

Touchstones of God's Economy

Jeremiah and Lamentations

The books of Jeremiah and Lamentations are composed of prophecies, history, and poetry concerning the carrying away of the children of Israel into captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem. In these books God carries out His economy through His chastisement of Israel, His elect, yet in love, with tender care, compassion, and sympathy (Jer. 2—45; ch. 52). Moreover, He judges the nations in righteousness to match His love (chs. 46—51). He deals with these two groups so that Israel may manifest Christ, who is their divine righteousness (23:6; 33:16), as their centrality and universality. Israel will manifest Christ by their being made a new creation with the inner law of life and the capacity of this life to know God (31:33-34). God's severe chastisement of Israel caused Jeremiah, the weeping and lamenting prophet, to compose five lamentations, in which he expresses his deep sorrow and mourning over the desolation and destruction of the holy city (Lam. 1—2) and over the affliction of his punished people (chs. 3—4), concluding with a lamentation as a prayer for the holy people (ch. 5).¹

These books have been compared to an orchard in which there is ripe fruit but which also has many old branches and dry leaves. While studying the “branches” and the “leaves” cannot be considered wrong, spiritual benefit comes from “picking” the “ripe fruit.” Readers of these books must beware that the fruit is often hidden by the leaves and the branches. The ripe fruit concerns Christ as the centrality and universality of God's people, revealing Christ as life and the church as His expression.

While there is a clear prophecy concerning Christ in Jeremiah (23:5-6), there are also many figures and hints concerning Him. Likewise, this book clearly speaks of Israel as God's wife (2:2, 32; 3:1, 14; 31:32), typifying the church as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23-32). Because the church is the enlargement and expression of Christ, portions that touch on the centrality of Christ also lead us to the church, His universality. This article will look for the “ripe fruit” of Christ and the church in the “orchard” of Jeremiah and Lamentations.

Christ as Seen through the Prophet Jeremiah

The name Jeremiah can mean either “Jehovah exalts” or “Jehovah tears down.” Jeremiah 1:10 says, “See, I have

appointed you this day / Over the nations and over the kingdoms / To pluck up and to break down, / To destroy and to tear down, / To build up and to plant.” This verse corresponds to the two meanings of the name Jeremiah. Jehovah's building up and His planting both involve His word, which is a building up of Christ and a planting of Christ for the exalting of Christ (Acts 20:32; Mark 4:14). The words spoken by Christ in the Gospels were both for building up and for tearing down (Matt. 5—7; ch. 23).

Jeremiah often wept, even wailed, and is therefore called the weeping prophet (Jer. 9:1; 13:17; Lam. 2:11; 3:48). It was by weeping that he reacted to God's correction of Israel. His reaction was very tender, sympathetic, and compassionate; in this he expressed God's love, which in these books is a composition of God's tender care, compassion, and sympathy. Even while God is chastising His elect, Israel, He is compassionate toward them (Lam. 3:22-23). This may be compared to a father who weeps as he disciplines his child because he loves the child. Jeremiah wept on God's behalf, and his weeping expressed God's feeling. In weeping he was one with God, and God wept in Jeremiah's weeping. The Lord Jesus, in His oneness with God, also wept for God's people as He prophesied concerning God's judgment of His people (Luke 19:41-44; cf. John 11:35; Heb. 5:7).

Christ as Seen through the Fountain of Living Waters

In Jeremiah 2:13 Jehovah declares, “My people have committed two evils: / They have forsaken Me, / The fountain of living waters, / To hew out for themselves cisterns, / Broken cisterns, / Which hold no water.” Although Jeremiah is a book full of speaking concerning Israel's sin and God's wrath, chastisement, and punishment, it reveals that God's intention is to be the fountain of living waters to dispense Himself into His chosen people for their satisfaction and enjoyment. By His people's enjoyment of Him, the church is produced as His counterpart, increase, and enlargement—to be His fullness for His expression. This is God's heart's desire, good pleasure, and the goal of His economy.

