

## Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary Jeremiah 4:11, 12, 22–28 • Devastation and Reconstruction

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Jeremiah 4:11, 12, 22–28 . . . A devastated land  
Psalm 14 Fools say, “There is no God.”

### Overview

Today’s lesson is based on the Jeremiah reading, but will come across better if at least part of the Psalm is read as well. The theme is the emptiness in our lives when God is absent—or when we turn our backs on God—and how we can rebuild a full and happy life when we invite God into our lives. It is a fairly mature theme, so it may be a challenge to make it meaningful for younger children.

### Key Points

- Without the Lord’s goodness and truth in us, we are spiritually “void and empty.”
- This emptiness becomes spiritual darkness in us, and leads to destructive ways of living.
- The Lord offers us goodness and truth to rebuild ourselves in a beautiful, spiritual image of God.

### Example for Teaching Children

Have you ever seen a house that was destroyed by a fire? It is an awful sight—especially if you knew what the house looked like before the fire. And it is *really* awful if you knew the people who lived there. People whose houses have burned down often have a terrible, empty feeling because so many of the things they loved have been destroyed in the fire.

Our reading from Jeremiah has this kind of a terrible, empty feeling. Not just one house, but whole towns have been destroyed—even the whole country. Imagine what a country would be like after a long and furious war had been fought there. This is just what Jeremiah warned his people about—the terrible destruction that would come to their land if they did not turn and follow the laws of the Lord.

In our church, we do not believe that the Lord brings destruction on anyone—even on people who live awful, selfish, greedy lives. But when we are selfish and greedy, there *are* ways that we are destroyed. Can you think of some? (*Let the children to give ideas.*) When we are selfish and greedy, it destroys everything good *inside* of us—our good and kind feelings towards others; our thoughtfulness and understanding of how others feel; our faith and trust in the Lord. And it wrecks our friendships, too.

If we refuse to listen to the Lord or care about other people, it won’t be long before we are living in a way that really hurts our friends, our family, and even ourselves. We become like a destroyed city.

But cities that have been destroyed by war can be rebuilt. What are some of the things we would need to rebuild a city? (*Let them list materials, equipment, tools, and so on, offering some yourself if necessary.*)

The Lord has also given us *spiritual* tools that we can use to rebuild our minds and hearts. What are some of these tools? (*Ideas for spiritual tools: the Bible, prayer, loving people, listening, helping, caring, friends, family, and especially the Lord. Let the discussion lead into the project.*)

### Basic Correspondences

- earth = our outer self
- heaven = our inner self
- person = a love for goodness
- birds of the sky = a love for understanding truth
- void = lacking goodness
- empty = lacking truth

### Thoughts from Swedenborg

When we have not yet been reborn, we are called “a void and empty land,” and also “ground” in which no goodness or truth has been sown—“void” where there is no goodness, and “empty” where there is no truth. From this comes “thick darkness,” or stupidity and ignorance about anything relating to faith in the Lord, and therefore about anything relating to spiritual and heavenly life. This state is described by the Lord in Jeremiah 4:22, 23, 25. *Arcana Coelestia* #17

In Jeremiah 4:23, 25 “earth” stands for our outer self, “heaven” for our inner self, “person” for a love of goodness, and “birds of the heavens” for an understanding of truth. *Arcana Coelestia* #477.3

Salvation comes from the Lord, since he is salvation. Everything relating to salvation and eternal life in a person or angel comes from the Lord. All the goodness of love in us, and the truth that forms faith, are the Lord’s in us, and not our own. They are the divine pouring forth, which is the Lord in heaven with the angels, and in the church with people. Salvation and eternal life come from the goodness of love and the truth that forms faith. *Apocalypse Explained* #460.2