

Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 12, Jeremiah 7, The Temple Sermon

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his instruction on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 12, Jeremiah 7, The Temple Sermon.

In our session today, we're looking at Jeremiah chapter 7 and the Temple Sermon.

As I'm working my way through the book of Jeremiah, I'm reminded of a young college basketball coach who really wanted to emphasize to his team the importance of the upcoming game. He told them, this is the most important game we've played this season. The problem is, as a young coach, by the time they had played their seventh game, he had already told them that five different times.

As I'm going through the book of Jeremiah, I know there are going to be times where I say, this is my favorite chapter in Jeremiah, or this is maybe the most important part of the book of Jeremiah. But in a sense, the Temple Sermon in Jeremiah chapter 7, in many ways, encapsulates what Jeremiah's ministry was about. In fact, this message is so important that there is a similar message in the second section of the book, Jeremiah chapter 26, and scholars debate about whether this is the same message or a similar one.

But in both sections of the book, we have a significant message where Jeremiah is announcing judgment against the Temple. The difference between the two passages is that Jeremiah 7 is going to focus more on the content of the sermon. Jeremiah 26 is going to focus more on the audience's reaction and the response to that sermon.

So, we're going to begin just by looking at the sermon, and I'd like to begin by reading the passage. In church history, we celebrate a number of famous sermons like Jonathan Edwards' Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God or George Whitefield's What Think Ye of Christ? In American history, we celebrate speeches like Martin Luther King's I Have a Dream. In a sense, as you think of Jeremiah, this is the sermon that Jeremiah is most known for.

This is what again encapsulates his ministry. Here's the message. Jeremiah chapter 7. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord.

Stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim there this word and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah, who enter in through these gates to worship the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words.

This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, and if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other guides to your own harm, then, and we see this if then, the conditional structure definitely laid out here, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of you to your fathers forever. Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail.

Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known? And then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered, only to go on doing all of these abominations. Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord. Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name to dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people, Israel.

And now, because you have done all of these things, declares the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer. Therefore, I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and your fathers as I did to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all of your kinsmen, all of the offspring of Ephraim.

Now, I think we all understand the incredible amount of courage that it took for Jeremiah to preach this sermon, to announce to the people that God is going to destroy his own house, and to destroy Jerusalem. In chapter 26, when we see the response of the audience, it's not surprising. The first reaction of the people, the spiritual leaders that are there to hear this message, is that this man deserves to die.

And I believe the reason for that is, is that in their mind, pronouncing judgment on God's house is a form of false prophecy. This is God's house. God's promised to protect it.

God has promised to be present with his people for a prophet to stand and say, God is going to destroy this. In their mind, in their understanding of the covenant, which has come to mean an absolute guarantee of protection, that's blasphemy. It's a false prophecy.

So, Jeremiah deserves to die. I think we understand the courage that it took to preach this message a little bit more and where that false confidence came from when we understand what the temple meant for Israel. Now, if I could, just thinking a little bit about the theology of temple, I'd like to go all the way back to the book of Genesis.

And when Adam and Eve are in the Garden of Eden, in a sense, the garden is not just a garden. The garden is a sanctuary because it's a place where they meet with God. It tells us in Genesis chapter three that God would walk with them and meet with them in the cool of the day.

And even more important than all the things that they enjoyed in the garden was the fact that God's presence was there. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, they lost that fellowship with God. They lost that presence.

A cherubim was stationed at the gate of the garden. They were no longer allowed access. And so we come to the end of that section of Genesis, and we're asking the question, is it still going to be possible for people to walk with God and have fellowship with him? Well, we go over a couple of chapters in one of the genealogies, and we're introduced to a man named Enoch.

And in all of the people who are being born and bearing children and dying and this sort of repetitious account of life and death, it tells us about Enoch, that Enoch walked with God. And then one day Enoch was no more because God took him with him. So, the possibility is still there.

