

OCTOBER 9

Jeremiah 12-14:10

Jeremiah 12

Vs. 1-4 Jeremiah is upset that as times got bad, the wicked and those who are plotting against him could hold off the effects of God's chastening longer because of their resources.

Vs. 5-6 God is challenging Jeremiah. He has not yet really seen what God's judgment will look like and how vile the people will be in their response to his preaching. God is telling Jeremiah that this is a picnic compared to how it will be. I think too, of how easily I can be shaken by mail, phone calls, bad news, and frustrations. It gives you a reminder of how deeply within us sin affects us and how self-focused and fragile it makes us. God trains us to handle pressure and live by spiritual reality and focus on trusting Him by exposing us to pressure, and at the same time, leaving us with no place to go but Him.

Vs. 7-13 You notice that the words *heritage* and *portion* are prominent in this pronouncement of God's judgment on Judah and Jerusalem.

Vs. 14-17 This is a pronouncement of judgment on the neighbors, then a promise of compassion on Judah and compassion on the nations who listen to what the Lord is doing. This might be looking to the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. This is like a summary of what God had always intended with Israel. The nations would see God's blessing on Israel because of their special relationship to God, and the people would come to Israel and be saved. That is the blessing promised to Abraham. Now and in the future, this is how nations will come under God's judgment or blessing.

Jeremiah 13

Vs. 1-7 First, what was this? Apparently it was like a belt, worn around the waist. The priest wore a sash or belt like this. John the Baptist wore one made out of leather. In order for this to have made any point to the people, it would have been recognizable and understandable to them. Apparently when Jeremiah wore it, it was either very attractive or it made him look like he was working as a priest.

V. 4 There are two possibilities with the Euphrates. There is a town/location about 3 miles from Jeremiah's home-town of Anathoth that is spelled exactly the same way. If it is the Euphrates River, that would have been a 700-mile round trip. If it is the near location, then this "parable" would have been more visible to the people and would have applied to the usefulness of the people to God. The name would have been a "suggestion" of exile, since it sounded like the Euphrates. If it really is the Euphrates, then this is also a very strong warning about the future exile, since the exiles would have been led north to the Euphrates and then south down the Tigris to Babylon.

Vs. 8-11 The point here is the linen *loincloth*. Just as the belt looked good and brought glory to the wearer, also signifying the purpose of the priest, Judah and Jerusalem's usefulness was in giving glory to God. When they stopped doing that and fell into idolatry and disobedience, they were rotted and were rendered useless.

Vs. 12-14 The people liked wine, but these are the grapes of wrath. The anguish of this judgment would be so emotionally devastating that it would be like them being drunk, confused, off balance, and unable to regain their composure. Imagine being drunk forever. This is another example of how people shouldn't count on making a last minute cry to God. The logic is living like they want and getting all the gusto right up until the end and then making that prayer and going to heaven. When God brings this distress on Israel, they will be so emotionally off balance and so overwhelmed that they might not be thinking straight. God is not mocked.

Vs. 15-17 This is God's warning of judgment, and Jeremiah is warning the people that if they don't listen, he's going to cry again.

Vs. 18-19 This looks like it is the humbling of King Jehoiachin and his mother who actually surrendered the city to Nebuchadnezzar, keeping it from being totally destroyed. This humility marked the second deportation of exiles and was a sign of mercy. The people who remained in Jerusalem didn't heed this mercy.

Vs. 20-27 The new king and the people didn't change, so the next time Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem it was for total destruction.

V. 22 Some of this imagery is very strong. The harlot is being raped, receiving the punishment fitting of her sin.

V. 23 This generation of people was incurable in their idolatry and perversion of what they thought about God and spirituality. But just for perspective, there were individuals who were being saved and who truly loved God. Jeremiah was one of them and we'll meet more.

V. 27 This imagery is just that, imagery. God will cleanse His people.

Jeremiah 14:1-10

Vs. 1-6 Drought was one of the punishments God would bring against the people if they left Him, and is mentioned in Deuteronomy.

Vs. 7-9 This is Jeremiah pleading for the people, that God should do something. He did. God removed the people from Israel, preserved them through their hardship and cleansed them in the Babylonian captivity.

V. 10 Here is God's answer to Jeremiah. The people wouldn't change, so God had to punish them.

When Jeremiah was just getting started, King Josiah found a copy of the Bible. When they read the books of Moses to Josiah, especially Deuteronomy and probably all five books, Josiah was moved to tears and grief because he understood the judgment coming against his people. When we read all of this, as disciples, we need to understand that what is going to happen to the people who don't know Christ - on this planet, in our town, in our neighborhood, and in our family - will make Jeremiah look like a party. Jesus said it best when He talked about what the lost would be facing for eternity, *where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched*. That is eternal punishment. It doesn't mean we need to get obnoxious in the harvest, but it does mean that we need to work and pray constantly. It was Jesus who saved us from the wrath of God. He is the only one who can save them.

