

# THE SERMON NOTEBOOK

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Jeremiah's America - # 25

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SUBJECT: A WORD FROM THE LORD

TITLE: A WORD FROM THE LORD

TEXT: JEREMIAH 37:

INTRODUCTION. Before graduating from seminary, I realized that I needed an on-going program for Bible study. I was thinking of the need to do more than reading the Bible on a daily basis. What I had in mind was in-depth Bible study. I needed to make notes so that I would have them for future sermons or Bible studies. When I was Youth Minister at First Baptist Church, Rayville, Louisiana, I had the privilege of working with one of the most remarkable men I have ever known, Dr. H. R. Herrington. I learned more from Dr. Herrington than any one seminary class I had ever had. More to the point, I learned which programs and plans were practical and which ones were not. At one point, I told Dr. Herrington about my future Bible study plans, which involved making notes and filing them according to the Books of the Bible. A few days later, he came into my office and handed me a box of file folders and encouraged me to get started filing my Bible study notes right then. I still have those folders with the books of the Bible typed on the tabs.

A few years later, I began preparing outlined studies of various books of the Bible, usually following the scheduled Southern Baptist January Bible Study, now the Winter Bible Conference. For some 35 years, I have prepared one of more studies each year, often teaching that book from four to six times. Then a friend told me he was giving me his old computer, which I assumed was going to cost me money before we were finished setting everything up for my use. I was pleased when he set up the computer, complete with all the hardware and software I needed, including a basic Bible program.

At that time, I began expanding my outlined Bible studies to verse-by-verse Bible studies, and eventually to commentaries. The first New Testament book I recall was the Book of Philippians, which I later had published under the title, *UNDEFEATED: Finding Peace in a Word Full of Trouble*. The first Old Testament books I prepared studies for were Exodus, Job, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. The first of those studies I expanded into a larger study was the Book of Jeremiah. My sister volunteered to type my handwritten study of Jeremiah for me. When she finished it she sent it to me - on an eight and one-half inch floppy disk. To this day, I have never seen a computer with an eight and one-half floppy drive.

I love the Book of Jeremiah, in part because I love Old Testament history, and in part because I have always loved reading in the King James Version, "Thus saith the word of the Lord..." When I was a teenager and a young adult I often heard R. G. Lee say, "You cannot substitute the thus reasoneth the mind of man for the thus saith the word of God." I pay special attention when I read from the

New American Standard Bible, “The word of the LORD came to me saying...”, or the New King James Version, “The Lord said to me...” The Holman Christian Standard Bible has a special place in my heart. I have numerous translations and versions of the Scripture, including a couple of paraphrases, neither of which holds much of an appeal to me. When I became pastor of the Hillcrest Baptist Church in Nederland, Texas, I began preaching from the King James Version of the Bible and one of my all time favorite deacons, Bob Moore, came by one day and said, “I see I am going to have to go back and dig up my old King James Bible. It was then that I discovered that everyone there used the Living Bible, a paraphrase!

I grew up with the King James Version of the Bible. When I began my first Bible class at Mississippi College, the American Standard Version was required. That is what I used through 33 hours of Bible at Mississippi College and three years at New Orleans Seminary. Later, I discovered the New American Standard Bible and that is what I used for personal study as well as the Doctor of Ministry program with Luther Rice Seminary. When I was invited to apply for the program at Luther Rice Seminary, I was a little hesitant, but then I remembered that Dr. Eddleman, who had been president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student there, told me about the Doctor of Ministry program pioneered by Luther Rice Seminary. Other seminaries were studying the program to come up with a similar program.

I learned about the Holman Christian Bible in a totally different way. When I was elected to serve on the LifeWay Christian Resources board of trustees, I learned that LifeWay was in the process of publishing a new translation of the Bible, which would be called the Holman Christian Standard Bible. I was assigned to the Broadman and Holman Committee and in the first committee meeting I remember, the General Editor, Dr. Ed Bloom met with us to give us an update and to answer questions.

