

Jeremiah or Jesus



David Wilkerson August 1, 1982

Jeremiah was a thundering prophet of the Old Testament. Every word he preached was like a sword cutting into the flesh. He angered politicians and church leaders so much they threw him into prison.

I wonder what Jeremiah would preach if he lived today! Probably the same message he preached to backslidden Israel. He would stand in our churches today and cry out: "Woe to the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep...behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings...I have discovered the wickedness of both prophet and priest...Therefore, they shall be driven out, and fall...I am against these prophets...I will punish them..." (Jeremiah 23).

To the compromising, lukewarm Christians, Jeremiah would cry: "For the land is full of adulterers...their ways are evil...their force [might] is not right...My people are now profane...they walk in lies...they are friendly with ungodly...there is deceit...false prophecy...The children of God have become light and foolish...they have perverted the words of the living God..."

"Therefore, I the Lord, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and cast you out of my presence. And I will bring on you an everlasting reproach and a perpetual shame..." (Jeremiah 23).

These were the words of Jeremiah to God's people Israel, and in spite of this kind of preaching, God's people backslid. They turned to idols. They mocked at sin. They rejected the altar of sacrifice. They went chasing after heathen gods, idolatry, fornication — all kinds of wickedness. They became vile and sinful, God allowed the Babylonians to take them captive for 70 years.

But all the time, this weeping prophet looked forward to a day when God would visit His people and change their hearts. Jeremiah knew that God pitied His people, and loved them with an everlasting love. He prophesied: "For God will set his eyes upon you for good, and will bring you again to the land. I will build them up and not pull them down...I will give them a heart to know me...They shall be my people, and I will be their God, for they shall return unto me with their whole heart..." (Jeremiah 24:6,7).

Jeremiah was right! God did bring Israel back. And for a short while they served Him with all their hearts. But once again they turned their backs on God. They went back to idols! Back to their heathen ways! God's people became perpetual backsliders, stiff-necked, set on mischief.

God realized Israel could not keep the Law. They repeatedly broke the covenant He had made with Abraham and Moses. Their unbelief destroyed them. God said: "Because they continued not in my covenant...I regarded them not..." (Hebrews 8:9).

From that day on, God began to look for new people. He would raise up a new House of Israel, a spiritual people. He would make a New Covenant with a new Israel.

"Behold, the new days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel...not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took them out of Egypt, which covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them...But this shall be the covenant that I will make: I will write my law in their

inward parts...and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more..." (Jeremiah 31).

" I will not turn from them, to do them good...but will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me...As sure as I brought evil upon them...I shall bring upon them all the good I promised..." (Jeremiah 32:40-42).

A covenant is an agreement! God agreed to do a new thing, for a new people. God no longer regarded Israel, the Jewish nation. Now He turned to the Gentiles — and to all who would accept Him by faith.

Paul explains, "They are not Israelites, which are of the nation of Israel...neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children...That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed..." (Romans 9:6–8).

Also, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly...but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly...that which is of the heart..." (Romans 2:28,29).

All true believers are now the spiritual seed of Abraham! We who are of faith possess the inheritance now. We have been adopted as the new Israel, and now all the covenants and promises being to us. The New covenant was meant for believers — children of Christ by faith alone.

We live in the day Jeremiah dreamed of — the dispensation of the New Covenant. How he would have loved to live today, and see his prophecy fulfilled!

As predicted, Christ was sent by the Father to fulfill the New Covenant. He sealed the agreement with His very own blood. He put it into effect the day He died. This means God is not dealing with our generation as He did with Jeremiah's. We have new agreement based on better promises. Jeremiah's message of Law has been fulfilled now in the finished work of Jesus Christ. And what a difference between the thunder of Jeremiah, and the mercy of Jesus.

Jeremiah Condemned — Jesus Did Not!

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved..." (John 3:17).

The church today is becoming so unlike Jesus. And many ministers are becoming more like Jeremiah. I, too, see the compromise in the church today, and I want to thunder against it like Jeremiah.

I see Christians strutting around, showing off their bodies in bikinis. I see their spiritual laziness, absorbed with sports, fun, parties. No burden for lost souls. Very little praying; very little Bible study. I see the young people messing up their spirits on rock music, lying around indulging in sex, cruising around in nice cars, playing Pac-man, loafing. Not even thinking much of the coming of Jesus. Some of them are two-timing the Lord. They claim to be Christians, yet they still drink, they drag pot, they run with fast crowd. Thousands of Christians are absolutely unconcerned, halfhearted. No weeping! No fasting! It makes me want to cry!

