

## Be Prepared

Don't be a Foolish Virgin

Kim Myers

Given 21-Jan-12; Sermon #1084A

The book of Jeremiah is a warning to the nation and people of Judah. And as I read the book of Jeremiah, I see a parallel, not between modern day Israel, the United States, and Britain and ancient Judah, but between God's church today and God's people, the Jewish people and the nation of ancient Judah. I see a clear parallel between us and them today. Let us turn to Jeremiah 1:11-12

**Jeremiah 1:11-12** (KJV) Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, "I see a rod of an almond tree." Then said the Lord unto me, "Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it."

Now I want you to remember the word "hasten" here. First off, what does a rod have to do with Jeremiah's warning to Judah? A rod is an instrument of punishment. This rod was the symbol of the punishment that Jeremiah was about to announce on the nation of Judah. What does the almond tree have to do with Jeremiah's warning? What God is showing Jeremiah is that His warning to Judah is: to be ready, or to get yourself ready. "To hasten." There is that word again, brethren. It means, "to watch for an opportunity to do a thing; to awake."

An almond tree blossoms in January when other trees are still dormant or asleep. You and I are being warned while most of America and the world do not see what is happening and what is about to happen. You and I are being warned to prepare spiritually and mentally for the future by the ministry of this church regularly. An almond tree also bears fruit in March, right at the beginning of spring when other trees are only beginning to bud. They are ahead of the time, and we are being warned, so we are ahead of the time.

What God is saying through Jeremiah is that His warning and punishment are going to be prompt; at once; or without delay. Now I want you to remember those words, because they mean something a little bit different to us than what they do to God. Let us drop down to Jeremiah 1:14-17

**Jeremiah 1:14-17** Then the Lord said to me: "Out of the north calamity shall break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. [We know that evil out of the

north was Nebuchadnezzar's Chaldean or Babylonian army. Now verse 15:] For behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north," says the Lord; "They shall come and each one set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah. [Verse 16] I will utter my judgments against them concerning all their wickedness, because they have forsaken me, burned incense to other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. [Then in verse 17 God tells Jeremiah to speak to them; the Jews.] Therefore prepare yourself and arise, and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, lest I dismay you before them.

Now Jeremiah was pretty young when God told him to prophesy to Judah. Jeremiah was probably 18 or 20 years old. Jeremiah went forth with fear and trembling to do the work of God. What God wanted Jeremiah to do was frightening because he was going to tell the nations their sins, and he was going to tell the people things that they did not want to hear. He was going to tell them their faults and their sins again. Brethren, no one wants to hear their faults or sins. If you want to get into an argument with someone in the church, tell them what is wrong with them.

Jeremiah started his warning in the thirteenth year of the reign of King Josiah. Now Josiah was probably the most righteous all the kings of Judah and of Israel for that matter. Two important things happened during Josiah's reign: 1) The book of the law was found in 622 BC, 2) Pagan worship was obliterated. In God's mercy, He gave Judah a righteous king in Josiah. He also showed King Josiah the law, and the King acted on it by obliterating pagan worship and by the keeping of God's laws once again. And he was able to do this because he was the king; he controlled the military. Then in 608 BC, Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. Josiah was Judah's last good king and the nation went, where? It went right back into idolatry and pagan worship.

Now I am going to tell you about the last 7 kings of Judea. I am going to give them to you in order:

Manasseh, who reigned 55 years was extremely evil, probably one of the worst kings they ever had. Jeremiah was born during the wicked reign of Manasseh. Then Amnon, who reigned 2 years, was also very evil. Then Josiah, who reigned 31 years (and like I said, he was a very righteous king). Jeremiah started to prophesy 13 years into his reign. Then, Jehoahaz, who reigned 1 year, was evil. Jehoiakim, who reigned 11 years, was also very evil. Jehoiachin, who reigned less than a year, was also evil. And then the last king Zedekiah, who reigned 10 years, was also evil. He was the king that went into

captivity by the Babylonians.

Now do you see a parallel here between God's people (us) and Judah? Judah, under Manasseh and Amnon, committed adultery and pagan worship. They did not live by God's laws and commandments. God's church and God's people went astray under Joe Tkach and sooner than that too. One of the first things that happened was the trinity doctrine, "the God is" doctrine. And then they did away with third tithe; they did away with clean and unclean meats.

The reason I know that is because my daughter was as Big Sandy, Texas at the time, and after they said you did not have to do that anymore, kids were ordering in pepperoni pizzas. They also did away with not eating leavening on the days of unleavened bread. I can remember up here in Portland, going to a potluck on the days of unleavened bread and half of the things there were leavened. And they also watered down the Feast of Tabernacles, and many more doctrinal changes were watered down, including the sign between him and his people—the weekly Sabbath.

Now God gave Judah a righteous king in Josiah, and God showed Josiah what he expected of him and the people in allowing them to find the book of the law. He gave Judah a second chance, because God is merciful. And what happened? The people made changes, and they turned back to God. Why did they do that? They did this because they had a righteous leader in Josiah.

Now God blew apart his very church—the Worldwide Church of God—to get us back on track. We had gone astray. He was trying to wake us up and draw us close to Him so that He could finish preparing us for the Kingdom of God. Judah, after King Josiah, went right back into pagan worship, until God had enough and sent them into captivity. But because of God's mercy, He gave Judah four more kings and plenty of time to repent. God also gave them Jeremiah to warn them. He told them they need to change or repent.

Jeremiah's warning was very upsetting to his countrymen, so much so that they often times laughed him to scorn, and they wanted to kill him. God's people, after the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God, started out pretty zealous. We expected the ministers to give us meat in due season. We expected them to uphold all of God's laws and doctrines, and not to water down any of them. We expected them to counsel us out of the Bible and not to cross the word and laws of God, but, brethren, that did not always happen.

God's church and people are now a watered down mess again. The breaking up of

God's church and watering down of God's laws has to do with all of us and what we will allow in our lives and in the very churches we attend. We are all guilty to one degree or another for this watering down. Now I am not going to go into all the things within the Greater Churches of God that are not correct with the Bible and with God's laws, but I will say, spiritually, the Greater churches of God are not very healthy at the present time.

Do you see the parallels between the Greater Churches of God and ancient Judah? Ancient Judah was doing the same thing; they were sick, spiritually. Jeremiah told the people of Judah that there is an undeniable relationship between sin and its consequences, and we should be able to see this. It should be very visible to all of us. Brethren, you can see as you look around at the brethren in the church—when you know they are doing what is not right—if you look at their lives it is visible. You can see that they suffer tremendously.

Judah waged captivity at a great loss of life, even though Jeremiah warned them for forty years- half of a lifetime, brethren. I said to remember the word "hasten." Well, God said it was going to happen, and it did happen, but it was forty years down the road because God is merciful. He gave them forty years. You and I should look long and hard at Matthew 25:1-12. We are not going into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar's Chaldean army—that is not our future, but if we do not heed the warnings we get each week through the commentary, the sermons, and the sermonettes, we could find ourselves without enough oil and lose the very Kingdom of God! Let us read Mathew 25:1-12. These verses are very familiar to all of us.

**Mathew 25:1-12** Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. [So half were wise and half were foolish.] Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. [verse 5] But while the bridegroom was delayed they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!" Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." [Half of the virgins did not recognize the times they were living in. They did not heed the warnings that you and I get every week. They had not prepared themselves spiritually, and they were not worthy to enter into the Kingdom of God. Verse 9:] But the wise answered, saying, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." [Verse 10] And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were

ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. [The five foolish virgins did not prepare themselves spiritually, and what happened? Time ran out on them. Verse 11:] Afterward the other virgins came also came, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" [Verse 12:] But he answered and said, "Assuredly I say to you, I do not know you."

He did not know them because they lacked in prayer, they lacked in Bible study. They did not fast regularly; they did not meditate. There was no repentance or very little of it in their lives. The first eleven verses are very sobering to all of us, brethren; and the twelfth verse is downright scary. Not to be admitted in to the Kingdom of God—that is a scary thought.

**Jeremiah 3:15** "And I will give you shepherds according to my heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding."

This verse is talking about the future—the time we are now living in. It is talking about ministers who will teach God's people knowledge and give them understanding; who will really teach God's law and way of life; who will counsel God's people according to the Bible not according to the world's standards. It is talking about ministers of righteous character who love God, who love God's people, who love God's way of life. It is talking about good shepherds, brethren.