We received hard-copies of various books as they were completed, and later, all trustees were given a complete Bible at a meeting at Ridgecrest. I have been reading and preaching from the HCSB ever since. It is a readable, word-for-word translation, not a version of an earlier translation. I love that. It was like a fresh reminder of the fact that the Bible is the Word of God when I began reading in Jeremiah:

“Then the word of the Lord came to me...”

“The Lord said to me...”

“The word of the Lord came...”

“Then the Lord said to me...”

Jer 1:11-15 (HCSB)

Let me assure you that, whatever your need may be, when you turn to the Bible, there is a word from the Lord there for you. I am aware of some people who announce that they have a word from the

Lord about this issue or that, and while that may have special significance to them, I cannot confirm it, and would be very hesitant to apply their message to my life. That which I trust is the “Thus saith the Word of the Lord.” With that in mind, I would like to invite you to turn with me to the Book of Jeremiah.

## I. GOD HAD A WORD FOR THE PEOPLE OF JEREMIAH’S DAY.

### A. God Often Gave Jeremiah a Word for His Chosen People.

1) The initial message announced the coming judgment upon a rebellious, but religious people. The first message after the Lord called Jeremiah was a warning of impending judgment: “The word of the Lord came to me, asking, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” I replied, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” The Lord said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I watch over My word to accomplish it” (Jer. 1:11-12).

The almond tree was an early sign of spring. Here, it is a warning of judgment that is now at hand. In case you missed it, let me highlight something we must not miss concerning any word from God: “I watch over My word to accomplish it.” Circumstance may prevent my accomplishing what I set out to do. God can, and will, always accomplish what He proposes to do.

2) The second message was even more shocking. “Again the word of the Lord came to me inquiring, “What do you see?” And I replied, “I see a boiling pot, its mouth tilted from the north [to the south].” Then the Lord said to me, “Disaster will be poured out from the north on all who live in the land” (Jer 1:11-15).

There was a boiling pot, tilted from the north (from which the mighty Babylonian army would march) toward the south (toward Jerusalem). We will see that what God proposes, God accomplishes. He says, “for I watch over My word to accomplish it.” This does not say that people will always like what God has to say. Nor, does it say people will believe it. It does say that He will watch over his word to accomplish it. The people to whom Jeremiah delivered the word from the Lord did not want to hear it. They did not like it. Their king did not like it. Leaders of Judah did not like it. The priests and prophets did not like it. They often tried to silence Jeremiah, but they could not prevent the Lord from fulfilling His promise.

3) There was a word from the Lord about their rebellion against Him.

**“Hear the word of the Lord,** house of Jacob and all families of the house of Israel. **Here is what the Lord says:** What fault did your fathers find in Me that they went so far from Me, followed worthless idols, and became worthless themselves” (Jer 2:4-5).

“Has a nation [ever] exchanged its gods? (but they were not gods!). Yet My people

have exchanged their Glory for useless idols. Be horrified at this, heavens; be shocked and utterly appalled. **[This is] the Lord's declaration.** For My people have committed a double evil: They have abandoned Me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jer 2:11-13).

4) The Lord had a word for an apostate nation.

"Why do you bring a case against Me? All of you have rebelled against Me. **[This is] the Lord's declaration.** I have struck down your children in vain; they would not accept discipline. Your own sword has devoured your prophets like a ravaging lion. [Evil] generation, pay attention to the word of the Lord! Have I been a wilderness to Israel or a land of dense darkness? **Why do My people claim: We will go where we want; we will no longer come to You?"** (Jer 2:29-31).

5) The Lord had a word of warning against hiding behind religion.

"**This is what the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel,** says: Correct your ways and your deeds, and I will allow you to live in this place. **Do not trust deceitful words, chanting: This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.** Instead, if you really change your ways and your actions, if you act justly toward one another, if you no longer oppress the alien, the fatherless, and the widow and no longer shed innocent blood in this place or follow other gods, bringing harm on yourselves, I will allow you to live in this place, the land I gave to your ancestors forever and ever. [But] look, you keep trusting in deceitful words that cannot help" (Jer 7:3-8).

