

## Jeremiah Chapter 4

### Verses 1-4

These verses conclude the message begun at 3:6, by using literary figures drawn from Israel's daily experiences.

From agriculture comes the admonition to "weed out" totally their present practices and "break up" their "fallow ground," and then "sow" the new "seeds" of spiritual fruitfulness for God.

Repentance and a broken heart must precede renewed spiritual vitality.

The second figure comes from religious ceremony.

Mere outward conformity to the standards of the covenant were insufficient (compare Gen. 17:10-14; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Joshua 5:2-7; Rom. 2:28-29; 4:9-25).

### Verses 1-2

Note the dual use of the term "return", emphasizing that God would not accept a half-hearted surrender.

He knows people's hearts (17:9-10).

**Jeremiah 4:1 "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove."**

The "if" implies a return from the hopes with which Jeremiah chapter 3 ended to the language of misgiving, and so, inferentially, of earnest exhortation.

"Abominations":

Literally, things of shame (as in Jer. 3:24); the idols which Israel had worshipped.

"Then shalt thou not remove":

Better, as continuing the conditions of forgiveness, if thou wilt not wander.

We see again, an offer from God to forgive them and start all over.

God will not take them back until they give up their idols.

When they give up their idols, God will welcome them back.

**Jeremiah 4:2 "And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory."**

God's covenant with Abraham had stressed that all peoples would be blessed through Him (Gen. 12:3; 22:18), but Judah's disobedience had prevented them from being the instrument of God's blessing.

This is very similar to the confessing with the mouth in Romans.

This is speaking of the promise God made to Abraham, that all the nations would be blessed through Him.

There was only one condition.

They must follow God with all their heart.

Look at the following Scripture what they must confess:

Romans 10:9 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

It is not enough to just believe in your heart.

You must confess with your mouth.

**Jeremiah 4:3 "For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns."**

"Break up":

Jeremiah appealed for a spiritual turnabout from sinful, wasteful lives.

He pictured this as the plowing of ground, formerly hard and unproductive due to weeds, in order to make it useful for sowing (compare Matt. 13:18-23).

"Fallow":

In the verse above, means freshly plowed.

This, to me, would mean to prepare the heart, and then plant the seed.

The heart unprepared, will not receive the seed of the Word.

It will be choked out with the cares of the world.

**Jeremiah 4:4 "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench [it], because of the evil of your doings."**

“Circumcise”:

This surgery (Gen. 17:10-14), was to cut away flesh that could hold disease in its folds and could pass the disease on to wives.

It was important for the preservation of God’s people physically.

But it was also a symbol of the need for the heart to be cleansed from the deadly disease of sin.

The really essential surgery needed to happen on the inside, where God calls for taking away fleshly things that keep the heart from being spiritually devoted to Him and from true faith in Him and His will.

Jeremiah later expanded on this theme (31:31-34; compare Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Rom. 2:29).

God selected the reproductive organ as the location of the symbol for man’s need of cleansing for sin, because it is the instrument most indicative of his depravity, since by it he reproduces generations of sinners.

Jeremiah said, “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD”, then added the more graphic phrase, “take away the foreskins of your heart”.

This is the kind of internal, spiritual operation that only God can do.

We find in the Scripture above and in the following, that God is not satisfied with just the formality of circumcision, but wanted the hearts of the people pure.

Romans 2:28-29 "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither [is that] circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:" "But he [is] a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the spirit, [and] not in the letter; whose praise [is] not of men, but of God."

If they do not learn to follow God with all their heart, He will destroy them.

1 Samuel 12:24 "Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great [things] he hath done for you."

Verses 5-8

God instructed Jeremiah to declare “for I will bring evil from the north” and destruction would come.

The invasion might take the form of a foreign army, but the driving force would be “the fierce anger of the LORD.”

The rest of the chapter contains a new message emphasizing the proclamation of God’s judgment.

The sounding of the “trumpet” was a well-known sign of danger in the ancient Near East (compare Hosea 5:8; 8:1; Joel 2:1; Amos 3:6).

