

Jeremiah's Description of God's Judgment

Jeremiah 5

Jeremiah 5:1-6 - *"Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem: See now and know; and seek in her open places if you can find a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks the truth, and I will pardon her. ² Though they say, 'As the Lord lives,' surely they swear falsely."*

³ *O Lord, are not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, but they have not grieved. You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to return.*

⁴ *Therefore I said, "Surely these are poor; they are foolish, for they do not know the way of the Lord, the judgment of their God. ⁵ I will go to the great men and speak to them, for they have known the way of the Lord, the judgment of their God." But these have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds.*

⁶ *Therefore a lion from the forest shall slay them, a wolf of the deserts shall destroy them. A leopard will watch over their cities. Everyone who goes out from there shall be torn in pieces, because their transgressions are many; their backslidings have increased."*

Background Notes

Have you ever been on a scavenger hunt? In the first part Jeremiah 5 God sent Jeremiah on a "scavenger hunt" to find just one righteous man in Jerusalem - just one who practiced justice and who sought God's truth. The Lord said that if Jeremiah could find just one man who practiced justice and sought the truth, then He would not punish Jerusalem for her sins of rebellion and her refusal to repent. Guess what? Jeremiah could not find even one. Jeremiah's hunt for one righteous man was a failure.

Therefore, the Lord would allow wild beasts to come in and destroy some of the people (v6). These wild beasts were not only symbolic of the coming Babylonian invasion, but were quite literal as well. 2 Kings 17 revealed that when the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians, God allowed lions to come in and kill some of the people - and even the foreigners recognized that this was judgment from the God of Israel.

Doctrinal Points

- 1. God must punish His people's failure to practice justice and failure to speak the truth.**

Jeremiah 5:7-19 - *"How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots'*

houses. ⁸ They were like well-fed lusty stallions; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife.

⁹ Shall I not punish them for these things?" says the Lord. "And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this? ¹⁰ "Go up on her walls and destroy, but do not make a complete end. Take away her branches, for they are not the Lord's.

¹¹ For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously with Me," says the Lord. ¹² They have lied about the Lord, and said, "It is not He. Neither will evil come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine. ¹³ And the prophets become wind, or the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them.

¹⁴ Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts: "Because you speak this word, behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them. ¹⁵ Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," says the Lord. "It is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say. ¹⁶ Their quiver is like an open tomb; they are all mighty men. ¹⁷ And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, which your sons and daughters should eat. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds. They shall eat up your vines and your fig trees. They shall destroy your fortified cities, in which you trust, with the sword."

¹⁸ "Nevertheless in those days," says the Lord, "I will not make a complete end of you. ¹⁹ And it will be when you say, 'Why does the Lord our God do all these things to us?' then you shall answer them, 'Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve aliens in a land that is not yours.'

In verses 1-6, Jeremiah could not find a single person in Jerusalem who practiced justice and sought the truth. The people of Judah were more interested in fulfilling their lusts and selfish desires. No wonder God said, "How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. ⁸ They were like well-fed lusty stallions; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. ⁹ Shall I not punish them for these things?" says the Lord. "And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this? (v7-9).

Judah not only failed to seek the truth, but they actually lied about the Lord (v11-13). They would not believe the Lord's warnings about the coming judgment, but rather they listened to the words of the false prophets who said that there was no need to worry about sword or famine. God said through His true prophet, Jeremiah, that these false prophets were nothing but hot air: "And the prophets become wind, for the word is not in them."

Because God's people failed to practice justice and because they refused to believe the truth of God's Word, God would have to punish His people by allowing a foreign nation to conquer them - the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army.

Why did God allow this judgment upon His people? Verse 19 gives the answer: "And it will be when you say, 'Why does the Lord our God do all these things to us?' then you shall answer them, 'Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve aliens in a land that is not yours.'"

When Israel turned away from the Lord to worship foreign gods, they no longer practiced justice and they no longer desired God's truth. For these sins, God had to punish His people. This was true then, and it is true today. Why is our nation that was founded on biblical principles no longer blessed by God as it was blessed in the past? The answer should be obvious. Selfish political agendas are more important than justice. Political correctness is more important than truth. And **even God's people are not immune from these sins**. These sins can be found in many churches today. God must punish His people's failure to practice justice, and their failure to speak the truth.

2. God must punish His people's determination to practice wickedness and to love what is false.

Jeremiah 5:20-31 - *"Declare this in the house of Jacob and proclaim it in Judah, saying,*

²¹ 'Hear this now, O foolish people, 'Without understanding, who have eyes and see not, and who have ears and hear not.

²² Do you not fear Me?' says the Lord. 'Will you not tremble at My presence, who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it. ²³ But these people have a defiant and rebellious heart. They have revolted and departed. ²⁴ They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the Lord our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

²⁵ Your iniquities have turned these things away, and your sins have withheld good from you. ²⁶ 'For among My people are found wicked men; they lie in wait as one who sets snares; they set a trap; they catch men. ²⁷ As a cage is full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit. Therefore, they have become great and grown rich. ²⁸ They have grown fat, they are sleek. Yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked. They do not plead the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper, and the right of the needy they do not defend.

²⁹ Shall I not punish them for these things?' says the Lord. 'Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?' ³⁰ An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land. ³¹ The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power - and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?'"

Israel not only failed to do what was right - they were actually determined to do what was wrong! They had eyes, but they refused to see; they had ears, but they would not hear (v21). Even though God was in sovereign control of the mighty and awesome sea and the necessary rain, the people of Judah were determined not to give God the credit, and they were determined not to submit to God's care and control: *"But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart. They have revolted and departed...Your iniquities have turned these things away, and your sins have withheld good from you"* (v22&24).

The people of Judah were experts at wickedness! They even practiced evil and deceit with one another, and they took advantage of the poor and needy (v26-28). Again the Lord asked the rhetorical question; *"'Shall I not punish them for these things?' says the Lord. 'Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?'"*

Conditions were so bad that the people not only practiced falsehood, they actually loved to hear what was false: *“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?”*

God said that He was shocked and astonished by this horrible situation (v30). The false prophets lied. They prophesied only what the people wanted to hear - and the people loved it! The priests conducted worship, but that “worship” was not in line with the Word of God. Their so-called “worship services” consisted of what the people wanted - not what God wanted.

Does this sound familiar? Not only do many churches today tolerate undisciplined sin, but many services are designed more as an entertainment than to preach and teach God’s Word to the people. People don’t want to hear about hell and the judgment of God, so these doctrines are either watered down or not preached at all. And the people love it that way! Thus God must punish His people’s determination to practice wickedness - and their determination to love what is false.

Practical Application

Praise God for His “remnant policy”!

“Go up on her walls and destroy, but do not make a complete end” (v10). “Nevertheless in those days,” says the Lord, “I will not make a complete end of you” (v18).

Even though God had to discipline Judah for her sins, He promised that He would not destroy her completely. Because of His grace and mercy, God has a “remnant policy.” From the prophetic Scriptures we know God will not allow the Jewish people to be wiped out – and a day is coming when there will be a spiritual restoration of the Jewish people.

Jeremiah 29:11-14 says - *“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you... and I will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”* Restored Israel will praise the Lord forever for His “remnant policy”!

God’s “remnant policy” should be an encouragement to believers today who feel they have failed the Lord, and that they being disciplined by God. Read 1 John 1:9. God has not written you off! **God still has good plans for you!** Praise God for His “remnant policy”!