B. The Word of the Lord Came Even in the Final Hour Before Judgment, Jer. 37:1-21.

1) Jeremiah gives us the historical setting. "Zedekiah son of Josiah reigned as king in the land of Judah in place of Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made him king. **He and his officers and the people of the land did not obey the words of the Lord that He spoke through Jeremiah the prophet"** (37:1-2).

2) They did not obey the Lord but still wanted Jeremiah to pray for them. "Nevertheless, King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, the priest, to Jeremiah the prophet, requesting, 'Please pray to the Lord our God for us!' I wonder how many people today ask the pastor to pray for them, but have no plans to obey the Lord. They do not know the words of Samuel, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

3). The people look to an ancient enemy for their salvation. "Jeremiah was going about his daily tasks among the people, for they had not [yet] put him into the prison. **Pharaoh's army had left Egypt,** and when **the Chaldeans,** who were besieging Jerusalem, heard the report, they **withdrew from Jerusalem"** (37:4-5). A smaller Babylonian force left Jerusalem ahead of the Egyptian army,

and once again, Judah looked somewhere other than to the Lord for relief. Nations today look to political alliances for their security. France, who was saved from Nazi Germany by the blood of American soldiers, refused to help us in Iraq because they fear the Muslim minority in that country which demonstrated how much trouble it can cause in the 2005 riots. Spain was intimidated when Muslims radicals blew up two trains, killing over 130 people. They pulled out of Iraq. Germany, whom we helped get on its feet after the Second World War, has been paralyzed by a small minority of Muslims in their country. Countries are looking everywhere for allies. We are looking to treaties with nations that have not proved themselves worthy of our trust. When will we learn to look to God?

4) “The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet” once again (vs 6): “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says:

**“This is what you will say to Judah’s king, who is sending you to inquire of Me:** Watch: **Pharaoh’s army**, which has come out to help you, **is going to return** to its own land of Egypt. **The Chaldeans will then return and fight against this city.** They will capture it and burn it down. **This is what the Lord says:** Don’t deceive yourselves by saying: The Chaldeans will leave us for good, for they will not leave. Indeed, if you were to strike down the entire Chaldean army that is fighting with you, and there remained among them only the badly wounded men, each in his tent, they would get up and burn this city down” (37:7-10).

5) They didn’t like the message so they imprisoned the messenger.

“When the Chaldean army withdrew from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh’s army, Jeremiah [started to] leave Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin to claim his portion there among the people. But when he was at the Benjamin Gate, an officer of the guard was there, whose name was Irijah son of Shelemiah, son of Hananiah, and **he apprehended Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “You are deserting to the Chaldeans”** (38:11-14a).

6) Jeremiah was beaten and thrown into a dungeon.

“[That’s] a lie,” **Jeremiah replied. “I am not deserting to the Chaldeans!”** Irijah would not listen to him but apprehended Jeremiah and took him to the officials. The officials were angry at Jeremiah and **beat him** and placed him in jail in the house of Jonathan the scribe, for it had been made into a prison. So Jeremiah went into a cell in the **dungeon and stayed there many days”** (37:14b-16).

7) Next, King Zedekiah asks Jeremiah, “Is there a word from the Lord?” How ironic. They have been trying to shut him up for years, and now the king wants to know, “Is there a word from the Lord?” It is also interesting that Zedekiah does not ask this before the leaders of the nation, but “in his house privately” the king asked him, “Is there a word from the Lord?”

8) There is a word from the Lord! ““There is,” Jeremiah responded, and he continued, “You will be handed over to the king of Babylon” (vs 17). There was very definitely a word from the Lord, but it is a word the king would never have heard if the kings and people had listened to the word of the Lord which Jeremiah had been proclaiming all along.

9) Zedekiah grants Jeremiah’s request for release from the dungeon.

“Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “How have I sinned against you or your servants or these people that you have put me in prison? Where are your prophets who prophesied to you, claiming, ‘The king of Babylon will not come against you and this land’? So now please listen, my lord the king. May my petition come before you. Don’t send me back to the house of Jonathan the scribe, or I will die there.”

