listen. To be close to God, be honest with him.

**5:4-5** Even the leaders who knew God's laws and understood his words of judgment had rejected him. They were supposed to teach and guide the people, but instead they led them into sin. Jeremiah observed the poor and ignorant—those who were uninformed of God's ways—and realized they were not learning God's laws from their leaders. Thus, God's search in Jerusalem was complete. There were no true followers in any level of society.

**5:7** God held these people responsible for the sins of their children because the children had followed their parents' example. The sin of leading others, especially our children, astray by our example is one for which God will hold us accountable.

**5:15** Babylon was indeed an ancient nation. The old Babylonian Empire had lasted from about 1900 B.C. to 1550 B.C., and earlier kingdoms had been on her soil as early as 3000 B.C. Babylon in Jeremiah's day would soon rebel against Assyrian domination, form its own army, conquer Assyria, and become the next dominant world power.

*16 Their quivers are like an open grave; all of them are mighty warriors. 17 They will devour your harvests and food, devour your sons and daughters; they will devour your flocks and herds, devour your vines and fig trees. With the sword they will destroy the fortified cities in which you trust. 18 "Yet even in those days," declares the LORD, "I will not destroy you completely. 19 And when the people ask, 'Why has the LORD our God done all this to us?' you will tell them, 'As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your own land, so now you will serve foreigners in a land not your own.' 20"Announce this to the house of Jacob and proclaim it in Judah: 21 Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear: 22 Should you not fear me?" declares the LORD. "Should you not tremble in my presence? I made the sand a boundary for the sea, an everlasting barrier it cannot cross. The waves may roll, but they cannot prevail; they may roar, but they cannot cross it. 23 But these people have stubborn and rebellious hearts; they have turned aside and gone away. 24 They do not say to themselves, 'Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives autumn and spring rains in season, who assures us of the regular weeks of harvest.' 25 Your wrongdoings have kept these away; your sins have deprived you of good. 26 "Among my people are wicked men who lie in wait like men who snare birds and like those who set traps to catch men. 27 Like cages full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; they have become rich and powerful 28 and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor. 29Should I not punish them for this?" declares the LORD. "Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this? 30 "A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: 31 The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?*

**5:21** Have you ever spoken to someone, only to realize that the person didn't hear a word you were saying? Jeremiah told the people that their eyes and ears did them no good because they refused to see or hear God's message. The people of Judah and Israel were foolishly deaf when God promised blessings for obedience and destruction for disobedience. When God speaks through his Word or his messengers, we harm ourselves if we fail to listen. God's message will never change us unless we listen to it.

**5:22-24** What is your attitude when you come into God's presence? We should come with fear and trembling (that is, awe and respect) because God sets the boundaries of the roaring ocean and provides the rain, assuring us of plentiful harvests. God had to strip away all the benefits that Judah and Israel had grown to expect from him and give the people another opportunity to turn back to him. God still sometimes uses the same method of blessing or withholding blessing to get our attention. Don't wait until God removes your cherished resources before committing yourself to him as you should.

**5:28-29** People and nations who please God treat the fatherless (orphans) justly and care for the poor. Wicked men in Israel treated the defenseless unjustly, which displeased God greatly. Some defenseless people—orphans, the poor, the homeless, and the lonely—are within your reach. What action can you take to help at least one of them?

## Bible Study Notes - Chapter 6

### *Jerusalem Under Siege - Verses 1-15*

*1 "Flee for safety, people of Benjamin! Flee from Jerusalem! Sound the trumpet in Tekoa! Raise the signal over Beth Hakkerem! For disaster looms out of the north, even terrible destruction. 2 I will destroy the Daughter of Zion, so beautiful and delicate. 3 Shepherds with their flocks will come against her; they will pitch their tents around her, each tending his own portion." 4 "Prepare for battle against her! Arise, let us attack at noon! But, alas, the daylight is fading, and the shadows of evening grow long. 5 So arise, let us attack at night and destroy her fortresses!" 6 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Cut down the trees and build siege ramps against Jerusalem. This city must be punished; it is filled with oppression. 7 As a well pours out its water, so she pours out her wickedness. Violence and destruction resound in her; her sickness and wounds are ever before me. 8 Take warning, O Jerusalem, or I will turn away from you and make your land desolate so no one can live in it." 9 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Let them glean the remnant of Israel as thoroughly as a vine; pass your hand over the branches again, like one gathering grapes." 10 To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it. 11 But I am full of the wrath of the LORD, and I cannot hold it in. "Pour it out on the children in the street and on the young men gathered together; both husband and wife will be caught in it, and the old, those weighed down with years. 12 Their houses will be turned over to others, together with their fields and their wives, when I stretch out my hand against those who live in the land," declares the LORD. 13 "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. 14 They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace. 15 Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the LORD.*

