

International Bible Lessons Commentary ***Jeremiah 7:1-15***

New International Version

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L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **International Bible Lesson** (also known as the *International Sunday School Lessons* [ISSL] and the *Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 9, 2015**, is from **Jeremiah 7:1-15**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help teachers with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study or give as a handout to students in the bulletin-sized edition. A podcast for this commentary is also available at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Jeremiah 7:1-15

(Jeremiah 7:1) This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

The prophet Jeremiah has been called “the weeping prophet,” because he had to preach about the people’s sins against God and the coming judgment of God upon His people. “The word” was a message directly from God that Jeremiah declared to the people of Judah. His message could have been deducted based on the law of God and the people’s disobedience; however, his message truly came from God himself to Jeremiah and confirmed what the people should have known from their study of the Law of God.

(Jeremiah 7:2) “Stand at the gate of the LORD’s house and there proclaim this message: ‘Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD.’”

Jeremiah preached where God told him. He preached to those who came to the temple to sincerely worship God and to those who came to do business for selfish reasons (such as the money changers that Jesus cast out of the temple). God wanted Jeremiah to express His words exactly as He gave them, and God told Jeremiah exactly what to say. He preached to everyone, because everyone who came to the temple had to go through the gate to the Lord’s house. God’s message was not just for a select few or a mystery to be shared only among an elite group. God intended for everyone to learn the truth and act according to the truth of His word. Jeremiah preached in a dangerous place, because he preached against the priests and politicians for their idolatry and immorality. They could not help but hear his words at the gate of the LORD’s house. Eventually, they arrested and persecuted Jeremiah.

(Jeremiah 7:3) This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place.

In 722 B.C., God destroyed the kingdom of Israel through their Assyrian enemies because of their sins; therefore, only the kingdom of Judah remained. As the God of both kingdoms, God sent prophets to call both kingdoms to repent, but neither kingdom repented (or they did not reform for very long). God wanted to dwell with His people, and because they were His people He would discipline them if they would not obey His commandments (which were always for their own good). God wanted to dwell with His people in Jerusalem, but they preferred to worship idols; therefore, God sent many of those who survived the siege of Jerusalem into exile in Babylon and the temple was destroyed as punishment in 586 B.C. However, through God’s prophets in Babylon, many repented and learned to obey and worship God rightly. Repentant believers found God even in Babylon, because God is everywhere present and with believers everywhere.

(Jeremiah 7:4) Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!”

These deceptive words referred to the belief and continual affirmations of the corrupt political and religious leaders that because God dwelt in the temple in Jerusalem that God would never let Jerusalem or the temple fall into the hands of Israel’s or Judah’s enemies. Rather than repent of their sins, the people pointed to the existence of the temple as the reason God would always protect them and their city. Jeremiah warned that this was a false hope, often repeated by the false prophets too. As we see from the commentary comments above, God proved Jeremiah right, and He also proved that Jeremiah was a true prophet of God when He fulfilled Jeremiah’s words.

(Jeremiah 7:5) If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly,

God wanted His people to change their way of life from practicing evil to doing that which is good. The Law of God (the Law of Moses in the first five books of the Bible) revealed the way of love and the specific ways for people to act justly in their relationships. The Law of God was an objective standard or measure by which people could evaluate their moral behavior and the behavior of the kingdom’s leaders. God’s indictment against His people included the fact that they did not treat each other justly; instead, they took selfish advantage of one another (as Amos and Micah also described so well).

(Jeremiah 7:6) if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm,

Most of the foreigners or sojourners or aliens were those who were not Israelites or Judeans but who lived in the Promised Land because they were descendants of those who had not been driven out after Joshua led the Hebrews into the Promised Land.

Some of these foreigners had led the Hebrews to worship idols and into immorality, and they could be punished for violating the Law of God. However, God insisted that foreigners were not to be oppressed simply because they were foreigners. Some of these foreigners had converted to the Jewish faith, but they were still oppressed by some of those who were Hebrews according to the flesh. So many of the Jews oppressed or took selfish, unfair advantage of those who were not racially like them, or who were orphaned or widowed or innocent, that if the kingdom did not repent God would destroy it. The people had even begun to worship the idols of the land by throwing their innocent children into the fire in order to secure the blessings their false gods promised. Indeed, what they were doing was to their own hurt and the hurt of others, so God warned them to repent so He would not need to discipline them. Their society would become worse and worse if God did not intervene.

(Jeremiah 7:7) then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever.

Whether or not God would dwell with them did not depend upon what they believed about the temple in Jerusalem, but on how justly they treated each other and how they obeyed God's laws. Whether or not God would dwell with them forever and ever in the Promised Land depended on how they treated the poor and underprivileged and whether or not they worshiped and promoted sacrifices to false gods. Because they did not repent, they were sent into exile for seventy years.

