

OCTOBER 5

Jeremiah 4:19-6:14

One of the challenges with Jeremiah, and you might want to take this up with God when you get to heaven ☺, is that Jeremiah's prophecies are arranged topically and chronologically, but not primarily chronologically until we get to the end of the book. That's not completely comfortable to a western (consecutive numbers, parallel lines and right angles) way of thinking. In Isaiah we had to be alert to when God was referring to the near events or the final events and the coming of the Messiah. In Jeremiah, besides the prophetic aspect of what he is writing, we are left to wonder if some things were written at a different time and are being put here by Jeremiah because it fits into the topic he is addressing. Mentioning times and kings, then, will always be important.

Jeremiah 4:19-31

Assuming that this was said in the early days of Josiah and Jeremiah, God was not only giving Jeremiah a vision, but He was also giving him all the emotions that come with fear.

Vs. 19-21 This is the kind of stuff that gives Jeremiah the nickname of "The Weeping Prophet." Early on, Jeremiah was distressed for his people and didn't seem to completely understand God. Later, after years of trying to help them, Jeremiah's attitude toward the people became more like God's.

Vs. 22-26 Look at what Jeremiah *looked* for. He was looking to see if the people would respond to God.

V. 22 The last part of this verse was used by Paul a couple of times, but in the opposite way, where he says, for example in 1 Corinthians 14:20, *be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.*

V. 23 This is like Genesis, but instead of order, the people have created their own chaos.

Vs. 27-28 This is God's desire for judgment and it has a certain "end times" ring to it.

Vs. 29-31 Surrounded by her enemies and not seeking the Lord, Judah tried to seek help from Egypt, but all Egypt's promises failed and Jerusalem fell.

V. 30 It's interesting that Jezebel painted her eyes before she went out to meet her judges and died.

Jeremiah 5

Vs. 1-2 I've noticed that often the first couple of verses make a statement, and the rest of the chapter works off of that statement.

V. 1 This reminds me of Abraham talking with Jesus (the angel of the Lord) about Sodom, before the angels destroyed it in Genesis 18:17.

Vs. 3-5 Like Abraham, Jeremiah was hoping that someone would be found who really followed God.

V. 6 Because these people were themselves treacherous, God will send three hunters to watch them, stalk them, and nibble away at their numbers.

Vs. 7-9 In spite of all the lessons and all the help, what they had become as a people was unredeemable unless God punished and purged them. It is interesting that when God blessed and fed them, they turned away from Him.

Vs. 10-11 The picture of Israel as a vineyard is common, but here God is bringing ruin to it. He will leave a remnant.

Vs. 12-13 We'll see this a lot. The prophets spoke peace to the people, but that is what the people wanted. Verse 13 is part of what the false prophets said about the true prophets like Jeremiah. Notice that the ESV has this as one saying inside of quotes.

Vs. 14-17 This is God declaring judgment for the words of the prophets that no danger would come. Then God describes the army that is to come against them and how devastating it will be.

Vs. 18-19 Mercy and judgment together. God will save a remnant, but He will give them what they want, making them sick of their own sin.

Vs. 20-24 This sounds a lot like Isaiah. Notice the contrast in vs. 22-23. The wild sea submits to God, but wild Israel does not.

Vs. 25-29 Again, although the Lord would gladly show them mercy, He can't. Think back to 5:6 where the Lord calls out three predators to pick away at the people. The people were predators too.

Vs. 30-31 The leaders were religious and ungodly, but the people liked it like that.

Jeremiah 6:1-14

Vs. 1-8 This is a prophetic warning for those in Jerusalem regarding the punishment coming against them. Benjamin was the only tribe that stayed with Judah when the nation divided. Jerusalem is the object of God's love in the future when the people will return to Him, but at this point Jerusalem was becoming the center of everything unholy. When we read Ezekiel, God will take him undercover and show what the leaders were really worshiping. It was creepy.

Vs. 9-14 This is a prophetic description of that coming punishment. Notice again who is mentioned in vs. 13 & 14. As we'll see in the reading tomorrow, this culture of ungodliness had gone so long and so deep that it was a part of the average family. God would have to cleanse everyone, but a special note would be made to single out the leaders who led the people away from God.

As disciples in the harvest, we need tact and wisdom as we talk to people. Yet, we need to tell people the whole truth. Jesus mentioned the coming judgment often. The disciples were sent out telling people to repent. Inviting people to Jesus to get a better life sounds good in their ears. But the whole truth speaks of God's coming kingdom, our sin, our need to turn to Jesus for forgiveness, and our need to be saved in Christ. This is the most important part and it is the most offensive. In many places in the world, salvation means that a person might have personal assurance and peace in Christ, but as a result of their decision, it means having their "worst life now" in their immediate context. People need the truth, not just what we think they want to hear that fits their needs and lifestyle. It's God's Word, not ours.

