

Jeremiah

Chapter 25

Seventy Years of Captivity

The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), 2 which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 3 “For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, to this day, the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened. 4 You have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear, although the LORD persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets, 5 saying, ‘Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds, and dwell upon the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers from of old and forever. 6 Do not go after other gods to serve and worship them, or provoke me to anger with the work of your hands. Then I will do you no harm.’ 7 Yet you have not listened to me, declares the LORD, that you might provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm. 8 “Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, 9 behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. 10 Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste. 13 I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. 14 For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.”

25:1–29:32 The dominant theme in chs. 25–29 is the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem and exile to Babylonia in 586 B.C. (hinted at briefly in 24:10). (CSB)

25:1–38 Divine judgment will descend not only on Judah but on “all the surrounding nations” (v. 9) as well. (CSB)

25:1 *fourth year of Jehoiakim ... first year of Nebuchadnezzar.* The synchronism yields the date 605 B.C. (CSB)

25:3 *twenty-three years.* Nineteen under Josiah and four under Jehoiakim (see v. 1). (CSB)
God called Jeremiah to be a prophet in 628 BC. (TLSB)

thirteenth year of Josiah. 626 B.C. (or possibly as early as 627). (CSB)

you have not listened. Jeremiah, now halfway through his prophetic ministry, had been warned at the time of his call that the people of Judah would oppose him. (CSB)

25:4 *his servants the prophets.* Zephaniah and Habakkuk and the prophetess Huldah had also been active during this period. (Kretzmann)

25:5 *saying,* The word referring either to Jeremiah alone or to all the prophets, (CSB)

your evil deeds – Their wickedness finding its expression in all the acts of their life. (Kretzmann)

25:6 *I will do you no harm* – For all the prophets had told them time and again that their conduct would bring God's punishment upon them. (Kretzmann)

25:7 *your hands to your own harm.* The natural consequence of their obstinate disobedience. (Kretzmann)

25:8 *Lord of hosts.* The term “host (Hebrew *tasaba*) refers to military service, the ranks and divisions of troops. God calls Himself the god of the armies or of hosts, that is not only of the angels or of the spirits but of the entire creation which carries on the warfare for Him and serves Him. (TLSB)

25:9 *tribes of the north.* Babylonia and her allies. (CSB)

Allies of Babylon. *Nebuchadnezzar ... My servant.* At that moment, he was marching southward from Carchemish on the Upper Euphrates, where he had defeated Pharaoh Neco in 605 BC (46:2; 2Ki 23:29). (TLSB)

Nebuchadnezzar my servant. “Servant” is used here not in the sense of “worshiper” but of “vassal” or “agent of judgment,” just as the pagan ruler Cyrus is called the Lord’s “shepherd” in Isa 44:28 and his “anointed” in Isa 45:1. (CSB)

this land. Judah. (CSB)

surrounding nations. Named in vv. 19–26. (CSB)

Judah had so often chosen as allies. (Kretzmann)

everlasting desolation. Onlookers would be filled with horror, which, however, would quickly be changed to a sneer of satisfaction and malice as the former fruitful fields were gradually converted into a wilderness. (Kretzmann)

25:10 *the millstones and ... the lamp.* Dead stillness and unrelieved darkness will replace mirth and gladness. (TLSB)

Here is meant the incessant grinding noise indicated a happy household in the Orient. (Kretzmann)

light of the lamp – Even the poorest house in the East had an open oil-lamp with a linen or cotton wick burning all night. Cp. Is. 24, 7. (Kretzmann)

25:11–12 *seventy years.* This round number (as in Ps 90:10; Isa 23:15) probably represents the period from 605 to 538 B.C., which marked the beginning of Judah's return from exile. The 70 years of Zec 1:12 are not necessarily the same as those here and in 29:10. They probably represent the period from 586 (when Solomon's temple was destroyed) to 516 (when Zerubbabel's temple was completed). (CSB)

25:11 *This ... land ... and these nations.* Judah and the nations named in vv. 19–26. (CSB)

25:12 *punish the king ... and that nation.* See 50:18. The city of Babylon was captured by the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. (near the end of Jeremiah's 70 years. (CSB)

The enemies thus being punished in turn, even as it happened when the Medes and Persians under the command of Cyrus overthrew the Babylonian empire. (Kretzmann)

25:13 *book.* After this word, the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) inserts the material found in chs. 46–51, though rearranged. (CSB)

