

August Answers

- 1) [August 1] Habakkuk lived during the reign of **Manasseh**. Evil and iniquity were everywhere, and Habakkuk couldn't understand why God allowed the wicked to "surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted" (Hab 1:4). God answered Habakkuk by addressing him and all the righteous of his day: "I am doing a work in your day that you would not **believe** if told" (Hab 1:5). God was raising up the **Babylonian** Empire, and it would crash down on Judah like a sledgehammer. Judah's sin would not go unpunished; justice was on its way. This teaches us that when evil seems to triumph, it is merely strutting on a stage that is set for God's **wrath** and judgment. Habakkuk was not happy at the thought of a Babylonian solution to Judah's problem, and he told God as much (Hab 1:13). God's reply came in the form of a **vision** of the future. It was a prophecy that wouldn't happen right away, but "**wait** for it; it will surely come" (Hab 2:3). Babylon was proud, and its pride would bring about its destruction, but "the righteous shall live by his **faith**" (Hab 2:4). God was telling Habakkuk that although Babylon would be used to punish Judah, they too would have their day of judgment. The important thing was for those who were righteous to **live** by faith. This verse is quoted three times in the NT. In **Romans** 1:17, salvation is received by everyone who believes ("by faith"). In **Hebrews** 10:38, the righteous endure to the end "by faith." In **Galatians** 3:11, believers are justified before God "by faith."

- 2) [August 2] If there was ever a man who didn't deserve forgiveness, it was Manasseh. He **burned** his own children in the fires of idolatry, and he **murdered** so many innocent people that Jerusalem was filled with blood from one end to the other. And yet, "when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and **humbled** himself greatly before the God of his fathers" (2 Chr 33:12). God was "**moved** by his entreaty." God brought him back to Jerusalem and restored his kingdom. He removed all the gods from the temple and ordered Judah to serve you. Manasseh teaches us that **no one** is beyond God's saving grace. As long as there is **life**, there is hope for repentance and restoration. Amon, Manasseh's son, came to the throne at the age of 22, and he quickly perished for his sinful ways. His son Josiah was made king in his place, and "he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father" (2 Kgs 22:2). How could such a godly man come from the likes of Amon and Manasseh? I think the likely answer is to be found in Zephaniah, a descendant of Hezekiah. When Josiah was young, **Zephaniah** prophesied of the coming "**day** of the LORD," that great and terrible day when God's wrath and judgment will be poured out on a sinful world. Zephaniah made it clear that those who said, "The LORD will not do **good**, nor will he do **ill**," were very much mistaken. God was going to personally "**search** Jerusalem with lamps," and punish those who spoke such sinful and complacent words (Zeph 1:12). What should Judah do? "Gather together...O shameless nation, before the decree takes effect...Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD" (Zeph 2:1-3). As Peter said, "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God." This teaches us that we should be "diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace" (2 Pet 3:11-15).

- 3) [August 3] Jeremiah was God's "prophet to the **nations**," and God told Jeremiah that he had appointed him before he was even **conceived** (Jer 1:5). This means that God thought about and planned for us long before we were **born**. When we're tempted to feel insignificant or inadequate, we should remember that God has a **purpose** for our lives, and God has always thought of us as **valuable**. Jeremiah was dismayed by God's call—surely he was too **young** to be a prophet! He didn't know how to speak, and he was afraid of proclaiming your message to "the nations." But God told him, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'...and...Do not be **afraid** of them, for I am **with** you to deliver

you, declares the LORD” (Jer 1:7–8). The truth is, Jeremiah was probably right—he most likely was too young, and he certainly was afraid. But like Jeremiah, we need to learn to see our lives in terms of God’s **presence**. Just as **Gideon** was told, “The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor,” so Jeremiah was told, “You shall speak...for I am with you.” This teaches us that God’s presence is what really matters. God will give us the strength and **power** to obey his commands as long as our hearts are set to do His will. God promised to be with Jeremiah and take care of him, but God never promised to keep his life free from trouble. So it is with us. The storms of life will come, but God will protect us and keep us strong. Jeremiah was sent to the kingdom of Judah first, and he declared in the hearing of Jerusalem, “What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?” (Jer 2:5). From the time Israel entered Canaan until the present day, they had rebelled against God and worshipped other gods. “Therefore I still contend with you, declares the LORD, and with your children’s children I will contend” (Jer 2:9). Jeremiah gave example after example of how shocking Israel’s sin was, yet they refused to be ashamed. Instead, they brazenly said to God: “‘My Father, my friend from my youth, will you always be angry? Will your wrath continue forever?’ This is how you talk, but you do all the evil you can” (Jer 3:4–5 NIV). What is it that God wanted from His people? “Return, O Israel...break up your fallow ground...circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts!” (Jer 4:1–4; Hos 10:12). More than anything, God wanted sincere repentance and loving obedience. May this always be true of us!

- 4) [August 4] Earlier, God had shown Jeremiah a vision of a boiling **pot**, tilting toward Judah from the north. It symbolized the armies of **Babylon**, which would soon come and besiege Jerusalem (Jer 1:13–16). God now gave Jeremiah a vivid experience of what that future judgment would be like. “In that day, declares the LORD, courage shall fail both king and officials. The priests shall be appalled and the prophets astounded” (Jer 4:9). The people would hear of the enemy and panic: “Our hands fall helpless; anguish has taken hold of us, pain as of a woman in labor” (Jer 6:24). The devastation Jeremiah saw was so great that he cried out: “My heart, my heart—I writhe in pain! My heart pounds within me! I cannot be still. For I have heard the blast of enemy trumpets and the roar of their battle cries” (Jer 4:19 NLT). Why did God paint such a terrible picture of the coming destruction of Jerusalem? Because He wanted Judah to **repent**! “O Jerusalem, wash your heart from evil, that you may be saved. How long shall your wicked thoughts lodge within you? Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls” (Jer 4:14; 6:16). This teaches us that God is always reaching out to sinners, calling them to **return**. If we would be like God, we must do the same. We must share God’s **burden** for the lost! We need to be so filled with God’s words that we are compelled to **proclaim** the gospel! The next time we think we’re too small and insignificant to make a **difference**, we need to remember what God said to Jeremiah: “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” (Jer 5:1 NIV).
- 5) [August 5] God told Jeremiah to stand in the gate of the **temple** and condemn the people for their sin: “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, ‘We are **safe**’—safe to do all these detestable things?” (Jer 7:9–10 NIV). The people of Judah thought they could get away with sin because they were God’s **chosen** people (cf. Jer 9:25–26). Do we think that because we’re Christians, we can sin and get by? We need to remember: “Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a **liar**, and the **truth** is not in him” (1 John 2:4). Jesus recalled Jeremiah’s words when He cleansed the temple over 600 years later: “Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD” (Jer 7:11 NIV; cf. Matt 21:13). Judah’s day of judgment was fast