It could also mark a time of national self-examination (Joel 2:15-17).

The “standard” (conspicuous flag upon a pole), would point to the appropriate place of refuge (compare verse 21).

**Jeremiah 4:5 "Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defended cities."**

Exhortations to repentance being without effect in general, though they might have an influence on some few particular persons.

The LORD directs the prophet to lay before the people a view of their destruction at hand.

Who calls upon some persons as a sort of heralds, to publish and declare in the land of Judea, and in Jerusalem the metropolis of it, what follows.

"Blow ye the trumpet in the land":

As an alarm of an approaching enemy, and of an invasion by him and of danger from him.

And this was to be done, not in order to gather together, and put themselves in a posture of defense to meet the enemy and give him battle; but to get together those that were in the fields, and in country villages, and hide themselves from him.

"Cry, gather together, and say":

Or cry with a full mouth, with a loud voice, that all might hear; which shows imminent danger.

"Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defended cities":

Such as Jerusalem, and others, where they might think themselves safe and secure (Matt. 24:16).

This declaration from God was to be throughout their land.

The blowing of the trumpet was for two things.

It gathered them for worship or for war.

Verses 6-7

“Evil from the north”:

This evil is Babylon’s army which would invade from that direction.

The “lion” on the prow fit Babylon because of its conquering power, and Babylon was symbolized by the winged lions guarding its royal court.

Babylon is later identified in 20:4.

Many details in chapter 4, graphically depict warriors in conquest (verses 7, 13, 29).

**Jeremiah 4:6 "Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction."**

Not on the tower of Zion, as Kimchi interprets it; but on some high place pointing to Zion, and directing the country people to flee thither for safety.

For the setting up of the standard here is not for enlisting of soldiers in order to fight, but as a sign of danger, and a direction to find refuge.

"Retire":

Gather yourselves together in order to flee, as the word is rendered (Isa. 10:31).

Though some render it, "be ye strengthened"; take heart, and play the man.

But this does not seem so agreeable to the context.

"Stay not":

Or, "stand not".

Stand not in the place ye are in, but move from it in all haste, because of the present danger.

"For I will bring evil from the north”:

From Babylon, as Kimchi interprets it; which lay north of the land of Israel.

And so, God designs the captivity that Judah should be brought there.

"And a great destruction":

Or, "breach"; which the Babylonians should execute on the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem.

The standard was to be raised pointing to Jerusalem or the church.

The standard must be raised by God's people for others to follow.

The road into Jerusalem that the enemy would come on, led to the north.

**Jeremiah 4:7 "The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; [and] thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant."**

The descending judgment of Babylon is described as "the lion" coming up from his "thicket."

The near interpretation is Nebuchadnezzar coming against them.

"Gentiles" here, possibly means nations.

The "lion" here could be the antichrist, who will come up from beneath and will destroy nations.

The "destroyer" is Satan, or someone greatly influenced of Satan.

He will destroy nations.

The last nation of course, will be Israel.

The "thicket" could be hell, or place of destruction.

Notice also where he came from.

It was from his place.

The "land" to be made desolate is Israel.

**Jeremiah 4:8 "For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us."**

"Sackcloth" was the traditional attire of grief and repentance.

God controls Satan the same as He controls everyone else.

God can stop him at any time.

The "sackcloth" here, is a garment of mourning.

When the LORD is angry with His people, He will allow the enemy to attack them.

**Jeremiah 4:9 "And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, [that] the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder."**

When Nebuchadnezzar should come up from Babylon into the land of Judea, and lay waste the cities thereof, and besiege Jerusalem.

"That the heart of the king shall perish":

Meaning Zedekiah king of Judah, should be in the utmost fright and consternation, not knowing what to do, being devoid both of wisdom and courage (see Jer. 39:4).

"And the heart of the princes":

Who being seized with the same panic, and at their wits' end, would not be able to give any advice and counsel to the king.

So the people would have no help from the king and his nobles, in whom they put their confidence.