The king burned the record of all the words God spoke to Jeremiah until the fourth year of Jehoiakim, so Baruch had to prepare another scroll at Jeremiah's dictation (ch 36). (TLSB)

25:14 *many nations.* Media, Persia and their allies. (CSB)

great kings. Cyrus and his associates. (CSB)

recompense them according to their deeds. This is further emphasized by the picture of the Lord's cup of fury. (Kretzmann)

25:1–14 In a prophecy dating to 605 BC, God warns His people that He will soon destroy Jerusalem because of their idolatry and immorality. Ultimately, His judgment will fall on all nations, including Babylon. God, righteous and holy, must punish sin. Even if God's justice seems to delay, it always accomplishes its purpose. The Law must do its work, yet God also has His Gospel. Jesus Christ is working a better work, saving all who repent and believe in Him. • Lord, turn us from our sins, and keep us steadfast in Your grace through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)

The Cup of the LORD's Wrath

15 Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. 16 They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them.” 17 So I took the cup from the LORD's hand, and made all the nations to whom the LORD sent me drink it: 18 Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a desolation and a waste, a hissing and a curse, as at this day; 19 Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his officials, all his people, 20 and all the mixed tribes among them; all the kings of the land of Uz and all the kings of the land of the Philistines (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod); 21 Edom, Moab, and the sons of Ammon; 22 all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the coastland across the sea; 23 Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who cut the corners of their hair; 24 all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed tribes who dwell in the desert; 25 all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of Media; 26 all the kings of the north, far and near, one after another, and all the kingdoms of the world that are on the face of the earth. And after them the king of Babylon shall drink. 27 “Then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink, be drunk and vomit, fall and rise no more, because of the sword that I am sending among you.’ 28 “And if they refuse to accept the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: You must drink! 29 For behold, I begin to work disaster at the city that is called by my name, and shall you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, declares the LORD of hosts.’ 30 “You, therefore, shall prophesy against them all these words, and say to them: “‘The LORD will roar from on high, and from his holy habitation utter his voice; he will roar mightily against his fold, and shout, like those who tread grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. 31 The clamor will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against the nations; he is entering into judgment with all flesh, and the wicked he will put to the sword, declares the LORD.’ 32 “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Behold, disaster is going forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth! 33 “And those pierced by the LORD on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground. 34 “Wail, you shepherds, and cry out, and roll in ashes, you lords of the flock, for the days of your slaughter and dispersion have come, and you shall fall like a choice vessel. 35 No refuge will remain for the shepherds, nor escape for the lords of the flock. 36 A voice—the cry of the shepherds, and the wail of the lords of the flock! For the LORD is laying waste their pasture, 37 and the peaceful folds are devastated because of the fierce anger of the LORD. 38 Like a lion he has left his lair, for their land has become a waste because of the sword of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.”

25:15 *cup filled with the wine of wrath.* Symbolic of divine judgment, especially against wicked nations. (CSB)

The desolation awaiting them is described frequently this way, which Jeremiah, acting as divine cupbearer, will force them to drink. No nation, whether Egypt and Babylon or one of the lesser states, will be able to refuse to accept the cup. (TLSB)

nations to whom I send you. God's judgment would begin with Judah and Jerusalem. From there it would spread in an ever-widening circle throughout the whole Middle East. Egypt

is mentioned next because many, including many Jews, fled the power of Nebuchadnezzar's invading armies. The lands immediately surrounding Judah: Uz (perhaps located in the Arabian desert), Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistra, Tyre and Sidon – all would fall. Nebuchadnezzar's might would be felt by those in the north, the south (deserts of Arabia), and the east – even Elam and Media, lands east of Babylon. In the end Babylon, the destroyer, would itself drink the cup it had forced so many others to drink, for the Lord is the one who controls all the nations and is bringing judgment. No flesh can boast before Him. (PBC)

25:16 *stagger and be crazed.* They would stagger and reel, and be stunned and stupefied with the intoxicating effects of the liquid consumed. (Kretzmann)

because of the sword. As the sting of wine causes people to stagger, so the stroke of the sword causes them to fall, never to rise again (see v. 27). (CSB)

That is, the war which the Lord intended to bring upon these nations would be so severe, so horrible, that people would be stupefied by its terrors and perish in helpless confusion. (Kretzmann)

