

Jeremiah Chapter 17

Jeremiah 17:1 "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;"

“The sin of Judah”: Reasons for the judgment (chapter 16) continue here.

- (1) Idolatry (verses 1-4);
- (2) Relying on the flesh (verse 5); and
- (3) Dishonesty in amassing wealth (verse 11).

“Pen of iron”: The names of idols were engraved on the horns of their altars with such a tool. The idea is that Judah’s sin was permanent, etched in them as if into stone. How much different to have God’s word written on the heart (31:33).

The “pen of iron” and “point of a diamond” refer to writing instruments used to make etchings and engravings on metal or stone. The sin of the people was indelibly inscribed on their hardened hearts, which is why they were unable to turn from their sinful ways and obey the Lord’s commands. The promise of the new covenant (in 31:31-34), is that the Lord would transform the people by writing His law on their hearts and giving them the inward desire and ability to obey His commands.

Iron denotes it is unbendable. Something engraved with a pin of iron with a point of diamond, would be deeply set. In this case, it is set into their hearts. Instead of God's laws engraved into their hearts, they have engraved their sins. The horns of the altar showed power through God. It appears these were not the same horns. They were connected to the sin. It could be saying, they were putting their faith in a false god. The heart is the center of man. To have your heart full of sin would mean you were totally absorbed with sin. We are what our heart is.

Jeremiah 17:2 "Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills."

Which is a further proof of their long continuance in idolatrous practices, and a fresh witness against them. They trained up their children in them; who, when grown up, could not forget them, but imitated them, and went on in the same evil ways. Some render the words, "as they remember their children, so they remember as well.

"Their altars and their groves, by the green trees upon the high hills": They had the same love to their idols, and the worship of them, as they had to their children. This sense is received by Kimchi: Yea, they had a greater affection for their idols than for their children; since they made their children pass through the fire to Moloch, and burnt their sons and their daughters to Baal. The Targum renders it, "their groves under every green tree": (see Jer. 2:20). Kimchi and Ben Melech connect green trees not with groves but with altars. And take the sense to be, that their altars were by green trees; since groves and green trees were the same, and which altars also were upon high hills.

Judah's idolatry is portrayed and condemned (see the notes on Judges 2:11-15 and 3:6-7).

The groves and the high places were both places to worship false gods. It was the obligation of the parents to tell their children of God. In this case, the parents have led them to the worship of false gods.

Jeremiah 17:3 "O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance [and] all thy treasures to the spoil, [and] thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders."

"Mountain in the field": Jerusalem in Judah which stood on a hill in the midst of a plain, surrounded with fruitful fields and gardens. Or in the midst of a land like a field. The Targum is, "because thou worshipped idols upon the mountains in the field:"

"I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil": All the riches of the city and temple to be the spoil and plunder of the enemy (Jer. 15:13).

"And thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders": The sense is, that all their substance and treasure throughout their borders, the riches of the whole land, as well as of the city and temple (Jer. 15:13). And all their high places throughout the land, which were used for sin, for idolatrous practices, on account thereof, should become the spoil of the enemy.

This is a further explanation of why God is willing to allow the enemy to take His hill, and the possessions of His people. It is as if this is a sacrifice for the sin committed.

Jeremiah 17:4 "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."

Or, "thou, and in thee"; that is, thou and those that are in thee. All the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea; or, "thou even through thyself". Through thine own fault, by reason of thy sins and iniquities.

"Shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee": Be removed from it, and no longer enjoy it. Or, "shalt intermit from thine heritage"; shall not till the land, plough and sow, and reap, and gather the fruits of it. This was enjoined on every seventh year, when the land was to have its rest, or sabbath (Exodus 23:10). But this law they did not observe. And now, therefore, whether they would or not, the land should be left alone, and not tilled and enjoyed by them. The Targum takes in the whole of the sense: "And I will bring an enemy upon your land; and it shall be desolate as in the year of rest: and I will take vengeance of judgment upon you, until I remove you from your inheritance which I have given unto you." The land of Canaan, which was given them for an inheritance.

"I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not": The Babylonians in Chaldea.

"For ye have I kindled a fire in mine anger": Or by their sins had caused the anger of the Lord to burn like fire.

