

Bible Study Notes

(A basic transcription with modifications for style and clarity)

... OR THE PROPHETS

Brian Orchard, August 6, 2021

I'm sure during these times many of us are reading much about the state of our society, the state of our world. It's very interesting to see how people try to grapple with these conditions. I just would like to reference a couple of statements here, and you'll see why as we go into this material. One, first of all, was a headline that declared, "Our Increasingly Unrecognizable Civilization". I don't think any of us have any difficulty in appreciating what's behind that. The change in our civilization has been rapid and the deterioration has been so fast that it's been very hard to keep up with it. I understand where this person is coming from. I'd just like to share a few comments from a British columnist who writes for *The Times* of London, a very prestigious newspaper as far as the UK is concerned, which again I'm sure you will be able to relate to.

"Why is so much of the political, cultural and business establishment meekly going along with the onslaught against normative western values and the repudiation of rationality itself?"

The answer lies in what's been happening to the west over the past half century. The current culture wars reflect decades of cultural Marxist chickens coming home to roost.

There's been a revolutionary long march through the institutions aimed at subverting western nations and destroying their culture. Setting out to undermine the traditional family, the educational system and the concept of the nation-state itself, the signature motif of this ideology is the repudiation of reason itself."

There are several factors in there that are worthy of a great deal of comment, but that's not the point that I want to make at this particular juncture. What we are experiencing has been a long time coming. That writer referenced a half century. It's been much, much longer than a half century. And even if we only take the modern version of what she's talking about, we can go back and track it at least 90 to 100 years. I would like to apply the increasingly unrecognizable civilization, and the long march through the institutions more specifically, to God's people. And this would be the nation of Israel. These comments reference Western Civilization, much of which is built on the foundation of the tribes of Israel. We particularly note the descendants of the two sons of Joseph.

With this study what I'd like to do is look at why our civilization is becoming increasingly unrecognizable by looking at prophecies, just using prophecies. The emphasis will be on prophecy and what I'd like to do is also bring into focus where all of this is heading, because we're not that far away, once again, from the Feast of Tabernacles which will focus on the soon-coming Kingdom of God. We, as God's people, need to begin to get our minds focused in that direction so that we can take full advantage of keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. I'd like to pick up the flow in Deuteronomy chapter 4. It should be a familiar chapter to us, very important in understanding God's purpose for Israel and what He wanted from them.

Deuteronomy 4:1 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you.

Here we are getting set up for Israel to inherit the land, as God has promised they would. This is what is going on in this particular chapter. If we drop down to verse 23, He gives them a very clear and very definite warning. He said:

23 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, (You could also say, "Which you made with Him", going back to Sinai.) and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you.

24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

25 "When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the Lord your God to provoke Him to anger,

26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed.

27 And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you.

Really not a lot of wiggle room here for God's people. "If you turn from Me, you turn away from this covenant which we have entered into and you turn to other gods, gods which you will form (idolatry is what He's referring to), I will simply deal with you and I will scatter you amongst the nations. You will become an increasingly unrecognizable people!" is what He was saying. God's intent, as you well know, was to have a special relationship with these people for a very important purpose.

Deuteronomy 4:13 So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

14 And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess.

You can see how important it was to God that these people truly represent Him. There are verses in this chapter that we refer to fairly often, verses which are very important in understanding that God was developing a nation representative of Himself to all of the other nations around. God stated that if they turned from the covenant of obedience, He would scatter them far and wide.

Deuteronomy 28:64 "Then the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known — wood and stone.

Scattered "from one end of the earth to the other". History tells us that Israel didn't and God did! If you look at Ezekiel 20 verse 21:

Ezekiel 20:21 "Notwithstanding (this is a simple statement of fact), the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, and were not careful to observe My judgments, 'which, if a man does, he shall live by them'; but they profaned My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the wilderness.

22 Nevertheless I withdrew My hand and acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the Gentiles, in whose sight I had brought them out.

23 Also I raised My hand in an oath to those in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries,

24 because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers' idols.

Israel did turn rather quickly to idols, to other gods. It's a very important point that God is making here, coming back to "You shall have no other gods beside Me and I want you to live by these rules, standards and laws to exemplify that fact that there is only one God." Not much has changed in the requirement God has for His people in that regard to where we are today.

Ezekiel 36:19 So I scattered them among the nations... (This is fact now. It was a promise that He would do it before. Now, it's a statement of fact.)

