

Journey through Jeremiah Part 16 Famine and False Prophets

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, April 05, 2017

† Jeremiah 14:1-22

1 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth.

By this time, God has withdrawn his hand of protection from Judah and has stopped blessing them with the rains they needed and they are going through a **dearth**. A dearth is another term for drought.

Judah in their pride thought that they didn't need God. They thought they were self-sufficient. They ran after other gods that were not even real gods. So, when God withheld his favor of giving them rain, everything dried up.

I'm reminded of the scientist who came to God one day and shook his fist toward heaven and said, "We've decided that we do not need you anymore. We have become so smart that we too can create a human being." So, God say, okay, let's put this to the test. Let's have a competition to see who can create a human being first. "Okay smiled the Scientist, no problem." God said, "Okay, go." The scientist bends down and scoops up a handful of dirt." "Whoa, said God, shaking his head in disapproval, "Not so fast. You get your own dirt."

The truth is we rely upon God for our next breath and our next heartbeat. Without Him we couldn't even do the most basic of things.

Without God having mercy upon Judah and providing the needed rains then everything dried up.

2 Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.

The inhabitants of Judah are sitting around in a state of mourning. No doubt people and animals alike were dying from lack of water and food. Without rain they could not grow any crops.

3 And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.

They went to the places where water was normally stored but they came back with empty buckets. It says that they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads." Covering the head was another sign of mourning.

4 Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.

Chapt: that word **chapt** is unique only to Jeremiah and only in this one place in the Bible. It comes from the Hebrew word, **khä-thath'** which means to prostrate or break down. Here in Jeremiah it means cracked. The ground was so dry that it was literally cracked. The plowers couldn't even plow the ground it was so dry and cracked, and they too covered their heads in mourning.

5 Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. 6 And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass.

A "**hind**" is a female deer, a doe. There was no grass for them to graze in. The wild asses took to high ground looking for grass but found none.

7 O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. 8 O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? 9 Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

This is a cry from Jeremiah to the Lord. He acknowledges that they have sinned against Him and deserve to be punished but he pleads with the Lord to do something before they all perish. He is begging Him not to leave them.

10 Thus saith the LORD unto **this people**, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. 11 Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for **this people** for their good. 12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.

They pushed God too far. His hand of grace and mercy is withdrawn. They refused to listen, they refused to repent, they refused to turn back to Him so now he must do the only thing that a holy and righteous God can do and that is to punish them because of their sin. Pay particular attention that the LORD stopped calling them "**my people**," and refers to them as "**this people**." He's already cut them off.

There is a price for sin. Oh, there is pleasure in sin for a season but that season is short and eventually moves away and reality sinks in. Just as the New Testament tells us in **Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death.**

False Prophets

13 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.

Jeremiah laments again and tries to intervene for the people of Judah. He makes the case that they were deceived by the false prophets that were telling them that everything was fine, that nothing bad was going to happen and they would have peace.

It seems there were so many false prophets in Jeremiah's day that their influence outweighed the true warnings from Jeremiah and other men like him. They were willing to believe a lie more than the truth.

14 Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

The LORD answers Jeremiah and tells him that these prophets were not sent by Him, that they are preaching false visions and divination. That word "divination" could also be translated as "Witchcraft," as it is in 1 Samuel 15:23. So, there is a Satanic influence going on here.

Just as there is in our day. Satan is influencing men to preach a false Gospel of peace instead of the true Gospel that men are lost, dying, and going to Hell unless they repent and trust Jesus as their Savior.

Instead, people want to hear a message that it doesn't matter what you are doing or what sin you are dabbling in, that God loves you and He just want you to be happy.

Mega Church pastor, Joel Osteen, preaches that "you are living your best life now." In one interview when asked what his general message was he said "*Our general message speaks to staying in peace and being respectful and staying full of joy and staying positive.*" ---- wow, sounds much like the false prophets message in the days of Jeremiah...

Emergent Church preacher, Rob Bell, preaches that Hell is a state of mind and whatever suffering you go through while here on earth, and eventually everyone will go to Heaven. --- In his book titled, **Velvet Elvis**, Rob Bell writes this about the Bible: *It wasn't until the 300s that what we know as the sixty-six books of the Bible were actually agreed upon as the 'Bible'. This is part of the problem with continually insisting that one of the absolutes of the Christian faith must be a belief that "Scripture alone" is our guide. It sounds nice, but it is not true.* --- so, he casts doubts on the authority and inspiration of the Bible. This is the same as casting doubt on the Word of God.

So, things aren't much different than they were in the days of Jeremiah. But let's see what God says about these false prophets and those that follow them:

15 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.

We find in God's Word that He will destroy the false prophets. They will die by the very means that they deny – sword and famine.

But, what's even scarier is what he says about the followers of the false prophets.

16 And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

These are the people that Jeremiah is praying for and requesting that God take into consideration that they were just deceived by the false prophets. But God is not going to spare them. Some may think "well that doesn't seem fair to punish them because they were misled." What you have to remember is that they were willingly misled. They chose to believe the false peace of the prophets than they did the truth from the real prophets such as Jeremiah.

In the Book of Romans, Chapter 1:18-32, Paul writes of God's wrath upon people who allow themselves to be deceived. He says that there comes a point when God gives them up and gives them over.

Romans 1:24 ...God gave them up to uncleanness.

Romans 1:26 ...God gave them up unto vile affections.

Romans 1:28 ...God gave the over to a reprobate mind.

Before we go around claiming God isn't fair, we need to remember that what's not fair is that God has grace and mercy upon any of us. It is only by His good graces that we are not in hell at this very moment suffering for eternity for our sins.

The people in Jeremiah's day had to face the wrath of God because they willingly believed a lie. In their fleshly pride, they believed lies instead of the truth. They loved the darkness rather than the light, therefore, God destroyed them.

17 Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. 18 If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.

God commands Jeremiah to speak to the people and tell them to take notice of him. How he alone cries for them and their calamity. He describes them as a virgin daughter that has been violated. They once were innocent and holy but because of their wickedness they will be like a virgin thrown into the calamities of war being violated by the evil men that will come upon them.

19 Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul lothed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!

Though Jeremiah has been forbidden to pray for the people he has nowhere else to turn but to God. He asks if the LORD has utterly rejected his people Judah? They were all that was left. The 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom were already in captivity. Judah was to be the chosen people. Judah was where the Messiah was the tribe the Messiah was to come from. Has God really rejected them?

20 We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.

Jeremiah declares that they have acknowledged the fact that they are wicked and have sinned against God. He includes himself in this acknowledgement.

21 Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.

Jeremiah reminds the LORD of His covenant with the Jews. That it was an everlasting covenant. Is He really going to end his covenant with them? Is He really going to utterly reject them?

22 Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.

Then Jeremiah ends his plea by acknowledging that there is no hope in the gods of the Gentiles. No one else but God can make it rain. He is their only hope and they will wait upon Him to save them.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible