

# UNDERSTANDING JEREMIAH

## CHAPTER 20

VERSION 1.00

## CHAPTER 20

*Jeremiah is smitten and put in the stocks—He prophesies that all Judah will be taken captive by Babylon.*

### **Jeremiah 20 (start)**

1 Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor [OR senior officer] in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things.

2 Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD.

### **Footnotes (a) smote**

1 Nephi 16

2 And it came to pass that I said unto them that I knew that I had spoken hard things against the wicked, according to the truth; and the righteous have I justified, and testified that they should be lifted up at the last day; wherefore, the guilty taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center.

Helaman 13

24 Yea, wo unto this people, because of this time which has arrived, that ye do cast out the prophets, and do mock them, and cast stones at them, and do slay them, and do all manner of iniquity unto them, even as they did of old time.

25 And now when ye talk, ye say: If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets; we would not have stoned them, and cast them out.

26 Behold ye are worse than they; for as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil.

27 But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say: Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer; yea, he will say: Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart desireth—and if a man shall come among you and say this, ye will receive him, and say that he is a prophet.

**Who do you fear more:** Jeremiah 20 identifies Pashur as both priest and *paqîd nāgîd*—an overseer-governor entrusted with order, discipline, and administration in the house of the Lord, a hybrid office that fused temple authority with juridical enforcement, which explains how he could both strike a prophet and confine him at a gate attached to the temple precincts without appealing to a separate civil court (Jeremiah 20:1–2). In ancient Judah this role was not equivalent to the high priest but to a senior temple officer charged with maintaining orthodoxy, public order, and loyalty to the institutional cult, particularly against disruptive prophetic voices (Jeremiah 29:26). Structurally, the closest modern analogue in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not a temple president alone, whose stewardship is sacred, administrative,

and deliberately non-coercive, but a bishop or stake president, who likewise presides as a judge in Israel with delegated authority over worthiness, discipline, and access to sacred space, yet without physical compulsion (Doctrine and Covenants 107:68–74). The critical overlap is not in ritual function but in governing authority exercised at the boundary of holiness, where institutional order confronts prophetic disturbance.

However, the comparison becomes morally instructive—not accusatory—when one observes that Pashur represents what happens when priesthood office mistakes custodianship for ownership and authority for control, for the Lord had already warned that those who “exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men” lose priesthood power “amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:37). Jeremiah was not punished for immorality or apostasy *but for prophesying covenant consequences that threatened institutional security*, a pattern Nephi foresaw when he warned that priests and leaders would once again, be lifted up in pride and persecute the humble followers of Christ (2 Nephi 28:4–5). Joseph Smith taught that prophets are often opposed most fiercely by religious officers *who fear disorder from the institution more than disobedience to God*, for “it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority... to exercise unrighteous dominion” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:39). Thus Pashur is best understood as a bishop-like governor of the sacred temple order, but one who crossed the line from judging righteously to silencing what disturbed their “peace”.

A lesson for the latter days is therefore not that modern bishops or temple presidents are Pashur, but that any steward in the house of the Lord may become Pashur-like the moment *institutional preservation outweighs fidelity to the living word of God*, for “the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets,” and those who reject that word invite spiritual captivity rather than peace (Amos 3:7; Jeremiah 20:4). True priesthood governance protects revelation rather than restrains it, persuades rather than punishes, and stands in meekness before uncomfortable truth- for Zion is built by hearkening to prophets, not striking them, and the faithful remnant is defined by those who “tremble at my word” even when it disrupts settled expectations (Isaiah 66:2; Doctrine and Covenants 84:87).

Another lesson, or rather series of questions, for us in the latter days might include:

- “Am I more loyal to the preservation of institution or loyalty and obedience to God?”
- “Would I have the courage to open my mouth and testify in such a situation?”
- “Would I have the faith to stand my ground against a modern day ‘Pashur’?”
- “How does having a testimony of ‘the pyramid of truth’ insulate one from apostasy?”

### **Jeremiah 20 (cont.)**

3 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib [IE Terror all around].