19 So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.

Israel was indeed scattered from one end of earth to the other. Hosea 9, verse 17 makes a statement along these lines:

Hosea 9:17 My God will cast them away, because they did not obey Him; And they shall be wanderers among the nations.

They became wanderers among the nations. Israel lost its identity, very important. As Ezekiel said, they lost the identifying sign, the Sabbath. They profaned the Sabbath and they lost their identity. That means two ways: They lost their identity and they didn't understand who they were. And as they wandered around from one end of the earth to the other, they haven't known who they are and the significance of who they are. They became an increasingly unrecognizable civilization. And in particular, God was not recognizable through these people. That's the consequence of them becoming lost and losing their identity. But the point I want to make is that scattering does not equal disappearing. They had not disappeared. Israel has not ceased to exist! Jesus Christ interestingly knew who they were and He said so! In Matthew chapter 10 He has these words to say:

Matthew 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

They were lost. As I say, they lost their identity, they were lost to themselves. They were lost to the world in terms of an identity. Christ referred to them as the lost sheep of the House of Israel. That's where that terminology comes from.

In being scattered they have taken on the identities of the nations into which they have been scattered. Not knowing who they were themselves, they have adopted the various aspects of other civilizations and, as I say, become an increasingly unrecognizable people. But Israel did not, has not and will not cease to exist. Christ knew who they were and their identity is very relevant to us today, to understand.

Amos 9:8 "Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, (God knows who they are. He is watching.) and I will destroy it from the face of the earth (as we've already read); Yet (this next statement is important) I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," (It will be punished, yes. But it will not cease to exist. It will not utterly be destroyed.) says the Lord.

9 "For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; (And notice the next sentence:) Yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.

It will continue to exist. Yes, God will fulfill what He said in terms of the correction that will need to be applied to them, but Israel will not cease to exist. The role of Israel is important to the validity of the Bible. If you remove Israel from the Bible, what do you have left? God chose the nation of Israel from the time of Abraham to fulfill His plan of salvation. It's very important to God. You can't just take Israel of old and say that's

history. That's interesting, but it's not relevant because it all keeps building. And prophecy is involved in the building of the ancient nation of Israel, the physical people of Israel, through into what is happening today, what the Church stands for and one of the important roles of the Church and it takes us on into the millennial period. That's why the focus towards the soon-coming Kingdom of God is important in understanding what is going on today and it's also important for us as God's people to have that focus.

If we just focus on what's going on around us today, we can't make head nor tails of it from a rational point of view. It takes God's Spirit, it takes the understanding of God's word. It takes the understanding of prophecy to understand what is going on and for us to keep a level head and the peace of mind to know why things are as they are today. If we deny the knowledge of the existence of Israel today, what do we do with the prophets and the prophecies that God made through them? We need to pay attention to two specific statements. Again, we come back to the words of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 5 there are two very familiar verses, but they are very powerful. We come back to Jesus Christ. He's sitting down with His disciples. He's teaching them. He's explaining very important principles to them and He makes this very direct statement:

Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law...

Now, we dwelt on that a great deal. It's very, very important. But do we bring into focus His next statement right on the heels of the law?

17 ... [I've not come to destroy the Law] or the Prophets.

Very important! Jesus Christ is speaking. "I did not come to destroy the Prophets!" In other words, there is some part that the Prophets have to play in what Christ is setting up at His first coming, His time on earth, and you know that He set up the Church. So, this becomes an important part of the Church and we know that from Ephesians. Again, a very familiar scripture, but important. In Ephesians chapter 2 it's discussing the Church.

Ephesians 2:20 [we have] been built on the foundation... (Now it's talking about the Church. The Church is being built. That's you and me.)

...[have] been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (yes), Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

The prophets are a part of the foundation of the Church of God. Christ did not come to nullify what the prophets had to say, but He came to fulfill what they had to say. There is this physical aspect, the historical aspect if you like, of prophecy. But there is a spiritual fulfillment of those prophecies that will come through the Church, in terms of the Church understanding what God is doing at this particular time. The Church is being built a temple and a dwelling place for God in the Spirit. The messages of the Prophets come alive for the Church today. As I say, yes, there is past history to learn

from. I don't deny that. But as Israel is not destroyed and exists today, so the prophets' messages are alive and relevant for today.

Prophecy helps point us toward the Kingdom of God and surely we very clearly need that focus. We are approaching the Feast and we need to be focusing our minds toward the Kingdom of God.