1 Thessalonians 1-2:9

After Paul established the church in Philippi, he went on to Thessalonica, a major city of about 200,000. We've read this in Acts 17:1-9. We know Paul was there at least three weeks, and perhaps from 3-6 months. Paul thanked the Philippians for two gifts of money they sent to him as he worked, starting and establishing the church in Thessalonica. From the two letters we have to this church, we can see that Paul did some very in-depth teaching to establish them. There was a lot of persecution to Paul and the church there, and eventually Paul was driven out and had to flee to Berea. When Paul settled down in Corinth, he wrote these letters to encourage the people in their faith, to strengthen them in the persecution, to correct their misunderstandings about what he had taught them and to counter false teaching by some of the Jews, who, as usual, tried to discredit Paul.

1 Thessalonians 1

Vs. 1-3 Notice that their faith became immediately visible. They were immediately met with opposition.

Vs. 4-5 Notice *our gospel*. This is to say that in spite of what others said about Paul, the power of the gospel was visible to them and bore fruit. Paul was simply a servant.

Vs. 6-10 Children become imitators of their parents. This is why Jesus' words to His disciples are so important, *a disciple is not above his teacher*. We need to be disciples of our Lord so that as we make disciples and they imitate us, they naturally grow to imitate Christ. The word about what God did among the Thessalonians and their faith in Christ became news.

V. 9 It is interesting that we're reading about idols in Jeremiah and these people were saved from idols.

V. 10 Notice how this chapter ends. Paul had taught them to wait on the Lord and to wait with expectation. This verse is important in that the implication of this verse is that those who know Christ will not enter into the Tribulation, that is, the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-9

Vs. 1-4 As you read this, understand that Paul had been/was being slandered and was said to have taken advantage of the Thessalonians. Just like in 1 & 2 Corinthians, Paul is having to defend himself here. But notice the gentleness in his tone. This wasn't a job for Paul. He poured out his heart to God and to them. Paul and his co-workers even sacrificed, providing for themselves, so that they could work there among them.

V. 5 They didn't come to flatter or make a name for themselves.

V. 6 They didn't come there to take advantage of their position as workers of Christ.

Vs. 7-8 They had come with a sense of love and vulnerability.

Vs. 9-10 As mentioned, they received financial gifts from the church at Philippi and when they didn't have money, they worked. This was to keep their critics at bay and God enabled them to get by, trusting Him.

Disciples in the harvest are natural born fools - pouring out their hearts, living by faith in love with Jesus Christ, allowing "life" to pass them by in order to reach out to those who don't even know they're lost. They spend their lives working to make disciples who will do the same and follow Christ and pour out their lives to make disciples. Paul poured out his heart, first to Jesus, and then in the love of Christ for others. He was a fool for the sake of Christ. He is a good person to imitate.

Psalm 79

It's kind of interesting to be reading Jeremiah as we're reading this psalm. What Asaph is protesting is exactly what God says will come upon the people. This psalm suggests that this son of Asaph was living in Babylon or was one of those who had returned with Zerubbabel and was burdened by the difficulties Israel was having trying to establish itself as a people and nation.

Vs. 1-4 God's entire inheritance had been destroyed, both people and city.

Vs. 5-7 God's jealousy was because of Israel worshipping other gods. Now God is being called on to be jealous for His ruined servant Israel.

Vs. 8-10 In appealing to God's mercy it was understood that what really had been damaged was the name of God *among the nations*. He hadn't deserved Israel's disobedience. In fact, it says that the nations blasphemed the name of God because of Israel. Daniel prayed that God would restore the city and the people for His name's sake. At the heart of this prayer was a true love and appreciation for God. Read Daniel 9. For me this is the greatest prayer in the Bible outside of John 17 where Jesus prayed for the disciples. In both of those prayers, by Daniel and by Jesus, the name of God looms big and should be honored.

Vs. 11-13 This is a kind of repentance. They have not only suffered, but Asaph says they are like sheep, helpless and needing a shepherd.

God did punish the nations for going beyond the allowance He gave them to punish Judah and Jerusalem. In many cases their violence against the Jews became butchery and was filled with rage against God. Jeremiah will prophesy about that. At the end of the Tribulation, this psalm will be fulfilled.

Proverbs 24:30-34

So, what is the point in all of this, especially if you don't own a vineyard or take naps in the afternoon?

It seems to me that it is saying that a little neglect leads to ruin. So, you can be a Christian workaholic and even be successful in "ministry," but neglect your marriage, your kids, your

health and boom! Before you know it, there are weeds all over the place; the wall is down; bad things are getting into the vineyard and it is ruined.

Along with the armor in Ephesians 6 is the command to stay alert with all perseverance. We still have this silly idea that walking through this life is easy and that God is a nice help when we need Him. This world is incredibly dangerous. Our bodies/spirits in this world are irreparably damaged, and the spiritual life is not a difficult life...it is an impossible one. We need the Word every day and the Spirit every minute.

Notice that v. 33 is a backward progression. *Sleep* is mentioned first and *folding of the hands* is mentioned last. The idea is that letting down a little can lead to spiritual unconsciousness. We say that reading the Bible is important, but live as if it is not really, really important. We need to keep our vision clear and our hearts fed every day, and the Bible is God's method of choice. We need our meds every day.

A Christian singer, who my children and I used to listen to, "came out" in April 2010, making public that she is a lesbian. Now she's trying to bend the Bible to match her "lifestyle." Ironically, her life is now a ruined vineyard testifying to the truth of these verses. It probably began with small areas of neglect. I don't believe she ever saw it coming.