

Jeremiah 12-13

Bible Study

Review

Chapter 10—God's rejection of pagan practices/idols (Temple sermons conclude)

- The House of Israel (whole nation) is instructed not to learn the way of the Gentiles (Pagan practices)
 - Making idols out of wood and decorating them...Trees involved in pagan worship
 - Comparing God's greatness with man-made objects of worship
 - Coming captivity/judgment of Judah because of their sins

Chapter 11—The broken covenant (Josiah had reaffirmed the covenant)

- Judah and Jerusalem will reap curses for breaking the covenant
- A conspiracy (revolt) among the people—Deliberate and planned revolt not to follow God
 - Pagan altars dedicated to Baal found in all their streets and all their cities
- A plot against Jeremiah's life—By the people and family of his hometown of Anathoth
 - God calls for judgment on them—they shall die by the sword

Verses 1-6 of Chapter 12 connects with the theme of the plot against Jeremiah's life

Chapter 12

Jeremiah's question: The prosperity of the wicked?

1 Righteous are You, O Lord, when I plead with You; Yet let me talk with You about Your judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously?

2 You have planted them, yes, they have taken root; They grow, yes, they bear fruit. You are near in their mouth But far from their mind.

v. 1 Within the context of opposition to him from his hometown, Jeremiah ponders the question of the prosperity of the wicked

- Not just those of his hometown, but the wicked in general

v. 2 Using the figure of a fruit bearing tree, he speaks of their hypocrisy...they speak God's name but they do not have Him in mind or heart

Matthew 15: 8 (Quoted Isaiah 29:13)

These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

3 But You, O Lord, know me; You have seen me, And You have tested my heart toward You. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, And prepare them for the day of slaughter.

4 How long will the land mourn, And the herbs of every field wither? The beasts and birds are consumed, For the wickedness of those who dwell there, Because they said, “He will not see our final end.”

v. 3 Jeremiah contrasts his heart toward God, with the wicked (he did not deserve their hatred for him)

- He asks God for judgment upon them
“prepare them for the day of slaughter”—like he had been a “lamb for the slaughter” (Ch. 11:19)

v. 4 When judgment comes even the crops, birds and animals suffer

- Droughts were already occurring as a way of judgment and more were to come (Ch. 14)
 - [Mid. part] reflects back to v. 1—the wicked ...they are a curse to the nation

v. 4 [Last part] “**they said**, He will not see our final end”

- The people mock Jeremiah’s prophecies, and say he will die before they do

God answers Jeremiah

5 “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?

6 For even your brothers, the house of your father, Even they have dealt treacherously with you; Yes, they have called a multitude after you. Do not believe them, Even though they speak smooth words to you.

v. 5 God’s answer is to prepare for greater trials in the future

The floodplain of the Jordan—the land adjacent to the Jordan River with heavy undergrowth
The river overflowed/flooded annually in the spring time (metaphor for trials)

v. 6 Even Jeremiah’s family could not be trusted, dealing treacherously with him

“Called a multitude after you”= He will be hunted down like a criminal

- They speak smooth words to him, but their intentions are mean

Matthew 10: 36

‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’

Returns to punishment for the wicked

7 I have forsaken My house, I have left My heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies.

8 My heritage is to Me like a lion in the forest; It cries out against Me; Therefore I have hated it.

God is speaking/lamenting for His people because of the punishment that will come upon them

“My house”... “My heritage”... “dearly beloved”

- “given into the hand of her enemies”—coming invasion

v. 8 Their rebellion against Him was like a lion’s fierceness

- He hated their rebellion and thus has withdrawn His protection from them



(Expositors) “The historical background of this passage was probably the events recorded in II Kings 24: 1-2, when Jehoiakim revolted against Babylon after three years of submission.”

Judgment for breaking the covenant

9 My heritage is to Me like a speckled vulture; The vultures all around are against her. Come, assemble all the beasts of the field, Bring them to devour!

v. 9 The vultures picture the nations against His people

- The beasts (Babylon and her allies) are invited to devour the land

(Expositors) “Nebuchadnezzar dispatched Chaldean, Syrian, Moabite and Ammonite soldiers against Judah. Dates for these events range from 602 BC to 598 BC.”

Leads to the 2nd Babylonian deportation)

II Kings 24: 1-2

(605-602 BC)

1 In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.

2 And the Lord sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon; He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord which He had spoken by His servants the prophets.

Ancient and end time applications

10 Many rulers have destroyed My vineyard, They have trodden My portion underfoot;

11 They have made My pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it desolate; Desolate, it mourns to Me; The whole land is made desolate, Because no one takes it to heart.