### **(24-2) Jeremiah 20:1–6. Jeremiah in Stocks**

Jeremiah 19:14–15 records Jeremiah’s standing in the court of the temple, again reminding the people of the troubles that lay ahead because of their wickedness. When Pashur, the chief

overseer of the temple, heard of the incident, he had Jeremiah beaten and placed in stocks. Stocks were an instrument of torture by which the body was forced into an unnatural position, much as the wooden stocks of medieval times confined parts of the body, such as the arms, legs, or head, by means of wooden beams that locked them into place.

Far from being cowed by this harsh treatment, Jeremiah used it as a further opportunity to teach. *Pashur*, in Hebrew, means “free.” Jeremiah, upon being released, told Pashur that the Lord had a different name for him. Jeremiah said that God had not called him *Pashur*, or “free,” but *Magor-missabib*, which means “fear on every side.” (see [Jeremiah 20:3–4](#).)

*(Old Testament Student Manual 1 Kings–Malachi, Religion 302, Chapter 24: The Babylonian Captivity)*

### **Jeremiah 20 (cont.)**

4 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword.

### **Footnote (a) captive**

1 Nephi 1

11 And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read.

12 And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

13 And he read, saying: Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations! Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.

14 And it came to pass that when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as: Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish!

### **Jeremiah 20 (cont.)**

5 Moreover I will deliver all the strength [HEB provision or goods] of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon.

### **Footnote (b) precious**

Ezekiel 22:25

12 In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God.

13 ¶ Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.

25 There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

27 Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

28 And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.

29 The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

30 And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

31 Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.

#### **Footnote Ezekiel 22: 12 (a) gift**

Isaiah 1

23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

#### **Footnote Ezekiel 22: 12 (b) usury**

Isaiah 3

14 The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

Amos 3

10 For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

Alma 4

12 Yea, he saw great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted.

13 Now this was a great cause for lamentations among the people, while others were abasing themselves, succoring those who stood in need of their succor, such as imparting their substance to the poor and the needy, feeding the hungry, and suffering all manner of afflictions, for Christ's sake, who should come according to the spirit of prophecy

*\*For the rest of the footnote breakdown on Ezekiel 22 see Understanding Jeremiah Chapter 17\**

#### **Jeremiah 20 (cont.)**

6 And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

7 ¶ O LORD, thou hast deceived [HEB persuaded] me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision [Despair; Suffering] daily, every one mocketh me.

8 For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.

9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

### **Footnote (b) stay**

Ether 12

2 And Ether was a prophet of the Lord; wherefore Ether came forth in the days of Coriantumr, and began to prophesy unto the people, for he could not be restrained because of the Spirit of the Lord which was in him.

### **Joseph Smith Jr.**

What Constitutes a Prophet?

If any person should ask me if I were a prophet, I should not deny it, as that would give me the lie; for, according to John (Revelation 19: 10), *the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy; therefore, if I profess to be a witness or teacher, and have not the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, I must be a false witness; but if I be a true teacher and witness, I must possess the spirit of prophecy*, and that constitutes a prophet; and any man who says he is a teacher or a preacher of righteousness, and denies the spirit of prophecy, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and *by this key false teachers and impostors may be detected*. (Dec. 30, 1842.) DHC 5:215–216. TPJS 269

**The Spirit of Prophecy; A fire in the bones:** Jeremiah’s sentence upon Pashur and his household—captivity, exile, death in Babylon—is not merely personal judgment but covenant mathematics to all, for those who prophesy lies to preserve institutional peace rather than declare divine truth always inherit the future they deny, and doom is the inevitable end of priestcraft unrepented (Jeremiah 20:6). Immediately Jeremiah turns inward and confesses that he was “persuaded” by the Lord, not deceived in falsehood but overpowered by truth, compelled by revelation so real that it reordered his life in the present according to the certainty of the future, which is the very definition of the spirit of prophecy (Jeremiah 20:7). Joseph Smith clarified that the spirit of prophecy is not an office but a condition of witness, for “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” and any true teacher must possess it or stand condemned as a false witness (Revelation 19:10; Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith, “What Constitutes a Prophet?”, December 30, 1842). Thus prophecy is not prediction alone but obedient foresight, the inward knowledge that God’s word will surely come to pass, producing outward action before the fulfillment arrives, as with Joseph in Egypt whose preparation during years of plenty proved that he believed the famine would literally come (Genesis 41:28–36). Those who truly possess the spirit of prophecy do not wait for calamity to validate revelation; they live now as if judgment and deliverance are already certain.

