

September 4

Scriptures: Read Jeremiah 14 & 15

Key Verse: “I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem you from the grip of the terrible.” (Jeremiah 15:21)

Overview

The message of the Lord that Jeremiah spoke, recorded in chapters 14 to 17, was likely given during the reign of Jehoiakim, when there were various enemy attacks (cf. 2 Kings 24:2). Jeremiah describes a period of drought and the resulting famine that came upon Judah as a direct result of her sin; it came upon them as one of the curses for their disobedience to the covenant (cf. Deut. 28:23-24). In a land where the vegetation is dependent upon the rain, it could prove disastrous if the Lord withheld His gifts of the former and latter rains (spring and fall).

It was not only a physical drought but also a spiritual one, for due to the people’s rebelliousness, their souls were so dry that even under this chastisement they did not sincerely turn to God, who was the Source of the Living Water (2:13; 17:13). The choice was theirs; but rather than choosing life and blessing, they chose death and cursing (cf. Deut. 30:15-19). Still today, the Lord gives people the choice; if they choose to follow Jesus, they will receive from Him the Living Water of everlasting life (John 4:10, 13-14; 7:37-38).

Even though Jeremiah suffered persecution and mockery, his heart still went out to his people because of their suffering, spiritual blindness, and destiny of doom. He had a compassionate heart, like that of our Lord Jesus. Although God had repeatedly told Jeremiah that it was of no use to pray (14:11; 7:16, 11:14), he still felt compelled to intercede on their behalf because of the love in his heart and because He knew that God was merciful and compassionate. Jeremiah identified himself with the people by being their mediator and in confessing their sins (14:7, 20), but God wanted them to confess their own sins, which they did not. They continued unrestrained in their idolatry, and because of their defilement, God would not accept their vain offerings nor hear their cry (14:10). Rather, He would bring upon them a sword, famine, and pestilence, which has always indicated a full-scale divine judgment (14:12; 24:10; cf. Ezek. 14:21; Rev. 6:8).

In Jeremiah’s attempt to save his people from God’s coming wrath, he tried to make excuses for them on the basis of the false prophets who had led them astray by deceiving them with words of “peace”, saying these words were from God when they were actually inspired by Satan. Although God promised to severely judge these lying prophets with the very punishments they asserted would never come, it still did not absolve the people from their responsibility to be obedient to God; they too had to be punished (14:13-16). Jeremiah’s tears and continued pleadings were of no avail, for God had rejected Judah (14:19; 12:7). As a last resort, Jeremiah tried pleading in a way that had once been successful for Moses; he pleaded that for God’s own name’s sake, He would show His people mercy and not bring reproach upon the city of Jerusalem wherein was His throne, the Temple which housed the Ark (14:9, 21; 3:17; Ex. 32:12-14; Num. 14:15-16).

No amount of intercession could prevail, not even if Moses and Samuel, the greatest of intercessors, had been there to plead along with Jeremiah (15:1; cf. Ex 32:30-32; Deut. 9:18-20, 25-29; 1 Sam. 7:8-10; 12:19-23; Ps. 99:6-8). The Lord had made the decision and would not relent. The effects of terrible sins committed and learned under the wicked reign of King Manasseh were still evident in Judah, and the Lord's justice was "weary" of holding off (15:4). The time for judgment was now. The wild beasts from the north would devour and destroy, leaving numerous widows to be suddenly plundered and terrified (15:3, 8). Yet some would escape, as signified in the analogy of the farmer who winnows so that he might get rid of the unwanted chaff (15:7).

Jeremiah was told by the Lord to continue speaking this unpopular message of doom, and as a result he was friendless, hated, discouraged, lonely, and frustrated, even though he was an honest and truthful man (15:10). Jeremiah took his grievances to the Lord in prayer, asking for God to be merciful to him. He confessed that he was the Lord's and his only joy was in God's word, which sustained him through all his troubles (15:16). The Lord reaffirmed His promise to protect Jeremiah from the wicked of Judah. God would make him indestructible, like a wall of bronze (cf. 1:18-19), and the Lord added that He would redeem him from the hands of the terrible Babylonian conquerors by intervening on his behalf (15:11, 21; cf. 39:11-12; 40:1-6).

Prayer

God of all compassion, teach us to love as You love, that our hearts would be burdened for the lost and spiritually blind all around us. Teach us to intercede on their behalf.