"And the priests shall be astonished":

Which Kimchi interprets of the priests of the high places, the idolatrous priests, whose service would now cease, and whose idols would not save them.

"And the prophets shall wonder":

Which he also interprets of the false prophets.

As does the Targum; who prophesied peace, and now they shall see it was a lie they prophesied, since sudden destruction now comes upon them.

In a situation like this, the king has no more protection than the people.

In many cases he has less.

These heathen people will not respect the office of the priest either.

God will allow this because He is angry with His people.

**Jeremiah 4:10 "Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul."**

Many suggestions have been given as to the meaning of this difficult verse.

One theory builds upon a textual variant found in a few ancient manuscripts that reads “said they” for “said I,” attributing the words to Judah’s false leaders.

Some lay great stress on Jeremiah’s exhausted emotions.

Perhaps it is best to see the verse as an expression of Jeremiah’s realization that God in His sovereign wisdom was allowing Judah and Jerusalem to use their own destiny by believing their own lies, even though He continued to urge their repentance (verses 14-18).

“Deceived”:

Like Habakkuk (1:12-17), Jeremiah was horrified at these words of judgment, contrasting the prevailing hope of peace.

God is sometimes described as if doing a thing He merely permits, such as allowing false prophets, who delude themselves, to also deceive a sinful people into thinking peace would follow (compare 6:14; 8:11; 1 Kings 22:21-24).

God sees how people insist on their delusions, and lets it happen.

Jeremiah was not happy with his role, offering “peace” to the people while God was setting events in motion that would send them into exile.

In the face of humanity’s persistent rebellion, God has determined that humans will be without excuse when judgment comes (Rom. 1:18).

God had promised there would be peace in Jerusalem.

The problem is that God did not mean that very day, but a time in the future.

It is as if Jeremiah was questioning God's intentions here.

Men will try to bring peace to this region, but there will be no true peace until the King of Peace comes to the earth and establishes His kingdom.

There will be peace in Jerusalem then.

There is a sword that reaches the soul in the following Scripture:

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

**Jeremiah 4:11 "At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse,"**



See Jeremiah 4:7.

Though the revelation of the certainty of Judah's ruin forces from Jeremiah a cry of despair, yet it is but for a moment.

He immediately returns to the delivery of God's message.

"A dry wind":

Literally, A clear wind.

The Samum is probably meant, a dry parching east wind blowing from the Arabian Desert, before which vegetation withers, and human life becomes intolerable.

"Not to fan":

The Syrian farmers make great use of the wind for separating the chaff from the grain: but when the Samum blows, labor becomes impossible.

It is not for use, but for destruction.

The Jews are like a hot wind that brings no blessing.

This "wind" is not the wind of the Holy Spirit.

It does not cleanse or bless.

The wind of the Spirit comes from an unknown place and brings blessings.

In verse 11, the "wind" comes from the mountain where false gods were worshipped.

**Jeremiah 4:12 "[Even] a full wind from those [places] shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them."**

"From those places":

Rather, "a wind fuller (that is, more impetuous), than those winds" which fan the corn (see Jeremiah 4:11).

"Unto me":

"for Me," as My instrument for executing My purpose.

"Sentence":

Judgments against them (Jer. 1:16).

This is an ill wind that brings no good.

God is the One who brings judgement against them.

**Jeremiah 4:13 "Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots [shall be] as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled."**

Either noting the vast number of them (Isa. 60:8; Heb. 12:1); or the suddenness of them.

When not expected, clouds often rising all of a sudden, and overspreading the whole face of the heavens.

Or rather, the great speed and swiftness with which Nebuchadnezzar shall march against them (Isa. 19:1), hyperbolically compared to the swiftness of eagles in this verse (Jer. 48:8).

"His chariots shall be as a whirlwind":

Which beside the swiftness, notes also the confusion and amazement that they will cause (Isaiah 66:15).

"Woe unto us! for we are spoiled":

The dreadful apprehensions that the people have of their woeful condition, or possibly the words of the prophet lamenting their misery.