This is why Jeremiah’s “fire shut up in my bones” is not sentimental enthusiasm or generic religious optimism, but the tormenting, inescapable pressure of truth known and judgment foreseen, a burden that makes silence a greater suffering than persecution (Jeremiah 20:9). To

reduce the spirit of prophecy to pleasant affirmations, emotional uplift, or vague declarations of love is to empty it of all covenant force, for Jeremiah's fire drove him to cry "violence and spoil," not comfort and reassurance, and made him willing to be struck, imprisoned, mocked, and ultimately killed rather than deny what he knew was coming (Jeremiah 20:2, 8). Ether testified of the same condition, that he "could not be restrained because of the Spirit of the Lord which was in him," demonstrating that prophetic fire compels warning, not applause (Ether 12:2). The Doctrine and Covenants confirms that the Lord's servants speak whether men hear or forbear, because they are constrained by commandment and conscience rather than consent (Doctrine and Covenants 84:87). This fire is costly, isolating, and grievous, but it is the only honest response to revealed judgment.

Accordingly, men and women filled with the spirit of prophecy consistently appear at the terminal stage of the priestcraft cycle, when religious authority has hardened into self-protection and the people will no longer endure plain truth, and the Lord sends one last witness before destruction (Jeremiah 7:25–26). Enoch warned before the flood, Noah preached while the ark was preparing, Lehi cried repentance as Jerusalem sealed its fate, Abinadi confronted a court fattened on false peace, Ether prophesied to a nation already past feeling, and Jeremiah stood alone at the temple gates announcing captivity to those who claimed the temple guaranteed safety (Moses 7:19–21; Genesis 6:13; 1 Nephi 1:18–20; Mosiah 12:1–2; Ether 12:1–3; Jeremiah 7:1–15). These prophets did not arise during renewal but during collapse, not to reform institutions but to rescue souls, for the Lord always sends fire before famine, warning before withdrawal, and testimony before destruction, so that the faithful remnant may act on prophecy rather than perish in denial (Amos 3:7; 2 Nephi 26:10).

### **The Spirit of Prophecy; A Fire in the Bones**

A fire in the bones, unquenchable, true,  
A burning that speaks when the world would construe  
That silence is safety, and peace is the way,  
But the prophet's voice cries of judgment's sure day.

With eyes set on heaven, unshaken by man,  
He speaks of the future, of God's mighty plan.  
In the face of the scorn, in the depth of despair,  
He cannot be silenced, for the fire's still there.

Not for joy or for comfort does his heart burn so deep,  
But for the souls lost, for the watchmen asleep.  
For the judgment that comes like a flood to the land,  
And the remnant who stand by the Lord's outstretched hand.

The fire is the warning, the cry in the night,  
That the end is determined, and the judgment is right.  
It cannot be restrained, though the heart may recoil,  
For the Spirit of Prophecy demands a soul's toil.

Points to Ponder

**(23-42) The Everlasting Warnings to the Wicked**

In his last address before his departure, Moses set before the children of Israel both a blessing and a curse: “If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments ... the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. ... But ... if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments ... the Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke.” (Deuteronomy 28:1, 15, 20.)

The Lord’s word through Jeremiah is the same as that given through other prophets to God’s people throughout history. It holds the promise of doom or destiny, punishment or prosperity, all dependent upon faithfulness to those laws irrevocably decreed by God (see D&C 130:19–20).

Read and consider the following references: Doctrine and Covenants 63:58; 64:34–43; 101:7–16; 103:7–18.

Then read the words of a modern prophet to his own people:

“The growing permissiveness in modern society gravely concerns us. Certainly our Heavenly Father is distressed with the increasing inroads among his children of such insidious sins as adultery and fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, abortions, pornography, population control, alcoholism, cruelty expressed in wife-beating and child-abuse, dishonesty, vandalism, violence, and crime generally, including the sin of living together without marriage.

