

The Prophets

Lesson #26

Jeremiah 1:1-7:34

Outline

- I. ***Prophecies From The Reign Of Josiah (1:1-20:18)***
 - A. The call and commission of Jeremiah (1:1-19).
 1. The title (1:1-3).
 2. The call of Jeremiah (1:4-10).
 3. The vision of the almond rod (1:11-12).
 4. The vision of the boiling caldron (1:13-19).
 - B. Warnings of judgment on Judah's sins (2:1-6:30).
 1. God's controversy with Judah (2:1-37).
 - a) Israel's ingratitude (2:1-8).
 - b) Israel's idolatry (2:9-19).
 - c) Israel's immorality (2:20-28).
 - d) Israel's irrationality (2:29-37).
 2. A call to repentance (3:1-25).
 - a) Judah, the faithless wife (3:1-5).
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 - c) The call to return (3:11-14a).
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 3. The invasion from the north (4:1-31).
 - a) The call to genuine repentance (4:1-4).
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 - c) The agony of Jeremiah (4:19-22).
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 - e) The desolation of the land (4:27-31).
 4. Judah's total corruption (5:1-31).
 - a) The wicked activities (5:1-9).
 - b) Denial of the Lord's activity (5:10-13).
 - c) The judgment described (5:14-19).
 - d) Israel's willful ignorance and rebellion (5:20-31).
 5. The siege and fall of Jerusalem foretold (6:1-30).
 - a) The approach of the invaders (6:1-5).
 - b) The siege of Jerusalem (6:6-8).
 - c) The fall of the city (6:9-15).
 - d) The cause for judgment (6:16-21).
 - e) The terror of the enemy (6:22-30).

- C. Jeremiah's temple address (7:1-10:25).
1. No refuge in the temple (7:1-34).
 - a) Misplaced confidence (7:1-7).
 - b) Indifference to godly living (7:8-11).
 - c) The example of Shiloh (7:12-15).
 - d) Worship of the queen of heaven (7:16-20).
 - e) Obedience is better than sacrifice (7:21-26).
 - f) Reception of Jeremiah's message (7:27-28).
 - g) Lament over Judah's desolation (7:29-34).

Notes

Jeremiah 1:1-20:18

- The call and commission of Jeremiah (1:1-19).
 - The title (1:1-3).
 - The first three verses stand alone as a superscription to the entire book. This is typical of many prophetic books (cf. Isaiah 1:1; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1).
 - Two brief reigns which occurred between these longer ones are not mentioned (Jehoahaz and Jeconiah), and no reference is made to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - The call of Jeremiah (1:4-10).
 - Jeremiah was set apart by God for his prophetic ministry before he was born. Paul and John were similarly chosen (Galatians 1:15; Luke 1:13-17). "Knew" includes more than intellectual knowledge; it is indicative of a relationship between parties (cf. Genesis 4:1; Amos 3:2).
 - So often, people look for external, physical proof of God's presence in and approval of their lives when the only "proof" He might offer is the promise that He is with them.
 - The vision of the almond rod (1:11-12).
 - The terms for "almond" and "hasten" are almost identical in Hebrew. By merely pointing to an almond branch, Jeremiah can make the point to his audience that the Lord is watching His prophecies to ensure they are carried out.
 - There will be opposition to and refutations of Jeremiah's prophecies, but the Lord's words will not fail, because He Himself will "perform" it.
 - The vision of the boiling caldron (1:13-19).
 - God has given Jeremiah a taste of what he will be prophesying to the people of Judah, and He recognizes that this will not be an assignment that Jeremiah will cheerfully accept.
 - The reason why the word of the Lord is terrifying is because of the response it evokes from those to whom it is directed.

- Acceptance of this call requires a measure of faith on Jeremiah's part.
- Warnings of judgment on Judah's sins (2:1-6:30).
 - God's controversy with Judah (2:1-37).
 - Israel's ingratitude (2:1-8).
 - As a whole, this unit serves to set up the metaphor of Jerusalem/Israel as the bride of the Lord.
 - Israel was holy to the Lord in order to fulfill the promise made to Abraham that all of the world would be blessed through him and his descendants. They are also God's firstfruits, the most prized produce (cf. Isaiah 5:1-7).
 - Those specifically entrusted with reminding the people of what the Lord has done for them lead the way in forgetting or ignoring the Lord.
 - Israel's idolatry (2:9-19).
 - The gods to whom the Israelites were turning for spiritual sustenance were broken; any nourishment they might have provided had seeped out, leaving the people with nothing.
 - The term "backslidings" is used particularly in Jeremiah 3 to denote Israel as a "faithless" wife, a wife who has prostituted herself with other gods. The people have learned a bitter lesson in the process.
 - Israel's immorality (2:20-28).
 - Jeremiah uses several metaphors depicting the rampant idolatry of the people. It is as if one illustration is not enough to convey the totality of the corruption in their lives.
 - God challenges the people to call to their gods to save them from their troubles, troubles that come when the Lord punishes them for their sins. They think the Lord does not deserve their allegiance.
 - Israel's irrationality (2:29-37).
 - Israel has been restless and dissatisfied with Him for no reason, choosing to roam from Him rather than accepting what He provides for them. They fail to appreciate the blessings they have, so they turn their attention to other sources of provision and protection.
 - Jerusalem placed military and political dependence in Egypt and Assyria. Whatever the external threat, they should be looking to the Lord -- their Savior, the Lord of Hosts, He who brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm -- to protect them.
 - A call to repentance (3:1-25).
 - Judah, the faithless wife (3:1-5).