“So King Zedekiah gave orders, and Jeremiah was placed in the guard’s courtyard. He was given a loaf of bread each day from the baker’s street until all the bread was gone from the city. So Jeremiah remained in the guard’s courtyard” (37:18-21 (HCSB).

God had sent one of the greatest prophets of all time to Judah with His word. He had told him exactly what to say, but the people preferred to listen to lying prophets and deceiving priests to the word the Lord gave Jeremiah to give them. Lest we feel superior today, I believe America is sinning against a far greater light than those ancient Israelites. No, we do not have Jeremiah to deliver the “Thus saith the word of the Lord.” We don’t need that. We have something far greater. We have the completed Bible. We have the Holy Spirit. God had thousands of preachers who are preaching the Gospel without compromise across this land. Of course, there are those who are still prophesying lies. There are ministers today who are deceiving the people. There are spineless preachers today who seem more interested in the approval of the people than the clear Word of God for this age. They say what people want to hear. They avoid what might offend the people: sin, judgment, repentance, and hell (assuming they even believe in hell). Let me assure you, the Lord knows what is going on in America and He has a word for us today.

Is there a word from the Lord? Yes! Is it a clear word, or has the Lord entrusted it only to a few chosen television preachers who call themselves prophets? Do we have to wait for some televangelist to get “a word of knowledge” from the Lord? Let me assure you, His Word is not obscure, hidden, or clouded.

## II. THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A WORD FROM THE LORD.

### B. There Was Always a Word From God in Bible Times.

1) Adam: Is there a word from God? There is! “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘**You are**

**free to eat from any tree of the garden**, but you must not eat from the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die”(Gen 2:16-17). Adam heard the word from the Lord but did not obey Him, and death has reigned like a tyrant ever since, with the only hope for any person being the One who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

2) Noah: Is there a word from the Lord? There is! Once again, the word from the Lord is earth shaking, and in this case, earth soaking!

“When the Lord saw that man’s wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every scheme his mind thought of was nothing but evil all the time, the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. Then **the Lord said, “I will wipe off the face of the earth: man, whom I created, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them.”** Noah, however, found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:5-8).

The Flood was the first great cataclysm ever to hit the earth, and the greatest. One creation scientist has suggested what may have happened in order for giant mammoths to have been flash frozen to be discovered thousands of years later with green grass in their mouth and stomach. He suggested that volcanic activity probably filled the sky with volcanic ash, cutting out the sunlight. Two hundred mile and hour winds, possibly reaching temperatures of 200 degrees below zero would have been necessary to have flash frozen these giant mammoths to a depth of several inches, and then within a short time they would have been frozen all the way through in great ice banks, where they would be found by modern explorers when portions of the giant ice banks broke away.

Those whom God brought to the ark and sealed inside were safe. All who were not in the ark perished. All those in Jesus Christ will be saved forever, but all who are not in Christ will perish.

3) Abraham: Is there a word from the Lord? There is!

“The Lord said to Abram: Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen 12:1-3).

With these words, the Lord entered a covenant relationship with Abraham fulfillment is found in Jesus Christ. The genealogy of Jesus in the first chapter of Matthew certifies that Jesus is the Seed of Abraham.

4) Moses: Is there a word from the Lord? There is!

“**Then the Lord said,** “I have observed the misery of My people in Egypt, and have

heard them crying out because of their oppressors, and I know about their sufferings. **I have come down to rescue them** from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the territory of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. The Israelites’ cry for help has come to Me, and I have also seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. **Therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt**” (Ex 3:7-10).

By His mighty hand, God fulfilled his promise, leading them out of Egypt, through the parted waters of the Red Sea, on dry ground, to Sinai, through the wilderness, across the Jordan, and into Canaan. What God proposes, God performs. What He promises, He accomplishes.

5) Joshua: Is there a word from the Lord. There is! God gave Moses instructions and then told him to write them in the book. Joshua said, everything Moses wrote in the book, we did.