Now, brethren, what are we trying to accomplish, you and I? What are you trying to accomplish? Are you and I trying to qualify for the Kingdom of God? Are we or are we not? Do we really believe that this is the true Church of God? If the answer to both of those questions are yes, if the goal is the Kingdom of God, then do you not think that all of us in the greater churches of God would want any help we can get to qualify for the Kingdom of God? I am talking about help from ministers and fellow brethren with good character who love God and His laws. Would you not think that God's people would be lined up at the door of God's churches that teach all of God's laws and truly shepherd the brethren? Would you not think that? I would, but that is not what is happening.

I want you to think about what I am going to say. To my knowledge, we are the only group in the Greater Church of God that has a weekly commentary. It keeps us abreast of what is happening, and we are given a warning about what is going to happen in the near future. Brethren, I have said this before...I think we are now living in the end time. How long of a period is the end time? I do not know, but the end for Judah was forty years; it was a long time. But there are reasons why a number of God's people and the

ministry think that we are living in the end time. The economy is one of those reasons.

Let me share with you some information I came across a little while ago that has to do with the economics of the country we live in: 1) For Americans to stay at status quo and not get any worse or any better economically (it is not very good economically), and for the government to be able to pay social security, Medicare and to keep the military at its present strength... To do all these things we will have to borrow \$1 trillion per year for the next 10 years and even that is probably not doable. 2) When the banks all started to fail about four years ago, like Lehman Brothers, and the government started bailing out the big banks, the banks were leveraged 32 to 1. That means that for every one good dollar, they had \$32 loaned out. Today the Federal Reserve Bank is leveraged 52 to 1. They say that if just 2% of the loans that the Federal Reserve bailed out are not met, the Federal Reserve Bank will also fail.

But the economy is not the big reason for my thinking that we are living in the end times. There are a couple of other factors that play into this: 1) *Everywhere* you look you see corruption. Corruptions in city, county, federal and state governments, big businesses, the banking industry, the educational system, the churches that are out in the world, and it is even in God's church, brethren. There is corruption within the Church of God. 2) The average person no longer possesses morals. We all know a lot of people, and a lot of people who are not in the church...how many of them really truly have any morals? Do you know what the definition of "moral" is? Moral people are concerned with the principles of life conduct; able to distinguish between right and wrong; people that are ethical, virtuous and upright. How many people do you know that have those qualities? 3) Today most people have little to no character. Do you know what the definition of character is? Character is features and traits that form the individual nature of a person. It is integrity, it is reputation and it is honesty. You know I know a lot of people who are not in the church that would not cheat me. They are honest when it comes to me, but they might cheat you because they do not know you.

They would cheat the boss they work for; they would cheat on their income taxes. They have some honesty, but they are not truly honest. 4) God's true ministers are quickly growing old, and there is no one to take their places. So when you put all these factors together, brethren, you have to come to the conclusion that we are living in the end times.

Now if we are living in the end times, and we are getting good solid sermons and sermonettes, which we are—we are being warned weekly through the commentary and through the sermons and sermonettes, and if our main goal is the Kingdom of God, would you not think that we would be very concerned about our spiritual well-being?

Would you not think that we would be drawing as close to God as possible through Bible study, prayer, and fasting? Would you not think that people would be flocking to God's true ministers that are warning the people and preaching good solid sermons week after week?

I do not see this happening in the Greater Churches of God. In most cases, I see just the opposite. I see the attitude that the Jews of Jeremiah's day had. Let us turn to Jeremiah 3:21

**Jeremiah 3:21** A voice was heard on the desolate places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel; for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God.

**Jeremiah 4:22 (KJV)** For my people are foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children [Do you know what *sottish* means? It means stupefied with prank or drunken. It means muddleheaded; they make bad decisions; they are cloddish or just plain stupid. That is the definition of *sottish*] and they have no understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

Do you see some of these very attitudes within the Greater Churches of God? Jeremiah prophesied to warn Judah for forty years through the reign of five kings, and what were the responses from the people? Jeremiah was attacked by his own brothers who wanted to kill him. He was beaten and put into stocks by a priest and a false prophet. He was imprisoned by a king; he was threatened with death over and over again. He was thrown into a cistern or a well, where he sank in the mud and goo up to his waist and was left for dead by high ranking officials of Judah.

Jeremiah was repeatedly arrested and King Jehoiakim who had Jeremiah's prophecies burned. Jeremiah was not allowed by God even to marry, so he had to endure that, too, because that was to be a sign that there would be no cause for celebration in the country of Judah.