approaching, and they had no one to blame but themselves. Most frustrating of all, they didn't believe that God would destroy them. They said things like, "This is the temple of the **LORD** (He would never let it be destroyed). We are **wise** and the **law** of the LORD is with us. **Peace**, peace!" (Jer 7:4; 8:8, 11). Jeremiah tried to break through these lies, but nothing he said would persuade them (e.g., Shiloh in Jer 7:12–14). Yet God didn't give up; He kept sending Jeremiah back to warn them. This teaches us that God is longsuffering and **faithful**. God does everything He can to keep people from flinging themselves into a devil's hell, and when nothing will turn them from their folly, God grieves over their fate: "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jer 9:1). Friends, let's purpose to live in such a way that we never cause God such pain!

- 6) [August 6] Josiah's religious reforms. Josiah began to seek after God when he was young, about **16** years old. This was probably due to the preaching of another young man, **Jeremiah**. Aren't you glad that although most may ignore the message of truth, there are always a **few** who are drawn to God. When Josiah was **20**, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of its idolatry (2 Kgs 23). The lengthy description of all the perversion he removed is a sobering testament to how corrupt Judah had become. In the account, there was mention of the altars of Ahaz, Manasseh, and even **Solomon**! How tragic that what had been built hundreds of years before was still a stumbling block to the people! Are there any "**altars**" in our lives that shouldn't be there? Josiah did not limit his reforms to Judah. He went into the cities of the old northern kingdom of **Israel** and destroyed the altars there as well. While in **Bethel**, Josiah discovered the grave of the man of God who had prophesied the destruction of Jeroboam I's altar (1 Kgs 13). Josiah realized that he had just fulfilled a **300**-year-old prophecy! This teaches us that what God promises always comes to pass. Even if hundreds of years go by, **wait** for it—it will be fulfilled (Hab 2:3). When Josiah was **26**, he began repairs on the temple. During the work, Hilkiah the high priest found a copy of the Book of the Law. When it was read to Josiah, he realized that God's wrath would soon be poured out on Judah, and he humbled himself before God and sought His guidance. This shows us once again that the proper response to God's rebuke is **humility** and repentance.
- 7) [August 7] News of the discovery of the Book of the Law spread quickly throughout Jerusalem. It likely prompted the **shift** in Jeremiah's preaching from a denunciation of the people's idolatry to a rebuke for breaking the **covenant** (cf. Jer 2:11 with Jer 11:3). Jeremiah warned the people that the covenant **curse**s given by Moses (Deut 28:15–68) would soon come to pass: "Behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape" (Jer 11:11). Jeremiah's message was met with resistance. Some conspired against him and even his own **family** turned on him. Jeremiah complained to God, but God told him that the worst was yet to come (Jer 12:5). This teaches us that speaking the truth doesn't mean that people will obey. Our responsibility is to faithfully proclaim God's message and leave the **results** in His hands. Josiah, however, did not reject Jeremiah's warning. He took God's word seriously, and at the time of the Passover feast, he called the people to **renew** the covenant. Josiah personally led the people in a commitment to "walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul" (2 Kgs 23:3). The people then celebrated the Passover and what a celebration it was. Nothing like it had been seen in Israel since the days of the judges! God was pleased with Josiah's love and said that there was no king like him who turned to God with all his heart (2 Kgs 23:25). Nevertheless, the decision to exile Judah remained firm. Judgment was coming, and Josiah's reforms only **delayed** the inevitable. Josiah cleansed the land of idolatry and made the people of Judah serve God. They did not turn away from God as long as Josiah lived (2 Chr 34:33). Yet I wonder—were they truly committed to serving God or were they simply along for the ride? We should ask ourselves the same question!

