

## Journey through Jeremiah Part 9 – The Valley of Slaughter

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, February 08, 2017

### + Jeremiah 7:19-34, Ezekiel 8:4-18, Jeremiah 8:1-3

We pick up tonight where we left off last Wednesday evening with verses 19. This chapter began a new prophecy in Jeremiah and we spent a lot of time talking about some of the false gods and goddesses that the Hebrews were worshiping that provoked the LORD to anger. We specifically dwelt upon what the Bible called “the Queen of Heaven.” We discussed how that was the pagan moon goddess that supposedly had the power over fertility and that is what caused many of the Hebrew women to be tempted to worship her.

We also see how God told Jeremiah not to pray an intercessory prayer for Judah because they had gone too far and he would not listen or answer his prayer for them. That is the thought that we pick up with tonight.

For context sake let's read verse 18 again: **Jeremiah 7:18** The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

Entire families are given over to this pagan goddess worship. The young men are gathering the wood for the idols and fires. The fathers are building and stoking the fires. The mothers are kneading dough and baking cakes to offer up to the queen of heaven and drink offerings to pour out to other gods and this has provoked the LORD's anger.

**(19) Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?**

We need to always remember that when God is provoked to anger it is not the same kind of anger that you and I have. Our anger is usually a fleshly anger but God's is a holy and spiritual anger. His anger is kindled against sin and false worship because of the damage that it does to man. That is why he says that they “provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces.” All they are doing is hurting themselves through their false worship and sin.

**(20) Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.**

God is going to direct his anger and fury upon everything that they need to survive. Remember, God owns everything. It is His to give or take as He sees fit. If He wants to destroy all of the trees and animals that is His right to do so. These are things that he has blessed man with and if man refuses to submit to God and instead submit themselves to false gods then they have brought this fury upon themselves.

**(21) Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.**

Here the LORD is telling them to just go ahead and eat the burnt offerings and sacrifices that they are offering up to him. He has no use for them. They are just offering them through routine and ritual and He is not pleased with them. The sacrifices are not good unless their moral behaviour is changed. Just offering a sacrifice without amending your ways does no good. It is like repenting of your sins

while in the back of your mind you fully intend to continue that same sin. It's useless and vain.

**(22) For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:**  
**(23) But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.**

The Children of Israel that were led out of Egypt's bondage knew that God required obedience along with the sacrifices. They were to obey His voice and if they did that then He would be their God and things would go well for them. It's the same promise that the people of Judah had.

**(24) But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.**

Just like Judah was doing, their ancestors did the same thing. They had a long history of disobedience. He said that they “went backward and not forward.” We all know the story of the Children of Israel. They could have reached the Promised Land in about 2-weeks had they been obedient to God but they weren't and instead they wandered for 40-years in the wilderness and none of the original Israelites from Egypt made it into the Promised Land except for Joshua and Caleb.

**(25) Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them:** **(26) Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.**

He tells them that since the day God allowed the Israelites to leave Egypt's bondage until the very day they were living in right then, they have been disobedient to Him. They would not listen to Him even though he raised up men, prophets, to warn them what would happen if they continued to be disobedient. But they would not listen to the prophets. He says that they “hardened their neck.” That is another way of saying “stiffnecked,” which is a term often used in the Bible about people that are stubborn and self-willed that refuse to be obedient. We first hear it mentioned in Exodus when God is speaking to Moses after the Children of Israel had constructed a golden calf to worship. **Exodus 32:9-10:** And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: **(10)** Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

In that case Moses asked the LORD to spare them and the LORD allowed the people to live because of Moses's intercession, but in the case of Judah they've went too far and have had too many chances and remained a “**stiffnecked**” people. Now and the LORD is not going to change his mind for Jeremiah's intercession.

I think it would be fair to say that the inhabitants of the United States of America are a **stiff-necked people**. Even though God still raises up preachers to warn what is going to happen if we don't turn from our wicked ways, repent, and submit ourselves to the LORD. We still live in a land of sin and wickedness.

**(27) Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.**

(28) But thou shalt say unto them, This *is* a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

The LORD tells Jeremiah to prophecy to the people about what is going to happen to them but He also tells him that they will not listen to him or do what he tells them to do. They are completely given over to their wickedness and have no truth left in them.

(29) Cut off thine hair, *O Jerusalem*, and cast *it* away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

What a terrible thing to hear; "**the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.**" I'm afraid that is what we are going to hear before long. "Cut off thine hair," is a call to mourn. He addresses them in a female sense. As he did **Jeremiah 6:2: I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.** According to 1 Corinthians a woman's hair is a glory to her. **1 Corinthians 11:15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.** So, for a Hebrew woman to cut off her hair and cast it away it would be a sign of great distress.

(30) For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

To get a good sense of what exactly they were doing in the LORD's house we can refer to the Book of Ezekiel. In a vision the Prophet Ezekiel had been picked up by the locks of his hair and carried away to the land of Judah to the Temple in Jerusalem to witness the abominations that were taking place:

#### Ezekiel 8:4-18

(4) And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. (5) Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

God called it an "**image of jealousy.**" This was no doubt an idol built to Baal for Baal worship. Most likely set up during the evil reign of King Manasseh and then later torn down by his grandson, the good King Josiah. It was placed there on purpose, to draw attention to the fact that they were defying the God of Heaven and provoking him to jealousy. But this was only the beginning of the problems.