God is reaching out to fallen humanity, and they're able to walk with God. We're going to see Abraham. God says to him, walk before me and be blameless.

But when God calls Israel as his chosen people, the reason that he brings them into the promised land is so that they can enjoy his presence and live in fellowship with him. We read a passage about the purpose of God bringing Israel into the promised land in Exodus chapter 15, verse 17. And Moses says, you will bring them in and plant them on your mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

So, when we think of the promised land, we think of a land flowing with milk and honey. We think of a abundant, prosperous land, but we also need to understand the promised land was a sanctuary. And just like the garden of Eden was a temple where Adam and Eve could meet with God.

The promised land was also going to be a sanctuary where God could dwell with his people, and they could enjoy fellowship with him. Leviticus 26 verse 11 says that God is going to walk among his people. And we hear the echo at Garden of Eden, Enoch walking with God, Abraham, walk before me and be blameless.

The tabernacle and the temple, the place where God chooses to place his name, as described in Deuteronomy chapter 12, is the place where God is going to walk among his people. It's not just a house of worship. It's not just a place where the people come to assemble.

This is God's dwelling place. This is God's house. In addition to that, the temple and the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant that are there, the holy place, also represent God's place of rulership.

The word temple, in fact, simply means, heikal is the word, it means big house. And it can refer either to a temple or a palace. The Ark of the Covenant represents the footstool of God's heavenly throne.

In a sense, the temple is where heaven and earth meet, and God dwells in the presence of his people. Before the temple is built, the tabernacle is a place where God's house is. And there are sights and sounds and smells and food and light, the things that people can see and understand. God lives in the midst of us.

As Israel's in the wilderness and they're camped out, the tabernacle is at the center because God is ruling in the midst of his people. And so, Israel has God as their next-door neighbor. And the temple, again, is not just a great structure like one of our great cathedrals.

The temple represents the dwelling place of God. And in Deuteronomy chapter 12, again, this is the place that God has chosen to place his name. And so, as Jeremiah is standing up and saying, God is prepared to destroy this place. In a sense, it overturns all of this temple theology that we have running through the Old Testament.

God had also promised as a result of his presence among the people that there were blessings that they would enjoy having God as their next-door neighbor. Psalm 46 is a Zion psalm that celebrates the security that God provides for his people because of his presence. And in Psalm 46, thinking about the Lord dwelling in the midst of his people in Jerusalem, here's the blessing of God's presence and God's security that the people enjoy because of that.

At the beginning of the psalm, it says, God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. At the end of the psalm, it says this: the Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.

And so, the people of Judah, as Jeremiah is preaching the sermon, they not only have a theology of temple, they have a theology of temple and of Zion where God has promised that he's their refuge. He's their source of security. And here is Jeremiah coming into their midst and turning over those traditions and saying, God is not going to be a source of security for you.

God is going to judge you and destroy the place that he owns that is called by his name. In this psalm, in Psalm 46, the people say that whatever disaster could possibly come into our lives, we know that because of God's presence, we're

absolutely safe and secure. So, the psalm goes on to say, therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way.

Though the mountains be moved into the midst of the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling, they imagine a storm, and not just any storm, but an earthquake or a tsunami that shakes the entire earth, and the mountains and the seas are roaring and foaming. And yet, there's one place in all of the world that is secure.

There's a storm shelter that is absolutely peaceful and that's the presence of God in Jerusalem. And in verse four of Psalm 46, there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the most high. And so, in the earlier verses, we imagine these raging waters that are shaking the entire earth.

But in Jerusalem, in the storm shelter, the one place in all the earth that is safe, this tiny city of Jerusalem, there's this peaceful stream that's flowing through it. The stream of Gihon, which was the water supply for Jerusalem, represents the presence of God. And because of his presence, the people of Jerusalem are absolutely secure.

Even if there's a storm that shatters the earth, we're safe because of God's security. Then Psalm 46 imagines another stressful situation. In fact, the two worst things that could possibly happen are a storm that would shake the earth, a natural disaster, an earthquake, and a tsunami; the second greatest tragedy they could experience in the ancient world would be the invasion of an enemy army.

