

**Date:** 1/5/25

**Sermon Title:** God Who Refines Through Tribulation and Grants Salvation

**Preacher:** Pastor Kim Soon-bae

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 24:1-10

(Jeremiah 24:1) After King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried away Jeconiah the son of King Jehoiakim of Judah, and the officials of Judah, the craftsmen, and the blacksmiths from Jerusalem to Babylon, the Lord showed me two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the Lord.

(Jeremiah 24:2) One basket contained very good figs, like the first ripe figs, but the other basket contained very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten.

(Jeremiah 24:3) And the Lord said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "Figs; the good figs are very good, but the bad figs are so bad that they cannot be eaten."

(Jeremiah 24:4) Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying:

(Jeremiah 24:5) "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so will I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans.

(Jeremiah 24:6) I will look after them and bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them.

(Jeremiah 24:7) I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.

(Jeremiah 24:8) "But like the bad figs which cannot be eaten, so will I deal with King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, the survivors from Jerusalem, those remaining in this land, and those living in the land of Egypt.

(Jeremiah 24:9) I will make them abhorrent and an object of horror, to all the kingdoms of the earth, as a disgrace, a byword, a taunt, and a curse. Wherever I drive them, they will experience trouble.

(Jeremiah 24:10) I will send the sword, famine, and plague against them until they are destroyed from the land I gave to them and their ancestors."

The New Year of 2025 has dawned.

We are offering our first Sunday worship service of the year.

You may remember that the sermon title for the last Sunday of last year was "I Will Bring Shame and Disgrace."

When we received that message, we were filled with fear and despair because of our motherland, South Korea.

Our hearts were broken, and our bones trembled.

And then, to make matters worse, a great disaster occurred.

At 9:07 AM (Korean time) on the 29th, a Jeju Air flight attempted an emergency landing at Muan Airport in Jeollanam-do due to a landing gear malfunction. The plane exploded, and out of the 181 passengers, only 2 survived.

Upon hearing the news, the entire nation was left speechless and spent a sorrowful week.

Listening to the heartbreaking stories of the bereaved families, my heart felt heavy, and I couldn't focus on anything.

It's devastating, but still, we pray that God's great comfort and love will be with the grieving families.

On this bleak first Sunday of the New Year 2025, God gives us words of comfort.

God says that He will give the people of Judah, who were dragged into Babylon and spent their days in despair without hope, a heart to know that He is the Lord, and He will bring them back to Him.

He will make them His people, and He will be their God.

(Jeremiah 24:7) "I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord. They will return to me with all their heart, and they will be my people, and I will be their God."

Though they were judged and taken to Babylon because of their sins, God promises to bring them back as His people after they repent and turn back to Him.

This message of God's prophecy must have been a great comfort and encouragement to those who were in despair.

It must have been a ray of light for those who had no hope.

We can only be moved by the fact that the God we believe in and serve is faithful and keeps His covenant, never abandoning His chosen people.

In the 18th year of King Jehoiakim of Judah, after his death (598 BC), and about three months after his son Jeconiah (Coniah, also known as Jehoiachin) ascended the throne as the 19th king of Judah, God showed Jeremiah a vision.

To properly understand this vision, we need to know the historical context of the time.

At that time, Judah was caught between the existing great power, Egypt, and the rising great power, Babylon.

After King Josiah's death, the people of Judah made his fourth son, Jehoahaz, king, who opposed the humiliating foreign policy of Egypt.

However, when Pharaoh Necho of Egypt learned of this, he invaded Jerusalem, captured Jehoahaz, and set up Josiah's second son, Eliakim (Jehoiakim), as the king of Judah.

(Jehoahaz ended up dying in Egypt.)

Thus, Jehoiakim became the 18th king of Judah and could not ignore Egypt's influence.

He paid tribute and served Egypt.

But then, about three years later, in 605 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated Egypt and besieged Jerusalem.

At this point, Jehoiakim switched his allegiance from Egypt to Babylon, offering tribute and handing over some of the temple's vessels and members of the royal family and nobility.

It was at this time that Daniel was taken to Babylon.

However, in 601 BC, when Babylon failed in its invasion of Egypt, Jehoiakim switched his allegiance back to Egypt.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would not stand idly by. In 598 BC, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah, besieged Jerusalem for about three months, and during this time, Jehoiakim died.

In the Chronicles, it is recorded that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon bound him with chains and took him to Babylon.

(2 Chronicles 36:6) "Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up to Jerusalem, attacked it, and bound Jehoiakim in bronze chains to take him to Babylon."

Jeremiah also prophesied that Jehoiakim would be thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem and would be buried like a donkey.

(Jeremiah 22:19) "He will be thrown outside Jerusalem's gates and will be buried like a donkey."

Following this, Jehoiakim's son, Jeconiah, only 18 years old, ascended to the throne as the 19th king of Judah.

