



## Jeremiah 16-17

## **JEREMIAH Chapter 16**

Jeremiah declares:

*The woes of the LORD came also unto me, saying, Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place. For thus saith the LORD concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, even lovingkindness and mercies.*

Now, again we have that phrase, “The word of the LORD came also unto me saying,” And all the way through the book of Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came unto me saying. We are going to read over and over again. It brings up again the issue of how did God speak to Jeremiah. Now, I would imagine that it had to be pretty clear for him to remain unmarried. You have to pretty well know that this is God speaking to me when he says don’t take a wife and don’t have children in this place. Did God speak audibly to Jeremiah? How did God speak to him? It is an interesting, thought provoking idea and something to consider. And we are to get to that as we get down the road in Jeremiah. We are going to discover a little bit of how the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah.

But here the word of the LORD came saying, you are not to take a wife. This was to be a sign to the people. It was generally accepted that when a boy became 16, 17, or 18 he got married. That was just a part of their culture. They started having children. So the LORD said to Jeremiah, “You are not to take a wife and have sons and daughters in this place.” Because those children that are here, the daughters and the sons that are born, their mothers and their fathers are all of them to be destroyed. They are going to die grievous deaths and they will not be lamented neither shall they be buried.

The reason being; there will be no one left to lament them, and no one left to bury them. There is going to be wholesale slaughter by the Babylonians. And those that are not slaughtered will be taken away as captives and the carcasses of the people will just be left to rot there in the ruins of Jerusalem. You are not to take a wife or have children to subject them to the terror that is going to befall the city of Jerusalem.

Their carcasses will be for the meat for the fowls of heaven. The vultures will feed upon them and the beasts of the earth.

*For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, even lovingkindness and mercies.*

Don’t weep for them and don’t mourn for them. They have turned their backs on God. They are abduant in their rebellion against God. This is coming as a judgment from God. When Aaron’s sons offered the strange fire to God at the dedication of the Tabernacle, when they had prepared the whole Tabernacle they came to the dedication, and they set the alter out and fire from Heaven came and actually ignited the coals that were upon the alter. The people were excited, this supernatural phenomena. And Aaron’s two sons grabbed their censers and went in to offer incense and the fire from the LORD came and destroyed them, killed them. And the LORD commanded Aaron not to mourn publicly because this was a

judgment of God. And to mourn publicly for them would be actually to vote against what God did in a sense. Because this is God's judgment and it is a righteous judgment upon them, you are not to mourn for them.

So the same thing is here. These people have turned their backs on God. They are deserving the judgment that is coming upon them and for Jeremiah to go into the house of mourning to mourn for them would actually be mourning against the work of God. And it would be an open affront against what God has done. And so God said, "I have taken my peace from these people and My peace from these people and My lovingkindness."

You have to go awfully far in your rebellion against God. He is so patient and so longsuffering. And with these people it had been centuries that God had been patient and longsuffering. But ultimately there comes that time when you cross the line and there is no more mercy, there is no more lovingkindness, there only remains that certain fearful looking forward to the fiery indignation of His wrath by which He devours His enemies.

*Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them:*

It was the custom of the pagan when someone died to mar your body, to cut your body as a sign of mourning and grief. Also they would shave their heads again as a sign of mourning and grief. But these were pagan customs. In Leviticus God commands them not to make any cuttings or to shave their heads or to make any baldness for the dead. It is also repeated in Deuteronomy 14:1, the commandment of the LORD not to do these things for the dead because they were pagan practices. And the LORD had said not to learn the ways of the heathen, the pagan.

The children of Israel, in spite of the fact that God said not to learn the ways of the heathen, they did. They had begun these heathen practices of mutilating their bodies or shaving their heads for the dead, when a person died. So the LORD is declaring when there is this great slaughter in the land, the people will not be buried, there will be no lamenting for them and there will be no one who will be showing these signs of grief and cutting themselves and shaving their heads because of them.

*Neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning*

It is interesting that in different cultures they have different practices. You think of India when the husband dies they have the fires and they throw the body on to cremate it, then if she is a good faithful wife she jumps into the bonfire herself. It is just part of their customs. And so people that do these strange things in their mourning or in their showing of grief, the various cultural things where by people show their grief. Here he is referring to other actions of people tearing themselves in mourning to comfort them for the dead.

*neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink*

Doctors today often give person sedation when a love one has died to calm them down and they will sedate them. There is of course is the old custom of giving them a shot of whisky or something so that they are not grieving so heavily for the dead. You sort of bomb out a bit and you don't think about it. So they are not to give them this cup of consolation to drink for their fathers or for their mothers. Even to the present day quit often after the funeral they have a feast. The friends bring in the food and you go in and have a time of fellowship and feasting.

*Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink. For thus saith*

*the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.*

Jeremiah, in your days these things are going to cease in the land. There will be no more parties. There will be no more voices of gladness or of the bridegroom or the bride in the marriage celebrations.

*And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?*

And so Jeremiah is to lay this heavy trip on them of the slaughter and their carcasses lying there being devoured by the birds and the animals with no mourning and no lamenting. So the people will say, "What have we done, what is our sin, what is our iniquity that God would do these kind of things to us?"

*Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law;*

So the answer to the question, why has God allowed this: is because they have turned their backs on God. God watches over His children. God cares for His children. But you can take yourself out of the place of God's protection and you can, in that place, become a prey to the enemy. So they had removed themselves from God's place of protection. They had forsaken the Law of God and they had forsaken God. And the prophet said,

*And ye have done worse than your fathers;*

Your fathers actually served other gods but you have done worse than your fathers because,  
*for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me:*

Again we have this idea of people following their wicked fantasies. Seeking to actualize the wicked fantasies of their hearts and forsaking the LORD, not listening to God.

*Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither you nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour.*

They have turned their backs on God, and God is going to turn their back on them. They have forsaken God, God is going to forsake them.

*Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.*

God always holds out hope for the future. The one key aspect to the Christian faith is the hope that God gives. He has just spoken of the tremendous darkness that they are facing. The future is totally bleak. It is just as dark as you can possibly imagine. The enemy is going to come. They are going to be slain, their bodies lie there in the streets, no one to bury them, their carcasses devoured by the animals, the residue of the people that are not slain will be taken away to Babylon. And there they are going to serve the gods of the

Babylonians day and night. This dark, dark picture of the future but then He goes out beyond that. God is still going to extend His grace and His mercy unto their children or children's children and they will come back from this captivity. They will be restored by God into the land.

This is a necessity because the Messiah is not yet come. And the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem and there is so many prophecies in regards to the Messiah. So God has to bring them back. God promises them that they will come back. They always spoke about the LORD that brought us out of Egypt. That was always the identifying thing for the LORD. The LORD that brought us out of Egypt. He created the nation by bringing us out of Egypt.

But, they will not be saying that in the future. They will be saying, "It is the LORD who brought us out of the land of the north, or brought us back from Babylon. And the LORD who brought us back from all of the places where we were scattered." And the reestablishing of the nation is again promised by God, though there is to be this desolation, dark as can be, yet God shows the light at the end of the tunnel and there will be when God is going to bring them back and plant them again in the land.

*and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.*

So the LORD is always holding out that hope for the future. Again, the earth, the world, is facing a very bleak future. There is going to be a time of great tribulation come upon this earth such as the earth has ever seen before or will ever see again. In all of history there has never been a time of such desolation and devastation, death and destruction as is to come upon the earth in the future. The Bible speaks a lot of these days of God's cataclysmic judgment that are coming. But the LORD does not end the story there. This will be followed by the glorious return of Jesus Christ and the establishing of the kingdom of God and righteous shall cover the earth as waters do cover the sea and there will be no more death, there will be no more sorrow, there will be no more pain, no more suffering, the former things will pass away, everything becomes new. The blind will see the glory of the LORD, the mute will sing His praises, the deaf shall hear and the lame shall leap for joy. The glorious day of the LORD that is going to come. But before it comes there is going to be darkness and desolation.

