Jeremiah: Lesson 7

The Crisis Continues

Memory Text: “‘But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 9:24)

Setting The Stage: What do you do when no one wants to listen to you? What if you’re Jeremiah? What if you’re God? Through Jeremiah, God still held out the possibility for repentance, but Israel wouldn’t listen. How much trouble could have been averted if they had. Is it the same for us today?

1 Corinthians 10:11: “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition [warning, instruction], upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

Sunday – Let Him Who Boasts
Jeremiah 9; Matthew 23:37

Chapter 9 of Jeremiah is really an extension of chapter 8. These chapters are a part of the Temple Discourse (chapters 7-10), when God told Jeremiah to go into the court of the temple to deliver a strong message to the priests and false prophets.

In chapter 8 Jeremiah warns Judah of the perils of false teachers (v. 5, 6, 8, 11) and coming judgment (v. 7, 10, 12-14, 16, 17). From vs. 18-22 the prophet begins to mourn for his people because they have not availed themselves of the provisions God has made for their recovery and because of their sad condition.

Jeremiah 9:1. The language here has appropriately been called the poetry of suffering. The hopeless condition of Judah touched the prophet deeply, and he wept bitterly. This verse is surely the source of the description we have come to know Jeremiah by – “the weeping prophet.”

Verses 3-6, 12-14, 25, 26. These verses describe the condition of God’s people in general. Not everyone had succumbed to idolatry and other abominable practices, but it was pervasive. It was so bad that Jeremiah wanted to leave to a quiet place, just like David wished to escape the treachery of his “friends” (Ps. 55:6-8 – fly like a dove).

What was Judah’s problem? The basis of their sad condition was that they did not “know” the Lord, or “acknowledge” Him (v. 3). When that happens, what restraint is there on the lives of the people (v. 5)? They had forsaken God’s law (v. 13) They were like the uncircumcised nations around them (v. 26).
Verses 17-22. When death entered a home, mourners were hired to bewail the loss. They emphasized their lamentations by disheveling their hair and rending their clothes. Jeremiah pictures the catastrophe to the nation as already having taken place and suggests the usual honors to the dead be carried out. Isn’t it better to mourn on account of sin now, than to mourn because of eternal loss later?

Jeremiah 9:23, 24. Jeremiah points out the pointless objects of self-confident boasting. They would be useless in the day of coming judgment. “Wisdom” – confidence in human wisdom is foolishness, as it is partial and uncertain (Prov. 3:5). “Might” – Military prowess, armaments, strength of combatants, all of these are limited. “Riches” – wealth and material possession constitutes no legitimate ground for boasting. “Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away.” (Prov. 23:5)

“Let him who boasts, boast in this” – The truly wise ascribe praise to God alone, never to self. The knowledge of God is the only true grounds for boasting, for in it is wrapped up eternal life (John 17:3). Our relationship to God has a reasonable and intelligent basis, but it is not all head knowledge. We are to serve Him with the entire mind but also with all of our hearts (Matt. 22:37).

Does Jeremiah’s heartache for Judah in some way typify God’s great love for us?

Matthew 23:37: “’O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!’”

“Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ’s agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God. Every departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him. When there came upon Israel the calamities that were the sure result of separation from God - subjugation by their enemies, cruelty, and death - it is said that ‘His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.’ ‘In all their affliction He was afflicted; ... and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old.’ - Judges 10:16; Isaiah 63:9” (Education, p. 263)

Monday – Creatures or the Creator?

Jeremiah 10; 1 Peter 2:9

Time and time again God warned Israel to not be shaped by the nations around them and adopt their wicked practices or it wouldn’t be well. God had called His ancient people to be different (special, not weird) from the nations around them.

Exodus 19:5, 6: “‘Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the
Deuteronomy 7:6: “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.”

Deuteronomy 26:18, 19: “Also today the Lord has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments, and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the Lord your God, just as He has spoken.”

1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

What does this tell you about the power of pressure to conform? Do we violate our principles because we want to be accepted, because the way seems easier, because we forget the dangers of departure from right, because we are not totally loyal to Christ?

Jeremiah 10:1-10. God again warns His people to not learn the ways of those who don’t know or have the truth about God (v. 2; Lev. 18:3; Deut. 12:29-31). The heathen used to make astrological calculations based on certain extraordinary appearances in the sky. Eclipses, comets, and certain configurations of the sun, star, and moon were seen as national or individual fortune or misfortune (v. 2). The worthlessness of idols is forcefully demonstrated by highlighting the origin of idols (v. 3-5, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15). Elijah gave similar mocking on Mount Carmel.

By contrast God reveals Himself as the Creator of all things (v. 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 16). He is truth personified (John 14:6). God has life in Himself (John 5:26) and is the source of all that exists (Acts 17:28). His domain is unlimited, not hindered by space and time. God alone has the right to claim worship, and that right is based upon the fact that He is the Creator. God’s continuous activity is seen in nature. Life around us reminds us that God is God and is worthy of our worship.

