

Class 4: Jeremiah 11-13

Disloyalty to God

April 26, 2017

Following their hearts: God commands Jeremiah to present to the people the case: since the covenant was opened, God has instructed Israel to obey Him. But all of the people have refused, and *“everyone followed the dictates of his evil heart”* (11:8). Now they will receive the promised penalty, and though they cry to Him, He will not hear them (Isaiah 59:1-2). Indeed, Jeremiah is not to pray for them in their anguish.

A Plot Against Jeremiah: Jeremiah 11:18-23 reference knowledge given to Jeremiah by God of a plot to kill him. It is the men of his own home town (Mark 6:4), and even some from his own family (12:6). Perhaps they have openly threatened Jeremiah (*“do not prophesy in the name of the LORD, lest you die by our hand”*). Jehovah tells Jeremiah that it is these men who will die by the sword, and their families destroyed by famine.

Jeremiah’s Complaint: 12:1-4 record a complaint by Jeremiah. He acknowledges that Jehovah is right, but question why the unrighteous prosper. Perhaps it is that he has been (and will be) preaching their demise for years, and yet it has not yet come to pass. Indeed, they are declaring that they will see his end, not he theirs. Jeremiah has abandoned his heritage to be God’s prophet. God replies (5-6) that he (Jeremiah) should not believe these men; in fact, worse messengers than these are coming (the king himself will turn against Jeremiah).

The Linen Sash: in Jeremiah 13 Jeremiah is driven by God to the north to act out a destruction. He buries a new linen sash along the river Euphrates, and when he retrieves it, it has been destroyed. So God will ruin Judah along the Euphrates (the home of Babylon). Even though it is His own inheritance (12:7-13) He is prepared to leave it to its own demise.

Judah’s Drunkenness: Another parable is given through Jeremiah of Judah being a land filled with full wine bottles. This related to the drunkenness God will bring to them, so that they will be dashed as the wine bottles are broken by the drunk who cannot walk. This is in accordance to their pride. This message was to be taken to the king and queen mother (perhaps Jehoiachin and his mother, 2 Kings 24:12), that their crowns were being cast down from them. There would be no help from Egypt when the north came.

With this image another offer is made by God: listen and give glory to Jehovah. There was still time, almost as though He was saying that while you live there is hope. But if even this offer they refuse, God would mourn only in secret; they would not discern Him to have compassion over them.

Ultimately, God knows that they will not repent. As a leopard cannot change its spots, so a sinner cannot turn from their sins. This is not to say it is impossible, but that when we live in a way that defines us (as Judah did in its idolatry), we are usually unable to change our identity.

Making Applications:

1. Jeremiah repeatedly points out that Judah’s deception is in their heart. He will say in 17:9 that the heart is more deceitful than all else. Why is it that our own hearts deceive us?
2. Wicked men have risen up in Jeremiah’s home town against him. How does this make Jeremiah an image of Jesus?

3. Jeremiah's complaint is that it seems like the wicked are not getting the punishment they deserve. According to 2 Peter 3:4-9, how does this parallel today, and why does God wait on the ultimate punishment?

4. How can we reconcile the idea that a sinner will not change (13:23) with the hope that any sinner can change? What does this reveal about a point where it is too late to repent (Hebrews 12:17)?