He was in the royal dungeon of King Zedekiah when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian army. His family and countrymen hated his message and his warning, and they wanted him dead. You know what. though, God gave Jeremiah a personal message. Do you know what that message was? It was, "Attack you they will; overcome you they cannot." This was fulfilled many times in the biblical narrative. Now this should give all of us who

love God, who love God's laws, and God's way of life courage and faith in these very trying times that we are living in.

When Nebuchadnezzar seized Jerusalem in 586 BC, he ordered that Jeremiah be set free from prison and treated well. Let us turn to Jeremiah 39:11-12.

**Jeremiah 39:11-12** Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, "Take him and look after him, and do him no harm; but do to him just as he says to you."

Again this should stiffen our courage and resolve to do what is right and biblically correct. God loves us just like he loved Jeremiah. Jeremiah did not go into captivity, and God protected him. All we have to do is to draw close to God by our repenting, which is nothing more than making changes in our lives by Bible study, prayer and fasting. He was protected; and we will be protected. The Church of the Great God has been warning us and all others who will listen for about 5 years now.

We are being warned to prepare ourselves spiritually, mentally, and physically for what is coming. Some of God's people are already tired of the warning. They say it is all negative; and it makes them feel bad. Jeremiah's warning was viewed in like manner, but he kept it up for forty years until they wanted to kill him.

You know I do not like the times we are living in any more than any of you. I do not like what our country has come to—all the corruption, very little character in our leaders, the poor economy, the scattering of God's people in His church, all the relationship problems that people in God's church are having and many other issues. I do not like any of it, brethren, and neither do any of you.

I am a Toys R' Us kid. I like to play. I love to go out on the river with the boat. I like to go to the drag strip with the hot rod. I like to go to car shows. I wish things were alot better and easier for all of us. I do not like trials any more than any of you, but we all need to live in reality, and the reality is that at this time, we all need to draw closer to God and make the changes needed to be in line with God's word and His laws.

We are being warned each week to prepare ourselves by our ministers. We need to be thankful for what God is giving us through the ministry. You know, last summer we were not able to do any of these things because of the economy. We can let ourselves get into the attitude of ancient Judah. My family and I were not able to take the boat out or

do any of the things we wanted. We were not Toys 'R Us kids because of the economy. You do not have to turn there, but let us look at Jeremiah 6:10.

**Jeremiah 6:10** To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it.

Jeremiah had contempt for false prophets and for corrupt priests, and we should too, brethren. Jeremiah lashed out against the sins of his countrymen, scorning them severely for their idolatry and for sacrificing their very children—that is how low they had sunk. They were sacrificing their own children to foreign gods. Let us turn to Jeremiah 2:30.

**Jeremiah 2:30** In vain have I chastened your children; they received no correction. Your own sword has devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

God is saying that even the chastening of God has not produced in His people any repentance. And that is what I see with the breakup of the church, brethren. I do not see a lot of repentance. I do not know if you feel like me, but I hate the scattering of God's people in all the different groups and churches of God. But God scattered us, not Satan. We were becoming lukewarm in the Worldwide Church of God, so God took action, and he scattered us with the intention of getting us back on fire.

But now, 14 or 15 years down the road, I feel that the Greater Churches of God have sunk to a new level. In the past 6 months, talking with different people of the Greater Churches of God, I have been told about cases of rape, a case of child molestation, internet pornography and many other sins that have grave consequences for the people involved.

This is what this split sermon is about. It is a warning to us all about the times that we are now living in. What prompted this was the things that I heard in these last months since the feast—things that would make the hair on the back of your neck stand straight up. Now I am not pointing a finger at any of the Churches of God or trying to correct anyone. I am just stating that we are living in very, very dangerous times, spiritually.

I think we all will see the moral, economic, and spiritual values continue to decay in America and in the entire world. What we will start to see (which you can already see if

you are looking) the formation of the beast in Europe and the coming of the king of the south in the middle east. But on the other hand, brethren, there will be times of great enjoyment and fun for all of us. But there are also going to be times that we will hate; there will be times of hardship, despair, confusion, and great trials.

At the end of November, my family and I all went to Hawaii for a week. This was a very pleasant time. It was quite enjoyable for all of us—the warm weather, good food...it was a relaxing time. And we arrived home on a Sunday after spending one week in Hawaii. And on that Wednesday, Debbie had a stroke that she has not yet fully recovered from. Debbie was in the hospital for three days and we all took turns staying with her. In our family, someone stays with somebody if they are in the hospital 24 hours a day. So we all took out turns in the hospital. J.B spent the night with her and then on Friday afternoon things were getting back to normal; after her dialysis run there in the hospital, they released her.