"Which shall burn for ever": As it will in hell, and therefore called everlasting fire. Here it only means until these people and their country were consumed by the enemy. Perhaps some reference is had to the burning of the city and temple by the Babylonians, or Romans, or both. These first four verses are left out by the Septuagint interpreters. Jerom thinks, to spare their own people.

"Land ... thou knowest not": Babylon.

God will allow Babylon to take them back to their land to serve as slaves of war. The land of their heritage will be no more. They have treated their heritage from God as if it were nothing, so God takes it away from them. These people, whom God had called His own, have sinned so greatly that God does not claim them. His anger is so hot against them, He allows them to be taken captive into a strange land.

Verses 5-8: Cursed be the man": Jeremiah contrasted the person who experience barrenness (verses 5-6), with the one who receives blessing (verse 7-8). The difference in attitude is in "trust" placed in man or "trust" vested in the Lord (verses 5, 7). And the contrast in vitality is between being like a parched dwarf juniper in the desert (verse 6), or a tree drawing sustenance from a stream to bear fruit (verse 8; compare Psalm 1:1-3).

Jeremiah 17:5 "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed [be] the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD."

Here begins a new discourse, or part of one. Or, however another cause or reason of the ruin and destruction of the Jews is suggested. Namely, their trust in man, or confidence in the creature, which is resented and condemned. "The words are vehement and abrupt, but they burst from the prophet's lips as proclaiming the root evil that had eaten into the life of his people. Their trust in an arm of flesh had led them to Egyptian and Assyrian alliances, and these to "departing from the Lord".

"And maketh flesh his arm": Or his confidence, as the Targum, to lean upon, and be protected by. Man is but flesh, feeble, weak and inactive; frail and mortal; sinful and corrupt; and so very unfit to make an arm of, or to depend upon. God, and an arm of flesh, are opposed to each other. As are also rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having confidence in the flesh (2 Chron. 32:8).

"And whose heart departeth from the Lord. As men's hearts may, under the greatest show of outward religion and righteousness. And as they always do, when they put their trust in such things. Every act of unbelief and distrust of the Lord, and every act of trust and confidence in the creature, carry the heart off from God. Every such act is a departing from the living God (see Isa. 29:13).

The arm is connected with something happening. The arm of man is not strong enough to do the things that the arm of God can do. When we trust in man's power to save us, it is a denial of our need for the LORD. To trust in man in the place of God, would bring the curse. We would have broken the very first commandment. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. God must have our loyalty, if His Arm will protect us. To place our heart on any other than God, would be sin all the way to the center of our being.

Psalms 18:2 "The LORD [is] my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, [and] my high tower."

Jeremiah 17:6 "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."

By which is meant some barren shrub or tree, about which the various guesses of interpreters (which the reader that is curious may find in the English explanations), are but uncertainties. And this planted in the wilderness too, which is a barren soil, which tree or plant is never the better for all the moisture that comes from heaven. Nor for all the beams of the sun; but stands in a dry and salt place, not inhabited by people. The scope is, to let us know that sinners who depart from God, and do not place their confidence in him in times of danger, but trust in creature aids and assistances. They shall miss of these very good things which they might have had if they had expected them from him, from whom alone they could have been obtained.

This is speaking of the cursed who put their trust in man and not in God. "Heath", in the verse above, is speaking of a juniper whose roots do not extend to the water table below.

Cactus live in the desert. They are not compatible with other plants. Their place is in the hot parched desert. The cursed man is like this also, nothing grows for him. He lives in total desolation.

Jeremiah 17:7 "Blessed [is] the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is."

Trusting in the Lord necessarily implies also a walking close with him, and not in his heart departing from him. For it is naturally impossible that any should repose a confidence in another for any good things. Which that other hath promised under any condition, without some satisfaction in himself that he hath in some measure fulfilled the condition upon which the promise is made. But that man that truly trusteth and hopes in the Lord is and shall be a blessed man.

This reminds me so much of the following Scriptures.

Psalms 1:1-3 "Blessed [is] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." "But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." "And he shall be like a tree planted by

the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

We read (in verses 5 and 6 in this lesson) about the cursed. We know that there is a curse for those who are not obedient to God. The beautiful thing is, there is a blessing for those who do keep God's commandments. Trust is just faith to the utmost. Abraham believed, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Faith in God brings salvation and hope of a better life.