And so with the nation of Israel there is coming the darkness and the desolation but yet God is going to bring them back into the land and the day of glory and blessing awaits these people.

*behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them;*

The idea is sort of like a dragnet. When the Babylonians come they will try to hide from them. They will hide in the caves and they will flee but the Babylonians will search out for them.

*and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.*

They are going to find them and destroy them.

*For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.*

God has seen, you cannot hide from God.

*And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things.*

Forsaking the Law of God, forsaking God. They were offering sacrifices unto these pagan idols. They had built alters to these gods on the tops of the hills. And here are the mountains of the LORD and they are covered with these pagan idols and these worship centers and the people offering their sacrifices and God said, "Because of that I am going to punish them double, recompense them for their iniquity and their sin double because of the defiling of the land."

Jeremiah responds to this and says,

*O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods? Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The LORD.*

Now, here is an interesting prophecy of the Gentiles coming from the ends of the earth and recognizing that the gods that they are worshipping are false and empty. Whereas the Jewish people have turned from the true and the living God, the Gentiles will come from the ends of the earth and recognize that He is truly Jehovah. So we find today, we have come to know what they do not know. That is that God kept His promise and did send the Messiah that He had promised to them just as He promised. And we know that Jesus is the Messiah, the savior of the world sent by God into this world to redeem man from his sin. And we have turned from the worship of idols, so to speak, to worship the living God and to follow after Jesus Christ. Whereas the Jews are still in blindness, having forsaken God's way of righteousness, which through our faith in Jesus Christ, have set upon themselves to develop a righteousness by their own works.

They are seeking to offer to God their own goodness, their own morality, their own works to be accepted by God as righteousness. The prophet Jeremiah will tell them in a while, that their righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God. Paul the apostle, in talking of these things, said it is interesting how that the Gentiles have obtained the righteousness of God which the Jews were seeking to attain by the Law but could not attain by the Law. But the Gentiles have attained it through faith.

So we because we believe in Jesus Christ are accounted by God as righteous. God accounts our faith in Christ for righteousness. So I am not righteous for what I do, I am righteous because of what I believe. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the savior of the world, that He died according to the Scriptures and rose the third day according to the Scriptures and is in heaven right now interceding for me. And God accounts me righteous because of my faith in Christ.

The righteousness that they are seeking to achieve they have not achieved. It is interesting that Yom Kippur, which used to be the day in which they offered the sacrifice for the nation, the sin offerings for the nation is not a day of reflection. What do they reflect on? Their good deeds. They reflect upon their bad and they balance out their good with the bad. They are looking to over balance the good deeds over the bad. But there is no offering or sacrifice for their sins. There is no sin offering. The Bible says that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.

Jesus Christ has shed His blood for us and thus we Gentiles have come to the LORD and found Him our strength, our fortress, our refuge. The Gentiles are coming from the end of the earth and say, "Surely our fathers inherited lies and vanity and things in which there was no profit." Then the prophet says, "Shall a man make gods unto himself that are no gods."

Interesting, man making a god, isn't it? And how often we see men making their own gods. Now in

chapter 17 the sign of the unmarried prophet continues.

## JEREMIAH 17

*The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;*

Their sin is deep rooted. It is at the core of their being. It is engraved in their heart. They are totally given over to sin. Engraved upon the horns of the alter. The horns of the alter was a symbolic place where the people would come on and hold on to the horns of the alter, a place where they sought mercy from God. But in that place of mercy, sin has been engraved.

*Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.*

The children, rather than really knowing what it was to worship the LORD there in the temple, they were taken by their parents to these places of worship of every high hill the alters unto Ashteroth, the Canaanitish female goddess of fertility.

*O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasure to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders.*

The land of God, the Holy Land, polluted by God's people.

