

# The Crisis Continues



## SABBATH—NOVEMBER 7

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Jeremiah 9; Jeremiah 10:1–15; Romans 1:25; Jeremiah 26; Acts 17:30; Acts 5:34–41.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “But here is what the one who brags should boast about. He should brag that he has understanding and knows me. I want him to know that I am the LORD. No matter what I do on earth, I am always kind, fair and right. And I take delight in that,” announces the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:24, Nlrv).

**THE HARDSHIPS AND SUFFERING OF GOD’S SERVANT (JEREMIAH) CONTINUE.** In fact, pretty much all of the book of Jeremiah deals with the challenges and struggles the prophet (special messenger from God) had in trying to get the people to listen to the Lord’s words of love and concern.

Imagine what would have happened if the people had listened to Jeremiah and had accepted the prophet’s warning. Suppose they had listened. Suppose the people, the kings, and the leaders had humbled themselves before God. Then the terrible crisis would not have come. The chance for repentance (turning away from sin) was there for them. Even after they had done so much wrong, so much evil, the door to redemption<sup>1</sup> and salvation had not closed.

“Those things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who are living at the time when God’s work is being completed” (1 Corinthians 10:11, Nlrv). We have these examples before us. So, what will we learn from them?

### DEFINITIONS

1. redemption—salvation for a price; Jesus paid the price for our sins by dying on the cross.

## LET HIM WHO BOASTS (Jeremiah 9:23, 24)

In Jeremiah 9, the prophet began his sad report. This is because he knew the terrible crisis that was coming to his country and people. God announced judgment against Jerusalem. And when God says He will do something, He does it. What they would face was something very terrible. What they would face was going to be the direct judgment of God. And it was this foreknowledge that was causing Jeremiah such sorrow. But his sorrow was small in comparison to the pain that God must have felt.

This quote about the Cross captures the idea of God's pain so well: "The cross reveals to our dull senses the pain that sin has brought to the heart of God. Every wrong done, every action of cruelty, every failure of man to reach His ideal, brings grief to God. Soon there came upon Israel the terrible events that showed the nation's separation from God; for example, being under the control of their enemies, their cruelty, and the threat of death. It is said that 'he [the Lord] couldn't [could not] stand to see Israel suffer anymore.' Judges 10:16, Nlrv. 'When they [Israel] suffered, he [the Lord] suffered with them. . . . He lifted them up and carried them. He did it again and again in days long ago.' Isaiah 63:9, Nlrv."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 263.

**Read Jeremiah 9, the prophet's sorrowful report. Pay close attention to verses 23, 24. Why are those words so meaningful even to us today?**

When it comes to death, we are all like an "unwalled city." Wisdom, power, and riches all are important. But to depend on these things, especially during bad events or when death comes, is fruitless, meaningless, and empty. With all the warnings about the doom, the people are told what really is important. That is to know and to understand the loving-kindness, the justice, and the righteousness (holy life) of God. What else alone can give us hope and comfort when everything earthly, everything human, fails us?

**What does the Cross tell us about the loving-kindness, the justice, and the righteousness of God?**



**"The cross is an example of the pain that sin has brought to the heart of God."**

**CREATURES OR THE CREATOR? (Jeremiah 10:1–15)**

As we have found already, God’s people had been called out to be different from the nations around them. The nations around them were all involved in idol worship and false teachings. So many of the warnings in the first five books of Moses were against following the practices of their neighbors. Instead, the Israelites were to be witnesses to the world of the truth about the Lord as Creator and Savior. Unfortunately, so much of Old Testament history is the story of how they were often tempted (led astray) into the very practices that they were warned against.

**Read Jeremiah 10:1–15. What is the Lord telling His people here? If this same warning were given today, in our time and culture and setting, how might it be written?**



**It is still so easy to put our trust in things that can no more save us than the idols could save Judah.**

Jeremiah is telling the people what they should have already known. These pagan gods are nothing. They were made by humans. They were examples of people’s own twisted imaginations. This is a perfect example of what Paul meant when he wrote about those who “chose a lie instead of God’s truth. They worshiped and served created things. They didn’t [did not] worship the Creator. But he must be praised forever. Amen” (Romans 1:25, NIV).

