

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—The Temple Sermon (c. 629t BC)

Jeremiah 7:1–8:3

The Temple Sermon

7:1 The LORD said to Jeremiah:

2 “Stand in the gate of the LORD’s temple and proclaim this message: ‘Listen, all you people of Judah who have passed through these gates to worship the LORD. Hear what the LORD has to say.

3 The LORD God of Israel who rules over all says: Change the way you have been living and do what is right. If you do, I will allow you to continue to live in this land.

4 Stop putting your confidence in the false belief that says, “We are safe! The temple of the LORD is here! The temple of the LORD is here! The temple of the LORD is here!”

5 You must change the way you have been living and do what is right. You must treat one another fairly.

6 Stop oppressing foreigners who live in your land, children who have lost their fathers, and women who have lost their husbands. Stop killing innocent people in this land. Stop paying allegiance to other gods. That will only bring about your ruin.

7 If you stop doing these things, I will allow you to continue to live in this land which I gave to your ancestors as a lasting possession.

8 “But just look at you! You are putting your confidence in a false belief that will not deliver you.

9 You steal. You murder. You commit adultery. You lie when you swear on oath. You sacrifice to the god Baal. You pay allegiance to other gods whom you have not previously known.

10 Then you come and stand in my presence in this temple I have claimed as my own and say, “We are safe!” You think you are so safe that you go on doing all those hateful sins!

11 Do you think this temple I have claimed as my own is to be a hideout for robbers? You had better take note! I have seen for myself what you have done! says the LORD. [\[Matt 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46\]](#)

12 So, go to the place in Shiloh where I allowed myself to be worshiped in the early days. See what I did to it because of the wicked things my people Israel did.

13 You also have done all these things, says the LORD, and I have spoken to you over and over again. But you have not listened! You have refused to respond when I called you to repent!

14 So I will destroy this temple which I have claimed as my own, this temple that you are trusting to protect you. I will destroy this place that I gave to you and your ancestors, just like I destroyed Shiloh.

15 And I will drive you out of my sight just like I drove out your relatives, the people of Israel.”

Worship of the Queen of Heaven

16 Then the LORD said, “As for you, Jeremiah, do not pray for these people! Do not cry out to me or petition me on their behalf! Do not plead with me to save them, because I will not listen to you.

17 Do you see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

18 Children are gathering firewood, fathers are building fires with it, and women are mixing dough to bake cakes to offer to the goddess they call the Queen of Heaven. They are also pouring out drink offerings to other gods. They seem to do all this just to trouble me.

19 But I am not really the one being troubled!” says the LORD. “Rather they are bringing trouble on themselves to their own shame!

20 So,” the Lord GOD says, “my raging fury will be poured out on this land. It will be poured out on human beings and animals, on trees and crops. And it will burn like a fire which cannot be extinguished.”

A Disobedient Nation

21 The LORD said to the people of Judah, “The LORD God of Israel who rules over all says: ‘You might as well go ahead and add the meat of your burnt offerings to that of the other sacrifices and eat it, too!

22 Consider this: When I spoke to your ancestors after I brought them out of Egypt, I did not merely give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices.

23 I also explicitly commanded them: “Obey me. If you do, I will be your God and you will be my people. Live exactly the way I tell you and things will go well with you.”

24 But they did not listen to me or pay any attention to me. They followed the stubborn inclinations of their own wicked hearts. They acted worse and worse instead of better.

25 From the time your ancestors departed the land of Egypt until now, I sent my servants the prophets to you again and again, day after day.

26 But your ancestors did not listen to me nor pay attention to me. They became obstinate and were more wicked than even their own forefathers.”

27 Then the LORD said to me, “When you tell them all this, they will not listen to you. When you call out to them, they will not respond to you.

28 So tell them: ‘This is a nation that has not obeyed the LORD their God and has not accepted correction. Faithfulness is nowhere to be found in it. These people do not even profess it anymore.