“We call upon our Church members everywhere to renew their efforts to strengthen the home and to honor their parents, and to build better communications between parent and child.

“Important as it is, building stronger homes is not enough in the fight against rising permissiveness. We therefore urge Church members as citizens to lift their voices, to join others in unceasingly combating, in their communities and beyond... the general flaunting of permissiveness. Let us vigorously oppose the shocking developments which encourage the old sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, and which defile the human body as the temple of God. ...

“God will not be mocked. His laws are immutable. True repentance is rewarded by forgiveness, but sin brings the sting of death. ...

“As we think back upon the experiences of Nineveh, Babylon, Sodom and Gomorrah, we wonder—will history repeat itself? What of our world today? Are we forgetting in our great nations the high and lofty principles which can preserve the nations? ...

“... There are among us those same vices which we have seen wreck empires, and we see them becoming flagrant in all nations. Shall we, like Belshazzar, sow the wind and reap the whirlwind? Shall we permit the home to deteriorate and marriage to become a mockery? Shall we continue to curse God, hate our enemies, and defile our bodies in adulterous and sensuous practices? And when the patience of the Lord with us is exhausted, shall we stand trembling

while destruction comes upon us? Or shall we wisely see the handwriting on the wall and profit by the sad experience of the past and return unto the Lord and serve him?" (Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, pp. 5–7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, pp. 5–6.)

*(Old Testament Student Manual 1 Kings–Malachi, Religion 302, Chapter 23: As Ye Sow, So Shall Ye Reap)*

### **Jeremiah 20 (cont.)**

10 ¶ For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars [OR familiar friends] watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

### **Footnote (a) defaming**

Psalm 31:13

12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

13 For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

14 But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God.

15 My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

17 Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.

18 Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

19 Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

### **3 Nephi 24**

13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say: What have we spoken against thee?

14 Ye have said: It is vain to serve God, and what doth it profit that we have kept his ordinances and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?

15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

16 Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18 Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

### **Helaman 7**

19 And behold, instead of gathering you, except ye will repent, behold, he shall scatter you forth that ye shall become meat for dogs and wild beasts.

20 O, how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you?

21 But behold, it is to get gain, to be praised of men, yea, and that ye might get gold and silver. And ye have set your hearts upon the riches and the vain things of this world, **for the which** ye

do murder, and plunder, and steal, and bear false witness against your neighbor, and do all manner of iniquity.

22 And *for this cause* wo shall come unto you except ye shall repent. For if ye will not repent, behold, this great city, and also all those great cities which are round about, which are in the land of our possession, shall be taken away that ye shall have no place in them; for behold, the Lord will not grant unto you strength, as he has hitherto done, to withstand against your enemies.

**Sweet in the mouth, bitter in the belly:** Jeremiah's lament exposes the anatomy of apostasy in its final, most lethal form, where idolatry ripens into priestcraft and priestcraft hardens into secret combinations, for the love of gain always precedes the silencing of truth (Jeremiah 20:10; Helaman 7:21). First comes the heart set upon gold and silver, upon security, praise, and institutional preservation, and "*for this cause*"—explicitly named—the people murder, plunder, steal, and bear false witness, not as random sins but as necessary tools to protect their system of gain (Helaman 7:21). When wealth and status become the functional gods, religion is repurposed to sanctify inequality and quiet conscience, and priestcraft emerges to preach peace to the unrepentant while robbing the poor of everything, including the truth (2 Nephi 26:29). Finally, when the prophetic word threatens exposure, secret combinations form in whispers and councils, defaming in private what cannot be refuted in public, watching for the righteous to "halt," to misspeak, to stumble, so that accusation may replace argument and vengeance masquerade as justice (Jeremiah 20:10; Psalm 31:13). This progression is never accidental; it is structural, deliberate, and satanic, for darkness always organizes itself when light refuses to be bought.