And Psalm 46 says, The nations rage, the kingdoms totter, he utters his voice, the earth melts. The same words that are used to describe the shaking of the mountains or the roaring of the waters are now used to imagine the enemy armies that are going to assault Jerusalem. And the response to that is, The Lord of hosts is with us.

The God of Jacob is our fortress. The psalmist says God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved.

God will help her when the morning dawns. So, imagine, yeah, if Jerusalem is attacked by an enemy army, God is going to be there in the morning to deliver his people. The psalmist concludes by saying, Come behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations and destruction on the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow. He shatters the spear. He burns the chariots with fire. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us.

So, the psalmist says, The two worst disasters that you could imagine happening, A storm that shakes the earth or an enemy invasion, God's going to protect us.

And the presence of God in Jerusalem at his house is like a quiet stream that provides a storm shelter when all of the other waters of the earth are roaring and foaming. Now, Psalm 46 is not the only place that gives us these assurances. Psalm 48, another song of Zion, says this: Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God.

His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth. Mount Zion in the far north, the city of the great king. Within her citadels, God has made himself known as a fortress.

So, Zion is God's city. It's beautiful in its elevation. And Zion is described here as a high mountain.

Though if you've been there, you know that Mount Zion looks more like a hill to us. And Psalm 48 says, For behold, the kings assembled. They came on together.

As soon as they saw it, they were astounded, panicked, and took to flight.

Trembling took hold of them there. Anguishes of a woman in labor. By the east wind, you shattered the ships of Tarshish.

As we have seen, so we have heard in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God, which God will establish forever. And so, Psalm 48, just like Psalm 46, imagines the city of Jerusalem under enemy attack. And God, by His powerful east wind, destroys that army.

We can look at Psalm 76 and the same thing. Another Zion Psalm. God is going to defeat the enemies that attack Zion.

So, imagine yourself as an Israelite, as someone who lives in Jerusalem, coming in 609 to hear Jeremiah preach and hearing his message. God is getting ready to destroy his house. And there's this cognitive disconnect between, wait a minute, Jeremiah 7, the Temple Sermon.

And our traditions about Psalm 46, Psalm 48, Psalm 76, our belief that the Temple is God's house, the Holy Land itself is a sanctuary. What do we do with this? On top of that, the Zion tradition in Israel were not just songs. And I remember in high school, sometimes we had pep rallies and we'd sing the school fight song.

And Friday night, we would lose 48 to nothing. Sometimes, songs don't mean anything. But these are not just songs.

These are promises from God. And in addition to that, these are songs that have been confirmed by historical events. And in Jeremiah's time, as he's preaching this

message in 609 BC, there is something that happened almost exactly a hundred years before that, that again seems to be a total disconnect with what Jeremiah is preaching.

During the days of Isaiah, one of the other great major prophets, in 701 BC, the Assyrian army invaded Judah. The king of Assyria says that he captured 46 cities in Judah and trapped Hezekiah like a bird in a cage. Again, we have confirmation of this outside of the Bible itself.

Then Sennacherib and his armies, they capture the city of Lachish that is 25 miles away and that was designed as a buffer for Jerusalem. And the king was so impressed with that that he decorated the walls of his palace with the ways that he conquered and sieged the city. And then he marches on Jerusalem.

Sennacherib and the Assyrian army surrounded the city with 180,000 troops. And they come to Hezekiah and to his diplomats, and they send a letter demanding the absolute and total surrender of the city of Jerusalem. And they make this claim, they say, do not trust and do not believe that your God that you worship, the Lord of Israel, don't believe that he's going to be able to deliver you any more than any of the other gods have been able to deliver their people from us.

Hezekiah, at this point, is in a quandary. What do I do? He has tried as a king to solve this in all the political and military ways that he could possibly imagine. But now, what he does is the best thing that he could have done.

