

THE UNMARRIED PROPHET

TEXT: JEREMIAH 16:1-21

INTRODUCTION:

1. In Jeremiah 16, the prophet Jeremiah is told he is not to have a wife and children (16:1, 2).
2. H.A. Ironside said, "Connubial bliss was not to be thought of under the present sad conditions. Children born in such circumstances were only being introduced into a scene of sorrow and grief, with the prospect of an unlamented death before them (verses 1-4). Parents and offspring alike would be involved in the general ruin. He is neither to go to the house of mourning nor to the house of feasting" (*Jeremiah*).
3. There are two similar passages in Scripture. In I Corinthians 7:25-27, the apostle Paul says that because of "the present distress" single people should remain unmarried.
4. Paul does not explain what he means by "the present distress." It may be a reference to persecution. Matthew Henry says, "Their enemies were very bitter against them, and treated them very cruelly. They were continually liable to be tossed and hurried by persecution. This being the then state of things, he did not think it so advisable for Christians that were single to change conditions. The married state would bring more care and cumber along with it (vss. 33, 34), and would therefore make persecution more terrible, and render them less able to bear it."
5. In Revelation 14:4 we are told that the 144,000 witnesses "are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins."
6. Regarding the LORD'S command to Jeremiah to remain unmarried, Merrill Unger says, "Jeremiah was to be a sign to the people of impending disaster. He was to conduct himself as one who very shortly expected his country to be in ruins. He preached that. Now he had to practice it. So the LORD instructed him to remain single, not to take a wife or think of raising a family 'in this place' (16:2), in Jerusalem or Judah. The reason was that the inhabitants in the coming Babylonian invasion were going to die 'grievous deaths' (16:4), unlamented, unburied, horribly desecrated, and viewed as excrement, only useful to fertilize the soil and for food for carrion birds and wild beasts (16:4; cf. 15:3; 34:20)" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).

I. JEREMIAH'S OTHER PROHIBITIONS

1. The first and most notable prohibition was regarding marriage (16:2). The other prohibitions were: no mourning (16:5), no burial or funeral service (16:6), and no feasting or mirth (16:8, 9).
2. The people of Judah had reached the point of no return. The LORD said in the latter part of verse 5 -- "for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, even lovingkindness and mercies."
3. The people were terribly backslidden. They had mixed together worship of Jehovah God with idolatry and paganism (cf. 7:9, 10).
4. Heathens would "cut themselves" and "make themselves bald" for their dead relatives. The backslidden Israelites had adopted these pagan customs, though they were forbidden to do so (16:6).
5. Leviticus 19:28 says, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD."
6. Deuteronomy 14:1, 2 says, "Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth."
7. H.A. Ironside says the Lord's people have "corrupted themselves as to have fallen into the most degrading practices of the pagan nations about them!" (*Jeremiah*).
8. Tattoos, body piercing, men wearing earrings and droopy pants with their underwear showing, etc. are all signs of a rebellious and wicked generation. We must warn our young people not to identify with the heathen culture.
9. Jeremiah 10:2 says, "Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen."
10. Some one told me that church youth groups were going to theatres to watch these violent movies! God help us!
11. This recent "Batman massacre" should be a wake-up call. Christians should stay away from movie theatres, rock music, and worldly places of amusement.
12. There is nothing "amusing" about murder. Or adultery, or foul language, etc.
13. The "tearing" in Jeremiah 16:7 refers to breaking bread. The word "themselves" is in italics and was added by the King James translators.
14. The NKJV says, "Nor shall men break bread in mourning for them, to comfort them for the dead."
15. The breaking of bread was accompanied by "the cup of consolation" (16:7). This was not to be done during this time.

16. Commenting on verses 8 and 9, Merrill Unger says the prophet was forbidden "to socialize with Judah's apostates. Not only was he not to offer any comfort to the sinning people in their bereavement (vss. 5-7), but he was not to participate in any social event of joy or gladness. He was not to go to any house where there was feasting and participate...How could the prophet be true to his commission in warning of Judah's doom and then engage in lighthearted conduct? He had to illustrate the terribleness of the coming calamity by his actions as well as by his words" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
17. Once again, the LORD had to remind the people of their terrible sin (16:10-13). This refrain runs through the entire book of Jeremiah (cf. 13:10, 11, 23-25; 14:10, 11; 15:6; etc.).
18. They would go into exile for their idolatry and other sins. They were worse than their fathers (16:10-13).
19. When we read through the book of Jeremiah we are often amazed at the attitude of the people. Why would they dare to question God when they knew they were guilty sinners (16:10).
20. The answer: the people were misled by the false prophets, who would not preach against sin (cf. 14:13-16).
21. False religion has a deadening effect on the conscience. Add in the public schools, rock music, television, and Hollywood, and we can see why America is going down fast!

II. JEREMIAH'S CONSOLATION (16:14, 15)

1. In the midst of these stern warnings of judgment, there is a message of mercy and hope -- God would bring them back after their captivity (16:14, 15).
2. This promise of restoration looks beyond the return under Ezra and Nehemiah, and includes the future millennial kingdom when Christ returns (cf. 23:3-8; 31:7-12).
3. Romans 11:26 says, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."
4. But before restoration, there would be judgment. Though some would attempt escape, it would be useless (16:16-18).

III. JEREMIAH'S PRAYER (16:19)

1. We have already noted several of Jeremiah's intercessory prayers.

2. Jeremiah prayed, "O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction..." (16:19).
3. The LORD would give Jeremiah (and others who would submit to God) the strength he needed to get through the coming calamity.
4. When the Lord Jesus returns to set up His kingdom in Jerusalem, Gentiles will come from all over the world to worship Him (16:19-21).
5. Then they will acknowledge the true God -- "The LORD" (16:21).

CONCLUSIONS:

1. There are many similar prophecies found throughout the book of Jeremiah, as well as Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, and the other prophets.
2. In the meantime it is our responsibility -- and our privilege -- to proclaim the true Gospel to every creature.
3. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).