At the end of such a cycle, the righteous find themselves engulfed by despair, surrounded by voices declaring that it is vain to serve God, that covenant obedience profits nothing, and that the proud—those who manipulate, exploit, and mock—are the ones truly blessed (3 Nephi 24:13–15). Jeremiah feels forgotten, broken, hunted by former friends who now serve power rather than truth, while fear presses in "on every side," a phrase the Psalms deliberately echo to show this is the common inheritance of all who trust God in a corrupt age (Jeremiah 20:10; Psalm 31:12–13). Nephi later confronts the same sickness among the Nephites, where loyalty to corrupt structures replaces loyalty to God, and slander, false witness, and coordinated violence become normalized so long as they protect wealth and status (Helaman 7:19–22). This is the spiritual suffocation of the end stage, where wickedness is institutionalized, righteousness is isolated, and hope seems irrational to those who measure reality only by visible power.

Yet precisely here the Lord draws His sharpest distinction, for while secret councils conspire in darkness, "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," and heaven itself listened, recording their faith in a book of remembrance not controlled by men (3 Nephi 24:16). The Lord does not merely reward such souls with eventual vindication; He gives them Himself, declaring, "They shall be mine... in that day when I make up my jewels," promising to spare them as a father spares a faithful son and to cause them to grow in safety and nourishment even while judgment falls around them (3 Nephi 24:17–18; Psalm 31:19). Jeremiah anchors himself in this same covenant certainty—"My times are in thy hand"—because the goodness of God is not hidden in secret chambers but wrought openly "before the sons of men," and no slander can annul what God has decreed (Psalm 31:14–15, 19). Thus the faithful remnant endures not because they are shielded from defamation, but because they fear God more than loss, trust Him

more than institutions, and cling to the promise that when Babylon collapses under its own conspiracies, Zion will rise as the Lord gathers His jewels unto Himself.

### **Jeremiah 20 (cont.)**

11 But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion [OR disgrace] shall never be forgotten.

12 But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins [HEB inward parts] and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

13 Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers.

### **(24-3) Jeremiah 20:7–18. The Weight of God’s Word**

The great stress the prophetic calling caused Jeremiah is particularly discernible in Jeremiah 20:7–8, 14–18. The Hebrew word translated in verse 7 as “deceived” means literally “enticed” or “persuaded.” The power that persuaded the prophet to continue to preach God’s word at such great personal cost was “as a burning fire shut up in [his] bones” (v. 9). It could not be stayed. Verses 14–18 reflect Jeremiah’s despair over the lonely ministry he was given. Some scholars believe these verses originally were meant to precede verses 7–13 because the tenor of the lament changes in verses 11–13, in which Jeremiah began to praise the Lord.

*(Old Testament Student Manual 1 Kings–Malachi, Religion 302, Chapter 24: The Babylonian Captivity)*

### **Jeremiah (fin)**

14 ¶ Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

15 Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad.

16 And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide;

17 Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me.

18 Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

*\*I would also place these lamenting verses above before ‘fire in my bones’ turn around\**

### **Luke 20**

19 ¶ And the chief priests and the scribes, the same hour, sought to lay hands on him; but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

20 And they watched him and sent forth spies, who should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so doing, they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

21 And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly; neither regardest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly.

22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?

23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

24 Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's.

25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people, and they marveled at his answer and held their peace.

## **Luke 16**

13 ¶ No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

15 And he said unto them, Ye are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

16 And they said unto him, We have the law and the prophets; but as for this man, we will not receive him to be our ruler; for he maketh himself to be a judge over us.

17 Then said Jesus unto them, The law and the prophets testify of me; yea, and all the prophets who have written, even until John, have foretold of these days.

18 Since that time, the kingdom of God is preached, and every man who seeketh truth presseth into it.

19 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail.

20 And why teach ye the law, and deny that which is written, and condemn him whom the Father hath sent to fulfill the law, that ye might all be redeemed?

21 O fools! for you have said in your hearts, There is no God. And you pervert the right way; and the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence of you; and you persecute the meek; and in your violence you seek to destroy the kingdom; and ye take the children of the kingdom by force.

Woe unto you, ye adulterers!

22 And they reviled him again, being angry for the saying that they were adulterers.

23 But he continued, saying, Whosoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her who is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

Verily, I say unto you, I will liken you unto the rich man.

24 ¶ For there was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

25 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores,

26 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

27 And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried of the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

28 And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.

29 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

30 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and

likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

31 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.