- 8) [August 8] Jeremiah's prophecies to Judah during the last years of Josiah's reign (c. 620–609 BC). Josiah **required** the people to keep God's covenant, and they complied with his wishes (2 Chr 34:33). But although there was no open idolatry, the people's hearts did not stay true to God. Their idols may have been destroyed, but their **desire** for other gods had not been quenched. As the fervor of Josiah's religious reforms cooled over the next decade, Jeremiah warned the people of coming judgment and **captivity**. He began by comparing Judah to a **waistband**, one of the more intimate pieces of clothing that clings tightly to the body. He said that Judah, like a waistband, had once been close to God. God wanted them to be His people and to bring praise and glory to His name, but they would not listen (Jer 13:11). They had become **worthless**, just like the waistband Jeremiah had buried near the river. So God brought hardship on the land, and a severe drought cracked the ground (Jer 14). But instead of repenting, the people hardened their hearts and listened to the false **prophets** who promised them that all would be well. Jeremiah pleaded with God to have mercy, but God told him to stop praying for the people: "Though **Moses** and **Samuel** stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people" (Jer 15:1). God's pity was exhausted, and He was tired of relenting. Jeremiah, understandably, began to feel **sorry** for himself. He had become the focal point of the people's rejection of God, and he was filled with frustration and pain. God rebuked him and told him not to let himself be **influenced** by the people. They might turn to him, but he was not to turn to them (Jer 15:19). Are we allowing the world to squeeze us into its mold, or are we standing firm like a wall of bronze? God also told Jeremiah not to **marry**, for had he done so, his wife and children would have perished in the coming destruction of Judah. But then, in the midst of His anger, God looked ahead to a time of future restoration, a time when all the nations will acknowledge God as LORD (Jer 16:19–21).
- 9) [August 9] The last of Jeremiah's prophecies during the reign of king Josiah. The people had promised to keep God's covenant (2 Kgs 23:3), but they were disobeying one of its fundamental commands: "Remember the **Sabbath** day, to keep it holy" (Exod 20:8). Jeremiah warned them that if they didn't obey, a **fire** would devour the gates and palaces of Jerusalem. This teaches us the importance of honoring God's day of rest. When we refrain from working on Sunday, we are **sanctifying** the day as God's and showing others that we respect His commands. It didn't take long for the people to get tired of hearing Jeremiah tell them that Jerusalem would be destroyed. They argued with him, insisting that God had **promised** to build up Judah and so the city couldn't be destroyed. God sent Jeremiah down to the potter's house and showed him that God's promises were **conditional**: they depended on the actions of the people. **Sin** could keep God from prospering a nation, while **repentance** could keep God from destroying a nation (Jer 18:7–10). If this is true of a nation, is it also true of an **individual**? (cf. Ezek 18:24; 33:12–13; Rom 11:20–24). These verses teach us that our relationship with God depends on how we **respond** to His grace. If God didn't spare His chosen people when they turned away from Him, God won't spare us if we reject the precious blood of His **Son** (Heb 2:1–3). The object lesson of the broken jar—"I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel"—proved to be the last straw for **Pashhur** the priest. He seized Jeremiah, beat him and forced him to spend a night in the stocks. Jeremiah was humiliated by the experience and complained bitterly to God: "I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. Cursed be the day on which I was born!" (Jer 20:7, 14). This teaches us that we can expect to be persecuted when we tell people the truth. We need to remember that **success** is found in obedience to God, not in the reactions of the people we're serving.
- 10) [August 10] The death of Josiah (Summer 609 BC). Three years earlier, Babylon destroyed the Assyrian capital of Nineveh just as Nahum had foretold (Nah 3:5–7). The Assyrians fell back to Haran and Carchemish, and Babylon sent its army to destroy them once and for all. Pharaoh Necho II of **Egypt** responded to the urgent appeal for help by Ashur-uballit II of **Assyria** and marched his army north to aid the Assyrians. Josiah, who had no love for Assyria, tried to prevent Necho from passing

through Judah. Josiah likely feared that if the Egyptian-Assyrian alliance defeated Babylon, Judah would again fall under Assyrian domination. When Josiah engaged Necho at Megiddo, Necho warned him to stand aside: “Cease opposing **God**, who is with me, lest he destroy you” (2 Chr 35:21). Josiah ignored this warning and ended up being killed in the ensuing battle. How could such a godly man come to such a tragic end? Josiah made the mistake of thinking that because Necho was the king of a pagan nation, he couldn’t be acting in harmony with God’s will (cf. Isa 36:10). His mistake teaches us that God is **sovereign** over the nations, and while not everyone who claims to have a message from God really does, we would be wise to stop and consider the fact that God often uses the **kings** of the world to accomplish His plans and purposes (cf. Isa 45:1–3). Josiah’s son, **Jehoahaz** became king after his father’s death, but Necho **exiled** him to Egypt and made his brother **Jehoiakim** king instead. Jehoiakim was a wicked man who was more concerned with building himself a palace of **cedar** than he was with obeying God. God sent Jeremiah to rebuke him: “Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? declares the LORD” (Jer 22:15–16). This teaches us that knowing God means more than knowing what He has done (the **stories**) or knowing what He has said (the **teachings**). It means knowing God as a person—what brings Him joy or makes Him angry, His values, concerns and priorities—and then **living** in the light of that knowledge. Such a life brings honor and glory to God!

- 11) [August 11] Jeremiah cried out against the false **prophets** and **priests** who claimed to speak in God’s name. The people would ask one of the false prophets what message he had from God, and the false prophet would claim to have “the **burden** (*massa*) of the LORD!” God was so angry at their lies that He actually commanded the people never to say those words again. If they did, God would pick them up and **throw** them out of His presence (Jer 23:36–40). Jeremiah’s experience teaches us how to identify false prophets today: (1) they do not hold people **accountable** for sin, (2) they tell people what they want to **hear**, (3) they do not live careful, **godly** lives, and (4) their message **contradicts** the clear teaching of Scripture. Early in Jehoiakim’s reign, God sent Jeremiah to preach another sermon at the temple. In mercy, God was giving Judah one last chance to repent. Instead, the priests and prophets seized Jeremiah and were going to kill him. Ahikam spoke up in Jeremiah’s defense, and reminded the people that Micah had also predicted the destruction of Jerusalem. Hezekiah had not put him to death; instead, he heeded Micah’s warning. Jeremiah was eventually released, and a few years later, he pronounced God’s final judgment on the people of Judah: they would be carried into captivity by the Babylonians for 70 years (Jer 25:11–12). After the 70 years were complete, God would judge Babylon and fulfill His word as spoken by Jeremiah.
- 12) [August 12] The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the nations (cf. Jer 1:5). Previously, God told the nations surrounding Israel: “See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that bears my Name, and will you indeed go **unpunished**?” (Jer 25:29 NIV). As Peter said many years later: “For it is time for judgment to begin at the **household** of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not **obey** the gospel of God?” (1 Pet 4:17). Now, through Jeremiah, God spoke directly to the Gentile nations. These oracles were designed to: (1) announce God’s **judgment** on a foreign nation, (2) show that God is sovereign over **all** nations, not just Israel, (3) fulfill God’s intention for Israel to act as **salt** and **light** to the world, (4) warn Israel of the folly of depending on foreign **alliances** for their security, and (5) serve as a message of **encouragement** to Israel (cf. Jer 46:27–28). The oracles to the nations give us several insights into God’s character and plan for the world: (1) Although God chose **Israel** to be His special people, He loves **everyone** and wants the whole **world** to come to Him, (2) God delights in **salvation** and wants to **build** up rather than tear down (Jer 48:47), (3) God is **holy** and will not tolerate **sin**, and (4) God is an impartial **judge**, for both Israel and the nations were held **accountable** for their sin.