6) Samuel: Is there a word from the Lord? There is! However, the Word of the Lord was very precious in that day. Very seldom had God spoken audibly to anyone when the young child heard the voice calling to him, “Samuel, Samuel.” Samuel became the pivotal figure of the era, the one God used to bring about the transition from the Period of the Judges to the Period of the Kings.

7) David: Is there a word from the Lord? There is!

“The Lord declares to you: The Lord Himself will make a house for you. When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, **I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.** He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me” (2 Sam 7:11-14).

David could have used one of those bumper stickers that reads: I AM NOT PERFECT, JUST FORGIVEN. David was not perfect, but he was the standard by which all other kings would be judged. That emblem on the Israeli flag today is not called the Star of Saul, or the Star of Solomon. It is the Star of David. David was a man after God’s own heart. He sinned and paid a severe price, but can you imagine what the Bible would look like if we cut out all references to David, and all the great Psalms he wrote?!!

10) Call the roll: Elijah, Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Malachi, Mary and Joseph, Peter, John, Paul. Is there a word from the Lord? Yes, there is! There has always been a word from the Lord. There has been a word for all occasions.

B. There Is a Word from the Lord for Us Today.

1) There is a word from Genesis for us today. God s the uncaused Cause of all that exists - not the first Cause, but the uncaused Cause. He is the source of your existence and you are accountable to



Him.

2) There is a word from the Lord in Exodus. When Nehemiah confessed the sins of his people, he prayed, "I confess the sins we have committed against You. **Both I and my father's house have sinned.** We have **acted corruptly toward You** and **have not kept the commands, statutes, and ordinances You gave Your servant Moses**" (Neh 1:6-7). If God expected Nehemiah and his generation to keep the "commands, statutes, and ordinances" He gave Moses, what do you think He expects us to do with them? We must go to the Sermon on the Mount to see how Jesus would have us to apply those commands, statutes, and ordinances.

3) There is a negative word from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount just for you and me.

**"You have heard** that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. **But I tell you,** everyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Fool!' will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, 'You moron!' will be subject to hellfire" (Matt 5:21-22).

The first step toward murder is a wrong attitude toward another person. In the words of that great theologian of the last half of the twentieth century, Barney Fife, we must "Nip it in the bud!"

Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt 5:27-28). If we are going to nip this sin in the bud, we are going to have to stay away from a lot of movies, turn off a lot of Television programs, avoid a lot of modern magazines, books, and music. I am not just talking about magazines we know to be pornographic, either. I had subscribed to Sports Illustrated for a number of year, but when they began publishing the Swimsuit issue I discontinued my subscription. Christians must avoid anything that may lead them into temptation - and they must avoid that which will lead others into temptation.

We can apply the principles Jesus sets forth in the Sermon on the Mount to any issue with which we must deal. The Holy Spirit, the divine Author, indwells believers and illuminates their hearts so that they can understand the Word of God and apply it in their everyday life.

4) There is a positive word from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount just for you and me.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who mourn, because they will be comforted.

Blessed are the gentle, because they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, because they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs” (Matt. 5:3-11).

CONCLUSION. Is there a word from the Lord for us today? There is! Let me give you a brief summary of His word for us. After that we are going to have to continually go to the Word of God, obey every impression of the Holy Spirit, and make an application of the Word of God in everything we do. His purpose is not to force you into a legalistic lifestyle. Far from it. Let Him tell you what He would expects of you: “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13). Salt preserves, seasons, and provides healing.

Jesus adds, “You are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14). Jesus is the Light of the world in that He generates light. His followers are called the light of the world in that we reflect the heavenly Son-light so that others might see it and follow Him.

King Zedekiah asked Jeremiah, “Is there a word from the Lord?” Jeremiah said, “There is.” There may well be some reason right now that you are asking, “Is there a word from the Lord?” I can assure you there is. You will find God’s word for you as you read the Word of God, and the more you read the Word of God the better you will know the God of the Word. If you need help with some issue, let me go with you to the Lord and find His word for you right now.

If you have never received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, I trust that you are asking right now, “Is there a word from the Lord?” There is! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31).