*And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever.*

They have gone too far. They are going to be taken away captive. God gave them this land as it was part of God's heritage for them but they have polluted the land that God had given to them.

*Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm,*

What happened is that when the Babylonians were coming with their armies, the king of Judah sent down to Egypt to hire the Egyptians to come and to help him fight against the Babylonians. Rather than at that point turning to the LORD and repenting from their sin and having a wholesale repentance and turning to God and just throwing themselves upon the grace and the mercy of God, instead they sought deliverance from the enemy through the power of Egypt. So the LORD said, "Cursed be the man that trusts in man." They were trusting in the Egyptians. "And who makes flesh his arm." They were looking to the arm of Egypt to be your strength.

What happened is that the Egyptians started to come and so Nebuchadnezzar diverted and went down and wiped out the Egyptians and then came back and wiped them out. So it turned out that it was a curse. The Egyptians were no help to them. The Egyptians were also destroyed.

*and whose heart departeth from the LORD.*

Where do you seek your help? Where are you looking for help? Cursed be the man who is trusting in man, who is looking to the arm of flesh. We need to look to God. Our nation is in serious trouble economically. The economic situation of the country is terrifying. Many of you are already beginning to feel the pinch of the economic woes of the nation. Where are we looking for help? Federal reserve. Lower

the interest rates. We are looking to the arm of flesh. Our nation ought to be on its knees, seeking God and asking God's forgiveness and repenting before the LORD. Our nation is a mess from a sociological standpoint, these gang wars, they are actually out of control. Where are we seeking help? Beefing up the Police Department. The arm of flesh. We ought to be seeking God. We ought to be repenting.

So we are in must the same condition as Israel. They were down and out and the count had begun. And still rather than seeking the LORD they were seeking the arm of flesh, the help of man. And in our nation today, I see no signs of real true national repentance. But still man is scrambling and doing his best to find the solutions for all of the problems that are plaguing our nation at this time. Cursed be the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, who departs from the LORD because he is going to be like the little scrub weed in the desert.

*For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.*

He is going to be left barren.

*Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.*

Cursed is the man who trusts in man but blessed is the man who will trust in the LORD. That is true from a national standpoint but it is also true from an individual standpoint. Where do you turn in your hour of need? Who do you look to for help? So many are looking to man, the arm of flesh. But oh, how blessed is the man who turns to the LORD, who puts his trust in the LORD, whose hope is in the LORD.

*For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.*

The blessing of the man who will put his trust in the LORD, he will be fruitful, he will survive. But the man who puts his trust in man will wither and die.

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

What is the most deceitful thing in the world? Your heart. How many people are deceived by their own hearts! How Satan loves to deceive and when Satan is on the throne of a person's life, he has them totally deceived. Deceived into thinking that they are all right. I am okay, you are okay. Deceived into thinking that it does not really matter with God how I live. Deceived in believing that as long as I am sincere, all paths lead to God. The heart is deceitful above everything else, above all things and it is also desperately wicked. The question is, who can know it?

David said, "Lord, You have searched me, You have known me, You know when I am up, You know when I am down. You understand my thoughts as they begin to originate in my mind." Where do your thoughts come from? What is the origin of the thought in your mind? What juices go together to create that little electrical impulse that crosses your brain that causes you to remember a particular incident or thing in life? There are certain kind of triggers that will bring back memories to you. But how do they originate? How are they stored and what brings them into mind? Where does the whole thought process start. That is what the psalmist was saying when he said, "You understand my thoughts afar off." It does not mean that God is way out at the other end of the universe and I am down here and He understands my thoughts over this vast distance between me and Him. That is not what is meant at all. What is meant is that God knows my thoughts in their origins, before I think them He already knows what I am going to be thinking.