Notice in this verse how Paul explains the big difference between the Creation and the Creator. This same difference is explained in these verses in Jeremiah, which talk about the weakness of these “gods” while the true God is powerful. All through these verses Jeremiah is trying to teach the people how foolish and silly it is to put their trust in these idols. The idols cannot do anything. All this is different from the Creator God, who both created the world and keeps it going by His power (read Hebrews 1:3).

These verses were written long ago. But their message is still so meaningful to us. We might not be tempted to bow down and worship man-made idols. Neither are most of us worried about the signs in the heavens. But it is still so easy to put our trust in things that can no more save us than these idols could save Judah on the day of judgment.

**What are some things that we could come to trust more than we should if we are not careful?**

**A CALL TO REPENTANCE (Jeremiah 26:1–6)**

**Read Jeremiah 26:1–6. What hope is the Lord offering the people here?**

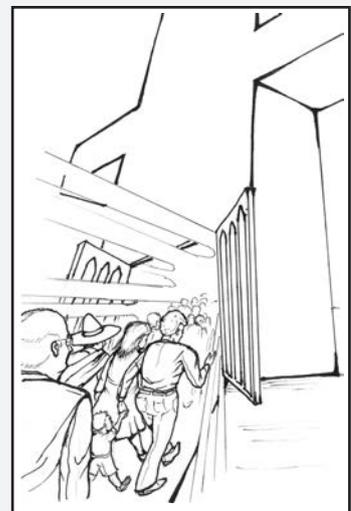
The message here was the same as the message all through the Bible, through both Old and New Testaments. The message is the call to repentance, to turn away from our sin and to find the salvation that God offers to all.

**What is the message in 2 Chronicles 6:37–39; Ezekiel 14:6; Matthew 3:2; Luke 24:47; and Acts 17:30?**

“The people of Judah were all guilty of wrongdoing. But God would not give them up. By them His name was to be honored and glorified [praised] among the heathen. Many who did not know God well were still to see the glory of His character [goodness and mercy]. It was for the purpose of making plain God’s mercy that He kept sending His servants the prophets with the message ‘Each of you must turn from your evil ways.’ Jeremiah 25:5, NIV. ‘Through Isaiah God spoke, “For the honor of my own name I put off showing my anger. I hold it back from you so people will continue to praise me. I do not want to destroy you.” Isaiah 48:9, NIV. “I tried to purify you for my own honor. I did it for the honor of my name. How can I let myself be dishonored? I will not give up my glory to any other god.”’ Isaiah 48:11, NIV.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 319.

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the message of God is the same to all of us. We are sinners. We have done wrong. We deserve punishment. But through the cross of Christ, through the atoning (cleansing) death of Jesus, God has made a way for all of us to be saved. We need to admit our sinfulness. We need to claim by faith the gift of Jesus, which is freely given to us even though we are unworthy. And we need to repent (turn away) from all of our sins. And, of course, true repentance includes putting sin out of our lives by the grace (mercy and forgiveness) of God.

**No matter what we have done, we can repent of our sin and be forgiven. This is the great gift of the gospel. What sin do you need to repent of right now?**



**Through the atoning death of Christ, God has made a way for us to be saved.**

**THE CALL FOR DEATH (Jeremiah 26:10, 11)**

From our place in the history of time, it is hard to believe the hardness of the hearts of the people in Jeremiah's day. As we saw in yesterday's study, Jeremiah's message was strong but still full of hope. If the people repented, God would hold back the terrible punishments that would come upon them. How different it would be if they would do what they were supposed to do. If only they would obey God and receive the blessing that obedience would bring, then all would be well. God would forgive. God would heal. God would restore (make new). The gospel gift, which would come through the sacrifice of Jesus, would be enough to forgive all their sins and restore the people.

What a message of hope, of promise, and of salvation!

