

## Jeremiah 7

### The Temple

**Read Jeremiah 7:1-15:** This chapter addresses those who attend temple services. It is hard to believe what these ‘*churchgoers*’ are allowing in their lives. This chapter is helpful in clearing up the confusion over what it means to walk with God. It’s not a declaration as much as it is a beacon that is pulling you. The Jews got it wrong; and so do we at times. We get pictures of what healthy faith looks like; and also, what societal/social faith looks like. We know that this is written for our learning; so, this must be a normal human state. This begs the question: How are we vulnerable to the same thinking?

We tend to think of Jeremiah being written to unbelievers facing judgement. In reality, this chapter is addressing people who are at church every week. The point is that what is being discussed here could totally happen to us too. The people were quick to point out that they were with God (so to speak).

Jerusalem is God’s home on earth. The children of Israel inherited blessings from Abraham. These are people who go to worship services. The issue is not church attendance. It is about intellectual dishonesty. They were standing by and letting their neighbors get away with murder. Like the church in Germany during Hitler’s time, they found a way to justify what was happening. They found a way to reconcile the evil activities all around them and involving them.

How far have we stretched our holiness, to accommodate our culture? We can attribute almost anything to our culture. We are supposed to help the helpless. We are not supposed to be those who take advantage or leverage our trust relationships. There is nobody who can truly vouch for us.

The previous chapter had a lot to do with the role of the temple, verses becoming a living sacrifice. The Jews were treating the temple like *a good luck charm, while living in sin*. They felt like they were *The A Team* because they were worthy. They felt that there was a reason they were living at *God’s headquarters on earth*. They saw themselves as special; but they did not stop the evil around them. It was ironically almost like the German church and Hitler’s Arrian Nation manifesto. There was nothing personal or life-changing about all of these hometown benefits. It is a physical illustration (model) of heaven that lost its significance, as it became a substitute for a personal relationship with God.

Jerusalem is in the hill country. The Temple was situated on one particular rise that goes by many names in the Hebrew scriptures. The Torah never identifies the mountain, but simply talks about “the place God will choose to rest His name” (e.g. Deuteronomy 12). The specific mountain is identified in Isaiah and the Book of Psalms as Mount Zion (e.g. Isaiah 60:14, Psalms 125:1). The biblical Book of Chronicles, however, calls it Mount Moriah (2 Chronicles 3:1). Micah 4:1 refers to it generically as Har Beit Adonai — meaning “The Mount of the House

of the Lord.” Jeremiah 26:18 shortens this to Har HaBayit, “The Mountain of the House,” commonly translated as the Temple Mount. This last name, Temple Mount, is used frequently in the Mishnah and Talmud and other rabbinic literature.

Solomon commissioned the temple as a way to connect to God and receive help. Over time, that turned into the temple being the help, instead of God.

*“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! <sup>28</sup> Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today: <sup>29</sup> that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. (1 Kings 8:27-29)*

*Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. (Hebrews 9:23)*

This temple confusion is not unlike what happened with the sacrifices. The sacrifices were supposed to produce an awareness of the unfairness of a lamb being slaughtered for my actions. It is supposed to be repulsive and regrettable. Instead, it became a source of pride and a merit badge.

*And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. (1 Kings 8:63)*

The original Passover splattered blood all around the family's front door. The idea was that Jesus fought to the death to protect your family and died on your doorstep. The intended result is to live under a debt of gratitude. We are supposed to try to pay it forward by being protectors of our neighbor.

God did not want to evict his tenants. His CC&Rs (Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions) were very simple and clear. He even provided a remedy after they failed to keep their contractual obligation. The problem is that you cannot resolve to stop doing evil through self-will. It can be compared to weight loss or fighting alcoholism. There is no scenario where we can come out looking good. It cannot be effectively managed by what you are *not going to do*. That becomes a compulsive and consuming thing given to the heat of the moment. That is the Old Testament in a nutshell. It seems like we can become good Eagle Scouts, but we cannot maintain that. We have to be targeting something higher.

