

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON JEREMIAH

LESSON TWENTY-THREE: JEREMIAH'S SECOND DISCOURSE, PART THREE

by Sandy Harber

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it." Jeremiah 5:1

The search for a just and honest man begins! In the middle of his second discourse God tells Jeremiah to “run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem” seeking one person worth saving from the impending judgment. Find just one such person and God will pardon the nation. This was the first of ten “action sermons” in the book of Jeremiah. Sometimes words are not enough to get the message across. At times, God instructs His prophets to act out an illustration of His point to get the attention of His people. Jeremiah sought his just and honest man among the poor, but concluded that they were ignorant of the ways of God (vv. 2-4). He sought the man from among the nobles and leaders who knew the ways of God. But, these men had willfully rejected God’s instructions (v.5). Therefore, a predator, described as a lion, a wolf, and a leopard, will destroy them (v. 6).

God asked two important questions: 1) why should I forgive you (v. 7); and, 2) why shouldn’t I punish you (v. 9)? The people forsook Him and turned to idolatry. They were ungrateful for His blessings and practiced gross immorality (vv. 7-8). They were unfaithful (treacherous) and had no fear of punishment. They convinced themselves that God was impotent and would not bring judgment upon them, neither war or famine or any type of evil (vv. 9-12). The people of Judah could not answer God’s questions. They had no basis for forgiveness and they deserved God’s punishment. Would you know what to say if God asked you those questions? We have an answer, and that answer is: the precious blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7). God must forgive my sins because Jesus took them from me and nailed them to the cross (Col.2:14). There (at the cross) He took my punishment and paid my sin debt (I Pet. 1:18-19).

The people of Judah disregarded the Word of God that came to them by the prophets. To these unregenerate people the words coming out of Jeremiah’s mouth were invisible and immaterial like the wind (v. 13). But, wind can be incredibly powerful. The Bible tells us that God’s Word is “swift and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). Jeremiah’s sermon was life or death information. Ignore it at your peril. Judgment was coming. And it was coming for them. God told Jeremiah that the words in his mouth would become fire and the people were wood (v. 14). These sermons that the people mocked or ignored will destroy them!

Jeremiah’s warning of a nation coming to destroy them (vv. 15-17) should have been familiar. Moses warned that if the people did not obey God’s Word they would be plagued by curses that were spelled out in Deuteronomy 28, beginning with verse 15. One of the curses mentioned was the nation of fierce countenance that would attack them (Dt. 28:44-52). Although the enemy would prevail, Jeremiah had some good news for his audience: God would retain a remnant so that all of Israel would not perish (v. 18). Nevertheless, the people would find that they would be serving strangers in a foreign land because they chose to serve foreign gods in their own land (v. 19).

Jeremiah was instructed to publically proclaim the attitudes and sins of the people (v. 20). “Listen to this, you foolish people,” Jeremiah declared. “You are blind and deaf and have no comprehension” (v. 21). The people did not respect the Lord. They were stubborn and rebellious (vv. 22-24). God wanted to bless His people, but He could not because of their unconfessed sins (v. 25). They had no compassion for the poor and needy. They made themselves rich at the expense of others (vv. 26-28). God concludes, “How can I not bring down judgment on such a nation? The prophets lie, the priests are corrupt, and the people like it that way (vv. 29-31).” Judah was ripe for judgment.

“Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” Jeremiah 5:29