(6) He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, *and thou shalt see greater abominations.*

"**Greater abominations.**" You've probably heard someone in your life use the phrase "**there is no sin bigger than the other, or "there's not big and little sin.**" Well, that's not true. According to the Bible there are indeed some sins bigger than others. Oh, they all have the same results, sin brings forth death, but there are degrees of sins that God sees and he punishes on different levels.

He told Ezekiel "**thou shalt see greater abominations.**" Meaning even worse than the idol of Baal at the entrance of the Temple.

(7) And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

From all indications, this hole was not the entrance to the room. Evidentially it was a place you could stop and peer into in secret. It wasn't there on purpose and those that were inside the room apparently did not know it was there. It was only big enough to peer into the room. They thought they were hidden away and out of site. But nothing escapes the eyes of the LORD.

(8) Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. (9) And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

He is instructed to dig into the wall and when he does this he discovers a door to the room. When he goes into the room he discovers some of the most sinister and ungodly things imaginable being done in secret. The Bible called them "**wicked abominations.**" This word "**abomination**" comes from a Hebrew word *tô'ê vah* which means "**a morally disgusting act, one that is abhorred and hated.**" It is a very powerful word that God reserves for certain sins, usually those dealing with idolatry, sexual perverseness, or wicked human behavior.

(10) So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.

My but how Ezekiel must have been sick to see what was going on inside of the God's Temple. There on the walls in this secret chamber inside of God's House were portrayals of every imaginable form of wickedness. These were most likely things that they had learned from the wicked Egyptians as they were known for the hieroglyphics that they displayed on the walls of their tombs portraying animal gods that they worshipped: oxen, dogs, apes, crocodiles, beetles, snakes and the list goes on and on.

Can you even imagine that this was going on inside of God's House? That would be like us going down into one of the rooms downstairs and painting wicked pictures on the wall and worshipping them here in the Church. It is unthinkable!

(11) And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

And there in that room we find 70 men of Israel. Men from every tribe that is in there in secret worshiping false God's. And to beat it all there is the son of Shaphan the Scribe in the middle of them. Remember Shaphan was the Scribe that was around during the reign of Josiah when the Book was found in the rubble. These men were in there in their secret room worshiping their strange and wicked gods and even burning up incense to them, mocking the service that normally is done in the Temple to the God of Heaven.

(12) Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

And now we see the true nature of their hearts. They think that God can't see them do their nasty deeds there in their secret dark room. They think they are unseen by

God's all seeing eyes. They think they are doing things in secret. Now why does a person do things in secret? Because they know that it is wrong! They know they are doing wrong. They know they are committing abominable acts and that God would not be pleased. They think as long as they don't get found out that they are all in the clear.

But oh, my friend, that is where they are deadly wrong. I want you to know that God directed Ezekiel to a hole in the wall. That hole in the wall revealed their wickedness. That hole in the wall revealed their abominations. That hole in the wall revealed their vile and evil hearts. Nothing is hidden from God. There's no where you can go, no where you can hide from God's all knowing, all seeing eye. **Hebrews 4:13**  
**Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.**

The Psalmist David understood this as he wrote in **Psalm 139:7-8:** Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

(13) He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. (14) Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

Last week we covered the **queen of heaven** and I told you how that **Nimrod** had a wife named **Semeramis** who eventually became known as the "**queen of heaven**" and was worshiped by the Assyrians and Babylonians. After Nimrod was killed she declared him to be a god, the sun god in fact. He was also known as **Bel**. According to tradition, Semeramis claimed she had been supernaturally impregnated by the Sun god (Nimrod) and gave birth to a son and named him, **Tammuz**. The story goes that Tammuz was hunting and was killed by a wild boar. Semeramis mourned for him for 40-days and at the end of the 40-days he came back from the dead. Then Semeramis declared herself to be the **Queen of Heaven**. Then she formed a priesthood to worship her son Tammuz and declared this worship a 40-day period of denial which was to be repeated every year. --- This is what was going on the Temple of the LORD. These women were **weeping for Tammuz** in this pagan worship service.

(15) Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. (16) And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

Here Ezekiel sees 25 men with their backs to the Temple and their faces toward the Sun in the east and they are worshiping the sun god Bel. These 25 men most likely were the 24 temple priest along with the high priest. After the exile only the priests were allowed to enter into the inner courts of the Temple. They were no longer worshiping the God of Heaven in the Temple but the false god of the sun. This was strictly forbidden by the LORD.

We read in 2 Kings how the good King Josiah had removed these wicked priests when he began purging Judah of idolatry: **2 Kings 23:5** And he put down the

idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

(17) Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. (18) Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

So, from Ezekiel we learn more about the wickedness that was going on in Judah that Jeremiah was prophesying against. Let's now turn back to Jeremiah and finish the last 4-verses:

**Jeremiah 7:31-32:** And they have built the high places of Tophet, which *is* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded *them* not, neither came it into my heart. (32) Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.

Probably one of the very worst things that was going on in Judah at that time was the worship of the fire god, Molech, which required the sacrifice of children. This took place in the valley of Hinnom and Tophet was on the outer edge of Hinnom. We read about it in **2 Kings 23:10** And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. As we mentioned last week, Molech was another name for Baal. He was also called Chemosh.

(33) And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray *them* away. (34) Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

Then a final description of what is going to become of Judah because of their idolatry. The LORD will pour out his wrath and fury upon them and allow their enemies to devastate their land and slaughter the people. That is why He said in verse 32 "*it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter.*"

**Jeremiah 8:1-3:** At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: 2 And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. 3 And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.