***Jeremiah 34:12-22 Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 13“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, 14“At the end of seven years let every man set free his Hebrew brother, who has been sold to him; and when he has served you six years, you shall let him go free from you.” But your fathers did not obey Me nor incline their ear. 15Then you recently turned and did what was right in My sight - every man proclaiming liberty to his neighbor; and you made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name. 16Then you turned around and profaned My name, and every one of you brought back his male and female slaves, whom you had set at liberty, at their pleasure, and brought them back into subjection, to be your male and female slaves.’ 17“Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and every one to his neighbor. Behold, I proclaim liberty to you,’ says the Lord - ‘to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine! And I will deliver you to trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth. 18And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it - 19the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs,, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf - 20I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth. 21And I will give Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon’s army which has gone back from you. 22Behold, I will command,’ says the Lord, ‘and cause them to return to this city. They will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.’***

Recall with me that, the last time we were with Jeremiah, he was giving a prophecy to King Zedekiah. This prophecy involved Zedekiah being taken to Babylon, where he would not die by the sword, but in peace. He would be mourned and lamented by the people, unlike other kings before him. Remember that Zedekiah did not care for this prophecy and imprisoned Jeremiah. When we left last time, the people had made a covenant with God to release the Hebrew slaves. After the Babylonians left to pursue the Egyptians, the people thought themselves free to place the slaves back on bondage. They’d changed their minds, but not their hearts. They followed God because of requirement and not because of love. So, it is today with many. Now we rejoin Jeremiah, as we learn of the fate that this dishonesty before God brings upon the children of Judah.

Verses 12-14 *Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 13“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, 14“At the end of seven years let every man set free his Hebrew brother, who has been sold to him; and when he has served you six years, you shall let him go free from you.” But your fathers did not obey Me nor incline their ear.* God now calls to mind the covenant made with the forefathers. The Hebrew translates “within the term of seven years” or sometime in the seventh year, the people will be released. This is referred to in several places in Deuteronomy. The idea is that the Hebrew slaves will be in servitude for six full years and released in the course of the seventh year. *But your fathers did not obey -* The slave owners valued profit over obedience. Slaves were enslaved in perpetuity and not just for seven years. This appears to have been an ongoing and long observed violation of God’s Law. God now delivers these slaves from this unjust slavery.

Verses 15-17 *Then you recently turned and did what was right in My sight - every man proclaiming liberty to his neighbor; and you made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name. 16Then you turned around and profaned My name, and every one of you brought back his male and female slaves, whom you had set at liberty, at their pleasure, and brought them back into subjection, to be your male and female slaves.’ 17“Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and every one to his neighbor. Behold, I proclaim liberty to you,’ says the Lord - ‘to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine! And I will deliver you to trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth.* ***Then*** *you recently turned* – The people turned, due to the covenant that Zedekiah pronounced and the people accepted. The people did what is right in God’s eyes. Slaves were proclaimed free and a covenant with God was entered. 2 Kings 23 gives us an example of such a covenant, as the people gather and pledge their obedience before God and man. *Then you turned –* The start was good, but then they turned and profaned their solemn promises made in the name of God by disobeying. When the threat of the Babylonians was thought gone, they dismissed their covenant and returned to evil. *Therefore –* God now declares the sword, famine, and pestilence free and at liberty to do as He has ordained. These calamities come by God’s allowance because of the disobedience of man. God will deliver the people of Judah to trouble, hardships, and miseries. They will come into bondage like the servants that they misused and abused all those years.***.*** Verse 18 *And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it* ***–***The practice in Judah was to kill a calf, cut it into two pieces, place the two halves a distance apart, and pass between the two halves. This ratified the covenant. This signified that the people entering the covenant were saying, “This happen to me if I break my word.” This was a common practice, not peculiar to the Israelites, but to many ancient cultures. Secular writers highlight the Romans, the Greeks, the Trojans, as well as others using this to ratify agreements.

Verses 19-22 *the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs,, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf - 20I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth. 21And I will give Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon’s army which has gone back from you. 22Behold, I will command,’ says the Lord, ‘and cause them to return to this city. They will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.’* ***The princes*** *of Judah****, -*** These are the officers that would be recognized in the royal and priestly courts. The officers and the people, meaning that everyone accepted the covenant by passing between the two halves. They have broken the covenant. Now God says I will give them into the hand of their enemies – Not all Jews are included here, but the Jews that entered into and then broke the solemn covenant. He will give the kings, nobles, and princes, as well as the wealthy slave owners into the hand of the enemy. They sought wealth over obedience. Their bodies will be left unburied, dishonored, and available for the birds and the beasts. *Behold, I will command, and cause them to return to this city* ***–*** God will command Nebuchadnezzar and his armies to return to the city. We know from Jeremiah 39, this is exactly what happened. And the siege will resume, ending in the conquest of Jerusalem. The city will be burned with fire and the land left desolate. God turns kings and princes where He will. He holds all in His divine Providence. He turns rivers and nature as He will, to serve His Will. We do well to serve Him with our whole heart, mind, strength, and soul.

And so we leave Jeremiah again tonight. He has delivered the prophecy, and it will end with him in the court of prison. Zedekiah will impugn the messenger rather than heed the message. Likewise, people reject the truth when it disagrees with their sin. The Bible is quite clear though that, when people refuse to hear the truth, though they have been given a clear opportunity, they will be given over to a reprobate mind and strong delusion. *2 Thessa 2:11-12 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,****12****that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* As Jeremiah has taught us, we may be rejected and hated, but we must give witness. Some will receive the witness and it will change their life. Like the seed that fell on good ground, our sowing will produce. When it falls on a ready heart, it will produce abundantly. But we must sow, we must witness. To do otherwise is a violation of our sacred covenant with God through His Son Jesus. God does not break covenant and neither must we.