25:17 A symbolic description of Jeremiah's announcement of divine judgment against the nations. (CSB)

In the following verses, they are listed according to their location in a line running from south (southeast and southwest) to north (northeast and northwest). For the oracles addressed to them all, cf chs 46–51. In the LXX, these oracles are found following the words “written in this book” (25:13). (TLSB)

25:18 *Jerusalem and ... Judah.* God's own people are to be judged first (see v. 29; see also Eze 9:6; 1Pe 4:17). (CSB)

These two heading the list as the chief offenders against the Lord of the covenant. (Kretzmann)

desolation...waste...hissing...curse. 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). (PBC)

25:19–26 The roster of nations begins with Egypt and ends with Babylon, as in chs. 46–51; but Damascus (see 49:23–27) is omitted, and a few other regions are added. (CSB)

25:19 *Egypt.* This was the nation upon whom the Jews had chiefly relied. (Kretzmann)

25:20 *foreign people.* These were small tribes of a mixed population near the borders of Egypt and elsewhere. (Kretzmann)

Uz. A large territory east of the Jordan (see v. 3), which included Edom in the south (see Ge 36:28; La 4:21) and the Aramean lands in the north. (CSB)

Philistines. The Philistines themselves were a vigorous Indo-European maritime people who invaded Egypt early in the 12th century B.C. After being driven out, they migrated in large numbers to southwest Canaan, later extending their influence over most of the land. The Philistines of the patriarchal period (see 21:32, 34; 26:1, 8, 14–15, 18) no doubt had earlier settled in Canaan more peacefully and in smaller numbers.) (CSB)

Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron. Three of the five main cities inhabited by the Philistines. (CSB)

remnant of Ashdod. According to the Greek historian Herodotus (2.157), the Egyptian pharaoh Psammetichus I (664–610 B.C.) destroyed Ashdod after a long siege. By Nehemiah's time, it was inhabited again (see note on Ne 4:7). The fifth main Philistine city, Gath (see Jos 13:3), though important earlier (see, e.g., 1Sa 21:10–12), was destroyed and apparently not rebuilt (in later centuries it is not mentioned with the other four cities; see Am 1:6–8; Zep 2:4; Zec 9:5–6). (CSB)

25:21 *Edom.* Reddish rock formations, primarily sandstone, are conspicuous in the territory of the Edomites, located south and southeast of the Dead Sea. (CSB)

Moab and Ammon. The sons born to Lot's daughters were the ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites (see Dt 2:9, 19), two nations that were to become bitter enemies of Abraham's descendants. (CSB)

25:22 *Tyre.* The main seaport along the Phoenician coast, about 35 miles north of Mount Carmel. Part of the city was built on two rocky islands about half a mile from the shore. King Hiram of Tyre supplied cedars and craftsmen for the temple (see 1Ki 5:8–9) and sailors for Solomon's commercial fleet (1Ki 9:27). (CSB)

Sidon. See Eze 28:20–26, the other prominent Phoenician city, about 25 miles north of Tyre. (CSB)

coastlands across the sea. Island and maritime regions, some of them Phoenician colonies, located to the west and northwest of Tyre and Sidon. (CSB)

These were all the distant countries along the shores of the Mediterranean and the nations on its islands. (CSB)

25:23 *Dedan.* An Arabian tribe whose merchant activities are mentioned also in Eze 27:20; 38:13 - A tribe and territory in southern Edom. (CSB)

Tema. An oasis in northern Arabia about 400 miles southwest of Babylon (cf. Job 6:19; Jer 25:23). (CSB)

Buz. A desert region in the east. (CSB)

This is another city and tribe in this neighborhood. (Kretzmann)

25:24 *mixed tribes*, The same Hebrew root underlies “Arabia” and “foreign people.” (CSB)

Arabs, where tribes no longer were of pure blood, and probably a country toward the Euphrates, and , to the east of the Tigris, used for Persia in general. (Kretzmann)

25:25 *Zimri*. Not to be confused with the Israelite king of that name, Zimri is perhaps the same as Zimran, whom Keturah bore to Abraham (see Ge 25:1–2). The region known as Zimri (location unknown) would then have been named after him. (CSB)

Elam. The Elamites lived east of Mesopotamia. (CSB)

