

Jeremiah

Chapter 26

Jeremiah Threatened with Death

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: 2 “Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word. 3 It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds. 4 You shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, 5 and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, 6 then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.’” 7 The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. 8 And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, “You shall die! 9 Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant?’” And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD. 10 When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the LORD and took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the LORD. 11 Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, “This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.” 12 Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. 13 Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you. 14 But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. 15 Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.”

26:1–24 A summary (vv. 2–6)—and its results (vv. 7–24)—of one of Jeremiah’s temple messages in ch. 7 (see note on 7:1–10:25). (CSB)

26:1–11 The Levitical high priest was the chief priest by divine right [Leviticus 8], and yet godless high priests were not to be obeyed. As Jeremiah and other prophets dissented from the high priests [Jeremiah 26:1–11], so the apostles dissented from Caiaphas and did not have to obey him [Acts 4:19–20; 5:29]” (Tr 38). (TLSB)

26:1 *beginning of the reign.* See 27:1. The Babylonian equivalent of the Hebrew for this phrase implies that the first year of King Jehoiakim (609–608 B.C.) is probably meant. (CSB)

26:2 *courtyard of the LORD’s house.* Perhaps near the New Gate. (CSB)

This was the large outer court, where the people assembled for worship. (Kretzmann)

who come to worship. These were the believers who still were found in the nation and those who made a pretense at serving the Lord. (Kretzmann)

do not hold back a word. This was the threatening prophecy being proclaimed in all its ruthless severity. (Kretzmann)

26:3 *every one turn* – His own goodness making another effort in their behalf and leaving them without excuse in the event of their refusing to listen. (Kretzmann)

relent. Repentance on the part of the people was still the Lord's object. (Kretzmann)

26:4 *my law.* They were to be in complete agreement with its precepts. (Kretzmann)

26:5 *my servants the prophets.* God had promised that Moses would be the first in a long line of prophets who would speak in the Lord's name and serve him faithfully. (CSB)

26:6 *make this house like Shiloh.* The Tabernacle had been removed and the city itself reduced to ruins, cp. chap. 7, 12, 14. (Kretzmann)

this city. Jerusalem. (CSB)

city a curse. Jerusalem's destruction will become proverbial. When uttering a curse, nations will say: Let Jerusalem's fate overtake you. (TLSB)

26:7-9 A mob demanded that Jeremiah be executed for uttering blasphemy against God's holy habitation (Dt 18:20). (TLSB)

26:7 *all...heard Jeremiah* – He brought his message to their attention in accordance with the command of the Lord. (Kretzmann)

26:8 *priests and prophets* – These were the very people who should be listening most closely and backing Jeremiah up. They like the religious leaders at Jesus' time had their own thing going and anything from him only messed things up. Jeremiah and Jesus had to go.

You shall die. The Hebrew for this phrase is translated "you will surely die" in Ge 2:17. A similar phrase describes the ultimate penalty for gross violations of the law of Moses (see, e.g., Ex 21:15–17; Lev 24:16–17, 21; Dt 18:20; cf. 1Ki 21:13). (CSB)

The response of Jeremiah's hearers, unfortunately, was predictable. Out of their hearts they spoke; out of their hearts they acted. The Lord had rightly evaluated their hearts. They were wholly impenitent from top to bottom, from the priests and prophets, to all the people. Without hesitation they arrested Jeremiah. In the legal hearing that followed they pronounced a death sentence on him. As if they did not already know, further proving their stubbornness, they asked, "Why do you prophesy...?" The priests, who were chiefly responsible for seeing that God's covenant was kept, led the charge. (PBC)

26:9 *Shiloh* – Had been a place of worship that the Philistines had destroyed. The Jews of that time and even at Jesus time put their trust in the temple (God's creation) rather than in God (the creator).

Desolate without inhabitant – They not only regarded his message as an insult to their capital and country, but they charged him with uttering falsehoods in the name of Jehovah, which was an act punishable by death, Deut. 18, 20. (Kretzmann)

gathered around. With hostile intent (see Nu 16:3). (CSB)

26:10 *officials of Judah.* Those responsible for making legal decisions concerning disputes taking place in the temple precincts. The priests and (false) prophets, who had a vested interest in Jerusalem and its temple, felt that Jeremiah should be sentenced to death because he was predicting the destruction of both the city and the Lord's house (see vv. 8–9, 11). After hearing Jeremiah's defense (vv. 12–15), the officials decided in his favor (v. 16). The people, fickle and easily swayed, first opposed Jeremiah (vv. 8–9), then supported him (v. 16). (CSB)