- 13) [August 13] Nebuchadnezzar's **first** siege of Jerusalem occurred in early 605 BC. God gave Judah one last chance to repent by having Jeremiah's prophecies written on a **scroll** and read in the temple courts. Many months later, around December 605, Baruch read the scroll in the temple again, and this time Micaiah heard it. He told the court officials, and Jehudi read the scroll to Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim, however, rejected the message and **burned** the scroll. This teaches us that God gives people, even those who refuse to listen, every chance to repent before the end. Those who perish in judgment have only **themselves** to blame. Many of Judah's finest young men, such as **Daniel**, were exiled to Babylon. Daniel and his three friends paid the price for Judah's stubborn refusal to repent. Clearly, righteous living does not always **protect** us from the sinful decisions of others. Daniel made up his mind to remain faithful to God, even at great risk to himself. His **appeal** to the overseer is a great example of how to stand for the truth while respecting those in authority over us. When dealing with a similar situation, we should: (1) avoid being **combative** or contentious, (2) discern the true **intentions** of our authority, (3) if possible, design a creative **alternative** which will achieve their goals, (4) appeal to our authority in a **respectful** way, (5) **pray** and give God time to change their mind, (6) be willing to **suffer**, if necessary, for keeping our conscience clear. If Daniel, who was likely a teenager when taken captive, can obey God in such circumstances, then surely we can obey God too!
- 14) [August 14] Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue (Dan 2). It was made out of **four** different metals, and its appearance was **frightening**. As he watched, a stone came and struck the statue and shattered its feet. The entire statue collapsed into dust and blew away, but the stone became a huge mountain filling the earth. Daniel interpreted the dream for Nebuchadnezzar. He told the king that the four metals represented four different **empires** that would rule the known world, one after the other: Babylon, **Medo-Persia**, **Greece** and **Rome**. The stone that destroyed the statue represented **Christ** at His Second Coming. He would defeat the last phase of the Roman empire and establish His worldwide millennial Kingdom. This shows us that God has complete control over the future, and that Christ's Kingdom will one day fill the earth. While Daniel was serving God in Babylon, Jehoiakim was back in Jerusalem plotting **rebellion**. When Pharaoh Necho II defeated Nebuchadnezzar's forces at the Egyptian border in 601 BC, Jehoiakim took advantage of the situation and rebelled. Once again Judah would **lean** on the "broken reed" that was Egypt. Babylon's struggle with Egypt had cost it dearly, and Nebuchadnezzar was reduced to sending raiding parties against Judah while he strengthened his forces. This drove the **Rechabites** into Jerusalem where God used them as an illustration of a group of people who faithfully followed their father's commands. What a **contrast** to rebellious Judah! However, it wasn't long before Nebuchadnezzar returned. By that time, Jehoiakim was dead. Nebuchadnezzar exiled Jehoiachin (and Ezekiel) and made Zedekiah the new puppet king. Once again God's word had proved true (Jer 36:31).
- 15) [August 15] The New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34). After the **second** deportation to Babylon, God told Jeremiah to write a letter to the exiles (Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, many prophets, priests and officials). In the letter, God told them to settle down and seek the **good** of the city in which they lived (Jer 29:4–7). This teaches us the importance of seeking the good of our country. How? By **praying** for our country and by **serving** God and calling others to do the same. Then, in the aftermath of Judah's devastation by Babylon, God's word again came to Jeremiah, but this time, it was a message of comfort. Indeed, Jeremiah 30–33 is known as the Book of **Consolation** (cf. Jer 30:3, 10–11, 17–18). In these verses, God spoke of a far distant future (the millennial reign of Christ) in which He would **restore** and **rebuild** Israel (Jer 31:10, 17, 38). And in the middle of these words of hope, God promised to make a **new** covenant with Israel (Jer 31:31–34). I love that God gave Jeremiah—the weeping prophet, the prophet who cursed the day of his birth, the prophet who proclaimed the fiery wrath of God on a rebellious people—God gave him the wonderful privilege of prophesying a

new covenant, a covenant which would be inaugurated by Jesus Christ! Listen to what the new covenant would be like. It would not be like the covenant at Sinai, the covenant whose laws and commandments were written on scrolls of parchment and tablets of **stone** (Exod 24:4, 12). It would not be like the old covenant, the covenant which separated Israel from the Gentiles but couldn't separate Israel from **sin**. It would not be like the first covenant, the covenant whose sacrifices purified from **external** defilement but couldn't purify the conscience. No, the new covenant would be **within** the people, written on their hearts and minds. The new covenant would **transform** them from the inside out. There would no longer be any need for one Jew to look at another and say, "Know the LORD," for all who were a part of the new covenant would know God. There would no longer be any need for daily and yearly sacrifices, for those offerings served as a constant reminder of sin (Heb 10:3). Why not? Because, declares the LORD, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will **remember** their sin no more" (Jer 31:34). And that's what happened when Jesus died for our sins—He fulfilled the word of God through Jeremiah! Hallelujah for Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant (Heb 8:6–13). Hallelujah for Jesus, whose blood secures our eternal redemption (Heb 9:11–15). Hallelujah for Jesus, the Lamb of God, who offered His body once for all—a single sacrifice for sins. Hallelujah for Jesus, who reconciled us to God (Col 1:20). Truly, this is "a great salvation"! (Heb 2:3).