Jeremiah 17:8 "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."

Jeremiah taught that those who trust God are like trees whose roots tap into underground channels of water during dry seasons (see Psalm chapter 1).

What a beautiful promise to those blessed of God! They do not have to fear the drought. The tree mentioned here shows the beautiful results of worshipping God. This tree will never die. The heat or problems of this earth, do not harm it. This tree is grounded in the Lord. It is fed water that the world knows not of. This tree draws strength from God.

Verses 9-10: The "heart" (compare Prov. 4:23), means man's innermost being. The bent of man's natural disposition, apart from God's redeeming grace, is described as "deceitful" (literally, crooked), and "desperately wicked" (incurably sick). Therefore, man cannot trust his own heart but must leave all to God who alone knows the heart and judges all men fairly. Only a person with a redeemed heart, can live in proper fellowship with God (Job 11:13; 1 John 3:18-24).

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart [is] deceitful above all [things], and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

This verse reiterates the "desperately" (incurable), wickedness of the human heart. The primary characteristic of being in the flesh is an absolute inability to please God (Gal. 5:19-21). Only surrender to the Holy Spirit can guarantee motives that will be pleasing to God.

The heart of man before he turns his heart over to God, is deceitful and wicked. The heart after God has written His laws on it, is a totally different thing. Only God knows the heart of man.

Jeremiah 17:10 "I the LORD search the heart, [I] try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, [and] according to the fruit of his doings."

"I ... search the heart": For the sin of man (verses 1-4), for the barren man (verses 5-6), or the blessed man (verses 7-8), God is the final Judge and renders His judgment for their works (compare Rev. 20:11-15). By Him, actions are weighed (1 Sam. 2:3).

I personally believe it is our heart that is judged on judgement day. We are what our heart is. The Lord knows the intentions of our hearts. Jesus said it so plainly when He said that someone who looked on a woman to lust had committed adultery already in his heart. You see the intentions of our hearts are the same as if we had committed the sin. A heart that has been washed in the blood of the Lamb (Jesus), is clean and pure. In this Scripture (in Jeremiah above), God is looking for a pure, clean heart. The following Scripture is a description of the pure clean heart.

Psalms 24:4 "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

This kind of heart produces good things.

Jeremiah 17:11 "[As] the partridge sitteth [on eggs], and hatcheth [them] not; [so] he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."

"As the partridge": This referred to a sand grouse which invaded and brooded over a nest not its own, but was forced to leave before the eggs hatched. It depicted a person who unjustly took possession of things he had no right to take and couldn't enjoy the benefits, despite all the effort.

As the hatched offspring soon recognized that another type of bird had been sitting on the eggs and so left the false mother, so a man's ill-gotten gain will "leave" him and he will be shown to be a "fool".

It would be a great disappointment to sit on eggs and not have them hatch out. The riches a man accumulates from dishonesty has a way of disappearing. Someone who gains great wealth on this earth from immoral practices may get away with it for the time being, but we know God will repay. When he dies he must stand before God and give an account.

Jeremiah 17:12 "A glorious high throne from the beginning [is] the place of our sanctuary."

Or, "Thou throne ... thou place ... thou hope ... Yahweh! All that forsake Thee etc." The prophet concludes his prediction with the expression of his own trust in Yahweh, and confidence that the divine justice will finally be vindicated by the punishment of the wicked. The "throne of glory" is equivalent to Him who is enthroned in glory.

God's throne is in the highest place. The throne of God is in heaven. The eventual sanctuary for all who believe, is in that high place in heaven near the throne of God.

Jeremiah 17:13 "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."

That is, he in whom alone the true Israel of God can hope.

"All they that forsake thee shall be ashamed": Those who forsake thy law, and that rule thou hast given them whereby to direct their conversations. First or last will be ashamed of such their disobedience.

"And they that depart from me shall be written in the earth": And those that depart from what I have, as thy prophet, revealed to them as thy will, shall have no portion beyond the earth which they seem so fond of. Or their names and memories shall vanish, and perish, and be presently extinct, like words written in dust.

