

Jeremiah

Chapter 24

The Good Figs and the Bad Figs

24 After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, together with the officials of Judah, the craftsmen, and the metal workers, and had brought them to Babylon, the LORD showed me this vision: behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the LORD. **2** One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. **3** And the LORD said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” I said, “Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten.” **4** Then the word of the LORD came to me: **5** “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. **6** I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up. **7** I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart. **8** “But thus says the LORD: Like the bad figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten, so will I treat Zedekiah the king of Judah, his officials, the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt. **9** I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a reproach, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them. **10** And I will send sword, famine, and pestilence upon them, until they shall be utterly destroyed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers.”

24:1–10 See Am 8:1–3. Having denounced Judah’s leaders (21:1–23:8) and false prophets (23:9–40), Jeremiah now describes the division of Judah’s people into good and bad (24:1–3) and summarizes the Lord’s determination to restore the good (vv. 4–7) but destroy the bad (vv. 8–10). (CSB)

Unlike false prophets (ch 22), Jeremiah stood in the council of the Lord (23:18); he was given a vision of the true course of events in Israel’s future. (TLSB)

24:1 *Jehoiachin ... and the officials ... brought them to Babylon.* In 597 B.C. (CSB)

An act which so weakened the power of the Jews as to make it practically impossible for them to prepare for war. Cp. 2 Kings 24, 14-17. This incident evidently happened at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign, when the country had been reduced to a condition of vassalage to the Chaldeans. (Kretzmann)

craftsmen and metal workers. See 2Ki 24:14, 16. Only the poorest and weakest people were left behind in Judah (see 2Ki 24:14). (CSB)

the LORD showed me. A common way of introducing prophetic visions (see Am 7:1, 4, 7). (CSB)

figs. Other ordinary objects given parabolic meaning were an almond tree (1:11), a boiling pot (1:13), a potter’s vessels (chs 18-19), and a yoke (27:2). (TLSB)

placed. The Hebrew root underlying this word is translated “meet” in Ex 29:42–43. As the Lord desired to “meet” with the Israelites at the entrance to the tabernacle, so the figs (symbolizing the people of Judah) would be “met” by him in front of the Jerusalem temple. (CSB)

24:2 *very good figs like first-ripe figs.* The first figs in June are especially juicy and delicious (see Isa 28:4; Hos 9:10; Mic 7:1; Na 3:12). (CSB)

Considered a delicacy (Hos 9:10). Perhaps offered as “firstfruits” (Ex 23:19). If the bad figs were meant to serve the same purpose, they would have been a blatant expression of contempt for the Lord. Sacrificing blemished offerings was an abomination to Him (Mal 1:6-14). (TLSB)

24:3 *What do you see ... ?* The purpose of the question was to impress the lesson upon Jeremiah's mind, to call attention to the objects which were to symbolize the Jews. (Kretzmann)

24:5–6 Just as good figs should be protected and preserved by their owner, so also the exiles of 597 B.C., who were the best of Judah's leaders and craftsmen (see 2Ki 24:14–16), would be watched over and cared for by the Lord (see 29:4–14). (CSB)

good figs – The Lord will regard as good figs the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar had brought to Babylon when he removed Coniah (Jeconiah; aka Jehoiachin) and the skilled craftsmen from Jerusalem (22:24-25; 2 Kgs 24:10-16). Chastised, humbled, repentant, these returning exiles will receive the new heart the Lord will give them. (TLSB)

24:6 *I will set my eyes on them.* Contrast Am 9:4. (CSB)

Being most attentive to their wants in this respect. (Kretzmann)

bring them back. In 538 B.C. (CSB)

build them up ... tear them down ... plant ... uproot. Like a poisonous plant or dangerous weed. The removal of these Jews to Babylon saved them from the calamities which befell the rest of the nation, and led them to repentance in the land of their captivity, the result being that their condition was bettered. (Kretzmann)

24:7 *a heart to know me.* For a more comprehensive prediction including the same promise see 31:31–34. (CSB)

The punishment of the Babylonian captivity directing their minds to the one true God, who could thus carry out His threats, so that they likewise looked for mercy to Him alone. (Kretzmann)

my people ... their God. The classic statement of covenant relationship. (CSB)

Restoring the original relation, which had been so rudely disturbed and made impossible by their idolatry. (Kretzmann)

with their whole heart. "I will be their God when they return to Me with their whole heart." (Kretzmann)

24:8 Bad figs are the people in Jerusalem who have escaped captivity. Because they remain self-righteous and impenitent, they shall be destroyed (cf Dt 28:37). (TLSB)

Zedekiah. Cf 2Ki 24:18–25:7. (TLSB)

remnant. God intended that some Judeans would remain in the land (Jer 44:7) to be joined by those who had been exiled. (TLSB)

dwell in the land of Egypt. Perhaps those deported with Jehoahaz in 609 B.C. and/or those who fled to Egypt after the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians in the battle of Carchemish in 605 (see 46:2). (CSB)

The obstinate Jews, who refused to heed His warning and accept His advice to yield to the Chaldeans. (Kretzmann)

24:9 *curse ... in all the places.* Literally, "I will give them for a shaking-up, for evil to all kingdoms of the earth," so that abuse and misfortune would strike them everywhere. (Kretzmann)

byword. The suffering of the Judeans would become proverbial, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (23:14; 50:40). This idea becomes a theme in Jeremiah, expressed in a litany of terms: byword, curse, desolation, execration, hissing, horror, reproach, taunt, and waste. (44:8, 22). (TLSB)

24:10 *destroyed from the land.* In 586 B.C. (CSB)

Thus the Lord predicts further invasions and repeated sackings of Jerusalem. Thus was His curse, as uttered in the Law, Deut. 28, 37, carried out upon all those who refused Him obedience according to His demand, as a warning to the men of all times. (Kretzmann)

Ch 24 The Lord tells Jeremiah that He will safeguard the Judean people sent into Babylonian exile in 587 BC, but that His wrath remains on those still in Jerusalem. The good—the faithful—will return. Today, the Lord calls us to repent of our sin and serve Him by faith. He graciously gives us His own heart and faithfulness in His Son born of David's line. • Father, keep us faithful by Your Holy Spirit, and direct our lives, redeemed by Your grace in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)