

JEREMIAH 7

A MESSAGE AT THE TEMPLE GATES

We must study the historical records given in the Books of the Kings and the Chronicles, in order to understand the remarkable movement which was afoot during the time covered by the first twelve chapters of the Book of Jeremiah. In his prophetic writings, the prophet scarcely refers to the great reforms that were being introduced by his friend, King Josiah; and Jeremiah is hardly mentioned in the inspired historical records. But surely he was in constant and close communication with the king and the little group of earnest reformers who clustered around him – which included Shaphan, Hilkiyah, the prophet Zephaniah, the prophetess Huldah, and Jeremiah's own friend and secretary, Baruch. King Josiah promoted measures of reformation from the earliest years of his reign; but at first, he was opposed by the deadweight of national apathy to the cause which he championed. The worship of idols had so many fascinations for the Jews – both from the customs of the neighboring nations, and from its appeals to sensual pleasures – that the majority of the people had no desire to revert to the more austere and pure worship of Jehovah that their forefathers had engaged in. Despite the united efforts of King Josiah and the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah, the cause of reformation moved slowly; and it might have even come to a complete standstill – like an express-train buried in an avalanche of soft snow – if the discovery of the lost Book of the Law in the 18th year of Josiah's reign had not given a new and unexpected impetus to the true and ancient religion of God's people.

Surely Jeremiah heard of this wonderful discovery, and of the sudden revival of interest in reformation that it ignited. Perhaps these events induced him to visit Jerusalem, where Josiah had gathered around him the elders, priests, and prophets. Standing by a pillar of the temple, the king caused the Book of the Covenant to be read aloud; and he made a covenant with Jehovah, that he and his people would keep His commandments and His statutes with all their heart. Afterwards, there followed a widespread destruction of idolatry; and then the Passover was solemnly kept. It is possible that sometime during this course of events, this third discourse (found in chapters 7-9) was uttered by Jeremiah. Standing in the gate of the Temple (verse 2), with a large gathering of people before him, the prophet called upon them to amend their ways and their doings.

It is clear from this sermon that the people of Judah, while destitute of true Godliness, were very much taken up with the outward ceremonies of it. They did not have the love of God in their heart, and yet they prided themselves

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The confidence of the Lord's people in their Temple was in vain – verses 1-16
- ❖ God speaks of their idolatries, which provoked Him to anger – verses 17-20
- ❖ He refuses to accept their hypocritical offerings, and He threatens judgment upon them – verses 21-34

in the Lord's Temple being in their midst. They imagined that it would be their protection – despite the fact that they were guilty of profaning that holy place. But the prophet reminded them (verse 12) that the city of Shiloh had also prided themselves in their privileged position as the location of the Lord's Tabernacle when His people first entered the land of Canaan, and they had become secure in their sins because they imagined that the Tabernacle's presence among them would be some kind of shield from the judgments of God. However, they were sadly disappointed, for the Lord *did* forsake that place because of their sins – despite their arrogant presumptions (see 1 Samuel 4:4-11).

The Lord forbade Jeremiah to even pray for his countrymen (verse 16), for they were guilty of much wickedness that provoked Him to anger. They had descended so far into the abominable depths of idolatry as to make cakes to the “queen of heaven,” and to cause their own sons and daughters to pass through the fire as an offering to the idol Moloch (verses 18-31). From the description of the great pride and shameful zeal that the Jews showed in the service of their idols, let us be stirred up to earnestly serve our gracious and loving God! Let us pray for grace to be diligent ourselves; and let us also be extremely careful to teach our dear children the truths of Scripture, which reveal the mysteries of Christ's Gospel of grace!



In verses 21-28, the Lord shows the kind of obedience that He desires from those who profess His name. He does not ask for burnt offerings and ceremonial sacrifices (verse 22). His command is this: “Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you!” (verse 23) Such a promise is a very encouraging one! Let God's will be your rule, and His favor shall be your happiness. Sadly, however, the people of Jeremiah's day did not listen to the words of the Lord (verses 24-28). And so Jerusalem was condemned to be humbled and separated from God, since she had separated herself from Him (verses 29-31). Nevertheless, we must not imagine to ourselves that the words of warning in this chapter were only intended for the people of Jeremiah's day. In our case, our heart is the Temple in which God has chosen to put His name; therefore, let us not pollute it by giving sin the innermost and uppermost place there.

The reference to the Lord's “rising up early” and speaking to His people, in verses 13 and 25, is the beginning of a running theme throughout the Book of Jeremiah (see chapters 11:7; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:15). God spared no pains to attract His people's attention to His gracious calls, which He gave through the mouths of His prophets; and even today, He still goes out of His way to preach the Gospel of reconciliation and redemption to lost and perishing souls!

Thank You, Lord, for Your gracious efforts to attract our attention to Your merciful Gospel-calls of reconciliation and redemption through Jesus Christ! Amen.