

## The Burden of Yahweh (Jeremiah 24:1–10)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (6/28/20)

### Introduction

#### A Little History

1. Chapters 21–24 began with a message to Zedekiah (Judah's last king) then looked back to the kings who preceded him, coming full circle to Zedekiah again.
2. Judah's last kings were Jehoahaz (Shallum), son of Josiah (3 mos.); Jehoiakim (Eliakim), son of Josiah (11 years); Jehoiachin (Coniah), son of Jehoiakim (3 mos.); and Zedekiah (Mattaniah), son of Josiah (11 years) (2 Chron. 36:11–16).
3. Three times Chaldean campaigns took captives.
  - a. 605 B. C., Nebuchadnezzar marched to Egypt after the battle of Carchemish and took the first captives of Judah to Babylon (Daniel).
  - b. 597 B. C., Temple plundered and second captivity (Ezekiel)
  - c. 587 B. C., Jerusalem burned; Zedekiah captured, blinded, and deported to Babylon
4. The deportation referred to in 24:1 occurred in 597 B. C., which included the priest Ezekiel, the disciple of Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar left behind the poorest people of the land under the puppet king Zedekiah. Jehoiachin (Jeconiah or Coniah) had already been taken to Babylon (22:25, 26). The proposition of the message: The principles outlined in Judah's fall and subsequent captivity can be traced to the failure of her leaders to shepherd the people in their covenant responsibilities to Yahweh.

Chapter 23 closed with a play on the word *burden* (*massa*) as either a prophetic message or a physical burden. A culture is doomed when no word from the Lord comes for guidance and direction (Prov. 29:18).

### I. Apostate Leaders

#### 1. Preparatory Questions

- a. If God is sovereign, can anyone truly resist His will? If His will cannot be resisted, how can He find fault with sinners? Paul responded by asking, “*Who are you to question God? Can what is made argue against his maker?*” (Romans 9:19). God allows history to play out to reveal the true nature of humankind, enduring with “*much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction*” (Rom. 9:22). He does this in order to “*make known His power for vessels of mercy which He has prepared beforehand for glory—even us*” (Rom. 9:23, 24). All things and all history will eventually resolve into the perfect will of God on earth because He is sovereign.
- b. Why is the doctrine of God's sovereignty so resisted?
  - 1) The simple answer is that in the fall humans want to be gods—worshiped and obeyed. One place where the tendency to exercise the will is clearly evidenced is in positions of authority. Sinners perceive leadership as *power* and *control*, not biblical *shepherding* and *modeling* obedience to God. The invisible God is assumed to be absent and, thus, unable to see and hold rebellious sinners responsible (Jer. 23:23, 24).
  - 2) The Word of God is not simply ignored; it is rejected with disdain (Jer. 23:28, 29). The power of the Word was despised by the leaders in Judah. They were totally unwilling to listen, let alone obey; thus, judgment resulted.

2. Godless leaders are a burden to be discarded (Jer. 23:33).
  - a. The “*burden of the Lord*” was a technical term signifying a genuine word from their covenant Lord (Jer. 23:38, 39).
  - b. The false *burden* was everyone’s own word, perverting the words of the living God.
  - c. Their audacity to preach their own message as the Word of God incurred God’s severe wrath (Jer. 23:39, 40).

How is this fault duplicated in modern Christianity? (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). Could this explain the church’s lack of influence on a culture that is at war in our nation?

## II. Good and Bad Figs

1. A vision was given to Jeremiah after the second exile (597 b. c.).
  - a. The vision was of two baskets of figs, a common fruit grown in Israel. One basket contained very good figs; the other, very bad (overripe or rotten) ones. The good figs represented the restored remnant under the branch of David, Jesus Christ (23:7); the very bad ones, the apostate nation cast out.
  - b. Jesus used the figure of good and bad fruit to mark those who were truly saved (Matt. 12:33–37).
2. The Lord gave a glorious promise of hope to those in whom His Spirit worked the grace of salvation (Jer. 24:4–7).
  - a. Even though these people suffered in the exile, the Lord promised to set His eyes on them for good.
  - b. They would also be returned to the land to be built up and planted again.
  - c. This is also a preview of the New Covenant to be established by Jesus at His first coming (Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 11:19, 20; 36:26, 27).

## God’s Word to His Church

The Lord allowed the terrible leaders to drive the nation to judgment. The prophets, whose duty was to stand in the counsel of the Lord and deliver His Word to the errant rulers, failed because they were more concerned to be appreciated than to preserve the righteousness of the nation. They knew that the negative reception Jeremiah faced would come to them if they told the truth (Jer. 23:18).

John the Baptist preached the same message to the Jewish leaders of his day (Matt. 3:7–10).

Clear evidence of true conversion is good fruit (Matt. 7:16–20; Mark 4:18–20).