**What was the response to Jeremiah and his message? Read Jeremiah 26:10, 11.**

In Israel, only a legally authorized court could give a death sentence. Only a vote of more than half of the judges was needed for the death sentence. The priests and the prophets attacked Jeremiah with their deadly charges. Those opposed to him wanted to set him up as a political criminal and as a traitor.

**How did Jeremiah respond? (Jeremiah 26:13–15).**

Jeremiah did not give up at all. The prophet knew that he might die. He might have had some fear, but he did not soften a single word of God's message. Remember, the Lord had warned him at the start not to hold back a word (Jeremiah 26:2). When Jeremiah was younger, he whined, complained, and cursed the day of his birth. But as a man of God, he stood strong and faithful to his beliefs.

**When was the last time you had to stand faithfully for the truth in Jesus? If you never have had to do that, what is wrong?**

**JEREMIAH'S ESCAPE (Jeremiah 26:16–24)**

Whatever his fears, whatever his own emotions (strong feelings) were, Jeremiah stood firm. He was fully aware of the possible death that his strong stand could bring him. He warned the princes and the people that if they killed him they would face punishment for spilling innocent blood (Jeremiah 26:15). Jeremiah knew that he was not guilty of the charges against him.

**Read Jeremiah 26:16–24. How did Jeremiah escape death?**

How interesting that the priests and the prophets, who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders, had to be scolded and challenged by just “elders” and “regular people” who came forward to defend Jeremiah. They brought up the memory of Micah, who had lived a century before Jeremiah, in Israel. At that time, the king did not hurt Micah but listened to his advice. The whole nation repented, and disaster was prevented for a while. Now these people in Jeremiah’s day were wiser than their leaders. These people wanted to save the nation from making a big mistake by putting a prophet of God to death.

In this instance, Jeremiah’s escape from death showed that he was not guilty of those things that he was blamed for. But the priests’ and prophets’ hatred became stronger. Their anger rose in them so that at a later time they would attack Jeremiah with their full fury. Jeremiah’s escape meant only a short time of freedom for the prophet. He was not fully out of danger.

What we find here is an example of how some people learned lessons from history while others who knew the same history did not. Not everyone learns their lessons. A similar event happened centuries later, when the Pharisee Gamaliel warned other leaders to leave the followers of Jesus alone.

**Read Acts 5:34–41. What comparisons are there with this story and with what happened to Jeremiah? More important, what lesson can we ourselves learn from history and from the mistakes of those who have come before us?**



“‘My God, my God, why have you deserted me?’” is the most powerful example of what it cost to save us.

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “We know what love is because Jesus Christ gave his life for us” (1 John 3:16, NIV). No doubt we can look around in nature, in human relationships, and in creation itself and get a view of God’s love. It does not matter how much sin has damaged that creation or our ability to appreciate or even ‘read’ it correctly. But at the cross, veils were torn off. And the world was given the sharpest display possible of that love. This is a love so great that it led to what Ellen G. White called “the sundering [separating] of the Father and the Son.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7, page 924.

*The sundering (separating) of the Father and the Son?*

So great was God’s love for us that the Godhead (Father, Son [Jesus], and Holy Spirit), whose members loved each other from eternity, suffered this “sundering” in order to save us. “‘My God, my God, why have you deserted me?’” (Matthew 27:46, NIV) is the clearest and most powerful example of that “sundering” and of what it cost to save us. Here, we can again understand the pain and suffering the Lord has gone through because of our sin.

It is no surprise that “we love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19, NIV). Of course, as sinful humans we only “copy” that love. Because of our own selfishness and sinful desires, we often do a poor job of showing God’s love. God’s love is far greater than ours. We reflect (show) God’s love the way an oily mud puddle (pool of water) reflects the sky.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Many of us today do not worship animals or things in nature the way the people of old did. But in what ways are we still in danger of making an idol or a god out of nature itself?
- ② How is repentance experienced in the life of a Christian? Other than repenting after first accepting Jesus, what purpose does repentance continue to have in the life of faith?
- ③ Try to think more about the idea of the “sundering of the Father and the Son.” How are we to understand this? What does this tell us about just how deadly and costly sin is?