A lesson that we have to learn here today is that all the systems of man (and I emphasize "all"), all the systems that man worships in place of God are nothing. Now, we don't have a whole bunch of wooden and stone idols sitting around that we bow down and worship. But we have put other things in place of God. Usually any word that ends in 'ism' is a god that man is worshipping. There are various things that man's mind has put in place of God.

Isaiah 41:21 "Present your case," says the Lord. (There's a little bit of sarcasm in what is said here.) **"Bring forth your strong reasons," says the King of Jacob.**

22 "Let them bring forth... (He's talking about the idols that they have turned to and worship in place of God.)

22 "Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come.

23 Show the things that are to come hereafter, (Knowing that the dumb idols can't do that, the point He is making is:) **that we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and see it together.**

24 Indeed you are nothing...

Everything apart from God, everything that man has made and devised with his mind, eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, is away from God. It takes man's mind away from God.

24 ... you are nothing, and your work is nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination.

This is directed at the gods, as I said, that man has placed before Him. The point being, there is no other God. There's none beside Him. That's the focus that you and I need to be very clear about. If we seek first the Kingdom of God, it will be our focus.

1 Corinthians 8:4 Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. (This is being written to the Church.)

5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords),

6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

7 However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some (Interesting, he's writing to the Church.) with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

"...for us there is one God". That's a lesson that we have to learn through experience, through observation, what's going on around us and, of course, from God's word.

All the systems of man are from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They are derived in part, or in whole, from the system that is known as the Mystery Babylonian Religion. The sad fact is that Israel has joined the rest of the world in embracing that fact that the systems are derived from a false system, a system opposed to God. And Israel has embraced them and brought them into play within the various civilizations that they are a part of. Israel was intended to be a standout people. A role that the Church has been called to occupy today. If you look at it very carefully, it's interesting what God did with Israel. Just reference Deuteronomy 4 to get the flavor of what God is doing today through the spiritual aspect of Israel. It's still the same purpose. God wants a standout group of people to represent Him, to represent His name, to stand against the tide of the absolute destruction beginning to be wrought upon our world. In 1 Corinthians 6:20 we are reminded of this, certainly around the Passover time:

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price...

Jesus Christ bought you as absolutely and as surely as if He went into a store and purchased an item. You have been bought by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

20 ... therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Why? For your glory? For your edification? No, for God's glory and God's edification, that His name can be taken out into the world.

1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

24 Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.

Prophecy envelops us. Prophecy is absolutely key to who we are. It helps identify us as God's people and God as the one, true and absolute God. It is a sad fact that God is totally misrepresented today. In Malachi chapter 2, to go back to a prophet:

Malachi 2:10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers?

I read that and I can see the historic aspects of what is being said here by Malachi. But I wonder if one day the same thing will not be said to the Church of God, because it could be said to the Church of God.

10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another...

16 "For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, (Separation, the dividing of something that He has made one.) for it covers one's garment with violence," says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

17 You have wearied the Lord with your words; Yet you say, "In what way have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"

These are interesting concepts. But this is not to be read just in the context of history, just something that Israel did, because the very next verse gives a context that is right spot-on for today.

Malachi 3:1 "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me.

There is the context. God is preparing the way before the returning Christ. That involves the Church. That's why you were called. You were called for a purpose. Ultimately you're hopeful that salvation will come from it. But that's not why you were called, not just for salvation. You were called because God is working out a fantastic purpose on this earth now, today. And all that is going on around us is a part of God working out that purpose and, specifically, what He's doing with you and your life is an incredible part of that purpose.

Jeremiah 51:52 "Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will bring judgment on her carved images, (on anything that man has worshipped in place of God) and throughout all her land the wounded shall groan.

53 Though Babylon were to mount up to heaven, and though she were to fortify the height of her strength, yet from Me plunderers would come to her," says the Lord.

The Babylonian system is going to rise up. It has; it will again. This system is an end-time system. It's going to become incredibly powerful. It's going to become a world-dominating, world-ruling system so it will look like it's very powerful that nothing could defeat this system. Nothing could bring it down. But God says, "I am going to deal with it."

60 So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon, all these words that are written against Babylon.

61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, "When you arrive in Babylon and see it, and read all these words,

62 then you shall say, 'O Lord, You have spoken against this place to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate forever.'

63 Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates.