The seed sown in this verse is fully developed in the New Testament, which reveals the dispensing of the Triune God, embodied in Christ and realized as the life-giving Spirit for

the producing of the church as the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem (John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39; 1 Cor. 10:4; 12:13; Rev. 22:1, 17; 2 Cor. 13:14).

Christ as Seen through the Condition of the Heart

Jeremiah 4:3 says, “Thus says Jehovah to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, / Break up your fallow ground, / And do not sow among thorns.” This means that Israel should have sown everything in the presence of God, with God, and for God; that is, they should have used the land properly. They, instead, worshipped idols and sowed among the thorns. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, / And it is incurable; / Who can know it?” This word is related to God’s economy with His dispensing. Although man’s heart is corrupt, deceitful, and incurable, even such a heart can be a tablet upon which God writes His law of life (31:33; 2 Cor. 3:3). Once God has come into the regenerated human spirit, He will spread from the spirit into the heart. This is God’s way, according to His economy, to deal with the heart of fallen man.

Just as Jeremiah deals with the real condition of man’s heart, the Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry as depicted in the Gospels also dealt with the condition of man’s heart (Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15). Today, through His dwelling in us as the Word of God, He is dealing with our heart (Heb. 4:12). It is in the divine dispensing that He can make His home in our hearts so that we might be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:17, 19).

Christ as Seen through the Breaking of the Old Covenant

Jeremiah points out that Israel broke the covenant of the law, which God gave them at Mount Sinai (Jer. 11:10; 31:32). The law, which itself is holy, righteous, good, and spiritual, became weak through the flesh (Rom. 7:12, 16, 14; 8:3). The law of the Ten Commandments was given to test and expose us as to our genuine nature and condition (3:20; 5:20; 7:7). Through their failure under the test of the law, Israel was to learn that they were unable to keep the law and that they had no righteousness by the law (8:3; 9:31; 10:3). They also came to know that they needed Christ to be Jehovah their righteousness and that they needed to have the divine life with its law imparted into them in the new covenant (Jer. 23:6; 31:33-34; 33:16; 1 Cor. 1:30; Heb. 8:8-12; 10:16-17). Hence, Christ is the destination of God’s law-breaking people. He is the “end of the law unto righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4). Moreover, Christ was incarnated, died, and resurrected to be the living Word, which is the Spirit, who is now in our mouth and in our heart, like the air, ready to be breathed in, received, and retained in the spirit (v. 8; 1 Cor. 15:45; John 6:63; 20:22).

Christ, the Righteous Shoot to David

Jeremiah 23:5 says, “Indeed, days are coming, / Declares Jehovah, / When I will raise up to David a righteous Shoot; / And He will reign as King and act prudently / And will execute justice and righteousness in the land.” This righteous Shoot is Christ incarnated as a man in the flesh, the descendant of David (Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3). The word *Shoot* indicates Christ’s humanity, and it also implies life. When Christ was born, a new, fresh sprout came forth from the stump of Jesse (Isa. 11:1). Christ’s reigning as King implies His resurrection and ascension; in His ascension He is now King of kings, Lord of lords, and Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 17:14; 19:16; 1:5).

Jeremiah 23:6 says that His name will be called “Jehovah our righteousness.” This refers to Christ’s divinity, indicating that Christ, as the descendant of David, is not merely a man but the very Jehovah who created the heavens and the earth, selected Abraham, established the race of Israel, and was the Lord of David, the One whom David called Lord (Matt. 22:42-45; Rev. 5:5; 22:16). Christ being *our* righteousness indicates that Christ has been made our righteousness based on His redemption, which He accomplished by dying on the cross and shedding His blood in order to wash away our sins (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:7).

The name *Jehovah our righteousness* is truly precious. Although Israel forsook God for idols and became incurably evil, because of His compassions, lovingkindness, faithfulness, and eternal love, God never gave up His people. Thus, even while He was condemning and chastising them, He was incarnated as a Shoot unto David so that He could be His people’s righteousness for Israel’s restoration. Then through Christ as their righteousness Israel can manifest Christ as their centrality and universality, and this manifestation will consummate in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12).