Babylon does come against these people and overcomes them.

God, we must remember, brings this as judgement against His people.

In the next few Scriptures, we will see God's power in the wind, or the whirlwind.

Nahum 1:3 "The LORD [is] slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit [the wicked]: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds [are] the dust of his feet".

Matthew 24:30 "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Daniel 7:2 "Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea."

We can see from this, that it is God who controls the elements of the earth.

**Jeremiah 4:14 "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"**

“Wash”: Jeremiah continued to appeal for a dealing with sin so that national destruction might be averted (verse 20), while there was still time to repent (compare chapters 7 and 26).

Jeremiah cries out to Jerusalem to repent and be saved.

It is as if he is saying, why can't you see why this trouble is coming?

They imagine a vain thing.

They appear to be caught up in their own values, overlooking the needs of others.

God wants man to be saved so badly, that He sent His only Son to save us.

Man has a part in his own salvation.

He must wash in the blood of the precious Lamb.

**Jeremiah 4:15 "For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim."**

“Dan”:

A border-town of Palestine on the north (Deut. 34:1).

"Affliction":

The same word, *aven*, occurs in Jer. 4:14, and apparently there is a play upon its double meaning.

For from a root signifying worthlessness, it is used both for wickedness and for misery.

Thus, the "iniquity" of Judah proves also to be her "affliction," as being the cause of ruin inflicted by the enemy.

"Mount Ephraim":

The northern boundary of Judea itself.

The invading army presses on so rapidly, that scarcely has the news arrived of its appearance at Dan, before fresh messengers announce that it has traversed the whole length of Galilee, and is now advancing through the mountains of Samaria.

It appears the enemy comes by the land of Dan and mount Ephraim.

The “affliction” had already begun.

**Jeremiah 4:16 "Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, [that] watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah."**

These are either the nations in Judea; or these words are a proclamation, summoning in the nations by the Chaldeans, as it were, in pursuance of a commission from God, to bring great armies together against Jerusalem.

Or they are the prophets turning away from Judah, as despairing of doing any good upon them, and calling for the nations to execute God's sentence.

"Publish":

Let her be acquainted with what is coming upon her, let her have public notice beforehand, that she may be warned.

"Watchers":

Military watchers, i.e. the Chaldean soldiers, that shall so carefully and watchfully encompass Jerusalem, that none shall escape.

Possibly a metaphor from hunters, that in hunting their prey lay wait at every passage, that the game may not escape (see 2 Kings 25:4-5).

"Come":

They are now at hand, you may as it were, see them.

"From a far country":

From Chaldea.

"Give out their voice":

They will proclaim war against them; or a shout, either encouraging soldiers to the battle, or triumphing after the victory.

Or the outcries that they will make, such as the Turks now make in their onsets (Jer. 2:15).

All of the countries surrounding Judah are to take notice of the fact of the attack against Judah.

God allows them to speak evil about Judah, because He is angry with them.

The Babylonians may be performing the physical battle, but it is really God who has come against Judah.

He is using Babylon for His purpose.

**Jeremiah 4:17 "As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD."**

As those that are set to watch a field, in which are fruit and corn of any sort, that thieves and robbers, and wild beasts, may not enter to waste and destroy, and are placed on all sides for that purpose, so the Chaldeans were round about Jerusalem, that none could make their escape out of it (see 2 Kings 25:4).

"Because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD":

It was not without reason that the LORD suffered the Chaldeans to come against Jerusalem, besiege, and take it.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem had rebelled against Him, their King and their God.

And therefore, He delivers them up into the hands of another lord, a cruel one.

They had provoked Him to anger with their sins and caused Him to stir up His wrath against them in this way.

Rebellion against a prince, or against a parent, is a provoking sin (1 Sam. 15:23).

The Chaldeans have surrounded Jerusalem as keepers of a field do.

They rebelled against God, and God brought this punishment on them.

