

“What Will You Do When the End Comes?” (Jeremiah 5)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (1/26/2020)

Introduction

1. Jeremiah is charged to seek out a man who faith-fully lives out his covenant commitment. If such a person were found, the Lord would pardon the nation (5:1).
 - a. The people confessed to live by Yahweh’s covenant (v. 2), saying, “*As the Lord lives,*” a phrase used 8 times in Jeremiah (see 4:2).
 - b. However, they lied by not faithfully living the terms of their confession.
2. Israel’s failure poses a major question: “*What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?*” (Romans 3:3). In other words, did Israel’s unfaithfulness prevent God from accomplishing His covenant purpose? (Romans 3:4).
 - a. Paul argues that Israel’s *unrighteousness* merely accentuated the righteousness of God—God purposely allowed Israel to fail in her covenant commitment so that His faithfulness would shine forth to His greater glory (Romans 3:5).
 - b. Of course, this raises another question: “*Is God un-righteous to inflict wrath on us [Jews]?*” No (vv. 8, 10–12; citing Psalm 14).
3. New covenant saints must pay careful attention to the words of Jeremiah because the same principles apply to them.
 - a. New covenant believers are obligated to live out faithfully their covenant obligations (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2).
 - b. In fact, the NT describes a believer as one who is “*faithful in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 1:1).
4. The major lesson here is that *Jesus Christ* is the key to new covenant faithfulness, and only those *in Christ* will be exempt from judgment on the faithless.
 - a. “*Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope* [that is, if we live out our confession in true covenant faithfulness]” (Hebrews 3:6).
 - b. Our new covenant commitment is laid out in He-brews 10:19–25.

I. A Faithful Man

1. In his quest, Jeremiah asked the Lord, “*Do not your eyes look for truth [emunah, faithfulness]?*” (v. 3).
 - a. The Lord disciplines His own to show that their inward character matches their outward profession.
 - b. The response of the people to discipline lacked brokenness and willingness to be corrected because of their hardness and obstinance. “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of know-ledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction*” (Proverbs 1:7).
2. Jeremiah looked for a reason for their failure (vv. 4, 5).
 - a. Perhaps only the *poor* were *foolish*, having no understanding because they did not “*know the way of the Lord, the justice of their God.*”
 - b. He went to the *great* (elders, prophets, and priests) because their position demanded knowing Yahweh’s will and ways, but “*they all alike had broken the yoke; they had burst the bonds* [symbolic of Israel’s denunciation of Yahweh’s rule through their rejection of His law]” (v. 5).
3. They were clearly warned (v. 6; Leviticus 26:14, 15, 22).
 - a. The Lord asks, “*How can I pardon you? . . . Shall I not punish them for these things?*” (vv. 7, 9).

- b. Because of their failure to keep covenant, their children forsook the Lord to swear by idols and live in spiritual adultery (v. 7).
- c. Justice required the Lord to avenge Himself on these unfaithful people.

II. The Fruitless Vine

1. The Lord likened the nation to a vineyard (v. 10, Isaiah 5:1–7).
 - a. He looked for fruit but got only wild grapes; so the Lord commanded the prophet to “*go up through her vine rows and destroy . . . strip away her branches, for they are not the Lord’s*” (v. 10).
 - b. Here again, Jesus makes the difference because in John 15:1 He affirmed, “*I am the true vine.*” However, just as Jeremiah was instructed to strip away and destroy fruitless branches, Jesus warned, “*Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away . . . If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers*” (John 15:2, 6). Bearing fruit requires one to “*abide in [Christ], and [Christ] in you.*” (vv. 4, 5).
 - c. The fruitlessness of Judah was due to their being “*utterly treacherous [unfaithful]*” to the Lord (v. 11). Their unfaithfulness came from what they were told the Lord had said—that He “*will do nothing; no disaster will come upon us*” (v. 12; Zephaniah 1:12). *They* of v. 12 is a reference to the prophets (v. 13) who spoke falsely of the Lord because “*the word is not in them.*”
 - d. The Lord rebuked the prophets, informing them that instead of helping the people, as they assumed they were doing, He would make their words a fire to consume the fruitless wood (v. 14; John 15:6).
2. The judgment the Lord determined against them was certain and would “*eat up*” everything in the land (vv. 15–17, 19).
3. Yet, even in this judgment, He would not “*make a full end*” (v. 18) because restoration was coming, not for the benefit of the nation, but in order to fulfill all His purpose to establish Christ and His new covenant. This work required “*a remnant according to the election of grace*” (Romans 11:5).

III. A Powerful Question

1. The section ends with a summary indictment (vv. 30, 31).
 - a. An astonishing and horrible thing happened to the land, not by the judgment impending, but by the false hope preached to a people who wanted it.
 - b. Wicked men took their place among God’s people, deceiving and capturing them as they enriched themselves at the people’s expense but, sadly, with their permission (vv. 26–29).
2. What happened in Jeremiah’s day has also occurred in our day (v. 31).
 - a. Paul warned, “*Fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. . . . Therefore be alert*” (Acts 20:29–31; Matthew 7:15; Colossians 2:8; 2 Corinthians 11:13).
 - b. Sadly, believers are not alert; thus, the church has been overrun with false teachers, false doctrine, and false professors. This is why judgment is to begin with the church so that she will be prepared for Jesus to return. “*What will YOU do when the end comes?*”

What to Take Away

1. How many “Christians” are characterized as “*foolish and senseless people*” (v. 21, 22)?
2. Many of the blessings of God are turned away because we have not followed Jesus’ clear instructions to abide in Him and let His Word abide in us. The Word of God must take ascendancy in our daily walk. We must be like the “blessed man” of Psalm 1, the Word transforming us by leading us to Jesus and making Him preeminent among us.