Christ in the Inner Law of Life

In the prophecy of Jeremiah, God reveals that He will replace the old covenant of the law with the new covenant of life (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-12). The center, content, and reality of this new covenant is the inner law of life (Rom. 8:2). Jeremiah 31:33 says, “This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Jehovah: I will put My law in their inward parts and write it upon their hearts.” In its essence, this law refers to the operation of the divine life, and the divine life is the Triune God, who is embodied in the all-inclusive Christ and realized as the life-giving Spirit, who has been processed and consummated to become everything to His chosen people (Col. 2:9; 1 Cor. 15:45).

According to its life, the inner law of the new covenant is the Triune God; according to its function, it is the almighty divine capacity, which can do everything for the carrying out of the divine economy. By this capacity we can know God, live God, and be constituted with God in His life and nature so that we become His increase, His enlargement, to be His fullness for His eternal expression (Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19-21).

Furthermore, by this life's capacity we are constituted members of the Body of Christ with many various functions (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30; Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:11, 16).

This inner law of life is first in our inward parts, and then it is written on our hearts. This corresponds to the New Testament teaching concerning the spreading of the divine life from the center of our being, our spirit, to all the parts of our heart (Rom. 8:10, 6, 11; Eph. 3:17; 4:23; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). God writes His law on our heart by moving from our spirit into our heart to inscribe what He is into our being (v. 3). The inner law of the new covenant is the law of the Spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus and which is the very Christ who indwells us (Rom. 8:2, 10).

Christ in the Inner Knowing of God

Concerning the new covenant, Jeremiah 31:34 continues, "They will no longer teach, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for all of them will know Me, from the little one among them even to the great one among them, declares Jehovah." To know God is to live God. Through the spontaneous, automatic function of the divine life within us, we have the capacity to know God, to live God, and even to be one with God in His life and nature so that we may be His corporate expression.

The difference between knowing God outwardly and knowing Him inwardly may be illustrated by food. One may have much knowledge of food related to its nutrition without eating it. However, even without this outward knowledge of food, one may know food by eating it. In John 6:57 the Lord Jesus said, "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me." To eat is to take food into us that it may be assimilated organically into our body. To eat the Lord Jesus is to receive Him into us that He may be assimilated by the regenerated inner man in the way of life. We live by Him whom we have received. We know God by the resurrected Christ who lives in us (14:19-20).

Christ, the Propitiation for Our Sins

In the new covenant God forgives us of our sins: "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:34). Forgiveness here equals redemption; hence, in quoting this portion in Hebrews 8, the writer uses the term *propitious* for forgiveness (v. 12). In His redemption Christ became the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, He propitiated for us, and He became the place of propitiation, typified by the lid of the Ark in the tabernacle, where we can meet with God and receive His speaking (2:17; 1 John 2:2; Rom. 3:25).

With His redemption as the basis, we can believe into Christ

to receive God's forgiveness, and God can forgive us, make Christ our righteousness, and clothe us with the robe of righteousness (Acts 10:43; Rom. 3:24, 26; Isa. 61:10). This opens the way for Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God to enter into us as our life, our inner law of life, and our everything, to dispense Himself into our entire being for the accomplishing of God's eternal economy (Col. 2:9; 3:4; Jer. 31:33).

Christ Enacting the New Covenant in His Blood

For the new covenant to come into effect, it had to be enacted. Christ established the new covenant in His blood, as symbolized by the cup at the Lord's table (1 Cor. 11:25). For certain promises to become a covenant, an oath is required, enacted with the shedding of blood. When the person who made the covenant dies, the covenant then becomes a testament, a will, in which all the covenanted items become bequests. When Christ, the embodiment of God, was crucified, His death both enacted the new covenant in His blood and caused it to become the new testament, in which Christ, as the embodiment of the Triune God, and all He has attained and obtained through His death, resurrection, and ascension, become bequests to us. Furthermore, in ascension He has been made the Mediator of this better covenant, the Executor who executes all the bequests of the New Testament to His believers (Heb. 8:6).