He comes to the Lord and trusts in him. And he takes this letter that the king of Assyria had written, blaspheming God and saying that the Lord would not be able to protect Israel. He lays it out in front of the Lord at the temple.

And he says, God, I want you to read this. I want you to hear what the king of Assyria is saying about you and that you're not able to deliver us. And God, help us.

We're in trouble. And as a result of that, God answers Hezekiah's prayer. God delivers him in the city.

Isaiah comes to Hezekiah with a message. Because of your faith, because you've trusted the Lord because you've humbled yourself and asked for God's help and trusted in him exclusively, God is going to deliver Jerusalem. And the king of Assyria, with all his troops, is not going to fire a shot into this city.

And miraculously, the Bible tells us that the angel of the Lord went out into the middle of the night, brought a great destruction on the army of Assyria, and Sennacherib got on his horse and went back. And the city of Jerusalem in 701 BC was miraculously delivered. So as Jeremiah comes to the people of Judah in 609, almost a

hundred years later, the people have come to believe in the absolute inviolability of Zion.

We have psalms. We have Bible verses. We can point them out to you.

God defeats the enemies who attack Jerusalem. We have historical evidence. Look at what the Lord has done on behalf of Jerusalem in the past.

Look at how He's delivered the city. And in the last days of the Babylonian crisis, we're going to see Zedekiah coming and asking Jeremiah, pray for us, that the Lord might do one of his wondrous deeds. And I really think that the wondrous deed that he's talking about there is maybe there's going to be another Hezekiah type deliverance.

Jeremiah takes all of those ideas. He takes that tradition. He takes that historical event and he turns it upside down.

And he says, God is not absolutely guaranteeing that He will protect the city of Jerusalem. In fact, in this very if-then conditional, you have to choose either life or death; Jeremiah is going to say that the security of Jerusalem depends on your faithfulness to God. They had developed an understanding of the covenant that really was a form of presumption.

Because their presumption was, God will always be there for us. God will always take care of us, no matter what. We're God's chosen people.

God has absolutely guaranteed that He's going to bless us. What they had forgotten about were some other important things in their tradition as well. Jeremiah is not repudiating Psalm 46.

Jeremiah does not repudiate these other Zion Psalms, Psalm 48 and Psalm 76. Jeremiah is not repudiating the idea of the temple and God's presence being there. He is reminding them of things about their tradition that they have conveniently ignored.

Remember, the temple theology was saying that God was Israel's next-door neighbor. They believed that God was omnipresent, but they also believed that in a special way, God had chosen his presence to be at Jerusalem and for the people to be able to enjoy that. And the three times a year when the people made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to be in the presence of God, it was the greatest pleasure and joy and experience that you could ever have in life.

The psalmist says in one place, better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere. But what they had forgotten is to be in God's presence, to enjoy God's

blessings and protection places responsibilities and obligations upon you. The Psalms not only teach that God is Zion's fortress, the Psalms not only teach that the presence of God is like a peaceful flowing river through the city of Jerusalem, the Psalms also remind us that there are responsibilities and requirements placed upon those who come into the presence of God.

As the people would come to worship at various times, we see Psalms like Psalm 15 and Psalm 24 that are described as entrance liturgies. Who may enter into the house of the Lord? Who may come into God's presence? And the answer in those Psalms, and perhaps the people or the priest would ask the question and the people or priest would respond back, who has the right to come into God's presence? Those who have clean hands and a pure heart and who have done the things that are pleasing to God. Before you walk into this presence, understand the responsibilities that it places upon you.

The idea that God would protect his people in the Psalms, that he was the fortress, that when the enemy armies came upon Jerusalem, he would shatter them like a wind. And there are other places in the Psalms that say that protection is conditioned upon the trust of the people. In Psalm 20, as the people prepare to go into battle, some trust in chariots and some trust in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

To enjoy that protection meant to repudiate all of the other things that you trusted in: your military strength, your horses, your chariots, and your alliances with Egypt. The people in Jeremiah's day had not met that condition. Who may dwell in the house of the Lord? The people in Jeremiah's day, who had clean hands and a pure heart, had not met that condition.

