

JEREMIAH 16

JUDGMENTS AND PROMISES

In this chapter, the Lord commands His prophet – in view of the approaching captivity of the people – to keep himself unconnected. Because of the greatness of the coming calamities, Jeremiah was told to not build up a home and family of his own (verses 1-4), nor to go into the houses of mourning (verses 5-7) or feasting (verses 8-9). The Lord justified Himself in sending such severe judgments against His people, by giving an account of their great wickedness (verses 10-13). And although He spoke of great evils that would descend upon them, yet He did give assurances of mercy yet to come (verses 14-15). We find sweet promises concerning the deliverance of the people from captivity – which is promised to be even greater than their former Exodus from slavery in Egypt. Hopes are given that the punishment of the sin would prove to work out the reformation of the sinners, and that they would eventually return to God in repentance (verses 16-21).

The prophet was told by the Lord (verses 1-9) to conduct himself as one who expected to see his country ruined very shortly; for when God takes His peace away from any people, distress must certainly follow. In the prospect of the sad times that lay ahead, Jeremiah was ordered to abstain from marriage and family life. He was commanded to refrain from mourning for the dead, and he was not permitted to share in the pleasures and feastings that his friends enjoyed. It is not in the mourning or feasting of this world, but in the preciousness of Jesus, that His faithful children (like Jeremiah) find lasting peace and consolation which sweetens and sanctifies all circumstances in life – whether happy or sad.

The words in verses 10 seem to be the language of those who quarreled at the Word of God, when they saw Jeremiah's strange behavior and heard his terrible prophesies of judgment. Instead of humbling themselves and condemning their own sinful actions, they endeavored to justify themselves – as if God was doing them a great injustice. But the Lord was ready for them, for He gave Jeremiah a plain and full answer to give back to them (verses 11-13). They were even more obstinate in sin than their wicked forefathers had been; each one of them walked after the imaginations of his own evil heart. And since they would not hearken to the Lord and His prophets, they are here warned that they would be hurried away into a far and unfamiliar country. The state of things there would make their situation a miserable torment to their souls. It is happy for a

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ God commands Jeremiah to keep himself unconnected, in light of the approaching ruin of his people – verses 1-9
- ❖ The Lord's justice in bringing His judgments upon His people – verses 10-13
- ❖ The merciful restoration of the Jews from their captivity, as well as of the conversion of the Gentiles – verses 14-21

soul when it is employed in the service of Jehovah. But in Babylonian exile, the Jews would have no public worship at all except the worship of idols; and then they would recall, with regret, how they had slighted the worship of the true God when it was freely available.



Notwithstanding all these terrible predictions of judgment, the Lord still did not leave His people without promises of hope! (verses 14-21) The rescue and redemption of God's ancient people from captivity was to be a foreshadow of the great salvation that was yet to be worked out by the Messiah. The Lord spoke of how the Jews' restoration from the Babylonian captivity would be remembered even more than their great and miraculous Exodus from Egypt, centuries before. Both of these events stood as pictures or foreshadows of the spiritual redemption of all God's people from sin and hell, which was effected by the Lord Jesus; and also of all instances when the Church of Christ has been and will be delivered from anti-Christian oppression and tyranny. But one reason why this deliverance from Babylon would eclipse the glory of the Exodus from Egypt was that the redemption from Babylon had more of an element of pardoning mercy in it – which is the most glorious branch of Divine mercy! The Jews' captivity in Babylon was more of a chastisement for sin than their bondage in Egypt was; and therefore, the greater comfort that Zion derived from her deliverance out of Babylon was that her iniquity was pardoned (Isa. 40:2).

The Lord speaks of His people being “fished” and “hunted” from all places of the earth where they had been scattered during their captivity (verse 16). And are these “fishers” an allusion to the title that the Lord Jesus gave to His own chosen Apostles, when He commissioned them to be “fishers of men”? (Matt. 4:19-20)

The nations of the world have often known the power of Jehovah in His wrath. But when He works out wonderful works of deliverance for His people, they then know Him as the strength of His children, and their refuge in time of trouble (verse 19). The prayer of the prophet in the concluding verses (19-21) of this chapter is a beautiful break in the subject! It is as if the man of God felt his mind instantly led out to look up and plead with the Lord. And the theme of his prayer seems to be his taking hold of the Lord's promise concerning the calling of the Gentiles (non-Jews), and their inclusion among the people of God. Let us sing out our praises to the Lord! Let us praise His amazing grace for causing us to be led away from our idolatrous past, and for bringing us to know that His name alone is “The LORD!” (verse 21)

Lord, we thank You for pouring out Your pardoning mercy upon us in redeeming us from the spiritual slavery that we were under to sin and Satan! Amen.