

Message #20**Jeremiah 16:1-21**

There are certain people who will do anything they can to get attention. Some will do all sorts of things to their physical appearance so people will look at them. Some have done risky things for attention such as go over Niagara Falls in a barrel. Some people love to go to a doctor or hospital so they get attention.

Most that do these kinds of things have serious emotional problems. Those who have studied these kinds of people conclude that those who do bizarre things for attention are those who are usually motivated by jealousy, lack of self-esteem and extreme loneliness. Their sole purpose in life is to get noticed and grab attention and they will do almost anything because they live for the compliment. They long for their “five minutes of fame.”

The prophets of God were at times very depressed and lonely, but when they did something bizarre it wasn't that they wanted attention for themselves; it was that God told them to do it. They were not interested in doing strange things to draw attention to themselves. In fact, most of them would have been happy to be out of the limelight. In Jeremiah's case, he wished he had never been born. But there were times when God demanded that they do some strange things to draw attention to His truth.

There were times when God demanded that His prophets do certain things that people could actually see that would visually testify of His Program, both immediate and prophetic.

GOD TELLS JEREMIAH NOT TO DO CERTAIN ODD THINGS IN ORDER TO MAKE A STATEMENT OF HIS COMING JUDGMENT.

Verse 1 makes it clear that this is the word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah, “saying.” So Jeremiah did not just imagine this or invent this himself. God wanted him to not participate in four activities of life that are normal for most people.

NEGATIVE ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION SIGN #1 – Do not take a wife. 16:2a

For a man not to be married in the Hebrew world was a rare thing. In fact, it is so rare that there is no actual single Hebrew word for “bachelor.” There are a combination of Hebrew words that may be used to describe one who is not married, but there is no actual single word in the O.T. for “bachelor.”

One commentator observed that when it comes to doing the will of God, a good wife can be a real help-mate, but a bad wife can be a real hinder-mate.

Charles Feinberg said, “Undoubtedly, the Lord's command (**v. 1**) for Jeremiah not to marry (**v. 2**) was an emotional shock for him” (*Jeremiah*, p. 478). Not only would it have been an emotional shock, but also a cultural shock.

Practicing celibacy was not something even thought about in the Jewish world. Jewish men were expected to be married by age 20. I am certain that Jeremiah would have loved to have an encouraging (not nagging) wife by his side in life. But God said no. Truth is some of the things Jeremiah will experience will be easier because he is not married.

When you are in ministry going through tough things, it is a wonderful blessing to have your loyal wife at your side, who supports you and stands with you. Jeremiah had no one to turn to except God. He had to face all things alone. That is a tough assignment.

A good thing for single people to remember is that God is sovereign in your life and He may be protecting you so that He may use you in ways you never thought.

NEGATIVE ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION SIGN #2 – Do not have children. 16:2b-4

It is so important to observe that God told Jeremiah he was not to marry and have children and he told Hosea just the opposite that he was to marry and have children (Hos. 1:2).

What this tells us is that when it comes to the will of God, what one person is called to do may not be the same for another person. In other words, the specific will of God may be just the opposite for one person as it is for another person.

Jeremiah was not to have the normal family life that most people had. He was not to marry and have children. Children can bring some joy to you and some happy moments in life or they can also be a big burden.

As we saw last time, Hezekiah had a son whose name was Manasseh, who did so much damage to the things of God that he led the people right into the judgment of God. I am certain Hezekiah would rethink having him if he would have had it all over to do.

Jeremiah would not have that problem. He would not have a wife and he would not have children.

One reason for this is because of what God was going to do in judgment would totally and completely disrupt the normal family life (**verse 4**).

God says the reason I am commanding you not to do this is because I am going to kill people in this land and if you have a wife or children, they are going to die of deadly diseases and they will not be lamented or even buried.

God says I will use diseases, sword and famine to kill people and their bodies will be devoured by the birds of the air and by the beasts of the earth.

NEGATIVE ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION SIGN #3 – Do not go to funerals. 16:5-7

To not mourn with others who are mourning was not normal. In fact, it was even viewed as heartless. Normally when someone dies, the people mourn and lament and console each other (v. 5).

According to **verse 6**, when all different classes of people would die, it was normal for people to verbally lament and physically gash themselves or shave the hair off their heads as a sign of mourning.

God says to Jeremiah, you stay away from this. Don't go to the funerals.

By Jeremiah staying away from funerals or things that make people grieve, he was making a statement that God's peace and presence would not be given to those grieving. There would be no mercy, compassion or consolation (v. 7) that would be given from God.

God was going to kill many people and there would be many places of mourning. Jeremiah was not to participate in any of that because there was no comfort to be found.

NEGATIVE ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION SIGN #4 – Do not go to feastings. 16:8-9

Jeremiah was not to do anything that would enjoy himself socially. He was not to go to weddings or various feastings where people are eating and drinking. **God says this illustrates that I will eliminate anything joyous.** There will be no more voices of joy and gladness and no more joyous praising from bride and groom.

