**August 9th - Jeremiah 9-12**

**9 1**Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people. **2**Oh, that I had in the desert a lodging place for travelers, so that I might leave my people and go away from them; for they are all adulterers, a crowd of unfaithful people.

**3**“They make ready their tongue like a bow, to shoot lies; it is not by truth that they triumph in the land. They go from one sin to another; they do not acknowledge me,”
declares the Lord. **4**“Beware of your friends; do not trust anyone in your clan. For every one of them is a deceiver, and every friend a slanderer. **5**Friend deceives friend, and no one speaks the truth. They have taught their tongues to lie; they weary themselves with sinning. **6**You live in the midst of deception; in their deceit they refuse to acknowledge me,” declares the Lord.

**7**Therefore this is what the Lord Almighty says:

“See, I will refine and test them, for what else can I do because of the sin of my people?
**8**Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully. With their mouths they all speak cordially to their neighbors, but in their hearts they set traps for them. **9**Should I not punish them for this?” declares the Lord. “Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?”

**10**I will weep and wail for the mountains and take up a lament concerning the wilderness grasslands. They are desolate and untraveled, and the lowing of cattle is not heard.
The birds have all fled and the animals are gone. **11**“I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals; and I will lay waste the towns of Judah so no one can live there.” **12**Who is wise enough to understand this? Who has been instructed by the Lord and can explain it? Why has the land been ruined and laid waste like a desert that no one can cross?

**13**The Lord said, “It is because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them; they have not obeyed me or followed my law. **14**Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts; they have followed the Baals, as their ancestors taught them.” **15**Therefore this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “See, I will make this people eat bitter food and drink poisoned water. **16**I will scatter them among nations that neither they nor their ancestors have known, and I will pursue them with the sword until I have made an end of them.”

**17**This is what the Lord Almighty says:

“Consider now! Call for the wailing women to come; send for the most skillful of them.
**18**Let them come quickly and wail over us till our eyes overflow with tears and water streams from our eyelids. **19**The sound of wailing is heard from Zion: ‘How ruined we are! How great is our shame! We must leave our land because our houses are in ruins.’”

**20**Now, you women, hear the word of the Lord; open your ears to the words of his mouth. Teach your daughters how to wail; teach one another a lament. **21**Death has climbed in through our windows and has entered our fortresses; it has removed the children from the streets and the young men from the public squares.

**22**Say, “This is what the Lord declares: “‘Dead bodies will lie like dung on the open field, like cut grain behind the reaper, with no one to gather them.’”

**23**This is what the Lord says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, **24**but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.

**25**“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh - **26**Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab and all who live in the wilderness in distant places. For all these nations are really uncircumcised, and even the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart.”

God and Idols

**10**Hear what the Lord says to you, people of Israel. **2**This is what the Lord says:

“Do not learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by signs in the heavens, though the nations are terrified by them. **3**For the practices of the peoples are worthless; they cut a tree out of the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel. **4**They adorn it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so it will not totter. **5**Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm  nor can they do any good.”

**6**No one is like you, Lord; you are great, and your name is mighty in power. **7**Who should not fear you, King of the nations? This is your due. Among all the wise leaders of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is no one like you.

**8**They are all senseless and foolish; they are taught by worthless wooden idols.
**9**Hammered silver is brought from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz. What the craftsman and goldsmith have made is then dressed in blue and purple - all made by skilled workers. **10**But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.

**11**“Tell them this: ‘These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.’”

**12**But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding. **13**When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

**14**Everyone is senseless and without knowledge; every goldsmith is shamed by his idols.
The images he makes are a fraud; they have no breath in them. **15**They are worthless, the objects of mockery; when their judgment comes, they will perish.
**16**He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these, for he is the Maker of all things,
including Israel, the people of his inheritance -  the Lord Almighty is his name.

Coming Destruction

**17**Gather up your belongings to leave the land, you who live under siege. **18**For this is what the Lord says: “At this time I will hurl out  those who live in this land; I will bring distress on them so that they may be captured.” **19**Woe to me because of my injury! My wound is incurable! Yet I said to myself, “This is my sickness, and I must endure it.”
**20**My tent is destroyed; all its ropes are snapped. My children are gone from me and are no more; no one is left now to pitch my tent or to set up my shelter. **21**The shepherds are senseless and do not inquire of the Lord; so they do not prosper and all their flock is scattered. **22**Listen! The report is coming - a great commotion from the land of the north! It will make the towns of Judah desolate, a haunt of jackals.