**Jeremiah 4:18 "Thy way and thy doings have procured these [things] unto thee; this [is] thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart."**

The way in which they walked, was an evil one.

And the actions which they committed, their idolatries, backslidings, and rebellions, before spoken of in this and the preceding chapter, were the cause of this siege, and those calamities coming upon them.

They had none to blame but themselves.

It was their own sinful ways and works which brought this ruin and destruction on them.

"This is thy wickedness":

The fruit of thy wickedness; or, "this is thy calamity".

That is, is owing to these things; so the word is rendered in Psalm 141:5.

"Because it is bitter":

Not sin (as in Jer. 2:19), but the punishment of it.

The calamity before mentioned; which was hard and heavy, and grievous to be borne, yet very just; it was by way of retaliation.

"They had bitterly provoked the LORD", as the word may be rendered in the preceding verse; and now He sends them a bitter calamity and a heavy judgment.

"Because it reacheth unto thine heart":

Into the midst of them, and utterly destroyed them.

The two last clauses may be rendered, "though it is bitter, though it reacheth unto thine heart".

Though it is such a sore distress, and such an utter destruction, yet it was to be ascribed to nothing else but their own sins and transgressions.

Their own sin brought this evil upon them.

They were wicked and their bondage will be bitter, because they have displeased God.

#### Verses 19-22

Jeremiah had pain in his "heart" because there was nothing he could do to avert the coming disaster.

God also laments the condition of the people who are "foolish" in the face of His judgment.

**Jeremiah 4:19 "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war."**

Here begins the woeful complaint of, and the great trouble the prophet was in, upon the consideration of these things, crying out as one even under great pain and torment.

Doubling his words for want of vent, thereby expressing the excess of his sorrow, which in words was inexpressible.

The like of 2 Sam. 18:33; which sorrow of his he expresses (Jer. 9:1, 10).

"I am pained at my very heart":

Hebrew, the walls of my heart; or, my heartstrings, that surrounded and encompassed my heart, are ready to break.

He may possibly allude to their encompassing the walls of Jerusalem.

Or the proper meaning is, my heart is ready to break.

The LXX (The Greek Old Testament, or Septuagint) renders it “doth beat or pant”.

Maketh a noise; is disturbed within me, I can have no rest nor quiet within (Job 30:27; Lam. 1:20).

"I cannot hold my peace":

I cannot forbear my complaints, I am so troubled and grieved (Job 7:11; Isa. 22:4).

"Because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet": i.e. I have heard in the spirit of prophecy; it is as certain as if I now heard the trumpet sounding, and:

“The alarm of war”:

Beating up or coming.

This is a cry of the fearful.

If this is Jeremiah speaking, it is because the pains of his people are his pains.

The trumpet has blown, and it is time for war.

**Jeremiah 4:20 "Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, [and] my curtains in a moment."**

Or, "breach upon breach".

As soon as one affliction is over, another comes on.

And upon the news of one calamity, tidings are brought of another, as in Job's case.

It signifies, that distress and troubles would come thick and fast, and that there would be no end to them, until there was an utter destruction, as this phrase indicates, and the following words show.

Kimchi interprets it of the destruction of the ten tribes which came first, and of the destruction of Judah that came now.

"For the whole land is spoiled":

Or "wasted"; that is, the land of Judea.

"Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment":

Meaning, either the armies of his people, which dwelt in tents, were destroyed at once; or the cities, towns, and habitations of his countrymen, which he compares to tents, as being easily beat down or overthrown.

And so, the Targum interprets it of cities.

And the prophet seems to intimate that this destruction would reach to Anathoth, where his tent; cottage, and curtains were.

So sudden destruction sometimes comes, when men are crying "Peace, peace" (1 Thess. 5:3).

Even the tent dwellers are taken and spoiled.

This is a destruction brought on by God.

It is a terrible destruction.

**Jeremiah 4:21 "How long shall I see the standard, [and] hear the sound of the trumpet?"**

The "standard," (as in Jer. 4:6), is the alarm signal given to fugitives.