Hezekiah in 701 BC had only experienced deliverance. The city of Jerusalem was only delivered because of the fact that he turned to God in absolute faith. The city was only delivered because Hezekiah, when he heard the warnings that Micah had preached about Jerusalem being reduced to a heap of rubbles, he had taken that word seriously and had acted accordingly.

That had not happened in Jeremiah's day. So what Jeremiah is going to do in this sermon in Jeremiah chapter seven is he is going to overturn their false confidence that God would protect them no matter what. Let's go back to Jeremiah chapter seven and I know it took a while to set the background there, but that's the context of what's going on.

That's the ideological conflict behind this message. Over in chapter eight verse 11, we get the idea of the people and their understanding of the covenant that God would protect them no matter what. In fact, there were false prophets that were promoting this message.

In Jeremiah 8 verse 11, it says, these false prophets have healed the wound of my people lightly saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace. So, there were false prophets; they were the ones who were promoting this idea that God will protect you no matter what. And so again, putting myself in the mind of a citizen of Jerusalem on this particular day, who do I want to listen to? A prophet who is saying, look, don't worry, this is God's house, this is God's city, God is going to protect you.

Let me take you to some Bible verses that would show you that. Or do I want to listen to a prophet who is saying, God's preparing to raise this place to the ground? So, Jeremiah has a pretty difficult job to do here.

Rhetorically, he has to convince the people that their view of covenant is all wrong. And again, just like in chapter 2, when Jeremiah accuses them of being a prostitute, and he engages in this disputation, how do you convince people to believe something that absolutely goes against everything that they believe? That's the task facing Jeremiah in chapter 7. So, what I'd like to look at here is a little bit of what's his rhetorical strategy? How does he preach this message and how does the Lord help him to design this? The first thing that I notice is that the message begins very positively. And there is a real opportunity at the beginning of this message, and they have a real opportunity to change their ways.

There's hope presented here. And in fact, in spite of the hundreds of years of disobedience, in spite of the recent history, this message begins very positively. It says, amend your ways and your deeds, and I will allow you to dwell in this place.

So, the Lord is not just announcing destruction here. He's giving them a real opportunity to repent, to change their ways, and to experience the blessings of Zion that were described in the Zion Psalms. Verse 5 through 7, if you truly amend your ways and your deeds and if you truly execute justice with one another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless or the widow, it goes on to say in verse 7, then I will let you dwell in this place in the land that I gave to your fathers forever.

So, there is a positive emphasis at the beginning. They have a real opportunity to repent, to change their ways, to be spared from judgment. It's exactly what we saw back in chapter 3, with the recurring, the repeated calls, return to the Lord, shub.

And when the prophet is saying, if you'll just amend your ways, if you'll just change your ways, God will allow you. It's exactly the same thing. You have a real opportunity to repent.

The message in Jeremiah 7 in this temple sermon only becomes negative at the end, when it becomes obvious that the people are not going to respond. All right.

The second thing that Jeremiah is rhetorically going to do is remind them of their covenant responsibilities. Look, you cannot just look at covenant and think about blessings. Covenant with God always has promises and obligations.

And so, Jeremiah is going to emphasize and he makes appeal to the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments that summarize for Israel, their obligations to God and to each other. And as we've mentioned in a previous video, what the Lord is going to do here is that he takes the Ten Commandments and he reverses the order.

In verse 9, will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely? Those are the last five commandments that deal with, or the last six commandments that deal with Israel's responsibilities to each other. And then he's going to say, make offerings to Baal, go after other gods that you have not known. That's referring to the first part of the commandments that talk about their responsibility to God.

