

# The Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations

## Lesson 5: The Temple Sermon: Do Not Trust Lying Words -- Jeremiah 7:1–8:3

Picture the busiest morning of the religious year. The roads into Jerusalem are packed. Families are arriving for the feast, sandals dusty, lambs in hand, hearts warm with the comfortable certainty that all is well. And there, planted in the gate of the house of the Lord, stands a man with a word that lands like a thrown stone. “Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word.” God has stationed Jeremiah right where the crowd is thickest, right where the singing is loudest, right where the people feel safest, and He has told him to say the one thing nobody wants to hear.

The people had a slogan, and they loved it. They chanted it like a charm: “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these” (7:4). Three times, as if saying it enough would make it true. They believed the building made them untouchable. God was here, in this magnificent house, so surely God would never let anything happen to them. And Jeremiah tears the slogan to pieces: “Do not trust in these deceptive words.” The temple is not a lucky charm. It is not a shield you can hide behind while you live however you please.

Then God asks the question that exposes the whole con. “Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?” (7:11). They were robbing the poor, oppressing the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, shedding innocent blood, and then strolling into the temple to declare, “We are delivered!” (7:9–10). They had turned the house of God into a hideout, the place where thieves feel safe between crimes. Centuries later the Lord Jesus would quote this very verse as He overturned the tables and cleansed His Father’s house (Matthew 21:13). The con was still running.

It is a sobering chapter, and it ends in a place called the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, where they burned their own children in the fire, and where God says it will be renamed the Valley of Slaughter (7:31–32). False worship is never harmless; it always costs somebody everything. But underneath the warning is mercy. God is pleading: “Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place” (7:3). The whole sermon is a door held open. He is not looking for louder slogans. He is looking for changed lives. And He is asking the same of you and me.

**Group Discussion:** The people kept chanting “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord” (7:4) as if the building itself made them safe. What are some of the religious slogans, routines, or symbols that people today (including us) can hide behind while their actual lives go unchanged?

**Personal Reflection:** God said, “Amend your ways and your deeds” (7:3). Where in your own walk are you tempted to substitute religious activity (attendance, giving, the right words) for the harder work of an obedient, changed life?

*Read Jeremiah 7:1–8:3*

## **Study Questions**

1. Read 7:1–7. God commands Judah to “amend your ways and your deeds” and warns them not to “trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the Lord.’” What does this reveal about how God evaluates worship, and why is the mere presence of true religious forms no guarantee of His favor?
2. The people treated the temple like a good-luck charm that made them untouchable. What is the religious symbol, habit, or membership that you are most tempted to lean on for security instead of leaning on a genuinely obedient relationship with God?
3. Read 7:8–11. God lists their sins (stealing, murder, adultery, false swearing, idolatry) and then says they “come and stand before me in this house... and say, ‘We are delivered!’” before asking, “Has this house... become a den of robbers?” What does this expose about the danger of separating worship from daily obedience?
4. Jeremiah confronted people who felt forgiven on Saturday while wronging their neighbor on Monday. Where is there a gap in your own life between the worship you offer God and the way you treat the people around you?

5. Read 7:21–23. God says that on the day He brought Israel out of Egypt He did not merely command sacrifices but said, “Obey my voice... and walk in all the way that I command you.” What does this teach about what God has always wanted most from His people, and how is ritual meant to serve obedience rather than replace it?
  
6. God’s great desire was, “Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people” (7:23). What would it look like this week for you to move one step from religious performance toward simple, glad obedience to God’s voice?
  
7. Read 7:25–28. For generations God “persistently sent... my servants the prophets,” yet the people “did not listen... but stiffened their neck.” What does God’s long patience, met by stubborn refusal, reveal about both His mercy and the hardening power of repeated disobedience?
  
8. Jeremiah was told the people would not listen to him (7:27), yet he was to speak faithfully anyway. Where are you tempted to go silent or grow weary in doing right because you cannot see any result, and how does Jeremiah’s example speak to that?
  
9. Read 7:30–34 and 8:1–3. The people built high places to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, so God declares the place will be called the Valley of Slaughter, and even the bones of the dead will be exposed. What does this terrible passage reveal about God’s holiness,

the real cost of false worship, and the seriousness with which He regards sin (especially sin against the helpless)?

10. Look back across the whole sermon, from the chant at the gate to the Valley of Slaughter. Name one specific way the Lord Jesus is using this passage to move you from trusting in religious forms toward a worship that is honest, obedient, and merciful all the way down.

### **Digging Deeper**

**Reflect on these passages:** Matthew 21:12–13, where Jesus cleanses the temple and quotes Jeremiah’s “den of robbers”; 1 Samuel 15:22, “to obey is better than sacrifice”; Isaiah 1:11–17, where God is weary of sacrifices and calls them to “seek justice, correct oppression”; Micah 6:6–8, what the Lord requires: “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God”; Amos 5:21–24, God despising feasts and calling for justice to “roll down like waters.”

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