So it looked like things were going to get back to normal and then Saturday night, after the Sabbath, J.B started having severe eye pain. He had the same thing happen to him that I mentioned at the feast this year. So Nicole, my youngest daughter, rushed him to the hospital. The Doctor said that his eye pressure was 54 again. Normal eye pressure is between 14 and 18. The doctor said that most people pass out (I mentioned this before) if it got to 38, and the doctor also said that some people have heart attacks when their eye pressure reaches these levels.

The doctor also said that if he had not gone into the hospital that night, by morning he would have been permanently blind in that eye. So they drilled three more holes in his eye to relieve the pressure and two days later, he had more surgery performed on that eye.

But there was also a blessing in this. First, JB went to the hospital. At first he did not know if he would go or not, and his eyesight was saved, so that was a blessing there. And second the doctor he saw was one of the best eye doctors in the country who just happened to be in Portland, Oregon that night. This doctor's practice is really in Denver, Colorado, but he flies all over the country as a specialist, and he just happened to be in Portland that night. This doctor knew what to do immediately, and he did it and he did it all for no charge, another blessing.

That Saturday night after Nicole brought J.B home from the hospital, and we thought things were going to get back to normal, I drove Nicki home, which is about 20 miles from J.B.'s house, and I got home that night at about midnight and Debbie was sitting on the couch and she said, "Guess what?" I said, "What?" and she said Noah had broken

his elbow at a COGWA church of God function, and he was at Doernbecher Children's Hospital and needed to have surgery on his elbow.

So after the week in Hawaii was one of those weeks that we all hate. But you know what, brethren, those trials do not bother me nearly as much as what I see going on in people's lives that I know and love in the Greater Churches of God. Do you know why? The reason is that what is being allowed in the Greater Churches of God, and in a number of people's lives, will kill them spiritually. They will be just as dead as if someone had shot them in the head.

Jeremiah was warning his nation and his people. They did not heed the warning. You and I are being warned each week that we are living in dangerous times spiritually, mentally and physically. Do we clearly see what is going on and are we heeding the warning?

Now I would like to ask you a question, and before I do, I want to paint a little picture for you. There is a billboard that I drive past regularly, and on the billboard it tells you what the current power ball lottery is worth. The other day it had reached \$125 million, and I thought to myself, "What would I do with that much money?" That is an incredible amount of money. I cannot even comprehend that much cash.

Now let us say that a man came to you with a lottery ticket, and he says, "I will give you this ticket; it is the winning ticket, but there is something you have to do to receive the prize. There is a narrow road about four feet wide, ten miles long; and at the end of the road there will be a man with \$125 million. He will give it to you, and he will also give you eternal life when you give him your winning ticket." Then the man says to you that there are rules you must abide by if you agree to take the winning ticket. He says, "There is a time limit; you have forty days to go ten miles. So you need to average about a quarter of a mile per day. If you fail to walk ten miles in forty days, you will die on the road and your carcass will be kicked off the road, and you will be forgotten. Also along the way there will be other paths that you can take, but they do not end up with the prize. There will also be people along the way who will try to delay you by inviting you into taverns to have a beer in order to get you drunk and disoriented. There will also be great amusement parks that will delay you for some time if you decide to enter in and play there. There will also be topless bars and dancers along the way that will try to entice you off the road and confuse you. There will be great shopping malls with great sales on merchandise and people there beckoning you to come in and shop and spend a few days with them to slow down your progress. There will also be buildings full of pornography, and houses of ill repute full of prostitutes that will try to entice you to forget about the goal and the prize. They will say, 'Let's just live for the moment; let's have

fun.' There will be rain, snow, and hail, on your journey. People will put all kinds of debris on the roadway. They will put rocks, logs, and branches in your path to slow you down. There will be icy patches and oil slicks along the way designed to knock you off the path. There will be all kinds of toys for you to play with along the way: boats, cars, motorcycles, you name it, that will also slow down your progress. There will also be people along the way that will tell you that you cannot make ten miles; it is too long and too hard. They will tell you that it is impossible to achieve the prize. There will be people along the way that will offer you drugs of all types. They will say, 'Just try this, you will not believe the experience you will get.'"

