

**A Sure Refuge (Jeremiah 15:15–21)**  
**By Pastor Jeff Alexander (4/6/2020)**

**Introduction**

1. The Lord's determination to punish Judah (vv. 1–4).

There He doubled down on His determination to send Judah into captivity (15:1–4). King Manasseh was singled out as being the reason the Lord was bringing these horrors (vv. 2, 3). Manasseh, whose 55-year reign was the longest of any of the Davidic dynasty, rebuilt the high places, set up altars for Baal and Asherah, engaged in child sacrifice and witchcraft. He even set up an Asherah pole in the temple (2 Kings 21:3–7). The author(s) of 2 Kings specifically cite the sins of Manasseh (Judah's most wicked king) as the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 24:3–4).

The response of the Lord in these first verses of Jeremiah 15 was His answer to the prophet's plea in the last verses of chapter 14: *“Do not spurn us, for your name's sake; do not dishonor your glorious throne; remember and do not break your covenant with us. . . . Are you not he, O LORD our God? We set our hope on you”* (vv. 21, 22).

Two great intercessors in Israel's history—Moses and Samuel—would not change the Lord's mind. Jeremiah was previously commanded, *“Do not pray for the welfare of this people”* (14:11).

2. The theme of this chapter is *“Remember me”*—the cry of Jeremiah, representing the righteous remnant (v. 15).

The weight of the displeasure of God on the nation rested heavily on Jeremiah. He could not deny that the people had rejected the Lord, had broken covenant, and had pursued their own sinful path. All earlier efforts to discipline the nation failed (vv. 5–9). The Lord finally declared, *“You keep going backward”* and *“I am weary of relenting”* (v. 6).

What about the righteous faithful like Jeremiah? In verses 10–14, Jeremiah expressed his concern for the personal suffering he endured from persecution. Although the righteous deserved no wrath, they would also experience the hardships resulting from judgment. Jeremiah suffered as one of the righteous, but he was also cursed continually because the Lord called him to faithfully proclaim His truth. The Lord responded that, unlike the people, Jeremiah, despite his hardship, was *“set free”* for their good (v. 11). The prophet would be a *“wall of bronze”* before his enemies, and they would not prevail against him. The Lord would strengthen him amid his trials (v. 12; 1:18). Nevertheless, he would also suffer because he was among those who deserved the anger of the Lord because of the nation's *sins* (v. 14).

The truth in our text (vv. 15–21) was given to inspire the prophet (and believing readers) with encouragement and hope.

3. The Lord enlisted four *destroyers*—*pestilence, sword, famine, and captivity*—against the covenant traitors.

The *destroyers* mentioned in verse 3 refer to the triad of terror developed in last week's message. To this triad are sometimes added *exile* (as in verse 2) and *wild beasts* (as in verse 3). Thus, we should not take the list in verse 3 as a new and different list. In my opinion, the emphasis needs to be on the number *four*. Like the number three, four is also very significant in Scripture, relating to the *creation*. For example, earth has four *regions* (east, west, north, south), four *seasons* (spring,

summer, winter, fall), four *elements* (earth, air, fire, water), four *divisions* of the *day* (morning, noon, evening, night), four *winds*, and the four *phases* of the moon, *etc.*

Is it a mere coincidence that in Romans 8:19–22 the word CREATION is found four times? Is it a coincidence that the fourth commandment honors the Sabbath, the rest day of the *Creator*, having finished creation? Thus, is there a relationship between the four destroyers and the four horsemen of Revelation 6:1–8? The end of the old world with its old covenant is mirrored in the end of the gospel age, with a new creation and new covenant.

## I. Severe Service

1. God does not remove His servants from tribulation but protects them in it.

a. The prophet's confidence rested in his covenant Lord's promise of protection (v. 15).

Jeremiah recognized that the Lord knew all things. He was the sovereign Lord, and the terrible Babylonian threat was fully in His purview. He would use Babylonians and then judge and dispose of them for their horrible acts inflicted on Judah.

The Lord also knew Jeremiah (1:5), calling him to salvation and appointing him to His service as a prophet before his birth. Would such a God forget His servant in the heat of the battle?

The fact that the discouraged and wounded servant began to waiver was natural due to his human condition. Nevertheless, Jeremiah rightly turned to the Lord in his anxiety. He called out to His God to remember and visit him, pleading, "*In your forbearance take me not away.*" He endured reproach for the Lord's *sake*.

b. The prophet's confidence was sustained by the *Word of God* (v. 16).