Media. Later to join the Persians in conquering Babylon. Located in what is today northwestern Iran. There was conflict between Assyria and Media during the eighth century B.C. Some, however, relate the fulfillment of this verse to the period when the Medes joined the Babylonians in defeating Assyria in 612–609 but later united with Cyrus to conquer Babylon in 539.). (CSB)

25:26 *Babylon. Sheshach*. Hbr *sheshach*, a cryptogram that uses a coded way of spelling known as Athbash. The last letter of the alphabet was substituted for the first, and the second last for the second, etc. (TLSB)

shall drink. The Lord’s agents of judgment are not themselves exempt from his judgment (see 51:48–49). (CSB)

Babylon itself being designated by this term and included in the list of those who were to be stunned by the wine of God's avenging fury. (Kretzmann)

25:27 *fall ... because of the sword*. Namely, the cup of the Lord's fierce anger, and vomiting as a result of their excessive drinking, will lead to being completely overcome by the powerful potion. (Kretzmann)

25:28 *you must drink* – There is no way out, they are compelled to endure the destruction which had been resolved upon in their case. (Kretzmann)

25:29 *I begin to work*. God’s own people are to be judged first. (CSB)

city that is called by my Name. Jerusalem. The name of God is equivalent to His gracious presence. (CSB)

25:30–31 Lest anyone think the fate of kingdoms and empires, mentioned by way of example, is merely an accident of history, Jeremiah is instructed to explain the causes of their downfall. Doom falls, not only on the people of his fold, but also on all the earth. The Lord insists on judgment with all according to unalterable laws of justice. No resistance is possible, for He issues thundering, resounding commands from on high. Cf Jl 2:11. (TLSB)

25:30 *The LORD will roar from on high.* An echo of Joel 3:16; Am. Amos, a shepherd, was sent to Israel to warn her that he had heard a lion roar and that the lion is none other than the Lord himself, who has only wanted to be Israel's shepherd. (CSB)

Scornful of any attempted opposition, He has reason to shout. Cf Jl 2:11. (TLSB)

shout like those who tread the grapes. This was a clear cry of exultation, to the accompaniment of a regular shout enabling them to keep time. It was against all the inhabitants of the earth, that is, of the land of Judah as beginning the judgment upon the whole world. (Kretzmann)

25:31 *clamor.* The sounds of war (see Am 2:2). (CSB)

indictment. This is a picture of a court scene where God's people are summoned as well as the nations to remind them of their covenant obligations to Him and when necessary, to pass judgment on them. (PBC)

25:32–33 Judgment will be so devastating that there will be no survivors to bury. (TLSB)

25:32 *disaster...farthest parts of the earth.* The wrath of God (see 23:19), mediated through the coming invasion of the Babylonians. (CSB)

25:33 *not be lamented... shall be dung on the surface of the ground.* Judgment will be so devastating that there will be no survivors to bury. (TLSB)

25:34–36 *shepherds ... leaders of the flock.* So certain is the threatened destruction that the prophet can call on the shepherds or kings to wail as if they and their flock had already suffered. (TLSB)

25:34 *fall like a choice vessel.* Cf. the description of Jehoiachin in 22:28. (CSB)

Rather, "And I scatter you, so that one part of the flock is dispersed, the other part slaughtered." Like a dainty piece of pottery, to be utterly shattered. (Kretzmann)

25:35 *nor escape* – Literally, "And there vanishes the refuge away from the shepherds," so that they cannot depend upon it. (Kretzmann)

25:36 *laying waste their pasture* – Utterly destroying the meadows which they thought inexhaustible by the blast of His burning wrath. (Kretzmann)

25:37 *fierce anger of the Lord* – Rendered desolate as He gave vent to His fury. The description once more returns to the picture of a lion. (Kretzmann)

25:38 *left his lair* – Leaving the thicknesses where his den is located. (Kretzmann)

his fierce anger – The Lord Himself having gone forth to punish His enemies.
(Kretzmann)

25:15–38 God warns all people that He will bring judgment to all the nations of the world. Implicit in the warning is a call to repentance and faith, the only way of salvation on the day of divine judgment. Like individual people, nations have gone their way without regard for God. Idolatry and immorality, including abuse and neglect of the poor, will be severely punished in the end. Ultimately, Jesus pays for the sins of all people and every nation by His death on the cross. Throughout these warnings to the nations, God’s promise of a Savior continues to shine through. • Father, may Your Gospel go forth for all nations. Turn our own nation to righteousness, and grant us Your continued blessing. Amen. (TLSB)