



Jeremiah 5:20-31

What Will You Do In the End?

20 " Declare this in the house of Jacob And proclaim it in Judah, saying,

21 'Hear this now, O foolish people, Without understanding, Who have eyes and see not, And who have ears and hear not:

22 Do you not fear Me?' says the LORD. 'Will you not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, By a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, Yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it.

23 But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; They have revolted and departed.

24 They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

25 Your iniquities have turned these things away, And your sins have withheld good from you.

26 'For among My people are found wicked men; They lie in wait as one who sets snares; They set a trap; They catch men.

27 As a cage is full of birds, So their houses are full of deceit. Therefore they have become great and grown rich.

28 They have grown fat, they are sleek; Yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked; They do not plead the cause, The cause of the fatherless; Yet they prosper, And the right of the needy they do not defend.

29 Shall I not punish them for these things?' says the LORD. 'Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?'

30 " An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land:

31 The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?

What will you do in the end? In these verses God asks that question of His people who are clearly living without any consideration of that question. That they have become apostate and gone after other gods, they ignore His commands, their society is corrupt, decadent, unjust and oppressive, and they are only a few steps away from disaster. And yet despite they are comfortable and content with the way things are.

They are like high stakes gamblers who are having a wonderful at the table losing everything and never considering that eventually the evening will end, and there will be a reckoning. And then what will they do when they do not have nearly enough money to cover their losses?

Sadly though, most people live the same way that Israel did, they never consider that most important question ***what will you do in the end?*** And by that I mean the very end, that is the end of their lives. Sometimes it's comical, you have people who have huge insurance policies, 401 Ks, they've planned out every supposed year of their retirement, and yet you ask them "what will you do when your life has ended and you stand before the judgment seat of God", and the have no answer. They have spent years preparing

in detail for a retirement they may never reach, and yet when it comes to the end of their lives, which will *everyone* will reach, they have not even given a thought beyond perhaps choosing a burial plot and making out their wills. They figure, I'll decide when I get there, but on that day it will be too late.

Israel should have been living with that question in mind. But they weren't. They were not only living like they would never come to judgment, they had no fear, no reverence or respect for, for the Lord who would be their judge.

So he addresses them. So he addresses them and in very stern voice "Hear this o foolish people" Why are they foolish? Well it's not they are uneducated, it's not even that they aren't religious. They have prophets, priests, they have the temple, and most of them attended on the sacrifices. They are foolish in that they have no wisdom, and that is because they do not know or fear the Lord whom they profess to worship – and without that godly fear wisdom will escape us, and we will have no desire to learn from Him – as Prov. 9:10 puts it: ***"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."***

They have no spiritual insight into their situation and when Jeremiah preaches God's word to them, the majority of them will not listen to Him.

Here we are reminded of an important fact, it is only by the God's grace that any man can come to a right understanding of the message of salvation. Without that grace, the natural man can never understand the word of God and remains deluded about his situation and solution to it as Paul put it

1 Cor 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

It is only if the Lord himself opens our eyes and until that happens, we remain deaf to His word and blind to the Light of the Gospel.

Now God is not speaking to the nations, He is speaking to His people, the People of God. It should be the case that the Lord can appeal to the testimony of Scripture, but they are not moved by this. Their understanding of spiritual things is so dull, that the Lord has to appeal to the testimony of Natural revelation – He uses the example of the Sea, the Rain, and the Harvest.

The Lord asks, you won't fear me and yet all of creation is under my control. Even the sea is under his control, it is a force no man can tame, and yet it is under the control of God and may not pass the bounds he had set for it. ***Luke 8:25 - "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"***

But Israel recognized no such Master. The Seas might obey His voice, but ***they*** persistently refused to bow the knee to His authority, they consistently transgressed the bounds of the covenant, and yet never considered what the ends of their action would be.

It's funny isn't it? When everything in creation transgresses it's natural bounds, disaster results. When the sea for instance does come inland, we call it a Tsunami, and it causes havoc and destruction. And yet men seem to think that they can transgress the moral bounds appointed for them by God and it won't produce disaster.

The Lord says, that isn't so. In Deuteronomy he had told them that if they loved Him and kept His commands they would have a rich harvest, but that if they worshiped false gods disaster would result:

Deut 11:16 "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them,

17 "lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

That is precisely what has happened, they are in the midst of a drought. "Your sins have withheld good from you." Few things are sadder than a person who is sitting in the midst of a terrible situation, who will not acknowledge the fact that they are to blame for it. Why don't we have enough money? Because you spend too much? No that can't be it!