The "trumpet" sounds to give the alarm, and quicken their flight to the defended city.

The prophet sees no end to the miseries of the coming war.

"And hear the sound of the trumpet?"

Either of the watchmen giving notice of danger and summoning to battle, or of the enemy preparing to attack (see 1 Cor. 14:8).

The standard bearer is usually the last one to fall, because if one falls another takes it up.

Before this battle is over, there will be no standard bearer or trumpet blower.

**Jeremiah 4:22 "For my people [is] foolish, they have not known me; they [are] sottish children, and they have none understanding; they [are] wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge."**

"Wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge":

Israelites were wise or clever in doing evil but were dull in knowing to do good, i.e., God's will.

Paul, applying the principle but turning it to the positive, wanted the believers at Rome to be wise to do good but unlearned in the skill of doing evil (Rom. 16:19).



The word "sottish" means "very foolish".

These are children who have made foolish decisions.

They have chosen dumb idols over the true God.

They have gone out of their way to sin.

These are a people whose understanding is darkened.

They had the Light of the world but chose darkness over Light.

#### Verses 23-26

Having warned of the winds of destruction (verses 11-13), Jeremiah gives a prediction of the horrifying extent of that coming event (verses 23-31).

That disaster is described in terms of a gigantic cosmic and terrestrial cataclysm.

The words "without form, and void" are used of the original conditions at Creation (Gen. 1:2).

Therefore, some have suggested that Jeremiah is actually describing the early earth in terms of the effects of a primeval judgment.

Similar language is also found in Isaiah 45:18.

However, the context of judgment in Isaiah and here are both relevant to the future.

Accordingly, both have merely applied the phraseology of Genesis to emphasize strongly the severity of Judah's coming judgment for sin.

**Jeremiah 4:23 "I beheld the earth, and, lo, [it was] without form, and void; and the heavens, and they [had] no light."**

"Without form":

Jeremiah may be borrowing the language, but the description in its context is not of creation (in Gen. 1:2), but of judgment on the land of Israel and its cities (verse 20).

The invader left it desolate of the previous form and void of inhabitants due to slaying and flight (verse 25).

The heavens gave no light, possibly due to smoke from fires that were destroying cities (verses 7, 20).

Jeremiah has jumped from their time, all the way back to the time before the Light was applied to this present world.

This is the same Scripture as:

Genesis 1:2 "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

Both of these speak of the time when there was no Light in the earth.

It was a time when nothing or no one, had the power to exist.

The Light gives everything the power to be.

**Jeremiah 4:24 "I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly."**

He proceeds in his figurative elegancies: Behold how the mountains of Judea tremble!

For a similar expression, see Psalm 18:7-8; Isa. 5:25.

As if the very senseless creatures were astonished at the greatness of God's anger; and he mentions these as being the most stable part of the earth, yet shake before him.

"All the hills moved lightly":

As easily as if they were some very light matter, or as dust or feathers in a whirlwind (see Psalm 114:4, 6).

Or these may be said hyperbolically to tremble and move by reason of the multitudes of trampling and prancing horses and chariots furiously passing over them.

**Jeremiah 4:25 "I beheld, and, lo, [there was] no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled."**

No people dwelling in it, as the Targum explains.

The land was without inhabitants, they were either killed with the sword, or carried captive into Babylon, or fled into Egypt and other countries.

"And all the birds of the heavens were fled":

At the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war; at the blackness of the heavens, filled with smoke; at the barrenness of the earth, there being no seed sown.

And the earth, as at the first creation, having no herb, nor trees bearing fruit, and so no food for birds; and therefore, they went elsewhere, both wild and tame.

There had been a habitation, but there had been a total destruction of that habitation.

Who they were and why they were destroyed, is none of our business.

If God had wanted us to know, He would have told us.

**Jeremiah 4:26 "I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place [was] a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, [and] by his fierce anger."**

Jeremiah often uses the "wilderness" to represent God's judgment (compare 9:10; 12:10-12; 17:6; 22:6; 50:12).