64 Then you shall say, 'Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary.'" Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

This system is going to be dealt with. How can we be sure that prophecies given thousands of years ago have actual relevance to this time today? Again, the Bible helps us answer this question. Certainly, and I want to make sure we understand, we can find past fulfillments of these prophecies. Here in Jeremiah, we are reading of a very serious set of prophecies on Babylon. Babylon is going to rise up. It will be great, but God is going to take it down. What can we gain from this? We know the Babylonian kingdom as a world-ruling kingdom no longer exists. There is no King Nebuchadnezzar over a world-ruling system. That was just one. There were successive kingdoms after that. But here, in this prophecy in verse 45:

45 "My people... ('My people' means you, it means me, it means Israel.)

45 "My people, go out of the midst of her! And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the Lord.

What makes this interesting is that it's exactly what we're told in Revelation 18:4. And it's directed to us. "Come out of her, My people, ... lest you receive of her plagues." Remove yourself from the system. That's why I say, part of our responsibility is to identify this system. All these systems out there, that man is turning to, this one fails, so we turn to this one. This one fails, so we turn to that one. They're all going to fail. We must appreciate there is one God and that is the only way forward for us as 'My people'.

47 Therefore behold, the days are coming that I will bring judgment on the carved images of Babylon; Her whole land shall be ashamed, and all her slain shall fall in her midst.

One part of this prophecy is historical – fulfilled. One part of it is future, very spiritual in its implications and holds implications for us. Part of our preparation for the Kingdom of God is the identification of this false system and our removal from it. One of your roles in the future is going to be helping people understand this system, what it has done to mankind from the very first steps in the Garden of Eden through to why Jesus

Christ had to come and the whole implications of that for the salvation of mankind. You are going to be one of the teachers of that, helping people understand it.

As God promised blessings, He also promised corrective action if they turned to one side, as we have seen. Let us go back to Leviticus 26 because I want to create an important bridge from the past to the present. In Leviticus 26 the emphasis, right off the bat, is on idols and turning away to idolatry.

Leviticus 26:1 'You shall not make idols for yourselves; neither a carved image nor a sacred pillar shall you rear up for yourselves; nor shall you set up an engraved stone in your land, to bow down to it; for I am the [Eternal] your God.

2 You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord. (That has come up in some of the previous verses that we have read. God says that:)

3 'If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them,

... then I'll do these certain things for you, the blessings that come for you. Let's drop down to verse 14:

14 'But if you do not obey Me, (like I say, let's flip the coin) and do not observe all these commandments,

15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant,

16 I also will do this to you...

Then He begins to list various things that will befall Israel if they turn to idolatry.

18 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

There's one important word in there that we'll come back to, but 'seven times' is mentioned here and it's referenced four different times in this one chapter. If you drop down to verse 21:

21 'Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues... (An identical statement. If we drop down to verse 24 there's a slight variance.)

24 then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. (And finally, in verse 28:)

28 then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.

The first two references to 'seven times' contain the word 'more', which means to add. Seven times I will add. This is a reference to intensity. If you don't get it this time, I'll increase it seven times until you begin to get the point. It has to do with intensity.

But in verses 24 and 28 the word 'more' is missing. It is not used. This introduces a time element to seven times. This is not intensity now, this is duration. This time element occurs in scripture. There are a number of places, we're not going to go through them all now, but you have Daniel, where seven times (years) pass over Nebuchadnezzar – a period of time. In Revelation 12, in reference to the Church, you have time, times and half a time, which is a period of time. Ezekiel was told to lay on his side a day for a year, a principle being introduced there. And you have Israel itself spending 40 years in the wilderness because of the 40 days that the spies spent spying out the land. Israel then rejected that, so they were punished a day for a year.

So, using this principle, we can see very clearly that we have a time period here of 2520 years. It's a punishment period for Israel. That's using a year being 360 days. So, what's the starting point for the time period of 2520 days? In verse 25 it says:

25 And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

It is the captivity by the Assyrians that gives us a starting point here. That is dated at around 721 B.C. We have a starting point, we have a time period, 2520 years. It brings us to a very interesting point in history.

When Jacob lined up his sons and told them things that would befall them (each one had some specific thing allocated to them) the reference was to "in the latter days". That's Genesis 49: 1. In the latter days these things would be identified amongst these people, which helps us get some indication of where some of this drifting and wandering throughout the nations has taken place. It's interesting when you come to Joseph which, of course, is referencing Ephraim and Manasseh, his two sons. There are wonderful blessings being portrayed for them.