And he flips them in order to emphasize the importance of their social responsibilities because, in Judah, that's the particular part of this covenant that they've abandoned. So that's the second strategy. He's going to directly remind them of the words of Moses.

Moses had warned the people that if they disobeyed, the covenant curses would come. Jeremiah is saying, you have disobeyed. The covenant curses are here.

Remember what God asked you to do. The third thing that Jeremiah is going to do very effectively is he's going to, as he did in chapter 2, he's going to quote the words of the people that reflect their false confidence. And in verse 4, do not trust in these deceptive words.

This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. Now, what we should imagine this as being is that this is their slogan. It really encapsulates.

And the threefold repetition of this in Hebrew is designed just to give emphasis. Like when the vision of the Lord that Isaiah sees, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. A positive affirmation.

Here's a negative affirmation of their false confidence. The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, this false belief that God would protect them no matter what. Jeremiah is turning that upside down.

Now, do you remember Ezekiel is a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah? Do you remember how he overturns their false confidence in the temple? He sees a vision in Ezekiel chapters 8 to 11, where the glory of the Lord that represents the presence of

God rises up in the holy place. It goes out of the holy place. It goes to the threshold of the temple.

It goes to the east gate of the city, and then it departs completely. The glory of God has left the building. And in a sense, what that was doing was saying you're trusting in the protective presence of God to deliver you from the Babylonian army.

Ezekiel says God isn't there. He's abandoned you. He's given you over to judgment.

What you're envisioning in Psalm 46 of the Lord being your fortress and your refuge, he's no longer there. And in a sense, what Jeremiah is doing is exactly the same thing. The presence of God doesn't guarantee your protection.

In verse 10, the false hope is expressed in the quotation of the people. They come before the Lord. They've committed all of these sins.

They stand before him. And in their time of worship, they say, we are delivered. We believe that God is going to save us.

So, these quotations in verse 4 and verse 10, the temple of the Lord, temple of the Lord, temple of the Lord, and verse 10, we are delivered. It is a reminder that the people have put their hope in something that's not going to work. The fourth thing that Jeremiah is going to do, again, very similar to what we have in chapter two, is that the prophet again is going to use rhetorical questions.

And here's the rhetorical question. Again, a rhetorical question is not just a rhetorical question. It's designed to make us think.

Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and then come into God's house and say, God is going to protect us? Do you really think that's going to work? And when it's expressed that way, the people get a clear understanding that this is a wrong understanding of God. A related rhetorical question in verse 11: has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Do you think that the holy God of Israel, who is untainted by sin in any way, do you think that he's going to allow his house to be turned into a hideout for criminals? Again, when the question is cast in that way, how could they possibly think that? Another rhetorical device of Jeremiah is that the prophet is going to remind them directly whose house the temple really is. And in verse 10, the Lord says, this is my house, which is called by my name.

And that expression, called by my name, expresses legal ownership. This is not the king's house. This is not Judah's house.

This is not the citizens of... This is God's house. And when they defile that house by their lifestyle and their behavior, God has every right to destroy it. When the prophet Amos went up to the northern kingdom to preach against the sanctuaries there, one of the priests at that sanctuary in Amos chapter 7 came to him and said, why are you preaching against the king's sanctuary? Jeremiah is reminded that this is not the king's sanctuary.

This is God's sanctuary and it belongs to him. Then I think maybe the most effective rhetorical device that Jeremiah uses in this section is that Jeremiah is going to use analogies and examples from their past history. And one of those, and maybe this place didn't really strike a chord as we were reading the passage, but one of those analogies is a reminder of what God did at Shiloh in verses 12 to 14.

And here's what the prophet says, go now to my place that was in Shiloh where I made my name to dwell at first and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel there. All right, let's talk about Shiloh for a minute. Shiloh was the sanctuary of God from the time of the conquest up until the monarchy.