For a similar use of this expression, see Isaiah 32:15-20; 51:3.

This speaks of total desolation brought on by God.

The place that had brought forth fruit is now a wilderness.

We see the reason is the anger of the LORD.

Verses 27-29

The LORD added a note of hope in the phrase "yet will I not make a full end":

He had "purposed" both judgment and the remnant who would survive to carry on His plan for His people.

**Jeremiah 4:27 "For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end."**

What follows is an explanation and confirmation of the above vision the prophet had.

"The whole land shall be desolate":

As he had seen.

It should not be manured, ploughed, and sown, or bring forth fruit; and should be without inhabitants, or at least have very few.

"Yet will I not make a full end":

There should be some inhabitants, who, with those that should hereafter return from captivity, would re-people it, rebuild the temple, and restore it to its pristine form and order.

Both as to things natural, civil, and ecclesiastical.

But though a full end of them, as a church and people, was not to be made now by the Chaldeans, yet it would be; as it has been done by the Romans, in the times of Vespasian and Hadrian (in A.D. 70) when Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were scattered.

This earth that was null and void shall live again.

God will send the Light of the world, and it will live.

It is the Light that brings life.

**Jeremiah 4:28 "For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken [it], I have purposed [it], and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it."**

That is, for the full end that will be made hereafter, though not now.

The earth may be said to "mourn" when the inhabitants of it do.

Or when it is destroyed, and is become desolate, as the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, explain it; when it is uncultivated and uninhabited.

"And the heavens above be black":

With thick clouds, and storms, and tempests; in allusion to mourners, that are clothed with black.

These figures, of the earth's mourning, and the heavens being clothed in black, denote the horribleness of that dispensation, when there would be an utter destruction of the Jewish nation, church, and civil government, of which Daniel prophesies (Dan. 9:27).

"Because I have spoken it":

In my word, as the Targum explains, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, by Moses and the prophets.

"I have purposed it":

Or I have thought of it, in my counsel, as the Targum explains.

It was a thing deliberately devised and determined, and therefore can never be frustrated, or made void.

"And will not repent":

Or change, what was purposed and predicted.

"Neither will I turn back from it":

Revoke, or retract it; it shall surely come to pass.

The Jews, upon their return from the Babylonish captivity, and afterwards, might flatter themselves that a full end would not be made of them, because it was not then done.

And therefore, these several strong expressions are used, to confirm and assure them of it; for the word of God cannot fail, His counsel shall stand.

He is not a man, that He should lie or repent; He will do all His pleasure.

This is a time of no Light.

The blackness symbolizes mourning.

God is Truth, when He speaks, it happens.

**Jeremiah 4:29 "The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city [shall be] forsaken, and not a man dwell therein."**

The inhabitants of all ranks and qualities shall seek to escape the fury of this Chaldean army (Jeremiah 39:4).

"For the noise":

Either upon the report of their coming, hereby as it were deriding their confidence; or rather at the approach of their vast armies, for they were close to being besieged before they fled.

As appears in 2 Kings 25:4.

"They shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks":

Such a consternation there shall be upon them that they shall run into every hole to hide themselves.

Thus, Manasseh was taken among the thorns (2 Chron. 33:11).

The Hebrew is *abim*, the clouds, possibly alluding to dark places on the tops of hills.

Reaching as it were to the clouds, or among the cloudy shades of trees and groves that usually grew there.

The LXX render it caves, and so the rocks for shelter, or the clefts, caves, and hiding-places in the rocks (See Isa. 2:21).

"Every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein":

There shall be an utter desolation, their cities quite forsaken, and not any to inhabit them (Jer. 4:25-26).

This is a terrible time of fear.

The fear is so great that they flee from the onslaught, and run to the caves for help.

No one is left in the cities.

Verses 30-31

Jeremiah returns to the personification of Judah and Jerusalem as a "woman," first as a prostitute (compare 2:18-34; 3:1-2), and then as a woman enduring labor pangs alone, and deserted by all.