- 16) [August 16] When God gave Jeremiah the prophecy of Babylon's future doom, the Babylonian Empire was at the **height** of its power. Assyria and Egypt had been defeated, and Judah was firmly under the control of **Nebuchadnezzar**. Jerusalem had been sacked twice and most of the city's inhabitants were in exile. To them, it must have seemed as though Babylon would last forever. But God is sovereign! Babylon's days were numbered, and like the **scroll** that Seraiah threw into the Euphrates, it would "**sink** to rise no more" (Jer 51:64). How encouraging to know that although evil may triumph for a time, it is destined to vanish forever beneath the **waves** of God's judgment! Jeremiah's prophecy compressed events that are separated by time: Babylon was overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire in 539 bc, but the utter destruction of the city (Jer 50:39–40; 51:6, 26) and the promised restoration of both Israel and Judah (Jer 50:4–5, 19–20) has not yet been fulfilled. Jeremiah looked beyond the destruction of the Babylon of old to an eschatological destruction of a future Babylon. The destruction of that wicked city will be the climax of God's judgment on the Gentile nations, and it will open the way for the fulfilling of God's promises to Israel. The oracle against Babylon teaches us several valuable lessons. First, God is **just**. He will repay the wicked for their evil deeds (Jer 51:56). Second, God is **all-powerful**. The destruction of Babylon is nothing for the God who created the earth! (Jer 51:15–16). Third, God answers **prayer**. It was right for the people to ask God for **vengeance**, and it was right for Him to answer them, for God is an avenger! (Jer 51:35–37).
- 17) [August 17] Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah calmly and **respectfully** told Nebuchadnezzar that they would not worship his image (Dan 3:17–18). Their loyalty to God is inspiring, for they could have used any number of excuses to bow down to the image: "We'll bow down, but we won't **worship** in our hearts," or "We'll worship this one time, and then ask God to **forgive** us," or "God will **excuse** us for obeying our king." But they didn't. They remained obedient to God in spite of the consequences. Their attitude is also inspiring. They expressed faith in God's ability to save, but they didn't **presume** to say that God would rescue them. This teaches us how true faith behaves: it **believes** what God says and **submits** to what God decides (Luke 22:42). When we live by this kind of faith, we testify to the gospel and bring glory to God's name (Dan 3:28). Several months after the incident with the golden image, **Zedekiah** was back in Jerusalem. He was not alone; representatives from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon were also there, and they were plotting **rebellion**. God told Jeremiah to tell them to submit to Babylon's rule. If they didn't, God would use Nebuchadnezzar to destroy them. This teaches us that if we counsel others to resist authority, we're actually counseling

“rebellion against the LORD” (Jer 28:16). The only time we should resist authority is when we must obey **God** rather than man (Acts 5:29). In any other case, resistance equals rebellion!

- 18) [August 18] God called Ezekiel to be a prophet to the **exiles** in Babylon. His prophetic call was amazing. God came to him in a vision, and he saw “the likeness of the **glory** of the LORD” (Ezek 1:28). God revealed himself in this spectacular way in order to instill in Ezekiel a renewed sense of **who** He was. This understanding **drove** Ezekiel’s ministry. It enabled him to proclaim God’s message with fervor and show the exiled Jews who it was that they had rejected. God warned Ezekiel from the beginning that he was being sent to a “**rebellious** house” (seven times in chs. 1–3 in ESV). But whether the exiles listened or not, they would know that a **prophet** had been among them. This teaches us that our responsibility is to **obey** and leave the results in God’s hands. God appointed Ezekiel as Israel’s **watchman**. His job was to warn the people, and he would be held accountable if he failed in this task (Ezek 3:20). God wanted him to: (1) show the exiles **why** they had been taken captive (Ezek 5:7), (2) dispel any false belief that their captivity was going to be **short** (Ezek 5:14–17), (3) call them to **repent** and return to covenant faithfulness (Ezek 14:6), and (4) bring a message of **hope** to those who were loyal to God (Ezek 11:16–20).
- 19) [August 19] God told Ezekiel to **act** out the coming destruction of Jerusalem (the final siege would begin in less than five years). God did this because many if not most of the exiles believed that they would **return** to Jerusalem soon and that God would never allow the wicked Babylonians to destroy His holy temple. Ezekiel warned them that they were mistaken. They had defiled the temple with their idols, and God’s patience with their evil was at an end. Ezekiel used a brick to represent Jerusalem, and he surrounded it with tiny siege-works. Then he lay on his left side facing north to signify the sin of the northern kingdom of Israel. He did this for a few hours each day for 390 days. Once the 390 days were complete, he lay on his right side facing south to signify the sin of the southern kingdom of Judah. He did this for a few hours each day for 40 days. During this enactment of the coming siege, God told him to eat and drink in a way that would show how the starving Jews would eat the food that remained in Jerusalem. Ezekiel was also bound with ropes to picture how the people would be trapped in the city. Ezekiel’s symbolic enactment **captured** the attention of the exiles and made them realize that sin had serious **consequences**. They should not continue to believe that their status as God’s chosen people made them **immune** to punishment. Ezekiel also told the exiles that God had been “**broken** over their **whoring** heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols” (Ezek 6:9). When all the things Ezekiel prophesied came to pass, the remnant who survived would **know** “that I am the LORD; I have not said in vain that I do this evil to them” (Ezek 6:10).
- 20) [August 20] Ezekiel’s vision of the departure of God’s glory from Jerusalem. Consider the beliefs that were behind the people’s idolatry. First, the elders of Judah said, “The LORD does not **see** us, the LORD has **forsaken** the land” (Ezek 8:12). Rather than admitting that their bondage to Babylon was the result of their own wickedness, the elders used God’s judgment as an excuse to say that God was no longer around. Since God was gone, they were free to turn to other gods. The irony is that God’s glorious presence was right there, hovering over their heads as they burned incense to their idols. Such is the foolishness of those who think God does not see! This teaches us that if we reject God’s word, we will become futile in our thinking and our hearts will be **darkened** (Rom 1:21–23). Second, the princes of Judah counseled, “Is it not a good time to **build** houses? This city is like an iron pot. We are safe inside it like meat in a pot” (Ezek 11:3 NLT). God had said that the city would be destroyed, yet the leaders of the people were encouraging them to build homes and feel secure. This teaches us that if we allow sin in our hearts, we will lead those under our authority into **disaster**! Lastly, the people who had been left behind in Jerusalem said to the exiles in Babylon, “Go far from the LORD; to **us** this land is given for a possession” (Ezek 11:15). They believed that those

who had been carried into captivity were the ones being judged for sin, and they saw themselves as the **sacred** remnant who would be preserved and blessed. Unbelievable! This shows us that when we refuse to believe the truth, the only thing left to believe is a lie. We will end up heading straight for a devil's hell, all the while thinking that we're right and everyone else is wrong (cf. Matt 7:22–23). May it never be! Ezekiel had a vision of one of the greatest tragedies in human history—God's glory left Jerusalem and the people didn't even know that He was gone. The message to us? "Do not become proud, but **fear**. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you" (Rom 11:20–21)!