During the days of the judges, that was the place where the tabernacle and the sanctuary were, and the people came to worship. Well, God allowed the sanctuary in Shiloh to be destroyed near the end of the time of judges in the early chapters of Samuel because of the apostasy of both the spiritual leaders and the people. It's an especially effective analogy there because it's the place where God's presence had dwelt previously.

But on top of that, as you go back to that story in Samuel, you realize that it's another place where Israel had an absolutely false understanding of the presence of God. They believe that as they go out into battle against the Philistines, if they simply take the Ark of the Covenant into battle, the Ark of the Covenant will protect them from the enemy. They have turned the Ark of the Covenant, instead of something that is a representation of the holiness of God, they have turned it into a good luck charm.

They go into battle, they take their good luck charm with them, and the shocking, surprising thing that happens there is that the Philistines capture the Ark, they defeat Israel, and the people of Israel are routed. And that same kind of false confidence that led the people to think, God is going to protect them no matter what, was exactly what was inspiring the people that couldn't believe Jeremiah's message in chapter 7. They were going back to 701 BC and saying, look at what God did for us then. God will protect Jerusalem no matter what.

Jeremiah says, wait a minute, there's some history lessons that you've forgotten. Let's go back to Shiloh and remember what God did there. There's a statement about Shiloh and an explanation about Shiloh that's given to us in Psalm 78 verses 56 to 62.

And listen to what it says there. Yet they tested and rebelled against the Most High God. They did not keep his testimonies, but they turned away and acted treacherously like their fathers.

They twisted like a deceitful bow, for they provoked him to anger with their high places. They moved him to jealousy with their idols.

When God heard about this, he was full of wrath, and he utterly rejected Israel. He forsook the dwelling at Shiloh, the tent where he dwelt among mankind. And he delivered his people to captivity, his glory to the hand of the foe.

He gave his people over to the sword and vented his wrath on his heritage. Until we get to the reference of Shiloh, I mean, that could be a description of the people of Jeremiah's day, exactly what happened then is getting ready to happen in the future. It's also appropriate because the sons of Eli that were the corrupt spiritual leaders of that day during the time that the ark was at Shiloh were in many ways responsible for the judgment that came upon the people of Israel.

In the same way in Jeremiah's day, corrupt priests and prophets are bringing God's anger and judgment against. So, this is an absolutely perfect counter to the way that they are arguing about 701. 701, and God's deliverance of Jerusalem is not the only story in the Bible.

We also have a reminder of Shiloh. In Jeremiah chapter 7:15, the other analogy that Jeremiah is going to use something from their more recent history. Jeremiah says, "...and I will cast you out of my sight as I cast out all of your kinsmen, all of the offspring of Ephraim." So he reminds them of the fall of the Northern kingdom.

If you think simply because you are God's chosen people, you cannot be defeated, you cannot be judged, you cannot be destroyed. Look at what's happened to your kinsmen in the North. Going back to chapter 3, here in Jeremiah, the problem is that, in a sense, Judah is worse than Israel because they have not learned from the example that God carried out with Israel.

So that's the message. That's the rhetorical way that Jeremiah is going to convince the people that they need to change. But what we also see is what kind of response to the message is there going to be? Ultimately, that's what's going to make a difference.

We come to a place where we realize that the harsh tone of this message at the end indicates that the people did not accept, they did not believe, and they did not respond in a positive way to Jeremiah's message. And in chapter 7, verse 16, we get a shocking response from the Lord here. The Lord says, as for you, do not pray for

these people, do not lift up a cry or a prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you.

The Lord tells Jeremiah, don't even waste your time praying for these people. I'm not going to save them. The response of the people to the message is ultimately what's going to bring their judgment.

The prophet is going to talk further about their idolatry. Verse 18, they make cakes for the queen of heaven, probably referring to the Canaanite fertility goddesses. Down in the bottom part of the chapter, there's going to be reference to the Valley of Hinnom and the Tophet, where they offered these sacrifices to the false gods, where they had even offered their children as sacrifices.

That's how degraded Jerusalem had become. By not changing their ways, God is not going to save them. God is not going to deliver them.

