

LECTURE 2

Jeremiah opens chapter six with a warning of judgment to come. This is actually a continuation of the message begun in chapter three. Here he likens Jerusalem to a beautiful woman under attack day and night. Jerusalem is overflowing with wickedness yet the warning is given “lest I make a desolation of you – a land not inhabited.”

God said, “their ears are closed . . . the word of the Lord has become a reproach to them, they have no delight in it.” The land was full of greed, false leadership, stubbornness, violence and oppression. Just as Jeremiah saw the indicators in his land, we can see so many of the same symptoms transpiring in our land today. But in vs. 16 God issued a challenge – “take a look at what’s happening to the world with attitudes like these – take a look at yourself.” Seek the ancient way, the good way and find rest for your souls. Jesus said, “Come to Me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” It calls for a commitment to God. One of the real blessings of the Christian commitment is the deep peace it brings. You’re not fighting God anymore . . . the war is over. It’s a peace that surpasses all understanding.

God goes on to say, “in your stubbornness Jerusalem, gird yourself with sackcloth and wallow in ashes for judgment is coming. You will be tested like metals in the fire and the wicked will look like rejected silver.”

In our lesson today we looked at 2 Chronicles to review how King Josiah had instituted the temple restoration. Josiah was the last of the “good kings” and after his reign everything really went downhill. He inquired of the prophetess Huldah and was told that because of his tender heart, he would die and not see the destruction that was coming. After the temple was restored, there was a great religious movement. It was the “in” thing to do . . . go to the temple and Josiah had also reinstated the Passover feast celebration. It was at the Passover celebration when the people came to worship that Jeremiah was told by God to stand in the gate of the Lord’s house and proclaim these words, “Amend your ways and your deeds and I will let you dwell in this place.”

Here is one of the great applications of this lesson for us today. To begin with, the people were coming with wrong motivation. They were seeking religion and not a relationship with God. They were saying, “the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord” as if it were some magical charm that would keep judgment from them. Many people today try to appease their conscience with church attendance. They trust in lying words . . . ritual or church attendance

cannot save you, nor can mouthing the Apostles' Creed, the 23rd Psalm, or John 3:16. Only the life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ can save your soul. You're a sinner – He's the Savior. It's one-on-one in a repentance-faith-grace relationship. If your faith has not changed you, then your faith must be challenged. Your actions must match your profession – your beliefs should be reflected in your lifestyle. But these were people who were living after the flesh during the week and then going to temple on Sunday. Do we abuse the grace of God and do these same things because we quote "have freedom in Christ" unquote. We must worship in truth and deed.

God then tells them to return to Shiloh and remember what He did there because of their wickedness. Shiloh, you remember, was where the first tabernacle was erected upon entering the land.

And then we have the harsh words of chapter 7:16 as God tells Jeremiah "not to pray for this people. I will not hear you." Recall in Genesis when in the days of Noah, God said, "My Spirit will not always strive with man?" There is a blessing and a curse in that Scripture. It's a blessing that He will strive with man at all . . . that He continually seeks what is good for me and is patient while I grow. The curse is that He will not always strive. Man can so harden himself that God has His fill of man's rebellion. Is there ever a time when you've gone too far? Is such a thing possible? Scripture teaches that there is. Romans chapter one tells us how tragic it is when God gives a man over to his own lusts. That God strives with us at all is a marvel – God doesn't owe us a thing, but because of His great love, He strives with us. John 12:37 says, "Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in Him." Unbelief – you've gone too far.

God is appalled back in Jeremiah 7:18 at their offerings to the Queen of Heaven. We see the whole family involved – children, father, and mother. God reiterated it was not sacrifice and burnt offerings but obedience that He desired for His people.

As so God tells Jeremiah go, but they will not listen. How disheartening for Jeremiah! The promise of failure, yet even so God blessed Jeremiah. You know, it's kind of a carryover from the secular world that a salesman only gets commission when he gets a signature on the dotted line. But God rewards you for the witnessing, not for the results. Response to the message is the work of the Holy Spirit; your job is to faithfully declare the gospel.

In chapter eight God chastises them by telling them even the animals instinctively know a change is coming. How can they claim to have wisdom and yet reject the Lord? We looked up those passages on wisdom that confirm there is no wisdom without a true knowledge of God. And then in verse 20 we have one of the saddest laments in the Bible. “The harvest is past, summer is ended and we are not saved.” My friends, it is the duty of all who give out the Word of God to warn you . . . the day of harvest is almost over. We’re living in the last days. The rapture of the church may occur at any time. If you are not saved, today – NOW – is the day of salvation. It hurts God to see those He loved and died for miss out. If you have not accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, Jesus died in vain as far as you’re concerned. “The harvest is past, summer is ended and we are not saved.” Don’t let that apply to you.

Jeremiah continued in chapter nine with the admonition to call for the mourning women, judgment is coming. In verse 23 we have the warning not to trust in the temporal things like knowledge, might and riches but instead glory in that which has eternal value. “Let him who boasts boast of this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.

That’s why we’re committed to Bible study. We truly want to understand and know our Lord. We want that circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit that brings us rejoicing into our Lord’s presence.

In chapter ten the Lord says, “do not learn the ways of the nations and do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens” meaning the Zodiac. Then in vs. 3-4 we have an interesting passage. Some say this is the pagan custom of worshipping the pagan Babylonian god Tammus (who was son of the Queen of Heaven, Istar) on December 25 by decorating fir trees. Others say this refers only to general idol worship. Neither can be proved, but there is interesting historical documentation on the origin of decorating trees in the book by Hislop titled *The Two Babylons*. It can give you something to consider. However, the real theme of this chapter tells us that idols made with hands are useless. God is the true God, the living God, the everlasting King. There is the God who mad man and then there are men who made gods. They were worshipping things they had to carry around.

Jeremiah concludes by saying, “I know, O Lord, that a man’s life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps. Correct me, Lord, but only with justice – not in your anger, lest you reduce me to nothing.” Salvation is not ours to earn – the way is not in us. “For it is by grace

you have been saved through faith – and that not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

It is a wise man who commits himself to God and says, “YOU correct me.”

Behold, today is the day of salvation. God will not always strive with man. Jesus wants you to experience His rest and surrender to Him.

Questions?

Closing Prayer