

The Redemptive Judgments of God



David Wilkerson (1931-2011) December 16, 2019

In Jeremiah 32, the prophet describes a dire scene. Jerusalem was surrounded by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army. Outside the city, the enemy was building large mounds to send their troops over the walls. Any Israelite who looked down on this scene was surely filled with a sense of doom.

Jeremiah was one of them. As the terrible scene unfolded, the prophet had to watch from a prison cell.

All the judgments he'd predicted were coming to pass upon God's people. The city had been plagued with famine, pestilence and destruction. Now it was about to be overtaken by a fierce enemy, yet the prophet could do nothing about it. The king had locked him away because of his hard prophecies. Jeremiah had spoken faithfully as God's voice to a backslidden people, but the royal court silenced him by shutting him up in jail.

All this time, Israel had been sliding into awful corruption. God's house became polluted with idolatry. Wickedness ran rampant, both in society and in the temple. God's people were on the brink of entering seventy years of captivity. After this period passed, however, the Lord would bring them back to the land, restoring his people in a redemptive act of mercy.

How can we apply Israel's circumstances to our present day?

The imprisoned prophet represents two things to us: the remnant church and the voice of God in desperate times. The church today has little or no influence over society. In America, Scripture is dismissed as outdated. True voices of godliness are mocked. A spirit of greed is running wild among God's people. As a result, the church has lost its effective witness in society. It no longer has power to withstand hell's rampages.

I assure you, the Lord will not be mocked. Peter warns that judgment begins in God's house, and the Lord will purge and cleanse his church.

In the midst of Israel's judgment, God spoke a strange word to Jeremiah. He told him that his uncle would come to visit him in prison and would ask Jeremiah to buy a parcel of land in Anathoth. The Lord then impressed upon Jeremiah to buy the field (see Jeremiah 32:6-9). Jeremiah did buy the land, making sure the purchase was sealed legally before witnesses, then he had the sale recorded. Finally, he had a copy of the deed buried in an earthen jar to be preserved for years to come.

As this small sale took place, an epic event was happening all around. Jerusalem was being stormed, its very history being altered forever. Why would Jeremiah take time out to make a real estate deal? What was the significance of this minor transaction?

We find a clue in the name Anathoth. It comes from a Hebrew root meaning "to speak, testify, bear witness, go on record." Jeremiah's land purchase was to be a testimony. It would serve as a powerful, illustrated message of God's redemptive purpose in his judgments.

The Lord was saying, in essence, “Jeremiah, every judgment I’ve shown you is coming to pass. But now I have another message for you to preach. Yes, I’ll purge the land through fire and judgment, but I’m also going to restore my people to the land. That’s the meaning behind the field you bought. After my judgment on Israel has passed, the land will be valuable again. Your purchase of that field testifies to my mercy and grace.”

Jeremiah’s act showed the world that God’s judgments are more than outbursts of his wrath. They are meant to redeem.

Jeremiah saw something coming out of this judgment that was so glorious he could hardly believe it.

“For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land” (*Jeremiah 32:15, NKJV*). God told the prophet, “Look at this land, now stricken with famine. Soon these houses will be burned to the ground. My temple will be destroyed. I’m purging and cleansing everything because my people have provoked me, turning their backs on me and bringing abominations into my house. After this judgment passes, however, I’ll raise up a totally new thing” (see 32:28-34).

Imagine what the people thought as they saw Jeremiah buying the field: “Are you insane? God is bringing judgment on the land. Your field is going to be worthless.”

Jeremiah answered, in essence, “You don’t realize the Lord is a redeemer. He gets no pleasure from his judgments. This present hour of wrath is meant to purge the land and his people. Everyone is going to know God is running things. A bright new day is coming. The redeemer will return to Zion and rebuild on the ashes of his redemptive judgments.”

“The Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts...great in counsel and mighty in work... You have set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, to this day...and You have made Yourself a name, as it is this day” (*32:18-20*).

Jeremiah is saying, “Lord, this great restoration you’ve shown me is overwhelming. Only you could bring your people out of this awful fire and restore them.”

Then the prophet realized, “But we’ve sinned grievously. We’ve broken your covenant and disobeyed your Word. That’s why judgment is falling all around us. Lord, how can we expect you to do this great, new thing when our nation is about to be destroyed?” (see 32:17-25).

The Lord interrupted his prayer. “Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, ‘Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?’” (*32:26-27*). What a glorious word he then gave to Jeremiah: “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me” (*32:37-40*).

God was telling his people, “Jeremiah’s field is a good investment. It’s a witness to you of my mercy. I redeem with mercy even in my wrath.”

Are God’s judgments still redemptive today, at this hour in history?

This present generation has provoked our Lord even more than Jeremiah’s. Our society has laughed at God, mocked his Word and shaken its fist in his face. Meanwhile, the church has lived as if God is weak and helpless, no longer relevant. The Lord is jealous over his name, and he’ll once again glorify it in all the earth. His purpose in judgment is not just to assert his authority over proud men; it is to reveal his glorious power to save and redeem.

In the very hour of judgment, God will be sanctifying his church, and all the idols and filth that have been brought into his house will be cast out. He’ll say, “I’m ending this profanity of my name, and I will sanctify my people before the world. I’ll save them from all their uncleanness.”

The same word that came to Jeremiah is God's word to his church today: "Go, buy the field in Anathoth." We're to testify, to go on record, that his judgments are redemptive. That means we have to settle in our hearts, once and for all, "Do I believe God is able to rebuild his church in this hour of judgment? Do I believe all these things are possible for him?" By making such a profession, we are buying into hope, into a new and unlimited faith. We are no longer to despair because he's going to tear down every defilement.

God will pour out his spirit of mercy and grace, beginning with conviction over sin. Our Lord is going to bring supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit to an undeserving people. He has promised us a new heart, and he's going to build a church that's pure and fearless. That's how he will bring back all glory to his name.

The Lord told Jeremiah, "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (33:3). The judgments, the hard times and the flood of iniquity make multitudes think about their eternal souls. Now that these judgments have begun, there is another message for God's people to preach: "We have an all-powerful God, and he is a redeemer!"

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