"Because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters": Because they have forsaken thee, who are alone certain relief and comfort of any people, the fountain and original of all that good they can hope for.

Jesus told the woman at the well that if she drank of the water He gave her, she would never thirst again. The fountain of living waters is the same thing. It is man's choice to choose the LORD and heaven or to choose Satan and the earth. The earthy will not receive heaven. In (1 Cor. 15:35 on), we read about the earthy must put off the things of the earth and become a celestial being to go to heaven. Read the whole chapter, beginning with verse 35.

Verses 14-18: Jeremiah voiced the prayerful cry that God would deliver him from his enemies (verse 14). Surrounded by ungodly people (verses 1-6, 11, 13), he showed qualities of godliness:

- (1) God was his praise (verse 14);
- (2) He had a shepherd's heart to follow God (verse 16);
- (3) He was a man of prayer open to God's examination (verse 16);
- (4) God was his hope (verse 17); and
- (5) He trusted God's delivering faithfulness even in judgment (verse 18).

Jeremiah renews his plea for vindication and help. He prays not to be rescued from the persecution but to be delivered through it (compare James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 3:7; 4:12-19).

Jeremiah 17:14 "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou [art] my praise."

The prophet, consciously or unconsciously, contrasts himself with the deserters from Jehovah. He needs "healing" and "salvation," but he knows where to seek for them, and is sure that his Lord will not leave the work incomplete. The prayer of the prophet is like that of the Psalmist (Psalm 6:2; 30:2). In "thou art my praise" we have an echo of (Deut. 10:21; Psalm 71:6).

Jeremiah has discovered something beautiful about God. God is all powerful. If we are to be healed, God will do it. If we are to be saved, God will have to do it. Man cannot heal himself, neither can he save himself. This points ahead to the coming of the Messiah (Jesus).

Jeremiah 17:15 "Behold, they say unto me, Where [is] the word of the LORD? let it come now."

Scoffing at me, as if I had threatened them in thy name without any order or direction from thee. As the scoffers mentioned by Peter (2 Peter 3:4), said, where is the promise of his coming? This hath been the practice of all wicked men hardened in their sinful courses, and resolved to go on, to put the evil day far from them. And to scoff at all condemnation of God's judgments (Isa. 5:19; Amos 5:18).

"Let it come now": Daring the vengeance of God, and challenging God to damn them, or to execute the vengeance with which he threatened them.

We know that the Word of God took on the form of flesh and dwelt among us. To me this is asking when the Savior will come.

Jeremiah 17:16 "As for me, I have not hastened from [being] a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was [right] before thee."

That the words contain the prophet's appeal to God upon some reproaches cast upon him by this wicked people. As if he had thrust himself into the prophetic office, is evident, and reasonably well agreed by interpreters. But they are divided about the sense of the word *wxua* which yet always in Scripture signifies to make haste, or to urge, or press. The sense seemed to be this: Lord! As I did not seek the office of a prophet, so when thou wert pleased to call me to it, I did not decline to be a pastor after thee.

"Neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest": Neither (saith he), have I desired to be a prophet of these sad tidings, those woeful miseries which thou hast made me thy messenger to foretell.

"That which came out of my lips was right before thee": I have spoken nothing but what was right in thy sight, being what thou commanded me to deliver as from thee, and so I know was right in thy sight.

Jeremiah brings to God's attention, the fact that he was chosen of God to do this job. Jeremiah could have gone on as any other shepherd. Jeremiah did not wish for the woeful day, that God caused him to speak of. The words Jeremiah spoke were God's words in Jeremiah's mouth.

Jeremiah 17:17 "Be not a terror unto me: thou [art] my hope in the day of evil."

By deserting him, and leaving him in the hands of his enemies. Or by denying him which supports under their reproaches and persecution. Or by withdrawing his gracious presence from

him, than which nothing is more terrible to a good man. Or by withholding the comfortable influences of his Spirit; or by suffering terrors to be injected into him from any quarter. And more is meant than is expressed. Namely, that God would be a comforter of him, and bear him up under all his troubles.

"Thou art my hope in the day of evil": The author and object of his hope. The ground and foundation of it, from whom he hoped for deliverance, when it was a time of distress with him. From outward as well as from inward enemies. He was his hope in a time of outward calamity, and in the hour of death and day of judgment.