12 The plunderers have come On all the desolate heights in the wilderness, For the sword of the Lord shall devour From one end of the land to the other end of the land; No flesh shall have peace.

13 They have sown wheat but reaped thorns; They have put themselves to pain but do not profit. But be ashamed of your harvest Because of the fierce anger of the Lord.”

v. 10

- Bad rulers led Israel and Judah astray
- “rulers”—heads of the foreign enemies will destroy the vineyard (nation)

v. 12 The plunderers will destroy, as God will allow it on all of the land

v. 13 The punishment will result in the land being incapable to even produce fruit

v. 14-17 Plan/promise for the neighboring nations
Jeremiah was called also as a prophet to the nations (Ch.1:10)

14 Thus says the Lord: “Against all My evil neighbors who touch the inheritance which I have caused My people Israel to inherit—behold, I will pluck them out of their land and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.

(NIV) “This is what the Lord says: ‘As for my wicked neighbors who seize the inheritance I gave my people Israel, I will uproot them from their land and I will uproot the house of Judah from them.’”

v. 14 Neighboring nations (Syria, Moab, Ammon) who took advantage of Judah at the time of the Babylonian invasions will be exiled (plucked out) from their land = Babylon would conquer them

(Points to end time nations who take advantage of the modern descendants of Israel will be uprooted from their lands)

v. 14 [Last part] “and pluck the house of Judah from among them”
(BKC) “In contrast God would later uproot the house of Judah from these Gentile nations where they had been scattered and would restore them to their land”

v. 15-16 A Millennial setting—restoration for the nations

15 Then it shall be, after I have plucked them out, that I will return and have compassion on them and bring them back, everyone to his heritage and everyone to his land.

16 And it shall be, if they will learn carefully the ways of My people, to swear by My name, 'As the Lord lives,' as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they shall be established in the midst of My people.

17 But if they do not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation," says the Lord.

v. 15 After their punishment they (enemy nations) will be brought back to their lands

(Bible Knowledge Commentary) "Though God will judge these Gentile nations, He will later have compassion on them and restore them to their own lands. This will happen when Christ returns to restore His millennial kingdom on earth."

v. 16 If these nations who were punished, will turn and worship the true God, they will be established ("built" KJV)
➤ having the benefits of God's people and opportunity for salvation

v. 17 A warning: Any nation that rebels against God will be destroyed
(Zechariah 14:17-19)

¹ Thus the Lord said to me: “Go and get yourself a linen sash, and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water.”

² So I got a sash according to the word of the Lord, and put it around my waist.

³ And the word of the Lord came to me the second time, saying,

⁴ “Take the sash that you acquired, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole in the rock.”

v. 1 ‘linen sash’ (KJV ‘girdle’)—a costly material, to be put around the waist [symbolizes Israel and Judah]
Not to get wet—would cause it to deteriorate

v. 4 Jeremiah instructed/commanded by God to hide the sash in in hole in the rock at the Euphrates river

- The Euphrates is the boundary of the Mesopotamian powers, Assyria and Babylon; a journey of 2-3 months

The hiding of the sash there symbolizes Israel and Judah seeking help/alliances from Assyria/Babylon

- They also worshipped the false gods that originated in Babylon

5 So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me.

6 Now it came to pass after many days that the Lord said to me, “Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the sash which I commanded you to hide there.”

7 Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the sash from the place where I had hidden it; and there was the sash, ruined. It was profitable for nothing.

v. 6 “after many days” —could have been months/years later

- Jeremiah goes back to the Euphrates, probably now during the reign of Jehoiachin (597 BC)
 - Many scholars say Jeremiah had been gone for a period during the reign of Jehoiakim

v. 7 Jeremiah returns to dig up the sash where it was hidden, and it was ruined

Explanation of the linen sash

8 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

9 “Thus says the Lord: ‘In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.

10 This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts, and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing

v. 9 The ruined sash pictures how Judah and Jerusalem fall and are ruined by their pride

v. 10 The people would not listen to God, but rather chose to follow and worship other gods (idolatry), and are now like the rotten sash, worthless to God

The point of the linen sash oracle

11 For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,' says the Lord, 'that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear.'

The people of Israel and Judah, instead of clinging to God, to be His people, had chosen to worship other gods, thus they are worthless to Him

Symbol of the wine bottles

12 Therefore you shall speak to them this word: ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: “Every bottle shall be filled with wine.” ’ “And they will say to you, ‘Do we not certainly know that every bottle will be filled with wine?’

13 “Then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land—even the kings who sit on David’s throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—with drunkenness!