Christ in the Words of God

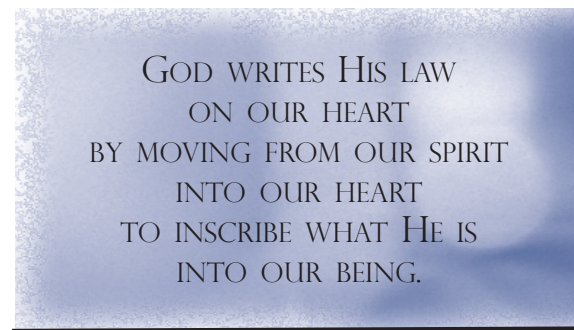
Jeremiah 15:16 says, "Your words were found and I ate them, / And Your word became to me / The gladness and joy of my heart."

According to the divine revelation in the Bible, God's words are good for us to eat, and we need to eat them. God's word, which is Christ as the living Word embodied in the Bible as the written word, is the divine supply as food to nourish us. Through the word as our food, God dispenses His riches into our inner being to nourish us that we may be constituted with His element (Psa. 119:103; Matt. 4:4; Heb. 1:2; 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2-3; John 1:1, 14; Col. 3:16).

The fountain of living waters (Jer. 2:13; 17:13), water (v. 8), and eating God's word (15:16) present the basic thought concerning the carrying out of God's economy by His dispensing. God is our food, our water, and our fountain of living waters for Him to dispense Himself into us. It is indeed marvelous that in a book concerned with God's chastisement of His sinful and evil people, such a full picture of God's economy, accomplished by His dispensing, is presented.

Christ in Jehovah Our Trust

Jeremiah 17:7 says, "Blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah, / And whose trust Jehovah is." In order to trust in Jehovah, we need Jehovah to be our trust. In the New Testament, believers are justified through the faith of Jesus Christ (Gal.



2:16—*faith in Jesus Christ* in this verse is literally *faith of Jesus Christ*). Christ, the Son of God, is the most precious One. When the gospel is preached to us, we are infused with the preciousness of Christ. Through our appreciation of Christ, He becomes in us the faith by which we believe and the capacity to believe. Our believing in Christ by the faith of Christ creates an organic union in which we and Christ are one.

Christ as Seen in the Tree Planted by Water

Jeremiah 17:8 says, “He will be like a tree transplanted beside water, / Which sends out its roots by a stream, / And will not be afraid when heat comes; / For its leaves remain flourishing, / And it will not be anxious in the year of drought / And will not cease to bear fruit.” While this verse refers to a person who trusts in God, it may also be applied to Christ, who, as a man, trusted in God and is the tree of life (Heb. 5:7; Psa. 22:9-11; Gen. 2:9; John 1:4; 15:1). The description here reflects the description of the tree of life in Revelation 22:2. By partaking of Christ as the tree of life, we may also be trees of life with the fruit of life to feed others.

The picture here is of God’s economy, which is carried out by His divine dispensing. In order to receive the divine dispensing, we as the trees must absorb God as the water (1 Cor. 3:6). The riches of the supplying God dispensed into us as the trees constitute us with God’s divinity and cause us to grow into God’s measure (Col. 2:19). In this way we and God become one, having the same element, essence, constitution, and appearance (Rev. 4:3; 21:11).

Christ, Jehovah Our Husband

In Jeremiah a number of times Jehovah refers to Himself as the Husband of Israel, who is His wife (2:2, 32; 3:1, 14, 20; 31:32). In the New Testament, Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, was incarnated, died, and resurrected in order to obtain the church, His bride, whom He loved (Eph. 5:23-32).

Christ and the Kingdom

In Lamentations 5:19 the prophet declares, “You, O Jehovah, abide forever; / Your throne is from generation to generation.” This verse speaks both of the restoration of Israel and the coming eternal kingdom. God did not utterly reject Israel, nor was He exceedingly angry with them (v. 22). Rather, He will come at the end of this age in the person of Christ to restore the children of Israel to be in His person and in His eternal kingdom to enjoy what He had promised to their forefathers.

Jeremiah 30:9 says, “They will serve Jehovah their God and David their King, whom I will raise up for them.” Here, *David* refers to Christ, who is the real David and who will be their King in the restoration (Isa. 32:1; Rev. 20:4, 6). David is a type of Christ as the King (2 Sam. 7:16).

