

Jer. 4:1 ¶ If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

Jer. 4:2 And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

This chapter begins with another plea from the LORD for His people to repent of their sin and turn back to Him in faith and obedience. Obedience is requisite in light of the instruction to “put away your abominations,” or get rid of your idols and all the practices associated with their worship. He also declares that the repentance of Israel will result in a blessing to the nations since they will then be in position to testify to the benefits of trusting in the LORD of Israel as their LORD. That testimony would reflect life in a nation governed by the character of God in truth, judgment and righteousness.

Truth = stability, trustworthiness

Judgment = Ruling with authority and righteousness

Righteousness = Moral integrity, purity

I can only imagine what life in America would be like today if our leaders possessed such character traits.

Jer. 4:3 ¶ For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

Jer. 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

As the LORD continues to speak through Jeremiah, His message is specifically directed to the people of Judah/Jerusalem; and He again uses the example of sowing seed. He is urging His people to prepare their hearts to receive the seeds of His truth, His word, and not let it fall on ground that will prevent its producing fruit. Fallow ground has not been broken up or plowed; it is not ready to receive seed; it does not provide an environment conducive to growth. How are they to do this? By circumcising their hearts. Circumcision is a cutting away of the flesh and is a graphic picture of the need to refuse to let the desires of the flesh rule their lives. Much of their motivation for idol worship was rooted in worship practices that included fulfilling the lust of the flesh through sexual immorality.

As the Lord pleads with His people to turn to Him in faith and obedience, He also warns them of the consequences of refusing to do so—the fact that they will experience His fury in judgment. He is very clear in stating that their evil **actions** would be the reason for such judgment. Scripture is consistent in declaring that sinful, evil actions have consequences; and if continued without repentance, result in God’s judgment.

Isaiah 13:11 "And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."

Jeremiah 5:25 "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you."

Psalms 38:3 "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin."

Psalms 32:10 "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked...."

It is obvious that the people of America and most of the world today do not understand this truth.

Jer. 4:5 ¶ Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities.

Jer. 4:6 Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.

Jer. 4:7 The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.

In these verses the prophet is declaring a warning to the people of Judah of coming judgment through the attack of an enemy from the north. This enemy is on the move and can be expected to cause great destruction in the land. Their best hope is to flee to Zion/Jerusalem, the city with the best fortifications, for safety. He has already conquered many of the Gentile nations and has now targeted Judah. The prophet is clear in stating that many cities in Judah will be left without inhabitants (implied: either through death or capture).

It is interesting to note that the winged lion was the standard or symbol for the nation of Babylon and was probably chosen in honor of Ishtar, the goddess of war and fertility.

Jer. 4:8 For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us.

Jer. 4:9 And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.

The prophet goes on to advise that the people clothe themselves in sackcloth, an indication of sorrow and repentance, in hopes of turning away God's anger. If they don't, the LORD is going to allow the enemy to invoke fear in the hearts of all the leaders of the people—king, princes, priests and prophets. The implication from the Hebrew is that the evidence of the enemy's power and destruction will stun the people. They will feel totally helpless.

Jer. 4:10 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.

Jeremiah decides to speak up on behalf of the people. (Rev 6/11) it sounds like he is accusing God of deception since He had promised peace for Judah and now He is telling them that judgment is at hand.

I have to admit that I needed help with this verse. The NIV Commentary and JFB made reference to how God had allowed the false prophets to misrepresent His message to the people and deceive them. They proclaimed that God was going to send peace to Judah, while Jeremiah, and other true prophets, had been consistent in declaring God's message of judgment to come in light of the wickedness and rebellion of His people. This logic makes sense and would seem to clarify that Jeremiah is not accusing God of deceit but is declaring the response of the people in this verse.

Scripture is clear that God uses all types of vessels to accomplish His purposes—from submissive, obedient servants to pagan world conquerors to false prophets to actually giving people over to their sinful desires. That is what He did in the life of Pharaoh, and that is what He will do again when the Antichrist comes on the scene.

*2 Thessalonians 2:8–12 “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. **And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**”*

In God's dealings with His people He often allows certain things to happen in order to prove their faith.

*Deuteronomy 8:2 “And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, **and to prove thee**, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.”*

*Judges 2:20–22 “And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: **That through them I may prove Israel**, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.”*

Jer. 4:11 At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse,

Jer. 4:12 *Even a full wind from those places shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them.*

Jer. 4:13 *Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.*

The LORD doesn't even acknowledge Jeremiah's statement. He just goes on to affirm that *judgment* ("I will give sentence against them") is coming in the form of a Gentile conqueror. He compares the coming judgment to a powerful, destructive wind (a blast of His anger). He will descend upon them like a thundercloud, with chariots as powerful as a whirlwind and with horses that are faster than eagles.

Jeremiah's conclusion, and again (I think) representing the response of the people—We are doomed!

Jer. 4:14 *O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?*

After these fearful words of judgment, the prophet again urges the people to repent of their wickedness and seek God's deliverance. He doesn't understand how they can choose to persist in their unrighteousness in light of God's message of judgment.