The uproar reached the palace apartments, the court of the king himself. Perhaps some of the king's officials had men assigned to keep track of Jeremiah's activities. The chief officers hurried from the palace, which borders the temple immediately to the south, and assembled in the New Gate. (PBC)

New Gate. See 36:10; possibly the same as the "Upper Gate of Benjamin." (CSB)

The location of the New Gate is uncertain, but it may have been a gate built to afford the king and his officers quick and easy access to the temple area. (PBC)

26:11 Jeremiah's enemies judge him before he has a chance to defend himself (see Dt 19:6). (CSB)

Having assembled, they were ready to hear the case against Jeremiah. The priests and prophets and others sympathetic to them leveled the charge: "He has prophesied against this city." They accused Jeremiah not of false doctrine or of being a false prophet, but of treason. (PBC)

These were those whose pride was injured by the message of Jeremiah, who were personally enraged against him. This expediency, that of appealing to a false patriotism, is resorted to by demagogues even in our day, when in reality they are merely trying to give vent to their own personal spite and grudge against the faithful citizens of a country. (Kretzmann)

26:12 *The LORD sent me.* Jeremiah seized the chance to respond by repeating the thrust of his previous sermon. Their problem, was with the Lord; he was only the Lord's messenger. They were furious with Jeremiah because he had convicted them of their sin. (PBC)

He was not giving his own personal opinion or voicing any spite which he might have felt, but he had only done his duty. (Kretzmann)

26:13 *relent.* God is faithful to forgive all who repent at any time. In fact the angels in heaven rejoice with him when one sinner repents. (CSB)

26:14 *I am in your hands* –Jeremiah did not flinch. He answered his accusers, "Do with me as you will, but know that to silence me will change nothing. You will only make your case worse, for you will pollute the city and make it unclean by shedding innocent blood. The Lord sent me." (PBC)

26:15 *put me to death* – Jeremiah is telling them that even if they kill him the truth of the Lord will not be stopped. (CSB)

Isaiah 55:11 "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

innocent blood. He was thereby increasing their guilt and incurring heavier penalties. (Kretzmann)

Lord sent me to you – Jeremiah feeling it necessary to affirm this truth a second time in order to give emphasis to his warning. (Kretzmann)

26:1–15 God sends Jeremiah to warn the people about the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple due to their sin. If they confess their sin, God will forgive them and spare them. For Jeremiah’s faithful proclamation, he is arrested and tried for treason (a capital crime). Hard hearts resist every overture of mercy from God and ignore all His warnings of impending judgment. God’s heart longs to forgive sinners, even though they resist His Word and murder His prophets. Today, know that the Lord has set His heart on you. Call on Him in repentance and faith, through Christ. • Father, open our ears to hear You clearly, and lead us every day in the way of faith and obedience, through Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

Jeremiah Spared from Death

16 Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, “This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.” **17** And certain of the elders of the land arose and spoke to all the assembled people, saying, **18** “Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.’ **19** Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD relent of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves.” **20** There was another man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Uriah the son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied against this city and against this land in words like those of Jeremiah. **21** And when King Jehoiakim, with all his warriors and all the officials, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death. But when Uriah heard of it, he was afraid and fled and escaped to Egypt. **22** Then King Jehoiakim sent to Egypt certain men, Elnathan the son of Achbor and others with him, **23** and they took Uriah from Egypt and brought him to King Jehoiakim, who struck him down with the sword and dumped his dead body into the burial place of the common people. **24** But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah so that he was not given over to the people to be put to death.

26:16–19 The judges did not impose the death sentence, basing their verdict of not guilty on a precedent that occurred over a century earlier. At that time, King Hezekiah did not put the prophet Micah to death when he spoke similar threats against Zion and Jerusalem. (TLSB)

26:16 Contrast v. 11; see note on v. 10. (CSB)

Although they had, in the beginning, clamored for his death, they had quickly been influenced in the opposite direction, after the manner of fickle mobs the world over. (Kretzmann)

26:17 *elders*. See 19:1; see also note on Ex 3:16. (CSB)

These were either the most venerable and experienced of the princes or aged representatives of the people, who were highly respected for their wisdom. (Kretzmann)

26:18–19 The elders cite the precedent of Micah, who lived a century earlier and who (together with Isaiah) convinced King Hezekiah to pray for forgiveness on behalf of his people. The Lord answered the prayers of the king and the prophets, and in 701 B.C. Jerusalem and the temple were spared (see Isa 37:33–37). (CSB)

