

Last time we looked at the horrible state of things with Judah – all due to JEHOVAH's judgement of her sin. We observed that this judgement was long in coming – particularly starting with Isaiah's around 739 B.C. and going into Jeremiah's prophetic around 626 B.C., about 13 years into the reign of Josiah. Judah had ample time to repent of her sin – she even had a period of reformation during Josiah's reign but the Bent was for sin and as soon as Josiah was killed in battle the plummet into sin was greater than the climb into reformation.

The sin of Judah was presented in the first chapter of Lamentations and was described in graphic detail:

⁸ Jerusalem sinned greatly, Therefore she has become an unclean thing. All who honored her despise her Because they have seen her nakedness; Even she herself groans and turns away. ⁹ Her uncleanness was in her skirts; She did not consider her future. Therefore she has fallen astonishingly; She has no comforter. "See, O Lord, my affliction, For the enemy has magnified himself!" Lamentations 1:8-9 (NASB)

To be called an unclean thing meant the worse of spiritual conditions – completely unfit for the worship and blessing of God. By the time this passage was written Jerusalem had fallen under Babylonian siege. So the outlook was bleak this passage amounts to Jeremiah's confession in behalf of Judah but the outcome had already happened and there appeared no hope.

Judah's National Hope in the Righteousness of the Lord as Expressed by Jeremiah.

¹⁸ "The Lord is righteous; For I have rebelled against His command; Hear now, all peoples, And behold my pain; My virgins and my young men Have gone into captivity. Lamentations 1:18 (NASB77)

The Order of the Prophets

1. Before the Captivities - to the ten tribes of Israel: Amos, Hosea, Obadiah, Joel.
2. Before the Captivities - to the two tribes of Judah: Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah
3. During the exile in Babylon - Ezekiel, Daniel
4. After the Exile - Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

This is the confession that Jeremiah longed to hear from Judah but now personally expressed in her behalf. The northern kingdom had long gone into oppression. Judgement was sure from the LORD. But for Judah

there was still hope in Jeremiah's mind. Jeremiah had prophesied during the reign of several Jewish kings. [See endnote 1](#) During this time it was a roller coaster ride for him. His heart was lifted during Josiah's reign. The temple of Solomon was rebuilt under the righteous king's rule but the end came abruptly when Josiah was killed in battle with Egypt. Jeremiah was very much aware of the sin of Judah. His hopes for a revival in

Judah was dashed when king Josiah was killed. It must have been heartbreaking for him to witness the tremendous spiritual downfall of his beloved country during his prophetic ministry.

The Lord's Call of Jeremiah

⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah 1:5 (NASB77)

What a lofty calling! Jeremiah was to be a prophet not only to Judah but to the nations – specifically, those very nations who were going to be the nemesis of Judah. His calling has an especially poignant note to it – first of all in a direct reflection of [Psalm 139:13-16](#) – Jeremiah was formed by JEHOVAH – and that creative act was preceded by the most intimate knowledge by JEHOVAH – He knew Jeremiah. This is the same word in the original as is used for the most intimate of relationship between a husband and a wife.¹

Yes, His calling was lofty but his ministry was borne out in a way he did not anticipate. Jeremiah was to be the prophet who was to announce that JEHOVAH was about to carry out His judgement in the land of Judah – a response of His righteous demands on Judah – if Judah had responded to JEHOVAH's call of righteousness given *more than a century earlier* through Isaiah, she wouldn't be facing this judgement now:

¹⁸ "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, " Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. ¹⁹ " If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; ²⁰ "But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 1:18-20 (NASB77).

The Lord God put it to Israel (make that Judah). Although they were sinful and guilty of the Sin of idolatry He had made provision for their forgiveness *and cleansing*. The remedy was there for the Israel's Sin but they had ultimately (as witnessed by Jeremiah) rejected the call to righteousness. But now judgement had come. Two graphical representations were given to Jeremiah. The budding almond tree and the boiling pot.

¹ God revealed that His selection of Jeremiah as a prophet had occurred before he had even been formed... in the womb. The word knew (yad?a?) means far more than intellectual knowledge. It was used of the intimate relations experienced by a husband and wife ("lay," Gen. 4:1) and conveyed the sense of a close personal relationship ("chosen," Amos 3:2) and protection ("watches over," Ps. 1:6). Before Jeremiah was conceived God had singled him out to be His spokesman to Israel.—Bible Knowledge Commentary

God Watches over His Word

¹¹ **And the word of the Lord came to me saying, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "I see a rod of an almond tree."** ¹² **Then the Lord said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it."** Jeremiah 1:11-12 (NASB77)

The almond tree. The almond blossom was the earliest of blossoms. The blossom appeared in January before the leaves:

"...God's first confirming vision caused Jeremiah to see the branch of an almond tree. The Hebrew word for "almond tree" is šaqed?, from the word "to watch or to wake" (šaqad?). The almond tree was named the "awake tree" because in Palestine it is the first tree in the year to bud and bear fruit. Its blooms precede its leaves, as the tree bursts into blossom in late January." —Bible Knowledge Commentary

It was a sign that spring was to come but further for the Jew it was confirmation that the LORD was watching over them as a guarantee that He was providing for them. The Jew should have understood this graphic for not only was the LORD watching over Israel in guarantee of their safety and prosperity but also in His requirement that they obey His word (see above, Isaiah 1:19, 20). So the Jew was not to think that JEHOVAH had loosened His requirement of Israel – rather His requirement for obedience was all the more in place. JEHOVAH will watch over His word and it will be obeyed.