“Living God” – mentioned 30 times in the Bible, and is often used to contrast the true God with false gods. John said that God is holding back the winds of strife until His servants are sealed in their foreheads with the “seal of the living God.” Has God given us something to remind us that He is our Creator? Yes He has - a weekly reminder in the seventh-day Sabbath (see Ex. 20:8-11).
Tuesday – A Call to Repentance
Jeremiah 26:1-6; Isaiah 55:7; Steps to Christ, pp. 23-35

Chapter 26 is a summary of the Temple Discourse given by Jeremiah in chapters 7 to 10. The reactions to the discourse by the people and the leaders and the final outcome of the entire incident are recorded only here.

**Jeremiah 26:1-6.** It’s very likely that this incident took place at one of the feasts that drew together worshippers from all parts of the nation. Obviously the message contained words that Jeremiah would likely want to withdraw from. The threat was severe that it is expressed with the hope that it may not have to be carried out (v. 6).

“Shiloh” – a town in the territory of Ephraim whose location is indicated in Judges 21:19. Its central location made it a desirable site for the sanctuary (Josh. 18:1). Shiloh was the home of the ark for 300 years until it fell into the hands of the Philistines (see 1 Sam. 4:10, 11). Because of Israel’s gross idolatry God “forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh.” (Ps. 78:60) The Philistines captured the ark and presumably at the same time destroyed the city.

“Turn from his evil ways” – Another way of saying, “Repent!” Repentance involves an acknowledgement of sin, a sorrow for it, a confession of it, and a turning away from it. Repentance involves man humbling his heart, but this does not debase him. Sin debases. Repentance restores the dignity of man. Repentance not only involves turning from sin, but leads to obedience to God’s law (v. 4, 5).

**Question: Repentance precedes forgiveness; does that then mean that I must repent before I come to Christ, or is repentance in some way meritorious?** It’s true that repentance precedes forgiveness, for it’s only the broken heart that feels its need of a Savior, however repentance should never be made a barrier to come to Christ. Repentance is actually a gift given to us by Christ when we come to Him (Acts 5:31), therefore removing any possibility that it’s meritorious.

**Luke 24:47:** “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

**Acts 17:30:** “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

**Isaiah 55:7:** “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”
Wednesday – The Call for Death
Jeremiah 26:10-15

Jeremiah 26:7-9. The response of the two parties to which Jeremiah was especially sent (and of which he belonged) – priest and prophet – threatened Jeremiah’s life. They didn’t like the accusing voice of their conscience and so they sought to forever silence the one who agitated it.

That the temple would become like Shiloh was an unbearable thought. The people had placed their entire confidence in a strict observance of the outward religious services of the temple. How ironic that they outwardly prided themselves in serving God, yet were conspiring to do the deed of the devil in killing God’s messenger! Jesus said those who were seeking His life were not the children of Abraham, but children of the devil himself (John 8:44!)

Jeremiah 26:10-15. What was Jeremiah’s response? The princes came to hear what Jeremiah had to say. Here the priests and prophets appealed to civil power to do away with Jeremiah. They declared him guilty without giving him a fair trial. If it wasn’t for Jeremiah’s courageous response (different from his prior whining, complaining, and cursing the day of his birth), which swung the balance of public opinion over in his favor, we would have a shorter book of Jeremiah.

Confronting lies, error, and hypocrisy in the spirit of Christ is a Christian thing to do. If we don’t stand for the right, how will people ever respect our witness and be led to give God a try? There is a risk that comes with being faithful, but we are to leave the consequences in the Lord’s hands.

Thursday – Jeremiah’s Escape
Jeremiah 26:16-24

Jeremiah 26:16-24. How did Jeremiah escape death? The princes and all the people declared that Jeremiah was not worthy to die. Some elders stood for Jeremiah reminding the priests and the prophets that when King Hezekiah and the people of Judah heard the strong message of Micah, they repented, and the Lord held His judgment back. Although there’s no written account of this experience, it does accord with Hezekiah’s character (2 Chron. 29:4-10; 32-36). The statement of the princes, the appeal of the elders, and the support given by Ahikam, Jeremiah was allowed to continue his ministry. Jeremiah was safe...at least for the time being.

With the priests and prophets conspiring against Jeremiah, what does that tell us about the need to always listen carefully and confirm the validity of what is said by the Word of God?

Does this remind you of an account in the Bible where a person of influence stayed the tide of persecution on God’s people? The religious leaders of the first century were plotting to kill the disciples of Jesus, however, Gamaliel, a respected Pharisee,
called on history to caution the action of the spiritual leaders of God's people. The disciples were safe...at least for a time (Acts 5:33-40). How important is it to not only know history but to also learn from it?

**Appeal:** God is inviting each of us to listen to Him, to His Word, and His prophets. Listening involves not only hearing with the ears but also applying the mind and heart to do God's will. Anything short of this is superficial and unhelpful. Won't you stop, listen, and apply God’s Word each day to your life?