I get alone with Jesus, shut up with the Bible, and I pray: "Oh, God, give me a red-hot sermon! Let me blast them away! Let me shake them up so badly they'll fall on their knees and repent. Lord, I'm angry! I'm grieved! It upsets me...I want a Jeremiah message...put a prophet's thunder in my mouth..."

I believe a man of God ought to cry out against sin wherever he sees it. I will not compromise in calling sin by its right name. But at the same time, it must not be condemnation, We must keep in mind that God loves His people, and that He has made a covenant to heal and save this generation, A man who thunders against sin like a prophet needs to know a lot about God's mercy, too.

The 17th Chapter of John is a beautiful picture of the message of the New Covenant — the message of Jesus. It was our Lord's final hour. He was in the Garden praying to His heavenly Father about His disciples. Please remember, Peter would betray Him within hours. Thomas would doubt Him. All the disciples would forsake Him and return to their homes. The 120 who would later come to the upper room, would all leave Him, too.

But Jesus did not condemn them. Listen to this fantastic prayer!

"Father, you gave them to me, and they have kept my word...they received the words you gave me. I am glorified in them...they are not of this world...the glory you gave me, I have given to them...let them know you love them, even as you have loved me..." (John 17).

We say, "But Jesus, don't you see what is in Peter's heart? He is a coward! He is going to betray you! How can you say that doubting Thomas has been given your glory? Those disciples are full of fear and trembling! How can you think of them as having accepted your words? How can you pray they be loved, when they are so weak?"

Oh, yes! Their sin would grieve Him! But the New Covenant was being ushered in — it would feature forgiveness, mercy and grace. "I will forgive their iniquities...I will remember their sins no more!"

Jeremiah, under the old covenant, preached: "Your sins have cut Him off from you. God will forsake you and make you a reproach!"

But Jesus said: "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more...Come ye heavily laden and find rest for your souls..."

Things have changed now. Sin still is hateful to God, but we know have a living Savior, seated at the right hand of the Father, praying for us. He prays: "Father, keep them from the wicked one. Love with the same love that you gave me. Forgive their backsliding...keep them by the power of your name..."

Look at the Difference Between the Message of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant

Jeremiah, when rejected by the people, prayed: "Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sins from they sight...but let them be overthrown...deal with them in anger..." In other words, "God, get those compromise's! Send judgment and damnation! Show your anger against sin, O Lord!"

Now listen to Paul, under the New Covenant. He was writing to the Corinthian church that was carnal, full of dissension, selfish, worldly-minded, and weak in moral standards. Yet Paul addresses his letter to them like this: "Unto the church which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...grace be to you, and peace, from God our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God for the grace that has been given to you...The testimony of Christ was confirmed in you...who shall confirm you to the end..." (1 Corinthians 1:1-8). In the very next breath, Paul says, "I've been told there are contentions among you..." (verse 11).

Saints in Christ? Why they act more like a bunch of rebels! They were still "babes in Christ". Paul was not writing only to a few of their best saints, he was writing to the entire church. But they were still loved. Paul did not condemn them or preach the law at them. Without compromising with their sin, he instructed them in the grace of God.

Jesus does not give up on us because we are still carnal, or immature, or weak. And God's people today need less spanking, and more of His mercy and love — even though there is still much carnality. I interpret it like this — now that we are in Christ Jesus, secured by His, let us cooperate with the immaturity and carnality that still remains in us.

Jeremiah Preached Obedience by the Law — Jesus Preached Obedience by Love!

The message of Jeremiah and the old covenant was, "Fear God, obey His commandments, and be blessed — or disobey and be rejected."

The message of Jesus and New Covenant is: "If a man love me, he will obey me...he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings..." (John 14:23,24).

You can put away all the sermons about why God's people disobey. Why they continue in their sins. It is simply because of a lack of prayer or Bible study. It is not the "spirit of this age". It is not overwhelming temptations. It is not a lack of witnessing or fasting. It is primarily because of a lack of love for Jesus. Paul warned, "because sin will abound, the love of many will wax cold."