Jeremiah knows the only hope he has is in God. He does not want to be terrified of God.

Jeremiah 17:18 "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."

With words with reproaches, with scoffs and jeers, saying, "Where is the word of the Lord?" (Jer. 17:14). Let such be ashamed that scoffing put such a question, by seeing the accomplishment of it.

"But let not me be confounded": Who have delivered it out as the word of the Lord that should be surely fulfilled. Let not me be brought to shame by the failure of it and be reckoned as a false prophet.

"Let them be dismayed": Terrified and affrighted when they shall see the judgments of God coming upon them, which they have jeeringly called for.

"But let not me be dismayed": By their not coming, or when they shall come; but preserve and protect me.

"Bring upon them the day of evil": Of punishment; which they put far away, and scoff at. Though the prophet did not desire the woeful day to come upon the people in general, yet upon his persecutors in particular. Jarchi interprets it of the men of Anathoth alone. And which desire of his did not arise from malice towards them, but from indignation at their sin and for the glory of the divine Being, whose name was blasphemed by them.

"And destroy them with double destruction": Not with two sorts of judgments, sword and famine, as Jerom; but with an utter destruction. With breach after breach, destruction after destruction, until they were entirely destroyed. Unless it should have regard to the two times of destruction, first by the Chaldeans, and then by the Romans.

Jeremiah had brought God's message to these people, and they had persecuted him for it. He asks God to see what they had done to him, and for God to take vengeance for him. Jeremiah is saying, as you have spoken let it be, but do not let it come on me.

Jeremiah 17:19 "Thus said the LORD unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem;"

Jeremiah next denounces Judah's false legalism (17:19 – 20:18).

Here begins a new sermon or discourse, concerning the sanctification of the Sabbath, and a very proper place to begin a new chapter.

"Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people": Where there were great numbers of people passing back and forth. And where the people gathered for one thing or another; or where they gather. Some particular gate of the city of Jerusalem seems to be meant; and not the gate of the temple, as Abarbanel. Some think the sheep gate, and others the water gate (Neh. 3:1). Perhaps rather the latter, since the Nethinim dwelt near it, who were the Gibeonites, so called, because given to the congregation of Israel, to be hewers of wood and drawers of water to it. And these were "the children of the people", of the nations of the world. The old Canaanites, as well as they were the servants of the people of Israel. But what particular gate is intended is not certain; it is very likely it was one that was near the court, by what follows.

"Whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by which they go out": When they went out to war and returned. Or went to their country houses and came back; or on any business and occasion whatever. This shows a reason why the prophet was to go and stand in this gate first. Because his message was to be first delivered to these great personages, who had a personal concern herein, and who could influence others by their authority and example.

"And in all the gates of Jerusalem": After he had been in the former, and delivered his message. For it concerned all the inhabitants of the city, high and low, rich and poor, male and female, young and old. And therefore, he was to go to every gate, and stand and proclaim there, as being the most public places of gathering, and where people were continually going and coming.

Verses 20-27: Because the personal observance of the "Sabbath" recognized God as Creator and Preserver of the world and was a distinct obligation of the revealed law of God (Exodus 20:8-11; Deut. 5:11-15; Ezek. 20:12-24; 22:8, 26; 23:38), its defilement necessitated Judah's judgement (compare 21:14). Conversely, a future Israel will be blessed for its sabbath-keeping (Isa. 56:2; 58:13-14; 66:22-24; Ezek. 44:24; 45:17; and 46:1-4).

Jeremiah 17:20 "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:"

Concerning the sanctification of the Sabbath; for this was not of human, but of divine institution.

"Ye kings of Judah": Which must be understood either, as Kimchi thinks, of the then present king and his sons, so called because they would reign after him. For, there was but one king at a

time; and who, perhaps, at this time, was Josiah. Or else the king and his nobles, the princes of the land, are meant.

"And all Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates": The people in the several parts of the land of Judea, which came to Jerusalem either for trade and merchandise, or for worship. And all that dwelt in the metropolis; for the business the prophet had to charge them with concerned them all.

Not only did God give Jeremiah the message for the people, but he told Jeremiah where to stand and proclaim the message so all would hear. God wanted everyone to hear so they would be without excuse. They all came through these gates.