29 So, mourn, you people of this nation. Cut off your hair and throw it away. Sing a song of mourning on the hilltops. For the LORD

has decided to reject and forsake this generation that has provoked his wrath!”

Coming Judgment of Human Sacrifice

30 The LORD says, “I have rejected them because the people of Judah have done what I consider evil. They have set up their disgusting idols in the temple which I have claimed for my own and have defiled it.

31 They have also built places of worship in a place called Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom so that they can sacrifice their sons and daughters by fire. That is something I never commanded them to do! Indeed, it never even entered my mind to command such a thing!

32 So, watch out!” says the LORD. “The time will soon come when people will no longer call those places Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom. But they will call that valley the Valley of Slaughter and they will bury so many people in Topheth they will run out of room.

33 Then the dead bodies of these people will be left on the ground for the birds and wild animals to eat. There will not be any survivors to scare them away.

34 I will put an end to the sounds of joy and gladness, or the glad celebration of brides and grooms throughout the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. For the whole land will become a desolate wasteland.”

Desecration of Graves by the Enemy

8:1 The LORD says, “When that time comes, the bones of the kings of Judah and its leaders, the bones of the priests and prophets and of all the other people who lived in Jerusalem will be dug up from their graves.

2 They will be spread out and exposed to the sun, the moon and the stars. These are things they adored and served, things to which they paid allegiance, from which they sought guidance, and worshiped. The bones of these people will never be regathered and reburied. They will be like manure used to fertilize the ground.

3 However, I will leave some of these wicked people alive and banish them to other places. But wherever these people who survive may go, they will wish they had died rather than lived,” says the LORD who rules over all.

Jeremiah’s Prophecy to Judah—A Depraved and Incurable People (c. 629t BC)

Jeremiah 8:4–9:6

Stubborn Refusal to Return to God

8:4 The LORD said to me,

“Tell them, ‘The LORD says,

Do people not get back up when they fall down?

Do they not turn around when they go the wrong way?

5 Why, then, do these people of Jerusalem continually turn away from me in apostasy?

They hold fast to their deception.

They refuse to turn back to me.

6 I have listened to them very carefully,

but they do not speak honestly.

None of them regrets the evil he has done.

None of them says, “I have done wrong!”

All of them persist in their own wayward course like a horse charging recklessly into battle.

7 Even the stork knows

when it is time to move on.

The turtledove, swallow, and crane recognize the normal times for their migration.

But my people pay no attention to what I, the LORD, require of them.

8 How can you say, “We are wise!

We have the law of the LORD”?

The truth is, those who teach it have used their writings to make it say what it does not really mean.

9 Your wise men will be put to shame.

They will be dumbfounded and be brought to judgment.

Since they have rejected the word of the LORD, what wisdom do they really have?

10 So I will give their wives to other men

and their fields to new owners.

For from the least important to the most important of them,
all of them are greedy for dishonest gain.

Prophets and priests alike,
all practice deceit.

- 11 They offer only superficial help
for the hurt my dear people have suffered.
They say, "Everything will be all right!"
But everything is not all right!
- 12 Are they ashamed because they have done such disgusting things?
No, they are not at all ashamed!
They do not even know how to blush!
So they will die just like others have died.
They will be brought to ruin when I punish them,
says the LORD.
- 13 I will take away their harvests, says the LORD.
There will be no grapes on their vines.
There will be no figs on their fig trees.
Even the leaves on their trees will wither.
The crops that I gave them will be taken away."

The People's Resignation to the Coming Invasion

14 The people say,

"Why are we just sitting here?
Let us gather together inside the fortified cities.
Let us at least die there fighting,
since the LORD our God has condemned us to die.
He has condemned us to drink the poison waters of judgment
because we have sinned against him.