Jer. 4:15 *For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim.*

Jer. 4:16 *Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah.*

Jer. 4:17 *As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD.*

Jer. 4:18 *Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.*

The land allotments of Dan and Ephraim frame the northern and southern borders respectively of the Northern Kingdom that had already been conquered by the Assyrians. That the Northern Kingdom had been judged and taken captive by a Gentile power should have spoken volumes to those in the Southern Kingdom of Judah about the consequences of disobedience to God and disregard of their covenant with God. The LORD is clear in verses 17-18 in declaring that it is their rebellion against Him that has resulted in the current threat posed by the advance of the enemy. I think the wording of the CJB for verse 18 is clear:

"Your own ways and your actions have brought these things on yourselves. This is your wickedness, so bitter! It has reached your very heart."

Jer. 4:19 ¶ *My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.*

Jer. 4:20 *Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.*

Jer. 4:21 How long shall I see the standard, *and* hear the sound of the trumpet?

In this section of verses we hear the heart of the prophet; he is distressed over the plight of his people. He knows judgment is at the door and that their destruction is certain. Verse 21 indicates that he is hoping that this judgment is swift; he is distressed with thoughts of an extended action.

Jer. 4:22 For my people *is* foolish, they have not known me; they *are* sottish children, and they have none understanding; they *are* wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

This verse seems to begin God's answer to Jeremiah's question in verse 21. He declares the people of Israel, specifically Judah in context, to be *foolish*—perverse, willfully wicked. "Sottish" children again emphasizes *silly* (lacking in judgment) from a root that means "to be fat." One definition from Webster for *fat* that seems to apply is: "Exhibiting the qualities of a fat animal; coarse; heavy; gross; dull; stupid." These comments flow easily in context with the statement that they have no understanding; I believe spiritual understanding is the implication. This conclusion is clarified by the next statement; they are wise to do evil but seem to have no understanding of how to do good.

When man chose to rebel against God and inherited a sin nature, it became natural for man to choose to do evil. This does not excuse evil actions because scripture is clear from the very beginning that men knew what was acceptable before God and what was not. Evil is identified in contrast to that which is good and acceptable. Though men may argue the fact, it doesn't change the truth that God is the source of truth and goodness.

Deuteronomy 32:3–4 "Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life...."

1 Chronicles 16:34 "O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."

Psalms 34:8 "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

Those who choose to do evil show themselves to be children of the devil.

John 8:44 "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

Acts 13:10 "... thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"

1 John 3:8 "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning."

Jer. 4:23 I beheld the earth, and, lo, *it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.*

Jer. 4:24 I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly.

Jer. 4:25 I beheld, and, lo, *there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.*

Jer. 4:26 I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place *was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger.*

After reading through this section several times, I'm still not quite sure what to make of it. Verse 23 seems to tie directly to the Genesis account of creation.

Genesis 1:1–3 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

It's interesting to note that God is clear in declaring that He did not create the earth in this state. (See journal on Genesis 1.)

Maybe it is a nutshell version of Israel's history. Verse 24 could be a reference to the people conquering the land and taking possession of it. Verses 25-26 could be referencing the judgment to come (which from God's point of view is a done deal) and even looking on into the future just preceding the return of Jesus to assume the throne of David. As always, I'm open to input.

Jer. 4:27 For thus hath the LORD said, **The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.**

Jer. 4:28 For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken *it*, I have purposed *it*, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

These verses are obviously referencing the situation confronting Judah at the time of Jeremiah's prophecy. There is a ray of hope in light of the coming judgment; God promises not to completely destroy the nation.

God also declared the preservation of a remnant in accordance with His covenant with Abraham and as declared by other prophets.

Isaiah 10:20–21 "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God."

Isaiah 11:10–12 "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an

ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

Ezekiel 14:21–23 "For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast? Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it. And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD."

Micah 2:12 "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men."

Zephaniah 3:16–20 "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD."

Zechariah 8:12–13 "For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong."

Still, judgment is certain—"I have purposed it, and will not repent." It will be a time of such mourning that it will seem that the sun has quit shining on the land. As sure as the coming judgment is their future restoration to full fellowship with the LORD. God is not finished with Israel. God has not replaced Israel with the church. The church has been blessed to be grafted into the vine of God's chosen people and participate in God's plan to bring salvation to the nations and share in many of her blessings, but we have not replaced her.

Romans 11:1 "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid."

Romans 11:5 “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”

Romans 11:11 “I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.”

Romans 11:17–18 “And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.”

Romans 11:25–27 “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”

Jer. 4:29 The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.

Jer. 4:30 And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life.

Jer. 4:31 For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers.

This section of verses begins with a description of the response of the people as they see the enemy advancing. Evidently, the people thought they could stave off the advance of the enemy by buying them off and/or declaring their position as allies; but point is made that their attempts will be rejected. The whole process is likened to a woman scorned. Judah’s actions in seeking to win the favor of the Babylonians are affirmed and vividly described by the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 23:4 “...Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah.”

Ezekiel 23:11–17 “And when her sister Aholibah saw this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in her whoredoms. She doted upon the Assyrians her neighbours, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men. Then I saw that she was defiled, that they took both one way, And that she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion, Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity: And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them,

and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea. And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them."

The chapter closes with a picture of Israel as a very frightened woman who seems to be drawing her dying breath after delivering her first child.