

THE BROKEN COVENANT, PART 2

TEXT: JEREMIAH 12:1-17

INTRODUCTION:

1. The LORD told Jeremiah to, "Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant" (Jer. 11:1-3).
2. Unfortunately "they obeyed not" (11:8). They broke the covenant and so God judged them (11:11).
3. The message of the broken covenant continues on into chapter 12.

I. WHY DO THE WICKED PROSPER? (12:1)

1. This question is frequently asked. Job is considered the oldest book in the Bible. Job said in Job 12:6, "The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly" (cf. Job 21:7-15).
2. Psalm 73 also deals with this subject.
3. The prophet Malachi said in Malachi 2:17, "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words."
4. The people responded by saying, "Wherein have we wearied him?"
5. Malachi said, "When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?"

II. GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR TRIALS

1. Jeremiah 12:2 says God is like a gardener planting a garden. But the hypocrites in Jeremiah's day were far from God -- "thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins" (12:2b).
2. Our Lord, quoting Isaiah 29:13, said, "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mark 7:6).
3. In contrast, Jeremiah said to the LORD, "But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee..." (12:3a).
4. The latter part of verse 3 is an imprecatory prayer, found often in the Old Testament, especially in some of the Psalms.
5. These wicked sinners wanted to kill the prophet Jeremiah. They said, "He shall not see our last end" (12:4b; cf. 11:18-23).
6. Jeremiah 12:5 says, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt

- thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" The LORD was preparing Jeremiah for more trials and troubles. The Bible teaches the Christian life gets more difficult, not easier. But as we grow in grace we learn how to depend on the Lord to get us through these trials.
7. Warren Wiersbe says, "The easy life is ultimately the hard life, because the easy life stifles maturity, but the difficult life challenges us to develop our 'spiritual muscles' and accomplish more for the Lord" (*The Bible Exposition Commentary*).
 8. In fact, things were so bad that Jeremiah's own family was part of the conspiracy to kill him (12:6; cf. 11:9).
 9. Since His covenant had been broken, the LORD declared judgment (12:7-13).
 10. "Mine house" (12:7) refers to the temple, and "mine heritage" (12:7, 8, 9) and "the dearly beloved of my soul" (12:7) refers to Israel.
 11. Israel was like a lion roaring against her Maker (12:8).
 12. Israel was like a speckled bird which would be attacked by other birds of prey (12:9).
 13. Merrill Unger says the "speckled bird" represents a blending together of worship of the true God of heaven with pagan idolatry, so the neighboring nations "were ready to pounce upon her in her sinful assimilation to their idolatry" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
 14. Israel is compared to a vineyard destroyed by the trampling feet of "pastors" who have turned the pleasant promised land into a "desolate wilderness" (12:10).
 15. Jeremiah usually uses the word "pastors" (shepherds) to refer to Israel's religious leaders, but the context here indicates foreign soldiers (12:10).
 16. Nebuchadnezzar and his army destroyed Jerusalem, and turned Judah into a desolate wilderness. The word "desolate" is used four times in verses 10 and 11.
 17. Nebuchadnezzar and his army destroyed Judah, but they were just instruments in God's hand. It was the sword of the LORD that devoured them (12:12).
 18. It was "the fierce anger of the LORD" (12:13b).

III. GOD WILL JUDGE ISRAEL AND HER ENEMIES (12:14).

1. The "evil neighbours" (12:14) were used by the LORD to judge Israel and Judah, but they were still responsible for their own sin and would therefore be punished accordingly (12:14).

2. God would "pluck them out of their land" but would eventually restore them if they repented (12:14-16).
3. Referring to Romans 11:15 -- "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" -- Irving Jensen says, "The casting away of Israel thus would become the reconciling of the world. God's covenant with Israel was destined by divine design to bless the whole world!" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
4. Jeremiah 12:16 speaks of the future millennial kingdom when the Gentiles will come to Jerusalem to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Isaiah 2:1-5; 66:23; Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16-21).
5. Jeremiah 12:17 speaks of God's judgment upon the nations that will not obey Him.

CONCLUSION:

Irving Jensen says, "The world today needs more Jeremiahs who, in the midst of opposition, are true to the standards of the Bible, patient in the proclamation of the gospel, gentle in the hands of persecutors, committed to the protective care of the Chief Shepherd, and burdened for the souls of lost men and women. Satan and the world may conspire against a servant of God, but the conspiracy is really against God, and God is *invincible!*" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).