There's a special section here at the end of this in response to this message and a couple of interpretive issues that I want us to look at as we wrap this section up. In verses 21 to 23, Thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, add to your burnt offerings, to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought you out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices.

But this command I gave them, obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people and walk in the ways that I command you, that it may be well with you. All right, there are a couple of interpretive issues here. What does the Lord mean in verse 21 when he says, add to your burnt offerings or add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat the flesh? What's that verse talking about? Well, there were several different types of sacrifices in Israel.

One of those was a fellowship offering or a peace offering where a person could come in to express fellowship or thanks to God. And actually, part of the sacrifice was offered to God as an offering. Part of the sacrifice was given to the priest, and then part of the sacrifice was returned to the person, and the person was allowed to eat that with their family or friends or servants in celebration of some answer to prayer or something that God had done for them.

The burnt offering, however, was an entirely different type of offering. It was an offering that had an atonement aspect to it. It was related to sin, but it was also an offering that expressed complete devotion to God.

And when the skin was removed from the animal, the entire animal was offered. It was completely burned. Okay, so I think that helps us to make sense out of what the Lord is saying.

Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat the flesh. The Lord is saying, look, you might as well eat your burnt offerings rather than offering them to me because, without the lifestyle behind them, those burnt offerings mean absolutely nothing. They do not provide atonement for your sin.

They do not express your devotion to me. If you want to express devotion to me, then reflect it by your lifestyle. So that's the significance to add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat the flesh.

Then the Lord also says something in verse 22 that, in a sense, as we look at this, we're not sure what the Lord actually means here. In verse 22, for in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. What does the Lord mean when he says, I didn't speak to your fathers about burnt offerings and sacrifices? And we're like, well, yeah, I think he did.

I can go back to Exodus and other parts of the law. The Lord did speak to them that they were supposed to offer these things. I think the NIV has helped us out here by giving us a sense of what this verse is saying.

And they add a word here to clarify. I did not just speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. In a rhetorical way, the Lord is saying, look, I didn't even talk to you about offerings and sacrifices.

And that sort of extreme hyperbolic statement, I didn't even talk to you about that, is a way of saying, compared to the standards of justice and the ways that I wanted you to live and behave, the sacrifices and rituals were secondary to that. Really, in a sense, the Lord is saying to Israel exactly the same thing that Samuel said to Saul, to obey is better than to sacrifice. And the prophets were not repudiating the sacrifices, the rituals, the offerings, the holy days.

Those things were important. They were part of obedience to God. But in this temple sermon, those rituals are not enough.

What needs to happen is that Judah needs to obey my voice. I will be your guide. You shall be my people and walk in the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.

The sad thing we know and the sad thing we realize is that as we come to the end of this temple sermon, God knows the way that his people are going to respond. And God, in a sense, has offered them a very valid opportunity, the chance to repent and avoid. It's a legitimate offer.

But the Lord says this about his people at the end of the message: from the day that my servants, the prophets, spoke to them day after day, yet they did not listen to me or inclined their ear but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. So, Jeremiah, speak all of these words to them, but they will not listen to you.

You shall call to them, but they will not answer to you. And you shall say to them, this is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord their God and did not accept discipline. Truth has perished.

It is cut off from their lips. They will not listen to God's word. And so, the exactly the same things that we've already seen in chapter two and chapter three, return to the Lord, return to the Lord, but they would not return.

Chapter seven, amend your ways, and the Lord will allow you to live here. In a sense, I believe that Jeremiah seven is one of those hinge moments. It's a watershed moment.

They had an opportunity to respond before the Babylonian crisis enveloped them. And swallows them up. They have an opportunity to return to God.

But as has happened throughout Judas history and has happened throughout the ministry of Jeremiah, they would not listen. They would not respond. They would not amend their ways.

They would not shub and turn back to the Lord.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his instruction on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 12, Jeremiah 7, The Temple Sermon.