(Jeremiah 7:8) But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

The "deceptive words" the people had come to believe and trust in were the false teachings of their priests, their political leaders, and their false prophets. The "deceptive words" enabled the privileged class to stay in power and enabled everyone to think they could escape moral accountability for their behavior if they continued to worship God every Sabbath at the temple (where God told Jeremiah to preach). Jeremiah consistently warned that God would hold them morally accountable, and God would punish them for their unrepentant hearts no matter how many times they went to the temple on the Sabbath. Because Jeremiah preached contrary to the "deceptive words" of the kingdom's leaders, he was persecuted and punished by the religious and political leaders in Jerusalem.

(Jeremiah 7:9) Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known,

All of the sins listed here violated the Ten Commandments, which all of the people should have known by heart. The people went through the temple gates supposedly to worship God, but the other six days of the week they violated the Law of God (and perhaps did so even on the Sabbath). God's objective standard of right and wrong that God had revealed clearly to them forbid murder, adultery, lying, worshiping idols, and sacrificing to the false gods their neighbors had led them to serve. They did not go through the temple gates to show their love and devotion to the true God.

(Jeremiah 7:10) 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?

The sins of God’s people in Israel and Judah seem to be similar to the sins of God’s people throughout human history. Some people think that they can disobey God throughout the week, but if they go to God’s house one day a week to worship God according to their formulas and leave God’s house feeling good that they will be safe and never suffer the just discipline of God that they deserve here or hereafter. They think they can worship God with unrepentant hearts and God does not see their hypocrisy. When he preached the word of the LORD, Jeremiah revealed the hypocrisy of the leaders and people who came to the temple.

(Jeremiah 7:11) Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD.

The temple had become a den of robbers in Jeremiah’s day; so, God destroyed the temple in 586 B.C. When the people returned from exile, they rebuilt the temple. By Jesus’ day, the temple had become a den of robbers again, and God was watching. Many of the people, including the religious leaders who permitted it, used the temple for personal enrichment rather than for the true worship of the true God. Jesus cleansed the temple, but after the religious leaders crucified Jesus, it soon became a den of robbers again; so, after about 40 years the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Romans.

(Jeremiah 7:12) Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel.

Because of the sins the priests practiced at Shiloh, God destroyed Shiloh as a place of worship. God told the people to remember Shiloh’s history and go and look at what He had done, because He would do the same in Jerusalem and to the temple if the people would not repent. When God kept His word, the people learned that they had trusted in the “deceptive words” of their leaders and false prophets. Compare 1 Samuel 3:21 and Psalm 78:56-64. Jerusalem did suffer as did the priests and people at Shiloh suffered.

(Jeremiah 7:13) While you were doing all these things, declares the LORD, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer.

The Bible reveals that the LORD is persistently patient, but at some point patience with persistently evil practices ceases to be a virtue. God did not send just one or two prophets to speak His words and call His people to repent, but many. The leaders and people persistently refused to listen to God or His prophets and return to God and obedience. As Jesus reminded His listeners, their ancestors killed the prophets (Luke 11:47-51). God does not speak empty or meaningless words; God speaks and acts.

(Jeremiah 7:14) Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears my Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your ancestors.

The leaders and people had come to trust in a false theology that taught that because God had indwelt the temple from the time of King Solomon that He would never let His house be destroyed or desecrated by their enemies. They trusted in an unfounded deduction rather than trust in the words of God and His true prophets. Their ancestors learned at Shiloh that God would allow the Ark of the Covenant to be captured and He would take the lives of their immoral political and religious leaders. God wanted the people to learn from this example in their own history. God warned the people through Jeremiah that He would do something similar to their temple and to them, which God did in 586 B.C.

(Jeremiah 7:15) I will thrust you from my presence, just as I did all your fellow Israelites, the people of Ephraim.”

God meant His promise as a threat that would lead His people to repent. God had destroyed the Kingdom of Israel (their fellow Israelites) in 722 B.C, and God expected them to learn from that how He would fulfill what His prophets foretold, but they would not listen and learn. Therefore, God did thrust that generation from His presence and into exile (where God went with those who truly loved and obeyed Him, but who suffered the fate of their nation because of its disobedience).

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Where did Jeremiah preach and why was that a dangerous place for him?
2. What did God want people to do and stop doing and why?
3. What place did the people of Judah trust instead of trusting in the LORD and why?
4. What words did the people trust instead of the words of the LORD?
5. What had God's House, the Temple, become, and what was it in Jesus' day?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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