¹³ **And the word of the Lord came to me a second time saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north."**

¹⁴ **Then the Lord said to me, "Out of the north the evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁵ "For, behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north," declares the Lord; "and they will come, and they will set**

each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

¹⁶ **"And I will pronounce My judgments on them concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. Jeremiah 1:13-16 (NASB77)**



The boiling cauldron.²

This is chilling. Remember that Jeremiah's prophetic ministry spanned the prosperity

² seething -- literally, "blown under"; so boiling by reason of the flame under it kept brisk by blowing. An Oriental symbol of a raging war. —Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

and utter desolation of Judah. This would be like knowing that all the blessings from the LORD that we enjoy today were about to be removed and in its place the judgement of the Lord was to fall upon us. The cauldron was tilted – away from the north and towards Judah – specifically at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem and its walls. Note the clear reference to idolatry. Anything that takes the place or would take away from the glory of God is idolatry. Judah had followed Samaria in its headlong plunge into idolatry and now the cauldron was about to spill its contents of judgement. The imagery is so telling. Take the illustration of a pot set upon a stove with the burner turned up high. All is OK for a while as the contents is heating up but eventually the whole thing becomes a “red alert” as the pot boils over and the hapless cook is left with the task of cleaning up the mess and probably dealing with a dinner that is uneatable. Israel had frittered away God’s patience in her Sin and now the pot is about to boil over.

“...God’s second confirming vision caused Jeremiah to see a boiling pot. The pot was a large kettle that was evidently sitting on a fire because it was “boiling” (lit., “blown upon,” napûah, indicating a wind or draft blowing on the fire to help bring the cauldron’s contents to a boil). The pot was tilting away from the north indicating that its contents were about to be spilled out toward the south....The tilting pot represented disaster that will be poured out on those who live in Judah. The direction from which the pot was facing represented the peoples of the northern kingdoms whom God was summoning to punish the nation of Judah.” —Bible Knowledge Commentary

The Righteousness of God Is Not to Be Trifled With.

So the Righteousness of God is not to be ignored nor marginalized – on a national basis *and* on a personal basis. Although man can attempt to say “after all I’m only human” or some sort of excuse such as that, God still requires due honor to His Righteousness. And it’s not that He hadn’t made provision for the frailty of man or his disposition for sinfulness. Please reread Isaiah 1:18: **"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, " Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.** There was provision for this universal problem – it’s just that Israel had chosen to rebel against God and create substitute gods – gods that wouldn’t hold them responsible for their actions. No! When Jeremiah later inserted **"The Lord is righteous; For I have rebelled against His command; Hear now, all peoples, And behold my pain; My virgins and my young men Have gone into captivity."**

Lamentations 1:18 (NASB77). This rebellion was NOT to go unpunished – by the time of this writing “My virgins and my young men (that is JEHOVAH’s) had been led off to captivity. His claim on His people was not to be usurped – His demand for obedience was not to go on unnoticed. This Righteousness of God is not some a result of man’s imagination – it is the very essence of God’s character. When Isaiah stood in the presence of the Lord his response was: ‘ **Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have**

seen the King, the Lord of hosts.’³ But things did not end there – Isaiah was not destroyed by the Lord because he was a man of iniquity. No! The Lord’s response to Isaiah’s confession was: “**And he touched my mouth with it⁴ and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.’**”⁵ Isaiah’s iniquity was (lit) turned aside and his sin was purged (covered – atoned for, see inset⁶). So as completely as Israel’s sin was provided for, she nevertheless rejected the Lord’s provision and pursued the false gods of her neighbors. This was the horrible contrast that Jeremiah was given by the Lord. On one hand, if Israel had capitulated to the Lord’s call of repentance, their sin would have been once and for all resolved and removed as a barrier between Israel and the Lord but on the other, hand the reality of the situation was that Israel rejected this loving, merciful offer and instead went after her own fanciful apostate religion – one that suited her better especially in the eyes of her neighbors (could this have been a “politically convenient” decision on Israel’s part?).

Too many times the character of the Lord’s patience is magnified above the rest of His essence – as much as His Patience is to be appreciated the eventual call of “**...And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.**” (Lev. 20:26).⁷ So along with alignment with the Lord and His blessing comes the responsibility of obedience to Him. This is the important point that Judah missed in her plunge into sin.

