

IMMERSE: PROPHETS

Week 9 – Jeremiah: “...RETURN To Me....”

July 30, 2023

The Book of Jeremiah is primarily a message of judgment on Judah for rampant idolatry (Jer. 7:30-34; 16:10-13; 22:9; 32:29; 44:2-3) AND their disobeying God’s commandment concerning the “Sabbath rest” of the land (Leviticus 26:33-35; Deuteronomy 28:64). Jeremiah warned Judah that God’s judgment was at hand. Note the false prophets who plagued Jeremiah and sought his death. The message of the false prophets came against God’s message through Jeremiah. Even amid God’s message of judgment, God promised the restoration of Israel back into the land God had given them (Jeremiah 29:10).

Jer. 1:1 - *The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, Jeremiah served as a priest and a prophet. His father, Hilkiyah, was a priest (not the High Priest of II Kings 22:8 who discovered the book of the law). Jeremiah was from the tribe of Benjamin.*

Jer. 1:2-10 – *...to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. ³ It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. ⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ⁵ ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.’*

⁶ *Then said I: ‘Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.’ (I am not experienced)*
⁷ *But the LORD said to me: ‘Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. ⁸ Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,’ says the LORD. ⁹ Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: ‘Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.’*

It is thought that Jeremiah’s name means “Jehovah throws” in the sense of laying down a foundation. Jeremiah’s ministry spanned at least five decades from Judah’s King Josiah (in Josiah’s 13th year, 627 BC) to the final king of Judah, Zedekiah, in his last year (586 BC).

Jeremiah grieved over the wickedness of his people and the impending judgment the nation's sins had provoked. Jeremiah's warnings went mostly unheeded, and he responded to Judah's rebellion with tears of mourning (Jeremiah 13:17). Jeremiah has been called "the weeping prophet" because he cried tears of sadness because he knew what was about to occur. And, the warnings of judgment were intensified by his people NOT listening to God's words through Jeremiah! Because of the impending judgment on Judah, God told Jeremiah that he was not to marry or have children (Jeremiah 16:2). Jeremiah knew no human comfort.

God confirmed His call to Jeremiah by giving him two visions.

Jer. 1:11-16 - God's first confirming vision, focusing on the nature of the message Jeremiah was to deliver, caused Jeremiah to see the branch of an almond tree which has been called the "awake tree." The branch represented God Who was watching to see that His word is fulfilled. God's

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second confirming vision, focusing on the content of the message, caused Jeremiah to see a boiling pot. The pot was tilting away from the north indicating that its contents were about to be spilled out toward the south toward Judah. The tilting pot represented disaster that would be poured out on those who lived in Judah. The direction from which the pot was facing represented the people of the northern kingdoms whom God was summoning to punish the nation of Judah.

Jer. 1:17-19 – *Therefore prepare yourself and arise, and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces... ¹⁸ For behold, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against its princes, against its priests, and against the people of the land. ¹⁹ They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you,' says the LORD, 'to deliver you.'*

Are we as believers in Jesus who have God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit dwelling within us (John 17) prepared to speak forth God's word in this day and age?

I Cor. 15:3-6 – *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,*

Rom. 1:16 - *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

Rom. 10:14-15 - *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?* The Gk. for “preacher” is one who proclaims the good news of the gospel of Jesus!

In Jer. 2:13 we are told that Israel had committed two sins... *For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters...*

Israel (kingdoms of Israel and Judah, had forsaken God and His gift of living water! Jesus had told the Samaritan woman at the well that, *...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.*

And, Israel had *...hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

Cisterns were large pits dug into the rock and covered with plaster for the purpose of gathering rainwater. And the water held was not reliable, not refreshing – not satisfying. And, if a cistern developed a crack, it could not hold water. To turn from God, a pure source of running water to idols depicted by broken, brackish (unpleasant; distasteful) water was...someone expressed it this way...idiotic!

Israel had turned from God to idols!!!!

Amid warnings, what does God call Israel to do?

Jer. 3:6-10 - *The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: ‘Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. (the high places were where the pagans worshiped many gods) ⁷ And I said, after she had done all these things, ‘Return to Me.’ But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. ⁸ Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away (Israel had been exiled to Assyria)*

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and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also....

In Scripture “divorce” is understood as a ripping apart of what God brought together as “one” (Gen. 2:24 - *...a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*)

Re: a “certificate of divorce,” did God actually issue a certificate of divorce to Israel? One of the ways in which God assured the children of Israel of His love for them is to describe Himself as their “husband.” *‘Return, O backsliding children,’ says the LORD; ‘for I am married to you’* (Jer. 3:14). God entered into an everlasting covenant with Israel (the Abrahamic Covenant). Marriage is a covenant (Gen. 15). And thus says, *‘Your Maker(s) is your husband – the LORD Almighty is His name – the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer’* (Isa. 54:5).