Jeremiah’s Prayer

**23**Lord, I know that people’s lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps. **24**Discipline me, Lord, but only in due measure - not in your anger, or you will reduce me to nothing. **25**Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge you, on the peoples who do not call on your name. For they have devoured Jacob;  they have devoured him completely and destroyed his homeland.

The Covenant Is Broken

**11**This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: **2**“Listen to the terms of this covenant and tell them to the people of Judah and to those who live in Jerusalem. **3**Tell them that this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Cursed is the one who does not obey the terms of this covenant - **4**the terms I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, out of the iron-smelting furnace.’ I said, ‘Obey me and do everything I command you, and you will be my people, and I will be your God. **5**Then I will fulfill the oath I swore to your ancestors, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey’ - the land you possess today.” I answered, “Amen, Lord.”

**6**The Lord said to me, “Proclaim all these words in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: ‘Listen to the terms of this covenant and follow them. **7**From the time I brought your ancestors up from Egypt until today, I warned them again and again, saying, “Obey me.” **8**But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubbornness of their evil hearts. So I brought on them all the curses of the covenant I had commanded them to follow but that they did not keep.’”

**9**Then the Lord said to me, “There is a conspiracy among the people of Judah and those who live in Jerusalem. **10**They have returned to the sins of their ancestors, who refused to listen to my words. They have followed other gods to serve them. Both Israel and Judah have broken the covenant I made with their ancestors. **11**Therefore this is what the Lord says: ‘I will bring on them a disaster they cannot escape. Although they cry out to me, I will not listen to them. **12**The towns of Judah and the people of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they will not help them at all when disaster strikes.**13**You, Judah, have as many gods as you have towns; and the altars you have set up to burn incense to that shameful god Baal are as many as the streets of Jerusalem.’

**14**“Do not pray for this people or offer any plea or petition for them, because I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their distress. **15**“What is my beloved doing in my temple as she, with many others, works out her evil schemes?  Can consecrated meat avert your punishment? When you engage in your wickedness, then you rejoice.”

**16**The Lord called you a thriving olive tree with fruit beautiful in form. But with the roar of a mighty storm he will set it on fire, and its branches will be broken. **7**The Lord Almighty, who planted you, has decreed disaster for you, because the people of both Israel and Judah have done evil and aroused my anger by burning incense to Baal.

Plot Against Jeremiah

**18**Because the Lord revealed their plot to me, I knew it, for at that time he showed me what they were doing. **19**I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying, “Let us destroy the tree and its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more.”
**20**But you, Lord Almighty, who judge righteously and test the heart and mind,
let me see your vengeance on them, for to you I have committed my cause.

**21**Therefore this is what the Lord says about the people of Anathoth who are threatening to kill you, saying, “Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord or you will die by our hands”— **22**therefore this is what the Lord Almighty says: “I will punish them. Their young men will die by the sword, their sons and daughters by famine. **23**Not even a remnant will be left to them, because I will bring disaster on the people of Anathoth in the year of their punishment.”

Jeremiah’s Complaint

**12**You are always righteous, Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease? **2**You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit. You are always on their lips but far from their hearts. **3**Yet you know me, Lord; you see me and test my thoughts about you. Drag them off like sheep to be butchered! Set them apart for the day of slaughter! **4**How long will the land lie parched
and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked,
the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, “He will not see what happens to us.”

God’s Answer

**5**“If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan? **6**Your relatives, members of your own family - even they have betrayed you; they have raised a loud cry against you. Do not trust them, though they speak well of you. **7**“I will forsake my house, abandon my inheritance; I will give the one I love into the hands of her enemies. **8**My inheritance has become to me like a lion in the forest.
She roars at me; therefore I hate her. **9**Has not my inheritance become to me like a speckled bird of prey that other birds of prey surround and attack? Go and gather all the wild beasts; bring them to devour. **10**Many shepherds will ruin my vineyard and trample down my field; they will turn my pleasant field into a desolate wasteland.
**11**It will be made a wasteland, parched and desolate before me; the whole land will be laid waste because there is no one who cares. **12**Over all the barren heights in the desert destroyers will swarm, for the sword of the Lord will devour from one end of the land to the other; no one will be safe. **13**They will sow wheat but reap thorns; they will wear themselves out but gain nothing. They will bear the shame of their harvest because of the Lord’s fierce anger.”

**14**This is what the Lord says: “As for all my wicked neighbors who seize the inheritance I gave my people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands and I will uproot the people of Judah from among them. **15**But after I uproot them, I will again have compassion and will bring each of them back to their own inheritance and their own country. **16**And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, saying, ‘As surely as the Lord lives’ - even as they once taught my people to swear by Baal - then they will be established among my people. **17**But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it,” declares the Lord.