- 15 We hoped for good fortune, but nothing good has come of it.
We hoped for a time of relief, but instead we experience terror.
- 16 The snorting of the enemy's horses
is already being heard in the city of Dan.
The sound of the neighing of their stallions
causes the whole land to tremble with fear.
They are coming to destroy the land and everything in it!
They are coming to destroy the cities and everyone who lives in them!"

17 The LORD says,

"Yes indeed, I am sending an enemy against you
that will be like poisonous snakes which cannot be charmed away.
And they will inflict fatal wounds on you."

Lament for a Stricken People

18 Then I said,

"There is no cure for my grief!
I am sick at heart!

- 19 I hear my dear people crying out
throughout the length and breadth of the land.
They are crying, 'Is the LORD no longer in Zion?
Is her divine King no longer there?'"
The LORD answers,
"Why then do they provoke me to anger with their images,
with their worthless foreign idols?"
- 20 "They cry, 'Harvest time has come and gone, and the summer is over,

and still we have not been delivered.’

- 21 My heart is crushed because my dear people are being crushed.
I go about crying and grieving. I am overwhelmed with dismay.
- 22 There is still medicinal ointment available in Gilead!
There is still a physician there!
Why then have my dear people
not been restored to health?
- 9:1 I wish that my head were a well full of water
and my eyes were a fountain full of tears!
If they were, I could cry day and night
for those of my dear people who have been killed.
- 2 I wish I had a lodging place in the desert
where I could spend some time like a weary traveler.
Then I would desert my people
and walk away from them
because they are all unfaithful to God,
a congregation of people that has been disloyal to him.

3 The LORD says,

“These people are like soldiers who have readied their bows.
Their tongues are always ready to shoot out lies.
They have become powerful in the land,
but they have not done so by honest means.
Indeed, they do one evil thing after another
and do not pay attention to me.

- 4 Everyone must be on his guard around his friends.
He must not even trust any of his relatives.
For every one of them will find some way to cheat him.
And all of his friends will tell lies about him.
- 5 One friend deceives another
and no one tells the truth.
These people have trained themselves to tell lies.
They do wrong and are unable to repent.
- 6 They do one act of violence after another,
and one deceitful thing after another.
They refuse to pay attention to me,”
says the LORD.

Jeremiah’s Prophecy to Judah—Jerusalem’s Coming Ruin (c. 629t BC)

Jeremiah 9:7–26

God’s Justification for the Coming Punishment

7 Therefore the LORD who rules over all says,

“I will now purify them in the fires of affliction and test them.
The wickedness of my dear people has left me no choice.
What else can I do?

- 8 Their tongues are like deadly arrows.
They are always telling lies.
Friendly words for their neighbors come from their mouths.
But their minds are thinking up ways to trap them.
- 9 I will certainly punish them for doing such things!” says the LORD. “I will certainly bring retribution on such a nation as this!”

10 I said,

“I will weep and mourn for the grasslands on the mountains,
I will sing a mournful song for the pastures in the wilderness

because they are so scorched no one travels through them.
The sound of livestock is no longer heard there.
Even the birds in the sky and the wild animals in the fields
have fled and are gone.”

11 The LORD said,

“I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins.
Jackals will make their home there.
I will destroy the towns of Judah
so that no one will be able to live in them.”

12 I said,

“Who is wise enough to understand why this has happened?
Who has a word from the LORD that can explain it?
Why does the land lie in ruins?
Why is it as scorched as a desert through which no one travels?”

13 The LORD answered, “This has happened because these people have rejected my laws which I gave them. They have not obeyed me or followed those laws.

14 Instead they have followed the stubborn inclinations of their own hearts. They have paid allegiance to the gods called Baal, as their fathers taught them to do.

15 So then, listen to what I, the LORD God of Israel who rules over all, say. ‘I will make these people eat the bitter food of suffering and drink the poison water of judgment.

16 I will scatter them among nations that neither they nor their ancestors have known anything about. I will send people chasing after them with swords until I have destroyed them.”