Jesus is trying to say to us, "You do not need a thundering Jeremiah to keep you from sin and the world. You need only to awaken and draw closer to me. No condemnation. No guilt. No fear. Simply love me completely, and you will forsake your sins."

Paul asked the Corinthians, "Do you want the rod, or love in the spirit of meekness...?" (1 Corinthians 4:21).

It is so difficult to learn that, under the New Covenant, Christ loves us in spite of what we are and what we do. Think of it! He loves sinners, while still in their sin. But you can flaunt His love, reject it, and be lost — even while He loves you!

The Prophecies of Jeremiah Are All Fulfilled in Jesus!

Please remember the most glorious promise of the New Covenant: "They shall not depart from me..." (Jeremiah 32:40).

The old covenant had no promise like this. It was an agreement between God and man. Man was required to keep his part, or the covenant was breached. God said, "They kept not my covenant, so I will make a new one..." But this New Covenant is not between God and man! God knew we could not keep our part. He must do not only His part now, but ours as well. He made a one-sided agreement on His own part. We do nothing but believe and obey by love. He promises to keep all believers from departing from Him.

God said, in essence, "You cannot stay true to me. Your promises are empty. Your human efforts will fail. From now on I am going to keep you supernaturally. I will do your part. You will no longer depart from me — I will see to it!"

But — It's true! Read it! "They shall not depart from me..."

You say — "Oh, but at all the wickedness. There is an epidemic of drugs...drinking...promiscuous sex..." God says — "I will keep you from the hour of temptation that is coming to try the earth."

You say — "But television is getting so filthy! Movies are now made in hell. The seductions are coming at us from all sides..." God says — "You will not forsake me...I will keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the throne of God with exceeding great joy."

You say — "But I'm afraid! People are backsliding. Satan is trying to discourage me! I'm lonely, confused! The future looks so dark! There is divorce everywhere. Homes are breaking up. I don't know what's happening to this world..." God says — "You will not forsake me...I will hold you in the palm of my hand — fear not. I will restore to you all the years the cankerworm has eaten. You will be reconciled and revived."

You say — "What if I fail in the end? What if I get tripped up and fall back into sin? What if the spirit of this age seduces me, and I slip and become a castaway?" God says — "You shall not depart from me. I have not given you the spirit of fear. When the enemy comes in like a flood, I'll raise up a standard against him! I will bring you for myself."

Now, We Come to the Prophetic Part of This Message!

The prophets predicted God would raise up an end time army of holy, consecrated people. Christ is not coming back for a sick, diseased bride. He is not coming back for a church that is defeated, broken, and crippled by sin. He is not coming back for a people with filthy garments, spotted with the corruption of this evil age. No! Christ is coming back for a holy people — overcomers — believers who have gotten victory over all the power of the devil!

How is God going to raise up such a holy, pure, powerful army?

1. He is going to send an awakening to the ministers. "And he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold...that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness..." (Malachi 3:3).
2. He is going to restore marriages, heal families, and take away bitterness — by sovereign acts of grace. "Behold, I will send you (the spirit of) Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the Lord..." "And he shall turn the heart of the children to the fathers...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse..." (Malachi 4:5,6).
3. He is going to cause the Holy Spirit to send upon us, a great turning around! "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn not ye into me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning..." "And tear your heart, and not your garments...and turn unto the Lord your God. He will be gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness..." (Joel 2:12,13).

A lazy, haphazard, sports-minded generation turning around? Weeping? Fasting? Rending their hearts? Turning to

the Lord with all that is in them?

YES! A merciful God has promised to do it. The only thing that can hinder God's is unbelief. If you will reach out in faith, the promises of restoration are yours and mine. We are not going to get stuck in some dry wilderness like Israel did. We're going on into the Promised Land! You can sense God wooing back His people all over the world.

The Spirit is doing His sovereign work, calling people out of their coldness, sinfulness, and spiritual bondage.

If we won't surrender, if we won't love God — the Spirit will go out into the streets and raise up a new people, overnight! Drug addicts, harlots, alcoholics, gangsters — they will take the place of all those who refuse to yield to the Spirit's moving.

We do not reject Jeremiah, nor his message. He declared God's word to his generation. But now, we see Jesus making it possible to fulfill all God's demands by faith in the blood sacrifice of the Cross. Today is the day of mercy, not wrath.

Thank God for the new covenant of mercy, love, and grace. God help those who reject such an offer! They will die in their sins.

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