

Handout: Jeremiah Lesson 7

Chapter 11 is from the period after good King Josiah's death when his son, Jehoiakim, overturned all his father's religious reforms. The people showed their approval by immediately restoring their false idols and apostatizing from their covenant with Yahweh.

This part of the book contains what are called the "confessions of Jeremiah," in which the prophet confesses his anguish over his people's wickedness and his deepest personal feelings to his Lord. Jeremiah's five confessions:

1. Jeremiah 11:18-12:6
2. Jeremiah 15:10-21
3. Jeremiah 17:14-18
4. Jeremiah 18:18-23
5. Jeremiah 20:7-18

The theme of Jeremiah 11:1-13:27 is that broken covenants leave everyone hurting, including Jeremiah whose opposition to the people's renewed apostasy from the covenant results in threats against his life (11:19). There are three covenant oracles in Chapter 11:1-13:

- Oracle #1: the curses of the covenant (11:1-5)
- Oracle #2: obeying the covenant (11:6-8)
- Oracle #3: the covenant is broken (11:9-13)

The oracles in 11:1-14 move from Jeremiah's present time, to the past of the Exodus wilderness generation, and then back again to Jeremiah's time:

1. Oracle #1 announces a curse-judgment on the present generation (verses 3-5).
2. Oracle #2 recalls the curse-judgment carried out on the Exodus generation (verses 6-8).
3. Oracle #3 announces a curse-judgment on the present generation (verses 9-13).

Chapter 11 contains the first of many "covenant" references:

- Most of the references are to the God-ordained covenant with Israel at Sinai (11:1-14; 22:9; 34:13).
- The God-ordained covenants that included the Davidic covenant, the Aaronic priestly covenant, and the covenant with Adam and creation (33:20-26).
- The covenant King Zedekiah made with the people to free Hebrew slaves (34:8-22).
- God's promise of a New and Eternal Covenant (31:31-34; 32:40 and 50:5).

Jesus referred to the New Covenant at the Last Supper in Luke 22:20 and so did St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:25. See handout 2 for a list of the God-ordained covenants.

"Word," *debar*, is a key word in the three oracles in 11:1-14; used in both the singular and the plural, it is repeated seven times in verses 1, 2, 3, 6 (twice), 8 and 10. The other key word is "covenant," *berith*, repeated five times in the three oracles in verses 11:2, 3, 6, 8 and 10.

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The three oracles in 11:1-3 share common words and phrases clustered in verses 3-5, 7-8, and the result in verse 10.

In Jeremiah 11:14-17, there are two speakers:

1. Yahweh speaks to Jeremiah in prose in verse 14, to an unspecified audience in verse 15a, and then directly to the people in verse 15b (poetry in verse 15).
2. Jeremiah speaks directly to the people in verse 16a, followed by speaking to an unspecified audience in verse 16b (poetry), and again directly to the people in verse 17 (prose).

Jeremiah 11:18-19 is one of the Messianic passages in the Book of Jeremiah: *Yahweh informed me and I knew it; you then revealed their scheming to me. 19 I for my part was like a trustful lamb being led to the slaughterhouse, not knowing the schemes they were plotting against me, "Let us destroy the tree ['ets] in its [belehmo] strength [literally = bread], let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name may no longer be remembered!"*

In verses 18-19, Jeremiah becomes a figure of Jesus Christ who was also rejected by His people (Mt 13:57; Mk 6:4; Lk 4:24; Jn 7:5-5) and sacrificed as the Lamb of God to atone for the sins of His people and all humanity (Jer 11:19; Is 53:7, 12; Jn 1:29; 19:31).

It is a verse frequently used as a proof-text by the Fathers of the Catholic Church in support of the prophecies in the Old Testament that referred to the Passion of Christ and the promise of Eucharist. The Hebrew word 'ets can mean "tree" or "wood" (Strongs, H6086). The Hebrew word for "bread" is *lehem/lechem* (Strongs, H3899). The Hebrew word *be/belehmo* can mean "in," "for," "with," or "through" and is an additional key word in this verse where *belehmo* translates "in" or "with" or "for" **its bread**. The 2nd century Catholic apologist Tertullian wrote that Christ ... *said Himself through Jeremiah: "They have devised a device against Me, saying, 'Come, let us throw wood onto his bread'" ... the cross, of course, upon His Body*. In his commentary on the Book of Jeremiah in the 5th century, St. Jerome wrote, *All of the churches believe that what is said of Jeremiah refers also to the person of Christ (Commentarii in Ieremiam, 2.11)*.

Chapter 12 divides into three parts. The first part is the conclusion of Jeremiah's first confession where he asks Yahweh why it appears that the wicked prosper (verses 1-3), followed by a response from God (verse 5). Then, in verses 7-17, there are two oracles that refer to Israel as the "heritage of Yahweh":

- Oracle #1: Verses 7-13
- Oracle #2: Verses 14-17

Chapter 13:1-14:

- The oracle and object lesson of the useless waistcloth (verses 1-11)
- The oracle of the wine jugs smashed together (verses 12-14)

YAHWEH'S EIGHT COVENANTS

But Yahweh's faithful love for those who fear him is from eternity and forever; and his saving justice to their children's children; as long as they keep his covenant and carefully obey his precepts. Palms 103:17-18 (NJB)

COVENANT	SIGN	SCRIPTURE
1. Adam: -Fertility, dominion over the earth, to keep and guard the garden Sanctuary	Tree of Life	Genesis 1:28-30; 2:15-17; Hosea 6:7 <i>But they, like Adam, transgressed the covenant; there they betrayed Me (Hos 6:7).</i>
2. Noah and the earth: -The earth will never be destroyed by flood waters again (water will become a sign of salvation)	Rainbow	Genesis 6:18; 9:9-17; Sirach 44:17-18
3. Abraham (3-fold covenant continues with Isaac, Jacob, descendants): -Land/kingdom, many descendants, & worldwide blessing	Circumcision on the 8 th day	Genesis 12:3; 15:1-18; 17: 1-27; 18:18 & 22:13-18; 26:3-5; 28:10-14; Exodus 2:24; Psalm 105:8-11; Sirach 44:19-20
4. Sinai Covenant (Moses & Israel): -Tabernacle, liturgical worship, ordained priesthood, covenant sacraments & the Law	Tabernacle and & Sabbath obligation (sacred space and time)	Exodus 19:5; 25:10-22; 31:13-17; 34:10, 27, 28; 40:34-35; Deuteronomy 5:2-3; 29:12
5. Aaron & sons: -Perpetual ministerial priesthood	Salt	Exodus 40:15; Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19; Jeremiah 33:21; Sirach 45:7/8, 15/19; Malachi 2:4-5
6. Phinehas: -Perpetual priesthood in Covenant of Peace (prefigures Christ)	Seamless robe & miter	Numbers 25:11-15; Sirach 45:24
7. David & lineal heirs: -Dynasty and throne forever secure = eternal covenant	Throne/ Temple	2 Samuel 7:11-17; 23:5; 2 Chronicles 31:5; Psalm 132:11-12; Sirach 45:25.
8. New Covenant in Christ Jesus: -Eternal covenant; He is the fulfillment of all the former covenantal promises	The Cross, the true "Tree of Life" & the Eucharist	Isaiah 55:3; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Hebrews 12:24; Revelation 2:7.