**Jeremiah 4:30 "And [when] thou [art] spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; [thy] lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life."**

Or, "O thou spoiled", wasted, and undone creature, how wilt thou help thyself?

By what means do you think you can be delivered?

It suggests that her ruin was inevitable; that she could not be recovered from it by herself, or any other.

"Though thou clothest thyself with crimson":

And so look like some rich and noble person; hoping thereby to find mercy, and to have quarter given (The phrase "no quarter" was generally used during military conflict to imply combatants would not be taken prisoner, but killed).

"Though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold":

As a person of high and princely dignity.

Or rather all this is to be understood of the manner of harlots, who dress rich and grand, in order to allure men, since it follows:

"Though thou rentest thy face with painting":

Or, eyes, which painting enlarges or expands as Jezebel did (2 Kings 9:30).

"In vain shalt thou make thyself fair":

So as to be loved and admired: far from it.

"Thy lovers will despise thee":

As an old harlot is despised by her former gallants, notwithstanding all her dressing and painting.

Yea, their love is often turned into hatred and abhorrence, as would be the case here.

"They will seek thy life":

To take it away.

So far would there be from being any ground of expectations of help and deliverance from them.

All of the beautiful clothing and jewelry will not make them beautiful to God.

We see that the ones they have thought of as lovers, will be of no help at all.

This adulterous people who were the wife of God, are now abandoned.

**Jeremiah 4:31 "For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, [and] the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, [that] bewaileth herself, [that] spreadeth her hands, [saying], Woe [is] me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers."**

So, the distress of the Jews, at the time of their destruction, is compared to the sorrows of a woman in travail (Indicating that things will get totally and remarkably worse at the end of the era).

"And the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child":

Whose time is more difficult, her pains sharper, her anguish greater, and having less experience, the more impatient.

"The voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself":

Her unhappy condition, and miserable circumstances.

"That spreadeth her hands":

As persons in distress do, and particularly women in travail saying:

"Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers":

Here Jerusalem is very pathetically described by the character of a woman under the pangs of her first childbearing, when her pains as well as her fears are usually greatest.

Such, saith the prophet, shall be the anguish of Jerusalem, bewailing the loss of her children by the devouring sword of the Chaldeans, and in vain imploring comfort and assistance.

Spreading out the hands is the gesture of one displaying the helplessness of her condition, and imploring the aid of others.

This appears to be speaking of the physical house of Israel, which is destroyed.

The "first child" is generally speaking of physical Israel.

"Zion" can be the church or Jerusalem.

She is crying because of the murderous destruction of her children.

The "woe" is for the loss.

### **Jeremiah Chapter 4 Questions**

1. To get back in good standing with God, what did Israel have to put away?
2. What was the only condition, if the nations were to be blessed?
3. What is "fallow" in verse 3?
4. What does the author believe this is saying?
5. What is the circumcision that is important to God?
6. How far-reaching was the declaration God made in verse 5?
7. For what two reasons was the trumpet blown?
8. Set up the standard toward \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Why must God's people raise the standard?
10. What is the near interpretation of verse 7?
11. Who is another the lion could be?



12. Who is the destroyer?
13. Why should they gird with sackcloth and lament?
14. What is the sackcloth?
15. What had God promised Jerusalem?
16. What are the Jews like, in verse 11?
17. Where does the wind of the Spirit come?
18. The wind in verse 11, comes from where?
19. Who controls the elements of the earth?
20. In verse 14, Jeremiah cries out for Jerusalem to do what?
21. Why does God allow them to speak evil of Judah?
22. Why is Jeremiah feeling pain in verse 19?
23. What is the last thing lost in battle?
24. What does the word "sottish" mean?
25. What is verse 23 speaking of?
26. The \_\_\_\_\_ gives everything the power to be.
27. Why had the fruitful place become a wilderness?
28. It is the \_\_\_\_\_ that brings life.
29. What has happened to this adulterous people, who were the wife of God?
30. What does verse 31 appear to be speaking of?