In **verse 10**, God tells Jeremiah that the people will wonder the reason why God is doing this. People will ask him why you aren't married. Why don't you have any children? How come you don't go to funerals or weddings? Why is God allowing this entire calamity to come on us? Then Jeremiah was to inform them because God is sending horrible judgment against His own people.

God's people through all of this will finally ask what our iniquity is and what is our sin that we have committed that has brought God to the point where He is permitting this entire calamity to hit us.

Reason #1 - Your forefathers have forsaken Me and My word. 16:11

We do know from this book that Manasseh's evil some 50 years before this was a critical reason for this judgment (15:4). **What we clearly learn here is that a national chastising judgment comes after an accumulation of sins that even may go back to the forefathers.**

We would also observe that a personal and individual chastising judgment comes after an accumulation of sins that have not been faced and confessed.

Remember Paul said if we judge ourselves we would not be judged (I Cor. 11:31). So judgment comes after an accumulation of sins that have not been judged.

Reason #2 - You also have done more evil than they did. **16:12**

You are stubborn and proud and arrogant and you walk according to your own evil heart and you refuse to listen to Me and My word. God makes it clear here that judgment comes because of one's own evil sin that is even worse than that of the forefathers.

In **verse 13**, God says I am going to hurl you out of this land. This land that was supposed to be the wonderful Promised Land you are leaving by my judgment.

When we come to **verse 14**, God seems to give some future hope to His people. Their hope would not be found in the present things they were experiencing, but in the future. Even though God is angry with His people, it is clear that His anger is not the last word concerning His people.

In **verse 14**, God says I will so remove them from the land that no one will even talk about the fact that I brought them out of the land of Egypt. In fact, according the **verse 15**, the next time this is discussed, it will be about God who brought them into the land from the north and all over the world.

So what this means is that the banishment from the land would not be permanent, but it would be in the future when God would bring His people back to the land from all over the world.

In **verses 16-18**, God uses three metaphors to describe what He is going to do to His own people:

Metaphor #1 - The metaphor of fishing. **16:16a**

Now the fishing metaphor used here is not a good one if you are the people of God. God says I am going to let foreign powers fish for my people and catch them. In other words, I will permit my people to be snatched out of their environment and taken away.

When Jesus uses the metaphor with His disciples, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men, He is reversing the very principle of this judgment. He will allow His word to go out and snatch people out of the world and bring them into His family.

Metaphor #2 - The metaphor of hunting. **16:16b**

God says I am going to let foreign hunters come and hunt down my people and destroy them. The hunters will be plentiful and they will hunt down God's people no matter where they are.

Verse 17 is eye-opening, literally. God says the reason I am doing this is because God's eyes are on all their ways and no iniquity is concealed from His eyes. No one gets away with secret sin. All sin is seen and known by God.

If God sees all things with his eyes, see if you can set no unclean thing before your eyes. In this case, God's people were caught up in iniquity and God saw every bit of it.

Metaphor #3 - The metaphor of banking. **16:18**

God says I will pay them back double for what they have done against Me. They have committed abominable things and they have committed sin and iniquity. They have committed abominable things and I will doubly pay them back with interest.

Now everyone understands the principle of putting money in a bank or savings to earn interest. God uses that analogy here and says iniquity and sin earns interest. It eventually reaches a point where I pay it back "double."

In view of what God told Jeremiah, Jeremiah responded to God in the same way that any faithful believer responds to God.

In **verses 19-20**, Jeremiah responds to God by acknowledging six realities:

(Reality #1) - Jeremiah acknowledges that God is my strength and my stronghold. **16:19a**

(Reality #2) - Jeremiah acknowledges that God is my refuge in the day of distress. **16:19b**

These are two realities that all of God's people need to realize in times when God is sovereignly permitting trouble and turmoil to reign. **Our security is found in our relationship with God.**

(Reality #3) - Jeremiah acknowledges that God sovereignly controls the nations and one day all nations will come to Him. **16:19c**

(Reality #4) - Jeremiah acknowledges that God's people have lived false lives. **16:19d**

God's people have listened to false things and followed false ways. This is true in the religious world, the academic world, the political world, the social world. God sees any who live a phony life.

(Reality #5) - Jeremiah acknowledges that God's people have gone after things futile, of no profit. **16:19e**

God's people have chased after empty, futile things.

(Reality #6) - Jeremiah acknowledges that God's people have worshipped things that are not gods. **16:20**

Men have a tendency to make their own gods. In fact, in many churches today they have worship services that invent their own idea of God because it is not based on truth.

In **verse 21**, God responds to Jeremiah. God says through everything I am doing, I am going to make My people know My power and My might. It is a shame that God has to do things to get His own people to acknowledge His power and might. But that is exactly what He will do and what He is doing.