26:18 *Zion will be plowed ... become a heap of ruins*. Quoted verbatim from Mic 3:12—the only place in the OT where one prophet quotes another and identifies his source. (CSB)

26:19 *seek his favor*. Lit. “stroke his face” (cf. Ps 119:58), “pat his cheek” (see Ex 32:11; 1Sa 13:12; 2Ki 13:4). (CSB)

26:20–23 A parenthesis, cited as an example of the contrast between how a good king, Hezekiah, treated the Lord’s prophets and how a wicked king, Jehoiakim, was known to have treated them. (CSB)

Jeremiah’s life had indeed hung by a thread, as a recent incident showed. Another man, Uriah, was put to death because the king regarded the Lord’s spokesman guilty of treason. Jehoiakim had Uriah executed like a common criminal. Uriah is unknown except for the reference here to his tragic death. (TLSB)

26:20 *Uriah*. Not mentioned elsewhere in the OT, though it has been claimed (but not substantiated) that he appears in one of the Lachish letters. (CSB)

Kiriath-jearim. Northwest of Jerusalem. The ark of the covenant was lodged there during Samuel’s time. (TLSB)

26:21 *officials*. Lit. “strong men” (perhaps the royal bodyguard). (CSB)

Uriah ... escaped... to Egypt. A fatal mistake, for now he could be accused of treason and sedition. (CSB)

26:22 *Elnathan son of Acbor*. One of King Jehoiakim’s highest officials (see 36:12), he was impressed on another occasion by Jeremiah’s prophecies (see 36:16), “urged the king not to burn” Jeremiah’s scroll (36:25), and warned the prophet to hide (see 36:19). An Elnathan (perhaps the same man) was Jehoiakim’s father-in-law (see 2Ki 24:6, 8). An Acbor (perhaps the father of this Elnathan) was one of King Josiah’s officials. (CSB)

Member of the delegation sent to Egypt to bring Uriah back; he later gave good advice to the king. (TLSB)

26:23 *took Uriah out of Egypt*. Mutual rights of extradition were a part of the treaty imposed on Judah by Egypt when Jehoiakim became the vassal of Pharaoh Neco II (see 2Ki 23:34–35). (CSB)

Because favorable diplomatic relations with Egypt existed at this time, the requested extradition was granted. (TLSB)

Jehoiakim struck him down. Apart from divine intervention, Jeremiah probably would have fallen victim to the same fate (see 36:26). (CSB)

burial place of the common people. Commoners were buried in the Kidron Valley east of Jerusalem (see 2Ki 23:6). (CSB)

The executed criminal was not accorded a resting place in a family sepulchre but was thrown into a common grave. (TLSB)

common people. Lit, “sons of the people,” which could refer to the landholders of the upper class. However, the common burial ground in the Kidron Valley seems the more likely place of Uriah’s burial (cf 2Ki 23:6). (TLSB)

26:24 *Ahikam son of Shaphan*. One of King Josiah’s officials (see 2Ki 22:12, 14), along with an Acbor who may have been the father of the Elnathan in v. 22 (CSB).

His father, Shaphan, was a trusted official of King Josiah. His son Gedaliah, appointed governor by Nebuchadnezzar, respected Jeremiah (39:14; 2Ki 25:22). (TLSBB)

Ahikam was also the father of Gedaliah, who would become governor of Judah after Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. (see 40:5) and who also befriended Jeremiah (see 39:14). (PBC)

was with Jeremiah. Ahikam's high position in Jehoiakim's court was doubtless instrumental in saving the prophet's life. (CSB)

This course was sometimes followed by rulers in order to remove the stigma of a judicial murder from themselves. Note: Urijah was faithful in delivering his message, but erred in this, that he forsook his post when danger threatened; so God permitted him to lose his life, while that of Jeremiah was spared. God's ministers must firmly believe that He can and will protect them in every emergency, according to His will. (Kretzmann)

26:16–24 Jeremiah narrowly escapes the death penalty under wicked King Jehoiakim when a high court official, Ahikam, and others intercede for him. Faithful proclamation of God's Word often brings serious, even fatal, opposition by the worldly powers. Despite this, faithfully defend those wrongly accused, and pray for fellow Christians who face persecution. God often rescues His people from physical harm, but the greater blessing is that He rescues you from eternal condemnation through Jesus Christ. • Lord, by Your Spirit, make us faithful bearers of Your Word, no matter what troubles it causes. In Jesus' name. Amen. (TLSB)