**6:1** The Lord warned Jeremiah's own tribe of Benjamin to flee, not to the security of the great walled city of Jerusalem because it would be under siege, but toward Tekoa, a town about 12 miles south of Jerusalem. The warning smoke signal was lit at Beth Hakkerem, halfway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

**6:9** The "remnant of Israel" mentioned here is not to be confused with the righteous remnant. This remnant refers to those left after the first wave of destruction. Like a grape gatherer, Babylon wouldn't be satisfied until every person was taken. Babylonians invaded Judah three times until they destroyed the nation and its temple completely (2 Kings 24-25).

**6:10** The people became angry and closed their ears. They wanted no part of God's commands because living for God did not appear very exciting. As in Jeremiah's day, people today dislike God's demand for disciplined living. As unsettling as people's responses might be, we must continue to share God's word with others. Our responsibility is to present God's word; their responsibility is to accept it. We must not let what people want to hear determine what we say.

**6:14** "Ignore it and maybe it will go away!" Sound familiar? This was Israel's response to Jeremiah's warnings. They kept listening to predictions of peace because they did not like Jeremiah's condemnation of their sin. But denying the truth never changes it; what God says always happens. Sin is never removed by denying its existence. We must confess to God that we have sinned and ask him to forgive us.

### *Verses 16-30*

*16 This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.' 17 I appointed watchmen over you and said, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' But you said, 'We will not listen.' 18 Therefore hear, O nations; observe, O witnesses, what will happen to them. 19 Hear, O earth: I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because*

*they have not listened to my words and have rejected my law. 20 What do I care about incense from Sheba or sweet calamus from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please me." 21 Therefore this is what the LORD says: "I will put obstacles before this people. Fathers and sons alike will stumble over them; neighbors and friends will perish." 22 This is what the LORD says: "Look, an army is coming from the land of the north; a great nation is being stirred up from the ends of the earth. 23 They are armed with bow and spear; they are cruel and show no mercy. They sound like the roaring sea as they ride on their horses; they come like men in battle formation to attack you, O Daughter of Zion." 24 We have heard reports about them, and our hands hang limp. Anguish has gripped us, pain like that of a woman in labor. 25 Do not go out to the fields or walk on the roads, for the enemy has a sword, and there is terror on every side. 26 O my people, put on sackcloth and roll in ashes; mourn with bitter wailing as for an only son, for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us. 27 "I have made you a tester of metals and my people the ore, that you may observe and test their ways. 28 They are all hardened rebels, going about to slander. They are bronze and iron; they all act corruptly. 29 The bellows blow fiercely to burn away the lead with fire, but the refining goes on in vain; the wicked are not purged out. 30 They are called rejected silver, because the LORD has rejected them."*

**6:16** The right path for living is the ancient, good way, which has been marked out by God. But the people refused to take God's path, going their own way instead. We face the same decision today—going God's old but true way, or following a new path of our own choosing. Don't be misled. The only way to find peace and "rest for your souls" is to walk on God's path.

**6:20** Sheba, located in southwest Arabia, was a center of trade for the resins and spices that were ingredients in the incense, holy oil, and sacrifices used in worship at the Jerusalem temple. But God wasn't really looking for sacrifices and rituals; he was looking for people with repentant and obedient hearts.

**6:25** Ominous travel warnings, increased threat levels, and tight security were as much a part of life in ancient Israel as they are in the world today. Terrorism, in one form or another, has been a tactic throughout history. The question raised about such real or potential dangers forces us to examine our sense of ultimate security. Whether the outlook is bleak or hopeful, do we actually trust in God? Or does our trust last only as long as the threat seems distant?

**6:29-30** Metal is purified by fire. As metal ore is heated, the pure metal melts and is separated from the impurities. As God tested the people of Judah, however, he could find no purity in their lives. They continued in their sinful ways. Do you see impurities in your life that need to be removed? Confess these to God and allow him to purify you as he sees fit. Take time right now to reflect on the areas of your life that he has already refined; then thank him for what he is doing.