Verses 21-24: "Sabbath day": Not only had the Jews failed to observe Sabbath days, but also the required Sabbath year of rest for the Land (Lev. 25:1-7), was regularly violated. God had warned that such disobedience would bring judgment (Lev. 26:34-35, 43; 2 Chron. 36:20-21). The 70 year captivity was correlated to the 490 years from Saul to the captivity, which included 70 Sabbath years. When the Jews were restored from captivity, special stress was placed on Sabbath faithfulness (compare Neh. 13:19).

Jeremiah 17:21 "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;"

That ye sin not against the Lord, by breaking the Sabbath, and so bring wrath and ruin upon yourselves. Or "to your souls"; to the inward frame of them, that they be in disposition for the work of that day. And that they be wholly engaged therein, even all the powers and faculties of them. And that they be not taken up in thoughts and cares about other things.

"And bear no burden on the Sabbath day": As no worldly thoughts and cares should, cumber the mind, and lie heavy thereon, to the interruption of spiritual exercises of religion. So neither should any weight or burden be borne by the body, or carried from place to place. As not by themselves, so neither by their servants, nor by their cattle, nor in carts and wagons, nor by any instrument whatever. In short, all servile work was forbidden.

"Nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem": To be unloaded and sold there, as wine, grapes, figs, and fish were, in the times of Nehemiah (Neh. 13:15).

We see God had set the Sabbath aside, and made it holy unto Himself. There was to be no labor on the Sabbath.

Jeremiah 17:22 "Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers."

Not of dirt and soil only, as some restrain the sense; but of any ware or merchandise, in order to be sold in the city or elsewhere.

"Neither do ye any work": Any servile work, any kind of manufacture, either within doors or without. Or exercise any kind of trade, or barter and merchandise, or do any sort of worldly business. Nothing but what was of mere necessity, for the preservation of life (see Exodus 20:10).

"But hallow ye the sabbath day": Or, "sanctify it"; by separating it from all worldly business, and devoting it to the worship of God in public and private. Spending it wholly in acts of religion and piety.

"As I commanded your fathers": Not Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but those that came out of Egypt, to whom, and to their descendants after them this commandment was enjoined (Exodus 20:8). So that this was not a novel injunction, but what was commanded from the beginning of their civil and church state. From the time of their coming out of Egypt, and becoming a separate people and nation, under a theocracy, or the government of God himself. Being chosen and set apart to be a special, peculiar, and holy people to himself. Of which the sanctification of the Sabbath was a sign. And was to be observed unto the Messiah's coming, the sum and substance of it (Col. 2:16).

When God gave Moses the 10 commandments, they were instructed to keep the Sabbath day holy. God had set the pattern for man when He made all of His creation in 6 days and rested the seventh.

Jeremiah 17:23 "But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction."

Or, "heard not"; so as to observe and do; that is, their fathers did not. This command was very early disobeyed, and more or less in all intervening times.

"Neither inclined their ear": Or listened attentively to what was said to them. But if they heard at all, it was in a very indifferent and careless manner, as if they cared not whether they heard or not. Whereas persons intent on hearing bow the head, and turn the ear. And if they have one better than another, will turn that, in order to take in what they are attentive to. But so did not the Jewish fathers.

"But made their neck stiff": Or "hard"; and would not bend it, to take upon them the yoke of the commandments. A metaphor taken from untamed oxen that will not submit the neck to the yoke, but draw back from it. The Septuagint and Arabic versions understand all this, not of the Jewish fathers of old, but of their children. Even of the then present generation, rendering the words, "but hardened their neck more than their fathers". They were more stiffnecked, stubborn, and disobedient than they were. This was always the character of this people. As were the fathers, so were the children, if not worse (see Acts 7:51).

"That they might not hear nor receive instruction. About the command of the Sabbath, or any other. Or "correction", or "discipline"; the yoke of which they were as unwilling to bear as the yoke of the commandments (Jer. 31:18).

The children of Israel had been rebellious from the beginning. They did not honor God's commandments. They were too proud (stiffnecked), to receive instruction from God. They did not listen to the prophets God sent to instruct them.

