

Week of July 11-17

Jeremiah 17 Trust in Man or God; The Door of Repentance Opened

Once again, God stated His resolve to judge his people because of the determination to sin. That sin was "*written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.*" This statement is followed by a contrast between the man who trusts in man and the "*man who trusts in God.*" Trusting in man is like a desert wilderness. The second is like a tree planted along a riverbank. God searches hearts and examines its deepest motives so they can be revealed. To these words of God, Jeremiah replied in a great declaration of faith, and an equally great appeal of his need. He was conscious of God's refuge, namely, the uplifted throne of God. To forsake God was to forsake the fountain of living waters.

Yet Jeremiah's sense of need was very great, and he appealed to God to give him His Word to protect him in the sight of the people. He was then commanded to stand in the gates of Jerusalem, and tell them to honor the Sabbath, to warn them of how their fathers failed in this respect, and also to declare to them that if they refused to listen, then judgment must come.

We now come to the second series of messages before the fall of Jerusalem (18-20), which consists of declarations of God's absolute sovereignty.

Jeremiah 18 The Potter's Jar; A solemn Warning of Judgment

Jeremiah was sent to the potter's house where he saw the potter at work on his wheel. Power was shown by the potter in his manipulation of the clay, and in his remaking of the jar that did not turn out as he wished.

God Himself explained what this represented. The house of Israel was like clay in God's hand. His will must be accomplished, and the people could not possibly escape His hand. Jeremiah was charged to deliver this message to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, but they insisted on continuing in their evil. God declared their sin to be worse than heathen nations. What, then, remained but that judgment must fall?

This message stirred up new opposition against Jeremiah and a conspiracy was formed against his life. In resentment, Jeremiah poured out his soul to God. He had pleaded their cause, and they returned good with evil. Therefore, it was surely necessary that they should be punished, and he appealed to God to deal with them in His anger. Jeremiah had prayed an imprecatory prayer.

Why do some people proceed along the path of destruction even though warned? It has to do with the conditional versus the unconditional will of God.

Jeremiah Judgment announced

Jeremiah was now sent to the valley of the son of Hinnom, taking with him a potter's jar. His message there was of judgment. Because the people had forsaken God and turned the valley into a place of shame and wickedness, even burning their sons in the fire on altars built to Baal, judgment was to fall against them.

Jeremiah was commanded to break the jar in the sight of the people and declare that in the same way, God would break the people and Jerusalem. Returning from Topheth, Jeremiah stood in front of the Temple and repeated the warning of judgment because they had stubbornly refused to listen to the Lord.

Jeremiah 20 The priest's opposition and Jeremiah's sufferings

Pashur, the priest in charge of the Temple, heard the prophecy and arrested and imprisoned Jeremiah overnight. The following day Jeremiah, being released, repeated his prophecy of judgment, singling out Pashur for special attention, declaring that on him would fall the most severe punishment.

Amid this persecution and suffering, the prophet poured out his soul in the presence of God. Conscious that he had been commanded to declare these prophecies, he complained that he had been the laughingstock of the people and that the Word of God had made him a reproach. He declared he would not mention God again, nor speak any more in His name, but God's Word had become a burning fire, and he had been compelled to speak it. The emotional state of his mind is seen in that after the complaint, there was a sudden outpouring of confidence in which he declared that God was with him, that his enemies would not prevail, and he sang out in thanks to the Lord. Praise Him because he had been delivered.

This, however, was immediately followed by an outburst of fear, which was a strange contrast to his former confidence. He cursed the day of his birth and mourned the continuity of his life. This reveals to us how terrible were the sufferings through which Jeremiah passed.

Does God hold church leaders responsible for members spiritual growth?

These are the final chapters before the fall of Jerusalem and consists of messages delivered to Zedekiah. King Josiah is dead and Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim follow him. Zedekiah became the worst and weakest king to lead Judah. He was also Judah's last king.

Jeremiah 21 King Zedekiah's Request and Jeremiah's Response

Zedekiah's sent Pashur to Jeremiah with the following message: The curse which Jeremiah had foretold was imminent. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was approaching. Zedekiah was asking whether he should hope for deliverance by God. There was no uncertainty in Jeremiah's answer the prophet gave to the messengers.

He first prophesied the disaster in detail. He then declared that the only alternative was death or captivity. His final word had to do with the house of the king. He called the king to return to righteousness in government. The hopelessness of the situation was evident because the last word of the message declared Jerusalem's fall and was the clearest declaration that their fate would be by the will and act of God Himself.