Christ in the Compassions of God

Lamentations 3:22 speaks concerning the compassions of

God: “It is Jehovah’s lovingkindness that we are not consumed, / For His compassions do not fail.” We touch God’s compassions in Christ, which cause us to offer our bodies to Him for His service, and we experience God’s compassion for others through our oneness with Christ in His inward parts (Rom. 12:1; Phil. 1:8).

No matter how much God punished Israel, He did not utterly consume them. Even as Jeremiah lamented the destruction of Jerusalem, he and many others still remained. The people of Israel failed, but God’s compassions did not fail. They preserved the remnant of Israel for the carrying out of His economy.

Lamentations 3:23 says, “They are new every morning.” This indicates that Jeremiah contacted the Lord as the compassionate One every morning. It was through his contact with the Lord that he received this word regarding God’s lovingkindness, compassions, and faithfulness.

Christ in the Faithfulness of God

Lamentations 3:23 continues, “Great is Your faithfulness.” God’s compassions do not fail, because He is the faithful One. The faithfulness of God, which is Christ (Acts 13:34), refers to His word and is also related to His covenant. Because He made a covenant with Abraham and confirmed it with Isaac and Jacob, God was faithful to keep His word (Gen. 15:1-21; 17:1-22; 26:1-4; 35:11-12).

Christ, Our Portion and Our Hope

Lamentations 3:24 says, “Jehovah is my portion, says my soul; / Therefore I hope in Him.” This word bears a New Testament flavor. Christ is our all-inclusive portion, typified by the land of Canaan, and our hope (Col. 1:12, 27). Jeremiah enjoyed Jehovah as his portion, and he put his hope not in himself, not in the people, nor in anything else other than Jehovah. Jeremiah realized that God is a God of lovingkindness, that He is compassionate, and that His word is faithful. Yet he also realized that we still need to contact the Lord every morning, put our entire hope in Him, wait on Him, and call on His name (Lam. 3:55).

Christ, on Whose Name We Call

Lamentations 3:55-56 says, “I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, / From the lowest pit. / You have heard my voice; do not hide / Your ear at my breathing, at my cry.” The name Jehovah in the Old Testament is the name Jesus in the New Testament (Matt. 1:21). *Jesus*, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Joshua*, means “Jehovah the Savior” or “the salvation of Jehovah.” Hence, Jesus is Jehovah becoming our salvation. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved (Acts 2:21; 4:10, 12; Rom. 10:9). Salvation through calling on the name of the Lord is needed not only by all people but especially by the believers for their daily salvation and moment-by-moment supply (Phil. 1:19; Rom. 5:10; 1 Tim. 4:10).

Christ, Who Became Poor

As part of His chastisement, God stripped the people of Israel of their wealth and made them poor. Because Jeremiah was part of the nation of Israel, when the wealth and treasures of Israel were given to their enemies, Jeremiah also became poor. He suffered poverty for the Lord's sake and for Israel's sake. Christ also became poor for our sakes in order that we, because of His poverty, might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

Christ, Witnessed by Martyrdom

When Jesus Christ was incarnated, the evil King Herod killed all the infant boys in Bethlehem and in all its borders (Matt. 2:16-18). This was the first martyrdom in the New Testament related to Christ. It was prophesied poetically by Jeremiah (Jer. 31:15).

Christ, the Coming One

In Lamentations 5:21 Jeremiah entreats Jehovah: "Turn us back to You, O Jehovah, and we will be turned; / Renew our days as before." At the time of the Lord's second coming, the Lord will turn to Israel and appear to them, and they will turn to Him and receive His household salvation (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:26; Rev. 1:7).

Regarding the Lord's coming, we need to learn the lesson of waiting on the Lord. Lamentations 3:25 says, "Jehovah is good to those who wait on Him, / To the soul that seeks Him." Although God is true, living, compassionate, and faithful, in order to test His people, He often delays fulfilling His word. In Jeremiah's case, the waiting on the Lord has been quite long, for the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the age of restoration has still not come. Today is not the time for the ultimate consummation; therefore, we must wait on the Lord.