This is a great verse and shows how the prophet reflected on the greatness and power of Scripture to encourage him. The Hebrew has him literally *devouring* the Word of God with a ravishing appetite. The Word was the source of his joy and delight. He was also assured of His standing with God: "*I am called by your name.*" His authority to believe and act was assured to him in God's *name*—his covenant Lord, Yahweh. His God was a "*God of hosts*"—the warrior God of Israel armies, greater than any enemy presenting itself on the battlefield (Zephaniah 3:17).

c. The prophet was assured that the power of God—"*His hand*"—rested on him (v. 17).

(God's "*hand*" designates the irresistible and immediate power of God upon him.) Thus, he had avoided the company of idle pleasure-seekers preferring solitude, being possessed by divine sorrow for human sin and punishment that rendered him incapable of taking part in their merry but evil proceedings. Isaiah had the same caution (Isaiah 8:11–13).

2. Jeremiah nevertheless wavered, focusing on the pain of his suffering (vv. 18–21).

a. Why, Lord? As evident in verse 18, the prophet was beginning to fear his circumstances and question his God. As he turned his focus from the Lord and the task laid on him (to preach the truth faithfully) to his rebellious nation; fear and uncertainty overtook him. Consequently, he wrongly focused on the pain coming from persecution and the knowledge of the terrible things coming to his nation. Why must he suffer? Would the Lord be faithful in the dark hour? Would the Lord fail him like some uncertain stream whose flow cannot be counted on (v. 18)? He should have relied on this text (Isaiah 33:16).

b. Jeremiah must repent of his doubts. Here again, we see the term *shuv*, translated "*return.*" This is a covenant term and is used by Jeremiah more than any other OT author. The Lord gently ap-

pealed to the prophet, “*If you return,*” presupposing his turning away. This exhortation is accompanied with a promise, “*I will restore you and you shall stand before me* [as a true servant ready to act in behalf of his Lord].” There was no doubt in the Lord’s mind that Jeremiah would obey.

The Lord appealed to Jeremiah that if he preached God’s Word (“*If you utter what is precious*”) and not what the false prophets were offering (“*what is worthless*”), he would be the Lord’s mouth to the people. They might turn to him, but he must never turn to them. The Lord would be with him and deliver him from their opposition—“*the grasp of the ruthless.*”

Bringing Jeremiah’s experience to our day, notice—

## II. Hope of the Heavenly

1. A brief survey of Revelation 4–6 is necessary, a passage mirroring the pattern ending the old covenant period revealed in Jeremiah.

a. This passage gives the heavenly perspective of the gospel age. Revelation 4 and 5 is a heavenly view of Jesus, the Lion/Lamb of Judah, raised in victory over the whole of the sin-cursed creation, as evidenced in His being the sole Worthy One to take the scroll (title deed of creation) and open its seals. This triumph elicits glorious praise in heaven (5:12, 13).

b. Revelation 6 describes the heavenly perspective of the gospel age as the judgments of God are loosed on it. What is depicted are the very dealings that God used in the final days of the old covenant system—the triad of terror—in order to bring in the new covenant.

The first four seals are the horsemen of the apocalypse, which are the very things Jesus described in Matthew 24—nations rising against nation, wars, famines, and pestilence. Death follows all this, being the last enemy to be conquered. Remember, 4 is the number of creation and this passage is judgment on the sin ruling humanity in creation. The picture is bleak and horrendous.

The fifth seal reveals the martyrs who, like Jeremiah, were opposed because of their righteousness (6:10, 11).

c. The end of the age and the final judgment are revealed in the opening of the sixth seal. Sinful and rebellious humanity flees to mountains to hide from the wrath of God and the Lamb, “*for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?*” (6:17).

2. With stark contrast, Revelation 7 reveals the fruit of the glorious gospel—the redeemed of the Lamb from every nation and every generation during the awful period of darkness and judgment resulting from the opening of the seals.

a. The sealing of the 144,000 shows that the servants of the Lamb will be protected in this period as they work this harvest of the earth. Some have argued that these are Jewish saints who are saved during the “tribulation” after the church is raptured. However, these servants appear again in chapter 14, where it is clearly stated, “*These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb*” (v. 4). *Mankind* refers to all of Adam’s fallen race, not specifically Jewish people.

b. The remainder of the chapter 7 reveals the harvest—a multitude redeemed from the whole of mankind and celebrating the victory of the Lamb (vv. 14, 15). They are the citizens of the *new* creation.