Backstory: Jer. 3:1 – it’s been asked, *‘If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man’s, may he return to her again?’* The answer, according to the Mosaic Law, was “No.” A man who had divorced his wife could not later remarry her (Deut. 24:1-4). Israel seems to be in a hopeless situation. She has been divorced by God, and, according to the law, she can never be accepted back. HOWEVER, God’s mercy intervenes! God promised to do what the Mosaic Law could never do: restore the broken “marriage.”

Jer. 3:11-15 - *Then the LORD said to me, “Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. ¹² Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: ‘Return, backsliding Israel,’ says the LORD; ‘I will not cause My anger to fall on you. for I am merciful,’ says the LORD; ‘I will not remain angry forever. ¹³ Only acknowledge your iniquity. That you have transgressed against the LORD your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,’ says the LORD. ¹⁴ ‘Return, O backsliding children,’ says the LORD; ‘for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

Amid a scenario of hopelessness for Israel, God invited the children of Israel to “return” to Him. After God spoke of the “certificate of divorce, He commanded them four times to “return” (Jer. 3:12, 14, 22, Jer. 4:1)!!! Read Jer. 16:14-15...re: God’s physical deliverance of Israel from Egypt and His future restoration of both the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah in the Millennial Kingdom. The ultimate future restoration of Israel in the Kingdom of God established on earth will not only include the physical aspect of restoration (the land, the Messiah ruling and reigning), the blessings which God had promised to Israel (Lev. 26 and Deut. 28) will also be fulfilled. Blessings will come to Israel, yet these blessings are contingent on Israel’s repentance (Matt. 23:39; Hosea 5:15; Zech. 12:10).

Jeremiah 4 reveals that Israel’s repentance will lead to blessings for the nations. Jer. 4:1-2 – *‘If you will return, O Israel,’ says the LORD, ‘Return to Me; and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved. ² And you shall swear, ‘The LORD lives,’ In truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him they shall glory.’* This reaffirms the truth of Gen. 12:2-3 and Gen. 18:18 that God’s plans include the nation Israel and Gentile nations.

And, as we know from what Jesus told Nicodemus, those who enter the Kingdom of God must be transformed spiritually.

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John 3:3 - *Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'*

Matt. 5:3 - *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (the Kingdom of God).* The poor in spirit are aware of their bankrupt condition before God. There is nothing that we can do to reconcile our separation from God (Isa. 59:2).

In Jer. 22:24-30 - we read of the message of Jehoiachin/Jeconiah/Coniah. God declared that King Jehoiachin would be removed from the throne and be taken to Babylon, where he would die (verses 26–27). But the curse upon Jehoiachin went deeper than just his deposition and exile: *Thus says the LORD: 'Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.'* Re: the reason for this judgment upon Coniah is found in Jer. 22:28 - *a despised, broken idol—a vessel in which is no pleasure?* Thus, the line of kings from David's family ended with Jehoiachin—a fact that had ramifications for the Messiah, who was to be the Son of David (2 Samuel 7:12–16). (Or we might say that the line of kings from David's family ended with Jehoiachin/Jeconiah/Coniah's uncle).

Jesus' genealogies in Matthew 1 and in Luke 3 resolve the “roadblock” re: the kings from David's family. Matthew presented the legal line of Jesus through his stepfather, Joseph. Joseph's line came through Solomon from whose line Jehoiachin/Jeconiah/Coniah descended. Had Jesus been a physical descendant of Joseph and not virgin born, He would have been disqualified as Israel's King! Luke presented the physical line of Jesus through Mary who was descended from David through David's son, Nathan. Jesus was not under the “curse” of Jehoiachin. And so...

...in Jer. 23:1-8 we read of the righteous Branch.

The branch of David through Coniah had been “cut off.” However God promised to raise up to David another King Who would be a righteous Branch.

Jer. 23:5-6 – *'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. ⁶In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

In Jer. 23:9-12 we read that Jeremiah's heart was broken and his body became weak. False prophets were opposing Jeremiah's warning of coming judgment. These false prophets offered, instead, a promise of peace. Instead of calling Judah to return to her covenant with God, the false prophets told Judah that no harm would come upon them. God would not judge them. A false prophet is a person who spreads false teachings or messages while claiming to speak the Word of God.

Jer. 24:2, 5-7 - two baskets of figs – very good figs and bad figs.

One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten, they were so bad. ...⁵ “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for their own good, into the land of the Chaldeans. ⁶ For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. ⁷ Then I will give them a heart

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to know Me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.

The good figs represented the exiles from Judah who had been carried away to Babylon. This was a surprise as the people of Jerusalem believed that those in captivity had been taken away from the LORD... yet, God promised to watch over the remnant in captivity and bring them back to the land (Eze. 11:16-17).

Jer. 24:8-10 - *And as the bad figs which cannot be eaten, they are so bad’— (the bad figs are those who listened to the false prophets) surely thus says the LORD, ‘so will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, his princes, the residue of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt. ⁹ I will deliver them to trouble into all the kingdoms of the earth, for their harm, to be a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse, in all places where I shall drive them. ¹⁰ And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they are consumed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers.’*

READ Jeremiah 29!!!!!!

OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS

We'll pick up with Jer. 25 next week!

