***Jer 4:19-31 O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, Because you have heard, O my soul, The sound of the trumpet, The alarm of war. 20Destruction upon destruction is cried, For the whole land is plundered.  
Suddenly my tents are plundered, And my curtains in a moment. 21How long will I see the standard, And hear the sound of the trumpet? 22“For My people are foolish, They have not known Me. They are silly children, And they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil,  
But to do good they have no knowledge.” 23I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; And the heavens, they had no light. 24I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, And all the hills moved back and forth. 25I beheld, and indeed there was no man,  
And all the birds of the heavens had fled. 26I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were broken down At the presence of the Lord, By His fierce anger. 27For thus says the Lord: “The whole land shall be desolate; Yet I will not make a full end. 28For this shall the earth mourn, And the heavens above be black, Because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, Nor will I turn back from it. 29The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen. They shall go into thickets and climb up on the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, And not a man shall dwell in it. 30 “And when you are plundered What will you do? Though you clothe yourself with crimson, Though you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold, Though you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you will make yourself fair; Your lovers will despise you; They will seek your life. 31“For I have heard a voice as of a woman in labor, The anguish as of her who brings forth her first child,  
The voice of the daughter of Zion bewailing herself; She spreads her hands, saying, : Woe is me now, for my soul is weary Because of murderers!’***

We are back with Jeremiah, as he continues to speak of the sorrow the nation will come under as the invasion and dispersion of Judah happens. Captivity is still about 45 years away, but God has determined that it will happen. As we studied last week, Jeremiah speaks of the invaders coming through Dan, which is how Babylon came. He spoke of the invaders coming past Mt Ephraim, which history confirms that this was the route taken, because the desert lay between Babylon and Judah.

Verse 19 *O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, Because you have heard, O my soul, The sound of the trumpet, The alarm of war.* My soul, my soul. The King James Version says my bowels. This represents the center of emotions. Emotionally, Jeremiah is overcome at the calamity prophesied. To know that war was imminent, that ruin was impending, while the people refused to repent caused great suffering for Jeremiah. The verses have the idea that Jeremiah can almost see the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. His prophecy is like hearing the trumpets and the sounds of way, the shouts of the soldiers and the cries of the people. Feeling such pain and discomfort, he finds it impossible to hold his peace.

Verse 20 *Destruction upon destruction is cried, For the whole land is plundered. Suddenly my tents are plundered, And my curtains in a moment.* Destruction upon destruction simply means that calamity upon calamity befalls the nation. Recall, how Job received more bad news nearly before the previous stopped speaking. Josiah the king is killed in battle, Jehoahaz, Josiah’s son is deposed as king, Nebuchadnezzar attacks and takes Jerusalem, then, a few years later, Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem. He spoils the whole land, taking the best and the brightest people to Babylon. The once royal city is spoiled as though throwing a tent on the ground, sweeping aside a curtain.

Verse 21 *How long will I see the standard, And hear the sound of the trumpet?* The war to come will last more than 19 years, not somewhere far away, but in the very heart of the country, most often around Jerusalem. The people refused to surrender. They proved rebellious against Nebuchadnezzar, just as they are rebellious against God. This only aggravated the situation and enraged the king. But, God, through Jeremiah warned them of the inescapable punishment to come. God’s plans will be accomplished.

Verse 22 *For My people are foolish, They have not known Me. They are silly children, And they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, But to do good they have no knowledge.* Some theologians believe these words spoken by God to Jeremiah to answer the sadness brought by the vision, the suffering in his bowels or soul, as above. My people have behaved foolishly, they have not known the God who delivered them from Egypt, protected them through all these years. They call themselves God’s people, but behave as though they don’t know God. They are silly and stupid children, lacking wisdom and understanding. They rejected truth and accepted falsehood. They call good evil and evil good. They have failed to discern God’s love for them and, as a result failed to value the providence and protection He offers. They are wise to evil, meaning that they have a mind for evil and achieving evil things. They work to hide the evil they are doing and make people believe it is good. They feed their insatiable lusts and greed. But, when it comes to doing good, they have no knowledge. They are strangers to virtue and honesty, they are aliens to integrity and generosity.