14 And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together,” says the Lord. “I will not pity nor spare nor have mercy, but will destroy them.”

v. 12 Wine bottles are to be filled with wine, and the people mockingly agree that is so

v. 13 The point: All of the people of Judah, including the kings, leaders and priests are filled with drunkenness

➤ Spiritual drunkenness

(Expositors) “Canaanite worship was characterized by drunkenness”

v. 14 Judgment upon them all for their spiritual wickedness

Pride before captivity

15 Hear and give ear: Do not be proud, For the Lord has spoken.

16 Give glory to the Lord your God Before He causes darkness, And before your feet stumble On the dark mountains, And while you are looking for light, He turns it into the shadow of death And makes it dense darkness.

17 But if you will not hear it, My soul will weep in secret for your pride; My eyes will weep bitterly And run down with tears, Because the Lord's flock has been taken captive.

v. 15 Jeremiah calls on the people to pay attention to what God says

Hear and give ear (Heb. *shm*)—means to act on what is said—to repent

➤ But their pride is a huge obstacle preventing repentance

Proud (Nelson Study Bible) “Proud here refers to self-exaltation and contempt for the spoken or revealed word of God”

v. 16 Give glory to God= exalt and worship Him (instead of Baal)...

“before He causes darkness”-- (judgment)

- The people will fall ‘stumble’ when this darkness comes
- They might expect light (no coming judgment)...but darkness is coming

Five Kings of Judah during Jeremiah's ministry

Josiah (640—609 BC)

Last good king who made many religious reforms; Jeremiah began his ministry during his reign

Jehoahaz (609 BC)

Reigned only three months; Bad king; was captured by the king of Egypt and never returned to Judah

Jehoiakim (609—598 BC)

Reigns 11 years; Bad king; The people go full tilt into idolatry during his reign

Jehoiachin (597 BC)

Reigned 3 months; Rebelled against Babylon, taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon

➤ The **next section** verses 18-20 refer to king Jehoiachin although he is not named

Zedekiah (597—586 BC)

Reigns 11 years; Babylon conquers Judah at the end of his reign, he was taken to Babylon

Message to the king (Jehoiachin) and queen mother (II Kings 24:8-16)

Jehoiachin reigned only 3 months (597 BC) was about 18 or 19 years of age

18 Say to the king and to the queen mother, “Humble yourselves; Sit down, For your rule shall collapse, the crown of your glory.”

19 The cities of the South shall be shut up, And no one shall open them; Judah shall be carried away captive, all of it; It shall be wholly carried away captive.

20 Lift up your eyes and see Those who come from the north. Where is the flock that was given to you, Your beautiful sheep?

v. 18 The queen mother (Nehushta) and king (Jehoiachin) are told to humble themselves and step down, their rule would be ending

➤ They were carried away to Babylon in the 2nd deportation by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC

v. 19 The cities of the South were a series of fortresses in the south—they will fall to the enemy

The royal family, most of the leading citizens (including Ezekiel), cream of the army and skilled craftsmen were deported—they represented the whole nation

v. 20 “those who come from the north= the Babylonians

▪ The flock will be going into captivity

v. 21-27 The uncleanness of the people

21 What will you say when He punishes you? For you have taught them To be chieftains, to be head over you. Will not pangs seize you, Like a woman in labor?

22 And if you say in your heart, “Why have these things come upon me?” For the greatness of your iniquity Your skirts have been uncovered, Your heels made bare.

v. 21 Judah had tried to be allies with Babylon at times, but now they would be punishing them, and as a result will be in pain like a woman in labor

v.22 If the people ask why has this punishment come upon them, the answer is the greatness of their sins/iniquity

23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.

24 “Therefore I will scatter them like stubble That passes away by the wind of the wilderness.

25 This is your lot, The portion of your measures from Me,” says the Lord, “Because you have forgotten Me And trusted in falsehood.

v. 23 Judah was incapable of change, just as a leopard cannot change its spots

v. 24-25 Judah would be scattered in exile, the judgment for having forgotten God

26 Therefore I will uncover your skirts over your face, That your shame may appear.

27 I have seen your adulteries And your lustful neighings, The lewdness of your harlotry, Your abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! Will you still not be made clean?"

Their sins and shame will be revealed, uncovered to be seen by the nations

God has seen their idolatries and gives them warning, time to be clean

Lessons

Jeremiah contemplated that the people of his hometown who wanted to kill him spoke of God often but their hearts and minds were far from Him

- Important not to give lip service to following God, but to actually obey and serve Him

Jeremiah's own family turned against him for the truth he spoke

- Sometimes family or others close to us turn against us, but we must remain devoted to following God

The leopard cannot change his spots—metaphor that people cannot change and live rightly

- With God's Holy Spirit working in our lives we can be changed