A Lament over Jerusalem’s Destruction

17 The LORD who rules over all told me to say to this people,

Take note of what I say.
Call for the women who mourn for the dead!
Summon those who are the most skilled at it!”

18 I said, “Indeed, let them come quickly and sing a song of mourning for us.
Let them wail loudly until tears stream from our own eyes
and our eyelids overflow with water.

19 For the sound of wailing is soon to be heard in Zion.
They will wail, ‘We are utterly ruined! We are completely disgraced!
For our houses have been torn down
and we must leave our land.’”

20 I said,

“So now, you wailing women, hear what the LORD says.
Open your ears to the words from his mouth.
Teach your daughters this mournful song,
and each of you teach your neighbor this lament.

21 ‘Death has climbed in through our windows.
It has entered into our fortified houses.
It has taken away our children who play in the streets.
It has taken away our young men who gather in the city squares.’

22 Tell your daughters and neighbors, ‘The LORD says,
“The dead bodies of people will lie scattered everywhere
like manure scattered on a field.
They will lie scattered on the ground
like grain that has been cut down but has not been gathered.’”’

The Only Basis for Boasting

23 The LORD says,

“Wise people should not boast that they are wise.
Powerful people should not boast that they are powerful.
Rich people should not boast that they are rich.

24 If people want to boast, they should boast about this:

They should boast that they understand and know me. [[1 Cor 1:31](#); [2 Cor 10:17](#)]

They should boast that they know and understand
that I, the LORD, act out of faithfulness, fairness, and justice in the earth
and that I desire people to do these things,”

says the LORD.

Circumcision Will Not Save You—Circumcise Your Hearts!

25 The LORD says, “Watch out! The time is soon coming when I will punish all those who are circumcised only in the flesh.

26 That is, I will punish the Egyptians, the Judeans, the Edomites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, and all the desert people who cut their hair short at the temples. I will do so because none of the people of those nations are really circumcised in the LORD’s sight.

Moreover, none of the people of Israel are circumcised when it comes to their hearts.”

Jeremiah’s Prophecy to Judah—Idolatry and the Coming Exile (c. 629t BC)

Jeremiah 10

The Foolishness of Idolatry

1 You people of Israel, listen to what the LORD has to say to you.

2 The LORD says,

“Do not start following pagan religious practices.
Do not be in awe of signs that occur in the sky
even though the nations hold them in awe.

3 For the religion of these people is worthless.

They cut down a tree in the forest,
and a craftsman makes it into an idol with his tools.

4 He decorates it with overlays of silver and gold.

He uses hammer and nails to fasten it together
so that it will not fall over.

5 Such idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field.

They cannot talk.
They must be carried
because they cannot walk.

Do not be afraid of them
because they cannot hurt you.
And they do not have any power to help you.”

6 I said,

“There is no one like you, LORD.
You are great.

And you are renowned for your power.

7 Everyone should revere you, O King of all nations,
because you deserve to be revered.

For there is no one like you
among any of the wise people of the nations nor among any of their kings.

8 The people of those nations are both stupid and foolish.

Instruction from a wooden idol is worthless!

9 Hammered-out silver is brought from Tarshish
and gold is brought from Uphaz to cover those idols.
They are the handiwork of carpenters and goldsmiths.

- They are clothed in blue and purple clothes.
They are all made by skillful workers.
- 10 The LORD is the only true God.
He is the living God and the everlasting King.
When he shows his anger the earth shakes.
None of the nations can stand up to his fury.
- 11 You people of Israel should tell those nations this:
'These gods did not make heaven and earth.
They will disappear from the earth and from under the heavens.'
- 12 The LORD is the one who by his power made the earth.
He is the one who by his wisdom established the world.
And by his understanding he spread out the skies.
- 13 When his voice thunders, the heavenly ocean roars.
He makes the clouds rise from the far-off horizons.
He makes the lightning flash out in the midst of the rain.
He unleashes the wind from the places where he stores it.
- 14 All these idolaters will prove to be stupid and ignorant.
Every goldsmith will be disgraced by the idol he made.
For the image he forges is merely a sham.
There is no breath in any of those idols.
- 15 They are worthless, mere objects to be mocked.
When the time comes to punish them, they will be destroyed.
- 16 The LORD, who is the inheritance of Jacob's descendants, is not like them.
He is the one who created everything.
And the people of Israel are those he claims as his own.
He is known as the LORD who rules over all."

