

August 31

Scriptures: Read Jeremiah 5 & 6

Key Verse: “And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls...” (Jeremiah 6:16)

Overview

When the Lord instructed Jeremiah to go through Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah, he could not find one righteous man among them. Therefore, the city was doomed and God could find no reason to pardon her (cf. reminiscent of Gen. 18:32). This may be overemphasized to stress the fact of the universal depravity of man. The people of Judah, as a whole, clearly showed this depravity in stubbornly rejecting God’s warnings and not learning from their chastisement nor even feeling the shame of their sin. Therefore, the Lord told them that because of their iniquity, He would withhold good things from them (5:25). Jeremiah excused the poor commoner for being ignorant of the law, but the learned had no excuse on that basis; they knew the Law of God and the stipulations of the covenant, yet they willfully broke those specified boundaries set by God (5:4-5). The only course of action to be taken against Judah after she had forsaken Him, committed adultery through idolatry, and oppressed the needy was for the Lord to punish them and avenge Himself on that deserving nation (5:7-9, 26-29).

A cruel and fierce nation, symbolized by the various wild animals, would pounce upon Judah (5:6), take all her produce, flocks, and herds, and carry the people away captive (5:17-19). But the Lord would restrain the enemy so that Judah would not be completely annihilated (5:10, 18). The enemy from the north, however, would “take away her branches” (in the Babylonian Captivity, 5:10,19b), for since they produced only bad fruit, they were “not the Lord’s” (cf. 2:21; Isa. 5:1-7; Rom. 11:17-19), but the stump and root would remain, for from that root in Judah, the Messiah would come (cf. Isa. 11:1).

While Jeremiah, the true prophet of God, was foretelling these events, there were at the same time false prophets deceiving the people by telling them that no evil would come, only peace (4:10; 5:12; 6:14). The Lord called this lying a “horrible thing” (5:30), for it was done through an evil spirit (“Baal”, 2:8b; cf. John 8:44). Jeremiah predicted that when the evil would indeed come upon Judah, in fulfillment of true prophecy, these false prophets would be devoured by God’s fiery wrath (5:14), and because of the lies, the people would blame God for deceiving them (4:10). But God did not deceive them; the fault was really their own, for they were spiritually blind and deaf, choosing to listen only to the so-called “prophets” who said the things they liked to hear (5:31; cf. Isa. 30:9-10). The true prophets, however, were mocked and persecuted, as was Jeremiah (cf. 37:15-16; 38:4-6; cf. 1 Kings 22:5-8, 18, 27; 2 Chron. 36:16); others were even killed for prophesying the truth (cf. Rom. 11:3; Acts 7:52).

Knowing that the Babylonians would come and lay siege to Jerusalem very soon, Jeremiah gives a special warning for the children of Benjamin to flee the city, for it was inhabited by many Benjamites (6:1). Jeremiah had an affinity with the people of Benjamin, since his priestly hometown of Anathoth was in their territory. Jeremiah uttered the Lord’s instructions to Babylon concerning rushing towards Jerusalem and building siege ramparts so they might break through

the walls and destroy the city without mercy (6:4-6, 22-23). The Lord declared that everyone, regardless of age or position, would feel His wrath (6:11-13, 21), for their brazen sinfulness had provoked His anger into action. It grieved the compassionate and merciful Lord to do so; therefore, up until the last moment, He sent His “watchmen” (such as Jeremiah, 6:17; cf. Isa. 62:6) to plead with them to repent and to return to “the good old paths” — those paths in which they had walked before they backslid. Only in obedience and loyalty to their first love would they find true rest (cf. Matt. 11:28-30). However, they refused to heed to the Lord’s final warnings (6:16-19, 26). Therefore, the Lord appointed Jeremiah to be an assayer to examine their worth, but sadly, they were found impure, like the dross after the silver has been purified.

Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, Your Word clearly shows that You are willing that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Use us today, Lord, to share the Good News of Jesus with someone while we still have time.