Verses 23-26 *I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; And the heavens, they had no light. 24I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, And all the hills moved back and forth. 25I beheld, and indeed there was no man, And all the birds of the heavens had fled. 26I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were broken down At the presence of the Lord, By His fierce anger.* These verses go from making His creation perfect to describing the coming complete destruction of Judah in this war. As the land heals from the war, green and freshness reappear, almost to the point f being back to the created version of the land, flowing with milk and honey. The mountains will tremble at the presence of Almighty God. In God’s displeasure, the birds will abandon the fields. Once fertile fields will be overgrown and reclaimed by briars and trees. Wilderness will return and it will be beautiful, sad, and scary all at the same time.

Verse 27 *For thus says the Lord: “The whole land shall be desolate; Yet I will not make a full end.*  The whole land will be desolate, but God will not make a full end of the people. He will return a remnant. The words here have a tone in the ancient Hebrew of comfort and hope. Of course, we know that 70 years later, between 536 and 539 BC, God does return a remnant of the people from captivity, when King Cyrus allows some of the Jewish people to return, paying to rebuild the walls and providing money for the temple. God will not forget His people and His promises… then or now.

Verse 28 *For this shall the earth mourn, And the heavens above be black, Because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, Nor will I turn back from it.* Having given a glimmer of hope for a remnant to return, God now returns to the terrible nature of His judgement. The earth will mourn. The calamities and the misery will cause everything to look dismal and dark. God has purposed it and spoken it into existence. Hos word never returns void. If the people had repented and turned, the judgement could have been averted, but the God of perfect knowledge knew that the people would continue unrepentant and prideful. God looks upon the hearts and knows the past, present, and future. We can’t pretend and fool God.

Verse 29 *The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen. They shall go into thickets and climb up on the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, And not a man shall dwell in it.*  No matter the social standing or status of the people, all will flee. Even the King and his mighty men and princes tried to flee the Chaldean army in Jeremiah 39:4. 2 Kings 25:4 tells us that the king and the mighty men tried to flee by night. Soldiers would hide in the thickets. Anything to avoid the coming army. They’ll hide in holes and crevices. When the king of Assyria took Israel, king Manasseh was found hiding among the thorns. They’ll climb the tallest hills and hide among the rocks, clouds overshadowing them. All the cities will be forsaken, deserted, and few will be left to inhabit the area.

Verse 30 *And when you are plundered What will you do? Though you clothe yourself with crimson, Though you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold, Though you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you will make yourself fair; Your lovers will despise you; They will seek your life.* When the destruction, the spoiling, comes upon them, what will they do. The situation will be desperate. Jeremiah now makes fun of them. He says – they will turn to their pride and false hopes, using ornaments and red clothing, they’ll try to impress with the riches and status. They’ll paint their face and paint around their eyes with stibium, a black paint that the people of that time used to make their eyes look larger and rounder. This causes the eyes to stand out more boldly and appear larger. The Egyptians were well known for this. It will all prove in vain. The Egyptians and the Syrians will despise Judah and will abandon, for fear of the Chaldeans.

Verse 31 *For I have heard a voice as of a woman in labor, The anguish as of her who brings forth her first child, The voice of the daughter of Zion bewailing herself; She spreads her hendsa hands, saying, : Woe is me now, for my soul is weary Because of murderers!’*This has the idea of a woman in labor for the first time. Her pain and her fear come together. She will remember the first usually more than the ones to follow. Such will be the wailing of the mothers as their sons and daughters are killed by the Chaldeans. She’ll spread her hands in helplessness, knowing that there is nothing she can do to save her children.

And so we leave Jeremiah again tonight. His soul is suffering as he sees the destruction and desolation to come. Yet, God does not leave him without hope. A remnant will return. Likewise, God will preserve a remnant of His people. We remain faithful and prayerful that God may yet find us repentant, and His judgement may turn. Regardless, we pray for the salvation of all that will be saved, spreading the Gospel, telling the story of the Truth to all who will hear.