

September 2

Scriptures: Read Jeremiah 9 & 10

Key Verse: “But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King...”
(Jeremiah 10:10) Overview

As Jeremiah envisioned the coming slaughter of his people, he was full of sorrow, mourning, and weeping (9:1, 10). Like the Apostle Paul, he loved his people and his nation (Rom. 9:1-5), and yet in the presence of their terrible idolatry (spiritual adultery) and treachery against God, he felt like fleeing far from them (9:2; cf. Ps. 55:6-8). However, Jeremiah was faithful and obedient to God’s call upon his life, so he stayed with them that he might continue to warn and implore them to repent. But the people would not listen to him; they rejected God’s words of truth which could have saved them (cf. James 1:21-22), preferring instead to listen to the lies of the false prophets. The Lord saw that the only solution was to punish them by giving them bitter afflictions (the bitter plants, “wormwood” and “gall”) and dispersing them throughout the Gentile nations (the Captivity and Exile). By doing so, God would refine them, which means He intended to produce a remnant through these harsh measures who would truly believe and trust in Him (9:7, 9, 16; 10:18; cf. Isa. 1:25).

Jeremiah foretold that the devastation would be so complete that Jerusalem would be plundered and burned to the point that the city would lie in a desolate heap of ruins (9:10-12,19). The slaughter would be so great that he tells the professional mourning women to teach their daughters their art of wailing, or else they will be in short supply (9:20-22). What was the root cause of this calamity (9:10-12)? Jeremiah once again stressed the words of the Lord to the “deaf” people: they had forsaken God and did not obey His law nor walk in His ways; rather, they were self-willed and obstinate (9:14; contrast with 10:23). Since their hearts were far from God and they were not committed to Him, they were like all the other heathen, uncircumcised nations. They did not keep the covenant, and therefore the covenant sign of circumcision was meaningless (9:25-26; Rom. 2:25-29). Their estrangement from God is evident, in that they boasted and gloried in their own wisdom, might, and riches, rather than glorying in knowing the Lord (9:23-24; cf. John 17:3; 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17-18).

Having uncircumcised hearts, the Jews had become like the Gentiles. They even worshipped the gods of the Gentiles, but Jeremiah, in chapter ten, exhorts them not to do so, explaining how utterly futile and foolish idolatry is. How could one be so ignorant as to worship something they had made with their own hands from a tree? — something which can do nothing, not even stand up on its own? — something which they must carry from place to place? (10:2-5,14-15; cf. Isa. 41:23-24). In sharp contrast, the Lord is the only truly great, living, and transcendent God who should be feared by all, for He is not only the God of Israel and Judah, He is the God and King of all the earth (10:7, 10; cf. Isa. 44:6-10; Rom. 3:29-30). Interestingly, Jeremiah wrote verse 11 in the universal Aramaic language, since he wanted all nations to know that their gods would perish. The heathen believed that their many different gods had control over the heavens and the earth, but Jeremiah proclaimed that the Lord, the sole Creator of the universe, has sovereign control over it all (10:11-13). God declared that He would “distress” His people until they realized this was so (10:18).

Jeremiah concludes chapter ten by expressing his “woe” for the persecution and abandonment he has suffered for proclaiming the truth, yet knowing he was in the will of God; he resolved: “I must bear it” (10:19-20). For the sake of the Gospel, believers today must often endure hardships, and in many parts of the world they have experienced real persecution, but by keeping steadfast to the faith, the eternal rewards will more than compensate.

Despite the persecution, Jeremiah was determined to be a witness for God. He understood that the people of Judah had been led astray by false shepherds (prophets and priests), and when he envisioned the coming invasion, he saw that the flock of Judah would be scattered. On behalf of his people, Jeremiah confessed that Judah had wrongly gone their own way, for which He agreed they needed correction, but he entreated the Lord to not correct them in His anger, lest the whole nation become extinct. Then he appealed for God’s just judgment to be upon those who “devoured Jacob” (referring to Assyria’s and Babylon’s “devouring” of Israel and Judah). God answered both prayers in restraining His wrath, that a remnant of His people might survive, and in causing both Assyria and Babylon to fall.

Prayer

Lord, you are the creator and sole sovereign of the universe, yet You love us so much that You became one of us, Your creatures, in order to demonstrate that love. We trust You implicitly today.