32 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

33 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

34 Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

35 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

36 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead.

**The Weight of God's Word:** Christ's answer in Luke 20:25 is not a clever political evasion but a covenant indictment that divides the world into two rival economies: Caesar's economy of coin, compulsion, and gain, and God's economy of consecration, charity, and yielded will, for "the whole world lieth in wickedness" and is ruled by "the prince of this world" who traffics in power, property, and purchase (1 John 5:19; John 12:31). Satan offered Christ all the kingdoms of the world for worship because they were already governed by his system of gain and coercion, which Christ rejected utterly, choosing obedience rather than ownership (Luke 4:5–8). Isaiah declared that the Lord's covenant economy is without price, calling all to "buy wine and milk without money and without price," a passage Nephi explicitly applies to the gospel of the Lamb that is offered freely and should not be sold (Isaiah 55:1; 2 Nephi 26:25–27). Joseph Smith taught that the power of God cannot be purchased or controlled by wealth, but only flows through righteousness and voluntary submission, for "the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven" and cannot be exercised by compulsion or gain (Doctrine and Covenants 121:36–37). Thus when Christ says to render unto God what is God's, He is not requesting property, coin, or political allegiance, but the only thing Caesar cannot mint nor Satan counterfeit: the surrendered will, the broken heart, and the contrite spirit (Psalm 51:17; 3 Nephi 9:20).

Because these two economies are mutually exclusive, Christ bound Luke 20:25 to the unyielding law that "no man can serve two masters," for to seek gain, honor, or control while claiming discipleship is to serve mammon rather than God, since "ye cannot serve God and mammon" is a covenant reality, not a rhetorical flourish (Matthew 6:24). Joseph Smith taught that priesthood authority and divine power are immediately forfeited the moment religion is used to gratify pride, vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion over souls, declaring that in such cases "the heavens withdraw themselves... amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man," establishing Satan's dominion as one of compulsion and ambition rather than persuasion and love (Doctrine and Covenants 121:37). He further taught that the kingdom of God operates only by voluntary obedience and righteous influence, emphasizing that true priesthood functions "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned," thereby distinguishing Christ's kingdom from Babylon's systems of coercion and enforced loyalty (Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42).

Joseph Smith repeatedly warned that when religion becomes a means of gain, applause, or personal elevation, it ceases to be of God, teaching that false spirits often operate under religious appearance and that “nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith, p. 205). He condemned self-appointed religious authority and ambition within the Church, stating that a man who elevates himself while condemning others “is in the high road to apostasy,” thus identifying the pursuit of religious power and prestige as a hallmark of Babylon rather than Zion (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 194). This teaching aligns precisely with the Book of Mormon’s definition of priestcraft, which condemns those who preach for gain and praise rather than for the welfare of souls, a practice the Lord explicitly forbids (2 Nephi 26:29).

Finally, Joseph Smith taught that Zion cannot be built by wages, compulsion, or institutional force, but only through voluntary consecration and celestial law, declaring that “Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom,” thereby excluding gain-driven religion from the kingdom of God (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 279). The Lord Himself confirmed this boundary by teaching that those who set their hearts upon riches and exercise unrighteous dominion are not of Him, while those who magnify their calling without hire are sustained by God’s power rather than worldly systems (Doctrine and Covenants 121:35; Doctrine and Covenants 24:9). Together, these sources demonstrate that Christ’s dominion is marked by sacrifice, meekness, and obedience freely chosen, while Satan’s dominion is marked by gain, honors, and control—two kingdoms divided by law, motive, and end.