Then the man says that if you are not careful, and you do not heed my warnings, they will destroy you, and you will lose your way and your prize. He also says along the way you will be offered fame and great possessions. If you just get off the path and follow their ways. Your journey will be filled with much tribulation, he says, many hardships and many trials. But the man says, "I will help you. I will put men along the road every tenth of a mile to encourage you and remind you of the prize. They will counsel you to keep you moving forward. Remember I warned you of other paths along the way that do not end up at the prize. At the entrance of these paths, there will be men that will look like and act like they work for me, but you will know them by what they say and how they live their lives. These men will try to get you to follow them down them down the wrong path. These men will tell you, 'It is shorter over here on this path, follow me.'"

Then the man says, "I will be with you, and I will help you. I will also put a guardrail along the road on both sides to make it hard for you to slip off the road, but if you choose to climb over the guard rail, to play and to get side tracked...just remember, it is just as hard to climb back over the guardrail to get back on the road and continue your journey as it was to get off the road. I will not let them put debris, logs, branches and rocks on the road in your path that are too heavy for you to remove, and from time to time when you get discouraged and despair sets in, I will remove the debris, the logs, the branches and the rocks for you. I will help you along the way."

So the question I want to ask you is, "Do you think that you can make the Journey? Can you go ten miles in forty days?" I think all of us can make it. We have been told what to expect from God in the Bible, so I think the wise thing to do is prepare for our journey by buying ourselves a real good pair of shoes, so we do not get blisters—shoes with good traction on both ice and oil so we will not be prone to slipping off the road.

Then I would buy some warm clothes and some good rain gear. I would also get myself a big pry bar so I could remove the debris, log branches, and rocks as I traveled along the road. I would also purchase some blinders so I would not be prone to look to the

right or the left, I would want to keep my eyes on the prize straight ahead.

I would also get some real good earplugs so I could not hear all the bologna along the way. And last but not least, I would develop an attitude—an attitude that I can make it no matter what, an attitude that says, “No one or nothing is going to beat me or knock me off the road.” And added to that all the people and the false employees would not want to get mixed up with or come into confrontation with me, because they would know where I stand. I would make sure that I could see the prize in my mind, and that I could also see the hopelessness of everything on both sides of the road. Then just before your journey the man with the winning ticket, says to you, “I love you, and I know you can make it—that is why I am giving you this ticket.”

**I John 4:9-10** In this was manifested the love of God toward us, that God has sent His only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him. [This is how much God loves us. He sent Christ to die for us—His only son. Verse 10:] In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [So that was could make it.]

These verses show us how much God loves and how much God is going to be with us as we move forward along the path. He gave us His son so that we can make it. Let us turn to Ephesians 2:4

**Ephesians 2:4** But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us

And how much mercy did he have on Judah? He gave them forty years. Another verse that shows us how much we are loved and how much mercy God has on all of us. Let us also look at I John 4:19.

**I John 4:19** We love him, because he first loved us.

God is telling us that He loves us before we were even capable of love—that is how much He loves us. He loved us when we were still in the womb. He called us; we did not call him. I know that I was not looking for God or this church when he called me. I had no interest at all, but yet I am here.

Brethren, our future is sure, as long as we heed the warnings and stay on the path.

Jeremiah was in constant conflict with other prophets and was generally hated by the populous that did not want to hear what he was being told to say to them by God.

The book of Jeremiah records the final prophesies to Judah warning of upcoming destruction if the nation does not repent. Jeremiah calls for the people to turn back to God. But Jeremiah also recognizes that Judah's destruction is due to its unrepentant idolatry, immorality, and corruption. The book of Jeremiah uses versions of the word "to turn" or "repent" more than any other of the prophets; he uses those words the most. Still the people did not listen to him. Let us turn to Jeremiah 2:13.

**Jeremiah 2:13** For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

**Jeremiah 2:31** O generation, see the word of the Lord! Have I been a wilderness to Israel? a land of darkness? Why do my people say, "We are lords; we will come no more to you?"

The Jews are talking here. "*Lord, we wish to be our own masters...*" Is that what we want to be, brethren? "*We will not be restrained by religion or civil authority; we will regard no laws human or God's.*" Is the Greater Church of God starting to show signs of this attitude, here in Jeremiah 2:31?

Brethren, we are living in very dangerous times spiritually, but if we stay on the path and heed the warning, we will receive the prize. God loves us. He is with us, and he will continue to help us. So stay on the path. Do not let the prize slip away now. We have already traveled nine and a half miles, brethren. We are close!