The period of 2520 years brings you down to the period of time we know as the Industrial Revolution, which is given a rough time span of the late 1700s, the early 1800s. How you predict a specific starting point for the Industrial Revolution I have no idea, but things blossomed in the development of technology at that point in time. And it coincides with the rise of Britain, the great strength and power of the British Empire and following that subsequently, of course, the rise of this country, the United States of America.

Christ's statement that the Prophets would not be destroyed acknowledged the Old Testament prophecies concerning the tribes of Israel, that knowledge is for the Church. That was post Christ's first coming and it's in anticipation of His second coming. This comes right into our time period here today that we can pick up on and work with. Christ was preparing His Church for that which would occur in the latter days.

As God has faithfully poured out His blessings, let's just simply take the starting point of 1800 AD, from that point on the blessings were poured out. But God also said, if you don't respond to those blessings appropriately the curses will follow on their heels. This helps us step right into the time period where we are today. What we are seeing unfold is not pleasant and it's going to get a lot worse according to what God has to say. The 'revolutionary long march', going back to that comment, is turning Israel into an increasingly unrecognizable civilization. Idolatry, of course, has a way of doing that.

As we approach the Feast of Tabernacles keep the big picture in mind. Punishment has a purpose.

Ezekiel 11:14 Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

15 "Son of man, your brethren, your relatives, your countrymen, and all the house of Israel in its entirety, are those about whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'Get far away from the Lord; this land has been given to us as a possession.'

The attitude of pushing God out of the picture and saying, in essence, "We have done this ourselves, by our strength, by our might."

16 Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.'" (God never gives up on His plan and His purpose.)

17 Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.'"

18 And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there.

19 Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,

20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

That has not happened yet. This is a prophecy for the future. It's the future of Israel. Yes, we could take a lot of time and dwell on the punishments as they will be meted out. And we're starting to see the fulfillment of some of those now. It's just a matter of the intensity that's yet to flow. But we need to have a mind that takes us beyond today, because we need to have peace of mind in the midst of the fulfillment of the punishments that God has said He will mete out. The punishment phase is only just beginning. Israel will no longer be 'lost'. Not only will the world come to see us. It says

here, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God". Through the punishment phase Israel will come to recognize its true identity.

As the punishments are meted out, other nations rise up, as I say, the Babylonian system rises up, the beast power rises up and is mighty powerful. You get this conglomeration of power coming out of the north and the east and so on, but as those nations of Israel go down they must be questioning, why? Why are we down here and those other nations up there? Slowly there will be a realization as to who these people really are.

Jeremiah 30:3 For behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the Lord. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'"

4 Now these are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah.

(There's going to be a time that's very difficult. He says:)

5 "For thus says the Lord: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.

One reason why I want to get this focus clear is because, as we go to the Feast of Tabernacles, seeing God's prophecies being truly fulfilled should give us peace of mind.

6 Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? (It will be tough!)

7 Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, (There's a reason for that trouble.) but he shall be saved out of it.

"He shall be saved out of it." Satan will be unable to thwart God's plan, a plan that He initiated – well, we see it being initiated with Abraham. It was probably clearly in His mind long before man was even created. Satan cannot stop God's plan of salvation or God's purpose for Israel. Israel will become a totally recognizable civilization for the benefit of all mankind.

Jeremiah 33:7 And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first.

8 I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me.

9 Then it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all nations of the earth (this is coming), who shall hear all the good that I do to them; they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that I provide for it.'

All the nations of the earth will become aware of the name of God and all that that means. They'll become aware that there is only one God and there will be a group of people who will be representing that one God both spiritually and physically at this particular time. Israel is going to be cleansed of her idolatry and all of the nations are going to see a civilization that represents God.

Romans 11:26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

27 For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

This God is going to do. A Deliverer will come out of Zion. He will save His people. He will rescue His people and once again they will be set up as a nation representing Him for the benefit of all mankind. But in the meantime, there is a group of people, for whom there is a Deliverer, that have been called out of this system. There is a group of people for whom prophecies have been fulfilled in the sense of deep spiritual enrichment. We understand what God is doing, why God is doing it.

Don't be fearful. Stay close to the trunk of the tree in a relationship with God as He works out the direction that the world and mankind is going. Prophecy has not been destroyed. It is being fulfilled. The Deliverer will come! Let the Feast bring clarity of these understandings to our minds. ◇