They have refused to acknowledge Him as God, which is bad enough but it's not just the Lord whom they have sinned against they have also sinned against their fellow Israelites. Their society is full of fat cats who catch "birds", a reference to the poor, the widows, those who would have to sell themselves into slavery

These were the corrupt officials, the men who could bribe, combine, conspire. They would be like the merchants who worked with officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to defraud Indians,

Whenever the poor and powerless, confront the rich and powerful unless the rich are godly, oppression and injustice inevitably occur. And this is a universal result of total depravity, rather than some sort of defect of breeding or the lack of the right political system. We see that in fact that as soon as the formerly poor and powerless have installed themselves as the new rulers of society via revolution, these new leaders like Stalin, Lenin, Mao, Mugabe, Robespierre, Chavez, immediately begin to oppress the powerless and gather wealth to themselves.

God's people however were supposed to be different in the way that they treated the oppressed. They were supposed to remember that at one time THEY were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord had delivered them. You and I who were also once slaves to sin, until we were purchased by Christ and delivered from the house of bondage are supposed to DEFEND the poor as well, we are to uphold the rights of the powerless, speak for the speechless. That is why you and I must not remain silent when gross injustice is going on in other nations. We must speak up for the unborn, and for the enslaved, and oppressed. For instance, for over three decades our brothers and sisters in Christ have been being killed and enslaved in Southern Sudan and Darfur, but the world for the most part has been silent. We must not be. It is why we must not be content when our own government backs corrupt and horribly oppressive regimes, even though they are "our friends", so for instance, we should not be turning a blind eye to the corruption of the governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, China or the oil producing nations.

He promises though that even if no one else will intervene on behalf of the poor, HE WILL - the Lord says that His judgment Mal. 3:5 ***And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness Against sorcerers, Against adulterers, Against perjurers, Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, And against those who turn away an alien -- Because they do not fear Me," Says the LORD of hosts.***

But the most astonishing and horrible thing going on in the nation wasn't the injustice or economic oppression, it was the corruption of the very thing that was supposed to instruct and admonish and lead them to faith and salvation and the knowledge of the Lord that would revive their nation. It was the corruption of their religion:

George Whitefield remarked: "As God can send a nation of people no greater blessing than to give them faithful, sincere, upright ministers, so the greatest curse that God can possibly send upon a people in this world is to give them over to blind, unregenerate, carnal, lukewarm, unskillful guides,"

Then there are the prophets and the priests:

My people *LOVE* to have it so:

They want to hear things that will confirm them in their immoral and rebellious behavior

Isa. 30:9 That this is a rebellious people, Lying children, Children who will not hear the law of the LORD;

10 Who say to the seers, "Do not see," And to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.

11 Get out of the way, Turn aside from the path, Cause the Holy One of Israel To cease from before us."

Not just in the OT it happens in the NT as well:

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

Today we have it all sides:

We have the Word of Faith Gospel of TBN evangelists

Or just the moral and therapeutic deism of the majority of Evangelical churches:

It used to be the case that "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross" was a slogan describing liberalism, now it describes far too many *evangelical* churches.

They thought this sad state of affairs could go on forever, but it would not, the Destroyer of Nations was on His way, and what would they do when the Lord brought their nation and their lives to an end? How would they answer Him? They were certainly not prepared for the judgment seat.

Two Applications of this NATIONAL and PERSONAL:

NATIONAL: We are nationally in the midst of the same cycle as Judah. We have no fear of God, and no wisdom. Our sins are destroying us, and yet we will not have done with them. We are bringing up a generation that does not know the Lord that does not know their right from their left, that has no virtue. People were shocked at the recent mall rampage where teens trashed a mall, but I am personally thankful to God that that kind of thing doesn't happen more often, because it is only God's common grace that holds it back.

What have we told our children? There is no God there are no absolutes, the God proclaimed by our scientists is Evolution:

Lead us, Evolution, lead us

Up the future's endless stair;

Chop us, change us, prod us, weed us.

For stagnation is despair:

*Groping, guessing, yet progressing,
Lead us nobody knows where.*

*Wrong or justice, joy or sorrow,
In the present what are they
while there's always jam-tomorrow,
While we tread the onward way?
Never knowing where we're going,
We can never go astray.*

We wonder where our freedoms are going, and yet the founding fathers of this nation recognized that a republic could only last if the people themselves had that virtue that only comes through fearing God.

"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." - John Adams

And so we find ourselves slumping towards a Police State. Let us hope our own generation learns this lesson by means of reflection, repentance, and renewed faith, rather than via their own downfall.

Personal: Have YOU considered that question? What will you do in the end? So many do not, they live as though their death will never come, they

Luke 12:18 "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." '

20 "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

Every person has a day appointed for them, a day we cannot know when it will come.

Eccles. 12:6 Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, Or the golden bowl is broken, Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, Or the wheel broken at the well.

7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

The fact is that the end can come upon us at any time

I've always been intrigued by that vision of the silver cord. We are a little like people hanging on fraying over a burning pit, eventually the rope will snap.

Heb. 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Many people will NEVER take stock of their financial situation because they fear that they will find that they are bankrupt but I pray that will not be the case with you.