- Anywhere one looks, even on the “high places,” one can find a place where Israel has been unfaithful to her husband.
- Israel could not say that they were unaware of His displeasure. He had placed them in economic peril so that they would recognize their wrongs and repent.
- Judah worse than Israel (3:6-10).
 - The Lord reveals that He had a dual purpose in His harsh treatment of the northern tribes. His primary goal was to bring them to repentance; but He also had a secondary goal of bringing Judah to repentance.
 - The people of Judah followed Josiah’s lead because he was king and stopped their idolatrous practices, but they still did not see idolatry itself as the problem.
- The call to return (3:11-14a).
 - Israel is more righteous, but that does not mean that she is acceptable to the Lord as she is.
 - It is likely that Judah had developed an arrogant and “holier-than-thou” attitude toward Israel, because the Lord had exiled them to Assyria.
- Future blessing (3:14b-18).
 - “Faithless” can be translated “ever-turning.” So, the Lord is calling on His “ever-turning sons” to “return” to Him; He wants them to stop turning away from Him continuously and turn in just one direction -- toward Him.
 - The phrase “in those days” (vss. 16, 18) refers to messianic times. In that era of blessing, no one will even mention the ark of the covenant of the Lord. The worship of God will need no visible aids, for God will dwell among His people. The old covenant, of which the ark was a central feature, is to give way to another -- a preview of 31:31-34.
- Israel’s disobedience (3:19-20).
 - God expected them to respond as grateful and obedient sons, but instead they responded as an unfaithful wife.
 - Their expected call to God comes from an insincere heart. What God is looking for is people whose lives will change as a result of their relationship to Him.
- Exhortation to repentance (3:21-25).
 - The people did not heed His commands to remember what He did for them in getting them out of Egypt and settling them in their own land (cf. Deuteronomy 4:9; 7:18; 8:18-19).
 - The Lord reveals His patience and forgiveness by repeating the call for repentance (vss. 12, 14). They have sacrificed their

sustenance to idols but now realize that they possess no true power to help them.

- The invasion from the north (4:1-31).
 - The call to genuine repentance (4:1-4).
 - The hurdle which the Israelites must overcome is the temptation to replace the deception of their idols (3:23) with the deception of repentance (cf. 3:10).
 - The practice of a true religion of the heart, as originally prescribed by Moses, would create a people through whom God could fulfill His promises to Abraham and His place for rescuing humanity from its sinfulness and sufferings.
 - The enemy on the way (4:5-18).
 - The impending calamity was not something determined by the Babylonians; it is the Lord's plan.
 - Jeremiah speaks to Jerusalem as a woman with a soiled heart. He appeals to her to wash her heart, which is similar to language used by David (Psalm 51:2, 7, 10, 14).
 - The Lord is not unaffected by what is transpiring. He takes no joy in seeing His people suffer (cf. Hosea 2:14-23).
 - The agony of Jeremiah (4:19-22).
 - Both Jeremiah and the Lord take turns expressing the grief and heartache they both feel over the fate that confronts the people of Judah.
 - For the Old Testament writers, to "know God" is to live a righteous and merciful life toward one's neighbors. It is a verb of action, not a verb of comprehension (cf. 22:15-16).
 - The cosmic catastrophe (4:23-26).
 - This beautiful section has been acclaimed as one of the most forceful passages in all of prophetic literature. It is unique for its vividness, simplicity, directness, breadth of reference and gravity of subject matter.
 - The Lord, who gave life to this land, has now taken life away, because His people have stirred up His fierce anger. It is the story of Genesis 1 in reverse.
 - The desolation of the land (4:27-31).
 - The final unit of this chapter opens with the Lord echoing the thoughts just expressed by Jeremiah. The created world reflects the devastation and sorrow experienced by the people of Judah.
 - Vss. 30-31 compare two images of women which represent the beginning and the end of Judah's relationship with foreign nations and their false gods.