- 21) [August 21] The exiles in Babylon did not take Ezekiel's warnings seriously. They still hoped for an early return to Judah, and they viewed the continued preservation of Jerusalem as a sign of hope. In response, God sent Ezekiel to refute their claims of peace and prosperity. First, God dealt with the belief that Ezekiel was speaking of events that were in the **distant** future (Ezek 12:22, 27). God's reply: "It will no longer be delayed, but in **your** days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord God" (Ezek 12:25). This teaches us not to presume on God's patience and forbearance, for His kindness is meant to lead us to **repentance** (Rom 2:4)! Second, God dealt with the fact that Ezekiel was predicting disaster while the other prophets were saying "**Peace!**" (Ezek 13:10). The people had built a flimsy wall of wickedness, and instead of condemning the wall, the false prophets covered it with **whitewash!** God's reply: "I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, you shall perish in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the LORD" (Ezek 13:14). This teaches us that when we **cover** our sin rather than confessing it, we are setting the stage for our own destruction. Third, God dealt with the false piety of the elders who insisted they were listening to God's words. They would come and sit before Ezekiel and ask him to inquire of God on their behalf (Ezek 14:1). God's reply: "Repent and **turn** away from your idols...For anyone who separates himself from me, taking idols into his heart...and yet comes to a prophet to consult me...I will set my face against that man; I will make him and sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people" (Ezek 14:7–8). This teaches us not to **harbor** sin in our hearts and then come to God and act like all is well. If we do, we'll get God's attention, but it won't be the kind of attention we want! Last, God dealt with the belief that His wrath would not fall on Jerusalem as long as there were a few **righteous** people left (Ezek 14:13–14). God's reply: "Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their **own** lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord God" (Ezek 14:14). This teaches us that we can't **rely** on the righteousness of others. We must have a righteousness that is our own (Phil 3:9).
- 22) [August 22] God told Ezekiel a beautiful and tragic story about an unwanted **orphan** (Jerusalem) who abandoned her loving **husband** (the King of kings) to become an insatiable **prostitute**. This story is a record of God's love for Jerusalem, beginning with its birth, continuing with its wickedness and debauchery, and ending with its coming judgment. Yet the story doesn't end in despair! In a burst of hope, God revealed that in the distant future, He would restore the city and establish an everlasting covenant with His people. This allegory teaches us so much. First, that God's love is **unconditional**. When God found Jerusalem, it was unwanted and unloved, cast into a field to die. Yet God loved them! Why? Was it because of their size or wealth or goodness? No! (Deut 7:7–9). God loved them because that's who He is—God is love! (1 John 4:8). It also teaches us that God's love is **vulnerable**. God loved Jerusalem, not from a **distance**, but in the most intimate way possible—God **married** her. God did this knowing that He would suffer the pain of betrayal! Jesus demonstrated this kind of vulnerable love. He loved Peter, and Peter denied Him. He loved Judas, and Judas betrayed Him. He loved Jerusalem, and its leaders crucified Him. Such love, such wondrous love! It also teaches us that God's love is **sacrificial**. God promised that one day He would establish an everlasting covenant with His people, but the only way this could happen was for God

to sacrifice His Son on the cross to pay the penalty for their sin. God manifested the depth of his love in the person of Jesus Christ: “While we were yet **sinners**, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). More than anything else, **giving** is the action most closely associated with God’s love. As we think about this story, let’s ask ourselves some tough questions. Do we love others the way God loves us? Is our love unconditional? Is our love vulnerable? Is it sacrificial? John summed it up well when he said, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers” (1 John 3:16). Will we answer the call to love others the same way God loved us?

- 23) [August 23] The exiles responded to Ezekiel’s story by accusing God of punishing them for the sins of their **fathers** (Ezek 18:2). God responded in the strongest possible terms (cf. Ezek 18:3). God’s wrath and judgment for sin does not fall on the innocent. Instead, “the soul who sins shall die” (Ezek 18:4). This teaches us that while the wickedness of earlier generations may have **consequences** that affect us in the present, God will not hold us **guilty** or punish us for the sins that others commit. God’s promise to visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children was for “those who **hate** me” (Exod 20:5). Children who **follow** in their parent’s wicked ways will justly receive such a visitation (cf. 2 Chr 21:12–15; Matt 23:32). Ezekiel also reminded the exiles of what God said through Moses (Deut 24:16). A wicked son would not be declared innocent because of his father’s righteousness, and a righteous son would not be punished because of his father’s wickedness (Ezek 18:20). This means that each individual stands on their **own** before God. We are innocent or guilty based on our own decisions. Ezekiel went on to say that the wicked who repent will **live** and the righteous who rebel will **die**. It’s clear that this refers to more than **physical** life and death, for what profit is there for the wicked to live in this life, if they will die eternally in the next? God was speaking of the life that comes from a “new **heart** and a new **spirit**” (Ezek 18:31). Such life will last **forever** because it is united with the source of life, Jesus Christ. In the same way, the **death** that comes from apostasy and rebellion will also last forever. “The soul who sins shall die,” and that death is **eternal** separation from God in the fires of hell.
- 24) [August 24] The exiles refused to believe that God would cut off everyone from the holy city of Jerusalem. After all, the city had seen two **deportations** already (604 and 597 BC), and there were still princes, priests and prophets left. Surely the presence of a few **righteous** people would save the city. In reply, God said that a flashing **sword** was poised to strike, and it would cut off both “the righteous and the wicked” (Ezek 21:2–4). The upright people who remained could not save the city from God’s avenging sword. They, like Daniel and Ezekiel, would be **removed** from Jerusalem, and the city would sit forsaken and alone (Lam 1:1). This teaches us that there comes a time when the sins of a city or nation must be punished, and the righteous can no longer **hold** back the tide of judgment. How important it is to be **salt** and **light** while there is still time! Ezekiel went on to list all the sins of the “blood city” (Ezek 22:2). It wasn’t just idolatry that had brought God’s avenging sword; the people were murderers, adulterers, and thieves. They profaned the Sabbaths and oppressed widows and orphans. They despised their parents and committed all kinds of sexual immorality. The priests had done violence to God’s law, the prophets had lied in God’s name, and the princes had killed to gain more wealth. God said, “I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them” (Ezek 22:30–31). This teaches us that a righteous leader can sometimes turn a city or a nation from the path of destruction. May we always be that kind of leader! Ezekiel told the story of Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem), two sister-cities who “played the **whore** in their youth.” The graphic depiction of their wickedness teaches us that idolatry is like **adultery**. When we **trade** God for something else, we commit spiritual prostitution, and when we **join** ourselves to unbelievers, we commit spiritual whoredom (Ezek 23:14–17). We must strive to make sure that we never join Christ with **Satan** (2 Cor 6:14–15)!

