***Jeremiah 7:17-34 Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. 19Do they provoke Me to anger?” says the Lord. “Do they not provoke themselves, to the shame of their own faces?” 20Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Behold, My anger and My fury will be poured out on this place—on man and on beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground. And it will burn and not be quenched.” 21Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat meat. 22For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. 23But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.’ 24Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. 25Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. 26Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. 27“Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you. 28“So you shall say to them, ‘ This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the Lord their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth. 29Cut off your hair and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on the desolate heights; for the Lord has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath.’ 30For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight,” says the Lord. “They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it. 31And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart. 32“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room. 33The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away. 34Then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. For the land shall be desolate.***

Last week, we closed with God telling Jeremiah to pray no more for the people. He would no longer hear the intercession. We learned that amending their doings and their ways, in others words complete reformation and repentance, is the only way that God will turn from His anger. Tonight, we’ll learn more of the brazen activities and the haughty spirit the people are displaying toward God and His servants. They are wicked, evil, and sinning… and proud of it.

Verse 17 *Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?* No one can pass through the cities of Judah or the streets of Jerusalem without seeing the blatant abominations being committed openly and in public, without shame and no fear of God. The cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem gives the idea that it’s happening in both the wider countryside and the city of Jerusalem. Anyone passing through the streets can see the sins proving that the people are very aware of the abominations happening. They cannot deny and have no intention of changing their ways or their doings. This is the defiance that God sees day after day.

Verse 18 *The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger.* We see here that in is a family affair in ancient Judah. God demonstrates how the whole family is involved in idolatry. The queen of heaven is the moon, probably worshipped as a god named Ashtaroth. In addition to the moon, they worshipped other false gods, perhaps the sun or the stars, burning sacrifices and pouring out drink offerings. They know that this will provoke God. They were warned from the time of Moses, but they ignore.

Verse 19 *Do they provoke Me to anger?” says the Lord. “Do they not provoke themselves, to the shame of their own faces?* God will not be provoked. He is infinite and eternal. They are deceived. They will not anger God or derail His plan. All they are succeeding in doing is hurting themselves and breaking fellowship with God. They bring guilt upon themselves instead. Just as it is today when we sin against God. His Spirit is grieved, but It is grieved for the damage we have done to ourselves and separation we have caused from our Father.

Verse 20 *Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Behold, My anger and My fury will be poured out on this place—on man and on beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground. And it will burn and not be quenched.”* God will pour out His anger and fury like He brought the waters in the time of Noah, or brimstone in the time of Sodom. The people of Judah will feel the force of what they have earned. There will be no escape. Man nor beast will escape. Trees and fields will be destroyed. The fire of His wrath will burn unquenchable.

Verse 21-28 *Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat meat. 22For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. 23But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.’ 24Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and wentbackward and not forward. 25Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. 26Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. 27“Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you. 28“So you shall say to them, ‘ This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the Lord their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.* God lists here the people’s disobedience. God desires Obedience over sacrifice. Sacrifices and burnt offerings are to be offered from a place of a humble and obedient spirit. Obedience and humility are the furthest thing from the people. From the beginning, God said – ***Obey My voice***. But the people did not obey, did not incline their ear, but followed their own evil counsel and desire. God sent servant after servant in the form of prophets, priests, and kings. The people refused to listen to them, but became more obstinate about their sin. Now God tells Jeremiah – you shall speak and they will not obey. You will call and they will not answer. They do not obey and will not receive correction. Truth has perished in the nation of Judah. It is too late. The people have abandoned God, while God loves His people that disdain Him.

Verse 29 *Cut off your hair and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on the desolate heights; for the Lord has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath.’* In this time, cutting off hair and casting it away was a demonstration of deep sorrow and mourning. Like a woman in extreme misery, Jerusalem is exhorted to exhibit sorrow and mourning for the ***calamities*** which are beginning to befall Judah. They are to lament from the desolate heights or the high places of Judah. Before, these were the same places that the people used to worship false gods and idols. Now, they are to lament from these same places. God has rejected this sinful generation into the hands of the Babylonians.

Verse 30-31 *For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight,” says the Lord. “They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it. 31And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart.* The children of Judah have set up idols and other abominations in the Temple of God. They sacrificed their own sons and daughters to a false god called Moloch, which was a false god of the Canaanites. God never commanded child sacrifice! In Leviticus 20, God specifically forbids this. Any man that does this is to be put to death. Not only did He forbid it, but it never came to His heart. He does not delight in such cruelty. Romans 1:28-32 offers us a description of these kinds of people - *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*People are people. Rebellion does not change.

Verses 32-34 *“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room. 33The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away. 34Then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. For the land shall be desolate.* Now, we read of the destruction to come. Tophet will have bodies buried there until there is no more room. Tophet is a valley located very near Jerusalem, to its south, between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. This whole valley will be polluted and does become a common burial site when the siege and famine began. In the war with Nebuchadnezzar, many bodies were buried there and later with the Romans. Josephus writes that an “*infinite number of bodies were thrown over the walls, and left in the valleys round the city; insomuch, that Titus himself, beholding this spectacle, could not help lifting up his hands to heaven, and calling God to witness that he had no part in these inhuman practices.*” Later in Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah calls it the valley of dead bodies. God will cause to cease from the cities of Judah the voices of mirth, all happiness and joy, both in the country and the city. Lamentation will be everywhere. Singing will be replaced with sighing. There will be no bride or bridegroom, no one will marry, the ruin will be too great.

And so we leave Jeremiah tonight. The complete ruin is on its way. God’s wrath and fury is coming. The people defiantly refuse to turn. The valleys and the high places will become burial grounds and places of continual mourning. Judgement will fall. Much as today. God will only be long suffering so long, then His wrath will come. May we be attentive to God’s warnings, hear His servants, and turn from our sin, before it is everlasting too late.