The Church Typified by Israel, the Wife of God

Jeremiah 2:2 says, "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says Jehovah: / I remember concerning you the kindness of your youth, / The love of your bridal days, / When you followed after Me in the wilderness, / In a land that was not sown." In Jeremiah, God considered Himself a Husband to His beloved elect, Israel, and Israel a wife to Him. In particular, Jeremiah 2:1—3:5 can be regarded as a conversation between a husband and a wife.

God's economy is to have Christ for the church. God's ultimate goal is to obtain His corporate expression in the sonship, with Christ as the Firstborn and His many brothers as His reproduction (Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:29). In the Old Testament, Israel, God's corporate people, is the greatest type

of the church, encompassing the church's election, predestination, redemption, salvation, and building to become God's habitation on earth. The church is the bride of the redeeming God and is His wife, with whom He will have a marriage life for eternity (Rev. 19:7; 21:2). God's full salvation seen in the type of Israel will consummate in the holy city, New Jerusalem, the union, mingling, and incorporation of the processed and consummated Triune God with His redeemed, regenerated, and glorified tripartite elect (v. 17).

The Church, the Object of God's Love

Jeremiah 31:3 says, "Jehovah appeared to me from afar, saying, / Indeed I have loved you with an eternal love; / Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness." God's eternal love here was for Israel as His corporate people. Likewise, although Christ loves each of us individually (Gal. 2:20), His highest love, the love that surpasses knowledge, is for the church, for whom He paid the highest price, that is, for His counterpart (Eph. 5:25; 3:19; Acts 20:28).

The Church and the City of Jerusalem

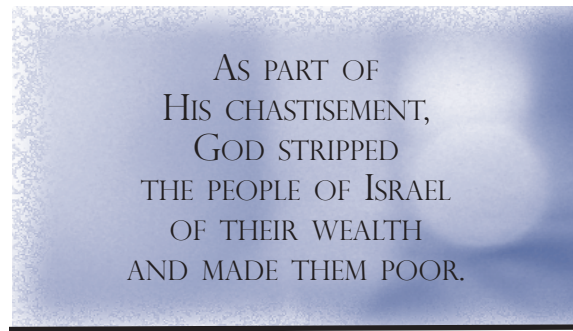
Jeremiah 3:17 says, "At that time they will call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah, and all the nations will be gathered to it because the name of Jehovah is at Jerusalem; and they will no longer walk after the stubbornness of their evil heart." In Jeremiah, the name of the city of Jerusalem is used as a symbol of God's people. This verse reveals that God's kingdom

is with His people. Verse 18 continues, "In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel." This indicates that Jerusalem is the uniting factor of the twelve tribes of Israel. Therefore, the city of Jerusalem in these two verses signifies that the church today is where the kingdom of God is and that the church is built by Christ when the saints keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace (Rom. 14:17; Eph. 4:1-16).

In Jeremiah 33:16 the city of Jerusalem is called "Jehovah our righteousness." Since Christ is called Jehovah our righteousness in Jeremiah 23:6, calling Jerusalem by the same name seems to indicate that Christ and the city of Jerusalem will be one. First Corinthians 12:12 says, "Even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ," and Colossians 3:11 says concerning the church as the new man that "Christ is all and in all." Christ and the church are joined together so that they are no longer two but one (Eph. 5:31-32; 1 Cor. 6:17).

The Church, the People of God

In Jeremiah 31:33 God promises, "I will be their God, and they will be My people." This is a promise in the new covenant.



Israel was already God's people, but their being such was according to the knowledge of the law and required them to walk according to that law, which they could not do. In the new covenant, God's relationship with us is based fully on the law of life so that today we do not need to walk according to the knowledge of the law of letters but according to the consciousness of the law of life (Rom. 8:4-6).