- 25) [August 25] On January 27, 589 BC, Nebuchadnezzar began the **third** and final siege of Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 24). The tragedy is that it didn't need to happen. It could have been avoided if Zedekiah and the people had listened to God. This teaches us: "He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be **broken** beyond healing" (Prov 29:1). On the day that Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, God's word came to Ezekiel in Babylon: "Son of man, write the name of the day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day" (Ezek 24:2). Then God told him to speak a parable to the rebellious house: "Put on the pot...make it boil vigorously." Earlier, the people had defied God's call to repent saying, 'We're safe in Jerusalem, just like meat in a pot' (Ezek 11:3 NLT). Now God put a fire under that pot that would burn up all the wickedness and impurity in His holy city (Ezek 24:10–11). The same day that Jerusalem was besieged, God told Ezekiel that his **wife** was going to die, and she died that evening. God did not allow him to mourn, and when the people asked what it meant, God told them that he was about to **profane** the temple: "The pride of your power, the desire of your eyes and the delight of your soul" (Ezek 24:21). Just as Ezekiel's cherished wife had been taken from him, the people's cherished temple would be taken from them. Ezekiel was a **living** testimony to the exiles; everything in his life communicated God's message of coming judgment. This shows us what it means to be **used** of God. Are we willing to suffer personal loss in order to minister to others? Zedekiah panicked when the siege began, and he ran to Jeremiah for help. Jeremiah told him the city was doomed. Those who wished to save their lives from disease and famine should leave the city and surrender to Nebuchadnezzar. Yet Zedekiah still would not listen! Rebellious to the end—may this never be said of us! Later, when Nebuchadnezzar lifted the siege of Jerusalem to deal with Pharaoh Hophra's army, Zedekiah thought the city had been saved (cf. Jer 37:5–10). Do we allow circumstances to bring **doubt** into our minds about the certainty of God's word? Do we remain steady and faithful even when it looks like God's promise has failed?
- 26) [August 26] What happened to Jeremiah during the third and final siege of Jerusalem? The siege provoked a return to covenant obedience. Zedekiah, the officials and the people made a **covenant** together, and they freed all their Hebrew **slaves** (cf. Exod 21:1–4). Sadly, their obedience didn't last long. When Nebuchadnezzar left Jerusalem to deal with the threat from Pharaoh Hophra's army, the king and the people went back on their word and forced the slaves to return to service. This shows us that repentance which is born in the heat of the moment **fades** quickly once the pressure is gone. If we really desire God's blessing, we will **persist** in obedience instead of going back to our old ways. While Nebuchadnezzar was gone, Jeremiah tried to leave Jerusalem on business. When he tried to pass through the Gate of Benjamin, Irijah, the captain of the guard, accused him of defecting to the Babylonians. Jeremiah protested his innocence, but they beat him and threw him into a dungeon. This teaches us that we can be in the center of God's will, doing God's work, and yet be falsely accused and **persecuted**. Such is the life of those who stand firm in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation. Eventually, Zedekiah rescued him, but he wouldn't listen to Jeremiah's warnings. He was interested in what God had to say ("Is there a word from the LORD?"), but he wasn't willing to **humble** himself to do God's will. Jeremiah didn't allow the threat of death to keep him from speaking the truth (Jer 38:1–3), and it wasn't long before he was thrown into an empty well to die from hunger and exposure. Ebed-Melech rescued Jeremiah, and he remained in the court of the guardhouse until Jerusalem was captured. Once Jeremiah was out of the well, Zedekiah wanted to speak to him again. Yet he still wouldn't listen! He was more afraid of his officials and the Jews who had gone over to the Babylonians than he was of God. We show who we fear the most by whom we choose to **obey** (Matt 10:28).
- 27) [August 27] More of what happened during the third and final siege of Jerusalem. While Jeremiah stayed in the guardhouse, God's word concerning **Egypt** came to Ezekiel. Pharaoh **Hophra** had interrupted Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem, and the people of Judah thought their political

alliance with Egypt was going to save them. But Egypt was interfering with God's plan to judge Jerusalem through Babylon, and so they too came under His wrath. God promised to make Egypt a "desolation" for forty years, and to scatter the Egyptians among the nations. When the forty years were over, God would return the Egyptians to their land, but their kingdom would not have its former power, and Israel would never again put their trust in Egypt rather than God. Sure enough, Babylon defeated Egypt in 568 BC (about 20 years after Ezekiel's prophecy), and it never again became a superpower in the ancient world. Forty years after that, the Persians allowed the Egyptians to return home, thus fulfilling God's prophecy through Ezekiel. This shows us the **futility** of ignoring God's word and trusting in the might of man. It also teaches us that those who resist God's plans make themselves His **enemies**. We should be careful not to defy the authority of a leader that is carrying out God's divine will—even if that leader is wicked! Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, the Babylonians had returned to the city after dealing with Egypt, and their siege ramps were reaching toward its walls. In despair, the people mourned the fate of Jerusalem—it was about to be destroyed forever. In the middle of this desperate situation, God told Jeremiah to buy a **field**! His purchase signified that one day God would **restore** His people to Jerusalem. Just as God had brought disaster on them, God would bring good on them. "Fields shall be bought in this land of which you are saying, 'It is a desolation, without man or beast'" (Jer 32:43). This reminds us that God is indeed, "the LORD, the God of all flesh" (Jer 32:27). Nothing is too **hard** for Him! When things look hopeless, we need to look up and see His mighty arm. Rather than giving in to despair, we should rejoice at the thought that one day, we will be a part of the glorious kingdom of Jesus Christ!