May I point out the transition in Isaiah’s prophesy. The first section gives out the warning to Israel of her waywardness but starting with the 40th chapter it seems as though the whole prophetic book shifts gears as is noted by these select verses:

¹ **"Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God.** ² **"Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the Lord'S hand Double for all her sins."** ³ **A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness;**

The KJV Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon

Strong's Number: 03722


Original Word

כָּפַר

Transliterated Word

Kaphar

Phonetic Spelling

kaw-far' 

Definition

to cover, purge, make an atonement, make reconciliation, cover over with pitch

(Qal) to coat or cover with pitch

(Piel)

to cover over, pacify, propitiate

to cover over, atone for sin, make atonement for

to cover over, atone for sin and persons by legal rites

(Pual)

to be covered over

to make atonement for

(Hithpael) to be covered

King James Word Usage - Total: 102

atonement 71, purge 7, reconciliation 4, reconcile 3, forgive 3,

purge away 2, pacify 2, atonement...made 2, merciful 2,

cleansed 1, disannulled 1, appease 1, put off 1, pardon 1, pitch 1

Word Origin

a primitive root

TDNT Entry

TWOT - 1023,1024,1025,1026

Parts of Speech

Verb

³ Isaiah 6:5 (NASB77)

⁴ The coal from the altar – a type of Christ’s finished work on the cross.

⁵ Isaiah 6:7 (NASB77)

⁶ Taken from <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/kjv/kaphar.html>

⁷ See also [1 Pet 1:13-19](#)

Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. ¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him And His recompense before Him. Isaiah 40:1-3, 10 (NASB)

Here is some poignant reference to not only the judgement of the Lord on His people but the promise that there will be comfort, will be forgiveness, will be salvation for his people. Now – fast forward to the time of Jesus' presentation at the temple as a baby:

²⁵ And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, ²⁸ then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹ "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word; ³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹ Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel." Luke 2:25-32 (NASB)

This is the comfort of Israel fulfilled. For centuries she had lived under the heel of oppression under the weight of her own waywardness and apostasy. Now was come not only the complete deliverance of all of Israel from her sin but for the whole world of sinners. Jesus, our righteousness, had come and was being held in the loving arms of the Lord's servant. This prophesy as given by Jeremiah himself:

¹⁴ 'Behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ 'In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. ¹⁶ 'In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the Lord is our righteousness.' Jeremiah 33:14-16 (NASB)

Had become fulfilled in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Begin Endnotes here.

1. Here is a portion from The Complete Biblical Library:

"...The beginning of Judah's end was deceptive. It looked like a fresh, new beginning, rather than an end. Judah had been a vassal state, subject to Assyria, for about 100 years. Finally Assyria's last great king, Ashurbanipal, died in approximately 629 B.C.. Judah, along with the other small states of western Asia, fell away to an exuberant new independence. Josiah, Judah's last great and good king, quickly established Judah as dominant among their neighbors. Josiah began a refurbishing of the temple of Solomon, which had fallen into neglect and disrepair during the long reign of Josiah's idolatrous grandfather Manasseh. The young Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry about this time.

Josiah died in battle against the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco in 609 B.C.. As quickly as Judah had risen under Josiah, the nation plummeted into crises and ruin even more quickly under his three sons and one grandson who succeeded him, before the fall of Judah and Jerusalem to the Babylonian forces of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.. Jeremiah also continued to prophesy under all four of Josiah's successors; the book of Jeremiah includes several episodes and prophetic oracles dated two to four years after Judah's fall.

Josiah had reigned over Judah from 640 - 609 B.C.. When Neco defeated and killed him at Megiddo, his son Jehoahaz (also called Shallum) became king. Neco allowed Jehoahaz to reign only three months, then carried him into Egypt as an exile. Neco placed Jehoahaz's brother Elikim on the throne, changing his name to Jehoiakim (2 Ki. 23:34); Jehoiakim ruled Judah for eleven years. During that time, Babylon became the dominant power in western Asia; Jehoiakim became Nebuchadnezzar's vassal.

Jehoiakim died in 598 B.C., during a Judian revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. It is tempting to think the rebel king died too conveniently, possibly assassinated to allow for Judian surrender when further revolt became obviously a hopeless endeavor. In any case, Jehoiachin the son of Jehoiakim became king. But he ruled three months. Nebuchadnezzar, as a part of his reorganization of the rebellious kingdom, carried Jehoiachin into exile in Babylon; he placed his uncle, Zedekiah, on the throne, it seems as prince-regent, rather than as king in his own right.

Zedekiah's rule also lasted eleven years. But, following in his brother's footsteps, he also rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, whose retribution came quickly and forcefully. After a campaign lasting about two years, Nebuchadnezzar's forces conquered all of Judea, captured Jerusalem and destroyed the temple of Solomon. Zedekiah was carried captive to Babylon, putting an end to the existence of Judah as a separate nation.

The chronology of Judah's last five kings can be stated very simply. Josiah reigned from 640 - 609 B.C.. Josiah's son Jehoahaz reigned three months in 609 B.C.. Josiah's son Jehoahaz reigned three months in 609 B.C.. Josiah's son Jehoiakim reigned eleven years, 609 - 598 B.C.. Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim and grandson of Josiah, reigned three months in 598 B.C.. Zedekiah, Josiah's third son to reign and Jehoiachin's uncle, ruled eleven years as prince-regent 598 - 586 B.C..