This is why Luke 20:25 is inseparable from the Lord’s condemnation of priestcraft, for priestcraft is the attempt to render unto God what He never asked for—money, praise, and control—while withholding what He did ask for: charity, service, and truth freely given. Nephi defines priestcraft precisely as preaching for gain and setting oneself up as a light to get money and praise, which the Lord forbids because it imitates Caesar’s economy while claiming Christ’s name (2 Nephi 26:29). Alma taught that the Lord’s servants must labor with their own hands and preach without charge so that the word of God is not bound, for when the gospel is sold it is no longer the gospel (Alma 1:3, 26; Alma 30:33). The Doctrine and Covenants declares that those who preach for hire and set their hearts on riches are not of God, for “if ye obtain not charity, ye are nothing,” and charity alone qualifies one to speak in Christ’s name (Doctrine and Covenants 18:16–21; Moroni 7:44–47). Christ therefore commands that what is rendered to God is Christlike service, love unbought, truth unlicensed, and lives laid down rather than monetized, while what is rendered to Caesar is left to perish with Caesar, for Babylon always collapses under the weight of its own gain, but Zion is built only by a faithful remnant who choose obedience over profit and covenant over coin (Revelation 18:2; Doctrine and Covenants 97:21).

At the end of every priestcraft cycle, corruption is not only tolerated but celebrated, for that which is “highly esteemed among men” is almost always so because it flatters power, rewards conformity, and protects gain, yet Christ declares without qualification that such esteem is “an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). Helaman/Samuel foresaw this inversion of

discernment with surgical clarity, warning that when a true prophet arises calling repentance, he will be rejected, but if a man flatters the people and sanctifies their pride, “ye will say he is a prophet,” revealing that popular approval is not a sign of divine favor but often the final proof of apostasy (Helaman 13:27). Jeremiah, Nephi, Abinadi, and Christ Himself all confronted religious systems that were admired for order, wealth, and outward righteousness precisely because those systems had learned how to silence God while invoking His name, and the Lord’s verdict is consistent across dispensations: admiration by men is irrelevant when measured against covenant fidelity (Jeremiah 20:10; Luke 16:15).

This is why Christ’s charge that the Pharisees were “adulterers” struck them with greater fury than His exposure of their priestcraft, for they heard the word only through the lens of sexual propriety, while Christ was indicting them for covenant treachery—adulterating the word of God, their callings, and the souls entrusted to them for power, influence, and gain (Luke 16:21–22). Their outrage reveals their blindness, because instead of defending the poor at their gates or repenting of devouring widows’ houses, they fixated on perceived insults to their moral reputation, proving that they prized appearance over charity and ritual over righteousness (Luke 16:24–26; Matthew 23:14). Christ immediately confirmed the true meaning of His accusation by likening them to the rich man clothed in purple, feasting daily while Lazarus starved at his gate, a parable utterly unrelated to sexual sin and entirely focused on wealth, neglect, and covenant accountability, demonstrating that priestcraft always produces polished orthodoxy alongside profound lovelessness (Luke 16:23–30). Their problem was not ignorance of the law, for they had Moses and the prophets, but refusal to hear them, a refusal that no miracle—even resurrection—could cure (Luke 16:34–36).

Thus the decisive question at the end of every cycle is not doctrinal literacy but weight: what does the word of God weigh to you? To the Pharisees it weighed as gold, status, and control, something to be measured, managed, and monetized, which is why they could not see beyond hair, clothing, and ritual compliance while the poor bled out at their gates (Luke 16:14; Helaman 7:21). To the prophets, however, the word of God weighs as fire—burning, urgent, unbearable—driving men to speak when silence would preserve safety and to warn when obedience guarantees suffering, because truth known becomes truth that governs life in the present (Jeremiah 20:9; Ether 12:2). This is the dividing line: those who weigh God’s word as utility will always serve mammon, but those who feel it as fire in the bones will serve God regardless of the great personal cost, for the Spirit of Prophecy does not decorate institutions—it judges them, and it does not soothe the wicked—it summons the remnant to endure until the Lord gathers His jewels unto Himself (Luke 16:13; 3 Nephi 24:16–17).

### **The Weight of God’s Word; A Fire in the Bones**

God’s word is not light as a slogan or song,  
Not a badge to be worn while the poor are wronged.  
It weighs like a future already known,  
Like famine foreseen while the fields are grown.

To some it is measured in silver and praise,  
A tool for position, a wage for their days.

They count it in rituals, polished and clean,  
While Lazarus bleeds at the edge of the scene.

But to prophets it burns—no coin can contain  
The truth that ignites like unquenchable flame.  
A fire in the bones that forbids all retreat,  
Till warning is spoken and judgment is meet.