The Church, the Kingdom of God

Lamentations 5:19 speaks of the throne of Jehovah, and Jeremiah 3:17 says that the city of Jerusalem is called the throne of Jehovah. God's eternal being and throne are higher than His lovingkindness, compassions, and faithfulness (Lam. 3:22-23). Both lovingkindness and compassions can fluctuate, but God's person and government remain unchanging forever. In the New Jerusalem, God will be fully unveiled in His person—as the eternal King—and in His government, which is His eternal, unshakable kingdom. Both His person and government are the unshakable foundation of His dealing with His people (Heb. 12:28). The kingdom of God in its reality is the church today for the ushering in of the kingdom in its manifestation in the coming age and in the New Jerusalem for eternity (Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 14:17; Rev. 11:15; 22:3).

The Church and God's Compassions and Faithfulness

The lovingkindness, compassions, and faithfulness of God are exercised toward His corporate people, Israel, typifying the church (Lam. 3:22-23; Eph. 2:4-6; 3:8-11).

The Church, the Issue of the Divine Dispensing

The dispensing of the Triune God revealed in the book of Jeremiah issues in the church as the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Jer. 2:13; 15:16; 17:7-8; Eph. 1:3-14, 22-23).

The Church, the Reproduction of Christ

The law of the Ten Commandments is a portrait of God, His photograph, so to speak. If Israel had been able to keep the law, they would have expressed God in full and would have been His reproduction. Instead, the law exposed the weakness of man's flesh and the impossibility of fallen man's fulfilling the law. In the new covenant, based on Christ's redemption, God imparts Himself in Christ as the Spirit into His chosen people, that is, as the inner law of life with the inner knowledge of Himself, so that by their organic union with Him and their growth in life in this union, they may be His corporate expression, the many sons of God as the reproduction of the firstborn Son of God, Christ (v. 5; Rom. 8:29).

The Church, a Virgin to Christ

Jeremiah often refers to Israel as a virgin to God (Jer. 18:13; 31:4, 21; Lam. 1:15). Although Israel was a virgin betrothed to Jehovah, she forsook Him, her reality, her Fiancé, and turned to idols, which are vanity (Jer. 18:15). The church

likewise is a virgin to Christ. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2).

The Church in Apostasy

In Jeremiah, the Lord condemns Israel for her apostasies and calls her apostate (2:19; 3:6, 22; 5:6; 8:5; 14:7). Apostasy is a matter of leaving the way of God and taking another way to follow things other than God. It is to forsake God and turn to idols. Jeremiah 18:15 says that God's people "have been stumbled in their ways / From the ancient paths / To walk on bypaths, / On a way which is not cast up." The ancient paths were the right paths, which their forefathers had taken. To take the bypaths is to go downward; to take the ancient paths, a way that is cast up, is to go upward. The result of leaving the way of God, the ancient paths, is degradation. Israel's apostasy and degradation are a type of the church's apostasy and degradation, which began in the first century A.D. and continues until today.

Implied in the prophecies concerning apostasy is the need for the Lord's overcomers to stand faithfully for God's interest in place of God's degraded chosen people, as the prophets from Samuel to Malachi did in the Old Testament. In the New Testament age the Lord is again calling for overcomers to stand faithfully for His interest in the midst of the church's degradation (2 Tim. 2:20-22; Rev. 2—3).

The Church, the New Creation of the New Covenant

God's purpose in giving the new covenant is for the new creation. He puts His law in our inward parts and writes it upon our hearts by imparting Himself with His divine life and nature into us. This makes us a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Corporately, the church is the new creation, the real Israel of God that includes all the Gentile and Jewish believers in Christ, who are the true sons of Abraham and the household of the faith (Gal. 6:15; 3:7, 29; 6:10). The consummation of God's new creation will be the New Jerusalem in eternity (Rev. 21—22).

The above thirty-two points on Christ and the church in Jeremiah and Lamentations are some of the touchstones of God's economy in these books. May we prayerfully muse on them so that we may find God's words and eat them, and they may be to us the joy and rejoicing of our hearts.

by Jim Batten

Note

¹This article draws extensively on the outline and footnotes by Witness Lee in the *Recovery Version of the Bible*.

Work Cited

Lee, Witness. *Outlines and Footnotes. Recovery Version of the Bible*, Living Stream Ministry, 2003.