Jeremiah 22 Judgment Announced on The Kings

The message Jeremiah given was not enough. He was commanded to go to King Zedekiah and what he said fills the succeeding chapters through chapter twenty-seven.

Arriving at the king's court, he repeated at greater length God's call for repentance and warning. Repentance was the way to restoration. Disobedience was the way of destruction.

He then revealed what had happened to the three previous kings. First, regarding Jehoahaz, there was no need to weep for Josiah who had died, but rather for Jehoahaz, who had been carried away to die in captivity. Moving on to Jehoiakim, he described the sin of his evil reign, which was characterized by injustice and oppression of the people. For his sin, he had been judged and dragged out of Jerusalem and thrown into the garbage dump. Finally, the prophet described the doom of Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin declaring that he and his mother will be thrown out of the country.

Jeremiah 23 A Shepherd after His Own Heart

Jeremiah now proceeds to deal with those who had been responsible for the failure of the people, the false kings, and prophets. The first section has to do with the kings.

The king has always been a shepherd, but the men who had held the office had destroyed and scattered the sheep. This is the charge of God against them, and Jeremiah declared that God would pour out his judgment on them. Then Jeremiah announced God would gather the remnant of His flock and place shepherds over them who would feed them. Jeremiah's vision grew clearer and he announced the coming of the branch of David's line, who would "*reign as King and deal wisely,*" and through Whom the restoration of Israel would be accomplished.

Then he turned to the prophets and priests. He spoke out of a broken heart as he thought about the condition of the land. The judgment of the prophets was because of the false messages they had delivered. They had prophesied peace, declaring that no evil would come upon the people. They had spoken without divine authority. They had dreamed their own dreams, rather than delivered the messages of God. Finally, he spoke the tremendous word of the divine judgment, beginning, "*I am against the prophets, says the Lord.*" The consequence of false prophesying is unutterable confusion, and ultimately, the loss of the word of authority, so that "*the burden is every man's own word.*"

False kings and prophets had led the people into evil. The people had willingly followed and listened, refusing the true messages of God, such as had been spoken by Jeremiah and other prophets of God.

Jeremiah 24 The Good and Bad Figs; God's Judgment of Man's Unfaithfulness

Still speaking to Zedekiah, Jeremiah repeated three prophecies from the past, the first being a vision of what happened after Jeconiah's captivity, the second a message delivered in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, and the last an earlier one, delivered at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign.

The vision after Jeconiah's captivity was two baskets of figs, the first containing very good figs, and the second very bad figs. The basket of good figs symbolized the captives who had been taken to Babylon. God would restore them in the future. The basket of bad figs represented Zedekiah and those who remained in the land under him. These were condemned to judgment.

Jeremiah 25 Judah's Captivity and Babylon's End

Still speaking to Zedekiah, Jeremiah reminded him of the word which came in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign. It was a message announcing the judgment of God against Judah, Babylon, the nations, and the world.

Judah's judgment was her persistent sin. God had spoken constantly and called them to return to obedience, but they had not listened. The judgment was to be the conquest of Judah by Babylon and her captivity for seventy years.

The prophecy also predicted the judgment of Babylon after the seventy years by a confederacy of nations and kings. Jeremiah

had seen even further into the future and prophesied that the judgment of God must ultimately fall on all the nations and that there could be no escape from it.

Finally, judgment would go forth from nation to nation. The severest judgment of this evil would fall on the kings and rulers.

Jeremiah 26

Once again, Jeremiah repeated a previous message, "*in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim.*" He had then been instructed to stand out in front of the Temple and deliver his message to allow the people to turn from their evil ways. The message warned them against refusing to listen and the consequences that would follow.

The message caused the priests, prophets, and people to become angry against Jeremiah, threatening to kill him. Jeremiah then told the story of his trial, saying he had been seized and condemned to die. The princes of Judah and the people interfered, and he was placed on trial before them. The priests and false prophets charged him with speaking against the city. He answered that he had only delivered the message of God. The interference of the princes and the defense of Jeremiah won the people to his side, and they declared that he was not worthy of death. Some of the elders addressed the people saying that to kill Jeremiah would be sin and told of Micah and Uriah's deaths. Ahikam, the royal secretary, persuaded the court not to turn Jeremiah over to the mob to kill him.