Jeremiah 17:24 "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;"

To yourselves, literally, "in your souls", i.e., in yourselves. They were to be on their guard from the depths of their own conscience, thoroughly and of conviction.

"Bear no burden on the sabbath day": Apparently the Sabbath day was kept negligently. The country people were in the habit of coming to Jerusalem on the Sabbath to attend the temple service, but mingled traffic with their devotions. Bringing the produce of their fields and gardens with them for disposal. The people of Jerusalem for their part took their wares to the gates, and carried on a brisk traffic there with the villagers (Jer. 17:22). Both parties seem to have abstained from manual labor, but did not consider that buying and selling were prohibited by the fourth commandment.

Verses 25-27: For obedience, God would assure the dynasty of David's perpetual rule in Jerusalem, safety for the city, and worship at the temple (verses 25-26). Continued disobedience would meet with destruction of the city (verse 27).

Jeremiah 17:25 "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."

In a very public and splendid manner.

"Kings and princes, sitting upon the throne of David": That is, kings, with the princes of the blood, or with their nobles, who shall be of the house and line of David. And in a continual succession shall sit upon his throne, and possess the kingdom of the house of Judah, and rule over them in great glory, peace, and prosperity.

"Riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem": Some riding in chariots, and some on horses. The king, with some of the princes of the blood, in one chariot; his nobles in others, or on horseback. With great numbers of the citizens of Jerusalem, and people from all parts, flocking to see them. And join in the procession, and so make it more grand and impressive.

"And this city shall remain for ever": Or, "be inhabited for ever"; a long time, and not be destroyed, as has been threatened, or its inhabitants carried captive.

Obedience to God's commandments brought blessings. God promised here to always bless them in Jerusalem, and have kings descended from David on the throne continually. All they had to do was obey God.

Jeremiah 17:26 "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."

The sum of all these three verses is, that if they would sanctify the Lord's Sabbath, they should either continue in, or be restored unto, their ancient, civil, and ecclesiastical order. They should have kings and princes in their former order and splendor, and men should come from all parts of the country bringing their usual sacrifices and offerings to the temple, and those of all sorts. Some think this promise is to be understood as one principal part of the law of God, and such a one as was in their power to obey, being put for the whole law of God. The general sense is no more than that both their city and their temple, their civil and ecclesiastical state, should continue and flourish in that order wherein it was.

God's temple was to be the central place of worship for the whole land. Three times a year they were to come for the special feast days unto the Lord. The sacrifices and offerings were to be made in the temple in Jerusalem. The house of the LORD was the temple in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 17:27 "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."

A threatening quite contrary to the former promise, upon their acting contrary to the duty to which that promise was annexed. God would destroy their city; it should be burned with fire, and the highest and noblest structures should be burned. And though the hand of the enemy should do this, yet God should order them to do it, so as it should be a fire of his kindling. And therefore, not likely to be quenched, till it had effected that thing for which God so kindled it.

If they fail to keep God's commandments, God will destroy Jerusalem and all of them with it.

Jeremiah Chapter 17 Questions

1. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of _____.
2. It is graven upon the table of their _____.
3. What is verse 1 describing?
4. What were the groves and the high places?

5. In verse 3, it as if this is a _____ sacrifice.
6. How long will God's anger burn?
7. They have treated their heritage as if it were _____.
8. _____ be the man that trusteth in man.
9. When we trust in man's power to save us, it is a denial of our _____ for the _____.
10. What is heath in verse 6?
11. What Scriptures does this remind the author of?
12. Trust is just faith to the _____.
13. Describe the tree in verse 8.
14. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately _____.
15. Who knows the heart of man?
16. What does the author believe will be judged on judgement day?
17. What is a man, who gets riches dishonestly, compared to in verse 11?
18. What throne is verse 12 speaking of?
19. Who is the fountain of living waters?
20. Where do we read about the final place of the earthy and the celestial?
21. What is Jeremiah trying to convey in verse 14?
22. What does the author believe verse 15 is asking?
23. The words Jeremiah spoke were _____ words in Jeremiah's mouth.
24. Jeremiah knows the only hope he has is _____.
25. Where was Jeremiah to speak to the people?
26. What was the main statement God wanted him to make?
27. What did God promise them, if they were obedient to His commandments?