Colossians 1:21-2:7

Since Paul had not yet visited this church, much of what he says has the same tone of introduction as in Ephesians. Even the letter to the Ephesians was a letter sent to many churches, some of which Paul had never visited. Paul had never visited any of those churches in the area around Colossae.

Colossians 1:21-29

Vs. 21-23 This sounds just like portions of Ephesians, except v. 23 where Paul reminds them that this is the same gospel that is being preached everywhere. Paul had to remind the Corinthians of this too, because of preachers who were adding to the teaching which Paul had brought.

V. 23 In light of all we've read, knowing you can't lose being a "new creation" (salvation), how do you interpret Paul's warning?

Vs. 24-29 This is Paul describing the importance of the ministry in the harvest God had given him, and has given us.

V. 24 Nothing was "lacking" in Jesus' suffering with regard to salvation. Yet now, guiding the church, Jesus was using Paul's suffering (He uses ours, too) to provide crucial insights and leadership to others. Jesus was using Paul to fill out what He was not physically present to teach.

V. 27 We've seen this in Ephesians. The mystery is not that the Gentiles would be saved, but that God would make a mysterious "nation" of Jews and Gentiles during this time. That's us, the church.

Colossians 2:1-7

Vs. 1-2 Paul saw all of his ministry struggles as challenges to strengthen churches. That would be an interesting mindset for us, as disciples, to develop. Notice that in v. 2 Paul tells what he understood to be God's goal in allowing him to struggle as he did. The point of making Paul struggle was to produce mature disciples and a unified church.

Vs. 3-7 are entering into one of the problems at Colossae. Teachers were apparently saying there was hidden knowledge beyond what Paul had shared with them, and that if they wanted the fullness of God, they had to go deeper into this knowledge and philosophy, and, wouldn't you know it, deeper into Jewish custom.

Paul is, and will be, saying that Jesus is as deep as you need to go. And as we saw in Galatians, Paul will tell them that if you begin with Jesus in faith, you should stick with Jesus in faith. All the fullness is in Him. He's enough.

Psalm 77

I wonder what this son of Asaph was living through when he wrote this. These guys usually led worship under godly kings. This could have been written during the Assyrian advance on Jerusalem under Hezekiah, or it could have been written after the return of the people from Babylon. Both times were times of distress.

Vs. 1-2 Whatever was happening, Asaph was very distressed. In v. 2 it says he was coming to God *in the day of my trouble*. We might think, "better late than never," and God may hear if we only go to Him as a last resort. However, the godly are always going to God and always receiving peace. This is the secret behind the peace promised in Philippians 4:6-7. Asaph was a regular at God's door and God was his only hope.

Vs. 3-9 Here we see that the distress had something to do with the nation. The times were continually bad and the good times were now only memories. God's grace and favor on Israel seemed like history. But Asaph himself is forcing himself to wrestle spiritually with the situation. You see a progression in these verses and he comes upon God's promise that He will be gracious to Israel.

Vs. 10-15 Underline *I will*. Now look at what Asaph declares about God in the last three verses. Underline *you* and *your*. This is great stuff.

Vs. 16-20 In the fulfillment of His promises and love for Israel, God shook all of creation. Though Asaph couldn't understand the current distress, this was the same faithful, fearsome, and almighty God who promised to fulfill His love to Israel. That day is still coming.

Funny, this morning I was reading in Luke 8 about a weary Jesus waking up in a sinking, storm-tossed boat filled with screaming fishermen, *Master, master, we are perishing!* Jesus gets up and turns off the wind and the waves and says to them, *Where is your faith?* They didn't know that they had God in the boat.

So what is the comfort of these psalms? I'm reading this one and identifying deeply with it. In a way, who'd want to identify with such a distressing psalm? But there's a sense of saying you

know what the psalmist is going through and realizing that God says it's OK to feel like this. It is, oddly enough, God saying that He knows how we feel. It leads me to believe He wants me to be able to understand that this psalm is true. And then He wants me to find and use the hope in this psalm.

So, what do we have? Crying out? Check. Remembering? Check. Verses 7-9, wondering? Check. Appealing, remembering, pondering, and meditating? Check. Verses 16-20 are from the Bible itself, viewing the way God redeemed His people. For us too, we know about our salvation, our Lord's rescue and the future we have in Him. Now as we wait on Him, we have the privilege of knowing Him and following Him in the harvest. He's not just in the boat with us, He's in us in the Holy Spirit. Right? Check.

Proverbs 24:23-25

I'm sure this is harder than it sounds, especially if the wicked are in power or pay the salaries. I'm sure King Manasseh didn't rule for 55 years by making friends with the people who rebuked him. It says that he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and I'll bet gallons of that blood came from those people who stood up to him. But who is the real king? Oh, yeah, that's right. God is the real King and His is the real kingdom.

In the case of those who rebuked King Manasseh, the delight and blessing was in the form of standing in the presence of God and relaxing in the glory and wonder of heaven. That's not bad at all.