The psalmist said, "Such knowledge is too great for me. It is too wonderful. I cannot attain it." And he confessed that he did not know himself. There were things about himself that he did not know. There are things about you that you don't know. The LORD spoke to the children of Israel and He talked to them about their wilderness journey and He said, "I took you for forty years of wandering in the wilderness, to prove you and to know what was in your heart." It was not for God to know what was in their heart, He knew what was in their heart, but it was for them to know what was in their heart but the trials that they went through brought out what was in their heart.

It is amazing how trials have a way of revealing what is in our heart. It terrifies me when I find out what is in my heart when I go through my heart. Driving freeways can be a trial to me. Some of these wild drivers in Southern California, and they do these crazy things that jeopardize your life. What I have found is in my heart is not very pleasant. I have to keep telling myself that this is a test. The LORD is revealing what is in my heart. You soon forget. You think, "Well, I am not too bad of a guy. I am pretty easy going and pretty well go it made." But then the LORD brings something along, and that reaction, and suddenly you realize that you are not as cool as you thought you were. You don't have things as well under control as you thought you did. This is a test. And the problem is that when you fail the test you have to take it over. He will keep testing you until you pass. But, how would we know what is in our heart unless we went through these experiences. It would be so easy to be completely deceived as people are. Because the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

The psalmist said, "Try me oh LORD, and know my thoughts. Search me oh God, know my heart. Try me, put me through the test that I might know the truth about myself." So the LORD speaks of the deceitful heart, the desperately wicked heart. He questions who can know it. But then He answers:

*I the LORD search the heart,*

God searches your heart. He knows what is exactly what is in your heart.

*I try the reins,*

Those controlling things. How much control!

*even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

The testing.

*As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not;*

This is a proverb. It really fits with the Proverbs. It sounds like something Solomon would say.

*so he that getteth riches, and not by right,*

Or ill gotten riches.

*shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.*

Several years ago when we were at the little chapel, a fellow started attending the church who was pretty deeply involved in the Mafia. His wife had come and had accepted the Lord and he was in trouble with the police and was coming as sort of an out. He invited me over to his house. He went to his safe and

got out a wad of hundred dollar bills. It was a big roll. He said there were \$ 200,000 in that roll and I had no reason to doubt him. It was a big roll. And he said, "It is a crazy realm that I am in. I happen to be holding this right now. I scammed a guy and got it off of him. I happen to be holding it now but the whole crowd knows that I am holding it. Everybody is trying to scam me to get it. This wad of money just rotates around in our group. We all get to hold it for a little while until the guy scams it off of us. It is only a matter of time until I am going to fall for one of these scams and I will lose it and then that guy will have it for a while but then we will all try to scam him. It just moves in our circle."

So riches that are not got by right, he will leave them in the midst of his days, in the end he will be a fool. That which you have will be taken from you, someone will scam you. But then verse 12:

*A glorious high throne from the beginning is that place of our sanctuary.*

The sanctuary is a place of protection. A place of rest and security. Where is your place of security? A glorious high throne from the beginning. God's throne is our place of security, our sanctuary.

*O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.*

You remember in Jeremiah 2 where the complaint of the LORD against the people is that they had forsaken Him the fountain of living waters and they have carved out cisterns and the cisterns cannot even hold water. Every man has to believe in something and does believe in something. Every man has a philosophy, or an ideal or a religion where by his life is governed. The governing principles of a person's life. Now we are governed by the law of God, by our submission to Jesus Christ.

The fountain of living water, and thus there is life, abundant life in Him. But there are people who have their own philosophies. They have carved out their own cisterns. The best they can hold is stagnant water but at worse the cisterns leak and they cannot hold water. And so are the religious systems of man, they just cannot hold water.

Here is a guy that is forsaking God, the spring of water. The whole idea is that here is a spring of fresh water, it is just bubbling out of the ground. It is fresh water, you can just go and drink of it. Up at our Conference Center near Green Valley Lake, we have a spring up there where the water just comes gushing out. It is cold and it is clear and it is delicious. I love to go and put my face down there and just drink it. It is good water. We also have a little stream that dries up during the year, but there are little stagnant ponds, I don't drink out of that. There is green moss and algae.

Here is what they were doing. They were forsaking these springs of living water. God, the fountain of life for cisterns that really do not hold water.

*Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.*

The prophet was responding to God. LORD, heal me, save me. Because he was running into problems. The people were beginning to say to Jeremiah:

*Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the LORD? let it come now.*

The judgment had not yet come. And so they began to really get on to Jeremiah. "Where is the word of the LORD? You tell us all this stuff, we don't see this happening." They were really beginning to give Jeremiah a bad time. And Jeremiah said,

*As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day;*

LORD, you know that I don't desire these things that I have been telling the people. I don't desire these days when the Babylonians come and wipe us out. I don't desire the days of slaughter, You know that.

*thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee.*

Now they are giving me a bad time for what You told me to tell them.

*be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil. Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.*

The LORD said, "I will punish them double." So he is saying to go ahead and give them the double destruction but LORD I have only been speaking your word, don't let me be dismayed and confounded.

That ends the message of the sign of the unmarried prophet and this is another short message. He was told to deliver it at the gate.

*Thus said the LORD unto me; God and stand in the gate of the children of the people, come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem;*

So this is a message that he is to speak at the king's gate and then at all of the gates at Jerusalem.

*And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;*

In other words, calling again to honor the Sabbath day. Through out the Bible God made various covenants with His people. When God destroyed the world with the flood, when Noah came out of the ark and built an alter unto the LORD, the LORD made a covenant with the LORD. Do you remember the covenant? It was that God would never again destroy the whole world by a flood. That was God's promise. Now God gave him a sign of the covenant. What was the sign? A rainbow.

When God gave the law to Moses for the children of Israel. God made a covenant with the nation of Israel that they would be His people and He would be their God. If they would keep the law. Keep all of the law and I will be your God and you will be My people and then there was a sign of the covenant. And the sign of the covenant was keeping the Sabbath day. That was there sign of the covenant.

With Abraham the covenant that through his seed all of the nations of the world would be blessed. The sign of the covenant was circumcision. In the New Testament Jesus said, "This is a new covenant in my blood which is shed for the remission of sins." And so the cup of communion is the sign of the new covenant where by our faith in Jesus Christ God forgives us our sins. That is the covenant that God has made. Believe on Jesus Christ and you will be forgiven of your sins. The sign of the covenant is the cup of communion.

So, in telling them to keep the Sabbath and not to bear burdens on the Sabbath the LORD is actually saying to come back to this covenant relationship. In that covenant relationship God promised that He

would be their God they would be His people and He would defend them from their enemies and they would be blessed and all of the blessing that went with the keeping of the covenant of God. Even at this state God is calling them back to the covenant but they are not responding. So the message at the gate, all of you inhabitants of Jerusalem.

*Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do y any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.*

Come back to the covenant.

*But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction.*

They had set their heart against God and the things of God and they were abdurant. The Bible says that he being often reprov'd hardens his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy. And that is just to the place that they are coming. They will suddenly be destroyed with no remedy. They have hardened their neck and they will not listen. Though God is still holding out His hand, offering them even now reprieve.

*And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work therein; Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever.*

God is still holding out the hand of opportunity to them. Just return to the covenant, return to God. You can have your kings and your princes and you will remain in this city.

*And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the LORD.*

This can still be a place of blessing, a place of praise where the people can gather and worship God. And God making still this appeal to the people. How reluctant God is to bring His judgment. How longsuffering and slow to wrath. And even at this state of their moral degradation God is still stretching out His hand unto them. For the LORD warns:

*But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.*

And so it was. The gates of the city burned. The palaces burned. Jerusalem burned and today you can go over and in the archeological digs you can see a layer of ash of when Jerusalem was burned by the Babylonians shortly after Jeremiah gave them this prophecy. Sad that people won't wake up to the reality that going your own sinful path is only going to lead to destruction. God's way leads to life, abundant life, eternal life.