- 28) [August 28] The fall of Jerusalem in July 587 BC. Everything God predicted through the prophets was fulfilled. God said that there would be **famine**: the people would eat their bread with care (Ezek 4:16), and finally, they would eat their own **children** (Ezek 5:10). Just as God said, it happened (2 Kgs 25:3). Babies cried out for thirst, children begged for food, and women **boiled** and ate their own children (Lam 4:4, 10). God said that the temple would be destroyed and burned with **fire** (Isa 64:11; Jer 7:14). Just as God said, it happened (Jer 52:13). Nebuzaradan, the captain of the king's bodyguard, came to Jerusalem and burned the temple with fire (2 Kgs 25:9). God said that Zedekiah would not escape. He would see and talk with Nebuchadnezzar face-to-face (Jer 34:3). Just as God said, it happened (Jer 39:3–5). Zedekiah tried to escape by **night**, but he was captured on the plains of Jericho and brought before the king of Babylon. God said that Zedekiah would be brought to Babylon, yet he would not **see** it (Jer 32:5; Ezek 12:13). Just as God said, it happened (Jer 39:6–7). Nebuchadnezzar killed Zedekiah's sons "before his eyes," then had him **blinded** so it would be the last thing he ever saw (2 Kgs 25:7). If there's anything today's reading teaches us, it's that *what God says will come to pass*. If it seems slow, wait for it—"it will surely come; it will not delay" (Hab 2:3). What a tragic and terrible story! I can still hear the echo of the Chronicler's words: "The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy" (2 Chr 36:15–16). "No remedy"—what dreadful words! They warn us to return to God before it's too late, to repent with "all our heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12–14).
- 29) [August 29] What happened to Jeremiah in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem. **Nebuchadnezzar** himself sent word that Jeremiah should not be harmed, but "deal with him as he tells you" (Jer 39:12). Nebuchadnezzar had no doubt heard of Jeremiah's ministry in Jerusalem: he had foretold Babylon's victory over Judah and the other nations, he had urged Zedekiah and the princes to submit to Babylon's rule, and he had suffered greatly at the hands of his own people. But his kind treatment of Jeremiah was ultimately due to God's **promise**: "I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD" (Jer 1:8, 19). God took Jeremiah from the guardhouse and placed him in the care of

Gedaliah. Gedaliah's father, Ahikam, had saved Jeremiah's life twenty years earlier (Jer 26:24), and his grandfather Shaphan was none other than the secretary (scribe) of Josiah (2 Kgs 22:3)! This shows us that God takes **care** of those who are faithful to follow His will, and that even in the midst of ruin, God can prosper and protect us. Today's reading includes two psalms of Asaph that speak of the devastation of Jerusalem. The first, Psalm 74, begins by asking, "O God, why have you rejected us **forever**?" The author then poignantly described the destruction of the once beautiful city. Yet he did not spiral into despair. Instead he recalled the greatness of God's past deeds and the power of God's creative acts. He ended by urging God to repay the enemy for what they had done and to vindicate Israel. This psalm teaches us that it's appropriate to call God to action on the basis of His **character** and His **covenant**. We should never give in to despair; rather, we should meditate on God's promise and God's power. The second, Psalm 79, begins by announcing that the nations had defiled the temple: "They have laid Jerusalem in **ruins**" (Ps 79:1). The author then pleaded: "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!" (Ps 79:9). This psalm teaches us that God's judgments are designed to **draw** us to His side. We should run to Him, ask for His forgiveness, and then call on Him to restore and refresh. Then we will be able to praise His name (Ps 79:13).

- 30) [August 30] Lamentations answers this question: 'How should God's people respond to the terrible judgment that had fallen on them because of their wickedness?' First, they should realize how **low** they had fallen. In the past, Jerusalem had been "full of people," "great among the nations," "a **princess** among the provinces," "the perfection of beauty," "a **joy** to all the earth," filled with "precious things," and mighty in its "strongholds." This greatness had not come from their own strength or power; it had come from God's **blessing**. Second, they should recognize what had brought about their destruction: "The LORD has afflicted her for the multitude of her **transgressions**" (Lam 1:5). The city's devastation was not due to the sin of one generation. It was the result of generation after generation of wickedness, where **children** embraced their parents' legacy of idolatry, murder and perversion. Third, they should **own** the pain of God's judgment. This was not a punishment to be shrugged off. This was a grief to be **felt**, a grief that should cause their eyes to run with **weeping** (Lam 1:16). 'Remember this pain,' Lamentations cries, 'Let it soak into your hearts. May the memory of the anger of God for your sin be always in your minds!'
- 31) [August 31] God continued by urging the people to remember who they had **cast** aside (Lam 3:21–22). Next, God told them to accept the punishment of their sin without **complaint** (Lam 3:39). Instead, they should patiently bear the yoke of His **discipline** (Lam 3:28–29). Next, God told them to **repent** of their sin and turn back to Him (Lam 3:40, 49–50). They had much to be sorry for—they had "transgressed and rebelled" (Lam 3:42)—and godly sorrow always leads to **repentance** (2 Cor 7:10). God also told them to leave **vengeance** in His capable hands (Lam 3:64). God had used the Babylonians to punish Judah, but they would be held **accountable** for what they had done, for they were a wicked and idolatrous nation.