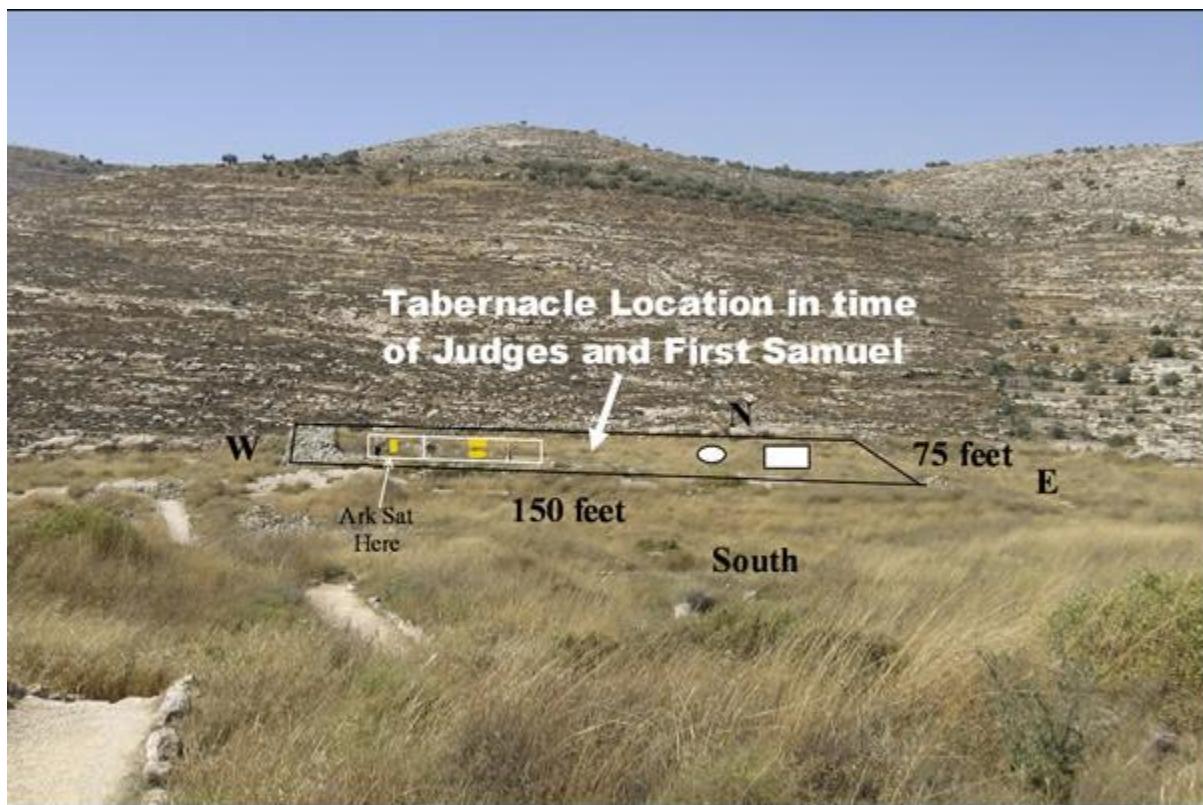
*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.....<sup>4</sup> You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. ....<sup>7</sup> You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? .... <sup>14</sup> For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love*

*your neighbor as yourself.” .... <sup>16</sup>I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Galatians 5)*

Originally, the tabernacle was located at Shiloah. God pulled out of northern Israel, and he brought it down in judgement. It moved to Jerusalem. The tabernacle location did not save the residents from Samaria and Shiloh from the results of their awful behavior. The book of Judges records it. Assyria took them all away. Jeremiah is telling the residents of Jerusalem that is going to play out all over again. How are you in Jerusalem different than the residents of Shiloh?

Many people do not realize that prior to the Temple in Jerusalem, a tabernacle stood in Shiloh, an ancient town in Samaria, for a full 369 years. That is a very long time – far longer than the United States has been an independent country. While Shiloh’s fortunes varied over this time, it was the only place that served as a national religious center for the children of Israel during this period – the era of the Biblical Judges. The lack of personal buy-in was obvious. People walked to the beat of their own drum; and were unaffected by ongoing temple activities.

Eli was the High Priest who presided over the sanctuary in Shiloh for 40 years, it seems clear that something rather bad was involved in Shiloh’s demise. In warning about the looming fate of Jerusalem, he has these stern words of caution: “For go now to My place that is in Shiloh, where I caused My name to rest at first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel”.



The point is this. We all find a way to make peace with our bad habits and with our areas where we are lacking. Shiloah is an example of how God will remove his own house of worship if it is not producing fruit.

We may not be committing crimes; but are we really helping anyone in need?

*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup>Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, <sup>9</sup>and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. <sup>10</sup>And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matthew 3:7-10)*

**Read Jeremiah 7:16-27:** Being God's people is not about your zip code or your bloodline. It's about letting the Holy Spirit do a work in your life. That is going to bless everybody. God wants a living sacrifice, not another ceremony or ritual.

Martin Luther risked his life to break tradition with the Catholic Church. He used scripture to point out that the church was out of bounds and heading in the wrong direction. Years later, the Lutheran Church has synods that are pro LGBTQ; and even have gay bishops. How is that even possible?

Misfortune, disease, heartache and failure are all tools to teach people not to pretend that God concurs. Imaginary solutions never work. They need to experience the *school of hard knocks* when words won't suffice.

**Read Jeremiah 7:28-34:** The men of Judah were faking it at best. What happens when we fake it? Look at some pastor's kids. Some of them know how to show respect outwardly, while they crave something different in their life. The church attendance becomes an expected obligation void of any connection with God. They find ways to incorporate bad habits and secret involvements to satisfy their curiosity. The children of Israel became worse than the Canaanites once they got a taste for the wildlife. It was like giving alcohol to the Indians. They went crazy on these idolatrous practices.

*Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. <sup>2</sup>And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. <sup>3</sup>For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. <sup>4</sup>He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem I will put My name.” <sup>5</sup>And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. <sup>7</sup>He even set a carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD had said to David and to Solomon his son, “In this*

*house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; <sup>8</sup> and I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers—only if they are careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them.” <sup>9</sup> But they paid no attention, and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. ( 2 Kings 21)*

The Valley of Hinnom (Tophet) was a representation of hell. It is where they beat drums to drown out the sounds of unwanted crying children...who were being fried by the cults. They were unwanted byproducts of promiscuity. The Valley of Hinnom was part of Jerusalem.