- Judah's total corruption (5:1-31).
 - The wicked activities (5:1-9).
 - The opening lines of this chapter reminds one of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18:21.
 - There is a standard -- a very low standard -- that must be met if the Lord is to forgive His people and prevent the Babylonians from attacking, but it turns out to be too high.
 - Between the questions are three charges which expose how Judah's idolatry is evidence of her foolish ingratitude.
 - Denial of the Lord's activity (5:10-13).
 - The coming destruction will not be total; there will be a remnant, some branches of the vine left behind (cf. 2:21).
 - The other prophets see the warning signs of a Babylonian invasion, but they dismiss them and predict that all will be well.
 - The judgment described (5:14-19).
 - "This word" is the lies and baseless claims of the prophets mentioned in vss. 12-13.
 - Jeremiah accuses the nation of actually being less zealous about their religion than their pagan neighbors. Israel does not uphold reverence for God in her own land, even though He is the only true God.
 - Israel's willful ignorance and rebellion (5:20-31).
 - The Lord's first accusation is that the people do not honor and respect Him as creator. The proper response should be to have hearts that fear and tremble before Him.
 - The Lord's second accusation concerns social oppression as the rich and powerful manipulate the system to the detriment of orphans and the poor. The whole nation is held accountable for their sins.
- The siege and fall of Jerusalem foretold (6:1-30).
 - The approach of the invaders (6:1-5).
 - These verses summon a sense of urgency and anxiety with the verbal sounds of battle.
 - The repetition of sounds in quick succession reflects the sense of urgency; the speaker does not want to wait another day.
 - The siege of Jerusalem (6:6-8).
 - The seeming inevitability of the attack in the preceding verses is tempered by the end of the section.
 - Jerusalem is told that God's words of destruction are only threats, and that they are to heed these threats lest God finally abandon and destroy them.

- The fall of the city (6:9-15).
 - The Lord returns to a tone of inevitable destruction with vs. 9. There will be no remnant in the land this time.
 - The rest of this section serves to justify such a harsh sentence. It is not a result of some irrational expectations from the Lord; the fault lies with the people themselves.
- The cause for judgment (6:16-21).
 - This section shows that the sacrificial system was only one aspect of the Old Testament concept of worship.
 - The imagery of the "old paths" probably is to be traced back to Deuteronomy (5:33; 9:16; 11:28; 13:5; 31:29). God is calling them back to the attitude they held toward God's laws when they were given.
- The terror of the enemy (6:22-30).
 - The Babylonians strike fear in the hearts of their enemies, for they are not only a massive army, they are also cruel and show no mercy.
 - After all the process of burning away the dross, there is nothing left. Just as he earlier could not find a man, now he can find no pure metal.
- Jeremiah's temple address (7:1-10:25).
 - No refuge in the temple (7:1-34).
 - Misplaced confidence (7:1-7).
 - The basic message to the temple crowd consists of two points. The first is a call to repentance. The second is to not be deceived by the presence of the temple.
 - The people believe that the Lord will unconditionally protect the temple and the city against attackers. Jeremiah convinces them this is false.
 - Indifference to godly living (7:8-11).
 - Jeremiah accuses the people of using the temple as robbers would use a hideout.
 - They believe that they can get away with murder and still expect God to accept them because of their sacrifices. Their sacrifices have essentially become bribes.
- The example of Shiloh (7:12-15).
 - The irreverent attitude of Jeremiah's own ancestors had led to the defeat of Israel's armies and the capture of the ark (1 Samuel 2-4).
 - Jeremiah pleads with them not to make the same mistake his people had made, but their pride prevents them from receiving his message.

- Worship of the queen of heaven (7:16-20).
 - Just as the people have not listened when He spoke to them, now He will not listen when Jeremiah speaks to Him.
 - The Lord says that they have shamed Him, but they have shamed themselves even more. The whole land and its natural inhabitants will suffer.
- Obedience is better than sacrifice (7:21-26).
 - In these verses, the Lord gets to the heart of long-held misconceptions about faith in the minds of the Israelites, but the sentiments He expresses apply to all worshipers of any time.
 - The persistence of their disobedience had been demonstrated in the fact that the Lord had sent prophets to tell them that He knew where their hearts lay.
- Reception of Jeremiah's message (7:27-28).
 - God tells Jeremiah that they will respond to Jeremiah the same way they have responded to Him.
 - Jeremiah is going to share with the Lord the heartache of loving a stubborn people. There was no truth to be found, so call off the search.
- Lament over Judah's desolation (7:29-34).
 - There are two sins of the people mentioned in 7:30-31. The first is idolatry in the temple; the second, child sacrifice.
 - The practice of child sacrifice is thought to have infiltrated Israel and Judah's religious practices from several of Israel's neighbors.
 - There is ample evidence of child sacrifice among the Phoenicians, particularly in the Greek and Roman eras, and among the Moabites in earlier years (2 Kings 3:26-27).
 - It is unclear how far back this appalling practice began, as there is evidence of a connection between child sacrifice and Molech (1 Kings 11:5, 7). It is first mentioned for certain in Judah in the reign of Ahaz, father of Hezekiah (2 Kings 16:3; 17:17, 31; 21:6; 23:10; 2 Chronicles 28:3).