

July 26

Jeremiah 3-5

Welcome to today's accelerator as we continue in the prophecy of Jeremiah. Today we are looking at chapters 3-5.

This prophesy takes place during the time of Josiah, the king of the nation of Judah. He is considered the greatest reformer and revivalist king in the history of the kings. Decades before this, Israel, the other part of the divided kingdom of the Jewish people, was invaded and carried off by the Assyrian army because of her unfaithfulness. The nation of Judah is fully aware of her sister nation Israel's exile, yet they proceed down the same destructive path.

In the first section of our reading, faithless Israel is invited to return to the Lord and to be restored to the land. God entreats his wayward people, his bride, to come home. No longer are they to look to the Ark of the Covenant as their focus of worship, but to the name of the Lord himself and his presence with them. We can feel the compassion in the Lord's voice when he speaks of hearing the cries of his people and says "return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding."

Then, from out of their misery, Israel replies; "yes, we want come to you, for you are the Lord our God" and they acknowledge the shame of their unfaithfulness. God instructs them further: "If you return, get rid of your idols and look to me."

Then to Judah, he brings a message of warning; circumcise your heart or my wrath will break out against you. It will be like a fire no one can put out. Our nation is about to fall. The northern armies of Babylon will come from the north and bring terrible destruction down on us. Empty ruins will be the only thing left after the invasion.

Jeremiah is shocked when he gets this awful prophesy to deliver because at the time he got this message from God, there was a sense of peace and well being in the land. Reformation had taken place under the leadership of Josiah, but it was only on the surface. The people's hearts were still inclined to wander from the Lord. The popular way of thinking was that peaceful times would continue, while in reality a sword was at their throats.

As we look at the rest of chapter 4 we get a glimpse into the heart of God as he expresses His feelings about coming events. Through Jeremiah, God expresses his anguish as he sees the destruction as if it had already happened. This shows us that the Lord is not impersonal, or sends his judgment with unfeeling rage. His heart is touched with the pain of his people. From these scriptures we can be sure that our God is a God of compassion, even when his judgment is severe.

In verse 22 of chapter 4 the Lord describes Judah as fools and as children without understanding. They are skilled at evil and don't know how to do good. As a result there will be consequences. Invasion, destruction and desolation are closing in just as labor pains are certain to come on a pregnant woman.

Chapter 5 begins with a description of the evil characteristics of the people in the capitol city of Jerusalem.

First, no one is honest. They swear to be telling the truth, but don't. And it's not just the common people who were that way. The leaders were just as guilty and lived without restraint in their rebellion against the Lord's standard.

Second, the nation is full of lust, with rampant adultery. Men have become like animals consumed with sex. "Should I not punish them for this?" declares the Lord?

At this same time there are lying prophets in the land that spread a false sense of security among the people. "No harm will come to us; we will never see sword or famine" was their message.

The message from this passage doesn't need much commentary. Sadly, in many ways it describes our present day. Here in America there is an underlying feeling that "no harm will come to us; we will never see sword or famine".

Yes, God has shed his grace and blessing on us, but we must not be deceived; there is judgment ahead for a sinful nation that turns its back on God.

Sometimes I'm asked to give advice to a young couple as they approach marriage. Recently I heard this word of advice I really like: "Find out what annoys your spouse and stop doing it!". From Jeremiah's prophesy we are finding out what really annoys God; unfaithfulness, dishonesty and lust. Run from these! Say no to them as a new creation in Christ. As his people, let us put on faithfulness, honesty, and purity.

The Lord bless you as you walk faithfully with him today.