But fearing that Jeconiah would incite rebellion to avenge his father, King Nebuchadnezzar deposed him after only three months.

Less than three months after Jeconiah ascended the throne, King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah again, capturing Jeconiah, his mother, the queen, the king's wives, the officials of Judah, and craftsmen and blacksmiths.

This was the second time Nebuchadnezzar had taken the people of Judah into captivity, following the first during the reign of Jehoiakim in 605 BC.

In this situation, God showed Jeremiah a vision.

He showed him two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple. One basket contained very good figs, and the other contained very bad figs.

(Jeremiah 24:1) After King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried away Jeconiah, the son of King Jehoiakim of Judah, and the officials of Judah, along with the

craftsmen and blacksmiths, from Jerusalem to Babylon, the Lord showed me two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the Lord.

(Jeremiah 24:2) One basket contained very good figs, like the first ripe figs, but the other basket contained very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten.

(Jeremiah 24:3) And the Lord said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I answered, "Figs; the good figs are very good, but the bad figs are so bad that they cannot be eaten."

God explains this vision to Jeremiah.

First, He speaks about the good figs.

The good figs symbolize the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

(Jeremiah 24:4) Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying:

(Jeremiah 24:5) "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so will I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans.

(Jeremiah 24:6) I will look after them and bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them.

(Jeremiah 24:7) I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord. They will return to me with all their heart, and they will be my people, and I will be their God."

God promises that He will, through His sovereign providence, bring back the Jewish exiles from Babylon to Judah. He will restore and replant them.

He will give them faith and cause them to repent and return to Him.

In Deuteronomy, God says that even if Israel is driven away because of disobedience, if they repent and obey His word, He will turn His heart and restore them.

(Deuteronomy 30:1) When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God has dispersed you among the nations,

(Deuteronomy 30:2) and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today,

(Deuteronomy 30:3) then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where He scattered you.

(Deuteronomy 30:4) Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back.

(Deuteronomy 30:5) He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.

(Deuteronomy 30:6) The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

(Deuteronomy 30:7) The Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies, who hate and persecute you.

(Deuteronomy 30:8) You will again obey the Lord and follow all His commands I am giving you today.

(Deuteronomy 30:9) Then the Lord your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as He delighted in your ancestors,

(Deuteronomy 30:10) if you obey the Lord your God and keep His commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

God is always faithful and keeps His word.

Next, God speaks about the bad figs.

The bad figs represent King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, the remaining people of Jerusalem, those left in Judah, and those living in Egypt.

(Jeremiah 24:8) "But like the bad figs, which cannot be eaten, so bad they are, says the Lord, so will I deal with King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, and the remnant of Jerusalem, those remaining in this land, and those living in the land of Egypt.

(Jeremiah 24:9) I will make them abhorrent and an object of horror, to all the kingdoms of the earth, a disgrace and a byword, a taunt and a curse; wherever I drive them.

(Jeremiah 24:10) I will send the sword, famine, and plague against them until they are destroyed from the land I gave to them and their ancestors."

God says He will abandon King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, and those left in Jerusalem, as well as those living in Egypt.

He will cause them to experience calamity and disgrace, making them a byword and subject to ridicule and curses.

He will destroy them with the sword, famine, and plague.

The Jews living in Egypt are the ones who went there when King Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt (BC 609), those who fled there when King Jehoiakim became a vassal of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar (BC 609), and those who went there as refugees when Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah (BC 597).

This prophecy is about those who refused to follow God's will and either remained in Judah or went to Egypt.

Their hearts became hardened, and they would be destroyed without repenting.

Beloved members of Church of God's Dream,

The prophetic word that God gives today brings great comfort and encouragement, not only to the people of Judah but also to us, who are in fear

and despair due to the calamities and the confusion and darkness in our motherland, South Korea.

It leads us out of sighs and despair and fills us with hope.

God says that even though you may have sinned and are suffering punishment, if through that punishment you realize His will, repent, and turn back to Him, He will accept you again.

He will not only give you a life but will also cause you to prosper more than before. However, if you do not turn back, He will utterly destroy you.

I pray that the President of South Korea, along with the leaders and the citizens, will hear this message and understand God's will.

The calamity that God has sent upon us is not to abandon us.

It is to stop us from rushing down the wrong path, the path of death, and to turn us back.

He is trying to save us.

If we continue on the evil path, it is clear that we will face destruction.

All church leaders should rise and fulfill their responsibility to convey God's true word, so that the people can walk on the right path.

What South Korea urgently needs is not the fighting between the right and the left, but repentance and turning back to God.

If we realize God's will, repent, return to Him, and listen to His word, we will become His people again, and God will be our God.

He will grant us life and bless us with greater prosperity than before.

Let us all repent and turn back to God.

At this time, we all pray to God to grant us grace and mercy so that we may understand His will.