Announcement of Exile

- 17 Gather your belongings together and prepare to leave the land,
you people of Jerusalem who are being besieged.
- 18 For the LORD says, "I will now throw out
those who live in this land.
I will bring so much trouble on them
that they will actually feel it."
- 19 And I cried out, "We are doomed!
Our wound is severe!
We once thought, 'This is only an illness.
And we will be able to bear it!'
- 20 But our tents have been destroyed.
The ropes that held them in place have been ripped apart.
Our children are gone and are not coming back.
There is no survivor to put our tents back up,
no one left to hang their tent curtains in place.
- 21 For our leaders are stupid.
They have not sought the LORD's advice.
So they do not act wisely,
and the people they are responsible for have all been scattered.
- 22 Listen! News is coming even now.
The rumble of a great army is heard approaching from a land in the north.
It is coming to turn the towns of Judah into rubble,
places where only jackals live.

Jeremiah's Prayer

- 23 LORD, we know that people do not control their own destiny.
It is not in their power to determine what will happen to them.
- 24 Correct us, LORD, but only in due measure.
Do not punish us in anger or you will reduce us to nothing.
- 25 Vent your anger on the nations that do not acknowledge you.

Vent it on the peoples who do not worship you.
For they have destroyed the people of Jacob.
They have completely destroyed them
and left their homeland in utter ruin.

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Chronological Notes

- 1) The current majority view is that the “Temple Speech” recorded in Jeremiah 7 belongs to the time of Jehoiakim and should be harmonized with Jeremiah 26 (e.g., Lalleman, Harrison, Thompson, Craigie-Kelley-Drinkard, Feinberg, and Brown). However, Laetsch is not convinced: “The reasons advanced for this identification do not seem convincing. 1) The same demand for a change of conduct. Yet that was the subject and purpose of all the preaching of Jeremiah. 2) The same occasion, a festival. Yet these festivals gave an opportunity to preach to all the people and were quite generally used by the prophets. 3) The same place. Yet Jeremiah and others spoke in the gates and courts of the Temple, cp. ch. 19:14; 35:2, 4; 36:5–10; also 28:1, 5. 4) In ch. 26 only the main thoughts of ch. 7 are repeated. That does not prove identity! 5) The reference to Shiloh. Why should not Shiloh have been repeatedly mentioned as a warning example of the folly of relying on external possession of God’s house? A warning like this was not only possible, but quite to be expected in the days of Josiah, when the Lord announced His readiness to fulfill all the threats contained in the rediscovered Book of the Law (2 Kgs 22:16–20). One of these threats referred to the overturning of Jerusalem ‘as Sodom and Gomorrah’ (Deut 29:23), involving the destruction of the Temple. Linking up with Huldah’s message, Jeremiah may have reminded the Jews of the destruction of the Tabernacle at Shiloh as a warning against misplaced trust in the Temple. In ch. 7 there is not the slightest indication of opposition. That also would fit well into the time of Josiah’s reform.”¹
- 2) Given the speculation involved in identifying Jeremiah 7 with Jeremiah 26, I have decided to go against the majority view and place Jeremiah 7–10 just prior to the discovery of the Book of the Law (solidly within Josiah’s reign).

¹ Theo. Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, pp. 93–94. See also F. B. Huey, Jr., “Jeremiah, Lamentations,” *NAC*, pp. 103–104 and J. Barton Paine, “The Arrangement of Jeremiah’s Prophecies,” *JETS* 07:4 (Fall 1964), pp. 121–128.